CHAPTER – IV

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
PRE-INDEPENDENCE HINDI AND ASSAMESE
SHORT STORIES ON BASIS OF THEIR
CONTENTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
PREMCHAND AND SARAT CHANDRA GOSWAMI
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4.1. Introduction

Talking and listening are inherent human tendencies. Telling and listening to stories are as old as human civilisation. International poet Rabindranath Tagore says, “Just as the river is a flow of water, similarly, mankind too is a flow of tales.”1 Even though modern story is the fallout of the literary evolution that has taken place in every century, we must still take into consideration the thought-provoking ideas of the distant past. Words, sayings, sagas, narrations etc., are ancient forms of modern story literature, which we may not be able to consider as stories, but which lend enough substance in our study of modern story. In Amarkosha the first kind of imaginary ideas was regarded as story. Similar expressions are found in Kabyadarshan, Sahitya Darpan and Dhanyalok. In Amarkosha writings on emulative knowledge and narrations on reality were called Akhyayika (tales). In Sahitya Darpan and Dhanyalok also some special features have been mentioned. Even the poetic narrations and accounts are equally regarded as perceptive literature by scholars.

4.2. Tradition of Modern Hindi story

Modern Hindi story found a free and orderly form in the hands of Premchand. There were stories before Premchand, but those could not be considered as stories in the true sense of the term, even though they were
replete with dialogue. While studying modern Hindi short story there is a need to study its most ancient form also.

The Rigveda is regarded as the world’s most ancient text. The maxims of the sutras of the Rigveda are still relevant. Some of the sutras are replete with interesting and idealistic tales. Later on, these tales underwent development. The Narapali tales like Pururava, Ghajati, Putra, Puru and Turbashru have similarities with the sutras of the Rigveda.

The maxims of the Rigveda are similar to those found in the Upanishads. In the Kathopanishad tales on the tests of the powers of the gods and Nachikata are mentioned, in the Chandopanishad tales on Satyakam, Khetaketu and Uddelak, in the Brihaddarunyupanishad tales on Gargi and Yagyabalka, in the Troitreyupanishad tales on Aswinikumar, in the Prashnupanishad tales on Bedarbhi, Kaushalya, Mukesh and others and in the Mundukupanishad tales on Shoinak and Angira are mentioned. The allegorical philosophy and objectives of these tales are different from those of general tales because these tales are subjects of deep mysticism. Considering the rules of their composition, style of narration and flow of the developments, these stories are of a high standard and are steady and filled with unearthly happenings.

After the Upanishads comes the age of narrative verse and ancient tales. In the narrative verse the tales of Rama and Krishna are the most popular. The chief composers of these tales are Valmiki and Vyas. In the Ramayana and Mahabharata a mixture of religious, customary and literary ingredients are found.
Next comes the age of the Jatakas. In the Jataka Tales, stories of the 547 births of Gautam Buddha are mentioned. Apart from the Jataka Tales, Acharya Buddhaddutta’s Amidhammavatatar, Ruparup Bibhag, Binoy Binissoy, Uttar Binissoy, Buddha Ghosh Mahasthabir’s Bimuddhi Bhaggou, Samasta Pashadika, Sumagal Bilashini, Papangcha Sudini, Sharattha Patrashini etc., Acharya Dharmapal’s verse compilations Shetubandha Theri, Udan Itibuttak etc., are other books where the greatness of Buddhist literature the Jatakas and other literatures are found. The far-reaching effects of these are found in the national folk literatures of the Middle East, Arabian countries, Iran and the European countries.

Brihat Katha, a book written in the first or second century AD, which is now unavailable, is an immortal testimony to story literature. Similarities with Brihat Katha are seen in the Harshacharit, Kabyadarsha, Brihat Katha Manjari, Kathacharit Sagar and other texts. The Kathacharit Sagar written by Kashmiri Brahman pandit Somdev, is regarded as the Kashmiri version of the Brihat Katha.

There is mention of a book on fables Kubalayamala, written by Udyatan Suri. Along with this, Banabhatta’s Kadambari, Subandhu’s Basabadatta and Dandi’s Dashakumar Charit, books of the initial stages of Sanskrit prose literature, are also mentioned. Apart from these, there are also other Sanskrit books namely, Brihatkatha Sloka, Baital Panchabinshatika, Suksaptati, Singhashan Dratrishika, Panchatantra and Hitopadesh. These texts form an immense storehouse of prose literature. Even though there is a profusion of poetic expressions in Basabadatta, Dashakumar Charit and Kadambari, enough prose-style expressions are also found. From the angle of story
telling, Kathacharit Sagar, Baital Panchabinshatika, Singhashan Dratrisikha and Suksaptati are very important. The incidents in these texts have been concealed in such a manner that they have become a storehouse of curiosity and interest. In subsequent times the tales of the Katha Sagar, Baital Panchisi, Singhashan Battisi and Kissa Tota-maina were drawn from these texts.

These tales are entertaining and educative. They have contributed beautifully in popularising prose literature. Their far-reaching effects also fell on the original and offshoot prose literature of subsequent times. Moreover, the main sources of the folk tales of the Hindi-speaking states were these story collections.

The Panchatantra and Hitopadesh are collections of moralistic tales. These were written probably in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively.

Leelawati Katha, written by Kautuhal in original Maharashtrian language, also has substantial prose value. In the offshoot also a large number of important books are available. Most of these are found in the Jain offshoot narrations on love. In offshoot Jain books like Pattam Charit, Bhabisyadatta Katha, Neminath Charit, Karakanda Charit, Mahapuran, Yashodhar Charit, Kumarpal Pratibodh etc., prose is found in abundance.

Even after that there is a lot of versification in them. Still their greatness lies in the fact that they have made enough influence on the texts of the initial stages and on the tales of narrative verse of the middle stages.
With the strong and successful usage of imagination, writers of books based on weak historical backgrounds, created well laid out tales. In the writings of Beesal Dev Raso, Jamba Swami Raas, Kadhuli Raas, Khuman Raso, Hammir Raso, Parmal Raso, Bijoypal Raso, Prithviraj Raso and others, even though versification finds prominence, still a stable theory on prose is seen. Because of their relation with folk heroes, the narrations of these writings gradually became popular and within a short period they became bases of folk tales.¹

Rajasthan was the centre of development of folk literature. In matters of creation of literature Rajasthani language Dingal was enjoying the upper hand. After that came the prominence of the Braja language. Steady prose continued to evolve. Around this time as the colloquial language was in vogue in Rajasthan, that language was used for creation of various folk tales. The tradition of this system was multifaceted. Such stories were called ‘khyate aur baate’ in Rajasthan.² Such tales were sources of immense amusement.

The folk tales of that time were not only oral but also written. The written folk tales began to be found in three forms namely – verse, prose and assorted. Famous folk tales like Doula Sadhura Doha, Madhavalan, Kamakadala, Heer-Ranjha, Kutub Satak, Singhasan Battisi, Sahelira Ratteesi, Bahale Hanshini ki Katha, Phootkar Batarou Sangrah etc., have been written in prose form. Famous folk tales like Madan Satak, Beeja Saurath ree Baat,

¹. प्राकृत अपभ्रंश तथा चारण कथा साहित्य धीरे धीरे तेलाक रूचि में घुलते जा रहे थे। Rastogi Girija, Hindi kahani : Siddhant Aur Vivechan, P.-22
². Jigyasu Mohanlal, Kahani Aur Kahanikar, P.-55
Chandrakumar ree Baat and Sadabaccha Sabalinga ree Baat have been written in the assorted form.

These folk tales are interesting and entertaining. Their style is very attractive. Imagination, history and pleasure form a junction in these writings.

Next came the age of Hindi narrative verse of the middle period. The Muslims were by now spreading prominently in India. The Muslims had made quite an impact on different aspects of the local people’s lifestyle. The mundane love in the narrative verse was given a hue of divine love. As a result of this a new kind of attraction was created. Among the prominent verse are Kutuban’s Mrigavati, Jaysi’s Padmawat, Manjan’s Madhumalati, Osman’s Chitrawali, Noor Mohammad’s Indrawati and Duhakhcharan’s Pushpawati. Among the love stories written by Hindu writers, Satyavati Katha, Nala-Damayanti and Ushcharitar are noteworthy.

Apart from the fables mentioned above, a different type of story was created by virtue of the mentality of the Muslim writers, wherein entertainment, imagination and profuse ornamentation were found. Laila Majnu, Sheere Farhan, Sabilee Bhattiyarin, Tota-maina, Hatimta, Golabkabali, Saranga Sadabrikkshya and Kissa Saare Teen Yaar carry tendencies of the traits mentioned above. These stories became more popular because they could draw more attention of the readers.

3. मुसलमान भारत में एक नवीन सभ्यता और साथ ही साथ अपने देश के किसी कहानी भी लाये थे।....... अरब के मुसलमान अपने अरबियन नाइट्स (सहस्र रचना चरित्र) और फारस में मुसलमान लैला मजनू तथा शीरी-फरहाद जैसी प्रमुख कहाँ कहाँ लाये थे Jigyasu Mohanlal, Kahani Aur Kahanikar, P-56
It is of utmost importance to mention two religious books on communicative literature of the final stage of the ancient literature prevalent in the Hindi-speaking states. These two books are Chaurashi Vaishnabon ki Vaarta and Do Sou Bawan Vaishnaban ki Vaarta. In these texts the lives of devotees are described in the form of tales. Philosophically these stories should have established the supremacy of the Vallam community and Vaishnavism and created an attraction towards them. Still, the method adopted in these stories to expand through description, is superb and because of that there is a congregation of narrations.

The purpose of engaging in all these discussions is to give a clue to the status of Hindi story and to bring together its different angles.4

After Apabhransh, proper prose began to appear. The development of what Acharya Shukla describes as ‘small story’, is said to have taken place in the Bharatendu Age. For example – Alhah Khand, Sur Sagar, Ramcharit Manas and Ramchandrika too are distinctly influenced by fables. Moreover, Goura Badal ki Katha compiled by Jatmal also is a noteworthy creation. Lallulal’s Prem Sagar, Sadal Mishra’s Nachiketopakhyan and Inshah Allah Khan’s Ranee Ketki ki Kahani also have their linguistic and artistic greatness from the point of view of story-telling. The main ingredients of these stories have been derived from the Puranas and a profusion of imagination is noticed in them. The language of Prem Sagar is scholarly.5 From the artistic point of

4. कहानी कहला केवल हिन्दी कथा साहित्य में ही आकर उत्पन्न नहीं हुई उसकी दूसर तथा अपने अप में विशिष्ट अत्यधिक महत्वपूर्ण प्राचीन शिला है जिसकी नींव पर हिन्दी कहानी विकसित हो सकी। Rastogi Girija, Hindi kahani : Sidhant Aur Bibechean, P.-24
5. लल्लुलल्लाल जी का काव्यभाषाग्राह गद्य भक्ति की कथा बातों के काम ही अधिकतर है – Shukla Ramchandra, Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas, P.-499

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view it looks underdeveloped. According to Dr Paramanand Shreevastava, its style of writing is very shallow.\(^6\) So far as arrangement of narration and art is concerned, Pandit Sadal Mishra’s Nachiketopakhyan is far superior to Prem Sagar. Here the element of surprise is far more prominent. It can be viewed as an influence of the ancient religious fables. Both assume importance because both have been translated from Sanskrit and have enriched Hindi literature.\(^7\) It is also true that Ranee Ketki ki Kahani is a standard creation having an independent existence and artistic nuance.\(^8\) Many Hindi critics regard this as the first story in Hindi. Its narration style is very appealing, even though the propensity of coincidence is prominent in it. Even though the story seems irrelevant from the modern point of view, the sequence of progression lends it a historic importance.

After the three writings mentioned above, two stories, Gulab Chameli ka Kissa and Raja Bhoj ka Sapna written by Raja Shiv Prasad Sitare are noteworthy. These stories are of fundamental nature, but are based entirely on imagination and lack the progression of a fable.

After that, Bharatendu Harichandra appears on the scene during the peak of Hindi literature. From the angle of stories this period is called the Bharatendu Age. This is the period of transition. Talking about the speciality of this period, Dr Paramanand Sreevastav says that it was in the Bharatendu

\(^{6}\) ShrivastavParmanand, Hindi Kahani Ki Rachna Prakriya, P.- 57

\(^{7}\) ये (प्रेम सागर और नासिकेतोपाख्यान) स्वतंत्र रूप से लिखी जाने वाली कहानियाँ नहीं हैं, संस्कृत के रूपांतर मात्र हैं, केवल भाषा के लिए इनका महत्व है’ –Jigyasu Mohanlal, Kahani Aur Kahanikar, P.-59

\(^{8}\) इन्हें कहानी को हम कहानी कला की दृष्टि से देखने तो यहाँ भी हम उनको नवीन धारा के प्रवर्तक के रूप में देखते हैं’ –Lakshmisagar, Sahitya Chintan, P.-77
Age that the story writer underwent a fulfilling change in nature and an apt medium emerged to analyse the existence of that age.9 Stories before Bharatendu can be regarded as ancient and those after him as modern. It was during the times of Bharatendu that English colonialism was established all over India. As a result of that the people of India for the first time came face-to-face with western civilisation and culture. The literature and society of the Bharatendu Age experienced tremendous influence of Swami Dayanad’s Arya Samaj movement, Brahma Samaj movement, the religious and spiritual movements of Ramkrishna Paramhansha, Swami Dayanand and Swami Ramteertha and Anne Besant’s Theosophical movement. Because of the various movements and incidents and circumstances mentioned herein, the stories of the Bharatendu Age did experience newer horizons, but they were not yet able to be totally free from the influence of the ancient writings. Still, there was a yearning for newness.

4.3. Contribution of newspapers and magazines in the development of Hindi short stories

During the Bharatendu Age various newspapers and magazines began to appear. The main publications of that time were: Kavi-vachan-sudha, Harichandra Magazine, Harichandra Chandrika, Hindi Pradeep, Brahman, Bharat Mitra etc. Cartoons, stories, light articles, satirical visuals, dream visuals etc., were published in these publications. The prose that appeared in these publications, carried traces of fables.10 The chief writers of the

10. इन पत्र-पत्रिकाओं में जिन मनोरंजक गद्य शैलियों को अपनाया गया अनेक कहानी कला का बीज हमें अवस्था मिलता है । .... निबंधों में भते ही वे सामाजिक हो अथवा साहित्यिक, कहानी को सी कथा वर्तन्ते और चित्रात्मकता अवस्था लक्षित होती हैं। Rastogi Girija, Hindi kahani : Sidhant Aur Bibechan, P.-147
Bharatendu Age were, Balakrishna Bhatta, Bharatendu Harichandra, Pandit Pratap Narayan Mishra, Babu Bal Mukunda Gupta, Kishorilal Goswami, Girijadutt Bajpayee, Kartik Prasad Khatree, Ramchandra Shulk, Mirzapur’s Babu Purnachandra Dharmapatni, Yashodananda Akhouri, manager of the Indian Press Girija Kumar Ghosh, Lal Parbatinandan, Suryanarayan Dikshit and others. The writings of these writers carried traits of newness.\(^\text{11}\)

In the year 1900 the journal Saraswati began to be published from Nashik. Publication of Saraswati was an epoch-making event in the history of Hindi prose, especially Hindi story. Acharya Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi became the founder of Hindi prose of that time. The period from 1900 to 1925 can be regarded as Hindi story’s Dwivedi Age. Kishorilal Goswami’s original story Indumati\(^\text{12}\) that had appeared in the first year of Saraswati, is regarded as the first Hindi story. After that his other stories began to be published. But for some time to come, mainly translated writings were published. These were either direct translations from English to Bengali, or were written as shadow creations. Besides Indumati and translated writings, in the years that followed, some original stories began to be published in Saraswati. Golbahar (1902 – Kishorilal Goswami), Plague ki Churail (1902 – Master Bhagawan Das), Gyarah Varsh ka Samay (1903 – Acharya Ramchandra Shukla), Pandit aur Panditani (1903 – Girijadutt Bajpayee) and Dulaiwali (1907 – Bangamahila), were some of them. It may be mentioned

11. भारतेन्दु युग की हिंदी कहानी में शिल्प सम्बन्धी कुछ पुरानी रूढियों का निर्वाह होते हुए भी राष्ट्रीय एवं समाजवादी सामाजिक चेतना का आधार बना है। ... इन लेखकों को कहानियाँ पूर्व की लेखकों के कहानी शिल्प से भी आश्चर्यका रूप में आगे जाना चाहते हैं। Shrivastav Parmanand, Hindi Kahani Ki Rachna Prakriya, P.-65

12. Saraswati, Part - I, Ed.-VI, June, 1900
herein that some critics regard Gyarah Varsh ka Samay as the first original Hindi story and some others give that recognition to Dulaiwali, because they regard Indumati as a shadow translation of Shakespeare’s The Tempest. Many writings that appeared in Saraswati’s contemporary magazine Sudarshan, were not given recognition. The stories of Madhav Prasad Mishra that were published in Sudarshan were mainly ancient fables.

Later on, stories that were published in Saraswati, included Nyay by Jambu, Vidya Vihar by Vidyanath Sharma, Ninnyanve ka Pher by Maithalicharan Gupta, Chandradas ka Adbhoot Akhyan by Pandit Suryanarayan Dikshit, Prushika Patrika by Chandajee, Ek ke Do Do by Parbati Nandan, Kumbh me Choti Bahu and Daan Pratidaan by Banga Mahila and Ek Ashrafi ki Atma Kahini by Pandit Venkatesh Narayan. These stories were of general nature devoid of any artistic style. The period saw publication of some translated works by Swami Satyadev, Uditnarayan Bajpayee, Baburam, Lakshmidhar Bajpayee, Premnath Bhattacharya, Bishambhar Nath Jijja, Gangaprasad Agnihotri, Shivnarayan Shukla, Kundanlal Shah and others. In 1909 Brindaban Lal Sharma’s story Rakhiband Bhai was published in Saraswati. This story carried originality and the writer’s philosophy of life. As a result of disillusionment with Saraswati and some other disadvantages that confronted the magazine, another magazine named Hindu began to be published from Kashi in 1911. That year itself Prasad’s first story Gram was published in Hindu. Prasad was a master of imagination and contemplation. In 1911 itself Gangaprasad Sreevastava’s first satirical writing Picnic was published in Hindu. Around that time Prasad came out with several stories like Akashdeep, Bisatee, Pratibimba, Swarg ke Khandahar
and Chitra Mandir. In 1912 Prasad’s story Rasiya Balam and Bishambharnath Jijja’s story Pardesi were published in Hindu. In 1913 the famous story Kano Mein Kangana by Raja Radhika Raman Prasad Singh, who was extremely thoughtful and could add a unique musical touch to his stories, was published in Hindu. In 1914 Bishambharnath Sharma’s first story appeared in Saraswati and in that same year Chatursen Shashtri started writing stories. Sukhmay Jeevan, the first story by Chandradhar Sharma Guleri appeared in Bharat Mitra in 1911, but his peerless story Usne Kaha Tha appeared in Saraswati in 1915. This story gave him a place of pride in world prose literature. In 1916 Premchand also started writing stories and his first story Pancha Parmeswar appeared that same year in Saraswati. In the history of Hindi story the appearance of Premchand was an epoch-making development.

Even though Saraswati and Hindu kept on entertaining the fable enthusiasts, the latter’s taste found real expression. A fallout of this was the appearance of another monthly magazine Hindi Galpamala from Kashi in 1918. Stories written by Pyarelal Gupta, Phoolmati, Rudradutt Bhatt, Prasad, Ilachandra Joshi and others began to be published in the new magazine.

4.4. Pre-Independence Hindi short stories with special reference to Premchand

This was an important period in the history of Hindi story. Guleri, Prasad and Premchand lent an independent grazing ground and rejuvenating strength to Hindi story. They laid the base for a new style in Hindi story. In the history of Hindi story, Premchand is an age in himself. Although he
started writing in Urdu, soon he switched over to writing in Hindi. His stories are like an encyclopaedia of all contemporary social aspects – political, economic, cultural, familial, personal. He had also foreseen the future trend.

Premchand wrote about three hundred stories. Sapta Saroj, Nava Bidhi, Prem Pachichi, Prem Dadashi, Prem Teerth, Prem Piyush, Prem Kunj, Prem Chaturthee, Pancha Prachun, Sapta Suman, Kafan, Prem Pratibha, Prerna, Prem Pramod, Prem Sarovar, Kutte ki Kahani, Jungle ki Kahani, Agni Samadhi, Prem Panchami and Prem Ganga were among his published collections. All his stories were published from Saraswati Press in Varanasi in six volumes under the title Maansarovar. Raja Hardoul, Rani Saranda, Mandir aur Masjid, Agni Samadhi, Binod Atmaram, Sujan Bhagat, Burhi Kaki, Durga ka Mandir, Shatranj ke Khilaree, Panch Parmeshwar, Bare Ghar ki Beti, Vikramaditya ki Katar Kamna Taru, Degree ke Rupaye, Sout, Ishwaria Nyay, Namak ka Daroga, Sati, Lanchan, Ghar Jamai, Ghaswali, Khusar, Julius, Pus ki Raat, Kafan, Do Bailon ki Katha, Idgah, Bare Bhai Sahab etc., are his artistic stories of a high stature.

Premchand’s writing period is a long one. It was true that his art and style of writing continued to develop persistently. His collection of Urdu stories Soz-E-Watan was published in 1907. In 1915 his Urdu stories were published in translated form in Hindi under the collection Sapta Saroj. It has already been mentioned that his first original Hindi story Panch Parmeshwar was published in 1916. The period 1916 – 1920 can be regarded as the first stage of the development of Premchand’s stories. The stories of this period are too descriptive and because of the tendency in them to describe the writer’s identity in the foreword in detail, the stories cannot bring out the full
potentials of the characters and also fail in offering acceptable and natural solutions to the incidents.\textsuperscript{13} The narrations in the stories of this period are very long and the incidents acquire elaboration. The stories are of the fable nature. The stories fail to acquire the form of incidents. Also, a lot of influence of the Urdu language is seen on the stories of this period. The stories of this genre are included in Sapta Saroj and Prem Pachichie. Saut, Panch Parmeshwar, Namak ka Daroga, Rani Saronga, Bare Ghar ki Beti, Maryada ki Beti, Amawashya ki Ratri, Paap ke Agnikund and Mamta represent the stories of this period. In these stories the future developments are given in brief at the beginning itself. As a result of that they lack the element of curiosity. Dramaticism is also lacking in them as the stories end in dialogue. The practice of bringing up the end without the story coming to an end, has been commensurate with the tendency of the stories.\textsuperscript{14} The tenor of the stories is pleasing.

The time from 1920 to 1930 is the second period of Premchand’s stories. Premchand knew that according to the inherent requirement of the story there was a need to infuse elements of advice, simplicity of language and spontaneity of style into the stories. He is seen to have given due importance to comprehension and expansion in the stories of this period. Because of the less interference by the writer and also because the incidents come to the extreme end, the stories of this period are more interesting and

\textsuperscript{13} Sinha Suresh, Hindi Kahani : Udbhav Aur Vikas, P.- 327
\textsuperscript{14} Sinha Suresh, Hindi Kahani : Udbhav Aur Vikas, P.- 330
self-developing. Prem Purnima, Prem Prachut, Prem Pachichee, Prem Dadashi etc., fall in this category of stories. Some stories of this period seem to suffer the writer’s interference unnecessarily. Some such stories are Lokmat Samman, Atmaram and Nairashya Leela. There are some other stories which are artistic in nature and allow the reader to think or be a part of the story. For example Nagpuja, Daftari, Shankhanad, Bidhangsha and Shatranj. There are still other stories which are neatly arranged and artistic and hint at the entire ensuing happenings. Mention may be made of stories like Ghar ka Ant, Meku and Shanti. Around that time Premchand began to succeed in garnering dramatics and evolving psychology in the characters of his stories. He could successfully apply various techniques.

The period 1930-1936 saw the third phase of Premchand’s stories. In this phase his stories seem to have attained completeness and psychological viewpoints seem to have been employed in the stories. In this phase there is a profuse assemblage of the psychological angle. The level of compassion is higher. In place of ideology, these stories carry more of extant situations, but the conflict of situations is not seen in them. At the same time, the characters seem to arise from the incidents or situations. The writer’s explanation seems to have disappeared altogether. The need for self-formation of the incidents becomes redundant. It became a medium of arousing the mentality of the characters. A lot of attempt seems to have been made to make the dialogues in these stories far more dramatic. Some of the prominent stories of this period are – Do Kavare, Algaunjya, Nayabibah,

16. यहाँ चरित्रों को आदर्शवादी मान्यतायें सब पीछे छुट गयी। Lal Lakshmi Narayan, Hindi Kahaniyon Ki Shilpvidhi Ka Vikas, P.-155
Gulli-danda, Mispama, Kusum, Ghaswali, Kafan, Bare Bhai Sahab, Pus ki Raat, Nasha, Manovritti and Jadu. The element of influence is seen prominently in the stories of this period. The stories are based on the emotions of the characters or on some circumstances. The comments made by Dr Paramananda Sreevastav on the stories of this phase are regarded as ever convincing. “The artistic mastery that we expect in a modern story, is easily available in these stories.” Now Premchand took up views of contemporary environments, which English poet Keats used to call negative capability. He expressed feelings through symbolic ingredients also.

Premchand was deeply influenced by his own thoughts and by the contemporary situations and environment. His mental creations evolved in such a manner that those became inseparable from the contemporary environment.

The age of Premchand saw manifold changes in the social, cultural and religious spheres. The knowledge acquired from western literature lent a new path and tradition to the country’s intellectual force. The absence of foreign intervention, scientific discoveries, industrialisation, growth in the population of the educated, arousal of democratic values, rise of the middleclass, ban on slavery, spread of women’s education, compassion towards society’s neglected and exploited sections, cultural and archaeological discoveries of ancient glories elevated the country’s self-

17. Sreevastav Paramananda, Hindi Kahani Ki Rachna Prakriya, P.-98
18. साधारण विवेक, अनुभव की प्रौढ़ता आत्मविश्वास और कथा का स्वाभाविक सौंदर्य प्रेमचन्द की ऐसी विशेषताओं हैं जो उन्हें हिन्दी कहानियों का श्रेष्ठ निर्माता सिद्ध करती हैं। Bajpaye Nand Dulare, Adhunik Sahitya, P.-245
respect and renaissance. But exploitation of the farmers increased. The distance between them and the moneyed class increased further. Litigations came into existence. Cruelty of the moneyed class and moneylenders grew. Industry began to suffer. Scientific and industrial tools were developed only to that extent which would benefit the government machinery. The profits began to be exported. The mental strength of the masses broke down. This situation gave rise to the Swadeshi movement. The English were a spirited race. By coming in contact with them, a new society came into existence within Indian society. After coming in touch with western civilisation Indian lifestyle experienced an outburst of momentum. It proved effective for the newly literate people. The economic policy of the English gave rise to a middleclass society. They were exceptionally and selfishly focused from the high class rulers. Emancipated economic and political ambitions began to rise in the Indian psyche. The movement launched by Gandhiji and freedom aspirants became vigorous. Many nationalistic agitations started taking place. Efforts went on for Hindu-Muslim unity. Western influence started falling on the joint family system, conjugal life and love affairs.

Premchand began writing stories in these situations. All these situations are reflected in his stories. He unravelled the mysteries of human life and made every problem of the society and environment a subject matter of his

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19. इस समयज्ञान की परिभाषा का स्वरूप हुआ और सामाजिक एवं धार्मिक सुधारक आन्दोलनों, कालानुसार राष्ट्रीयता। नवीन नैतिकता, सी शिक्षा, आर्थिक चेतना, भावोन्नति और मानव सांस्कृतिक नीति पर आधारित आर्थिक उत्थान की चेष्टा के फलस्वरूप चुनौतियाँ महत्वपूर्ण होने लगी। Lakshmi Sagar, Adhunik Kahani Ka Pariparik, P.-11
20. राष्ट्रीय हल्लावों ने प्रेमचंद के मन को जितना हिला दिया, उतना उनके समकालीन किसी अन्य लेखक को नहीं। Sreevastav Paramananda, Hindi Kahani Ki Rachna Prakriya, P.-94
stories. He gave special importance to the social and familial problems. He started writing stories that gave importance to incidents, characters, circumstance etc. Along with it he employed all styles of character portrayal.

Premchand’s life was one of struggle and the influence of the two aspects of his life – one of a professor and the other of a writer – can be seen in his stories.

All the contemporary situations of that time converged on Premchand’s stories. The story found its true character and base in the hands of Premchand. We get to hear the earnest appeals of the Indian farmer in his stories. All the possibilities and tendencies of his time are seen in his stories. He took literature in the form of definition of social life and the base of its evaluation was its necessity. Normally most of his stories are coloured with idealistic hues. He made an attempt to understand an individual’s problems, psychology and feelings in the context of the social environment.

Premchand’s stories are mainly linked with the middle-class of society. His post-Independence stories too are basically centred round the middle-class. Exploitation by capitalists, zamindar-farmer relations, loans and the system of money-lending, absence of unity in the villages, mass national and moral uprisings, erosion of social considerations, religious considerations, Hindu-Muslim unity and differences and conflicts, the problem of widow remarriage, family incidents, poverty, inequality, indisciplined lifestyle etc., were subjects of his stories. Some subjects of the stories remained relevant even in later stages as well as after Independence.

