Ernest Hemingway, one of the most important and influential writers of the 20th century, was born on 21st of July, 1899 at Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. He is considered as one of the distinguished litterateurs in the history of World literature for his multifaceted literary genius. Hemingway had varied and diverse experience as he passed through various circumstances from the period of adolescence to the maturity and he penned down his literary works on the basis of those experiences. Hemingway’s life and writings were interdependent. His writings, based on the two World Wars, Spanish Civil War, exciting haunting adventures, horrible scenes of the battle field and wonderful experiences gathered from different countries had a remarkable impact on the readers and hence most of his writings were translated into almost all the major languages of the world. In the words of E Nageswara Rao——

Ernest Hemingway made a lasting impact both as a writer and as a man on the twentieth century.¹

Being a physician, Hemingway’s father Clarence Edmond practiced medicine. Besides this, he was doing some other activities such as hunting, fishing etc. at his leisure time. Hemingway witnessed his father’s activities and these influenced him a lot. Right from his childhood, his father taught him how to catch fish and how to shoot a gun in hunting. He liked adventurous activities and his whole life is full of adventures as well.

Grace Hall Hemingway, mother of Ernest Hemingway was quite different by nature from that of his father. Being a fairly gifted musician, she was interested in Opera and Piano. She was a mother of six children. Ernest
Hemingway was the second child in their family. Surrounded by and getting contacted with two different kinds of personality of his parents, Hemingway was brought up as an extra ordinary personality.

Hemingway got admitted in Oak Park and River Forest High School for his school education. From 1913 to 1917, he took part in different events of games and sports and other competitions in school. During that time he preferred boxing, water polo, football, track and field etc. He was a member of swimming organization too. Moreover, he liked to play role in drama, took part in debating competition and even he used to write stories and poems in the school magazine.

When he was in the junior class a few students published some of their writings in the school newspaper *The Trapeze*. Hemingway and his sister Marcelline wrote pieces for that newspaper. Hemingway’s first piece *Judgement of Manitou* was published in the month of January in 1916 where this young author’s interest in the mechanics of the narrative art and his early absorption in the theme of violence were revealed. After that piece he used to write continuously in *The Trapeze* and *The Tabula*, the school year book. In this way, before introducing himself as a novelist, he served as a journalist. In 1917, he graduated from Oak Park and River Forest High School. Meanwhile, the World War I started in the entire Europe. Hemingway was very much adventurous who wanted to involve with risky task. So he tried to join the army, but he was rejected for his poor eye sight. Being frustrated he went to Kansas City to stay with his uncle. There, in Kansas City, he was looking for a job and finally he got a job of cub reporter in the newspaper *The Kansas City Star*.

During that period, *The Kansas City Star* was a famous and great newspaper with a high circulation. Hemingway started his career in *The Kansas City Star* as a creative writer. In his writings, the contemporary society of the time of war was clearly reflected. He was well experienced in war, sex, violence, hunting, fishing, adventure etc. and his writings were based on these massive
experience. The innumerable experience that he gathered by working in the newspaper and by witnessing the war helped him to be a literary writer. Hemingway was very much eager to introduce a ‘literary column’ in *The Kansas City Star*. In the office of the newspaper, he met C.G. Wellington and Lionel Calhoun Moise, who influenced Hemingway a lot. Wellington insisted on him to observe discipline in writing. Lionel Calhoun Moise often discussed with Hemingway deeply about art and literature. Moise’s literary consciousness was quite sharp. He was a renowned figure as an ardent prose writer in the field of journalism. Hemingway learnt from him that the impersonal art of writing helps a writer in establishing as a good writer. Hemingway was very much inspired by Moise. Moreover, Miss Margaret Dixon and Miss Fannie Biggs, the school teachers of Hemingway also inspired and influenced him a lot. In fact, Hemingway started his writing career at the age of 16 after being inspired and influenced by these school teachers.

