CHAPTER – II

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF HINDI AND ASSAMESE SHORT STORIES
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2.1. Introduction

The French Revolution caused an upheaval in the entire world. Inspired by the French Revolution the Romantic poets raised strong protests against the autocratic rule and economic exploitation. The wave of social movement spread far and wide. Shelly highlighted the world’s evils and bad days in the following manner –

Nature – No 1  
Kings, Priests and Statesmen blast the human flower  
Even if its tender land, their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society.

While unmasking the society bogged down by torture, they also hoped for a better future, because of which poets like Shelly envisaged the onset of Spring after Winter.

“The dream of lighting up the trouble-torn society with hope in the future inspired the writers of that period to write short stories. The fall of the machine age, social evolution and romantic dreams inspired the writers of that period. Just like romantic verse was born out of love of the past, inclination towards love etc., the preliminary sketch of short story too was born out of the same. Short story began to be written in a new format in Germany which was swept over by the Romantic movement, and along
with it a similar trend spread through America, France and Russia also. Short story assumed its full form in the nineteenth century. This was the story of birth of short story in Western literature.”

Now we shall discuss the birth of short story in Indian literature. The spread of modern scientific and materialistic civilization gave birth to various forms of modern literature in India. It was only after coming in contact with the Western world that short story made its appearance in different frontiers of India. The spread of Western education caused an upheaval in Indian society. This brought about a drastic change in the Indian way of looking at things. Western education inspired nationalistic consciousness and as a fallout of the national uprising and the consequential uprising in the world of Indian literature that took place around this time, the short story was born. Moving away from the traditional Indian literatures like the Vedas, Upanishads, Jatakas and Panchatantra, a totally new stream of literature - the short story - was born.

2.2. Growth and Development of Hindi short stories

There were some situations that led to the birth of Hindi short story and it will be relevant to discuss those situations –

2.2.1. Political situation

The establishment of the British empire in India led to the birth of Indian political consciousness. With the setting up of the British empire the Indian leaders started cooperating with the British rulers for the good of the country and the British rulers also gave assurances of the development of

India. But this cooperation did not last long because the Indian leaders realised the policy of exploitation and discriminatory tendencies of the English rulers. Extravagant arrangements in Delhi at the time of famine, enforcement of the Press Act and Arms Act, famine, plague and the rulers’ failure in safeguarding the country after the war in the frontiers, made the Indian leaders lose faith in the English rulers. As a result, a radical faction of the All India National Congress (1885) was born in 1907.

In 1916 India repeatedly demanded self-rule. That same year at a convention held in Lucknow the moderate and radical factions of the Congress came together.

After the First World War ended in 1919, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform was implemented and it caused resentment throughout India, leading to strikes and hurdles all over the country. On April 13, 1919, General Dyer ordered indiscriminate firing on peaceful protesters at Jalianwalabag in Amritsar. This angered even moderate leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. At the Calcutta conference in 1920 a resolution on non-cooperation was adopted and at the Nagpur conference sanction was accorded to attainment of Swaraj through a non-cooperation movement. The Muslim League and the Congress joined hands in this movement. Spread of the swadeshi sentiment, abandonment of government titles, rejection of foreign goods etc., that formed part of this movement, attained success and soon came the declaration: “Swaraj is our Birthright.” Thus India’s freedom movement continued. “In 1947 British Prime Minister Atley announced that full independence would be given to India by 1948. India was given independence on August 15, 1947.”

2. Thakur Devesh, Hindi Kahani Ka Vikas, P.- 29
During this entire period the political scene in India underwent drastic changes. In the initial stages although the Indian leaders maintained good relations with the English rulers and cooperated with them, they also discussed their policies and ideologies among themselves. But later on their spell was broken and they advanced with a clear goal of freedom. Practically the political struggle in India began around 1920.

2.2.2. Social environment

During India’s freedom movement, not only the political scene underwent change, but also the social scene. Superstition, religious differences, casteism, atrocities on women etc., unsettled the Indian social fabric. With the advent of the English the mindset of the Indian people opened up and education began to spread.

The social reformers realised the usefulness of Western education, culture and way of life and hence they devoted themselves to social reformation keeping in mind the Western lifestyle. With the help of Western education the social reformers tried to infuse some spirit into the Indian lifestyle. The Arya Samaj took a bold step towards social reformation. The rise of Dayanand Saraswati during this period was an important development. He criticised in the strongest terms the existing social system. He was vehemently opposed to religious priesthood and child marriage and strongly advocated education for women. The Arya Samaj set up the concept of Hindutva and expressed its solidarity with the welfare of the state. The Samaj played a stellar role in the spread of women’s education and removal of untouchability. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshabanand Sen, Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda continued with their efforts for social
reformation. During discussions on uplifting the condition of women, the issue of untouchability was also discussed. At the initiative of Gandhiji, people like Dr Ambedkar and Sreenivasan got due social recognition.

Casteist feelings were noticeable in the Indian social system. Vast inequalities were clearly noticeable among the labour-farmer class, middleclass and the moneyed class. Even though ancient traditions had taken deep roots among the illiterate and middleclass sections of society, the partial influence of newer thinking also was clearly noticeable. The growth of industrialisation gave birth to a new class in society, the labour class. From the beginning the farmer class had been exploited by the moneyed section; now even the labour class began to be exploited by the capitalists. The urban scene underwent development and dissatisfaction and poverty raised their ugly heads among individuals and the society.

2.2.3. Economic environment

One can easily comprehend the economic condition of a nation ruled by foreign powers. The British rulers laid the foundation of colonial rule in India and started the process of exploitation. India is an agricultural country. So private ownership of agricultural land was allowed and as a result, one could buy or sell land. The English rulers created a class of zamindars. They set up industries in India and tried to start an immense market in the country. Even though the conscious sections of Indian people resisted the move, the British continued with their exploitation. In 1857, 1871 and 1897 India was devastated by famine, but the menace of exploitation did not abate. Through agriculture, business and administration, the English totally ravaged India. Mahatma Gandhi undertook a number of economic initiatives
for the good of society. He appealed to the people of India to start cottage industries. Hence small textile industries sprung up in the country.

2.2.4. Religious, cultural environment

Before Independence, along with economic inequality, there was disparity in the religious-cultural sphere also. In the nineteenth century Jainism made a tremendous impact in India. In order to escape the vagaries of the Sati system, child marriage, old age marriage, polygamy etc., prevalent in Hinduism, and in order to escape the domination of high caste Hindus, many people embraced Jainism. This fall of Hinduism and its socially dominant stand was noticed by the Indian leaders and social reformers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Raja Ram Mohan Lohia launched his social revolution. The Arya Samaj, Prarthna Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission tried to highlight the moderate angles of Hinduism. The nineteenth century also saw the conflict between Eastern and Western cultures. The individualistic aspect of Western culture peeped into the Indian culture, whereas the Indian culture gave more importance to society. It ignored the individual and gave more importance to one’s community, society and environment.

In the midst of the situations mentioned herein, the traditional ancient thoughts were abandoned and Hindi short story was born with new ideas and concepts. The period 1850-1900 is regarded as the Bharatendu Age of Hindi short story. During the Bharatendu Age the English had concretised their rule in India. As a result, the Indian people came under the influence of Western culture and civilization. The influence of the movements of Swami Dayanand’s Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj and the spiritual movement
of Ramakrishna Paramhansa on the literature and society of the Bharatendu Age was distinctly felt.