21. जिनके आने के साथ ही कहानी विधा को प्रणतत्व ही नहीं प्राप्त हुआ, सुनिश्चित दिशा भी उपलब्ध था। Lakshmi Sagar, Adhunik Kahani Ka Pariparab, P.-34

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Premchand’s stories in the later years carried psychological and attritional analyses also.

Premchand’s language also carries futuristic tendencies. It was he who presented language in the correct form and ensured its spread.²² He opened the path of language and established its glory.

If we go back to the past, we find that Premchand had in him seeds of most of the tendencies and probabilities that would arise in stories of the post-Independence period. The first meeting of the progressive writers was held in London in 1924. It was Premchand who had chaired that meeting. It was in his novels that attention to love and relationships in conjugal life was drawn. The psychological conflict of how an individual could become both good and bad subject to demands of the situation, was seen in Premchand’s stories. It was he who introduced psychological traits in dialogue. His language is character-centric. Premchand’s name was in the forefront in the matter of placing variety and colour, description and antiquity in stories. It was Premchand who first of all gave full attention to the complete art of story-telling and maintained its momentum. Thus we can see that Premchand was present in every aspect of story-telling, which further developed in the post-Independence period.

A contemporary writer of Premchand was Jayshankar Prasad. Premchand represented social responsibilities and Prasad represented the trend of idealistic imagination. The other noted writers who were influenced by Premchand and started writing were Bishambhar Nath Sharma ‘Kaushik’,

²². भाषा की दुनिया से भी प्रेमचंद ने एक क्रान्तिकारी परिवर्तन लाने की चेष्टा की।Sagar Lakshmi, Hindi Kahani Ka Pariparab, P.-42
Sudarshan, Jwaladutt Sharma, Bishambhar Nath Jijja, Raja Radhikaraman Prasad Singh, Ganga Prasad Sreevastav, Brindaban Lal Sharma and Bhagawati Prasad Vajpayee. Those writers influenced by Prasad were ChaturSEN Shashtri, Rai Krishna Das, Chandi Prasad Hridayesh, Gobinda Prasad Pant, Binod Shankar Vyas, Basaspati Pathak and Pandey Bechan Sharma Ugra. Ugra can be bracketed in a separate category because of his stinging satire. Premchand’s contemporary writers also can be bracketed in a separate category. First there were those writers who wrote in the lines of Premchand’s traits and style, and then there were those who wrote analytically. In the first category were Kaushik, Prasad, Guleri, Sudarshan, Vrindaban Lal Verma, Ugra, Bhagawati Prasad Bajpayee, ChaturSEN Shashtri, Bhagawati Charan Verma, Yashpal, Amritlal Nagar, Dr. Rangeya Raghav etc. In the second category were Jainendera Kumar, Aggye, Ilachandra Joshi, Yashpal, whose writings continued even after the age of Premchand.

From the time of Premchand and beyond, the noted writers included Shukla, Vishnu Prabhakar, Chandragupta Vidyalankar, Amritlal Nagar, Bhagawati Charan Verma, Rangeya Raghav and others. Apart from them other noted writers after Premchand and before Independence were Siyaram Charan Gupt, Mahalal Mahato, Biyugi, Suryakanta Tripathi Nirala, Pahari, Kamalakanta Verma, Sadguru Charan Awasthi, Devendra Satyarthi, Mahadevi Verma, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Uma Nehru, Shivrani Devi, Ushadevi Mitra, Saraswati Malik, Houmavati Devi, Tara Pandeyo, Ratna Kumari, Chandrakiran Saunariksha and others.

Description of the styles and achievements of writers other than Premchand will not be relevant here.
Thus we see that by the time India attained independence, Hindi story had been established as a glorious tradition.

4.5. Hindi short story writers of the Pre-Independence period

In the realms of modern Hindi prose, the story evolved in the age of Bharatendu. Among the fables of the prose that was available before the age of Bharatendu, Insha Allah Khan’s Rani Ketki ki Kahani is noteworthy. This story has been written with the aim of being regarded as real prose. The other fables of the pre-Bharatendu age only have historical relevance. In the age of Bharatendu the writer’s attention was drawn specifically to prose literature. The writers of this age wrote mainly on social issues. The writers of the Bharatendu Age are mentioned below:

4.5.1. Bharatendu Harichandra

Bharatendu Harichandra was born in 1850 and he died in 1885. As the pioneer of the modern age, he also introduced story literature. Ek Kahani Kuch Aap Beetee Kuch Jag Beetee, a writeup of his, is of the story literature genre. This story has its relevance from the points of view of subject matter and style of language. This story has been written in an autobiographical style in colloquial language. In it the writer presents an analysis of the mentality of man in the context of the contemporary social lifestyle. Bharatendu did not write any story other than this one. This story is included in the Bharatendu Granthawali. This story written in the Bharatendu Age has a historical relevance in story literature. Mention may be made of another prose creation by Bharatendu Harichandra, Ek Adbhoot Apurva Sapna. This creation which is in an essay form, has a storyline added to it.
4.5.2. **Radhacharan Goswami**

Radhacharan Goswami was born in 1856 and he died in 1925. He wrote *Yampur ki Yatra*, a story based mainly on imagination. In this story the writer wants to show that in all strata of society there are people who are attracted to lies and superstition, but their actions are influenced by their personal interests. The story has been written in a dramatic style and the writer symbolically employs many social, political and religious points.

4.5.3. **Kishorilal Goswami**

Kishorilal Goswami was born in 1865 and he died in 1932. He is credited with many writings in the field of prose. His main contribution is novels. In respect of stories he could not show much creative acumen. His only story is *Indumati*. It is an imaginative story in which lack of circumstantial issues and social reformatory feelings is seen.

4.5.4. **Ramchandra Shukla**

Pandit Ramchandra Shukla was born in 1884 and he died in 1940. His contribution was mainly in the field of reviews. Besides writing many thought-provoking and research-based essays, he wrote elaborate articles evaluating famous poems of great poets like Hindi ke Sur, Tulsi and Jayasi and brought out *Hindi Sahitya ka Itihas*, in which he wrote on the fitting achievements in Hindi literature. His only creation in the field of story writing is *Gyarah Varsh ka Samay*. This story was published in Saraswati in September 1903. Like the majority of Bharatendu’s prose writings, this story too is mainly based on imaginary backgrounds. In the story the writer brings
about the reunion of two lovers after eleven years. A contemplative language is found in the story.

4.5.5. Keshav Prasad Singh

Keshav Prasad Singh wrote an essay which he named Apattiyon ka Pahar. It is narrative essay. It has already been mentioned that the writers of this age had written stories like Raja Bhoj ka Sapna, Yamlok ki Yatra and Ek Adbhoot Apurba Sapna in artistic patterns. Apattiyon ka Pahar was also written in a similar pattern. It is written in a dramatic style in the form of a dream.

Apart from the writers mentioned above, there were several others who contributed to Hindi story in this age. Pandit Mahendralal Garg’s story Pre ki Atmakahani was published in the September 1904 issue of Saraswati. It was written in an autobiographical format and its speciality was application of satire in it. From this point of view, Chandini’s Proshit Patrika deserves mention. The story Ek Ashrafi ki Atmakahani written by Shree Nenkateshwar Narayan Tiwari also is replete with dramatics and imaginative ideas. It is a story in the first person in the form of an autobiography. Uday Narayan Bajpayee’s story Janani Janmabhumiswa Swargadipi Gariyoshi too was written in this period. Stories written by Lakshmidehar Bajpayee too were published in this age. Premnath Bhattachaya’s story Pukka Gathbandhan is basically an idealistic story. Satyadev Kirti’s story Keerti Kalima is based on imagination. Madhu Mangal’s Bhootoree Kuthori also can be mentioned. Among the stories based on the autobiographical style, Saligram’s Ek Jyotishi ki Atmakatha can be mentioned. Kundanlal Shah’s story Pratupkar ki ek Adbhut Udaharan was published in this age. Among the stories based totally
on imagination, Saat Kumar written by Shravan Narayan Shukla can be mentioned. Pyarelal Gupta’s story Samalouchak was published in Hindi Galpamala. In this journal itself Phooldevi’s story Bare Ghar ki Beti and Rudradutt Bhatta’s thriller story Ajivan Das ki Jasusi were published.

Thus began the progress of the first stage of Hindi story in the Bharatendu Age. It has already been mentioned that creation of modern Hindi literature began in the backdrop of ancient moral literature, folk literature and Jataka literature. Bharatendu Harichandra, Radhacharan Goswami, Kishorilal Goswami, Ramchandra Shukla, Keshav Prasad Singh, Girijadutt Bajpayee, Kartik Prasad Khatri, Parbatinandan, Yashodanandan Akhouri, Mahendralal Garg, Suryanarayan Dikshit, Banga Mahila, Udayanarayan Bajpayee, Lakshmidhar Bajpayee, Kundanlal Shah, Shivnarayan Shulk and Ganga Prasad Agnihotri were among the new writers who displayed their talents in this age. Their stories began to be published in Saraswati, Hindu and Hindi Galpamala and through these, Hindi story found a path for development. Many stories written in this age carried social issues based on imagination. Revolt against the caste system prevalent in Hindu society, protest against economic disparities, misuse of the age-old traditions, pomposity of religious beliefs, decline of imperialism, spread of modern education and many other issues with all their merits and demerits were found in the stories of this period. These stories displayed a tendency to bring about an uprising and reform among the women. The quick pace at which the customary social system underwent change can be seen in the stories of this age. Besides stories replete with social issues, some stories linked to detective ideas are also found in this age. The progress that was
seen in the first stage of development of Hindi story, lent impetus to an overall prosperity of Hindi story literature in the subsequent period and along with it, artistic fullness and influence of ideas also got concretised.

4.5.6. Chandradhar Sharma Guleri

Chandradhar Sharma Guleri was born in 1883 and he died in 1920. In Hindi literature he mainly worked on stories, essays, reviews and language. The main reason for his popularity is his story Usne Kaha Tha, which was published in Saraswati in 1915. Prior to that, Sukhamay Jeevan, an extraordinary story of his, was published in Bharat Mitra in 1911. His third and final story was Buddhu ka Kanta. Guleri established his permanence in Hindi literature with just three stories. His first story Sukhamay Jeevan is based on conflict of love and duty. Usne Kahan Tha presents an expectedly high standard of systematic narration. Even though this story is not devoid of dramatics, the traditional form of idealism present in it makes it an epitome of contemporary consciousness.

4.5.7. Bishambharnath Sharma Kaushik

Bishambharnath Sarma Kaushik was born in 1861 and he died in 1945. His first story Rakshabandhan was published in Saraswati in 1913. From the idealistic point of view, Kaushik’s stories are replete with moral decisions. He has successfully portrayed the traditional customs and mentality of the zamindars, farming class and low castes in his stories. He has written extensively on the social bindings and ills, especially the purdah system, child marriage, women’s education and family problems. There is an
assemblage of phychological viewpoints also in his stories. Teerth, Paap ka Phal, Mata ka Hriday, Moh, Rakshbandhan etc., are his famous stories.

4.5.8. Jayshankar Prasad

Jayshankar Prasad was born in 1886 and he died in 1937. Even though his main contribution was in the field of verse, he had done enough work for the development of story literature also. The main subject of his stories is historical issues. Along with historical issues the prime feature of his stories is addition of psychological and idealistic viewpoints in them. Tansen, Jahanara, Ashoka, Sikander ki Shapath, Mamata and Chittor Uddhar fall in this category. The tender feelings of love and the probable reactions of the human heart in different situations are also found in strong measures in his stories. His stories written both on historical and social issues, are seen to portray the traditional Indian features like ideals, sacrifice, service and martyrdom. Some stories of Prasad are also included in the contemplative category. The main feature of his stories is union of ideals and reality. Akashdeep, Puraskar, Mamta, Roop ki Chaya, Saleem, Parivartan, Karuna ki Vijay, Andhi, Maghua etc., can be bracketed in this category of stories.

4.5.9. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala

Suryakant Tripathi was born in 1833. He showed his literary prowess in different avenues of literature. He built a realm of his own in poetry, novel, story, review etc. Some of his stories are Lily, Chaturi Chamar, Sakhi, Sukul ki Bibi and Apna Ghar. Patriotism and feelings of nationalism are the main features of his stories. His stories strongly protest against the superstition that was widespread in Indian society and other ills that retarded progress
of the society. Hence, sometimes there is a profusion of realistic ideas in his writings. Wit and humour play a major role in his stories. Nirala takes a realistic view of social issues. In stories like Shrimati Gajanand Shashtri, Jyotirmoyee, Raja Sahab ka Thenga, Chaturi Chamar, Do Daane and Safalta, focus is on different social problems and the writer’s solution to them. Exploitation, family problems, religious problems and call for awareness about nationalism are the main subjects of his stories.

4.5.10. Chaturasen Shashtri

Acharya Chaturasen Shashtri was born in 1891 and he died in 1960. Apart from stories, he also wrote novels and books on prose-poetry, history, religion, politics, medical science etc. Altogether 186 items written by him were published. About 52 writings still remained unpublished and they are being published gradually. Shashtri had written about 450 stories. These stories were written on social, political, historical and cultural issues. Bahar Bhitar, Dukhua mein Kache Kaho, Dharti aur Apman, Soya Huwa Shahar and Kahani Khatm ho Gayi are some of his stories. Among his stories published earlier were – Akshyat (1931), Rajkaran (1933), Nawab Nanku (1948), Lambagreel, Peer Nabalig and Burma Road (1951), Safed Mahua and Raja Sahab ki Patloon (1958) and Meri Priya Kahani (1956). His stories that were written on social issues, mainly focused on problems of women, administrative drawbacks and social evils. Vidhwa Ashram, Patita, Torchlight, Thakurani, Sirata, Kanyadan, Pranay Path etc., are stories on these themes. Issues on widows, prostitutes, woman education, dowry system, pure love, inter-caste marriage, family problems etc., are found in these stories. Amba Palika, Chandradas, Abhimanyu, Upamanyu, Prabuddha, Panch Pandav,
Grihalad, Garudaji, Dhruva Outanka, Pitribhukta Shrawan etc., are stories based mainly on religious thoughts. Some such stories were published in Shastri’s collection of stories Adarsh Balak. Stories written on historical issues include Hathi Sameer, Singhagarh Vijay, Jaisalmer ki Rajkumari, Tipu Sultan, Soya Huwa Sahar, Haider Ali, Vishwasghat etc. All these stories were written in the backdrop of the Moghul and British eras. Most of the characters are historical and the writer has brought about a harmony of historical evidence and imagination in them. Shashtri also has many political stories to his credit. Some of them are Sukhveer, Krantikarini, Warrant and Louhapurush. His political stories seem to have been clearly influenced by Gandhiji. The psychological aspect is evident in almost all his stories.

4.5.11. Pandit Bechan Sharma Ugra

He was born in 1900. Besides stories, he used to also engage in writing novels, plays and journalism. His stories were published in Indradhanush, Dojakhi Aag, Chingariyan, Reshmi, Nirlaj, Balatkar, Galpanjali, Chocolate, Man ki Ameer, Peelee Imarat, Yah Kanchan ki Kaya, Kala Kapurush, Kal Kothari, Chitra-Bichitra, Ugra ki Shresht Kahaniyan etc. He used to write with an eye on reforming society plagued by religious plagiarism, social evils and defects of the new civilisation.

4.5.12. Jainendra Kumar

He was born in 1905. Besides stories, he used to write novels. All his stories have been included in a seven-volume collection – Jainendra ki Kahaniyan. The first volume includes stories on the freedom struggle, the second volume includes stories on psychology and the influence of
childhood, the third volume contains stories on philosophy and symbolism, the fourth stories on love and marriage, the fifth volume has stories on the various angles of love, the sixth volume stories on social issues and the seventh volume includes stories on miscellaneous subjects.

Thus, the above mentioned writers made considerable contributions towards development of literature in the Premchand Age. They participated in every developmental aspect of story writing that was seen in that age. The contemporary social situation is reflected in their stories. The movements that had influenced the social and economic spheres, were also mentioned in the stories. The age of Premchand was active from the political point of view also. The various political self-contradictions and the shape of the consequential national agitations launched to gain the upper hand, were also mentioned in the stories of Premchand’s age. The stories of this age threw light on the contemporary social, political, national and also cultural consciousness. The contribution of the situation prevailing in this age that influenced the development of Indian culture, was also clearly mentioned in the stories of this age. The religious movements that took place in this age threw light on the prevalent religious situations and emphasised service to mankind as the religion to get rid of the religious problems. The communal problems also found special mention in the age of Premchand. The thinkers of this age were pledged to get rid of the ills plaguing the multi-racial Indian society. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi laid stress on delivering the Harijans and bringing them at par with the other communities. Some writers laid more stress on bringing about equality in the values of the general lifestyle. Thus the story literature of the age of Premchand encompassed in its vast storehouse the various aspects of Indian lifestyle.
4.5.13. Bhagwati Prasad Bajpayee

He was born in 1899. Besides stories, he also contributed in the fields of novels and verse. He has to his credit stories like – Madhu Park, Hilour, Puskarani, Dweep Malika, Sher Sapne, Uphar, Uttar Charab, Khali Bottle, Adan-Pradan, Angaare, Sneh aur Bati and Louh. Bajpayee was a true representative of the idealistic tradition of the Premchand Age. In his stories, along with the social issues, he also included psychological analyses. Placing the different issues in particular situations he used to portray those issues in minute detail. Humanity found a prominent place in his literary viewpoints, which were based on idealism. In stories like Kabari ka Taj Mahal and Hotel ka Kamra, he infuses a profusion of psychological viewpoints. Like the stories of most of the writers of the Premchand Age, his stories too mainly follow the path of idealistic thoughts.

4.5.14. Sudarshan

Sudarshan’s real name was Badrinath Bhatt. He was born in 1899. His story collections are – Puspalata (1919), Suprabhat (1923), Parivartan and Sudarshan Sudha (1926), Teerth Yatra and Phoolwati (1927), Saat Kahaniyan (1933), Sudarshan Suman and Galpa Manjuri (1934), Char Kahaniya (1938), Panghat (1939) and Anguthi ka Mukadma (1940). Some of his stories are similar to Premchand’s stories in respect of subject matter, style of language and characterisation.

4.5.15. Raja Radhikaraman Prasad Singh

Apart from stories he used to write novels also. His stories used to be published in magazines like Saraswati, Indu and Lakshmi. His prominent
story collections are Kusumanjali, Gandhi Top, Sawni Sawa, Nari: Kya ek Paheli, Haveli aur Jhopri and Deva aur Danab. His stories basically portray different aspects of social issues.

4.5.16. Usha Devi Mitra

Usha Devi Mishra was born in 1897. Along with stories she used to write novels also. Her prominent story collections are Sankia, Purvee, Raat ki Rani, Aanki ke Chand, Mahawar, Neem Chameli and Megh Malahar. Like traditional stories her stories too are idealistic by nature. She always espoused an idealistic viewpoint towards women.

4.5.17. Bhagwati Charan Verma

He was born in 1903. Apart from stories he used to write novels, plays and poetry. Among his story collections are – Instalment, Do Baake, Rakh aur Chingaree and Khilte Phool. In his stories Barma portrays superstition and vanity that are widespread in society and consider them deterrents to the healthy growth of society. He projects a negative view of these social conditions.

4.5.18. Ila Chandra Joshi

Ila Chandra Joshi was born in 1902. He was one of the writers who used psychological analyses in his stories. Apart from being a story writer he was also a journalist and used to write novels and essays and take part in discussions. His prominent story collections are – Dhup Rekha, Diwali aur Holi, Romantic Chaya, Aahuti, Khandhar ki Atmayen, Diary ki Neerash Prishtha and Kateele Phool Lajeele Kante. His stories mainly portray the opportunistic traits of the middleclass of society. Man’s vanity, diffidence, mental disorder etc., are seen in his stories.
4.5.19. Sachidanand Heeranand Vatsyayan Aggye

He was born in 1911. Besides stories, he used to write novels, poetry, articles and essays. He used to also edit magazines like Sainik, Vishal Bharat, Bijlee, Pratik and Bak. Some of his story collections are – Bipathaga, Parampara, Kothori ki Baat, Joydoul etc. His stories are replete with issues like national freedom, armed struggle, social mockery, mental conflicts, diffidence and somnambulism. In the stories that appeared in Bipathaga …, issues like national movement, imprisonment and national consciousness are portrayed. Belief in the uselessness of non-violent movement is found in these stories.

4.5.20. Upendranath Ashk

He was born in 1910. Besides writing stories he engaged in writing plays and one-act-plays, novels, poetry, revisions, essays, diaries and translations. His stories are – Ankur, Chattan, Dasi, Pinjara, Gaukhoru, Baygon ka Paudha, Jemane, Daliya, Kaale Sahab, Bache, Ubal, Captain Rashid etc. His stories have been published in Urdu collections also like Noiratan, Aurat ki Phitrat, Dasi, Kaunpal, Nashur, Kafan, Chattan and Kaale Sahab. In Hindi his old collections Pinjara, Daudhara, Baygon ka Paudha etc., were followed by newer collections like Chaate and Judai ki Shaas ki Geet. Kahani Lekhika aur Jhalem ki Saat Phool, Sattar Shrestha Kahaniya, Pangal, Akashchari etc., were his newer stories.

4.5.21. Yashpal

He was born in 1903. He was the editor of a monthly magazine named Biplab. Apart from stories he used to write novels and essays. Some of his
noteworthy stories are Gyandaan, Abhisapt, Tarkar Toofan, Ashabrit Chingari, Wah Duniya, Phoolon ka Kurta, Dharmayudh, Uttaridhikari, Chitra ka Sheershak, Tumne Kyon kaha Mein Sunder Hoon, Uttami ki Ma etc. Yashpal took active part in the freedom struggle. Social morality is seen in his select stories. He considers the massive economic inequality in society as a social distortion and as the root cause of detachment. He also put forward analyses of the real picture of the social life of the middleclass, its values, beliefs etc. In stories like Parda, Dukh, Vaishnavi, Javate ki Karyabahi, Seema ka Sahas, Phalit Jyotish and Chandan Mahasay he has portrayed the different shades of human life.

4.6. Premchand’s short stories and their review

Munshi Premchand was born in 1880 and he died in 1938. His real name was Dhanpat Rai. After confronting different types of struggle in life he finally devoted his life to literature. His main contribution is seen in prose. Besides being the author of best selling novels, he had also written about 300 stories. The main collections of his stories are Sapta Saroj, Nabanidhi, Prem Purnima, Bare Ghar ki Beti, Lal Pheeta, Namak ka Daruga, Prem Pachichi, Prem Prachun, Prem Dadashi, Prem Pratima, Prem Prasaud, Prem Teerth, Pancha Phool, Prem Chaturthi, Prem Pratigya, Sapta Suman, Prerna, Samar Yatra, Pancha Pramun, Navjeevan, Bank ki Dawala, Shanti, Agni Samadhi, Kafan aur Shesh Rachnaye, Nari Jeevan ki Kahaniyan, Prem Piyush, Galp Ratna, Premchand ki Shreshtha Kahaniyan, Galp Samucchay and Galp Sansar Mala. He also has to his credit a collection of stories dedicated to rural life. All the stories mentioned in these collections have been published in eight volumes as Manasarovar.
Munshi Premchand had created his stories in the backdrop of the immense Indian lifestyle. The picture of India in the first decades of the twentieth that is seen in his stories is not seen in the writings of any other writer. If on the one hand Premchand has supported the traditional Indian ideals, especially sacrifice, service and self-sacrifice in his stories, on the other hand he has also advocated shedding of the traditional ills. He says that blindly following the western civilisation and culture is detrimental to the future development of Indian society. Premchand’s viewpoint on caste discrimination is based on economic, religious and social considerations. Under no circumstance did he support any form of exploitation. He protested vehemently against the capitalists and looked down upon their century-long exploitation. Similarly, he also protested in an equal measure the exploitation carried out by the moneyed section of society. Premchand was of the view that the most oppressed section of society was the middle-class who landed themselves in trouble by dint of their vanity, improper education and lack of farsightedness. The main problem with the lower section was their illiteracy. If the rate of illiteracy in the rural areas could be decreased, then there would be an end to the social maladies. Premchand also espoused a reformatory view towards the problems of women, untouchability, family problems, moral problems as well as psychological problems.

One year after publication of Sapta Saroj, Premchand’s second story collection Nav Nidhi was published in 1918. This collection includes the stories Raja Hardoul, Rani Sarandhra, Maryada ki Bedi, Paap ka Agnikund, Jugnu ki Chamak, Amawashya ki Ratri, Mamta and Pachtawa. The collection also has stories based on historical events, which can be regarded as very
important from the angles of tragedy and effectiveness. His third story collection Prem Purnima contains the stories Ishwariya Nyaya, Shankhanad, Khoon Safed, Garib ki Hai, Do Bhai, Beti ka Dhan, Dharm Sankat, Durga ka Mandir, Sewamarg, Shikari Rajkumar, Jwalamukhi, Balidan, Boudh, Sacchai ka Uphar and Mahateerth. After that followed his collections Prem Pachichi, Prem Dwadashi, Prem Teerth, Prem Chaturthee, Prem Prasun, Prem Pratima, Prerna, Agni Samadhi, Kafan, first volume of Manasarovar, Galpguchha, Gram Jeevan ki Kahaniyan, Nav Jeevan, Nari Jeevan ki Kahaniyan, Panch Phool, Mritak Bhoj, second to eighth volume of Manasarovar, Prem Piyush, Prem Ganga, Kutte ki Kahani, Jungle ki Kahani, Thakur ka Kuwa, Premchand ki Sarvshresth Kahaniyan, Hindi ki Adarsh Kahaniyan and Samar Yatra aur Anya Kahaniyan. Immediately upon publication of the various story collections, his stories began to be published in different magazines like Madhuri, Hansha, Chand, Saraswati, Prema, Prabha, Maya, Jagaran, Swadesh, Bharatiya, Maryada, Vishal Bharat and Bharatendu. These included historical, social, religious, political and psychological stories. Apart from these collections, thirty other stories of Premchand were published in Guptdhan in two volumes. This was in 1962. In the first volume of Guptdhan altogether 16 stories were published. Those were – Vikramaditya ka Tyag, Akhri Manjil, Nasheetoh ka Daftar, Alha, Rajhath, Triya Charit, Milap, Andhera, Sirf ek Awaj, Banka Zamindar, Anam Larki, Apni Karni, Gurat ki Katar, Chamdanka Putla, Vijay and Wafa ka Khanjar. The second volume of Guptdhan contained 14 stories. These were – Putra Prem, Taangewali ki Bar, Shadi ki Wajah, Moteramji Shashtri, Kabas, Dusri Shadi, Shout, Devee, Poipuji, Cricket Match etc. Premchand had
written his stories between 1903 and 1936. Some of the stories that were
published in Guptdhan, have, however remained untraced. Apart from these
published works, Premchand also has some plays to his credit. Premchand’s
collections of his literary and analytical writings are Kuch Vichar and Sahitya
ka Uddeshya.

Premchand had written about 300 short stories. His Urdu stories too
would number over 100. These stories were written at big intervals of time.
Hence, several stages of artistic development are noticed in them. From the
artistic angle, traces of finesse and aestheticism are not noticed in the stories
written in the initial stages, but the stories written in the later stages are
packed with such points. In the initial stages his stories are long and
descriptive, which later on became constructive, terse and considerably
dramatic. Not only artistry, a wide disparity is seen between the initial and
later stories in respect of maturity of ideas and opinion. In respect of ideas,
Premchand’s early stories are contemplative and idealistic. Under any
circumstance he finally ends up in some kind of high idealism. Its influence
is thought-provoking and advisory in nature. But later on a deep relationship
began to be established between the characterisation and expression of
feelings. Now his characterisation became more psychological, informative
and natural. Even though Premchand’s idealistic tendencies are seen in the
later stories because of his immense faith in mankind, the influence seems to
be quite limited. In stories like Kafan, Push ki Raat and Nasha, which are
bereft of idealism, he seems to have taken recourse to the satirical tool for
the sake of circumstantial progress. Even in these stories the main influence
is revolt against situations. Premchand has never written a story which
portrays total hopelessness, in which the goal of life is totally forgotten. Even in the earlier stories his characters are seen to fight against situations and even suffer defeat. But the writer portrays hope in life. That is why the stories are not tragic but comical in nature. Thus, all of Premchand’s stories portray the progressive and hopeful aspects of life.

From the analytical point of view also we get to see Premchand portraying gravity in his stories. He advances in life with his own feelings. He observes the situation with open eyes and an open mind and then translates it into words. Along with a rise in feelings he also advances in terms of studies. Along with Indian litterateurs, he began to study western litterateurs also. He tried to absorb even the natural change that came about along with the social change. He makes special portrayal of his realisation of women’s self-respect and their equal social status, in his stories. Along with a woman’s chastity and expertise in household chores, Premchand also talks about her equal status with man. Thus he makes progress in other avenues also. All of Premchand’s stories have not been written always from a single source of inspiration. It was not difficult for him to stretch or shorten the story subject to necessity. Because of his consistent writings for the magazines, such discrepancies were a common occurrence. There are even some stories written in his advanced age which have not been able to acquire a qualitative elevation. From this point of view his stories can be classified into two types: the first type written with full artistry and the second type written with an eye on necessity. Segregation of his best stories will be possible only if such a step is taken, because his literary supremacy is based on it.
4.7. Classification of Premchand’s short stories

From the angle of subject matter Premchand’s stories are basically related to social and political issues. In his social stories rural and urban life is portrayed. His stories have been written taking into consideration both aspects. In his political stories all the aspects have been included which are burning problems in Indian politics.