Hemingway considered his job of writing as his occupation. He offered himself to this job. Yet, he had an urge to serve in the army so that he could take part in war. Apart from his writing job, he was looking for an opportunity to get involved in the war. But he did not have to wait long. He came to know that a few ambulance drivers had been recruited by Italy to serve the Italian Front in 1918. Hemingway was selected and so he had to give up his job as a writer and joined the Italian Front as an ambulance driver. At that time he was 19 years old and had witnessed the terrifying, sinful acts at Kansas City Hospital in Milan. N. G. Meshram comments in this regard—

> At Kansas City he witnessed full range of human misery from the distorted lives of criminals to the shattered bodies of hospital inmates.²
Hemingway witnessed the brutal scene of war where the people’s life were shattered and destroyed by the ugly and weird bomb blasting. He was affected both physically and psychologically by the War. As a humanist he engaged himself in rescue operation and in taking care of the victims as well. The experiences what he got from various Wars provided him rich sources of writing. He tried to pour such experiences of Wars in his literary works.

While working in the World War I, Hemingway felt that his work, in fact, was quite safe, but dull. He always wanted to be in the front lines. Therefore, he started canteen service voluntarily. Not only this, he was handing out mails, tobacco, chocolate etc. to the soldiers in the trench by riding a bicycle. This new job, in which he completed more than a week gave him satisfaction. But on the tenth day, an event occurred in Italy when Hemingway was distributing chocolate among the Italian soldiers. An explosion of a large Australian mortar shell took the life of an Italian soldier and another one’s legs were badly shattered. Hemingway was injured very badly in that incident. More than 250 pieces of sharpnel got into his body below the waist. He suffered from a mental shock which made him fainted. He was admitted to a Red Cross Hospital where, he was treated for his recovery. He had to spend six months in hospital. There, in that hospital he got closed to an English nurse, Agnes Von Kurowsky, with whom he fell in love. Hemingway was younger to her by 7 years. Even then they planned to get married. After getting recovered and being awarded with a lot of military gallantry award he returned back to America. The terrifying scenes of war, the tragic form of death, the new faces of people, and the experience of love in his personal life—all these created some kind of wave in his inner world. Meanwhile, after going back to America, he got a letter from Agnes. Through that letter he was informed that Agnes had been engaged with an Italian major. This bitter experience of love of his personal life made the physically weak Hemingway mentally weak too.
After the end of the war when Hemingway had to live an ordinary civil life, then he had been suffering from an unstable state of mind. Then he went to Michigan. Apart from his hobbies of fishing and hunting, his aspiration of being a writer raised high in his mind. So, he took up his pen and concentrated on writing poems and short stories. But it is quite unfortunate that not a single publisher came forward to publish his writings. Every publisher rejected his writings and returned to him. This made him extremely depressed. Even his parents were not satisfied with his writings and considered those works as pointless and wastage. Being depressed, he went to Canada in search of a new job. There in the city of Toronto, he got appointed as journalist in *The Toronto Star Weekly* paper in 1920. This new job encouraged him to lift up events to write on various topics of general interest. Hemingway had a good sense of humour and irony. *The Toronto Star Weekly* paper provided him a suitable platform to express his sense of humour and irony. Meanwhile, his writings got maturity in different directions. His prose style became useful to the narrative of the story. But after a few days he gave up his job of a journalist and went back home. At home he felt idleness. His activities did not satisfy his mother and she used to scold him. The bitter quarrel between Hemingway and his mother compelled him to leave home again. This time he went to Chicago where he worked for a Real Estate Farm as an advertising copy writer. But this work could not satisfy him and so he started writing, producing sketches, anecdote, short-stories etc. The theme of his works were chiefly about the events that took place in Europe during war.

Ernest Hemingway got married to a young piano player Elizabeth Hadley Richardson in 1921. At first the couple seemed to be a happy one as no complexity of conjugal life could be seen between them. But their happiness did not last long. In 1927, they got separated from each other as both were running out of love.
In Chicago, Hemingway met an eminent person, Sherwood Anderson who influenced him a lot. Anderson could perceive the power that existed in the mind of Hemingway. He advised Hemingway to go to Paris for literary upliftment. At his advice Hemingway went to Paris and got an opportunity to get introduced with some literary figures like the famous novelists James Joyce, the great poet Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, etc. In Paris, Hemingway used to compose poems which were looked over by Ezra-Pound. During that period Paris was the centre for art and literature. In this regard Sanjukta Dasgupta says,

_Ernest Hemingway went to Paris fully convinced that he could learn the art of writing in Paris. France was to these writers and artists a great centre of literature and art. In Paris they were eagerly studying the old masters of French literature._

Gertrude Stein was among those artists and litterateurs that Hemingway met in Paris. She helped Hemingway a lot. In the words of Sanjukta Dasgupta—

_Despite Hemingway’s admission of literary forbears the one who really had a great impact on his literary style was Gertrude Stein who taught him to write impressionistically._

Hemingway was very much influenced by the literary style of Gertrude Stein.