During the Bharatendu Age several journals and magazines began to be published. These included – Kavi-Vachan-Sudha (1867), Harichandra Magazine (1873), Harichandra Chandrika (1874), Hindi Pradip (1877), Brahman (1880) etc. Witty cartoons, stories, light articles, satirical pieces etc., were published in these publications. The prose that was used in these publications is still in vogue. The writers of the Bharatendu Age included – Bharatendu Harichandra, Balakrishna Bhatt, Pandit Pratap Narayan Mishra, Babu Balmukund Gupta, Yashodananda Akhouri, manager of Indian Press Girija Kumar Ghosh, Suryanarayan Dikshit and others.3

The journal Saraswati that was launched in 1900, played an important role in the field of Hindi short story. Indumati, an original Hindi short story written by Pandit Kishorilal Goswami, was published in the first year of Saraswati. Indumati is also regarded as the first Hindi short story. After this several stories began to be published in Saraswati. Among the other original stories were – Golbahar (1902 – Kishorilal Goswami), Plague ki Churail (1902 – Master Bhagawan Das), Pandit aur Panditni (1903 – Girijadutt Bajpayee), Gyarah Barsho ka Samay (1903 – Acharya Ramchandra Shukl) and Dulai Wali (1907 – Banga Mahila). Some critics tend to regard Gyarah Barsho ka Samay as the first original Hindi short story, while some others give that credit to Dulai Wali. This is because Indumati has similarities with Shakespeare’s The Tempest. Some other stories published in Saraswati included Jambu’s Nyay, Vidyanath Sharma’s Vidya Vihar, Maitheli Charan

Gupta’s Ninnyanwe ka Pher and Pandit Suryanarayan Dikshit’s Chandrahas ka Adbhut Akhyan. Some other writers like Swami Satya Dev, Uditnarayan Bajpayee, Baburam, Lakshmidhar Bajpayee, Premnath Bhattacharya and Gangaprasad Agnihotri translated short stories and got them published. In 1911 a journal named Indu was published from Kashi. Prasad’s first story Gram was published in it. Also, Ganga Prasad Sreevastava’s wit and humour piece Picnic, which was the first story of its kind, was published in Indu. Chandradhar Sharma Guleri’s first story Bharat Mitra was published in 1911. In 1915 his second story Usne Kaha Tha was published in Saraswati. This story has found a place of pride in world prose literature. In 1916 Premchand also started writing stories and his first story Panch Parmeshwar was published in Saraswati. Premchand’s appearance was a far-reaching development in Hindi short story.

Saraswati and Indu played a stellar role in arousing interest in Hindi short story. As a result, work on publication of another monthly journal Hindi Galpamala from Kashi began in 1918. Thus, Hindi short story made its appearance in Indian literature.4

2.3. Development of Hindi short stories

The development of Hindi short story can be classified into three segments. The nucleus of the full development of Hindi short story in the true sense of the term is Premchand. While dividing Hindi short story into periods, Premchand must be given prominence. If we take the development of the pre-Independence short stories into consideration, then we can make the classification in the following manner –


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1. Pre-Premchand Age (1800-1910)

2. Premchand Age (1911-1936)

3. Post-Premchand Age (1937-1947)

2.3.1. Pre-Premchand Age (1800-1910)

Even though many well-known scholars tend to accept Insha Allah Khan’s Rani Ketki ki Kahani as the genesis of Hindi short story, they also give due importance to Prem Sagar (Lalluji Lal) and Sadal Mishra’s Nachiketopakhyan. It is true that even though a new trend in written literature is sought to be set through these stories, all these three stories fall back upon tradition. In Prem Sagar and Nachiketopakhyan tales about Krishna are linked to tradition. The writers of these stories have not succeeded in breaking free from the confines of the ancient genre. “In Prem Sagar even the artistry is replete with the ancient genre where the writer has stuck to a big borderline. The same is the case with Sadal Mishra. The plot of Nachiketopakhyan is completely dominated by incidents; it is devoid of the suddenness of happening, is imaginary in nature and narrative. The narration follows the traditional ancient style. The amusement of curiosity does prop up at times, but only that does not fulfil the factors of modern Hindi short story.”

Towards the end of the nineteenth century short story broke free from the shackles of lethargy and traditionalism and bloomed in a new form. In the Bharatendu Age even though the short story did not possess originality, the subject matter underwent a revolutionary change. Bharatendu’s Ek Adbhut Apurba Sapna and Radhacharan Goswami’s Yamlok ki Yatra are wonderful

satirical writings. These two stories have surely deviated from the ancient style and have been written in a different backdrop.

The initial form of modern Hindi short story is seen in the stories translated from Bengali. Following in the footsteps of English literature, stories were written in Bengali and then these Bengali stories were translated into Hindi. In this context Girija Kumar Ghosh, Lal Parbatinandan, Rajbala Ghosh and Banga Mahila deserve special mention. Banga Mahila later on wrote some original stories, among which Dulaiwali was the most prominent.

In 1900 publication of Saraswati began. Publication of this journal was an epoch-making event in Hindi story. By this time an environment for creation of original Hindi stories was emerging. In the first year of Saraswati Kishorilal Goswami’s story Indumati was published, but critics considered it to be written in the lines of Bengali stories and English plays. Apart from Indumati, other notable stories published from 1901 to 1910 were Ramchandra Shukla’s Gyarah Varsh ka Samay, Banga Mahila’s Dulaiwali, Bhagwan Das’ Plague ki Churail, Keshav Prasad Singh’s Chandralok ki Yatra and Girijadutt Bajpayee’s Pandit aur Panditni. The relevant social issues were touched upon in these stories and the attention of the writers that was drawn to the widespread inequalities in contemporary social life, was clearly noticed in them. In most of the stories there was a convergence of varied thoughts, mysticism, curiosity and idealism. Most of the stories were written under the influence of Bangali and English writings. Apart from the writers already mentioned, some others like Master Bhagwan Das, Madhav Prasad Mishra, Bishambhar Nath Jijja and Maithalicharan Gupta created a distinct
environment and earned popularity among readers through different journals and magazines.

2.3.2. Premchand Age (1911-1936)

In terms of development of Hindi short story, the age of Premchand is most important. In this age Hindi short story came to be linked to social values. In this age Hindi short story acquired variety from the angle of artistry, and many talented writers came into focus. Premchand is the greatest writer of this age.6

In 1907 he started writing in the Urdu language under the name Dhanpat Rai. But his original story Panch Parmeshwar was published in Hindi in 1916. Along with Premchand, Jayshankar Prasad wrote stories based on history, imagination, verse and love and lent an unprecedented aesthetic beauty to Hindi short story. Prasad appeared in the scene with his story Gram published in Indu in 1911. This story shows the pathetic outcome of taking loan. This condition has arisen due to natural circumstances. The stories of the Premchand Age have developed particularly along this line. In 1913 Bishambharnath Kaushik’s Raksha Bandhan and Radhikaraman Singh’s Kanon Mein Kangana were published. In 1914 Jwaladutt Sharma’s Vidhwa was published. In 1915 Guleri’s famous story Usne Kaha Tha was published. Raksha Bandhan and Vidhwa are stories that throw light on familial and social issues, while Usne Kaha Tha is an interesting story on humanism. This is the only story about which Ramchandra Shukla has written elaborately in Itihaas. According to him this story is a fitting instance of maturity, which

remains within the confines of good taste and where the height of contemplation remains inherent in a very deft manner. Love’s heavenly form is seen in this story; the screams of shamelessness are not seen in it. Nowhere in the story is there shameless impudence or statements of pathos. Taste has not unduly interfered with artistry; the incident speaks, it has not waited for the characters to speak.  