Premchand is rarely seen deviating from the contemporary social movements and political situations in his stories. His entire work is centred round the 20-30 years of Indian life. In other respects Premchand is an artiste as a direct witness. He is concerned with those avenues of human development which are linked to information related to history and other living sciences. It can also be said that he was unable to go beyond the realms of imagination and could accept the situation of daily life. A fallout of this was that Premchand always remained confined to portraying simple characters within limited situations. Consideration of extraordinary and special characters, which are related deeply and intrinsically with psychology and other related sciences, does not fall within Premchand’s ambit of creation. Even within the ordinary, Premchand shows his weakness for reformatory and idealistic psychology. Still, the psychological application is meagre in his stories. Premchand never attempted to delve into a woman’s behaviour and the inner realms of her nature. His characters could only portray those aspects which are normally seen in this colourful human society. His stories are therefore bracketed in the ‘subjective’ class. He had certainly acted as an effective weapon in the process of social progress. But what its status will be with the passage of time is open to debate.
In terms of an art, extant questions, situations and opinions have their own status. But in case of a great artiste there are some such points which not only make him a historic writer of his age, but also prove his emergence and discovery. Apart from that, an ace artiste also has the capacity to keep his eyes open on portraying the universally changing nature of mankind with the change in situations. If this is not done then the story-teller’s area of operation remains very limited. It remains just a representative and determiner of temporary life. His evaluation takes place in history and he himself leaves his own achievements for historical exercise. But a true artiste never works with such a limited goal. His entire life-related viewpoint, his entire feelings, his entire creations work towards lending permanence to his artistic creativity. The objective of art is not to turn into history, but to project its creator towards a higher level of achievement. Even though Premchand’s stories are situated on a different level because of the depth of his feelings and truthfulness – to be precise, for their representing his personality – his complete viewpoint and artistic ability are bound considerably to contemporary life.

It must not be misconstrued that the writings of an artiste remain limited and constricted because his storyline and character portrayal come from temporary situations. No matter to what arena the material belongs, the writer’s entire talent is retained in its placement and direction. All the questions are linked to the fundamental traits of human character. These traits are characterised. The universality of any occupation can be viewed from this perspective. The question is not of the ingredients, which are collected from anywhere, the question is the nature and actions of life are inherent to
those ingredients. If an artiste touches upon the permanent subjects of human life to work within a limited space and sensationalise them, then his talent crosses the limit of being temporary.

If from among Premchand’s three/four hundred stories we can build a precise format by selecting certain stories, then we can ascertain the general traits of his stories. We can select any type of his stories through any yardstick or classification. These stories have not been selected with any particular point of view; hence these are part of Premchand’s general talent.

The social setup of the days of Premchand was very critical. There were many problems in the society at that time. The then Indian society was surrounded by superstitions and evil practices, for which the common people became their own enemy. Premchand was the eyewitness of these things and therefore he supported the exploited class, and depicted the social problems successfully.

4.7.1. Stories based on women

During the days of Premchand the condition of women was very pitiable. He wrote many stories depicting the status of women—the destitute, the prostitutes and the widows. As stated the condition of women was quite bad in those days:

“भारतीय समाज नारी के प्रति बहुत ही निर्मम रहा है।”

A woman was treated as the object of enjoyment only in those days. She was also used as machine of production of children. As such she remained exploited.

23. Sharma Rajendra Kumar, Premchand-Parampara Ki Kahaniyo Main Parivarik Ebang Samajik Chitran, P.-126
In his stories he depicted the problems of the orphans and destitute in a very successful way. In ‘Dudh Ka Dam, he illustrated the Dalit and helpless classes, which he described as a sin to exploit these classes. Even the wife of the Zamindar forced the Dalit mother to give her breastmilk to feed her children. Again in contrast to it, Premchand in his story Anath Ladki, one Sethini brought up a destitute child and got her married to her son.

Such contradicorty characters were common in those days. Premchand gave stress on the characters from the prostitutes. He described the problems faced by the prostitutes. To him women forced into prostitutes by the men through their act of injustice and wantonness. There were certain prostitutes who were forced to become so because of cheating and deceiting of males:

“उन्होंने वेश्या कहानी से यह सिद्ध किया है कि वेश्या भी नारी हैं जो प्रेम, सम्मान और कुलीनता की उतनी ही भुखी हैं जितनी कोई भी नारी हो सकती हैं।” 24

The ‘Balak’, Aga Pichha, Narak Ka Marg etc. are the examples where such problems of the destitute are depicted.

Premchand has written many stories relating to widows, where he depicted the social injustice against the womenfolk, particularly against the widows. He supported widow remarriage. He believed that the life of widows became unbearable due to superstitions and age old beliefs in the society. He studied the problems of the widows from principles of morality:

“उन्होंने विवाह को व्यवस्था के निर्मम प्रतिबन्धों में नैतिक दृष्टि से ऊँचा कर दिखाया है।” 25

24. Sachdev Gautam, Premchand: Kahani Shilp, P.-128
25. Ibid, P.-287

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The stories like the ‘Tathya’, Prayschitta’, ‘Subhagi’, ‘Adhar’, ‘Sati’ etc. are the good examples of such stories depicting the problems of destitute and widows.

Premchand also depicted the problems of wines, prostitutes, games of dice and such other social evils of the then society. The ‘Vismrī’, ‘Diksha’ etc. are the examples of such stories.

4.7.2. Stories based on casteism and Untouchability

Premchand was very much against casteism and untouchability. Therefore, he depicted such social evils in some of his stories.

In the story named ‘Mandir’ he showed how so-called untouchables were not allowed to enter into the temples. He believed that maximum exploitation had been committed in India in the name of religion: of which the great numbers suffering from it were the untouchables. His stories the ‘Sadgati’ Thakur Ka Kua etc. are the good examples of such exploitation. The meanness of the higher classes is shown through the character of ‘Thakur’.

4.7.3. Stories based on family life

People make the family and families make the society. So, a family is the most important element of the society. Premchand wrote many stories on the basis of families.


Considering the social stories of Premchand, it can be assumed that to him the family is the root of social life. That was why, he exposed lots of problems of domestic life. He was always against inequalities in the society and wanted to find out some permanent solutions to all such problems.

Right from the ancient period, the joint family system is in vogue in India. But gradually this system is changed. Because the capitalists system believes in the importance of money and that becomes the reason behind the fall of joint families now-a-days, Premchand himself witnessed the fall of several joint families in his times. He analysed the problems of the joint family and tried to find out some permanent solutions. The ‘Bade Ghar Ki Beti’ is one of such stories depicting domestic problems.

In another story ‘Algyojha’ Premchand tried to find out the reasons behind the fall of joint families. He showed that the economic conditions is responsible for such problems. He also depicted the problems of joint families in stories like ‘Do Bhai’, Bair Ka Ant’, ‘Sankhnad etc.

Premchand has written several stories based on domestic life and its problems. He has also expressed his views relating to stepmothers, co-wife, mother-in-laws, daughter-in-laws, son-in-laws, brothers and sisters and widows.

4.7.4. Stories based on social evil customs

The Indian society at the time of Premchand age was full of superstitions, evil customs and traditions. The society was suffering from
these superstitions. He wanted to reform the society for a good social set-up. He wrote stories where the problems of social evil customs, like the dowry system, casteism, inequality, problems of widowhood and of prostitutes, problems of old age and of religious rituals etc. were reflected. His stories like the ‘Uddhar’, ‘Vidroh’ etc. reflected the problems of the dowry system; and the ‘Narak Ki Marg’ of the inequal marriage.

4.7.5. Stories based on characters

Premchand written several stories on the basis of characters. In such stories the characters got more importance over the incidents. Premchand was successful in expressing the ideas hiding in heart of the individual characters. He used psychology in such cases.

In the ‘Indranath’ Premchand depicted the picture of a relationship between Indranath and Mani, who was a widow, Finally, he married her. Premchand supported widow remarriage, because he wanted to finish such cruelty and injustice in the society. But it is not easy to finish evil customs of the society so easily. In his own words:

Like in the cases of social and political fields, stories were written on the basis of characters in the religious field. The Dalits and the poor are always exploited; such an incident has been depicted in the storey ‘Mantra’. Premchand expressed his idea of humanitarianism through the character Bhagat, who has been depicted as poor, godlike, selfless, useful and kind-hearted. A man is always a man, there is no question of high and low, and of this caste or that caste does not arise. Again in the story ‘Pus Ki Ra’, Premchand speaks of the cultivator, Halku. This Halku is such a character who did not dare to open his mouth against corruption committed on him.
In this manner, Premchand depicted the picture of social characters through which he successfully exposed the contemporary social evils. He also exposed the exploitation of the ‘Mahajans’ over the cultivators.

4.7.6. Stories based on environment

Premchand was very much conscious of the environment and circumstances of the time. He took up the day-to-day incidents of his time and depicted in his stories. In the then social life, some rich people apparently showed that they were not after wealth and fame. On the other hand, the so-called lower class was with the all-humanitarian values like service to mankind, love and affection, truth etc. Premchand depicted such people with so much sincerity.

“वास्तव में प्रेमचंद भीतर से भारतीय उच्च मानव मूल्यों के समर्थक हैं, जिनमें प्रेम, सहानुभूति, त्याग, करुणा आदि को उच्च स्थान दिया गया है और इसी के अवलोकन से मानवीय समस्याओं का वास्तविक समाधान किया जा सकता है।”26

Premchand picturised one environmental background of the stories with the help of social and natural circumstances. In his story, the ‘Satranj Ke Khiladi’, the major role is played by environment. Here he showed the falling society and the environment and incidents relating to political matters. The writer successfully depicted the picture of lonely khandhar. This story is based completely on environment.

“यह तत्कालीन गतिविधियों और मानसिकता का प्रतिनिधित्व कर रहा है।”27

27. Mishra Ramdaras, Hindi Kahani: Antarang Pehchan, P.-20
Story named ‘Pus Ki Rat’ is also based on environment. Through the character Halku, the writer exposed the miseries of poverty. He also depicted the severity of cold in the month of ‘Pus’ and the sufferings of the poor people for it.

In his story ‘Kajaki’, Premchand made a comparative study of nature and human emotions. Generally Premchand made the environment suitable to the characters.

In the stories like the ‘Kafan’, ‘Pus Ki Rat’, Thakur Ka Kua’, ‘Manovrtty’, ‘Idgah’ and such other imaginary stories Premchand depicted the picture of environment very sincerely.

Premchand depicted many pictures of rural environment, where all the specialities of a village comes into light. He also illustrated various weaknesses of the rural people like poverty, pride, superstitions, their industrious nature, exploitation of the Mukhiyas, Police, Thakurs, Mahajans, Zaminders etc. The ‘Kafan’, ‘Sadgati’, ‘Muktimarg’, ‘Sawa Ser Ghu’, ‘Andher’ etc. are good examples of such stories based on environment.

4.7.7. Historical stories

At the very beginning Premchand wrote many stories based on historical matters. He made history the medium of cultural idealism and humanitarianism. He wanted to establish the pride of the heritage of India when he found that some historical facts would be very helpful in bringing psychological and communal harmony and he made them the subject-matter of his story. His historical stories are the ‘Rani Sarandha’, Raja Hardaul’,

In the story ‘Rani Sarandha’, the heroic deeds of the Rajputs, who were sacrificing their lives at the sake of the motherland; in ‘Raja Hardaul’, the pride of Indian national life; in ‘Pap Ka Agnikund’ and the ‘Maryyada Ki Vedi’ the pride and fall of the Rajputs; in the ‘Sansarik Prem Aur Des Prem’, patriotism etc. are reflected.

Premchand depicted the luxurious life of the people of Lucknow during the last days of the Mughal emperors. He depicted the picture of the downfall time of the Mughals because he wanted to express his ideas of nationalism clearly. He wrote:

\[ “नवाब बाजिदअली शाह पकड़ लिए गए थे। सेना उन्हें किसी अज्ञात स्थान के लिए ले जा रही थी। शहर में न कोई हलचल थी, न मारकाट। एक बूंद भी खून नहीं गिरा था। आजतक किसी स्वाधीन देश के राजा की पराजय इतनी शान्ति से इस तरह खून बहे बिना न हुड़ होगी।”\]

Premchand showed that Mir and Mirza were not cowards; but there was a downfall of political idealism. He wanted that people should throw away idealness and realise their duty.

### 4.7.8. Stories based on politics

Premchand depicted the contemporary politics in many of his stories. He included many incidents like movement against British misrule, injustice done in administration, downfall of Indian states and movement for ‘Swaraj’. The writings of Premchand becomes important documents for political activities from the days of Tilak to those of Gandhijee. The main element of

28. Premchand, Mansarovar P-III (Shatrang Ka Khilari), P.-265
Premchand’s political stories is patriotism. The ‘Yahi Meri Matribhumi’, ‘Holi Ka Upkar’, ‘Chakma’ etc. are good examples of such political stories. He also showed that there are no less people to exploit the poor people in the name of ‘Des Seva’ (service to nation).

Premchand witnessed the movements organized by Gandhijee. He was so influenced by the speeches of Gandhijee that he resigned government services. After giving up government services, he depicted his political consciousness through his stories. The ideals of Gandhijee got clear expression in the stories of Premchand.

In the story ‘Lalfita’, Premchand supported the non-co-operation movement of Gandhijee. He also humoured the people receiving titles like ‘Raisaheb’, ‘Raibhadur’, ‘Rajasheb’ etc. in his stories. After non-co-operation movement there came ‘Salt Satyagraha’. Premchand wrote some stories on this movement.

Premchand, in his story ‘Damul Ka Kaidi’, exposed selfishness of the capitalists. He also expressed weakness of the middle class. He expressed the success of national movement in rural areas. In different stories, Premchand depicted the class-interest, the struggle of labours against capitalists, glimpses of national movements etc. But comparison to other matter of fact political consciousness was not very much expressive in his stories. He realized that:

“सभी खदर पहनेवाले और जेल जानेवाले देवता नहीं हैं। उनमें भी अक्सर बड़े-बड़े हथकंडे बाज़ लोग शामिल हैं, जो जेल में भी किसी न किसी स्वार्थ से ही गए थे।”

29. Premchand, Vividh Prasang P-II, P.-260
In his story ‘Hinsa Paramodharm’, published in 1926, Premchand has given a real picture of communal conflict. Similarly, in the ‘Mandir Aur Masjid’, he spoke of enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims. In his ‘Julus’, Mata Ka Hrday’ and ‘Updes’, he depicted the cruel suppression of Indians by the British.

In this way, Premchand depicted the pictures of political activities, movements, revolutionaries as well as the suppression made by the British in his stories. So these became a publicity to the movement. Although he did not take active parts in the movement.

4.7.9. Psychological stories

Premchand got mastery in discovering the truth of human mind. So, he put his characters in between the environment and incidents to uncover the mystery of the inner self. He is a successful artist in depicting the internal conflicts of human beings. Premchand believed that stories based on psychology are the best stories.

“सबसे उत्तम कहानी वह होती है, जिसका आधार किसी मनोवैज्ञानिक सत्य पर हो।”

Premchand used psychology on the basis of circumstances and happenings of different incidents; particularly when the question of the subconscious mind or internal conflict arose. The stories like the ‘Ghar Jamai’, ‘Swamini’, ‘Nasa’, ‘Dudh Ka Dam’, Thakur Ka Kua’, ‘Muktimarg’, Sadgati’, ‘Kafan’, ‘Pus Ki Rat’ etc. are related to psychology of human being. In the same manner, human psychology is given expression in the

30. Premchand, Kuch Vichar, Kahani Kala-II, P.-36
story ‘Manovrity’. It presented the psychological analysis of different people as regards to their opinion on a young lady.

Again Premcand made an analysis of child psychology in his stories like the ‘Bandh Darwaja’, ‘Kajaki’, ‘Nadan Dost’ etc.

Premchand also depicted the psychology of the elderly people. In his Betowali Vidhawa’ he depicted psychology of old Phulmati. He successfully depicted the internal conflict and life-struggles of the characters.

In the same manner, Premchand in his stories ‘Sujan Bhagat’, ‘Budi Kaki’ etc. depicted the internal conflicts and struggle for life. But as a matter of fact, Premchand did not use psychology in its theoretical aspect, but he used it in connexion with analyzing the characters. Without any doubt we can say that because Premchand understood the very psychology of the characters, it was possible for him to depict characters so minutely.

4.7.10. Life and literature

Premchand believed that life and literature are closely connected. He also believed that the word literature means the criticism of life. Dr. Raksha Puri remarks:

“प्रेमचन्द के अनुसार जीवन ही साहित्य का विषय और उसकी प्रेरणा है। अतः साहित्यकार जीवन और उसकी समस्याओं से विमुख नहीं हो सकता।”

Premchand always wanted to keep the truth intact. That was why he wrote exactly what he experienced in his life. Whenever and wherever he

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31. Premchand, Sahitya Ka Uddeshya, P.-2
32. Puri Raksha, Premchand : Kahani Sahitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, P.-43
found himself wrong, he wanted to correct it. This is one of his greatest qualities. His stories became the realistic picture of his contemporary life.

4.7.11. Nationalism

Movements going on during those days were depicted in the stories of Premchand. It was those days when India was recognizing into one united India. The social environment of those days had a great influence on the writings of Premchand. He also depicted the weakness under the influence of the Western education, selfishness of the people etc. in his stories.

4.7.12. Social consciousness

There were several problems in the society at the time of Premchand. He was born in a juncture of time, as remarked by Dr. Rambaksh in his Premchand Aur Bharatiya Kisan:

“प्रेमचंद एक परिवर्तनशील युग में पैदा हुए, जब सामाजिक शक्तियों में भयंकर टकराव था”

The then society was the victim of superstition, casteism, untouchability, evils in the name of religion etc. Premchand criticized all these evils in the society. He had firm belief in humanitarianism and faithfully depicted it in his stories.

Premchand always stood against the injustices and exploitation in the society. His stories reflected such ideas. It is evident that Premchand was very much socially conscious, which is clearly seen in his stories.

33. Rambaksh, Premchand Aur Bharatia Kisan, P-141
4.7.13. **Nobility**

There are several stories of Premchand where he showed great respect to nobility in human being.

“प्रेमचंद का मानव की मूलभूत सदाशिवता के प्रति विश्वास क्षूर पत्नों को भी अंत में बदला हुआ देख लेता है और इस बदलाव से ही वे एक सामाजिक समस्या का समाधान पा लेते हैं”  34

4.7.14. **Economic Inequality**

In almost all the stories of Premchand, he speaks of economic inequality that prevailed in the then society.

“अर्थ का दबाव पति-पत्नी, बाप-बेटे के भावात्मक सम्बन्धों को ही नहीं कुछ बल्क़ समाज में प्रचलित नैतिकवादी धारणाओं का भी मजाक उड़ाता है”  35

Premchand’s most famous story- ‘Kafan’ is the best example of such idea of economic inequality in the society.

4.7.15. **Beauty and Dignity**

Premchand depicted ‘beauty’ and ‘dignity’ in the real sense of the terms.

“उनके लिए सौंदर्य का अर्थ था कुरूचि को सभी स्तरों पर नष्ट करना”  36

Premchand wanted that beauty, dignity etc. should not be in opposition to humanity:

“सौंदर्य, सुरूचि, आत्मसम्मान और मनुष्यता का विरोधी न हो।”  37

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34. Ibid, P.-11  
35. Ibid, P.-31  
36. Misra Ramdaras & Gupta Gyanchand, Kathakar Premchand, Kathakar Premchand, P.-31  
37. Ibid, P.-32
There are such stories where this characteristic is evident. The ‘Sadgati’, the Thakur Ka Kua’ are good example.

4.7.16. Satisfaction

The stories of Premchand satisfies the idea of Dr. Ramvilas Sarma that the writer takes help of imagination to satisfy the delight of the story.

“पठानाथित्र प्रभाव पाठक के मन में एक संशोधन करके उभरता है, तब कहानी का एक ढौंचा हमें प्राप्त होता है।” 38

This characteristic is evident in almost all the stories written by Premchand during his beginning. The ‘Panch Parmeswar’, the ‘Bade Ghar Ki Beti’ etc. are some of such stories. At the beginning the stories of Premchand were lengthy and narrative ones, the subject-matter of which were related to social life. Since the scope of life being wide, his stories depicted the glimpses of the whole life. But stories of his later period of life were short and abridged ones.

4.7.17. Stories based on love

Premchand described ‘love’ in different ways in his stories. He regarded love between married couples as the ideal one. He believed:

‘जो प्रेम मिलन में भी वियोग की तड़क पैदा कर सके और वियोग के बड़बड़े आघात सह सके, वही आदर्श होता है।’ 39

To Premchand, ideal love is that in which there is faith and a sense of self-sacrifice. True love is in abandonment (tyag). The ‘Amrit’, ‘Kamna Taru’, ‘Akheri Manjil’ etc. are good examples of such love stories.

38. Choudhry Surendra, Hindi Kahani: Prakriya Aur Path, P.- 28
Love, for Premchand, is the most sacred thing in life. It subdues all other emotions.

4.7.18. Based on experiences

It was one of the most important characteristics of Premchand that he could not write any story without any basis. He himself wrote:

"मेरी कहानियाँ प्रायः किसी न किसी प्रेरण या अनुभव पर आधारित होती हैः। परंतु केवल घटना के वर्णन के लिए मैं कहानियाँ कभी नहीं लिखता। मैं कहानी में किसी दार्शनिक या भावात्मक तथ्य को दिखाना चाहता हूँ।" 40

4.7.19. Nature

Premchand believed that nature is not only required for poetry but also required for all parts of literature. In his own words:

"प्रकृति आप से आप प्लाट बनाती है, नाटकीय रंग पैदा करती है, प्रभाव लाती है, साहित्यिक गुण बदोरती है, चित्र सोचे आप ही आप सब कुछ होता रहता है।" 41

Finally, it can be easily assumed that Premchand made his stories successful ones through his own ideas and experiences of life.

4.8. Assamese short stories in the Pre-Independence era

The spread of modern scientific and materialistic civilisation gave birth to various forms of modern literature in India. After India came in contact with the western world, short story came into existence in different frontiers of the country. The spread of western education caused an upheaval in Indian society. This brought about radical changes in the Indian mindset. Western education enlightened the people with nationalist ideas and around

40. Gopal Madan, Kalam ka Mazdoor, P.-252
41. Ibid, P.-254
this time, along with the national renaissance that swept through India, a revolution took over the literary world also, as a result of which short story was born.

Man by nature likes to listen to stories. This is a primitive universal tendency of man. The practice of telling stories is not new to our literature, but the story of the modern age is completely new. Even then, modern short stories are basically tales.42

The medium of expressing tales and songs in the folk literatures of every country is the meter. The ancient attempt to write stories within these tales and songs of folk literature is noteworthy. Hudson refers to these tales-songs as story in verse, story poems. Normally each of these songs describes a tale. Dramatics, strong integrity, a single focal-point ending and realistic picturisation are the features of a story poem. Lighting up a section of life and with the help of swift dramatics and portrayal of a realistic life, some unknown rural poet hints at the renewed prospects of literature in the future.

The tradition of short stories has been in existence in India since very ancient times. The Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, Panchatantra, Hitopodesh, Buddha Jataka etc., bear testimony to the ancientness of stories. The tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata are known to one and all. Apart from portraying the political, social, economic and religious life of those times, the tales of these two epics also give us moral teachings. Like the tales from these two epics, the Jataka tales too are always very appealing.

42. Goswami Troilokya Nath, Adhunik Galpa Sahitya, P.-2

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The Jataka tales give us an overall picture of life in ancient India, from morality to advice to portrayal of women’s character to political and social customs. After the Jatakas the Panchatantra tales emerged in Indian story literature, and soon began the golden era of Indian story. The Panchatantra is an aggregation of five stories. In each of these stories several sub-tales have been incorporated. The Panchatantra is not just a compilation of tales, it is also a good example of the prose and verse styles.

After the Panchatantra the Katha Charit Sagar is the next most elaborate compilation of tales in Indian literature. The Katha Charit Sagar is in fact a sagar (sea). Innumerable charits (characters) have mingled into this sagar. Its author is Somdev. Like the Jataka and Panchatantra tales, its main attraction is thrill. It is an extraordinary creation of innumerable thrilling stories of love, separation and reunification of Udayan, king of Bats and his son Narbahan Dutt. Like the Katha Charit Sagar, Dashakumar Charit of Sanskrit literature is an immortal contribution to Indian story literature. “In the emergence of the Jataka and Panchatantra is the sunrise of Indian literature and the Dashakumar Charit is its setting. Between these two extremes Indian literature makes its celestial journey.”

The stories of Dashakumar Charit quench the thirst of the modern mind because, “The humour and wit of the author are remarkable and far more attractive to modern taste than are usually there qualities in Indian works. The whole work is pervaded by the humour of the wild deeds of the princes, their determination to secure what they wish and their light-hearted indifference of the morality of the means which they employ.”

43. Gangopadhyya Narayan, Sahitya Short Galpa, P.-61
44. Keith, A.B., A History of Sanskrit Literature, P.-302
Even though a preliminary level of short story can be determined in the ancient moral stories of the Jatakas, Panchatantra, Katha Charit Sagar etc., modern Indian or Assamese short stories cannot be said to have evolved from them. Because, in the narration of these stories thrill has been given more prominence than the goals of the stories. Modern short stories have no similarity at all with the purpose, art and style of the ancient stories. The main feature of modern short stories is to present particular moments or minute feelings of life in an appealing manner. Ancient writers did not seem to profess the tendency to present society’s shortcomings with the help of satire or criticism. On the other hand, in the short stories that evolved in the nineteenth century, the writers seemed to have successfully applied satire and criticism. Creation of modern short story has mainly been inspired by Western literature.

4.9. Contribution of Jonaki in the development of Assamese short stories

The tales that had been passed on by word of mouth among the Assamese people, found expression on print in the Jonaki Age. Of course, the Missionaries had published several stories from the Bible fit for children in newspaper (Arunoday, 1846). Dr Nathan Brown’s wife Aliza Brown had written a book of tales. This was the first collection of tales in Assamese. After that A K Gani brought out a small book of stories titled Koni Beheruar Sadhu. But they never tried to portray the features of modern short stories through these story collections. The obvious reason was that the Missionaries’ main aim of creating literature was to spread Christianity through
the Assamese language. Hence their novels and stories stopped more or less at the level of religion-centric tact or publications.45

The importance gained by the Asomiya Bhashar Unnati Sadhini Sabha in Calcutta in popularising and spreading the Assamese language and literature was due to the publication of a mouthpiece named Jonaki. This mouthpiece which was first published in 1889, not only remained as a mouthpiece of a group, but turned into a journal of the public engaged in discussing the language and literature, and in later years, laid the seed of the Jonaki Age and etched an everlasting name for itself. From the point of view of its publication, Jonaki is divided into two sections. The first section was published from Calcutta from 1889 to 1896. After a hiatus it was re-published from Guwahati from 1901 to 1903. The combined periods from 1889 to 1903 are regarded as the actual Jonaki Age. Of course, traits of this Age were extended up to the time of death of Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaruah (1868-1938). A majority of literary historians tend to show this entire romantic period as the Jonaki or Bezbaruah Age.

The first three years of Jonaki in Calcutta saw the birth of romantic poetry, articles, plays, mystery writings, health-related writeups, historical articles, travel stories, satirical pieces, novels etc. The Calcutta part of Jonaki is extremely important because the connoisseurs of literature had shed light on every aspect of literature and sown the seed of Assamese language and literature in this age. Jonaki seemed to have been accountable to establishment of every aspect of Assamese literature from the time of Chandrakumar Agarwala, Lakshminath Bezbaruah and Hemchandra Goswami to the first

45. Neog Maheshwar, Asomiya Sahityar Ruprekha, P.-232
batch of litterateurs of the twentieth century like Sarat Chandra Goswami. The important feature of the fourth year of Jonaki (1892) was the birth of short story. As in world literature, in Assamese literature also this extraordinary facet came into existence in the fourth issue of Jonaki in its fourth year of publication. Seuti earned the distinction of becoming the first Assamese short story and it was published in the fourth issue of Jonaki in its fourth year. The writer was Lakshminath Bezbaruah. So Bezbaruah is the father of Assamese short story.

Publication of Jonaki resumed in Guwahati in 1901, with Satyanath Bora and Kanaklal Barua as its editors. Of course, this edition of the magazine also closed down in 1903 after publication of four issues. On the pages of the Guwahati edition of Jonaki, the second storyteller of Assamese literature was born. He was the founder secretary of the Asam Sahitya Sabha, Sarat Chandra Goswami. Goswami emerged in the scene with a translated short story Pariclist in the first issue of Jonaki’s second year in Guwahati. This was the first short story translated into Assamese. In the second issue of the same year (1902) Sarat Chandra Goswami set off with strong steps as a primary storyteller in Assamese literature with his original short story Prabhawati. In the fifth issue of the same year itself Goswami’s second short story Malini was published. With one translated story and two original stories, Goswami established himself as a Jonaki era writer and the second short story writer in Assamese literature.