In 1921, Hemingway was offered a post of foreign correspondent by a newspaper _The Daily Star_ which was an opportunity for him to be there in various political conferences organized in Germany, Italy, near East. He also got chances to interview a large number of people. Meanwhile, Hemingway became the father of his first son John Hadley Nicanor who was born in Toronto in 1923.

Ernest Hemingway as an active worker worked energetically for his writings and his hard work became fruitful when six of his poems were published in the issue of _Magazine Poetry_ by Harriet Monroe in January, 1923. Apart
from this, an edition of 300 copies of Hemingway’s first book *Three Stories and Ten Poems* was brought out by his friend Robert Mc Almon in the summer of 1923. *In Our Time* was his second small book and 700 copies of this book were published by his another friend William Bird in January 1924, printed in Bird’s own press Three Mountains Press. In the book *In Our Time*, many sketches are found which were drawn from Hemingway’s experiences of World War I and the Greco-Turkish War which includes Spanish Bull fighting. An American edition of *In Our Time* was also published and it was first appeared in 1925. The content of this edition included all the sketches of the Bird edition, two stories of Mc Almon and ten new stories.

Hemingway is one of the most celebrated short story writers of American literature. His first story ‘Indian Camp’ which is included in *In Our Time* was appreciated and praised highly. In the first volume of the American edition of *In Our Time*, there are eighteen stories available there. A few of these memorable stories are—‘The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife’, ‘The End of Something’, ‘The Three Day Blow’, ‘The Battler’, ‘A Very Short-Story’, ‘The Revolutionist’, ‘Soldier’s Home’ etc. A new group of stories starts with the publication of ‘Mr. and Mrs. Elliot’ and this group consists stories like ‘Cat in the Rain’, ‘Out of Season’, ‘Cross Country Snow and My Old Man’. *Men without Women* is a short-story collection by Hemingway. It was published in 1927, the year in which he divorced his wife Hadley. This collection includes stories such as ‘The Killers’, ‘Fifty Grand’, ‘In Another Country’, ‘The Undefeated ‘etc. Gangsters, prizefighters, soldiers, bull fighters etc. are the subjects on which the stories are based.

*The Torrents of Spring* is a satirical work by Hemingway. It was published in 1926. The title of this satirical work has been borrowed from Ivan Turgenev’s, *The Torrents of Spring* published in 1870. Hemingway increased his list of enemies after the publication of this book. In the words of Meshram——
This was a short blistering title parody, part novel, part sketch, part spoof, ridiculing Sherwood Anderson’s Dark Laughter. This short piece of writing was both a climax and a turning point in Hemingway’s relationship with his literary comrades.\(^5\)

Apart from Sherwood Anderson, here in *The Torrents of Spring*, Hemingway mocks writers like Henry James, H.L. Mencken, Gertrude Stein, D.H. Lawrence etc. Even Hemingway had to fight against Gertrude Stein with the pen for this book.

In 1925, Hemingway met F. Scott Fitzgerald at Dingo Bar in Paris. At that time Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* was published. Hemingway read that book and getting inspired by reading that book he made up his mind that he would start writing novels.

Ernest Hemingway’s first novel *The Sun Also Rises* was published in the year 1926. In this book Hemingway depicts the early 1920’s European Society. *This book may be treated as a real document of post-war society in Europe in the early 1920’s.*\(^6\)

A group of exiled Americans and Englishman have been collapsed morally in the War and to get rid of that situation they tried to escape through all possible ways even with the help of violent activities. Regarding this novel N.G. Meshram opines thus—

> It was a fiction of frustrated men and women subsidized for carousing, poor in psychic resources who drift about and drink in Paris and Spain.\(^7\)

While Hemingway started writing his novel *The Sun Also Rises*, his relation with Hadley was in a deteriorated state. Meanwhile an affair between Hemingway and Pauline Pfeiffer, a fashion designer, started. In 1927 Hemingway divorced Hadley. After that Hemingway married Pfeiffer and converted to Catholicism as Pauline Pfeiffer was a Catholic. In 1928, Hemingway and Pauline
left Paris and went to Key West, Florida. Here in Florida, he completed most of his writings. In the month of June, in 1928, Pauline gave birth to a child who was named Patric. Hemingway lost his father Clarence as his father committed suicide on 6th of December in 1928.