In 1916 Premchand’s story Panch Parmeshwar was published in Hindi. Even though the story is based on idealism, it also portrays reality of life. This story has come out of the complexities of human life and touched upon the fringes and has given it a divine power revealing the truth, which however cannot be discerned due to its long intervals.

The stories of the Premchand Age formed a true foundation for portraying the real social picture of that time. As a result of the sincerity and perseverance of the writers of the Premchand Age, a simple style of a story soared high and connecting to the intricacies of human life, started to be part of the joys and sorrows of life. They turned short stories into extraordinary and sensitive pieces by infusing in them life and society, religion and culture, speciality and vagaries. Consequently, now Hindi short story has started assuming a positive posture in Indian society. Like the social reformers of those times, the Hindi short story writers also began to inflict injuries on the oppression of women, religious vandalism and heretics. They stood at the roots of these problems and became resolute to find ways to solve them. They became part of the nationwide nationalistic thinking and seeing the crumbling institution of family life, they set themselves the goal of

building a healthy society. Apart from Premchand, the other writers who were determined to work towards that goal were – Bishambharnath Sharma, Sudarshan, Jwaladutt Sharma, Radhikaraman Singh and Bhagawati Prasad Bajpayee. The viewpoints of these writers were idealistic and they were very appealing in their portrayal of the elementary problems of family life. Hindi short story became very popular because of the steadfast stand these writers took for development and reform of life and society. Another reason for the popularity of Hindi short story was the writers presenting the middleclass lifestyle and rural environment in their own words and thus picturising the contemporary Indian life to a great extent. This was a great realisation on their part. Hence, a special type of harmony showed in their writings. Harmony between idealism and eligibility became a general propensity among Premchand and the other writers of his time. The testimony to the effort to establish this harmony was the writers’ awareness about the correct Indian culture, literature and civilization and their attempt at projecting them in their writings in the right perspective. The portrayal of the true form of Indian philosophy gives us proof of the success of the storytellers.

These writers are extremely restrained and simple even when the question of usage of language crops up. Their language is very natural and simple. Tenor and flow are seen in their language. Moreover, there is a total absence of artistic artificiality in it. Their stories are very decent and clear. The writings of these writers have become popular because of the inherent nature of their language and artistry.

The varied roles of the writers of the Premchand Age have given them another distinct classification. Prasad is the forerunner among this class of
writers. The writers of this class are driven by the historical consciousness of Hindu culture and they are seen to have viewed social life from this perspective. Thoughtfulness, artistry and punch are the features of these writers. Besides, they have studied the psychological aspect of human life in minute detail. Prasad presented the psychology of women in such a vivid manner that even today it sounds surprising. In stories like Akashdeep, Puraskar, Goonda, Devrath and Salabati a woman’s psychology has been portrayed very beautifully. Apart from Prasad, other writers of this class were Raikrishan Das, Binod Shankarbyas, Mahadev Barma, Chandi Prasad etc. Ramani ka Rahasya is a woman-centric psychological piece from Raikrishan Das. Prasad had written stories based on history, culture, tenor and psychology. He had also written very sensitive stories on high aesthetics and love. Some such stories were Akashdeep, Chitrawale Patthar, Gram Geet and Mamta. “Expressions of historical environments, presentation of nature’s beauty, satire on social maladies, picturisation of opulent lifestyle of the Middle Ages and portrayal of romance-filled life have helped these stories in becoming fascinating, attractive and important.”

In their successful writings Prasad and his contemporary writers have given ample proof of their tastes. Their language is thought-dominated. There is dramatics in the dialogue, the beginning of the story is not narrative, there is caution in the choice of words and the sentences progress in verse form. Especially, the stories of Prasad and Raikrishna Das give both joy of the incident as well as the joy of poetry. The plots of these stories have the

capacity to touch the heart. The social consciousness keeps alive the sad poetic rhythm even in wonderful creations.

A prominent writer of the Premchand Age is Pandey Bechan Sharma Ugra. Ugra always presents himself with new style and revolutionary colloquialism. He also ventures into areas shunned by reformative writers. The swiftness and revolution brought about by Ugra had no place in the contemporary reformation period. The idealistic and moral society was not prepared for the style in which he unravelled the social misdemeanours and expressed the justification of life. His style, art, connectivity, dialogue, creation of situations, social consciousness, all project originality. The stories in his collection Chingaria are all revolutionary writings espousing revolutionary thoughts. Uski Maa is a very popular and important writing written on the role of the nation and the revolution. It is on the basis on Ugra’s story Uski Maa that analyst Acharya Nandadulare Bajpayee says that Ugra is the first and chief political storyteller in Hindi.9

2.3.3. Post-Premchand Age (1937-1947)

Till the death of Premchand (1936), the prominent writers who tried to develop Hindi short story, included Gyanendra, Ilachandra Joshi, Aggye and Yashpal. The advent of Yashpal lent a new dimension to Hindi story. It was Gyanendra who made forays into the minute inner realms of the human mind. It was not that Premchand had ignored the psychological aspect of human life; he did picturise the mental conditions of the individual, but those were made as demanded by situations and had shallowness. While Premchand expressed reactions happening in the mind on the basis of

9. Lal Lakshminarayan, Adhunik Hindi Kahani, P.-33
problems and situations, Gyanendra prepared a minute and detailed analysis of the conflicts going on in the inner realms of the human mind. Thus, Hindi short story assumed a new dimension. The main aim of Gyanendra and his contemporary writers was to analyse the mysteries and conflicts going on in the inner realms of the human mind. Revelation of the conflicts taking place in the human mind was something new to Hindi short story. The second thing is, Premchand saw in Gyanendra a progressive writer and his able successor. But even though from the beginning Gyanendra went along with Premchand up to some distance, he later adopted his own independent path. This brought variety to Hindi short story. Instead of sticking to the conventional reformative, idealistic and harmonious writings, Gyanendra took recourse to expressing and giving importance to psychology and inner conflicts, and thus established himself as a revolutionary writer. But this revolt is not about the intensity of conflicts, but carries traces of pathos, fatigue and philosophy. “Aggye, Joshi and Bhagwaticharan Verma stuck to the inner conflicts and hatred of their characters; their basis too was individualistic. But because Gyanendra took refuge in Gandhism, truth, remorse, sadness and compassion are seen in heavy doses in his writings.”