4.10. Sarat Chandra Goswami’s story collections

There can be no dispute that Prabhawati was Goswami’s first original story. Jatri, as claimed by some, is not his first story. This story was written
in 1905 and published in a hand-written magazine Ankur. A close look at these two stories will reveal that while Prabhawati has history as its background, Jatri is based on imagination. The skill of writing and expansion of both the stories are of the same status. Prabhawati is about Aurangzeb’s weakness and lust for Rajput women, which entails a battle. Aurangzeb is not an active character in the story. The willpower of Rajput women and the courage and chivalry of Rajput men are attractions of the story. The hero of the story Raj Singh, who is the ruler of Mewar, can be regarded as a historical figure because of his fight with the Moghuls. He fights with extreme valour and after emerging victorious in battle, succeeds in making the heroine Prabhawati his own. On the other hand, the main character in Jatri is bereft of heroics. Both the heroines of the two stories Prabhawati and Saraju are lovers. After reunion with their lovers even though both the heroines contemplate suicide out of frustration, Prabhawati does not have to take the extreme step, while Saraju feels the need to do so, but takes things lightly because of the escapist tendency of the hero, who betrays her. Even though Prabhawati is historical, the reality it portrays is noteworthy. But Jatri presents some unreality. But both are readable narrative stories.

Goswami’s second story Malini too is based on history. This too is mainly a love story. The story advances as the minister’s son Saroj Kumar falls in love with the princess. The kingdom named Kashi is a Hindu state. But one day the princess meets some Buddhist mendicants and attracted to them, she makes arrangements to feed them. This enrages some of the subjects and they demand her banishment from the kingdom. Malini seeks seven days’ time from the king to leave the kingdom. On the first day itself
the hero who is deeply in love with her, becomes frantic and commits suicide by jumping into the River Ganga. In the remaining six days the princess, along with the Buddhist mendicants, spreads the teachings of Buddhism and draws many subjects into the Buddhist fold. She never sets foot again in her parents’ home; but her love for Saroj Kumar remains etched in her mind. These three stories determine the status of Goswami on the pages of Jonaki.

In later years also Sarat Chandra Goswami (1887-1944) shone as a storyteller. After Jonaki almost all his stories were published in magazines like Usha and Banhi. His story collections are:-

1. Galpanjali (1914) : a collection of eleven stories
2. Mayna (1920) : a collection of ten stories
3. Bajikar (1930) : a collection of thirteen stories

Apart from these three compilations that contained 34 stories and were published during his lifetime, two other compilations of stories by Goswami were published posthumously. These two compilations comprise 24 stories. The compilations are:-

4. Paridarshan (1956) : a collection of seven stories

4.11. Comparison between Sarat Chandra Chandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaruah

With the inclusion of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories and publication of his novels, articles, poems etc., in Goswamir Rachanawali,
compiled and edited by Jatindranath Goswami, Sarat Chandra Goswami brightened up the Jonaki Age, as a proficient writer even though he might not be as great in stature as Lakshminath Bezbaruah. So far short stories are concerned, he can be bracketed in the same level as Bezbaruah. Bezbaruah’s satirical style and Goswami’s style of writing plain and simple language are noteworthy. The stories of both portray social issues. Man’s joys and sorrows, love and romance, union and separation, hopes and frustration, obstacles, prohibition etc., are evident in both writers’ stories. The stories of both writers are in the narrative style.

4.12. Sarat Chandra Goswami’s short stories and their review

Goswami’s nine stories included in the first anthology Galpanjali, along with the two published in Jonaki were of the first wave. These love stories reveal different feelings. In the story Tara written in 1907, even though the romance between Tara and Gopal is mutual, finally there is no union. After Tara becomes somebody else’s wife Gopal is no longer in a position to look at her to his heart’s content. Yet in his point of view Tara is the root of all beauty. Intoxicated with his one-sided love, he roams about aimlessly. His desire remains unfulfilled. Two more stories, Sanyasini and Noir Datit, published in the same year, express feelings of love. Sanyasini is the story of the heroine Kamal falling in love with a classmate of her elder brother. After the hero Mohan goes away to Calcutta to pursue his studies, there is a break in their contact, as a result of which she indulges in an illicit affair with another boy, but finally marries her first love. Some time later she suffers from mental conflict. Finally she leaves Mohan and becomes a sanyasini (ascetic). This slightly historical narrative effuses psychological traits. Noir
Datit is the story of an unfortunate woman. Malati the orphan, is a Brahmin girl who has crossed her age of child marriage. Ignoring the conservative views of a superstitious society and defying his guru, Kashinath marries the woman. His father debars him from entering the house because of his action. He too amasses wealth and lives his own life. After the death of his father, Kashinath who is brought back home by his mother and regains his status in the society after spending money, dies in a boat mishap. Their only child also dies, rendering the heroine totally lonely. She then gives away all her property to her brother-in-law and starts living on the bank of the river, praying to her deity. Although there are some unusual incidents in the story, Kashinath’s revolt against society and his audacity are noteworthy. There is a little weakness in the story’s attempt at reforming the society as the writer has taken recourse to allegory and leaves everything to fate towards the end of the story. But Kashinath’s love is pure and his character is strong. In Brahmaputrar Bukut (1905), which was included in the collection titled Mayna, an immoral woman indulges in an illicit affair with her husband’s friend and finally becomes remorseful and jumps into the river Brahmaputra. The victory of morality and inner conflict are the main features of this story. The central theme of Dekhadekhi and Shobha of the collection Galpanjali is love. Although there are similarities between the two stories, the dissimilarities are not the same. In Dekhadekhi the lovers do not succeed in their love affair due to differences in their castes. After several years the heroine Parvati meets her lover Dharani in her sick bed. Both lovers recall the past and shed tears, and Parvati makes up for the unfulfilled love affair with mental joy and then dies. The story portrays the invincibility of love. In another story of unfulfilled love Shobha, because of her parents’ objections, the heroine
sheds the love of her fiancé Harmohan, who fails in the matric exams, and 
mARRIES a tea garden clerk and becomes a devoted housewife. But several 
years later when Harmohan is posted there as a land settlement officer, she 
forbids her husband from inviting Harmohan to their home. Memories of 
past love are meaningless for her. The psychological angle of the story is 
noteWORTHY and the symbolic ending is wonderful. The other stories of 
GALPANJALI are – Ghunusa, Pashupatir Biya, Adrista, Punarjanma and Pakhi. 
Pakhi is an imagery. In Punarjanma the character of those who frame rules 
in society, the fear of being ostracised and the progressive-minded attitude 
of the hero are explicit. In Pashupatir Biya the inherent pathos is very deep. 
The part which shows the death of the bride due to cholera after just three 
days of marriage even thought the wedding is solemnised after the groom 
sells off his wealth and property, is really touching. In Adrista, the hero 
Dhaniram is a cowherd in a Brahmin family. Poverty is portrayed very strongly 
in the story as, even after working hard the whole day he is unable to feed 
his wife. So he packs part of the food he gets at the Brahmin family’s house 
in a gamocha and carries it for his wife. Ghunusa is the sad tale of a widow. 
After losing her husband she is accused of immorality. To save her son who 
is suffering from kalazar, she approaches the family guru and gives him as 
dakshina the only coin given her by a stranger. But her son dies. She goes 
insane and building the figure of a Brahmin on the bank of the river, keeps 
striking it. This sad story portrays the rebellion resulting from the harassment 
meted out to a widow by society.

4.12.1. Mayna, a collection of ten stories

Among the stories included in the collection Mayna, Mayna is about a 
mynah which is the only companion of a childless widow, that her husband
had brought for her. But one day the mynah too dies. As a result the lonely widow becomes insane. The story Banariya Pranay is about the love affair of a Miri (Mising) boy and a girl. But the tribal appeal seems to be missing from the story. Parichita is a simple readable story. Nadaram, Doctor, Devadarshan, Raktabeej etc., can be regarded as important stories of this collection. Nadaram projects love, betrayal, kindness and compassion, fear etc. In Devadarshan, Bidyaratna Mahasay goes on a pilgrimage; on the way he meets a prince as company, which is a divine coincidence. The prince is beaten and robbed by dacoits; by the grace of Dwarakanath the dacoits are captured, they beg forgiveness and are pardoned; all these portray supernatural elements.

Raktabeej is one of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s best stories. The reality of the theme of the story written in the backdrop of rural life overwhelms the reader. Raktabeej beautifully portrays how a simple issue brings about complete fragmentation and ruin to a village and its society. The viewpoints of two generations find expression in the story. In one generation there are two rich old farmers. The other generation shows their two sons. The two old farmers are very good friends and they read the Bhagawat and Kirtan together and even go and spend ten-twelve days together in the house of their guru. One day they go on a pilgrimage. Beginning in the natural form of a tale, the story shows in its first three small sections the friendship of the two friends and also their pilgrimage. From the fourth section developments concerning the two sons of the friends, Jadu and Moni begin. One day as a result of Moni’s cattle eating the paddy from Jadu’s field, their mothers engage in a bitter argument and finally even come to blows. Soon the fourteen-
year-old sons of Jadu and Moni too begin to fight. As a result Jadu’s son is injured and he starts bleeding. The matter results in a meeting and a legal battle. The lawyer is given twenty rupees as advance and the battle ensues. Finally Moni is jailed for ten days. Moni takes revenge and sues Jadu for not returning the money he had borrowed from him. The verdict is out. A distant relative of Moni, Sanatan the petition writer gets Jadu’s house attached through a peon. Thus Moni takes revenge for being jailed. In the meantime, after eight months the two old friends return from pilgrimage and are shocked at the situation. They try in vain to bring about a reconciliation; in fact, the rift widens even further. At the shraddha of Jadu’s father Moni declares Jadu’s family accused, as a result of which the village community splits into two. Thus a drop of the rakta (blood) of raktabeez is sown. How can a count be kept of the raktabeez that were created subsequently,” the writer mentions and portrays the picture of a disintegrated village. By projecting the developments concerning the various characters of the story in a realistic manner, the writer studies the social structure prevalent in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the story Doctor, believable and unbelievable incidents come to light while delving into the realms of the complex human mind. In Dilli ka Laddu the author portrays the pathetic condition of a graduate teacher who aspires to become a magistrate. It is bracketed as a play because of the nature of its presentation. In this story the Nandi Sloka is presented in a satirical manner. It has been written in the form of a long story and novelette.

4.12.2. Bazikar, a collection of thirteen stories

Bazikar is a collection of thirteen stories. The stories were written before 1930. In the main story Bazikar several characters try to define a bazikar
(magician), but fail. Towards the end of this symbolic story a sanyasi says that the Creator is bazikar. “Look at the magnificent world all around you. Have you seen such magic (bhelki) anywhere else?” Traces of transcendentalism are found in this story, which moves closer to being called a tale. Antar Avaran is a narration. Megh aru Bhekuli, Shikari aru Hanh and other allegorical stories bring to mind some stories from Lakshminath Bezbaroa’s Kaka Deuta aru Nati Lora. These cannot be considered as stories.

Beltumoni is a wonderful readable story of that period. The writer is successful in picturising the time and environment of the onset of the railway to Assam and presenting the positive features of the character of village boy Bentumoni, who is an orphan and is neglected and ridiculed by all. The story Darshan is appealing and in the story Pujari manifestations of God are realised in a child’s laughter, dances and songs. But the tragedy of the sudden death of the child due to snakebite is very intense. Piyahor Pani is about a woman becoming insane after the death of her son.

Tini Kuri Taka is another of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s interesting stories. A train passenger losing sixty rupees, recovery of the money by an eighteen-year-old boy who reads Sherlock Holmes’ detective stories, from an engineer, and then escape of the engineer from the clutches of the police make the story very interesting. In Bayan an old village bayan (one who plays traditional musical instruments like khol and mridanga) is on the verge of being totally sidelined by an alien twentieth century culture. But the bayan seems to have gained resurrection when, at the patronage of the important people of the village he manages to overcome the yatra and theatre and revives his own culture by organising a bhaona. Then one day fever and
cough claim the bayan’s life. The writer’s alertness towards his own culture finds expression in this story. The story is in the progressive style.

4.12.3. Paridarshan: a collection of seven stories

The collection Paridarshan which was published posthumously, includes seven stories. Sarat Chandra Goswami was a high official in the education department and an Inspector of Schools. From the experiences he gains by dint of his service, he portrays in his stories pictures of the education scenario and criticises it. These pictures can be said to have been presented in a satirical manner. Bibek Biparjay is a satirical tale of a man named Sachinanda Dev Das, who is strongly opposed to foreign rule and has embraced the movement for swadesh, and lands the job of a teacher in a school, but is soon about to lose his job for breaking all rules; but finally tries to retain it by giving shelter to an examinee who is caught cheating in the exams. This is a noteworthy story in the collection. Another satirical story Batubapur Barbepar highlights the varied pictures of the society of that time. All the stories in the collection Paridarshan express traits like greasing the palms of seniors, bribing them, speaking in English with the British masters and being too respectful towards them etc. But Joyram in the story Pandit Babu is an exceptional character. Sandhir Banh is all wit and humour. But according to the writer himself, Mantra is a play, not a short story. Parhahalir Paridarshan is a wonderful picturisation of the education scene. Corruption gets exposed in this story. Discipline was written in 1943 and it presents a picture of the total disorder in the education department. The excessive use of English in the stories of this collection tends to give a bilingual nature to the stories. The stories of this collection are of inferior quality compared to those of
Goswami’s other collections. Goswami’s works include Galpamala, which has a total of eighteen stories, including two previously published ones. Prabhawati was previously included in another collection and Premar Kahini, written in 1907 is of the standard of a tale. In Sasur Jowain written in 1908, a picture of the social happenings and economic situation prevailing at that time, is revealed. Chinaki was earlier published in the collection Galpanjali as Purna Janma. Chirakumar is a good satirical story. But the organiser of the chirakumars’ (confirmed bachelors) conference Somdhar the lawyer is compelled to break his vow in order to uphold the prestige of a woman. He has to give his consent to the wedding because he has to save the girl from impending danger. Brahmacarya presents a social custom by likening a child widow to a motherless deer. Sonia, written in the backdrop of the tea garden, is a readable story. The manager’s weakness for labourer women, involvement of labourers and clerks in a conspiracy, murder committed by a young labourer to save his sweetheart make the story interesting. In later years the story turned into a formula in Assamese literature. Aeu Koon is among Goswami’s latest creations. A young train passenger’s attraction towards a female co-passenger is the central theme of the story. Even though interesting, it is confined to narration only. The characteristics of stories of the Awahan Age fail to influence it with Goswami sticking to his own style. The same can be said of the other stories also. Beer Mati, Aejon Burha Bamun aru Teur Tini Putek, Dui Bhai, Chor, Kapalar Likhan, Baba Brahmaputra, Manuh aru Gas, Pujar Noiboidya, Shon Pani etc., are Goswami’s latest additions.
Influence of western writings along with Bezbaroa’s writings to some extent on Goswami’s stories can be seen. The satirical style has caused quite an upheaval. Goswami’s satire is quite simple. The swiftness of the language and the incisive style make his writings thrilling.

4.13. Pre-Independence Assamese short stories with special reference to Sarat Chandra Goswami

Although Sarat Chandra Goswami (1887-1944) was a writer of that period when Assamese short had just made its appearance, it was in his hands that Assamese short story made immense progress in terms of taking shape. In his stories mentioned above almost all the characteristics of Assamese short story of the pre-Independence period are present. His stories have enriched the first phase of the history of Assamese short story. His subject matter, mood and form far deviated from Bezbaroa’s stories and hence it was with his stories that the real history of Assamese short story began and they carried the characteristics of stories of that period.

The themes of the stories of the pre-Independence period were basically in the nature of tales and also realism. Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories deviated completely from the nature of tales and took shelter in realism. Based on life in rural and urban environments, his stories carry realistic subject matters. Making a correct analysis of Goswami’s stories, Homen Borgohain says, “To speak plainly, the main subject matter of many of Goswami’s famous stories is conflict. This conflict varies from individual to individual and from circumstance to circumstance. Sometimes the conflict is of the heart or behavioral (Brahmaputrar Bukut, Nadaram, Tara, Sanyasini).
At times the conflict is between man and society (Ghunusa, Noir Datit, Pashupatir Biya).” 46

In the stories of the pre-Independence period a soft romantic sensation is felt. The same is the case in respect of Goswami’s stories. Similarly, because of his humanitarian outlook towards life, the pathos he infuses into his stories while portraying lives of the poor and helpless section of society, fills the reader’s mind with compassion. Besides the misery stalking the helpless section of society due to the harm-injustice, heartlessness and selfishness of mankind, destiny too plays a major role in making human life miserable. Such a theme is seen in Goswami’s stories. The social consciousness of Goswami takes the themes of several of his stories to the vicinity of social injustice, ethics etc. That is why in his stories apart from the exploited poor of society, the sufferings of widows find expression with full compassion. To be precise, just as the way the subject matters of Goswami’s stories are deeply linked to the basic feelings and emotions of humans, so also they are linked to romantic appeals and emotions as well as with the realistic cycle of life. Hence, even though a romantic appeal is felt in Goswami’s stories, the picture of real life is more prominent in them.

The main characteristic of the stories of Assamese literature of the pre-Independence period is the subject. The biggest appeal of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories is the subject. His cohesion is smart and the language is plain and filled with dexterity of speech. A short story is an art based on a

46. Bargohain Homen, Asomiya Galpa Sankalan Part-1, P.-30

The development of short stories in the real sense of the term took place in the hands of Lakshminath Bezbaruah in the Jonaki era. It was Jonaki that infused the romantic movement into Assamese literature. Along with it newer avenues of literature made inroads into Assamese literature. Tales, historical accounts etc., made an appearance in Assamese literature in newer forms. Following in the footsteps of Western short stories, some scenes of Assamese tales and social life donned the garb of short stories. Even though these were not initially regarded as short stories, the intrinsic characteristics of the Western short stories were found in them.

4.14.1. Lakshminath Bezbaruah

Lakshminath Bezbaruah was the pioneer in creating such types of stories. Even though his stories were published in Jonaki, he had started writing such stories even before that. Bhadari was his first attempt at short story and all the characteristics of a short story found good expression in it. All the characteristics of a short story like an appealing beginning, ending, integrity and impersonality that picturise life through momentary tendencies, come alive in this story. Social consciousness, which is one of the main features of a short story, also comes alive in Bhadari. In this context historian and literary critic Dr Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya says, “Even though Bezbaruah had written short stories of different forms, it was his important social picture Bhadari that was the true trendsetter in short story.” Bezbaruah’s stories Burhi Air Sadhu, Kakadeuta aru Nati Lora (1912) and Sadhur Sangrah have been included in Surabhi (1909), Sadhu Kathar Kunki (1910) and Jonbiri (1913).
Because it was in Bezbaruah’s stories that the wave of literary realism was introduced, love between man and woman and humanitarianism found an important place in his stories. Because he viewed women from a spiritual perspective, many of his stories portray the glories of women. Just like Rabindranath had brought to light the universal truthfulness and beauty of a woman’s mind through stories like Deopaona, Hemanti, Jogyeswarer Jagya, Streer Patra and Patra o Patri, so also Bezbaroa portrayed the truthfulness and beauty of a woman in stories like Bhadari, Jayanti and Patmugi. Bezbaruah is on a par with Bengali writer Sarat Chandra in terms of compassion and respect towards women. Sarat Chandra’s stories Arakshaniya, Niskriti, Nababidhan etc., portray women in various virtuous forms. Such special attitude towards women is found in Bezbaroa’s stories also. From the perspective of conviction, depth and greatness in love, Kanya, Bhadari, Nakau, Jalkuwanri etc., are noteworthy stories. From these stories Bezbaruah’s compassion for women can be gauged. It was through the stories of Bezbaruah that such an attitude towards women, as also the humanitarianism that emerged in the Romantic Age of Assamese literature, took roots.

The subject matters and intent of Lakshminath Bezbaruah’s stories are not multi-dimensional. He is seen to draw the subject matters for his stories from contemporary social circumstances. Hence Bezbaruah’s stories can be mainly classified into two parts. The first part is about social reformation and the second is related to human life.

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47. Barua, Bhaben: Lakshminath Bezboruah’s major achievement: Short stories.)
In the first category of his stories attempts are noticed at presenting a satirical picture of the ills of society like hypocrisy, vanity and superstition and subsequent bids to reform the society. Stories like Molak Gwin Gwin, Bhukendra Baruah and Jatiramor Jati fall in this category. Because the writer’s eagerness to reform the society is intense in these stories, these satirical creations cannot be regarded as full-fledged short stories but are seen to have remained somewhere between short story and satire.

The second class of Bezbaruah’s stories are superior to his satirical pieces. In these stories the various aspects of life like laughter and crying, joy and sorrow and different adversities find expression and attempts are made to draw the reader’s compassion towards them. Putraban Pita, Bhadari, Nakau, Jalkuwanri, Mukti and several other stories fall in this category.

Nonetheless, through these two types of stories it was not only the base of short story that Bezbaruah had set up in modern Assamese literature; it was through the stories of this writer that modernity had set in, in Assamese literature.

Bezbaruah’s social consciousness can be considered to be his inspiration for all his literary creations. But the social consciousness that he portrays through his stories, is testimony to his deep realisation of socio-economic life. His social consciousness worked intensely in the midst of his sharp satirical creations, and the real feelings of life, emotions, human compassion etc., also find expression in them.

We can classify and analyse Bezbaruah’s stories in the following manner:

A) Political stories
Instead of getting directly involved in politics, Bezbaruah tried to bring about an all-round development of social life through an enlightened lifestyle by removing all the ills affecting the individual through the all-round development of language, literature and culture. But carrying on alone with that ideal in a country ruled by outsiders, was not possible. Especially, when the wave of national freedom had turned the entire nation rebellious, Bezbaroa, as a conscious litterateur, could not ignore the appeal.

In his political views Bezbaruah was initially a moderate. He was initially not against the British rule. Feeling reassured of a comfortable life under the foreigners, he had even appealed to the others to accept their rule.

The deep resentment that the First World War created in his mind, made Bezbaruah lose faith in the English rulers. He got fed up with the false promises of the British. His writings filled up with castigation of the British and expressed faith in the movement spearheaded by Gandhiji. He reposed full faith in Gandhiji’s non-violent movement, amity between Hindus and Muslims and the non-cooperation movement. His stories may not have described the complex political life, but they mention the various political environments and situations. For example, in the story Patmugi, Patmugi realises the betrayal by men and tries to find the meaning of life by taking part in the non-cooperation movement. The slogan, ‘Simon go Back’ finds
mention in the story Simon. In Bhukendra Baruah, he tactfully mentions the leaders and others who cheat the masses in the guise of patriots.

Bezbaruah’s stories portray a reliable picture of the then socio-economic life. He had immense knowledge and consciousness about the social and economic life of Assam. He realised very well the nature of exploitation by the imperialists and the impact of the social injustice and evils that this exploitation created. The constituents of this exploitation were atrocities of officials, arrogance and hypocrisy, excesses by the officers, fraud and exploitation by the religious preachers, spread in the use of opium. While trying to portray the Assamese social life, he mentions clearly the ill-effects of these things. He has also clearly shown how the lethargy, arrogance and pride of the clerks in the courts harmed not only themselves, but also others, in stories like Dhuwakhuwa and Phiringotir pora Khandabdah.

Bezbaruah also portrays the miserable condition of the people associated with the cottage industry of Assamese in the story Patmugi. The heroine of the story Patmugi, is the daughter of a potter family. She describes her family condition in the following manner –

“By caste we are potters. For ages we had been earning our livelihood by making pitchers and pans for grown-up people and rattles and idols of Krishna for young people and selling them. But now that profession is no longer viable.”

In this manner the picture of the social life prevalent in that period comes alive in Bezbaruah’s stories.
The picture of the then Assam’s socio-economic life is depicted more vividly in his stories portraying family life. In his stories he shows how family life is turned poisonous by social inequality, casteism, superstition, unscrupulous harassment by the menfolk etc. Along with these negative aspects his stories also portray wonderful scenes of family compassion, harmony and sacrifice.

During Bezbaruah’s time the society was a semi-literate rural one. Various ills, human envy etc., had kept the society and family terribly suppressed. And the worst sufferers in this situation were the womenfolk. In Seuti it is such a touching tale that the writer portrays. In Malati the Deka Baruah vows never to get his daughter Malati married to the an Ahom. But he cannot defy the king’s order. The king forcibly takes away Malati. But in the first night itself as Malati enters the room in the dark, the king who is dead drunk, kills her with his dagger. Having lost the jewel after getting hold of it, the king suffers from immense sorrow.

Bezbaruah also highlights beautifully the physical angle of women. In Chor the leaning of a young wife towards other men is portrayed. In Laokhuwa along with the spontaneity of sensual desires of widows, the wickedness of men too is portrayed. Erabari, Baniram and other stories also beautifully depict various problems related to women.

In his stories Bezbaruah disengages human life from nature and then picturises the misery and suffering. Nature is the source of happiness and sustenance for mankind. Once there is detachment from the heaven of nature there is no chance of returning to its fold. Hence the writer equates separation from nature with death. Such a picture is reflected in Jalkunwari. In one or
two stories, even death has taken place after separation from nature. In Kehukali, Botahi is a girl who has grown up in the lap of nature. After her separation from nature she seems to have died. In Mukti also separation from nature is the reason behind Sukumar’s death. It is in the wonderful lap of nature that love too blooms. In Ratan Munda, Kanya, Nakou and other stories, besides the magnificent portrayal of the cohabitation of man and nature, nature also is shown to have contributed immensely as the background for love to blossom.

Bezbaruah has also created a romantic sphere in his stories through an environment of mysticism and the supernatural. Maidam, Erabari and Laokhula are some such stories. He has also taken recourse to dreams to create a magic web of mystery. In some such stories social consciousness comes alive even in ghostly environments. Thus, his romantic stories have become extraordinary with inputs like love of nature, longing for the past, imagination and mysticism.

Bezbaruah was extraordinary in creating wit and satire. These two traits make his stories very interesting to read. Humour and satire have an intrinsic relationship with the modern short story. Most modern story writers make their stories interesting by infusing humour and intelligent satire into them. Bezbaruah’s stories have a layer of humour in them, and even in tragedies he infuses traces of humour whenever the occasion arises.

Bezbaruah took the help of satire to point out the drawbacks afflicting the contemporary society and the individual. Especially, he takes to satire to ridicule the helpless condition of the younger generation and tries to point
out the real path to them. In the backdrop of neo literacy, instead of the mental horizon expanding, when vanity, lethargy and impudence engulf the society, Bezbarua cannot give indulgence to such downfall. Hence, from the young pseudo patriot to the one who goes to study in Calcutta but falls in love, no one escapes Bezbaruah’s criticism. The young man who sheds nationalistic ideas and instead falls for a foreign lifestyle, draws Bezbaruah’s special attention. Molok Gwin Gwin, Lokendra Baruah, Nangaluchandra Das, Aamar Sansar, Milaramor Atmajiboni, Chenichampa etc., are his satirical stories.

4.14.2. Dandinath Kalita

Dandinath Kalita is another contemporary writer of Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Sarat Chandra Goswami. His collection of short stories is Satshori. Social consciousness finds special place in his stories too. In stories like Sadhaba ne Bidhoba ne Kunwari and Haricharanar Biya this tendency is prominently shown. Despite being from a higher caste Haricharan falls in love with Lalita who is from a lower caste, and finally shows enough courage and marries her. His action emboldens the younger generation. In Sadhaba ne Bidhoba ne Kunwari the heroine shows enough audacity to abandon her aged husband.

Chor is an unconventional love story. Raghu, who belongs to a high caste, loves Nandeswar’s daughter Jamuna. She is also attracted to him. In order to seek deliverance of his dead father, Raghu steals six hundred rupees from Nandeswar’s house. Gradually his standard of living improves and he surreptitiously returns the money that he had stolen from Nandeswar. Along with it he leaves a letter mentioning everything in detail. Nandeswar is amazed
at Raghu’s openness and gets his daughter married to him. It is only after the wedding that Raghu comes to know that he could steal the money because Jamuna had helped him indirectly. Bhool highlights Ramanath’s weakness for lady doctor Swarnalata. He ignores his wife Jayanti and seeks to marry Swarnalata for the sake of her job. It does not take Swarnalata much time to find out Ramanath’s true intentions. She ridicules him and chases him away. In the meantime, his wife passes away. Ramanath then realises his folly and becomes remorseful.

Kalita’s stories are written in a very simple style. Since the stories make the writer’s intentions clear, they have not been able to take the place of an art. While discussing society also, he has not taken recourse to satire and humour.

4.14.3. Surya Kumar Bhuyan

Story writer Surya Kumar Bhuyan is a poet, archaeologist and historian all moulded into one. His collection of stories is Panchami. Besides being full of romantic flavour, his stories also follow in the footsteps of national and foreign stories. In Shil Nohoy Phool the influence of Rabindranath’s story Samapti is seen and in his story Bijulee, American storyteller Edgar Allen Po’s story is reflected.