In 1929 *A Farewell to Arms*, one of the notable novels of Hemingway was published. It is a romantic tragedy of war and love. *It was considered as Romeo and Juliet of Ernest Hemmingway*. This novel bears the sign of writer’s writing perfection and it establishes the writer at the supreme height of popularity. Even Hemingway became financially sound and independent for the success of this novel. Meanwhile Hemingway became the father of his third and last son Gregory Hemingway, who was born in November, 1931.

It is observed that Hemingway was fond of bull fighting. Although he was not a bull fighter, yet he had immense experience on bull fighting as he enjoyed hundreds of bull fights. His *Death in the Afternoon* is a detailed account on bull fighting which was written in 1932. Apart from *The Death in the Afternoon* there is a lot of literary work on this special sport. He studied the vast literature of this event. He was well acquainted with this event and so almost all the pages of the book *Death in the Afternoon* is filled with his enormous experience on this sporting event. In this context Jeffrey Meyers comments--

*Hemingway writes for those who have seen their first bull fight, or shortly intend to see it, or are wondering whether to do so if they ever visit Spain. He tells them what, where, when, how— the seats to buy, the buses or trains to take, the things to watch for and which of them to applaud, which to salute with a volley of oranges, empty bottles and dead fish. He tells how the bulls are bred and tested, how the matadors are trained, glorified and in the end, killed off like bulls.*

In the year 1933, Hemingway and his wife Pauline decided to go on a Safari to East Africa. The ten weeks experiences of Safari supplied Hemingway
the necessary materials for *Green Hills of Africa*. Even his short stories like ‘The Snows of Kilimanjaro’ and ‘The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber’ are also based on his experience of the African safari. *Green Hills of Africa* is all about the hunting adventures. A picturesque narrative of the hills, plains, natives, animals, rivers, trees etc. can be found in Hemingway’s *Green Hills of Africa*. Meshram comments on this book—-

*Green Hills of Africa compares the life of a writer with that of the hunter and a meaningful relationship of man with nature is brought out. Hemingway observed that the civilized man, particularly of the west, has alienated himself from nature but the man from Africa lives in much closed touch with it. This was a new inspiration for Hemingway, which he lifelong.*

During 1930’s Hemingway wrote his novel *To Have and Have Not* and it was published in 1937.

In 1936 on the day of Christmas, Hemingway met a war correspondent Maratha Gellhorn for the first time in a bar at Key West in Florida. He made an agreement with North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA) to report on Spanish Civil War. Maratha Gellhorn, the native of St. Louis, went to Spain to join Hemingway in reporting. During the time of his stay with Maratha in Madrid, Hemingway completed his *The Fifth Column*. It is the only full-length play by Hemingway. In 1938 he published *The Fifth Column and the First Forty Nine Stories* which consists his sole full length play *The Fifth Column and the First Forty Nine Stories* of his career. Meanwhile, the relation between Hemingway and Maratha Gellhorn, became firm and solid. In 1940, Hemingway divorced Pauline and after a few days he married Maratha Gellhorn. After getting married for the third time, Hemingway started to live in a Cuban Estate Finca Vigia. He lived for 20 years in Finca Vigia with his third wife who was proved as a source of inspiration for this author. Being inspired by his wife Maratha Gellhorn he wrote his most famous novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* which was published in 1940. This novel is based on the back ground of the Spanish Civil War.
Maratha was assigned for Collier’s Magazine and so she was sent to China with the accompaniment of her husband. Just before the United States declared the war, the couple had returned to Cuba. Hemingway participated in the Second World War actively and his active participation convinced the Cuban government to help him. He assured the government that their helping hand in refitting his fishing boat Pillar would make him able to ambush German Submarines. He served as a volunteer in the Navy. He equipped his boat with guns to destroy the German Submarines off the coast of Cuba. But he never fired even at one. Hemingway showed bravery during the Second World War and so he awarded a Bronze Star also. He got the recognition for this valor as he stayed under fire in the battle field in order to obtain an accurate picture of such situations. It is Hemingway, who with his excellent power of storytelling enables readers to obtain a vivid picture of the difficulties and triumphs of the front line soldier and his organization in Combat.