In the Premchand Age the plot was seen to have been accorded a lot of importance. With the progress in the propensity for psycho-analysis, more importance was now given to the characters than to the plots. It is not that in the time of Premchand stories without plots were written; of course this was true that importance of plot was not as great as before and along with the consideration and analysis of the story, the influence of philosophy

10. Thakur Devesh, Hindi Kahani ka Vikas, P.-50
and thinking also became more prominent. This accorded minuteness to the periphery of short story.

Premchand and several of his contemporary writers had written many stories based on women. Their goal was to picturise the dominative nature in society or establish vociferously the human propensity through their characters. But Gyanendra, Aggye, Joshi and others of their ilk made extensive revelations of a woman’s own status and its relations with men. It was Gyanendra who first wrote on the inner conflicts of a woman. The personality of a woman began to be highlighted openly in this age. In the stories of the Premchand Age a woman could have been oppressed, exploited, dominated and unfortunate; could be she was a divine character or a housewife. The woman expressed her entire hopes and aspirations, powers and weaknesses.

The advent of Yashpal gave a totally new direction to Hindi short story. Even though Premchand had considered Gyanendra as his successor, Yashpal showed through his writings that he was no less talented. His writings lent a new meter in the development and spread of Hindi story and also brought about a connection with contemporary thoughts. The other writers who professed thoughts similar to Yashpal’s, included Rahul Sankrityayan, Upendranath, Rangeya Raghav and Amritlal Nagar. Yashpal drew inspiration from the happenings in the then political, literary and social spheres and wrote stories with special traits. Even as he wrote revolutionary social stories, he did not lag behind in writing psycho-analytical stories also. He carried out extensive experiments on man-woman relationships and on woman psychology. The area of operation of the writers of this age was far wider.
than that of Premchand and other writers of his age. Yashpal’s vision expanded from social traditions, superstition, politics and nationalism to man-woman relationship and woman’s socially dominant position. Against Gyanendra’s self-suffering and Gandhian philosophy, he took a revolutionary stand as the basis of his writings. The heightened value that Yashpal brought about in literature by embracing the philosophy of Marxism, was an important event for a developing country like India. Even though Yashpal has accepted the influence of Premchand, he has shown his originality in matters of subject matter, art, language, purpose etc. According to Santipriyo Dwivedi, after Premchand, it was Yashpal who represented the masses in storytelling. From the angle of language and style it looks as if it is Premchand who is reborn in a new age in a new body. Today’s progressive writers who use long sentences, will have to remain indebted to Yashpal also, along with Premchand.

2.4. Growth & Development of Assamese short stories

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Assamese literature also came under the direct influence of Western literature. Having undergone education in the English language, our litterateurs started creating varied forms of literature based on the Western model. Like other streams of literature, short story too made a glorious appearance in Assamese literature.

2.4.1. Jonaki Age

Assamese short story was born in the hands of Lakshminath Bezbaruah (1868-1938) in the pages of Jonaki (1889). The thinking of Western literature made its way into Assamese literature through this magazine. Even though Assamese short story was first published in the pages of Jonaki, some stories from the Bible did get published in the first Assamese journal or
magazine Arunoday (1846). But the main purpose of publishing the journal was to propagate the teachings of Christianity in Assam. Hence the stories published in this journal could in no way be regarded as modern short stories. It was in the pages of Jonaki that modern Assamese short story was born. Lakshminath Bezbaruah made a mark for himself as a story-teller in the pages of Jonaki. Bezbaruah’s Pandit Mahashay set the trend of short story in Assamese literature from the eighth issue of Jonaki in its fourth year. From this point of view Bezbaruah can be regarded as the father of Assamese short story. However, even though he started writing stories in Jonaki, it was in the magazine Banhi which he edited, that most of his stories were published.

On the one hand Bezbaruah created his own short stories and on the other, he edited and brought out the ancient stories in a new format. Bezbaruah has six collections of tales and stories to his credit. These are – Sadhukathar Kunki, Jonbiri, Surabhi, Kokadeuta-Natilora, Burhi Air Sadhu and Junuka. The first three collections contain modern short stories and the other three have ancient tales. After his death his stories that were published in magazines were compiled and brought out in a collection titled Kehukoli. This collection has been edited by Atul Chandra Hazarika.

In all, Bezbaruah had written 66 short stories. The entire history from the ancient fables to the modern short story, has been mentioned in Bezbaruah’s writings. Most of Bezbaruah’s stories are replete with wit and satire.

Hence it will not be proper to say that his main purpose of writing short stories was to create literature. Behind his attempt at creating literature lay his strong desire to bring about social reforms. The subject matter of most of his stories was the impudence, pomposity and vanity of the contemporary Assamese society. Lambodar Deka, Molok Gwin Gwin, Nangalu Chandra, Bhukendru Baruah, Jatirao Jat and Dharmadhaj Faisla Nabis are stories portraying these negative traits. Apart from that he pictured the joys and sorrow, fights and quarrels, human feelings of the Assamese agrarian populace and brought such characters into the midst of his stories. Bhadari, Amar Sansar, Maganiyar Burha, Nakau etc., portray these traits.

As we go on reading Bezbaruah’s stories we get a feel of his deep observation capacity and analytical mind. He did not miss even minute things which the common man failed to notice.

Bezbaruah wrote short stories by keeping constant touch with modern English and Bengali literatures. In a number of his stories there is a subtle influence of Rabindranath Tagore also. Of course, even in the midst of all this influence, his stories portray probable and real pictures of the Assamese way of life. The role that Bezbaroa played in the growth of Assamese short story is an epoch-making development in the history of Assamese short story.

After Lakshminath Bezbaruah it was Sarat Chandra Goswami (1887-1944) who made immense contribution in the field of Assamese short story. Bezbaroa’s story collection Surabhi was published in 1909, whereas

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12. Neog Maheswar, Asomiya Sahityar Ruprekha, P.-301
Goswami’s first story collection Galpanjali was published in 1914. Goswami’s other story collections include Mayna, Bazeekar and Paridarshan. Paridarshan was published after his death. Apart from these four collections, his stories published in different magazines and those that had remained in his note books, were compiled and brought out as another collection named Galpamala and included in Sarat Chandra Goswami Rachanawali.

Most of Goswami’s stories too were initially published in Banhi. As a writer of the Banhi Age or as one of the forerunners in the birth of Assamese short story, he does occupy a place of pride. The writings of the writers that appeared in Banhi, did not possess features of a short story, but in some of Goswami’s stories these features are observed. Goswami, contemporary to Bezbaruoa, was a powerful writer of the Banhi Age because many aspects of short story not seen in Bezbaruah’s writings are seen to have attained full form in his stories. To be precise, Goswami was the pioneer of modern Assamese short story because the path followed by Assamese short story after him, was initiated by him.

Even though Sarat Chandra Goswami and Lakshminath Bezbaruah were contemporary writers, from the angle of expression and subject matter Goswami was a far more conscious writer. The main features of modern short story first appeared in Goswami’s stories. In the real sense of the term, the path taken by Assamese short story in the next age (Awahan Age), was shown by Goswami. In his stories Goswami made forays into an individual’s mental world also. To portray the enlightened feelings of an

13. Goswami Troilokyanath, Adhunik Galpa Sahitya, P.-100
individual’s heart, he employed a clear and disciplined language. It was in his writings that the trend of modern thinking in Assamese short story was started, and the themes shown in his stories continued to be used prominently in subsequent Assamese stories for a long period of time.