In Shil Nohoy Phool, Puspa marries Baruna. But the romantic Puspa does not get good response from Baruna. At one point of time Puspa prepares to go to Calcutta. At the time of departure Puspa expects Baruna to feel sad. But instead, Baruna asks him to bring a knife with a long handle from Calcutta. But when Baruna grows up she becomes frantic for the company
of Puspa. Only now she seems to realise the greatness of love. Her heart is
not of stone but soft like a flower.

Bijulee too is a romantic story. Bijulee’s heart surges up in love for the
hero. Suddenly her life is in danger. When she lies in her deathbed, her lover
vows never to marry another girl. Bijulee peacefully closes her eyes forever.
A few days later the hero shifts to another place and marries another girl.
But he seems to hear Bijulee’s voice all around him. Those cries seem to
remind him that love is always the victor. This story seems similar to
Rabindranath’s story Nishitithe.

Amina too is a love story. The hero feels attracted to the simple Amina.
One day they get married. After the wedding he goes to Calcutta to pursue
his studies. After reaching Calcutta as he opens the books he finds Amina’s
letter written in Parsi, ‘Allah’s messenger’. He silently accepts Amina’s
words written on stone. The writer describes poetically the love that surges
up in the hero’s heart for Amina.

Bhuyan’s stories reflect the individual’s joys and sorrows rather than
social life. He has also thrown light beautifully on economic exploitation.
Bhuyan’s romantic imagination gets reflected in his lucid descriptions.

4.14.4. Mitradev Mahanta

Another short story writer of this period is Mitradev Mahanta. He has
attained success as a poet/lyricist. His stories also bear testimony to this
success of his. Mahanta’s published collection of short stories is Chandrarahar.
The lifestyle of the Satriya society, the corruption and injustice plaguing it, everything is depicted clearly in Mahanta’s stories. The joys and sorrows of common people, their love and aspirations are also portrayed in his stories. In Phoolar Kuki the love affair of Gopal and Bimalee is described. Gopal loves Bimalee and wants to marry her, but Nityananda is against their union. He has arranged his daughter’s marriage with another man. In order to stop the marriage, Gopal steals Bimalee’s horoscope. The marriage is stopped and the groom goes back. Bimalee is made to marry Gopal. After the wedding Gopal sends back Bimalee’s horoscope through her younger brother. Instead of being angry with Gopal, Nityananda blesses him. Thus, there is a happy ending to the story.

Udashin throws light on a Satriya environment. Bhuluka is sent to the satra at a tender age and he grows up there under very austere environments. He even does not eat food cooked by his mother. But one day he loses his self-control. After seeing the young and beautiful Maniki he gets desperate to win her heart. His unrestrained lust becomes so overpowering that he ultimately tries to fulfil his desire by intoxicating her with intoxicants. Two youths of the village come to know about his intention and bar him from carrying out his plan.

Although Mahanta’s stories are based on real life incidents, poetic grace is sometimes present in them. Whenever opportunity shows, he comes out with his poetic tendencies. Occasionally his poetic imagination also notices the union between nature and man.

Mahanta’s style of writing is very pleasant. Just as he is mature in expressing the moments of love, so also he is apt at beautifully bringing out
desires and aspirations. Portrayal of romantic consciousness and social reality is his speciality.

4.14.5. Nakul Chandra Bhuyan

A well-known storyteller of the beginning of the age of Assamese short story or the Jonaki Age, is Nakul Chandra Bhuyan. Bhuyan, who established himself as a storyteller in the pages of Banhi, Chetana and other magazines, had his first collection of short stories named Churangsuwar Chora. Apart from that, in 1962 the Assam Prakashan Parishad had published another of his story collections Galpar Sarai. In terms of stories, Bhuyan has not deviated from the standard of Bezbaroa and Sarat Chandra Goswami. His subject matters are very simple. His style of communication too is straightforward. Normally his subject matters are poverty and love. The technique of short story that is generally required, is not seen in his stories. From the Jonaki age to the Awahan age the short stories were normally story-based. But because the style of communication of some writers is artistic, their stories make very interesting reading. Bhuyan’s stories are devoid of that art, hence they have not been able to attract the reader. His stories on love between man and woman lack the minute observation; hence they cannot create any emotion in the reader’s mind. Similarly, his stories on the ills affecting the society cannot appeal to the reader because they have failed in portraying well the conflicts between man and society. Bhuyan’s satire is not up to the mark and hence it fails to throw proper light on the social evils. Restrained narration is one of his traits.

Nakul Chandra Bhuyan is a transitional writer. Having emerged in the pages of the pre-Awahan Age magazines Banhi and Chetana, it was in the
Awahan Age that he established himself as a storyteller. But his stories could not get close to the level that the stories of the Awahan Age had reached.

4.15. Classification of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s short stories

There is variety in the subject matters of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories. Social, moral and spiritual, all these three subjects find expression in his stories. The conflict between the mentalities of people with western education and those clinging on to old thoughts, is shown in many of his stories. The subject matter of many stories is the cruel ridicule of fate. Boundless pity for the poor and oppressed forms the subject matter of many stories. Even the compassion for lowly creatures finds touching expression in a few stories. Famous storyteller and critic Trailokyanath Goswami has made the right comment in respect of Sarat Goswami’s stories, “There is tragedy in his stories, but this sadness is not always an outcome of blunders committed by the characters; fate’s ridicule and inexplicable cruelty seem to influence this sorrow.”

Goswami’s stories present both urban and rural and learned and illiterate characters. Goswami has boundless sympathy for the helpless, oppressed and women. Apart from human characters, even lowly creatures find human greatness in his stories. The characters are simple in nature. Vile characters are very few in number. Goswami has a leaning for an untainted image of the characters; that is why even vile characters succeed in reforming themselves and attain greatness in the grinding stone of realisation.

48. Trailokyanath Goswami, Adhunik Galpa Sahitya, P.- 99

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The subject matter of short stories is human life. The aim of a short story is to create anxiety in the reader’s mind with joy, sorrow, complexity etc. Moreover, while trying to create suspense in the reader’s mind and make the reading interesting, the writer has to exercise a lot of discipline. The first writer to follow this rule in Assamese short story is Sarat Chandra Goswami. Even journalist/critic Homen Gohain admits that Goswami is the first writer in whose stories discipline is seen in the central theme of the story, integrity, progressiveness of the characters, limitations of language. “Apart from this, the contemporary individual traits, Assamese society, reformative realisation that are so clearly seen in Goswami’s stories, are not that clear in Bezbaroa’s stories.”

Sarat Chandra Goswami had written his stories between 1905 and 1943. These thirty-nine years, or rather almost four decades form a very long and important period for writing short stories. In the wave of the ever flowing time a lot of change takes place in social values, political atmosphere etc., in forty years.

4.15.1. Stories based on love

Dekhadekhi is the first story in Galpanjali. Love is the subject matter of this story. The love affair is between Nabin’s younger sister Parbati and his college friend Dharani. Love expects union. But the love affair of Dharani and Parbati does not bloom fully. Kayastha girl Parbati’s father does not get his daughter married to Dharani, who is from the Koch community. For the college-educated Nabin, caste, family prestige etc., are not important. Hence

there is a difference of opinion between father and son. Parbati’s father gets her married to another boy. Dharani also completes his college education and lands a job as a school teacher. One day a student seeks leave from Dharani because his mother is ill. That evening as he goes out for his routine stroll, he remembers the boy whose mother was ill. As he enters the house he is stunned; right before him he sees his once good friend Nabin and his ex-sweetheart Parbati lying in her deathbed. It is just like the heart-rending final scene of a tragedy. A girl, waiting for her lover in her deathbed, finally dies the next day after hearing a sweet word and getting a loving look from him, and with it she leaves in the reader’s heart echoes of yearnings for union of innumerable lovers who are exploited and oppressed in the name of social customs and traditions.

The culture of a contemporary society and the conflict of the hearts of the upcoming educated generation find expression in the story. Even though the writer ignores adorning his characters, conflict brightens up the characters. There is also progressive integrity in the story. As the first story of the first collection, it is a befitting story.

Tara reflects the disillusionment in love and union. A young man named Gopal goes to his friend’s house one day and falls in love with Tara. He feels that it is Tara who can bring fulfilment in his life. But as fate would have it, she does not become his wife. Still, Gopal thinks – Tara did not become mine in this life, in this life she did not become my fulfilment; in some other life, no matter how distant, Tara will be mine, she will erase my unfulfilled desire.50

50. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-1, P. -10.
The theory of rebirth espoused by Indian philosophy gets reflected in this story. Gopal may have faith in this philosophy, but he is human; he is never free from human emotions and feelings. Hence, even after Tara gets married to someone else, he feels an intense desire to have a glimpse of her for just once. But that desire remains unfulfilled. Under the pressure of intense desire Gopal becomes maddeningly contemplative. He beholds “Tara in the fragrance of flowers, Tara in the pleasantness of the moonlight, Tara in the laughter of a child, Tara in the playfulness of a young woman, Tara in whatever is beautiful in this universe.”

The most shattered form of a crestfallen lover is seen in this story. Gopal is the only character and it is his inner conflict that is seen in the story in a pathetic form.

Brahmaputrar Bukut is about an illicit love affair and its sad outcome. A highly educated, exceptionally beautiful restless woman does not find fulfilment with her learned husband. She enjoys the madness of youth in the arms of her husband’s barrister friend who has returned from abroad. But immediately she is filled with remorse for her sinful act and tries to find peace in the bosom of the Brahmaputra. But peace eludes her. She finds peace only after she returns as a spirit and admits her guilt before the writer. Even though the story is about an illicit affair, the heroine’s respect for a moral life is highlighted through the realisation of her shameful act.

Banariya Pranoy is about the love affair of a Mising boy and a girl and their subsequent union. During the Bihu season as Mising girl Loni and boy
Moni dance and make merry on the bank of the Brahmaputra, they fall into the river. The incident happens in front of a lawyer. The truth is revealed when, after three months the two youths appear at the lawyer’s house. Moni’s father is against the wedding, so the two lovers pretend to fall into the river when, in fact they run away to his maternal uncle’s house where he marries her. But Moni’s father does not accept the marriage and files a case in the court. Convinced with the sincerity of the two lovers the lawyer speaks in support of Moni.

Just like sorrows and sufferings of life find a touching expression in Goswami’s stories, so also the sweet reunions get very emotional projection. The writer’s efficiency in projecting the entire Mising society and mentality comes to the fore through a simple incident.

Jatri is a love story. The story ends in a tragedy. The childhood fun and frolic of Gadadhar and Santi who grow up together, turns into love in their youth. Santi’s parents look for a match for her. In order not to be an obstacle in Santi’s happiness, Gadadhar leaves the place and travels from place to place like Calcutta and Bombay, working as a porter, sardar, clerk etc. Finally, after twenty years he comes back in search of his former sweetheart Santi. Santi is then a happy housewife and mother of three daughters. Gadadhar does not identify himself. But it is not possible for the eternal lover to keep the sadness of his heart concealed. Revealing himself with unbearable pain, he finally takes leave of this earth.

In the preface the writer mentions the influence of Tennyson’s Inok Arden on the story. Great poet Tennyson’s Inok Arden runs in the following
manner – three children, Inok, Philip Ray and Ani are playing bride and groom in the sand on the seashore. Sometimes Inok is the householder, at times it is Philip. Ani’s role is always that of the lady of the house. She is normally fonder of Inok. As they grow up Inok marries Ani. Philip remains unmarried. In the meantime, Inok embarks on a sea voyage for business purposes. Unfortunately the ship capsizes in the sea and the waves sweep him to an isolated island. He spends twelve years on that island thriving on the fruits that grow there.

On the other hand, thinking that Inok is dead, Ani marries Philip after several years. One day a ship passes by the island and Inok boards the ship and returns to his place of birth. But by then Ani has become Philip’s wife. Inok does not reveal his identity before Ani. He experiences extreme mental suffering, which ultimately claims his life.\(^{52}\)

The three characters of Jatri – Gadadhar, Saraju and Nabin represent Inok Arden’s Inok, Ani and Philip respectively. Inok’s love for Ani and his sacrifice are portrayed in Jatri as Gadadhar’s activities and behaviour.

Parichita tells us about an educated youth’s unwarranted love for a young girl. The hero of the story who boards the train for Darjeeling to give tuition following an advertisement in the Statesman newspaper, befriends the family of a zamindar on the train. Being a compassionate boy, he helps the family to the best of his capability. Due to lack of space he lets the twelve-year-old girl sleep in his bed. Following the address given in the newspaper he traces the house of the family that seeks a tutor. He is astounded

\(^{52}\) Barua Atul Chandra, Sarat Chandra Goswami, P.-122
to be greeted by the young girl whom he meets on the train earlier on. The uniqueness of the subject matter lends credibility to the story.

Daktar is the sad tale of unfulfilled love and self-sacrifice. While studying FA, the hero falls in love with Prabha, daughter of a well-to-do family, who are his neighbours. In due course of time Prabha’s parents die of cholera. Her paternal uncle comes from a distant town and takes her away. Sorrow shows him the path to sacrifice. Taking up service to mankind as his goal, he pursues medical science. Then again he meets Prabha, who is seriously ill. She had in the meantime got married. But she does not recover from her malady. One day she passes away leaving behind an innocent baby. The doctor’s lonely soul searches for peace in the midst of his patients. But emotions of the first love continue to cause turmoil in the ‘lifeless’ heart of the hero. The simplicity and magnanimity of the hero are able to draw sympathy of the reader.

The subject matter of the story Darshan, enriched with the style and method of the modern short story, is selfless love. The relationship of Nayak, a college student, with the family of a 9-10-year-old girl Latika grows after he saves her from falling down from the roof of the house. But after completing his college studies when he has to go to Calcutta for the sake of his job, he does not meet Latika again. One day as he takes a walks towards the railway station in Calcutta, he sees Latika by the window of a train. He runs with the running train to hear a word from Latika. But he fails. Like him a Bengali gentleman runs after the train, but fails to catch it and then says panting, “Nah, aar para gelo na”53 (no, we couldn’t board the train). The

53. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasawali, Part-I,P.-141.
story seems to tell us that despite our attempts, we fail in holding back the sweet moments of reality.

The first story in Galpamala is Premar Kahini. The heart of the hero flutters at the sight of a beautiful girl. He does not meet his sweetheart. In place of the flame of love, it is sorrow that takes place in his heart. In the words of the hero –

“Sunk in the dense darkness of hopelessness; nothing all around. I had an immense desire, an immense yearning to keep her face close to mine and forget about the world. But one day I came to know that, that face had become someone else’s. The flower withered away, the moonlight was prematurely eclipsed by Rahu.”54 Still, he does not lose hope. In fact, his love seems to have acquired the immensity of infinity. He sees the enchanting form of his sweetheart in the graceful gait of the swan, in the quick passionate look of the doe, in the gentle sway of the breeze-driven creeper.

In this story replete with poetic expressions, the earnestness of mankind finds freedom through love of nature.

The writer admits at the beginning of the story Dilli ka Laddu that it is actually a play. Like in Sanskrit plays, this story presents eulogy, a prologue and words of wisdom. The education system, jobs, law etc., of the contemporary society are shown satirically through a long narration divided into four sections. At the insistence of his father, the story’s hero Sarbeswar completes his BA and then faces an insulting situation when he goes to the Englishman to seek the job of a magistrate. He lands the job of a teacher at

a school nearby for a monthly salary of fifty rupees, and continues to pester the Englishman. The clerk tells him what to do – “There is only one mantra and one mudra for worshipping the sahib. Greet him with an elaborate salaam. No matter what he says, just say ‘Yes sir.’ Go on palm greasing him until his palm is absolutely greasy.”

The English sahib is not influenced by the palm-greasing. Sarbeswar remains the teacher drawing fifty rupees as salary.

Many characters are gathered in the story. Sarbeswar and contemporary college students Haranath, Ramkumar, Chandrakishore and others present a satirical picture of the mentality of college students of those times. Sarbeswar’s father, Phukan, Duara, Baruah and others represent the elderly section of society of the contemporary times. The English sahib portrays the selfishness of an administrator. The feelings and emotions of illiterate rural women are seen in the two female characters.

4.15.2. Stories based on nature

Pakhi speaks about the tranquility and peacefulness that a bird brings into the life of the hero. The bird is his source of inspiration. But fate snatches away the bird. There is a poetic connotation in this tragic story. That is why Jatindranath Goswami must have regarded Pakhi as the first Assamese katha-kabita. But the writer himself has never mentioned it as a katha-kabita. Considering the fact that it has been included in a collection of stories, we can say that it is a unique subject matter, that is, it is a bold step

56. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali (Preface), P-8.
towards presenting even something from the world of nature as the subject matter of a story. For the progress of nature as the subject matter, the writer has given importance to a beautiful picturisation of nature.

In the bosom of nature even animals and birds can share man’s sorrows. This feeling assumes a touching form in the story. After the death of their three-year-old child, a couple that migrates from upper Assam to lower Assam in search of a job, tries to beget a second baby. But God does not fulfil the couple’s wish. Finding no other alternative, in order to keep his lonely wife’s loneliness at bay, her husband fetches her a mynah bird. “This is Mayna; she will be your company in my absence after you teach her to read.”

His words come absolutely true. Mayna begins to talk and becomes capable of greeting everyone with sweet words. But the woman loses her husband. And hardly has the sorrow of her husband’s demise been healed, when fate snatches away her bird. The pathetic outcome of her helplessness makes her rebellious against destiny.

“People say I am mad..... Am I mad or are they?...All I want is Yama…If I could teach him a lesson, then I would talk, eat and show people that I am not mad…it is revenge that I seek.”

Sympathy towards women finds expression in the story. Because of the intelligent placement of the subject matter, creatures of the animal kingdom are elevated to the level of humans.

In Samanya Prani, the heart-rending tale of the killing of a male deer living happily with its wife and two children, by a hunter is described. When

58. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, P.-I, P.-53

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the male deer goes to the bank of the lake to eat the soft grass, he looks at a young deer, because of which he has to face the ire of his wife. He sulks and leaves home, but his love for his wife prevents him from going far. He lies down on the grass in sorrow. The doe too is filled with remorse for having been so harsh on her husband and starts missing him. Just then she hears the sound of gunshots. Bullets rain on the male deer who tries desperately to run away. The helpless doe watches from the distance. The sight of the festive mood in the family of the hunter feasting on venison late in the night, adds to the pathos of the deer’s death. The emotion and sulking of the deer are very interesting presentations in the story.

In Baba Brahmaputra the sad story behind the mighty Brahmaputra, born to Santanu and Amogha, being addressed as Baba is described. Once Brahmaputra was a very loving father. His daughter, dressed in blue, jewels done in gold and with a blood-red complexion, is killed by lightning. Brahmaputra’s sorrow flares up. The peaceful waves become violent. To make Brahmaputra forget about his sorrow, the rivers-streams, hills and mountains start calling him Baba in earnestness. The story does not have the characteristics of a short story.

In the story Manuh aru Gas a dream is picturised. As the hero and heroine of the story sit under a tree in the park, they get drowsy. In their dream they see the lord of trees arousing their subconscious minds –

“You two are affected by four things – search for food, dearth of rest, sexual urge and fear of the future. In the life of a tree you can have food

standing in one place without doing any work, the entire period is of rest, there is provision for instant fulfilment as soon as the sexual urge arises.”

Feeling tempted for the peace and tranquility of a tree, and with the boon of the gods, when they become trees, they remember their familial responsibilities. On the other hand, the confined life of trees gives them far more suffering than human life.

The writer has succeeded in showing the end to the complexities of life and the actions and reactions of the subconscious mind through a dream.

A profusion of dreams is highlighted in the story Sonapanee aru Rupapanee. It is an interesting tale of an ascetic in the Khasi Hills and his two daughters who, by dint of their actions, turn into inanimate things of nature that is, the lofty mountain peak and the Bidon-Bishop Falls. Clear signs of a modern short story are missing from the story. It is worth mentioning that at that time this story was prevalent as a legend.

4.15.3. Stories based on struggles

In Noir Datit, the life story of Malati, who is devastated by struggles and sufferings, is presented. Having been born in a well-to-do family, Malati loses her parents at the age of six. She stays with different families and grows up to be a very beautiful girl. Hard working Kalinath is disowned by his father for marrying Malati, who has not undergone the stage of child marriage. Self-dependent Kalinath’s life goes on smoothly. They are blessed with a child. In the meantime, Kalinath’s father dies. At the entreaties of his

60. Baruah Birinchi Kumar, History of Assamese Literature, P.-175-176.
mother Kalinath’s returns to the village, but on the way his boat capsizes in a whirlpool. Having lost her son, his mother embraces his wife and child. But there is no end to Malati’s misery. Her mother-in-law passes away. Her only ray of hope, the child is also snatched away by death. She loses interest in the property and wealth and registers everything in the name of a distant brother-in-law. As soon as she gives up her property, she faces a lot of insult and ridicule and starts living in a small hut on the bank of the river. She lives by begging and all that she wants now is death. This is the story of Malati. The problems brought into the life of an individual by a society tainted with ills and the conflicts of human nature are focused in the story. The first conflict is in the form of disowning of Kalinath by his father for marrying Malati against social sanction. The second conflict is the atrocities meted out to Malati by her brother-in-law after she loses her property. The writer’s desire to bring about reforms in society is shown through the strong character of Kalinath.

4.15.4. **Stories based on women**

In Ghunusa, the sad story of a woman who becomes a puppet in the hands of her family, society and fate, is shown in a very touching manner. Ghunusa was once the daughter of a rich family, daughter-in-law of a rich family and wife of a rich man. Destiny ridicules her good fortune. Her husband dies during her pregnancy. Even the baby boy born to her is proven illegitimate by her brother-in-law through false witnesses. Society banishes her. Her brother-in-law seizes all the property. With her only son Moniram for company, she starts living beside the river in a thatched hut. Her sorrow
gradually grows. A fatal fever snatches away the life of Moniram. Ghunusa becomes mad.

The oppression of helpless women by powerful people in society is shown clearly in the story. The writer exposes men with greed for wealth, the religious preacher and the arbitrator. Moreover, the scholarly Jaminikanta Sarma brings to the fore the obnoxious picture of the hopelessness of those in society who are poverty-stricken, exploited and destitutes.\textsuperscript{61}

In Shobha, the chaste character of a woman is portrayed beautifully. The love affair between Shobha, the only daughter of a doctor and Hemu, the only son of her neighbour, a settlement clerk, comes to an end as soon as Hemu’s matriculation result is out. Realising that Hemu would not be able to fulfil his desire of having a graduate son-in-law, the doctor takes transfer to another district and leaves that place within three days of Hemu’s result. Several years later Hemu completes his graduation and landing the job of a ‘sub-deputy’, even marries the daughter of a munsif. Hemu the magistrate, who does not mix up with all and sundry, frequently visits the home a clerk. One day the clerk’s wife tells her husband, “I wonder why the magistrate frequents our house? He must not come here anymore. Explain to him in any way you can that he is not welcome here.”\textsuperscript{62}

In reply to his wife’s earnest entreaties when the clerk says, “Come on now Shobha, I shall tell him, but don’t cry,” only then does the reader realise the mystery in the story, Shobha’s chaste character and Hemu’s

\textsuperscript{61} Jaminikanta Sarma and Bhupendra Kumar Chakravarty (editors), Sarat Gaurav, P.-62
\textsuperscript{62} Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasannawali, Part-I, P.-19
indomitable attraction for her. The main factor of the story is Shobha’s character. It is not unnatural for a woman to feel attracted to a man with whom she grows up from childhood, after attaining puberty. But feeling attracted to that person even after getting married to someone else is nothing but a sin. Shobha abhors this sin. She does not want the return of Hemu into her life and desires to spend the rest of her life with the one she marries by the grace of God. The presentation of the subject matter and the ending are great. The brightness of Shobha’s chastity eclipses the other characters in the story.

In Sanyasisni the writer brings to light an unrevealed facet of a woman’s mind. The subject matter is the good decision of a woman who is in a dilemma and her remorse later on. The story runs in the following manner—Kamal, the heroine of the story is in love with Mohan. But getting no positive response from Mohan, she starts an affair with another boy, Ghanashyam. At one point of time Ghanashyam starts ignoring her. On the other hand, Mohan has always loved her from his heart; so, after completing his studies he marries her. It is only after the marriage that realisation dawns on Kamal. Her heart burns in remorse. Mohan’s simplicity and his passion for her drive her crazy. Consequently one day without the knowledge of Mohan, she leaves home and becomes a sanyasini (ascetic).

Through the simplicity of a woman’s mind, her repentance at adulthood for an act that she does in her younger days and her final decision, the writer tries to highlight idealistic advice. Except sanyasini, the other characters in the story fail to develop properly.
In Sonia the struggling life story of Sonia, who earns her living by working in the tea garden, is described. The subject matter of the story is atrocities by Sonia’s step-mother and the immoral character of some of the employees of the tea garden. One day the assistant manager hatches a plan with Sonia’s step-mother and the head clerk to take her to his bungalow. Had she not been saved by Budhan who goes to her help immediately upon getting wind of the conspiracy, her course of life would have changed forever. After hearing everything, the general manager dismisses the assistant manager and the head clerk from service and gives the jobs of gardener to Budhan and Sonia in his bungalow and has them stay there.

Sonia is a dynamic character in the story. The universal character of a step-mother gets reflected in the story. Life in the tea garden also gets partially reflected in it.

4.15.5. Stories based on economic hardship

In Adrista, the sad story of the life of Dhaniram, who is devastated by misfortune, anxiety and economic hardship, gets reflected. Dhaniram is the younger brother of a clerk of a tea garden. His life becomes totally unbearable due to the death of his brother just two days before his wedding, the seizure of all the wealth by his sister-in-law and the marriage of his would-be bride with someone else. “But just like birth and death, marriage too is a certainty.” He thinks it that way and after taking up the job of a servant in Tepubapu’s house, he marries an orphaned girl. After working the whole day at Tepubapu’s house, he is allowed to leave late in the night. On top of that,

63. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-31
starvation, sleeplessness and anxiety are always there. Under such a circumstance Dhaniram’s newly married wife falls sick. Instead of bringing nutritious food for the sick wife, the poverty-stricken Dhaniram brings her some rice packed in his gamocha given him by Tepuram’s wife, that too surreptitiously lest the Brahmin mistress should accuse him of stealing. But the steamed rice that he brings with such earnestness, is not eaten by his sick wife; all she does is shed tears and takes her last breath.

The bitterness and cruelty of fate and Dhaniram’s deep compassion for his wife tend to bring tears to the reader’s eyes. The tendency of social reform is seen in the story.

4.15.6. Stories based on Destiny / Fate

Pashupatir Biya throws light on destiny and a particular aspect of a society weighed down by evil practices. Considering marriage to be a very important act of human life, the poverty-stricken Pashupati sells off his ancestral belongings and with the seven hundred rupees he gets from it, he pays ga-dhan (money paid as compensation to the guardian of a girl sought to be married), marries a girl. There is no limit to the hardships Pashupati has had to face since the age of two. His wealthy and respectable father dies; finding no alternative, he sells off his ancestral property and gives the money as loan to a Brahmin. But the Brahmin dies without returning the loan, as a result of which Pashupati becomes a destitute. Now, at the time of marriage too misfortune does not take leave of Pashupati. Right in the marriage pandal on the wedding day, the girl’s father announces that he will not get his daughter married to Pashupati if he does not pay him two hundred
rupees. The wedding takes place after a relative of Pashupati’s takes the responsibility to pay the money in three days. But three days after the wedding the girl is afflicted with cholera and she dies at her father’s place. This time Pashupati becomes a total destitute.

The writer succeeds in portraying a social ill in a simple manner. There is no crowding of too many characters. Pashupati is the main character in the story. His father-in-law depicts a preserver of outdated social customs. Inhuman pictures like a very evil social custom like ga-dhan and fleecing of the poverty-stricken Pashupati by various means, forbidding the treatment of a sick daughter and instead talking about money, lend a very tragic touch to the story.

According to the four ashramas of the Vedas, Brahmacharya is the childhood stage when the child has to acquire knowledge. Symbolically man’s life too is that of a Brahmacharya. Because different incidents, whether sad or happy, bring varied lessons or experiences to man’s life. This meaning finds expression in the story Brahmacharya.

Ramchandra Baruah has a happy family with a daughter. He gets his beautiful and talented daughter married to a magistrate. But no one can erase destiny. Baruah’s son-in-law dies of cholera. Unable to bear the premature widowhood of her daughter, Baruah’s wife too passes away. Baruah too puts on the garb of an ascetic and searches for spiritual peace.