Hemingway’s wife Maratha Gellhorn was also a war correspondent. Both the spouse were in the same profession. As the time passed, the same profession developed the professional rivalry between Hemingway and Maratha Gellhorn. This rivalry developed between the husband and wife compelled them to be separated in 1945.

In 1946, Hemingway got married for the fourth time. This time he married Mary Welish, who was also in the same profession of Maratha Gellhorn. The couple remained childless throughout their conjugal life. A series of accidents took place in the lives of both Hemingway and Mary Welish. Even they were having a lot of health problem after the war. Meanwhile, Hemingway lost many of his literary friends in between 1939 and 1947. In 1939 he lost Yeats and Ford Madox Ford, Scott Fitzgerald died in 1940, in 1941 Sherwood Anderson and James Joyce left this world for ever and in 1946 Hemingway lost Gertrude Stein. During this period Hemingway had also been suffering
from severe headaches, high blood pressure, and problem of weight and even from diabetes. It is thought that the illness of Hemingway was caused by his previous accidents and for heavy drinking. Even then he did not give up the habit of writing. In June, 1946, Hemingway wrote *The Garden of Eden*.

In 1948 Hemingway went to Europe along with his fourth wife Welish and lived several months in Venice. During that time, he met a 19 years old girl Adrina Ivancich. He fell in love with her but this love was quite platonic. This platonic love of Hemingway with Adrina Ivancich inspired him to write a novel titled *Across the River into the Trees*. At first, this novel was considered as the most poorly reviewed novel of Hemingway’s career. But as the time progress, *the novel was considered a classic, and Hemingway was compared with Shakespeare.*

Hemingway lost his mother Grace in 1952. His novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* was also published in the same year his mother died. This novel made him an international celebrity. Hemingway won the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *The Old Man and the Sea* and the drama *Picnic* in 1953. This novel is regarded as a masterpiece of modern American writings. About this novel William Faulkner comments—-

*His best. Time may show it to be the best piece of any of us, I mean his and my contemporaries. This time, he discovered God, a Creator.*

Hemingway’s life was full of sufferings and hardship. It is mentioned earlier that he was badly injured while working in the First World War. In 1954 two successive plane crashes and a bush fire injured Hemingway in Africa. In this year, Hemingway was selected for the Nobel Prize in literature. He was the fifth American author to whom the Nobel Prize in literature was awarded. He was invited to Stockholm to receive the prize, but he could not go to attend the prize distribution ceremony as he was seriously injured in accidents. So, the American Ambassador John C. Cabot received the prize on behalf of Hemingway and read out the written speech sent by Hemingway.
The last part of Hemingway’s life was spent almost in Cuba. Living in Cuba Hemingway used to keep himself busy by catching fish in the sea along with his wife. Besides he did not give up the habit of writing literary pieces.

As he grew much older he suffered from the wounds which he got in the accidents earlier. This made him ill frequently. After taking over the charge of Cuba by Fidel Castro, Hemingway left Cuba forever and came back to America in 1959. As the time progress, Hemingway’s physical and mental condition became worse than before. His depression, addiction to alcohol and lots of physical ailments compelled him to commit suicide with his favourite gun at his home in Ketchum, Idaho, on the 2nd of July in 1961. In the year before Hemingway’s death, he showed such behaviour what his father had showed before his suicide. Hemingway’s father had been suffering from hemochromatosis, a kind of genetic disease. Hemingway’s medical report showed that in the early part of 1961, he was also suffering from the same genetic disease. His sister Ursula and his brother Leicester also committed suicide. After his death Hemingway was buried by following the Catholic rites in Ketchum.