The main subject matter of many of Goswami’s stories is conflict.14 This conflict could be different individual-wise or situation-wise. This conflict could be either of the heart or natural. Some examples of such conflict are Brahmaputrar Bukut, Nadaram, Tara and Sanyasini. At times conflict takes place between the individual and society. For example, Ghunusa, Noir Datit and Pashupatir Biya. The stories that he has written on the miseries of man, can be broadly classified into two categories. There is an inherent tragedy in man which has no definition or remedy. For example, death due to an accident. In the story Noir Datit the woman named Malati faces tremendous atrocity and torture at the hands of society. Such tragedy is definitely not inevitable or without remedy. In an ideal social system it is very natural for such a sad banishment to take place. But thinking of a human remedy for the death of her husband Kalinath in a boat mishap for which her entire life has become meaningless and ruined, is impossible. Goswami has succeeded in projecting such negative picturisation without any definition or remedy, in his stories. Realisation of the infallibility of fate and a form of sadness cover his stories all the time.

Goswami has written some such stories where man has to fall prey to abject poverty, sheer exploitation and various other social injustices. Adrista and Pashupatir Biya are two examples. Adrista is about the isolation of the

wife of Dhaniram, who is extremely poor. The love of Dhaniram, a servant at a Brahmin’s house for his newly married wife is testified by the food given him at the master’s house, that he surreptitiously takes home to his ailing wife. He believes that getting to eat something will make her feel better. Hence when he comes home he lovingly tells his wife, “Get up, have this food. His wife fails to speak up. Two streams of tears flow down her cheeks out of affection, respect and gratefulness for him. Her tears clearly express the deep affection in her heart, the depth of her love and the sorrow of her perennial isolation.”

In Pashupatir Biya, the death due to cholera of Pashupati’s wife, whom he marries by selling off his property, renders him a total destitute. Even though Goswami portrays compassion and bestiality clearly in his stories, the readers are not seen to have been driven by any moral grudge or excitement of protest. Just like he portrays fate in case of some inevitable sorrow, similarly in case of expected sorrow he picturises some pathetic helplessness.

Goswami’s stories portray different pictures of love. Banariya Pranoy is about the love affair of a Missing boy and a girl. As they make merry on the bank of the Brahmaputra, Mising damsel Loni falls into the river. Mising youth Moni jumps into the river to save her. And then both disappear in the water. Only later does it emerge that their falling into the water was an act. Both of them swim across the river to a village and run away. Thus the lovers are united. The story portrays the simplicity, honesty and playfulness of Mising life. Nadarm too has been written in the backdrop of tribal life. In Shobha the love affair of Shobha and Harmohan is shown. In Dekhadekhi

15. Goswami Jatindranath, Sarat Chandra Goswami Rachanawali Part-I, P.-33
the feelings during first love are brought to life. Social restrictions act as a deterrent for the lovers.

Some stories of Goswami portray illicit affairs. In such stories just like the thrill of the fulfillment of lust is clearly shown, so also the intensity of remorse and resentment after the act, is evident. Sanyasini is about the love of Kamala and Mohan. Initially Kamala is unable to express her love for Mohan. During this time Ghanashyam comes into her life and leads her along the path of sensuality. On the other hand, she is not able to ignore Mohan’s proposal for marriage also. But after marriage mental agony begins to weigh her down for the sin she has committed. Finally she gets deliverance from this sense of guilt by becoming an ascetic (sanyasini). In the story Brahmaputrar Bukut, despite living in the midst of opulence and dignity, a beautiful woman suffers the deprivation of the thirst of youth.

In Raktabeej Goswami shows that society and the individual can make progress only if people shed jealousy and hatred towards each other. Jadu and Moni get into a fight over a trifling matter. As the fight spreads wider, both parties are affected. The storyline is simple. There is no variety even in the picturisation of rural life. The propensity of rural society to fight is clearly shown in the story.

Goswami keeps an eye on the welfare of birds and animals. Like humans, birds and animals also have a family life. They too can feel joy and sorrow. He perfectly shows this simple fact in his stories Samanya Prani and Shikari aru Hanh. From the angle of characterisation and subject matter, his stories Samanya Prani, Shikari aru Sanh, Megh aru Bhekuli, Manuhar
Shrishti and Antar Avaran can be classified as tales, because it is only in tales that birds, animals, demons and gods talk and engage in supernatural acts. Since reality is the basis of modern short story, there cannot be any influence of the supernatural in it. In Goswami’s stories the influence of the supernatural is seen as in tales. Such a supernatural streak is seen in Brahmaputrar Bukut and Devadarshan. In Brahmaputrar Bukut an extremely beautiful woman speaks as a statue. Similarly, in Devadarshan a pilgrim named Bidyaratna confronting a stranger with a prominent tilak on his forehead and the latter’s disappearance as he tries to ask the stranger something the next morning, speak of the supernatural.

The collection of Goswami’s stories prepared posthumously was Paridarshan. When he was a school inspector he had noticed some fraudulent and deceitful activities in society. The subject matters of the stories in Paridarshan have been derived from such experiences he had come across as an inspector. Only seven stories have been included in Paridarshan. These are – Bibek Biparjoy, Parhahali Paridarshan, Discipline, Mantra, Sandhir Banh, Pandit Babu and Botu Bapur Bor Bepar.

After Goswami’s death several of his stories published in various magazines and retrieved from his notebooks, were included in Galpamala. The name Galpamala was not suggested by Goswami, but by the compiler.¹⁶ Seventeen stories are included in this collection. These are – Premar Kahini, Sashur aru Jowai, Pratisingsha, Chinaki, Chirakumar, Brahmacharya, Sonia, Eu Koon, Beer Mati, Ejon Burha Bamun aru Teur Tini Putek, Dui Bhai, Chor, Kapalar Likhoni, Baba Brahmaputra, Manuh aru Gos, Pujar Noibaidya,

¹⁶ Goswami Jatindranath, Sarat Chandra Goswami Rachanawali, P.-11
Prabhawati and Sonapani aru Rupapani. Sasur aru Jowai throws light on the atrocities meted out by society’s affluent section on the poor.

Goswami has proved his mettle by successfully creating wonderful stories from simple matters. He writes in a plain and simple language and always tries to maintain the suspense. His stories are sometimes filled with poetic beauty. His poetic talent seems to come alive while describing natural scenes.

In the pre-Awahan period, apart from Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Sarat Chandra Goswami, some other writers had made noteworthy contributions to Assamese short story. They included Dandinath Kalita, Suryakumar Bhuyan, Nakul Chandra Bhuyan, Mitradev Mahanta and others. These storytellers got their stories published in Jonaki and other magazines like Banhi, Alochoni and Milan. Despite being bereft of artistry of subject matters and lethargy in conveying any message and other shortcomings, their stories will always occupy a special place in the development of Assamese short story.