There is nothing new in presentation of style in the story. The writer has also not accorded much importance to portrayal of the characters and environment in the story.
Sarat Chandra Goswami’s belief in the philosophy of fate is evident in his stories, which are nurtured by ancient Indian custom and culture. In this context the comment made by Dr Jaminikanta Sarma is noteworthy – “Goswami is a man who grew up in the midst of ancient Indian tradition and culture and that is why his life is controlled by Indian philosophy. Indian people are basically believers in fate. Goswami too is basically a writer believing in fate. Apart from fate, many of his stories are replete with humanitarian viewpoints.64

Noted litterateur, journalist and critic Homen Borgohain sees the influence of irredeemable fate (destiny) in Goswami’s stories –

“Man is always affected by some form of sadness, which cannot be defined, or has no remedy. For example, an accidental death. In the story Noir Datit the woman named Malati faces tremendous torture in the hands of society…surely this sorrow is not inevitable or irredeemable…but the sudden death of her husband Kalinath in a boat mishap…no human remedy can be thought of for it. The realisation of certainty of fate and a sad feeling keep his stories weighed down.”65

Moreover, the pangs of poverty, ruthlessness of oppression and other social evils are shown so clearly in Goswami’s stories that they have the capacity to arouse even the hidden human pathos among his readers. In many stories some characters are seen engaging in humanitarian activities to overcome adversities driven by fate. In some other stories indications are

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64. Sarma Jaminikanta, Chakravarty Bhupendra Kumar (edited), Sarat Gaurav, P.-60
65. Borgohain Homen (edited), Asomiya Galpa Sankalan, Part-I, P.-30
seen of attempts to show the actions of fate or fortune through human realisation.

In Tara the theory of destiny finds full expression. Sixteen-year-old Tara who is in the prime of her youth, is an extremely beautiful girl. A youth named Gopal is in love with Tara, but she does not become his wife, she marries another man. Gopal tries to find solace by thinking of fulfilling his desire of this life in his next life. But he is a human being and is not above human nature. An indomitable desire surges in his heart to see her, but fate decides otherwise.

The one whom he did not want to go out of sight even for the blink of an eye, whose necklace he tried to remove to ensure that there should not be the slightest difference, was so far away from her, and he could not even see her. Alas fate, alas the extreme point of hopelessness! 66

Hopelessness and deep contemplation take Gopal to the realms of transcendentalism. He starts seeing Tara in everything that is beautiful in this world. Indian philosophical thoughts like fate and birth after death make the story serious.

In Noir Datit fate is highlighted through the poverty of Malati. Her losing her father at age five, her mother a year later, and her having to grow up living here and there, are defiant of remedy; these are part of destiny. A temporary family life with her husband and child, death of her husband Kalinath in a boat mishap while returning home, death of her crestfallen mother-in-law six months after her son’s death, and then the untimely death

66. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanaawali, Part-I, P.-11
of her only ray of hope, her child, are nothing but results of misfortune or
destiny.

Death is nobody’s wish; untimely death is very pathetic. The touching
description of how such sad incidents can influence human life, lends pathos
to the story.

In the story Adrista the sad destiny of another Malati is shown in a
heart-rending manner. Malati is the newly married wife of Dhaniram, the
servant serving at Tepuram Bapu’s house for a salary of seven score rupees.
The magnificence of pure love and happiness, meaningless extravagance
and an unrestrained conjugal life come the fortunate Malati’s way. But the
life of the beautiful Malati is soon filled with starvation, shame and
unimaginable destitution of her helpless husband. Even though the story has
been titled Adrista (destiny or fate), the incidents that happen to Dhaniram
the main character, may be sad but not without remedy. Death of his elder
brother due to cholera, appropriation of all the money and wealth by his
sister-in-law, loss of all his land at the instance of Keya Mahajan, his would-
be bride marrying another man even after solemnisation of the juran, and
finally his working as a servant in the house of a Brahmin family for a salary
of seven score rupees, come into the life of Dhaniram, but as a man these
are not beyond his attempts to overcome. But because of his weak nature
he becomes a puppet in the hands of destiny. Hence he cannot draw the
sympathy of every reader. Just as his action of bringing home surreptitiously
some food given him at Tepuram’s house, for his wife shows his cowardice,
so also the pathetic look in Malati’s eyes before she closes her eyes forever,
further deepens the gravity of her fate.
In Pashupatir Biya, the intensity of destiny is expressed. Pashupati loses his father at a tender age. His helpless mother goes away to his uncle’s house. His uncle sells off his father’s entire property and lends the money to a Brahmin on behalf of Pashupati. Suddenly one day the Brahmin dies and Pashupati loses everything. Upon growing up he proceeds to marry, an act that is considered socially indispensable. For that he sells off his gold necklace and the remaining property and with seven hundred rupees from the amount he gets, chooses a girl by making an advance payment. The wedding is solemnised, but at the wedding venue the girl’s father refuses to hand over his daughter to Pashupati if he does not part with another two hundred rupees. The wedding is finally solemnised only after a relative of Pashupati’s promises to pay the sum demanded in three days. The bride who visits her parents’ home after three days, is struck with cholera. Her father does not arrange medicines for her. He even does not allow the doctor that Pashupati fetches, to touch his daughter before Pashupati makes the promised payment. It is only after Pashupati sells off his remaining ornaments and makes the payment, that his father-in-law allows the doctor to check his daughter. But in the meantime the patient dies.

All the happenings in Pashupati’s life are indicative of the sad machinations of fate.

In the story Mayna fate seems to be controlling the happenings in the heroine’s life. The husband of the heroine who marries at a very young age, works at an unknown place in lower Assam. Destiny finds it hard to bear their happy conjugal life along with their three-year-old child. It snatches away the baby. The couple prays to God for another baby, but their prayer
goes unheard. Her husband tries to make her forget her misery by fetching her a mynah. But when the bird starts talking, her husband dies. Not only that, a few days later destiny snatches away even her last companion, the mynah. A very strong influence of fate is seen in the story.

The story Bazikar talks about the Supreme One, who is the all-in-all in this universe, the creator of this strange world.

In Pujari shades of destiny are clear. Following intense prayers offered to the child Gopal by the priest and his wife, child Gopal appears in their dream and hugs them. A few days after the dream they are really blessed with a beautiful baby. In the words of the writer, “In the abode of child Gopal the echoes of the joyful Nandan reverberated. As if the child Gopal himself was present at the cries and joys of the child.”

For the wellbeing of the child the priest and his wife pray to the deity with full devotion and eagerness. But suddenly their lovely child dies of snakebite. Not cowing down before fate, the priest consoles his wife in the following manner, “Don’t be sad. Isn’t it enough for us that the Lord Gopala himself came to live with us for a few days?”

The consolation is proof enough of the intensity of transcendentalism in the story.

In Beltumoni, fortune or fate is shown to be clearly at the root of the unthinkable change that comes into Beltumoni’s life. As the orphan Beltumoni roams aimlessly, he comes across a gathering of men engaged in laying

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railway lines. He saves the small son of the chief contractor from being bitten by a mad dog, but gets bitten himself. But the mad dog’s bite seems to be a blessing in disguise for Beltumoni, because the grateful contractor takes him to Kasauli for treatment. After staying there for a long time he joins the army during the First World War and is taken to France. The illiterate boy does not know for whom or against whom he is fighting, but he keeps on fighting and finally falls unconscious after being hit in the hand, stomach and eye by bullets. While undergoing treatment in the hospital he gets to know that he has been honoured with the Victoria Cross by the emperor for fighting valiantly against the Germans. Winning the globally prestigious Victoria Cross is seen as Beltumoni’s sign of fortune.

In Sashur-Jowain all the happenings in the hero Mangalu’s life are controlled by fate. In a single year his life is filled with misery; his ahu paddy is damaged due to dry weather, for his sali cultivation he has to face a dry weather till the month of Ahar, in the month of Shrawan his wife falls seriously ill and finally dies. He hopes to do some cultivation towards the fag end of the season, but the bullocks are afflicted with pox and die. All these happenings in a single year are extreme instances of fate. Having gained so much of experience, Mangalu tries to take every step in his life ahead carefully, but fate hands him ill-luck in place of fortune. Fearing that he will not be able to bring up his children properly, and also not wanting to work as a servant in somebody’s home, he takes up a job in the railways for a salary of six annas, and saves two annas from it for the future. After bringing up his daughter Rukmini with a lot of hardship, he gets her married to ‘writer’ constable Ananda and thinks that he has found a good match for her. But
fate does not want that to happen. On the day of Athmangala his son-in-law gets offended with him for not being able to entertain well the people accompanying him; and he severs all ties with Mangalu.

Five years pass amidst joy and sorrow. Mangalu’s thirteen-year-old son returns home after completing his minor exams and goes to the river with a few of his friends to row a boat. The boat capsizes in a whirlpool and Mangalu’s son and two others meet with a watery grave. Not only that, he even fails to trace out his son’s body. At the police station he expects some good treatment from his son-in-law, but is ill-treated. Finally he becomes totally helpless and is overwhelmed by misery. Seeing his condition his daughter, in the absence of her husband, takes Mangalu to her home. Upon his return home his son-in-law calls him a burden on others, a mad man and drags the half dead man out of his house.

Every incident in Mangalu’s life is controlled by destiny, none of these can be rectified by human action.

Brahmacharya is about the heart-rending tale of a happy family that suffers untold misery because of fate. Ramchandra Baruah and his wife are a happy couple with a daughter. He gets his daughter married to a magistrate. Their boundless happiness becomes unbearable for fate. It comes in the form of cholera and snatches away his son-in-law a few days after the wedding. Baruah’s crestfallen wife dies soon after and Baruah becomes a Brahmachari. The influence of fate is shown cruelly in the story.

In the story Antar Avaran, man’s style of determining his fortune is reflected. Greed, attachment, lust, anger etc., are God-given; but He does
not give all these to everyone openly, but keeps them covered with a layer. The aim of this is to protect man from others’ bad habits and help him enjoy life without anxiety. This story shows the deceit of fate.

In Ghunusa, the adversities that come into the life of a woman clearly reflect the philosophy of destiny. The untold atrocities unleashed on a helpless woman by her relatives reflect instances of extreme inhumanity. The deaths of her husband, father and inlaws, and even the birth of her son bring misery into Ghunusa’s life. Instead of a son had she given birth to a girl, she would have had no heir to the property and thus could have avoided the animosity of her brother-in-law. In order to deprive her of the property, her brother-in-law projects her as an immoral woman. Consequently she is considered untouchable. When her only son is affected by kalazar, she sells her wedding ring and paat riha and mekhela to pay the healer for his treatment; but the boy does not recover. Ignoring his mother’s prayers, offerings and donations, her only son passes away from this world. Ghunusa loses faith in God and becomes insane, but still she does not give up trying to get even with fate. Influence of cruel fate is an ingredient of the story.

In Punarjanma there is a union of humanity and fate. Just as fate is prominent in the capsize of the boat in the Brahmaputra in which Malati, her parents and brother come to see the Kamakhya temple, so also humanity finds good expression when Ramdas’ father not only gives shelter to Malati, but also makes his son marry her.

In Daktar, fate has an infallible influence on the life of the doctor who pledges to serve mankind and does so till his death. Death of his would-be parents-in-law, the resultant separation from his sweetheart Prabha, his meeting with the ailing Prabha, death of Prabha after giving birth to a baby
girl and his decision to bring up the baby girl even though he cannot marry Prabha, are all controlled by destiny, but in every action the doctor’s humanity is evident. In his every action humanity finds prominence.

In Kapalar Likhon the influence of fate in human life is highlighted. Mandighala Mudoi is an honest and sincere man. He cannot endure the highhandedness of the mauzadar on the common ryots. Hence once he files a case against the mauzadar of Suagkuchi mauza. His enmity with the mauzadar begins then. After that many officers are transferred. The mauzadar spreads slander against Mudoi and has him punished by the officers. But when the mauzadar’s house is about to be attached due to non-payment of revenue, it is the broad-minded (mandighal) Mudoi who bails him out by spending his savings.

Mudoi’s character epitomizes generosity. The fact that we accept as destiny the results of our activities, is shown in the story.

4.15.7. Stories based on religious life

In Punarjanma the sad-joyous picture of the reunion of two people in love who are ravaged by different problems, is presented. The theme of the story is this—a girl named Malati accidentally falls into the river Brahmaputra and goes missing and then reunites with her parents as a married woman in another society. It is a brief story. Had the style been a bit more developed it would have made interesting reading. By making Ramdas marry a girl of unknown antecedents, the writer tries to make his character look bold, but the feeling that it is actually destiny that makes it possible, is not totally missing.
Malini, as admitted by the writer himself, has been adopted from some ancient tale. The story is about Malini, princess of Kashi who abandons her lover when Buddhism makes its appearance, and embracing the religion, becomes a monk. The belief that the influence of religion can subdue even the madness of youth, seems to have been depicted in this story.

The story Devadarshan points to the miracles of God. The religious Bidyratna who goes on a pilgrimage to places like Kashi, Dwaravati, Setubandha, Jagannath etc., meets different people in different difficult situations. These people are of strange characteristic traits. The activities of these people make him realize that rather than the external pilgrimage, the real pilgrimage is self-cleansing. The honesty of all the characters – pundit, Brahmin and Rajput is shown in the story. Picturisation of honesty in the character of a dacoit is possible only for an expert storyteller.

Pujar Noibadya is the strange tale of the daughter-in-law of a well-to-do family giving away the offerings meant for Goddess Durga, to a person in distress. The writer has given emphasis to picturisation of environment. There is a flow in the character of the daughter-in-law.

4.15.8. Stories based on Assam’s rural society

Raktabeez is the naked picture of Assam’s rural society losing its discipline and peace due to alcoholism, and of the hatred that takes over the once cordial relations. The two elderly heads of two families that co-habit in harmony go on a pilgrimage to Jagannath. Their sons are Moni and Jadu. One day Moni’s cow eats grain belonging to Jadu. Both the shepherds get into a fight, which is later joined in by the wives of Moni and Jadu. The fight comes to such a pass that Moni and Jadu finally engage in fisticuffs. Not
stopping at that, Jadu ensures that Moni is sent to jail. After coming out of jail, Moni gets Jadu’s house attached through the settlement officer of the court. Half of the village population sides with Moni and the other half backs Jadu.

After returning from pilgrimage, the two old friends are aghast at what they see. They take solace in the fact that it is the influence of Kalyug. Even at the time of his death, Jadu’s father takes his last breath after drinking water provided by Moni’s father. In his last moments Jadu’s father entreats Moni’s father to make their two sons bury their hatchets, but the latter fails in his attempts. Just because a cow had eaten a little paddy, not only two families that had enjoyed such cordial relations, have fought, but a raktabeez (poisonous seed) is sown in the village. Three eminent scholars agree that the story has been influenced by Tolstoy’s A Spark neglected burns the House. They are Dr Banikanta Sarma69 Jatindranath Goswami70 and Troilokyanath Goswami71.

The two old men in the story epitomize the simplicity of old rural society. This simplicity is getting eclipsed in the modern change-oriented society. Impudence, selfishness and ignorance are usurping its place. This ideology gets reflected in the story.

Megh aru Bhekuli is the rediscovery of the festival of a frog’s wedding that was prevalent in the old Assamese society. By infusing the power of speech in a lowly creature like frog, human virtue is being given to it.

69. Sarma Banikanta aru Ananya (edited), Sarat Saurav, P- 70
70. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasana, Preface, P-9
71. Troilokyanath Goswami, Adhunik Galpa Sahitya, P-101
The writer has not given much importance to proper presentation of the characters. He seems more interested in highlighting the rural society.

The style of placement of the subject matter of Nadaram is unique. In an amusing game of planchette played by a few friends one night, the interesting incident in Nadaram’s life shines and one day as the friends play planchette, Nadaram appears physically before one of them. One of the friends catching planchet is a magistrate; hence he seeks justice from that magistrate for the misdeeds of his wife while he was away in France taking part in a battle. There is not the slightest difference between the planchette incident and real life incidents.

The story portrays the touching picture of the simplicity and magnanimity of Kachari youth Nadaram. During the World War, Nadaram goes to France as a soldier to take part in the war, leaving his aged parents in the care of his wife. On his return from the war Nadaram finds that his wife has totally neglected his parents and is having an affair with Bhatiram of the same village. Nadaram seeks proper justice from the English sahib. In the trial Bhatiram is sent to jail and Nadaram’s wife is compelled to come back to him. But to the surprise of all, Nadaram entreats the magistrate to release Bhatiram and sends his wife back to him. Because, “Since she is not content with me, what’s the use of keeping her?”\(^72\)

There cannot be a second instance of handing over of one’s wife to another man. A unique style has been adopted to find a link of today’s world with the ancient world of spirits through the placement of planchette.

\(^72\) Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasaniwali, Part-I, P.-00.
Bazeekar is the first story in the collection. The authority on religion, the litteratuer, scientist, philosopher and politician – all are driven by their shallow knowledge and define some highly wise great men as bazeekar (magicians). But in the end they are compelled to accept the logic put forward by the sanyasis, who are endowed with undisputed wisdom.

4.15.9. Stories based on Culture

The subject matter of the story Bayan is a conflict between good culture and bad culture. Bayan wants to organise a bhaona, an indispensable part of Assamese culture that has evolved from the glorious Indian culture, in the village, but the people want to hold a yatra to the accompaniment of tabla, violin and harmonium. But at the behest of Kabiratna, an influential man of the village, bhaona is held in place of yatra. But Bayan feels it deep within that his days of influence are gone. Like a simmering lamp that glows brightly for a split moment before going out, Bayan too presents his artistry with full commitment for the last time. After Bayan’s death Kabiratna remarks, “Old Bayan was a very pious man. Like Bheesma he was waiting for deliverance…”73 That a culture gets recognition after its death and an honest and truthful man gets recognition in society after death, are shown with the help of satire.

4.15.10. Stories based on Science

The sadness of a mother’s heart shattered at the altar of science is the theme of the story Piyanhor Paani. The only son of a widow suffers from typhoid. On the advice of a young doctor she does not give him water to

73. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-129
drink following the practice followed at that time in the treatment of typhoid. The boy dies yearning for a drop of water. Getting remorseful at being unable to give him a little water to drink, the mother becomes mad. Even at that state of lunacy she does give her dead son water. The sorrow of a mother’s heart cannot be measured in terms of scientific experiments. By bringing forth this great truth with just a momentary incident, the writer has shown his artistic acumen.

4.15.11. Stories based on Cruelty of man

The cruelty and wickedness of man, the highest of all living being, finds the ultimate expression in the story Shikari aru Haanh. At a heartening moment when a male duck, like a farsighted human couple, is thinking about their conjugal life, about the lessons to be taught to their little ones, suddenly bullets from a hunter’s gun pierce the duck and its little one. A feast is being arranged at the house of the hunter to celebrate his son’s ensuing foreign trip to pursue his studies. And yet humans, rooted so strongly to attachments, do not know that all the hopes and aspirations of life can come to an end at one ominous moment. Just like the hunter kills the ducks in moments, so also fate can snatch away man’s life in a moment. There is an intense conflict between the destruction indulged in by a family and the rise of hope in another family.

The subject matter of the story Sashur-Jowain is the heart-breaking cruelty of the human heart. Manglu, the hero of the story is honest, sincere and hard working. His is a happy family with his wife and two children Rukmini and Haragobinda. But God cannot bear his happiness. Adversities like a rainless season, death of his wife following a disease, death of his only...
means of cultivation the oxen etc., in just one season of the year change the course of his life. Finding no other option he lands a job in the railways and brings up his children amidst a lot of hardships. After getting his daughter married to Ananda, the clerk in the police station nearby, he thinks that his days of suffering are over. But his actual misery starts then. His son-in-law severs all ties with him for being unable to treat those who accompany him on the athmangala day with good food, standard gifts etc. God cannot bear this Manglu, who, keeping all his sorrows to himself and taking his son to be his only asset, devotes all his time and energy towards his education. Haragobinda, who goes boating with two friends, is engulfed by a whirlpool. For the sake of money Manglu’s son-in-law presents the incident as a murder and sends the dead body to Guwahati. He has his father-in-law who tries to touch his feet, chased out of the police station through a constable. The helpless and destitute Manglu breaks down completely. Even though Ananda never encourages his wife to enquire about her father, she comes to know about his misfortune and brings him to her home. On his return Ananda comes to know about it and landing a huge kick on his wife’s back, says, “Why have you brought this lunatic home to be our burden, wretched woman?”74 The son-in-law represents inhumanity and his father-in-law epitomizes tolerance. The conflict between the two men deepens the pathos in the story.

4.15.12. Stories based on Creation of man

In Manuhar Shrishti, a novel theory about the creation of man, the amrit santan of Vishnu, is described. With the remnants of items used by Brahma the Creator, his daughter makes an unusual figurine.

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74. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P-221
A jelly-like, rounded figure, its skin is the lightest of all, teeth are blunt, very short, nails are almost non-existent, it is hairless in order to be safe from cold and heat, the body is loose as it cannot be stretched; it cannot eat anything because of its soft teeth and mouth.\textsuperscript{75}

At the entreaties of his niece that is, Brahma’s daughter, Vishnu places a drop of nectar into the figure’s mouth and infuses a drop of blood from His pierced finger into its body. This is Ma-nav or the new mother of Brahma’s daughter. Even though human traits are being infused into Brahma, Vishnu, Bishwakarma, Sabitri etc., the description is not unusual.

4.15.13. Stories based on Rebirth

Pujari talks about rebirth. According to ancient Indian philosophy, man has to be reborn after death in order to fulfil his incomplete works of the present life. This finds expression in the story. The priest and his wife, who worship Bal-Gopal, are childless. Worship of that deity has led to fulfilment of the wishes of many. They too pray from the core of their hearts for a baby. At the blessings of Bal-Gopal, the priest’s temple is filled with the laughter of a child. But only for a few days. Suddenly one day the laughter and crying come to an end. Only the tearless lamentations of the heart of the priest’s wife remain alive. In an attempt to console his wife, the priest too tries to find solace –

“Don’t be sad. Wasn’t His temporary company with us enough?”\textsuperscript{76}

The theories of reincarnation of God through the ages as depicted in the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata of Indian philosophy, get expression in the story.

\textsuperscript{75} Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-133
\textsuperscript{76} Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-138.
4.15.14. Stories based on Sacrifice

Beltumoni is about an orphan Beltumoni who is courageous, spendthrift and a selfless patriot. Beltumoni, who is in the habit of roaming about aimlessly since childhood, finds his life taking a drastic change ever since he saves a small boy from being bitten by a mad dog. He gets the opportunity to travel to different places with the child’s father. During the World War he even gets an opportunity to fight against the Germans in distant France. Beltumoni, who regards his own life as secondary, is decorated with the Victoria Cross by the emperor.

Beltumoni is an apt example of characters in motion. His activities keep the reader curious about the coming developments. An uneducated young man’s sacrifice for others and for the country finds natural mention in the story.

4.15.15. Stories based on Travel

The story Pantha is about a traveller’s search for the unknown. The traveller is reasonable and logical; he does not seek fame and luxury. After extensive hard work and limitless search he realizes that this world is a never-ending source of happiness and a storehouse of peace and knowledge.

The story is in allegorical form. Nothing, from the characterisation, to progress of the story to style and artistry, finds good effort from the writer.

4.15.16. Stories based on Conscience

The hypocrisy of the so-called conscientious one is the subject matter of Bibek Biparjay. The teacher named Sachidananda Sewadas who is known as a man of high principles, is caught by the inspector while teaching his
students from the officially banned key book. In order to take action against Sewadas the inspector takes away the key books to submit as proof. Sewadas, who always talks of ethics and conscience, takes refuge in a student. Earlier one day Sewadas had forbidden this student named Atul from sitting for the exam after finding some torn pages of the geometry book in his pocket. The teacher who goes to Atul with an ulterior motive, tells the student in a tone of appeasement—

“You are aware of the exams this time. It was I who influenced the headmaster into giving you promotion. Now I am on the verge of losing my job over the key book issue. In my opinion a student studying a key book is not a big issue. Now there is no one else but you who can save me from this trouble. Actually it is a slur on the face of our school and it is bad for the headmaster also. That is why I am telling you…It is not a very tough job. See this bundle in my hand? There are seven key books to textbooks of the last five/six years in this bundle. If you can put this bundle on the officer’s table and bring those on his table to me, then all our crimes will be over. Anyway, you are a regular visitor to the officer’s bungalow.”

Having Atul get involved in an illicit act, teacher Sewadas is absolved of the charges. The conscience of a teacher known as an idealistic man, dies a premature death, but there is no indication of any conflict in his mind.

4.15.17. Stories based on Satire

Parhahali Paridardhan is a tale – presented satirically – of a village school teacher and an assistant inspector of schools conspiring to dupe the
school inspector. Kalpeswar is not fit to be a mandal, contractor or copy writer. His elder brother who is a mauzadar, sets up a school and makes him the headmaster of that school. At the instance of his elder brother, the school is sanctioned. The inspector comes to the school for inspection. At a gesture from the deputy inspector of schools, Kalpeswar has his students provide milk, fish, pigeons and goat to the inspector and succeeds in getting a report ‘exceptionally intelligent’ filed in his favour and his salary increased to twenty rupees.

In Pandit Babu, a corrupt sub-inspector of schools and the so-called scholarly aptitude of a semi-literate teacher of a primary school are shown satirically. Even though the importance of training in education is shown in a straightforward manner, the impudence of a teacher who passes training is shown satirically. The fact that impudence is deterrent to good teaching, is also shown indirectly.

The subject matter of the story Chirakumar is the result of a decision taken by a few young men on the spur of the moment. Satire is inherent in the subject matter. The hero of the story Baruah and some of his friends who are in college, take the pledge to remain bachelors as marriage is a burden and in an advanced society the bond of marriage is rare. In due course of time all of the twenty or twenty-five youths who had earlier vowed not to marry, get married. Baruah, the only one yet to marry, also starts acting in a crazy manner. Finally he marries a sixteen-year-old girl.

Man is a living being. Hence man cannot ignore his physical needs. Another angle of the story is education. In a society not yet blessed with civilisation, birth, death and marriage were regarded as necessary activities.
Just as birth had come to the family inevitably, similar was the case with death. Hence, such a wrong decision naturally makes the learned society thoughtful even though for a while.

In Beer Mati the superstition of the Assamese society is shown satirically. Legend is associated with a plot of land in a small village called Haldia in Kamrup district. Because of that people are scared of that plot of land. In the words of the writer –

“If you pass by that beermati, you will get to hear a lot of noise made by drums and cymbals. That place is now haunted. On Sundays they hold Nam Prasanga and distribute prasad there. If there are people around, prasad is given to them also; but they cannot partake of that prasad as it is made up of bones and skeletons. Sometimes the jingle of money is heard. At times the spirit queen is seen putting on her ornaments.”

When proverbs and sayings are not understood and ancillary interpretations are sought to be made, those do not fit in social or real life. Similarly, in the story Beer Mati, legendary tales are creating reactions in the mindset of the inhabitants of village Haldia. The traits of a short story are absent from it.

In Tinikuri Taka the inevitable moments of the human mind are shown satirically. Due to the confusion of different problems, man forgets about some instant point, but a vague form of that point takes root in his subconscious mind. For example, the point regarding tinikuri taka (three score rupees). While travelling by train the hero carries six ten rupee notes

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78. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-255.
and the ticket together in his wallet. He keeps the wallet locked inside the trunk. Since opening the trunk at the station proves troublesome, he opens the trunk before reaching the station, takes out the ticket and coins from it and then shuts it down again. At home he opens the trunk but is astonished to find that everything is intact except the six ten rupee notes. He tells his friends about it and they look at the matter from the angle of detectives, but cannot come to any constructive conclusion. The writer is successful in presenting a commonplace incident in man’s life satirically.

4.15.18. Stories based on Politics

The story Discipline is about the anarchic atmosphere created by the college students’ unruliness and the escapist attitude of the administrators. The college principal turns down the appeal of the students for permission to raise the national flag on Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday. On the other hand, apprehending trouble from the students who are determined to hoist the flag, the principal’s wife informs the police. The police assault the students and send some of them to jail. On the other hand, influential relatives of the students approach the minister concerned. The atmosphere in the college remains tense. There is part expression of the students’ rebellious stance, the principal’s escapist tendency and the craftiness of the politicians in the story.

4.15.19. Stories based on ills prevalent in society

The writer considers the story Mantra as a play. Because of the dialogue presentation, the story does take the form of a play. Goswami exposes the ills prevalent in society in those days – the aversion to work of the educated section, influence of harmful activities like gambling, addiction of school
students to opium. Vices like black magic had badly influenced even little children. While going to the opium joint of an addict named Kalai, Joyram, a brilliant student who had obtained a government scholarship and another school student Bhadreswar learn a mantra –

Thu thu photo
Dha dhu boot
Amuka Panditar haat
Bhelki marilu taat
Mor dak, gurur hak
Jenekoi aso tenekoi thak
Kamrupar Kamakhya mao
Aei kathat narakhile garu-manuh khao.79

Kalai claims that the mantra is strong enough to make the teacher forget even if they come late to school, and to reverse the hands of the clock. But the next day itself both the students get proof that Kalai’s mantra is not effective. A very important piece of advice has been presented artistically in the story.

4.15.20. Stories based on education system

In Sandhir Baanh the system of education in a Sanskrit tol faces ridicule. In the name of studies, twelve students of the tol simply indulge in pranks and frolic. One day as the Deputy Commissioner and the sub-inspector of schools pass by the tol, the students, in an act of false allegiance to the

79. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-185
school principal, get his monthly salary sanctioned. The cunning of the naughty students is shown in the story in an amusing manner.