After the death of Hemingway, some of his other writings were published. His Moveable Feast was published in 1964. In 1970, Islands in the Stream was published. It is in the form of semi autobiography about the life of the painter Thomas Hudson and his family relationships. The Nick Adams Stories, a short story collection by Hemingway was published in 1972. In 1981, Ernest Hemingway’s Selected Letters was published. It was an edited version Hemingway’s another novel The Garden of Eden was published in 1986. In 1987, The Complete Stories of Ernest Hemingway, a collection of first forty nine stories and a number of uncollected stories was published. Apart from these Hemingway’s son Patrick edited his father’s A Fictional Memoir and True at First Light, which were published in 1999.
This multifaceted personality, who contributed a lot to the history of American and World literature, will always be remembered forever by the readers across the world.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is one of the life time devotees of Assamese literature who plays a significant role in the development of Modern Assamese literature by his multifaceted literary personality. He has enriched the store house of Assamese literature by contributing many remarkable works like novels, short stories, poems, essays, travelogues, biographies, articles etc.

Bhattacharyya has been acclaimed as one of the prominent litterateurs in the realm of Assamese literature for his literary talent, high devotion and close attention. Hemanta Kumar Sarma, in the preface of the book *Birendra Bhattacharyar Sahitya Kriti* says-

> Among those authors who have been able to introduce themselves as the leading Indian litterateurs by their own genius, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, the winner of highest literary award Jnanpith award, is one of them.\(^{13}\) (Trans.)

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has been conferred the Jnanpith award in 1979, for his most famous novel *Mrityunjay*. It is needless to say that he is the first Assamese litterateur who has won this prestigious award.

Bhattacharyya, who was born on the 14th of October in 1924 at Safrai Tea Estate of Sivsagar district, was the son of Sashidhar Bhattacharyya, an employee of Safrai Tea Estate. He was the second child of his parents. The others were Nalinidhar Bhattacharyya, Putuli Bhattacharyya, Girin Bhattacharyya, Anil Bhattacharyya, Kamakhya Bhattacharyya and Mamoni Bhattacharyya. He passed most of the time of his childhood on the lap of the labourers of Safrai Tea Estate. Like the other Tea Estates, the caste discrimination and classification, like Elder Saheb, Younger Saheb, Head Clerk, Head Mahari, Male Mahari, Female Mahari, labour etc. existed there in Safrai Tea Estate also. But, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya who was born and brought
up in the midst of such a society was against the discrimination that prevailed in that society. Bhattacharyya searched for a new world which would be free from any class, caste, creed division. His writings mirror these things also.

The primary education of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya started at the Safrai Tea Estate. His interest for the study of literature came into light for the first time when he was in this Estate. He started his writing career by publishing a hand written Magazine named *Purabi Arun*. In this magazine his first poem ‘Sankardev’ was published.

After completion of lower primary education, Bhattacharyya got himself admitted in Kakojan M.E. School. During that period he used to live in his ancestral village namely, Dhekiakhowa Gaon. There, in that village he engaged himself in different kinds of activities along with his study. He also formed a students’ union with the help of his mates. They started a library movement. But he did not stay long there in that school. Meanwhile, he received a scholarship from Kakojan M.E. School and got himself admitted in Jorhat Government High School. In school Bhattacharyya came into contact with Zeheruddin Ahmed, a renowned teacher, who was officiating as the Headmaster in that school. was an ideal teacher for Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. In his high school life he met many teachers and litterateurs like Dimbeswar Neog, Mitradev Mahanta, Troilokya Nath Goswami, Krishna Bhuyan, Maheswar Neog and many others. These great personalities influenced Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya very much. From that period onwards he used to study hard and make himself fit for the field of literature. He started studying English, Bengali literature along with the pursuit of Assamese literature. The period that he spent in Jorhat Government High School provided him a golden chance to meet some young poets and litterateurs like Rajendra Nath Hazarika, Amulya Barua, Munindra Narayan Dutta Barua, Jyoti Narayan Sarmah, Padma Barkataki, Ajit Kumar Sarmah and many others. In the joined effort of these personalities a
hand written magazine named *Chenehi* was born. The very first article ‘Chatra aru Rajniiti’ (Students and Politics), by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was published in the *Chenehi*. Bhattacharyya’s first short story ‘Mahi Aair Sadar’ was published in the magazine *Jeuti* published from Jorhat High School. As a student Bhattacharyya was quite active. Apart from his study he also participated actively in the celebrations like Tithi of Sri Sri Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Hazarat Mohammad, Lakshminath Bezbaroa etc. He was very much inspired by the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel, Jay Prakash Narayan, Ram Monohar Luhia, Sarojini Naidu, Anne Besant etc. Being a socially conscious youth, he directly participated in the mass movement organized for independence.