2.4.2. Awahan Age

The second stage of Assamese story is the Awahan Age. Awahan, a quality monthly magazine was launched in Kolkata in the month of Kati in 1929. Progress and variety made their way into Assamese story through this quality magazine. With the launch of Awahan, Assamese short story also stepped into a new level. For the first time in the history of Assamese short story, Awahan played a steller role in introducing a new wave of thinking and newer expressions. Even though Assamese short was born in the Jonaki Age, it attained maturity only in the Awahan Age. Like the full monsoon
shower, it was the Awahan Age that lent completeness to the noteworthy beginning of Assamese story in the Jonaki Age. In the pages of Awahan, stories of the popular veteran storytellers began to be published. The old subject matters based on the rural and agrarian lifestyle, got replaced by subject matters based on the luxury and liberation of urban life as tasted by the new educated writers of the Awahan Age. The ecstatic thoughts of romanticism, free flow of imagination, minute treatment of language, psychological analysis and progressive style found place in the writings of the Awahan Age writers. In the stories of some of these writers the psychological influence of Freud could be seen. The old barriers of conservatism were broken and open culture and the open analysis of the human mind came to be taken up as the main ingredients of short story. Maupassant’s influence too could not be avoided. The free wanderings of the characters in a natural environment is Maupassant’s style of writing.17 The new writers set aside the conservatism that was present in the writing styles of the pre-Awahan Age and made efforts to evolve a new style of story-telling fit for a story. The attempts might not have succeeded all the time, but as a result of the efforts to evolve a new narration style, the form of the story got a better opportunity to become much more attractive in the Awahan Age.

After Jonaki, even though a fair number of magazines like Banhi, Usha, Bijulee and Chetana were launched, these could not lend a permanent status so far short story was concerned. The only reason for this was the untimely closure of these magazines. The birth of Awahan in such a situation and from the key role it played, this magazine can be regarded as a milestone in

17. Goswami, Troilokya Nath : Adhunik Asomia Galpa Sangrah, p-7
respect of Assamese short story. On the one hand, just as it caused the further development of Assamese romantic literature that took birth in Jonaki, on the other hand, it created a bunch of powerful new writers and launched a glorious age like Jonaki in the history of Assamese short story.

English education spread rapidly in the Awahan Age. With the rise in the number of educated people in the country, it was noticed that more and more people were becoming attracted to Western books and writings. Some writers started analysing the sensual desires of man in their writings, while others tried to gauge the social and economic problems of mankind though human values.

Compared to the expected conservatism of Banhi and Chetana, through the stories of Awahan rang the ecstasy of liberty, freedom of imagination. In some stories total luxury in thought, varied colours and varied forms were portrayed. Varied thoughts that had remained hidden in the deepest corner of the mind due to social torments, broke through the veils of darkness and showed the ruins of the wall of social ignorance. In many stories a sexual urge or coital desire succeeds in breaking through social sanctions, but the beauty in the writing style and the aestheticism lent by the structure of the story have made the stories readable.

Writers of the Awahan Age

Among the writers of the Awahan Age are – Nagendra Narayan Choudhury, Rajani Kanta Bordoloi, Mohichandra Bora, Lakshmidhar Sarma, Lakshmi Nath Phookan, Haliram Deka, Roma Das, Nalini Kanta Baruah,
Nagendra Narayan Choudhury, the founder of Awahan (1929), will always occupy a place of pride as an important story writer in the history of Assamese short story. The collections of his stories that appeared in Awahan included Nagendra Narayan Choudhuryr Galpa (1963) and Binar Jhankar (1964).

Regarding the main source of Choudhury’s stories, three points need to be mentioned. The picture of the social life in Goalpara region, the condition of the common people as a result of the zamindari system that arose during the British rule and the picture of the social life of the Garos, Rabhas and other tribal people. It was in his stories that a picture of the influence of money on human relationships and its reactions was first focused. Choudhury had also studied a lot of Bengali literature. The influence of this study fell on his stories. As a story writer even though Choudhury does not show any new trend, he has perfectly picturised the situations of life and sufferings that draw the attention of his sensitive mind. His noteworthy stories are – Maan ne Apamaan, Moidam Anusandhanat, Lahori, Sopadhara, Pratishodhne Pratidan, Ashampurna Ain, Bhag Batara, Ghora Phansi, Dhan Bharal, Binar Jhankar, Kukkut Medh, Madhu Maloti, Victoria Cross, Tuni etc. His story Rashayan can be regarded as the first Assamese science fiction story.\footnote{Borgohain Homen, Asomiya Galpa Sankalan Vol-I, P.-14}

Rajanikanta Bordoloi, who is regarded as the king of novels in the history of Assamese literature, also wrote a few stories in Awahan. Ga-dhan
is his noteworthy story. The intensity of romantic love and the prevailing social customs and traditions and social sanctions are clearly shown in the story. Premar Upashak and Saundaryar Upashak are Bordoloi’s popular stories.

After Nagendra Narayan Choudhury and Rajani Kanta Bordoloi, the writer who wrote stories without break in the pages of Awahan was Mohi Chandra Bora (1894-1965). This research paper is dedicated to the study of his stories and hence the discussion will be done from the next chapter.

Famous writer of the Awahan Age Mohi Chandra Bora’s social stories have earned a name for themselves due to their clean wit, lively language, flawless writing and original expression. Practically, after Lakshminath Bezbaroa he is the only Assamese writer of wit, humour and satire.19 The main characters in his stories are magistrates, clerks of courts and the rural people who come in contact with lawyers and clerks by virtue of litigation, officials loyal to the British rulers etc.

Among Mohi Chandra Bora’s stories, Chaknoiya, Abyay, Ashare Thalu Sansar, Keranir Kapal etc., are very popular. Even though Abyay is a sad story, the sadness has not succeeded in coming to the fore due to the intensity of his feelings and satire. Keranir Kapal is a sad story, but a strong undercurrent of satire seems to be flowing along it. The injustice and favoritism of the sirastadar show clearly in the story. In matters of portraying characters, Mohi Chandra Bora has a style of his own. He creates an incident or a problem and makes his characters react to that incident, and their reactions

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portray the features of the characters. Picturisation of characters is the main attraction in his stories.

Nothing special seems to be projected in his two stories Ukilar Apad and Ukilar Janma Rahashya. Bora has written very few stories on love. It is only in the story Mukti that he has beautifully portrayed the deep love affair of Ranghang and Langsi. Among his satirical writings Bishashang Noibo Kartabyam is a successful creation.

Another well-known story writer contemporary to Mohi Chandra Bora was Lakhidhar Sarma (1896-1965). In many respects Sarma can be regarded as an immortal writer in Assamese short story. He is the first writer to have demonstrated literary responsibilities in Assamese literature. Writers before him have expressed their sympathies towards the poor, hope for social reforms, emotional leanings towards the ideals of equality, support to the national freedom movement etc., but no writer before him has ever written about the freedom of the exploited sections of society like workers, farmers and women as vociferously and earnestly as he has done. It is in his writings again that the influence of modern economic and social thoughts is seen. According to Birinchi Kumar Baruah it was Lakshmidhar Sarma who lent status, completeness and popularity to Assamese short story.

Five famous stories of Sarma were included in a book named Byarthatar Daan during his lifetime itself. Several other stories written by him are still in the pages of Awahan. The contribution that he made to Assamese literature even from his sickbed, is invaluable.