4.15.21. Sad stories

Batu Bapur Bar Bepar is the sad story of an extremely clever student Batukanta Sarma. The head clerk of the tea garden has his foolish son get into the company of the simple Brahmin boy Batu since he is a very brilliant student and has obtained a scholarship. The head clerk takes both the students with his own expenses to a school in town. In the company of the head clerk’s foolish son, there is moral degeneration of Batu. Finally both of them wind up their studies in Class VIII. By dint of his father’s influence the head clerk’s son gets a job in the garden, but Batu becomes a total destitute. Using his mother’s savings to start a business, he gets in touch with a company in Calcutta, but is cheated badly.

4.15.22. Stories based on Jealousy

Pratihingsha is about the jealousy and counter-jealousy between two generations. Munsif Atulchandra and wealthy Tarinimohan live in the same village. A trifling issue causes misunderstanding between them and Atulchandra sends Tarinimohan to life imprisonment. Tarinimohan dies in jail. At the time of his death his son Kaminimohan is two years old. As fate would have it, when he grows up he marries the daughter of the man responsible for his father’s death and comes to live with them, without of course knowing the truth. When he finds out the truth, the flame of revenge for his father’s death flares up in his heart. The revenge ends in the bloody sacrifice of four people of two generations at the Mahamaya temple.
The presentation of the story is noble. The characters are clear and the story too is not scattered.

4.15.23. Stories based on Romantic Excitement

The subject matter of the story Eu Koon is romantic excitement. When Dharmeswar returns to his home in Tezpur from his college in Calcutta, he is accompanied by a Bengali lady and an Assamese girl called Jamuna. Jamuna’s father dies in a friend’s house in Calcutta while going on a pilgrimage. After that Jamuna stays in Calcutta. Birendranath Mitra, the friend of Jamuna’s father, had been looking for someone with whom to send her to Assam. Upon hearing about Dharmeswar’s ensuing trip to Assam, he sends Jamuna and a Bengali lady with him. The story begins as soon as Jamuna asks the Bengali woman about their co-traveller Dharmeswar, ‘eu koon’ (who is he). The endless excitement during the train journey makes the story interesting.

Even though the writer has not given much importance to presentation of his characters, the social influence of the one who can just put his signature during that time, is shown satirically. In relation to Dharmeswar’s identity, it is mentioned –

“There is no one in this state who has not heard of Laku Phukan alias Lambodar Phukan of Tezpur. Loku Phukan’s father was a poor man. Hence during his childhood he could not pursue his studies well. He simply had the capacity to somehow put his signature and read some lines of the newspaper. He landed the job of clerk in a tea garden. By virtue of his efforts and good qualities he could get his name included in the shareholders’
list of the tea garden along with Emanuel, Brown, Scot, Madagascar, Vladivostok and others. After a few years when everything seemed to be devastated in a catastrophe, the names of all the other shareholders got eclipsed by his name. That is, Lambodar Pukan or Lambodar Phukan or Loku Phukan became the proprietor and all-in-all or manager of Kiring Miring Tea Garden. Dharmeswar is the eldest son of this Lambodar Phukan.”

Just like Malakhu Gogoi, the main character in Bezbaroa’s famous story Malak Gwin Gwin changing his name to Malak Gwin Gwin, so also Goswami’s character Loku Phukan changes form to Lambadur Pukan. The incidents in both the stories shine in their own ways.

4.15.24. Stories based on Responsibility

In Ejon Burha Bamun aru Teur Tini Putra the ideals of duties of the three sons towards their father are highlighted in gestures. The old man has three sons and all of them are virtuous. The eldest son is very religious; because of his devotion to religious activities, he is not interested in family life. The second son is an ideal householder. He may not be a very rich man, but he is sympathetic and helpful towards all his relatives and friends. The third son is extremely rich. He is so very busy minting money that he finds it difficult even to attend the shraddha ceremony of his dead father. During his old age even though the man visits his three sons, he spends his final days in his second son’s house. The true duty of a real householder is to serve his parents and guru. This philosophy is shown in the form of a story.

80. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P-249-250
4.15.25. **Happy Ending stories**

The subject matter of Dui Bhai is the cleverness, patience at times of crisis and hard work of two brothers. Both the brothers Dharmanath and Gangadhar fall victim to the conspiracy of a deceitful relative and lose all their wealth. Selling off a marshy land that has been lying unused for forty/fifty years, the two brothers repay their loans and with the remaining money, open a shop. By the grace of God and hard work they gradually become quite prosperous. Both get married and start living happily. Stories of such happy ending are rare among Sarat Chandra Gosami’s creations.

4.15.26. **Stories based on Joint Family**

In Chor, the deceit and craftiness of three brothers find expression. The eldest of the three is Ghinaram, the village arbitrator. The second one is Minaram, a clerk at the police station. The youngest one Kinaram is unemployed. His wife is also treated as one working in other people’s homes. Kinaram’s wife is not willing to live in the joint family. This leads to regular quarrels among them, and finally the three brothers separate. The naming of the story is mysterious.

4.15.27. **Historical stories**

The story of Prabhawati is historical. During the reign of Aurangzeb many feudal chiefs in Rajputana had lived like kings. Prabhawati is the daughter of the Hindu feudal chief of Rupnagar. Aurangzeb sends word to the ruler of Rupnagar, seeking his daughter’s hand. On the other hand, Prabhawati is in love with Rana Jay Singh of Mewar. The Rana too has
reciprocated her love. Hearing about the proposal of Aurangzeb, Prabhawati seeks help from Rana Jay Singh. The Rana slays all the Moghuls who come to Rupnagar and marries Prabhawati. Respect for the chastity of a Hindu woman is highlighted in the story.

4.16. Mystery in Goswami’s stories

The belief in realisation of a separate entity, awakening and joy in respect of every object in this world has inspired different people in different ways at different times. This concept that inspires the human mind is called mysticism. As a complementary to this mysticism, mystery or transcendentalism has found mention in the literatures of both the West and the East. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the origin of the word ‘mystery’ is found in the Greek word myein. The meaning of this word is keeping the lips, eyes and ears closed.81

In the words of Kamakhya Prasad Singh Choudhury, who has done extensive research on mysticism and written the research book Modern Indian Mysticism, myein means preventing momentary emotions like fear, patience, shame and passions along with keeping the eyes, ears and mouth (lips) shut.82 The concept of mysticism is simply the earlier stage of creation. Because, when it is not possible to get rid of the bad impressions from the mind, then an overall idea of the very powerful mysteries and the unseen cannot be made.

81. Etymologically the word mystery is derived from the Greek word myein (to close) referring to the lips and the eyes. Mysteries were always secret cults into which a person had to be initiated (taken in). Encyclopaedia Britanica, Vol No 12, 1768, P.-787.

82. Mysticism necessarily implies ‘mystery’ which is derived from the Greek verb ‘muw’ signifying to close the lips, eyes and ears and to shut the doors of fleeting senses and passing passions, Choudhury KPS: Modern Indian Mysticism, 1981, P.-1
It is difficult to contain the meaning of Mysticism within a definition. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica the meaning of Mysticism is given as – The classic Indian formula – “that thou art tat tvam ase (Chandogya Upanishad 6.9) is hedged in with the profoundest ambiguity.

According to Adolt Lasson – “The essence of mysticism is the assertion of an intuition which transcends the temporal gategies of the understanding…Rationalism cannot conduct us to the essence of things; we therefore need intellectual vision.”

What theorist and critic Dr Prafulla Kataki has to say is that, “Whatever raises curiosity and yet that curiosity is not warranted, what we want to know but which is not grasped by our senses, that is supernatural, is mysterious.

Logic cannot be helpful in understanding a theory, that is why an intellectual viewpoint is very essential to understand it. In other words, it is some kind of knowledge or belief outside the periphery of emotional knowledge and conceptual knowledge.

From the above definitions it can be surmised that mysticism is a concept about a supernatural power’s existence derived from intellectual points of view.

The views of the general masses regarding the separate existence, creation and behavior of various earthly things, are normally contested by certain people. According to these particular people, there is some unity

83. Adolt Lasson – Encyclopaedia Britanica, Vol 12, page 787
84. Kataki Prafulla, Sahitya Aru Sangya, P.-282
among the various things and living beings of this earth that exist with specific features of their own. The basis of this unity is the existence of a supreme entity. Those who study or meditate on this entity are the thinkers or philosophers. Because in their hearts they have indomitable desires to know the unknown, immense attraction towards the truth, aversion to sensual pleasures, generous thoughts, gentleness and a pleasant nature. These philosophers are by nature mystics. According to them at the root of all these objects or powers of the world is one supreme power, which is limitless and endless. That is the supreme soul or God.

Every earthly object is transitory, temporary and false. The one and only truth of this universe is God. For the realisation of God one needs meditation. By means of meditation it is possible to make future prophesies, hypnotic studies, magic and other amusing activities; but these are not the real truths; they are extranatural powers only. Realisation of God through these extranatural powers is not possible.

Mystical experience brings tranquilising purification, abiding mental peace, sweet serenity, a paradise of tranquility, the fairest fruit of a well-ordered life. Material peace and joy are temporary and desires for them are limitless. Even after profuse enjoyment, the yearning for material comfort is not extinguished. But the mystics search for heavenly peace and joy.

Man is mortal. The mystics believe that the physical body dies because of the soul’s desire to merge into the Supreme Being. That is, man is born in this world and after completing his duties here as directed by the Supreme

Being, returns to the Unseen One’s fold. The cycle of life and death is the theory of transmigration. Another belief of the mystics is that if a man cannot complete his stipulated duties in this lifetime, then he takes birth again to complete the incomplete work. This is called karmafalbad. Hence it is the concepts of the present life, past life, rebirth, reincarnation, karmafalbad, the soul, the Supreme Soul etc., that define mysticism indiscriminately.

The history of the concept of mysticism to mankind is very ancient. Ever since humans gave up wearing tree leaves for clothes, living in the caves for houses, began to eat tasty cooked food in place of raw flesh and started living together as a society for the sake of safety, the concept of mysticism has more or less been working on their minds. In the first stages of civilisation when humans started engaging themselves in different agricultural activities, they began believing in unnatural phenomena in their daily lives and began performing various ceremonies and activities to protect themselves from them. Various religious beliefs like animism, polytheism and monotheism came into existence around this time. But with the gradual evolution of civilisation, humans began to realise that their fate or destiny was controlled by one Supreme Being.86

Thinkers delved into the root of polytheism and finally arrived at the conclusion that behind every natural object and power there is only one power; He is omnipresent, formless, pure, invisible and omniscient, omnipotent, supreme and all-expressive. It was from Him that the universe came into being, the animal kingdom came into being, and at the end of their

86. Religious of different forms like animism, polytheism and monotheism onwards in different stages of transition of human civilisation have the same belief in an external providence who controls the human destiny, Dutta Nilima, A Quest to Indian Philosophy, P.-2
life span all things return to His fold. He is Brahma or God, the Supreme Soul or Bhagwan.

Mystics find this Supreme Soul through feelings, not through pujas or religious ceremonies. He is even not a subject that can be described in words. That is why Upendranath Goswami mentions, “It is like a wonderful feeling of timelessness and limitlessness.” 87

Mysticism finds expression in the literatures of both the Orient and the Occident. Mysticism normally finds mention in literature that talks of religion, faith, philosophy, nature or beauty. In Assamese literature the Dehbichar Geet, description of the flute of Srikrishna as universal and taking the desire of the Gopis for unification with Him as an aspiration for unification between the soul and the Supreme soul as found in the writings of the Vaishnav poets; the writings of oriental poets like Hajif, Romi and Khayam and the expressions of love for nature by Wordsworth and Shelly reflect mysticism. 88

4.17. Humanism in Goswami’s Stories

In literature along with mysticism another contemporary theory is making its appearance; that is humanism. The source of humanism is man. Humanity is inherent in virtues like morality, honesty and generosity that are considered idealistic for human society.

Noted litterateur Mohim Bora says that the definition of humanism given by famous philosopher Corlis Lemont is universally acceptable. “The

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87. Goswmai Upendra Nath, Bhasha Aru Sahitya, P.-133
88. Upendranath Goswami, Purbukta Grantha, page 134
theory of joy in service towards mankind on the basis of logic and democracy is regarded as the theory of humanism.”

According to MH Abrahams, humanism is the theory of human viewpoint, ordinary human values, human dignity and placing human beings on the highest pedestal in this universe.

In the words of Mathew Arnold, humanity is that which is the opposite of beastly nature and which makes human nature acceptable and beautiful.

According to noted critic of Assamese literature Dr Prafulla Kataki, “Any action, or thought or theory in which human interest and human values and prestige are given importance, can be called humanism in brief.”

There is a relationship between fate and humanism because humanism is born out of the effort to find remedies to the bad days that man falls into because of fate or destiny. Of course, it is not that sorrow and bad times befall man due to fate. Due to the vices like lust, greed, hatred, meanness inherent in man’s heart, we think ill of others and engage in actions to harm each other. Humanity finds expression in actions of help and compassion towards the one in distress and feelings of anger towards the one engaging in harmful actions.

In modern Assamese literature humanity finds place during the period of renaissance. In every kind of literary work from poetry to novel to short

89. Bora Mohim, Chinta Bichitra, P.-208
90. Abrahams M.H., A Glossary of Literary Terms, P.-73
91. Ibid, P.-74
92. Kataki Prafulla, Sahitya Aru Sangya P.-269
story and play, the deepest feelings of the human mind like priority on
individuality, generosity towards all living beings, respect for love and beauty
and sensitivity, find expression. Just like the influence of the Occident on
the ideology of renaissance is universally accepted, so also the occidental
influence on the development of humanism is acknowledged everywhere.
Assamese poets and litterateurs have found the ideals of occidental humanism
through Bengali literature. In those days in West Bengal due to the
revolutionary role of the Young Bengal Society, many humanitarian activities
towards religious reforms like an end to child marriage, introduction of
widow remarriage, help to the poor and destitute, were carried out. The
novels of Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra and the short stories and
poetry of Rabindranath, who were the protagonists of humanism, were
regarded as ideals for the Assamese litterateurs. Because of the general
acceptance of the ideals of Bengali literature by the Assamese litterateurs of
that time, fate and humanism found bold expression in the short stories of
Bezbaroa, Chandrakumar’s poetry, Rajani Kanta Bordoloi’s novels and Sarat
Chandra Goswami’s short stories. Just as the concept of fate finds open
expression in the novels of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, humanism
finds a similar expression in the short stories of Sarat Chandra
Chattopadhyay. Both, Bankim Chandra’s fate and Sarat Chandra’s humanism
had immense influence on Sarat Chandra Goswami.

Many stories of Sarat Chandra Goswami depict humanity. In
Dekhadekhi, the first story of his first collection Galpanjali, humanity is
shown in a beautiful manner. The subject matter of the story is based on
humanity. Dharani wants to marry Parbati, the sister of his classmate Nabin;
but her father regards him as a low caste boy and rejects his proposal and instead gets his daughter married to a railway employee. Even though Nabin wants to get his sister married to his educated and virtuous friend, he cannot defy his father. Incidentally, after a long time Nabin, Dharani and the ailing Parbati meet at her house. The next day she dies.

Nabin’s resentment at not being able to get his sister married to Dharani shows a humanitarian aspect. Humanitarian angles like good moral character, educationally cultured, love etc., find reflected in the views of Nabin. Finding his sweetheart Parbati in her deathbed, Dharani melts down. His eyes are filled with tears at the apprehension that he is going to lose her. The greatness of human virtues is reflected in the story.

In the story Shobha, the pure love between the hero and the heroine reflects deep humanity. The wedding of Haragobinda and Shobha is cancelled due to the ambitions of their parents. Haragobinda, who studies amidst a lot of hardship and becomes a magistrate, finally traces out his previous love Shobha, who is in the meantime married to another man. When she finds out that he comes to meet her on the pretext of his friendship with her husband, she makes her husband promise –

Wife (Shobha)

Why does the magistrate visit us so frequently?

Clerk (husband) :- Why are you offended? He never sets foot at anybody else’s house. So what if he visits us?

Wife

The magistrate must not come anymore. Explain to him in whatever way you can that he is not welcome here. It doesn’t matter even if he gets
offended; but tell me, will you convey the message to him? Swear on me that you will.”

Shobha’s human virtues like her honesty and morality find true expression here. A married woman’s attraction for another man is immoral; this is a conscientious human act. This greatness glorifies humanity in the story.

In Sanyasini, humanitarian feelings find expression in the heroine’s remorse. In her younger days she falls in love with a boy without considering her conscience. After fulfilling his lust the youth abandons her. In due course of time the heroine too gets married to a moral, loving and honest young man. After marriage her heart is filled with remorse. In her words, “Everything, Mohan’s affection, his love has turned into poison. One day I said to him, ‘I am not fit for you, abandon me.’ His affection for me increased. I said again, ‘Abandon me.’ Mohan said, ‘Kamal, what joy do you gain from such heartless talk?’ I thought to myself, I will not let such a divine human being get stained in the company of a sinner like me.”

Considering herself an immoral woman, a sinner, the heroine leaves the company of her god-like husband and becomes a sanyasini (ascetic), thus displaying humanity.

The basic idea of the story Malini is humanity. There is an environment in the story for the heroine to shed even the lures of love after she gets respectfully attracted to the teachings of Buddhism, whose main moto seems to be humanity. The full devotion of the Kashi king Kuki to Buddhism

93. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanaawali, Part-I, P.-19.)
94. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanaawali, Part-I, P.-29-30

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following in the footsteps of his daughter who converts to Buddhism after being attracted by its virtuous teachings like helping others, loving others, showing equality towards all, sympathy towards the poor, announces the victory of humanity.

The incidents happening in the story Brahmaputrar Bukut make possible the realisation of humanity; at the same time, the belief in the existence of destiny also becomes strong. Having been shunned by her highly learned husband, the wife takes refuge in another man. Finally, for fear of being tormented by society, she kills herself by jumping into the Brahmaputra. But her soul roams about the bank of the river resentfully in the form of a spirit. Finally she approaches the writer to seek answers to many questions that puzzle the human heart, as he returns home by boat after witnessing the immersion of the goddess’ idol on Vijaya Dashami day–

“I am not a ghost; I now realise that I am not a god either. I am a human being. Mine is a human soul full of human hopes and aspirations, lust, shortcomings. In your moral scriptures my life is obnoxious, I am a prostitute, holy people shy away from me. But who is to blame? Is it only me? Or does the unknown man who instills intensity and intention in the inner realms of the heart, also has his share of the blame?”

Love is a very respectable expression in human life. And yet it is this love that can make somebody’s life sweet and somebody else’s life miserable, because it is controlled by fate. Humanity finds expression in the heroine’s craze for love, and fear and shame of society.

95. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P. 57
In Banariya Pranoy, the helpful legal activities of the young magistrate in bringing together two lovers Moni and Loni are replete with humanity. Moni is the son of a gam of a Mising village near Dhemaji, and his sweetheart is Loni, a beautiful girl from the same village. Moni’s father is the stumbling block to their union. He is determined to find a daughter of a gam of equal status for his son. Finding no alternative, the two lovers feign suicide by jumping into the Brahmaputra, but later get married. But Loni’s father is against this marriage and he files a suit. Moni and Loni seek help from the young magistrate. Without going into the intricacies of the case the young magistrate gives his verdict in favour of the two lovers. The activities of many of the story’s characters succeed in arousing human feelings.

A fitting display of humanity is seen in the story Jatri. Shanti and Keshab, the heroine and hero of the story grow up together. As they step into their youth, feelings of love arise in their hearts. The sacrifice that Keshab makes for the sake of love, is a bold example of humanity. Without seeking anything in return, he remains unmarried and spends his entire life praying for the wellbeing and progress of his sweetheart.

In Raktabeej thought-provoking lessons of humanity are inherent. Two families are very close to one another; when the cattle of one of the families enter the paddy field of the other family, things come to such a pass that not only the two families, but the entire village is plunged into chaos and turbulence. Raktabeej is an example of how a simple matter when attempted to be solved without conscience, brings trouble, increases enmity and even propels an entire society towards ruin. The wellbeing of a family or an
individual lies in the ability to solve a problem by humanitarian means. This philosophy finds expression in Raktabeej.

In the story Nadaram the character Nadaram is a fitting example of humanity. Deep humanitarian traits are seen in his actions and thoughts. At the time of leaving for the World War this open-hearted boy entrusts the care of his old parents to his wife whom he had married six months earlier. While at the war front, he comes to know that his wife has run away with a young man of the village, named Bhatiram. There is no end to the misery of his old parents. While at the warfront he informs the commandant about his predicament, but does not get a good response; so upon his return he approaches the deputy commissioner and emerges victorious.

He has no grudge against his wife for leaving him for Bhatiram, but he is resentful because she leaves his parents in utter agony. Because, had he been injured in the war, there would have been no one to look after the old couple. Nadaram has self-respect and there is logic in his talk. Since he has fought for the king and upheld the monarch’s prestige, the latter has to try the case of his wife and ensure his dignity; he does not want to be demeaned in front of Bhatiram. Following the trial by the deputy commissioner, his wife has to return to him and Bhatiram faces punishment. But realising the mental condition of his wife, he sends her back to Bhatiram, because without mental satisfaction conjugal life is meaningless. Through Nadaram the writer has succeeded in projecting respect towards parents, duties towards them, love for one’s wife, patriotism, self-respect and sacrifice.

The main ingredient of the story Piyahor Paani is affection towards a child. Humanity emerges strong through love for a child. The heart-rending
scene of how the mother undergoes a mental change after witnessing the death of her child right in front of her for want of some water to drink, has been successful in arousing pathos in the reader’s heart. Even at her dying moment the mother cannot forget her inability to give a drop of water to dying son.

“Have the water dear, water my dear.” She speaks in a weak voice and then tears dampen her entire face, her tattered clothes and the ground beneath her.”

Just like the mother’s love for the child fully expresses humanity, her hatred towards medical science further cements this realisation of humanity.

In the story Sonia, the three characters – Sonia, Budhan and the general manager are enlightened with humanity. Sonia, who grows up enduring her step-mother’s cruel treatment, deceit and cunning, is careful in every step she takes in life. Hence she does not readily accept Budhan’s repeated expressions of love towards her. The beautiful Sonia finally realises that Budhan is a true match for her when he stalls the conspiracy hatched by the head clerk, the assistant manager and her step-mother to take her to the bungalow. Hence, in order to save Budhan who is an accused, she admits that she is his wife. As a result Budhan’s prestige, life and love are safeguarded. The general manager’s greatness finds expression in his dismissing the assistant manager and the head clerk from service and appointing Sonia and Budhan as gardeners in his bungalow.

96. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-131
In all the characters of the story Ejon Burha aru Teur Tini Putek, humanity is seen; and this human virtue finds expression in an ideal form in the actions and behaviour of the old man’s second son. After all the three sons of an honest old Brahmin complete their studies and are of marriageable age, he advises them to marry and get settled and decides to spend the rest of his life at Kashi Dham. The three sons respond to their father’s advice and reply humbly. The first son says,

“Father, what you have said is true and sanctioned by the scriptures. I hear that a highly learned pundit lives in the east. I have an earnest desire to learn under him for some time more; and more than that, I do not want to become a family man now. With your permission I wish to travel east to pursue the scriptures.”

The second son’s reply is,

“Father, I have heard from my teacher and even the scriptures say that one’s parents are the greatest teachers. Whatever you say is for our good. Getting married after completing studies is the duty of every individual. Hence I have no qualms about entering into a married life. If permitted by you I am ready to live a married life.”

The third son replies,

“I too wish to begin a married life. But that is not happening. You are a wise man. You know the scriptures and are also an experienced family man. Without money nothing can be done. Everything, fame, glory, happiness,

97. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanaawali, Part-I, P.-257
98. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanaawali, Part-I, P.-257
faith, is derived from money. Hence, before getting married I have a strong desire to ensure my source of income.”

Convinced with the humble and logical replies of his sons, the old Brahmin advises them to complete their wishes and then leaves for Kashi. After spending twelve years at Kashi he returns to his sons. Although he is happy to see the lifestyles of his sons, he is especially attracted towards his second son. Even though wisdom, good behavior and equal treatment are displayed in the activities of the old man, his act of giving the highest seat to his second son reflects respect for humanity.

In Pujar Noibadya service to mankind gets preference over worship of idols. Three woman beggars, desperate with thirst and hunger, approach a woman from a well-to-do family who is preparing to make offerings during Durga Puja, in the hope of getting alms. Neither the woman nor the priest is willing to give any alms before completion of the puja, but when one of the beggar girls falls unconscious, feelings of humanity surge up within her. The woman pours milk meant for the puja into the beggar’s mouth and applies sandalwood paste on her eyelids and cheeks. The action of the woman arouses human feelings in the heart of the conservative family priest also and he shouts –

“Mother, get up! Offerings meant for puja have come in handy in offering to the one in distress. Your offerings have been fulfilled. You can now arrange puja offerings once again.”

99. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-257
100. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-287
In the story Devadarshan, luck is depicted as God’s blessing. After Bidyaratna, who is very eager to go on a pilgrimage prays to Vishwanath, his meeting with a tall fair-complexioned man, listening to the man’s prophesy, then the man’s sudden disappearance and the exact happenings the next day, his meeting with a similar Rajput while travelling to Dwaravati, his being accosted by a dacoit – all these are influenced by some divine power. On the other hand, humanity is prominent in the Rajput’s trial of the dacoit, the dacoit’s touching of the feet of Bidyaratna and the Rajput after being acquitted and his returning the items that he steals.

In Kapalar Likhon, humanity is more prominent than fate. Due to the machinations of fate, Mandighala Mudoi, despite being rich and popular, has to face a lot of insult at different situations from the mauzadar of Suwagkuchi mouza. Humanity finds expression in a somber manner in Mudoi’s selling off his ancestral bangles to bail out the mauzadar from getting his house attached.

Apart from the stories discussed, in the other stories also fate and humanity appear on and off. Because of the wonderful presentation of philosophical and human feelings, Goswami’s stories have succeeded in acquiring the greatness of epics.

Out of the five short story collections of Sarat Chandra Goswami, without doubt Galpanjali and Mayana are true examples of the extant Assamese short story of the initial stages. That the writer’s dexterous hands are at work in the story, artistry, creation of ambience of the stories, has been admitted by eminent litterateur Birinchi Kumar Baruah.
It is not only that the collection Bazeekar’s stories have caused curiosity in the readers’ minds, those of Paridarshan have stressed reformation in the education system and the stories of the collection Galpamala speak of the writer’s wish to remove the ills like superstition and bad precedents afflicting the society, but also his stories have established the very history of short story on a high pedestal.

4.18. Influence of stories of contemporary writers on those of Premchand and Sarat Chandra Goswami

Lakshminath Bezbaroa is among the prominent storytellers of the pre-Independence period. The stories of Sarat Chandra Goswami are somewhat similar to those of Bezbaroa, who was the father of Assamese short story.

Because Bezbaroa’s stories portrayed realistic literature, human love and humanity found a prominent place in his stories. Because he observed women from the spiritual perspective, his stories portray the virtues of the fairer sex. Stories like Bhadari, Jayanti and Patmugi portray the nature and beauty of women. From the points of view of determination, depth and nobility of love, stories like Kanya, Bhadari, Nakaou and Jalkuwonri are noteworthy. These stories show Bezbaruah’s compassion for women. Along with such an attitude towards women, the humanitarianism that peeped into Assamese literature in the Romantic Age, happened in the hands of Bezbaroa.

Like Bezbaroa’s stories, Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories Dekhadeki, Tara, Brahmaputrar Bukut, Banariya Pranay and Jatri are examples of human love. On the other hand, many stories have sprung up in the hands of Goswami which talk about the problems of women. Ghunusa, Shobha,
Noir Datit, Sanyasini etc., beautifully portray the sad tales of women. As a writer of the Romantic Age, Goswami displays humanity in many of his stories. Dekhadekhi, Shobha, Sanyasini, Malini, Brahmaputrar Bukut, Banariya Pranay, Jatri, Raktabeej, Nadaram, Piyahor Paani, Sonia etc., are fit examples of humanity.

Just as Goswami’s stories share some common traits with Bezbaroa’s stories, similarly they share similarities with stories of other contemporary writers like Dandinath Kalita, Suryakumar Bhuyan, Nakul Chandra Bhuyan, Lakshminath Phookan and others. Goswami’s stories share common traits with stories of writers of the Awahan Age also. Some such writers are – Nagendra Narayan Choudhury, Radhika Goswami, Lakshminath Phookan, Bina Baruah, Uma Sharma, Dinanath Sarma and others. In their stories the Indian mentality is portrayed clearly. A special trait of these writers is their attempt at giving a realistic picture of the different problems faced by the men and women who grow up in the Assamese society. Some stories of these writers are bereft of variation in art and attempt to explore the minuteness of things, but there is a natural aestheticism to attract the reader with their simple and straightforward language. The tragedy flaring up in Sarat Chandra Goswami’s Mayna and Adrista is a pale flame glittering amidst the simple and straightforward language. In Nagendra Narayan Choudhury’s Usarga the characterisation of Dutiram is clear and Dubari is a helpless Assamese woman getting tossed about in precarious situations. Tamar Tabij is a story about the cruelty meted out to a woman by her mother-in-law. In the stories of Lakshminath Phookan written on physical problems, no influence of western style and thought is seen. Maramar Madhuri, Mary and
Doctor portray incidents normally happening in our society without being noticed by others. Because of the effective placement and expression of the incidents, Phookan’s characters are clear but at the same time non-complex. Even though Phookan may not be interested in going into the inner realms of the characters, he has not neglected their emotional life. Bina Baruah’s Aghunibai is a perfect picturisation of rural life. There is no tragic incident in the story, but the picturisation of real situations is perfect. In Dinanath Sarma’s Dulal, an attempt has been made to portray the intensity of a mother’s love for her child. In Surabala the magnanimity of Haradas is an exceptional example of an individual having full faith in Indian culture.