In 1941, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya did his matriculation securing the letter marks in four subjects. He scored highest marks in Assamese among all the examinees. After doing matriculation Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya got admitted in Cotton College for his higher education. In 1943, he passed I.Sc. and B.Sc. in 1945 from Cotton College. During that period, he got the opportunity to develop his genius. In these days he participated in different competitions like essay writing, short story writing etc. and also won many prizes. Being extremely concerned with the upliftment of the society he engaged himself in various social activities. However, he rendered his services silently rather than taking part actively. Bhattacharyya was a humanist by nature. He always raised his voice for the oppressed and the downtrodden people and worked for them through his writings. Bhattacharyya was an ardent follower of social justice inherited by ideological hypothesis. He was very much influenced by the politics of his time. Despite his full faith on active politics, he never urged for individual power. Bhattacharyya had a good relation with the Indian National Congress right from his school life. But after 1942, he was quite
passionate to the socialist party. Ideas like social justice, honesty, peace, non-violence, humanity and social idealism always influenced the author very much.

In 1945, after completion of his college education, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya went to Calcutta to study Journalism and Law. But Journalism was not introduced there in that year and so he had to study Law only. In those days he got himself acquainted with the prosperity of political, cultural and literary field of Calcutta. He started his life as a journalist by officiating as an Assistant Editor of Banhi. But Banhi did not last long. After the death of its editor Madhab Chandra Bezbarua, the publication of Banhi came to an end. Then he joined an English paper entitled The Advance, as a sub editor, which was running under the editorship of Hemendra Prasad Ghosh. Editor Hemendra Prasad Ghosh knew the commitment of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya towards journalism. As a mark of recognition to his passion, he handed over the charge of the magazine section to Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. During his stay in Calcutta, Bhattacharyya witnessed the riots of 1946. In that communal conflict on 18th August, his dear friends Amulya Barua and Ananda Phukan were killed in the University hostel. The manuscript of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s first novel Maha Prasthanar Pathik was also extinguished along with Amulya Barua.

Bhattacharyya was badly affected by that communal conflict. After the death of his friends, he did not stay long in that chaotic environment in Calcutta. In 1946, he left Calcutta for Assam. Though it was anticipated that Bhattacharyya would join The Assam Tribune, yet instead of it he joined The Dainik Asomiya, a vernacular daily edited by Deva Kanta Barooah. But for some reasons, The Dainik Asomiya did not last long. In the last part of 1946, he took the charge of assistant editor of Natun Asomiya, another vernacular newspaper. In 1947, he joined the ‘Indian Socialist Party’ led by the socialist leader Joy Prakash Narayan. Later he became the editor of that party’s bulletin The Saptahik Janata.
Rishang Keishing, the former chief minister of Manipur was a very good friend of Bhattacharyya. On the request of Keishing, in 1950, Bhattacharyya as a B.Sc. teacher, joined Ukhrul High School, situated in a Naga village in Manipur. There in Manipur, Bhattacharyya stayed only one and half year. During that short span of time he was able to get diverse experiences and collect enough materials for his writings. In that period he studied closely the culture, living styles and the ideologies of the Tangkhul Nagas. Bhattacharyya, in his articles like the ‘Ukhrular Chithi’, has depicted the life style of the Nagas, their economic, sociological aspects and the simplicity of their characters. His famous novel *Yiaruningam* is also the result of his unbelievable experiences extracted from the Naga Hills. It will be worthwhile to mention that for this novel Bhattacharyya was awarded the prestigious ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ in 1961.