20. Borgohain Homen, Asomia Galpa Sankalan, P- 40
Another successful writer of the Awahan Age was Holiram Deka (1901-1962). The picture of change of times has been reflected in Deka’s stories. Deka also began writing stories in the pages of Awahan. The world of his stories was his experiences during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The mentality of the neo-literate middleclass Assamese people of the first half of the twentieth century is reflected in Deka’s stories. He chose the legal profession as his career and retired as a judge. Many of his personal experiences in life form the subject matters of many of his stories, where he has succeeded in presenting his characters and practical experiences. Such characters include – the magistrate and his Sho-saheb (Kolibhat), lawyer (Awagya, Julekha), doctor (Bhavishyat), writer (Din Holoni Hol) etc. His stories are attractive because of the rich, intelligent language reflecting his personality and stinging satire.

The influence of Freud’s psychology is seen in Deka’s stories. This influence is distinct in his story Dwitiyo Pakshya. Of course, because of the efficiency of the writer, the psychological aspect is not seen in a naked form. In his witty and humorous writings the reader does not burst out with laughter, but feels the thrill of joy in the heart.21

The first story of Lakshmi Nath Phookan (1897-1975), who was born in Dergaon, appeared in the monthly Alochani (1910-1917) published from Dibrugarh, fifteen years before the launch of Awahan. Phookan’s earlier stories were included in the collection Mala. The stories that he wrote in his later years were published in two collections, Uphaidang and Moromor Madhuri. Another collection of his stories is Anande Nadhare Hiya. In his stories the picture of the joys and sorrow of society’s middleclass is shown through satire and tragedy.

21. Goswami Troilokya Nath, Adhunik Galpa Sahitya, P-114
According to Dr Banikanta Kakati, after Lakshminath Bezbaruah, it is Phookan’s stories that act as a mirror of that time. In Phookan’s stories we get a view of the society familiar to us. His wit is quite intelligently presented; his satirical stories too are quite interesting. The incidents of his stories are not complex; the characters too shine clearly.

Lakshmi Nath Phookan’s style of writing too is colourful. He has a style of his own in telling stories. The simplicity of this style arouses the senses in the reader’s heart. The language of Phookan’s stories is in the colloquial format and is replete with adages and clauses. His pictorial and attractive wit too is an added virtue.

Rama Das, another famous storyteller of the Awahan Age, was born in 1901. Unlike the intense social consciousness seen in the stories of his predecessor writers, Rama Das’ stories reflect efforts to portray the inner feelings of the human heart. The inherent qualities of man like envy, love and sinful propensity are portrayed in his stories through the varied male and female characters.

Even though Rama Das has not written a large number of stories, the subject matter of most of them is romantic love. His story Barsha Jetiya Naame had quite attracted the youths of that time. The entire story seems to be a document of renaissance. He portrays in a clear language the picture of the well-off and lethargy of the middleclass and the opulent section of society. Both the unrestrained love and lust of youth and the sadness and pathos of life are picturised in his stories.

Nalinikanta Baruah is a writer who earned fame by writing just a few extraordinary stories in Awahan. His famous stories are Amar Jahaj, Etiya
aru Tetiya, Teur Katha and Mor Raati. The few stories that Baruah has written are fit to etch a place in Assamese literature so far the subject matter, language and art and style are concerned.  

A thin ray of Rabindranath Tagore’s talent seems to have been reflected in Baruah’s stories. A faint echo of the rebellious female character Mrinal in Rabindranath’s story Streer Patra, is heard in the female character Ranu in Baruah’s story Amar Jahaj.

Bina Baruah, writer of the famous novel in Assamese literature Jeevanar Batat, is the pseudonym of Birinchi Kumar Baruah (1908-1964). Apart from novels, Bina Baruah has contributed two story collections – Pat Paribartan and Aghuni Bai to Assamese story. The stories of Pat Paribartan were written during the writer’s early life. The stories of this collection are based on the problems arising out of the love and separation etc., of the middleclass youth and student community of the pre-Second World War period. 

The stories of Aghuni Bai that Bina Baruah had written during his later years, are on different subject matters written in the backdrop of rural life. Artistic descriptions of different fundamental problems and experiences of life, heart-rending incidents of poverty and misery and death have been given in the stories of Aghuni Bai.

Troilokyanath Goswami (1906-1988), a creative writer and experienced critic in the history of Assamese language and literature, started writing stories during the Awahan Age. In his own words the subject matter of his stories is picturisation of the men and women who are exploited by the social miseries,

22. Borgohain Homen, Asomia Galpa Sankalan, P.- 123
23. Borgohain Homen, Asomia Galpa Sankalan, P.- 123
24. Borgohain Homen, Asomia Galpa Sankalan, P.- 123
atrocities and injustice. He also claims that his style of writing is simple, and at times varied in nature. Even though slander, satire and humour are used in his stories, their profusion has not paled the beauty of the stories. Goswami has three published story collections to his credit – Aruna, Morichika and Shilpir Janma. Apart from these collections, several of his stories have remained confined to the pages of various magazines.

Born in 1906, Radhikamohan Goswami was a novelist, journalist and story writer. He was a socially conscious story writer. He has shown his aptness in portraying the middleclass society that is confused during the transitional period of society. He has taken a realistic stand in picturising society’s economic problems, moral conflicts, change in values and their wrong evaluation. According to Professor Nagendranath Saikia, Goswami’s noteworthy stories are – Niyoti, State Transport, Devata Samadhi, Ashamapta, Chakrabat and Shanigraha.

Krishna Bhuyan, who was born in 1914, rose as a notable story writer in the Awahan Age, but earned fame as a noted story writer even in the subsequent Ramdhenu Age. The main attraction of Bhuyan’s stories is the endless bid to unravel the mysteries of man-woman relationship. His stories portray varied pictures of the love, breakup, resentment and sensual thoughts of some men and women who do not want to be bound by reforms. He is seen to have always kept an eye on the plot and technique in his stories.25 His stories bear testimony to his familiarity with world literature. One of his famous stories is Jadughar. His stories which are regarded as standard from the angle of artistry and vividness of subject matter are – Sesh Path, Bihur Proyujan, Bhalpuwar Goti, Bukur Sobi, Shoishabar Priya, Jukti aru Jeevan and Rupar Praja.

25. Borgohain Homen, Asomia Galpa Sankalan, P.-193
Among the story writers of the Awahan Age, Dinanath Sarma (1914) has the highest number of stories to his credit. Even though his stories have different subject matters, many of those cannot be categorised as quality stories from the aesthetic point of view. But critics are unanimous in their opinion that Sarma cannot be left aside in the matter of discussion of best collections of Assamese short stories.

Dinanath Sarma has five story collections to his credit – Dulal, Akalhoriya, Kuwa Bhaturia Uthar Talat, Kalpana aru Bastab and Pohar.

Instead of creating mental conflict in the characters of his stories, Sarma gives more prominence to description of the incidents. According to critic Troilokyanath Goswami, Sarma is a realistic writer. Instead of creating poetic beauty in his stories he is more interested in the straightforward and naked description of incidents.26

Awahan Age writer Umakanta Sarma (1918), has a collection named Ghuronia Prithibir Beka Path (1947), in which eight short stories are incorporated. These stories prove Sarma’s extraordinary talent in choosing the subject matter and artistic beauty. Hence Sarma has succeeded in earning himself a place of pride in the history of Assamese short story. He does not accord much importance to the structure of the plots; instead he delves more into the mental realms of the characters. His logical characters seem to have come under the influence of philosophical theories also. In matters of analysis of thoughts and use of language, he has shown much restraint.