Krishnadev Prasad Gour and Bedab Benarsi are two noteworthy contemporary writers of Premchand. Their stories have been published in two collections – Benarsi Ikka and Gandhi ka Bhoot. In Jay Shankar Prasad’s stories a confluence of historical and idealistic viewpoints is noticed. Dr Brindabanlal Barma takes Bundelkhand as the backdrop to write stories on history, society and hunting. Taking social, political, historical and psychological issues as his subjects, Chaturse Sen Shashtri has to his credit story collections Bahar Bhitar, Dharti aur Asman, Sowa Huwa Sahar etc. Bishambharnath Sharma also wrote stories based on social reforms and ideology. In his two story collections Sudhangshu and Aankhon ki Thah, Raikrishna Das is seen laying stress on historical, philosophical, symbolic and contemplative aspects.

Harishankar Sharma, a contemporary writer of Premchand, wrote satirical and humorous stories. His story collections are Chiriyaghar, Bhukha Maskhara and Birbalnama. Shivpujan Sahay prepared his collection Bibhooti
with stories on duty, love, idealism and sacrifice. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, the compiler of collections like Apna Ghar and Chaturi Chamar, wrote stories on varied subjects. Exploitation, problems in conjugal life, widowhood, prostitution, fake religious preachers and the need for a national uprising are the subjects of Nirala’s stories.

The foremost among Premchand’s contemporary writers is Ushadevi Mitra. Giving importance to the helpless section of society, Mitra says that so long the Indian woman does not give due importance to her self-respect, ancient glory and traditional ideals, she will not be free from her weak position of being exploited and insulted. Sachche Purba and Raat ki Rani are Mitra’s story collections. In his story collections Ekadashi and Sandhya Pradeep, writer Gobind Ballav Pant brings about harmony among verse, thoughts, symbolism and philosophy to create his stories, whose main theme is idealism. Bhagabati Prasad Bajpai portrays life from the psychological angle. His story collections are Madhupark, Hiloor, Khali Bottle and Uphar. Another prominent contemporary writer of Premchand is Jahur Bux. His stories project social and child issues. Sumitra Nand Pant also has brought about a wonderful portrayal of social, cultural and familial issues.

From the above discussion we are convinced that issues like social problems, characterisation of women, humanity, psychological analyses and satire that are seen in the stories of Sarat Chandra Goswami’s writers, are also seen in Goswami’s stories. Premchand’s contemporary writers too portray issues on exploitation, family problems, widowhood, dowry etc. All these issue are reflected in Premchand’s stories also.
4.19. A comparative analysis of the contents, characters and social issues as portrayed by Premchand and Sarat Chandra Goswami

Human life is full of small and big incidents. From the general point of view some of these are exceptional incidents, while some others are plain and monotonous happenings. But story writers do not accept these divisions so simply. A simple looking happening may appear quite interesting to the writer; something that we witness every day may be very important for the writer. This interesting or important nature may depend on the writer’s viewpoint. A writer may take any simple matter seriously and turn it into a meaningful ingredient of his story.

Many famous stories of the world have most commonplace themes. Such incidents are happening daily in our lives; but the writer, with the flame of imagination and with the help of his creativity, gives such a beautiful shape to it that it takes even our minds to that level of realisation and also gives us heavenly bliss.

Even though a story portrays different subjects, a writer has to keep an eye on the general acceptability of the theme. A localised appealing subject cannot acquire general acceptability.

In the words of Richard Summer, “Theme is nothing more than the total meaning of the story.” According to him the subject matters of commercial or art stories can be of the following types –

A. The love of youth can overcome any obstacle and move ahead

B. A mother’s love is the greatest and purest love

C. Courageous patriotism is more valuable than life
D. There is no action purer than sacrificing everything for the sanctity of the family
E. The success or meaningful end to the love of youth is most valuable
F. Poverty can be made tolerable with self-restraint and tact
G. Being able to forego love and friendship for the sake of an ideology is the most progressive of all work
H. When everything is lost religion is the answer to all kindness
I. There is nothing like courageous self-sacrifice and in the end it gets rewarded
J. Success and luck come the way of those who have perseverance, courage and the power to formulate. Living life with honesty too is an important condition that has to be practised
K. Old age is very important for gaining knowledge

According to Dr Pratap Narayan Tendon, the main subject matter of Premchand’s stories is that he gives a lot of importance to the social life of the rural population. He is also seen to have written stories on political, historical and religious issues. The subject matter is a short story’s fundamental ingredient.

Precision of the subject matter is a special feature of a short story. Premchand’s stories Jadu and Ishwariya Nyay are apt examples of precision of subject matter. Originality is another important feature of a short story. Many of Premchand’s stories express specific feelings. Shatranj ke Khilari is a noteworthy story from the perspective of originality.
area-specifics of a subject matter, Premchand has several quality stories to his credit. Decree ke Rupaye, Narak ka Marg and Saubhagya ke Kaure are good examples in this respect. Objectivity lends importance to the subject matter. According to Dr Shyam Sunder Das, because of involvement of the intellectual faculties, it is more the reader than the writer who has to employ more concentration and intellect. If the writer adds non-objectivity to the story, it creates confusion in the mind of the reader. In order to etch a permanent picture on the reader’s mind, there has to be a detailed description of form, interest, nuance and sensitivity in the story.

From the angle of objectivity of a story, Premchand’s Sawa Ser Gehu, Bare Bhai Saheb, Nasha etc., are noteworthy short stories. Mantra is Premchand’s most revealing story. A good story induces curiosity many times. If the first curiosity arouses the thoughts, then the second and third stages of curiosity arouse even more feelings and every successive feeling becomes more intense. If this does not happen then the short story does not make progress and also does not reach its climax with intensity. So far arrangement of artistic maturity is concerned, Premchand’s short stories Shatranj ke Khilari and Bare Bhai Saheb are noteworthy. The last feature of a short story is influence. Premchand’s Rani Sarandhra is a fit example in this regard.

Premchand begins his stories with different subject matters. The subject matter of Captain Saheb begins with portrayal of the characters. The story Dwanda begins with a description wherein the writer picturises a particular place in the evening time. The subject matter of the story Adarsh Virodh is
begun with picturisation of an incident. The story Jadu begins with a conversation.

Premchand had written over three hundred short stories wherein he had showcased characters that represented India’s rural life and urban society. Portrayal of characters is an important aspect of a short story. In this respect Dr Shyam Sunder Das says that if the writer wants to present a correct and clear expression, if he gives more importance to the greatness of the incident than portrayal of characters, if he is adept at such disciplined write-ups, where he does not use even a single unnecessary word, then it must be gathered that such a writer is born only to create high standard stories and to earn fame.

In order for a short story to become successful, there must be a perfect balance between the subject matter and presentation of the characters. In most of Premchand’s stories such a trend is noticed. From the point of view of decisiveness, the success of a short story depends on certain factors. These factors are artistic harmony, spontaneity of usage, liveliness of characters, viability of foundation, intimacy of feelings, original writing, inner conflict, intellectualism, fullness of art etc. In Premchand’s Rani Sarandhra artistic friendliness is noticeable. In Bare Ghar ki Beti originality of writing is noticed. In Shatranj ke Khilari natural reactions are reflected through the characters. Namak ka Daroga exults in the spirited quality of the characters. In the story Mantra, old Bhagat is a symbol of compassion.

The characters of Premchand’s stories are being represented by different sections of people in society. Main and side characters are seen in large numbers in his creations. The main character lends greatness to the
central figure and helps in taking the story closer to the reader. With the help of idealistic, logical, individualistic, psychological, symbolic and historical figures Premchand placed his stories beautifully. Old Bhagat in Mantra, Shankar in Sawa Ser Gehu and Sarandhra in Rani Sarandhra are some such characters.

Premchand used variety even in the style that he employed in presenting his characters. Of these varieties the soliloquy style is worth mentioning at the beginning. With the help of such variety the writer tends to bring the reader very close to the characters in the story. The heroine of the story Narak ka Marg is a fit example of such variety. The analytical and introductory styles are also noteworthy styles which Premchand deftly employs in picturisation of his characters. Ahimsa Param Dharm and Panch Parmeshwar are fit examples of this style. Premchand seems to have beautifully used the psychological style in picturisation of his characters. The psychological aspect can be seen in stories like Binod, Bajrapat, Mukti Marg and Dikshya. Thus, Premchand beautifully presents his characters in the stories.

Literature is regarded as the mirror of society. A litterateur creates reflections of all aspects of society and presents them before the reader. Premchand has carefully studied every aspect of family life and presented a beautiful picture. Family problems may arise out of lack of happiness in married life. There may be several reasons behind it; ignorance by the husband, yearnings for rights, lack of trust, quarrels, behaviour, conflict between ancient and modern thoughts etc. Married life is filled with poison when the husband starts ignoring his wife. For those who deny women their rights or who consider women as inanimate, non-intelligent machines, a
happy married life is impossible. Taking such problems into consideration, Premchand has presented women as rebels. The enlarged form of family problems is social problems. Various types of problems are seen in society. Premchand’s short stories present discussions on the Hindu society. He is seen to have tried especially for the elevation of the devastated society in general. Education of women is a major social issue. Because women have to live under the shelter of men, they cannot be economically independent. Even though Premchand has taken a strong stand for women’s rights, in the Indian social system nobody wants full freedom of women. This is shown beautifully in the story Do Sakhiyan. Women have to face major problems in respect of marriage also. The biggest problem of marriage is the dowry system. Men inflict untold miseries upon women for not getting enough dowry. Kusum is a story based on dowry. Betonwali Vidhwa is also based on marriage. In society, no matter how daring or of evil character men may be, society never raises a finger at them, but a social problem is believed to arise as soon as the slightest mistake is committed by a woman. In the story Shanti Premchand beautifully presents such problems which show up after the woman’s marriage. In the prevailing social system widowhood is considered as a curse. In the story Betonwali Vidhwa, Premchand aptly shows how widows are ignored by society. Prostitutes are a social problem. In Veshya Premchand shows how a woman has to take to prostitution after being forced by circumstances.

Casteism is another major ill of society. In the Indian social system three classes of people are basically seen – high caste, middleclass and lower class. It is the middleclass that has to face ridicule always. Premchand
has written many short stories targeting this section of society. Safed Khoon is a wonderful story showcasing the problems faced by the middleclass.

Thus, Premchand beautifully presented in his stories all the problems plaguing society.

The universal theme of love between man and woman has enjoyed general acceptance through the ages. Writers of love stories lay stress on clearing the beautiful horizons of life through love. Story writers also show us how the love affairs with ancient values are shining in new forms in this problem-ridden bomb-ravaged society of ours. The writers have also been successful in portraying the sad picture of the sweet feelings of love getting stifled under the burden of economic constraints.

Even though the stories of Sarat Chandra Goswami, one of the most prominent pre-Independence writers, have been analysed, we can mention a few specific points in respect of those stories. The flow of love is clearly noticeable in Goswami’s stories.

Love is the greatest language on earth, social life without love is meaningless, love has always played a steller role in social system and behind every issue on earth. In Goswami’s stories also love plays an important role. Love between man and woman sometimes ends in union and sometimes it ends in unbearable separation.

Galpanjali is Goswami’s first story collection. Dekhadekhi and Tara, two stories of this collection are based on love. Dekhadekhi is the first story in Galpanjali. The subject matter of this story is love. This love is between Nabin’s younger sister Parbati and his classmate Dharani. Love seeks union.
But the love between Parbati and Dharani does not attain fulfilment. Kayastha girl Parbati is not allowed by her father to marry Dharani, who belongs to the Koch community. To college-educated Nabin however, caste and family lineage are not important. So there is a difference of opinion between father and son. His father gets Parbati married to another boy. Dharani also completes his college studies and takes up the job of a school teacher. One day a student seeks leave from Dharani as his mother is unwell. That evening as Dharani is out for a leisurely stroll, he remembers the student whose mother is ill. As he enters the house of the student, Dharani is stunned; in front of him are his one-time classmate Nabin and his sister Parbati, lying in a pathetic condition in bed. It is like the final scene of a tragedy. The heroine is waiting for her lover in her deathbed, and the next day upon hearing a loving word from the lover, upon getting a soulful look from him, closes her eyes forever, thus filling the reader’s heart with the echoes of a myriad lovers who are exploited and debarred from uniting by blind social customs and traditions.

Tara presents the tragedy of love and union. Gopal, a young man visits his friend’s house and at the first sight, falls in love with Tara. Gopal believes that Tara alone can fulfill his unfulfilled life. But fate decides otherwise and Tara does not marry him. Still Gopal decides, “Tara did not become mine in this lifetime, my wish remained unfulfilled in this lifetime, no matter how much later, if necessary, Tara will be mine in the next life; this wish of mine is unfulfilled.”102

102. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasamanwali, Part-I, P.-10
The second story collection has a story named Brahmputrar Bukut, which is about an illicit love affair and its tragic consequences. A highly educated, extremely beautiful, restless married woman is not satisfied with her literate husband. She finds the true meaning of love in the bosom of her husband’s friend, who has returned from abroad and is now a barrister. But soon she realises her folly and is bogged down with remorse. In order to find peace of mind she jumps into the Brahmaputra, but does not find peace. Instead, she finds peace by confessing to her sin before the writer of the story in the form a spirit.

Another story published in Goswami’s collection Mayana is Banariya Pranay. The story is about the plain love affair of a Mising boy and girl and the outcome of that affair. While enjoying Bihu on the bank of the Brahmaputra, beautiful Mising girl Loni and energetic Mising boy Moni fall into the river. The incident happens in front of a lawyer. Three months later when the couple appear before the astounded lawyer, the real fact comes to light. Because Moni’s father is against their wedding, the young couple jump into the Brahmaputra and get married secretly at Moni’s maternal uncle’s home. But after coming to know about it, his father files a suit in court. Convinced with the sincerity of the young lover, the lawyer speaks on behalf of Moni.

Jatri is a love story. It has a tragic ending. The childhood fun and frolic of Gadadhar and Shanti take the shape of love in their adolescence. Shanti’s parents seek a match for her elsewhere. For fear of becoming a deterrent to her happy married life, Gadadhar goes far away from that place. After spending twenty years in places like Kolkata and Mumbai working as a
porter, clerk etc., he finally feels an urge to see his long unseen sweetheart and comes back home. Shanti is then a happily married family woman, with three daughters. Gadadhar does not reveal himself. But for the diehard lover it is not possible to hide the deep feelings of the heart. He makes his confession in unbearable sorrow and takes leave of this earth.

Parichita is about the simple affection of an educated young man for a minor girl. After coming across an advertisement for a private tutor in the Statesman, the hero of the story travels to Darjeeling by train. On the train he meets the family of a zamindar. The compassionate young boy helps them as much as he can. Due to lack of space he allows their twelve-year-old daughter to sleep in his bed. Following the address given in the newspaper he turns up at a house, only to be astonished to see the twelve-year-old girl opening the door.

Doctor tells the sad story about unfulfilled love and sacrifice. As a student pursuing his FA, the hero of the story falls in love with Prabha, daughter of a well-to-do family in the locality. Soon Prabha’s parents are afflicted with dysentery and both pass away. Prabha’s paternal uncle comes back from the mainland and takes her away. The sadness of separation eggs him on to take the path of sacrifice. Taking service to mankind as his life’s motto, he pursues medical studies. In course of the story he again meets Prabha in her deathbed. Prabha had in the meantime got married, but she does not recover from her ailment. Giving birth to a baby she breathes her last. The lonely soul of the doctor tries to find solace in the midst of his patients. But the emotions of his first love keep tormenting his ‘dead’ heart.
The simplicity and magnanimity of character of the doctor have been able to draw sympathy of the reader.

Premar Kahini is the first story of the collection named Galpamala. The heart of the hero becomes restless after he sees a beautiful woman. But their union does not happen. In place of the flame of love burns the fire of sorrow.

Dekhadekhi speaks of the conflict between the contemporary reforms and compassion of the educated youths. A regular flow of incidents is also seen in the story. Tara reflects the saddest condition of the disconsolate lover’s heart. Gopal is the only character and it is his inner conflict that finds expression in a tragic form in the story. Although Brahmaputra is about illicit love, the remorseful realisation of the heroine creates respect for a moralistic life.

Characterisation is an important part of story-telling. In order make the characters acceptable to the readers the writer gives interesting narration of the characters. Sometimes the writer allows the characters to develop on their own and himself remains as an observer. Normally, instead of the writer talking about the characters, if the characters are made to showcase their characteristics through their actions, the story becomes more attractive. The characters can also be made lively through gestures.

An important qualification that the characters of a story have to acquire is their reliability. The characters acquire this reliability as far as possible from their actions, thoughts and expressions. It is incumbent on the characters to always maintain their integrity. In order that the characters become
acceptable, they have to be projected in a clear manner. The writer has to project the characters through his own observations. Only then the characters can amuse the reader. Speaking on how the modern writer gives clarity to the characters in his stories, Richard Summers briefly points out –

A. Through physical description of the characters
B. By presenting an idea of the thought processes or conscious thinking of the characters
C. Through the reactions of the characters to incidents
D. Through a direct analysis by the writer
E. By placing the characters in the midst of situations
F. Through dialogue among the characters
G. Through reactions of others to the characters
H. Through remarks on the characters made by others.

Unless the characters are aptly made familiar, they cannot cause any reaction in the reader’s mind. So, the purpose of the story is served only when the writer is able to take the characters close to the reader’s heart. Hence Richard Summers says, “If the reader is not interested in and sympathetic with the people of the story, he certainly will not care what happens to them no matter how exciting the events take place, no matter how vivid the descriptions, no matter how clear the exposition.”

The tragic end of a woman’s life is shown in a very touching manner in Sarat Chandra Goswami’s story Ghunusa. Ghunusa was once the daughter of a rich family, daughter-in-law of a rich family and wife of a rich man. Fate

ridicules her fortune. Her husband dies during her pregnancy. Even the son
born to her is ‘proved’ a bastard by her brother-in-law through dubious
means. She is consequently banished from society. Her brother-in-law seizes
the entire property. She starts living in a small hut on the bank of the river
with her only companion, son Maniram. Gradually her sorrow grows. A
terminal illness snatches away the life of her son and she becomes insane.

A heart-rending picture of a helpless woman being subjected to torments
by the common folk of society is shown in the story. “The writer has exposed
the true natures of the one having greed for wealth, the judge and the arbitrator.
Moreover, Dr Banikanta Sarma has thrown light on the picture of
hopelessness of the murky world’s poverty-stricken, oppressed and
destitute.”104

In Shobha the clean image of a woman is shown beautifully. The love
affair between Shobha, the only child of a doctor and Hemu, son of the
neighbour head clerk comes to an end as soon as Hemu’s matric result is
out. Not finding hope of Hemu fulfilling his dream of a graduate son-in-law,
the doctor takes transfer to another district within three days and leaves that
place along with family. After several years Hemu completes his graduation,
becomes a sub-deputy collector and even marries the daughter of the munsif.
Hemu, who does not mix up freely with everybody after becoming sub-
deputy collector, frequents the house of a clerk. One day the clerk’s wife
tells her husband – “Why does the magistrate come to our home so
frequently? He need not come anymore. Explain to him in any way you can

104. Sarma Jaminikanta and Chakravarty Bhupendra Kumar (edited) Sarat Saurav, P.-
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that he is not welcome in our house.” It is only when, in reply to Shobha’s lamentation-filled requests, her husband says, “Okay Shobha, I will tell him, but you don’t cry,”\textsuperscript{105} that the reader realises Shobha’s purity of character and Hemu’s indomitable attraction for her. Shobha’s unique character is the main feature of the story. The weakness of a woman for a man with whom she grows up from childhood to womanhood, is not unusual. But Shobha abhors the sin of a married woman’s weakness for her previous lover. In the hope of spending her life happily with the man God has chosen for her, she does not want the coming of her previous lover into her life anymore. The presentation of the subject matter and the ending are unique. The other characters in the story pale in the brightness of Shobha’s character.

In the story Noir Datit, the life of Maloti, who is devastated by the ups and downs of life, is portrayed. Maloti, who is born to very rich parents, loses her parents at the age of six, and she grows up to be a very beautiful damsel staying at different people’s homes. Hard-working youth Kalinath, who marries Maloti, who has not sat for child marriage, is disowned by his father. A baby is born to the self-dependent Kalinath. In the meantime, Kalinath’s father dies. On the requests of his mother when Kalinath returns to his village, his boat is capsized in a whirlpool. Having lost her son, the old woman accepts her daughter-in-law and grandson. But Maloti’s misfortune does not end there. Her mother-in-law passes away and even her son, who is her sole companion, is not spared by destiny. Maloti loses all interest in the wealth and property and writes down all of it in the name of a distant brother-in-law. After losing her property she faces tremendous insult.

\textsuperscript{105}. Goswami Jatindranath (edited), Sarat Chandra Goswami Rasanawali, Part-I, P.-19
and ridicule and finally shifts to a small hut by the river. She now lives of alms given by others and all she wants now is death. This is the story of Malotl. The story portrays a conflict between the woes that an ill-cultured social system brings into the life of an individual and human nature. The first conflict is seen in the fact that Kalinath is disowned by his father for going against society and marrying Malotl, who does not undergo child marriage. The second conflict arises when Malotl is harassed by her brother-in-law as soon as she gives away all her property to him and becomes vulnerable. The bold character of Kalinath shows the writer’s leaning towards social reforms.

In Sanyasini the writer brings to light a dark side of a woman’s life. The subject matter is the prudence of a woman in peril and her subsequent remorse. The story runs as follows – Kamala, the heroine of the story loves Mohan. But finding no response from him she starts an affair with another boy Ghanashyam. A time comes when Ghanashyam starts ignoring her. On the other hand, Mohan who loves Kamala from the bottom of his heart, completes his studies and marries her. It is only after her wedding that Kamala realises her folly and her heart is filled with remorse. Mohan’s simplicity and his sincere love for her drive her crazy. Consequently one day she leaves Mohan without his knowledge and becomes an ascetic (sanyasini).

The simplicity of a woman, her repentence in adulthood for mistakes committed when young and the final step taken by her reflect the idealistic mentality of the writer.
Devadarshan portrays the limitless miracles of God. The religious-minded Bidyaratna who goes on pilgrimage to different places like Kashi, Dwarawati, Setubandh and Jagannath, comes across people with different characters in various dangerous situations. These people are of strange demeanour. After witnessing the strange activities of these people he realises that the real pilgrimage is the cleanliness of the inner self, and not outer pilgrimage. Honesty is reflected in all the characters – the priest, the Brahmin and the Rajput. Inducing real honesty in the character of the robber is possible only on the part of an experienced writer.

In Goswami’s story Beltumoni, Beltumoni is an ideal example of a character in motion. The courage, perseverance and selfless patriotism of Beltumoni, an orphan, are reflected in the story. From the day Beltumoni, who grows up roaming about aimlessly, saves a small child from a mad dog, his life takes a turn for the better. He gets an opportunity to travel to different places with the child’s father. He even takes part in the World War in distant France against Germany. The Emperor honours Beltumoni with the Victoria Cross for fighting dedicatedly without caring for his life.

Sonia is a story narrating the life story of Sonia, a simple and plain tea community girl who earns her living by working in the garden. Sonia is a character in motion. The subject matter of the story is the atrocities of her stepmother and the immoral character of some of the people working in the tea garden. After setting eyes on the restless and spirited Sonia, the assistant manager of the tea garden tries to lure her into his bungalow with the help of her stepmother and the head clerk of the garden. Had Budhan, who comes to know about the conspiracy, not saved her in time, Sonia’s life would
have taken a totally different course. After coming to know about the incident
the general manager of the tea garden dismisses the assistant manager and
the head clerk from service and employs Budhan and Sonia as gardeners
and lets them stay in his bungalow.

These social stories are written in the backdrop of various problems
that arise in social life. This social evolution takes place from the nineteenth
century. In the backdrop of this evolution, the modern short story has exposed
various newer problems. With the influence of Romanticism falling on
literature, the writers began to lay a lot of stress on issues like casteism,
social injustice, woes of the common man due to misuse of power, the
greatness of love and illicit love affair; as a result these issues began to
appear in Assamese story also. These issues are seen to be reflected in
Sarat Chandra Goswami’s stories.

A burning problem of our society is widowhood. Right in that distant
past Goswami had tried to focus on the various problems confronting
widows. In the story Ghunusa, after Ghunusa’s husband dies leaving her
destitute, her relatives dispossess her of all the property and start spreading
canard against her. As a result she sort of becomes a persona non grata in
society. After her only child dies due to lack of proper treatment, she becomes
mad. Not only for widows, Goswami displayed his sympathies towards the
oppressed and neglected sections also.

Different pictures of rural life like joy, sorrow, hope and hopelessness
are portrayed in Goswami’s stories. His story Raktabeej shows how trouble
ensues among the illiterate, semi-literate, inconsiderate and non-
compassionate people of the village. The story presents a wonderful picture of how mutual hatred, greed, grudge push society towards ruin.

The stories on worldly pursuits and matters of the heart that Goswami wrote, were totally new to Assamese short story of that time. This was so because Lakshminath Bezbaroa had totally neglected this aspect. Even though men cannot resist the temptations of the heart, they are not blameworthy in the eyes of society, but the issue is totally different in case of women. The more a woman can suppress the urges of her heart through patience and austerity, the more her respect soars. But society forgets that a woman too has her feelings and desires. In quite a few of Goswami’s stories, women have been compelled to succumb to the yearnings of the heart. But the social sanction on a woman’s desires is so strong that after she yields to her yearnings, she ultimately has to commit suicide or resort to some other extreme step. In this context Goswami’s stories Brahmputrar Bukut and Sanyasini are worth mentioning. Along with sensual desires, the stories also portray conscience and harsh social customs and punishments.

The main theme of many of Goswami’s stories is conflict. This conflict acquires different forms according to the characters and situations. At times it turns into a conflict of the heart or of desires, while sometimes it turns into one between individuals and society. Goswami has shown it beautifully in his story Nadaram. In this story the conflict arising in the heart is projected. The wife of Nadaram, who has to remain engaged in the World War in France, goes back to her previous lover Bhatiram. Upon his return from France he files a suit before the magistrate to bring back his wife. But when he sees that his wife is not at all willing to get separated from Bhatiram, the
flame of revenge against Bhatiram does not flare up in him. Instead of succumbing to hatred and selfishness like an adversary, he decides to send his wife back to Bhatiram, displaying virtues of true openness and sacrifice.

Pashupatir Biya is Sarat Chandra Goswami’s popular social story. The story portrays destiny and an aspect of society that is engulfed in negative practices. Regarding marriage as a very important act in human life, the poverty-stricken Pashupati decides to marry a girl by paying the required seven hundred rupees as agreement money, which he amasses by selling off his long-preserved ancestral belongings like gold and silver. There is no limit to the sorrow and hardships that Pashupati has to face since the age of two. His rich father dies. He then sells off his ancestral property and lends the money to a Brahmin. But the Brahmin dies and Pashupati does not get his money back. As a result he sinks into abject poverty. Now, even at the time of his wedding ill-luck does not leave him. While the wedding is on in the marquee, the girl’s father raises tantrums that he will not get his daughter married to him if he does not pay two hundred rupees. The wedding is finally solemnised after a relative of his takes up the responsibility to pay the money within three days. But just three days after the wedding the bride dies of cholera in her father’s house. Pashupati is now a total destitute.

The writer is successful in exposing an ill of society with ease. There is no convergence of too many characters in the story. Pashupati is the main character. His father-in-law’s character depicts a dark custom of society. Inhuman feelings like an evil practice like assurance money taken for a marriage, fleecing of a poverty-stricken boy like Pashupati and his father-in-
law not getting his sick daughter treated and instead asking for money from Pashupati, lend a tragic hue to the story.

We have so far discussed the contents, characters and social problems as projected by Premchand and Sarat Chandra Goswami.

Even though Goswami has used love as a subject matter in his stories, it is used in the tragic form. But Premchand’s short stories are seen to be a bit different. In most of Premchand’s stories the characters seem to be the moving type. Old Bhagat, Shankar and Sarondha are prominent moving characters. In case of presentation of characters Goswami seems to have lacked life. But some moving characters like Ghunusa, Sonia and Beltumoni do seem to make an appearance.

Premchand and Goswami both seem to accord equal importance to social problems. Premchand’s society is the greater Indian society of the pre-Independence period whereas Goswami’s society is the Assamese society of the pre-Independence period. Premchand has made his female characters rise up to the occasion as rebels. Whenever a crisis shows up the women become determined to confront it. But Goswami is not seen to project women as fighters when any crisis arises. There are instances when women, bogged down by tormentations, have even jumped into the Brahmaputra. Premchand’s stories portray the dowry system, whereas Goswami’s stories show the acceptance of arrangement money. In the pre-Independence period the Indian society was plagued by the problem of prostitution, but Assamese society was free from this menace.