Munin Barkataky (1915-1992) has lent a trace of originality to the world of Assamese short story by writing a few stories in the pages of Awahan

and Jayanti in the third decade of the twentieth century. Some of his stories with unconventional subject matters are – Joyne Porajoy, Shaapne Bhool, Niyamor Bandh aru Pranor Taan, Aprakashar Bedana and Aprakash. It was in Barkataky’s stories that the wave of consciousness began in Assamese literature.

Apart from the story writers mentioned above, several others have written in the pages of Awahan and besides earning a place for themselves, have enriched Assamese short story.

Firebrand Assamese woman of the freedom struggle Chandra Prabha Saikia stepped into the world of literature with her story Akul Pathik in the first and second editions of Awahan (1929) in the magazine’s first year. The other notable writers of the pre-War Awahan Age were – Dr Hemendra Baruah, Prabodh Goswami (1915), Jamiruddin (1897), Suprabha Goswami (1917), Premnarayan Dutta, Mohendramohan Choudhury, Indibor Gogoi, Jagdish Medhi and others.

A few years before the Second World War, apart from Awahan, two other magazines Jayanti and Surabhi had become popular. Notable writers who wrote in Jayanti and Surabhi were Syed Abdul Malik, Kumar Kishore, Tirthanath Sarma, Gobinda Poira, Hariprasad Gorkharay, Mohanlal Choudhury and others.

Assamese short story that was born in the hands of Lakshminath Bezbaroa, blossomed fully with new subject matters and styles in the hands of writers of the Awahan Age. The stories of the Awahan Age took a new shape in later times and elevated Assamese story to new heights of progress.
Second World War

In 1939 even though the catastrophe of the Second World War had raised its ugly head in the western region of Europe, its destructive influence had fallen on the entire world. The war claimed the lives of lakhs of people. India, or for that matter Assam, could not escape this destructive phenomenon. In 1942 India’s struggle for freedom assumed a widespread dimension and in 1947 the country attained independence.

During the war not only basic needs like food and clothing were in crisis, even writing materials like paper were found to be in great crisis. The country’s cultural life also faced a tremendous crisis. After extending useful service towards the Assamese language and literature for several years at a stretch, popular Assamese magazine Awahan faced crises in the middle of the war and its publication became irregular. Its influence on the cultural life of Assam also gradually began to wane. An era in the history of Assamese literature came to an end and in the years that followed, gradually another age began to rise in the post-War period, the Ramdhenu Age.

2.4.3. Ramdhenu Age

The third layer or stage of Assamese short story is the Ramdhenu Age (1945-67). At the root of the birth of the magazine Ramdhenu was the Second World War. The overwhelming influence of the war had in the meantime fallen on Assamese lifestyle and Assamese literature. The war had unsettled all the thinking, ideology etc., of the times of Jonaki, Banhi, Usha, Chetana and Awahan. At the same time, India’s struggle for independence also gained momentum. As a result of the influence of the Second World War, the
people’s way of thinking etc., underwent change. During this historically important period, a new angle of thinking of a new genre of writers gained prominence. As has already been mentioned, during the war there was a dearth of printing material like paper for publishing magazines and newspapers. This brought about varied constraints in the cultural life of the country. Even Awahan, which was running during the war, had to be closed down due to various reasons. Gradually, as its influence on the cultural life of Assam waned, a new magazine Ramdhenu was launched in 1951 by Dr Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya in order to get rid of the lack of an Assamese magazine. After Awahan, the contributions of Ramdhenu in Assamese literature are noteworthy.

**Writers of the Ramdhenu Age**

Even though Syed Abdul Malik (1919), who has the most number of stories to his credit among Assamese short story writers,, began to write in the pre-World War Awahan, his stories waded through the Jayanti Age and attained full form in the Ramdhenu Age. A majority of his stories were published in Ramdhenu. His story collections include – Parasmani, Rangagora, Maraha Papori, Ejoni Natun Suwali, Shikhare Shikhare etc.

With a unique webbing of wonderful words, Malik created an extraordinarily wonderful language and natural characters and thus succeeded in easily catching the attention of the readers. Moral education and picturisation of a society bogged down in scarcity, are attractive subject matters of his stories. These traits of Malik are clearly shown in stories included in collections like Rangagora, Maram Maram Laage and Sheel aru Shikha.
Regarded as the king of short story, Abdul Malik has written over 2000 short stories during the last fifty years; moreover, many of his stories have adorned the pages of different magazines and journals. The world of Malik’s language and subject matter is vast and colourful. He has always been compassionate towards the oppressed, exploited and poverty-stricken. Romantic love, political, social, economic and other issues concerning life have been reflected in his stories.

Selection of subject matter, its placement and the magic of language are special features of Malik’s stories. With the conviction that life is colourful, extensive and great, he has studied life from very close quarters. After gaining tremendous experience at picturising minutely the universal human emotions, love, sorrows, understanding and misunderstanding etc., he later inches closer to characters of every stratum of society with varied viewpoints and psychological techniques. His immortal story Jisu Christar Sobi carries a testimony to the pleasant presence of the Second World War in Assamese society. Pran Puwar Pisot is a wonderful story with an artistic touch written by Malik. A clear example of the perseverance needed to follow an ideal is shown in the story.

From the above discussion we have gathered that the situation influencing the growth of Hindi short story and Assamese short story was the same. With the spread of colonialism in India, the doors of knowledge of Indians opened up. Indians came in contact with world literature. As a result, newspapers and magazines came into being.

The tales of the Vedas, Upanishads, Panchatantra, Jatakas etc., had taken deep roots in the Indian psyche. These ancient literary creations have
made considerable contributions towards the evolution of the short story. Their role in the emergence of Hindi short story and Assamese short story is everlasting.

Newspapers and magazines made special contributions in the rise of Hindi short story and Assamese short story. Apart from Kavi Vachan Sudha (1867), Harichandra Magazine (1876), Harichandra Chandrika (1874), Hindi Pradip, Brahman, Bharat Mitra etc., the monthly journal Saraswati published in 1900 gave birth to Hindi short story in its modern form.

In Assamese literature a magazine Arunoday was published in 1846, Asam Bilashini was published by the Aoniati Satra in 1871. In 1872 Asam Mihir was published. In 1889 a magazine Jonaki was launched. Prior to this magazine even though a modern intellectual trend had taken shape in Assamese literature, the real movement of renaissance began in the Jonaki Age. In this way newspapers and magazines contributed towards the birth of Assamese short story.

The flow of development of Hindi short story and Assamese short story has been clearly discussed above. The development of Hindi short story in the pre-Independence period has been divided into three sections taking Premchand, king of Hindi short story, as the focal point. Similarly, the development of Assamese short has been classified taking the newspapers and magazines as the focal point.

To sum it all, along with the birth and development of Hindi short story, Assamese short story also was born and made progress. Both literatures progressed according to their own virtues and enriched Indian literature.