In 1952, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya came back to Assam and took charge of the *Ramdhenu*, a periodical in Assamese. *Ramdhenu* created a new trend in the Assamese literature in Post War and Post Independence era. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya continued to work for *Ramdhenu* for twelve years right from 1952 to 1963. Being the editor of this magazine, he played an active role in identifying, cherishing and promoting new literary talents in Assam. Playing the role of a torch bearer, he tried to create a proper atmosphere of progressive writing for the new generation. On the pages of *Ramdhenu*, a variety of subjects take place such as- a lot of mental complexity during the Post War and Post-Independence period, discussion about the practicing of national culture, thinking about the introduction with world literature, importance on leftist ideas and its practice, comparative discussion on the different trends of literature, evaluation of contemporary literature etc. In the field of poetry, *Ramdhenu* has started a new trend. Centering round this magazine a class of poets get united as members of a family. It has generated a suitable atmosphere for the
scope and development of blank-verse and modern poetry. In this respect Birinchi Kumar Barua says, *Ramdhenu has created not only a congenial atmosphere for new poetry but also a growing circle of admirers for it.* In respect to short story also *Ramdhenu* started a new sensation. There is hardly any doubt that, *Ramdhenu* in the hands of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, started a new movement in the Assamese literature. In an interview Binita Bhattacharyya, the wife of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also says-

*Bhattacharyya edited a few literary journals such as Ramdhenu, Prakash, Navajug, etc. But among all these journals Ramdhenu is the first and foremost to be mentioned. The contribution of Ramdhenu to the Assamese literature and culture is remarkable.*

Bhattacharyya was quite successful in nourishing a considerable number of emerging writers. It must be mentioned that this section of Assamese writers has been considered as the significant litterateurs of the second half of the 20th century who have left indelible mark in different spheres of literature. The most prominent writers among them are- Lakshminandan Bora, Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Navakanta Baruah, Saurov Kumar Chaliha, Bhabananda Deka, Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, Padma Borkatoki, Homen Borgohain, Hiren Bhattacharya, Chandra Prasad Saikia, Nilamoni Phukan, Hiren Gohain, Mamoni Roysom Goswami and many others. Bhattacharyya along with these poet-litterateurs made effort to make *Ramdhenu* universally recognized. In the words of Homen Borgohain—

*If Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya had not been the editor of Ramdhenu, the Ramdhenu Era would not have occurred in the history of Assamese literature. Moreover, if he hadn’t the editor of Ramdhenu, Assamese literature would not have witnessed the literary revolution marked with special characteristics. His literary persona had given a new character to the magazine and also affected a magnetic attraction to the emerging writers. The Ramdhenu Era is considered synonymous to Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Unknowingly the*
new breed of writers led by Dr. Bhattacharyya created a new literary age in the history of Assamese literature.\textsuperscript{16} (Trans.)

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya as the editor of this magazine is so outstanding and competent that the entire period of its publication in the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century is known as the ‘Age of Ramdhenu’ or ‘The Ramdhenu Yug’ in the history of Assamese literature. It is really a fact that whatever effort Bhattacharyya had made for the development of Assamese literature and culture by editing \textit{Ramdhenu} will remain highlighted in the history of Assamese literature forever.

Not only at the time he dealt with such work even after resigning from \textit{Ramdhenu}, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya carried on his mission of identifying extra-ordinary literary talent in Assam. As a leading Indian literary critic, he busied himself with literary criticism and reviews the new generation till mid 1980’s. He always searched for such younger authors who would have promised to emerge as influential litterateurs in the coming years.

In 1963, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya joined another weekly paper \textit{Sadiniya Navayug} as editor. Like \textit{Ramdhenu}, \textit{Navayug} could also secure a prominent place in the field of journalism. Writings like new story, poems, sports, films, thoughtful political issues, contemporary problems etc. were discussed and analyzed thoroughly in this paper. Unfortunately after four yearsof its inception, the publication of this paper also came to an end.

Though the publication of the news paper \textit{Navayug} came to an end, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya did not give up his career as a journalist. Henceforth, he started a new career as a free lance writer. He began to write in \textit{The Assam Tribune, The Dharmayug, The Man and Development} etc. and published a lot of value based and thought provoking theoretical writings in those papers. In 1968, he was appointed as a reporter for Guwahati for the Mumbai based Economic and Political Weekly. Even Birendra Kumar
Bhattacharyya used to teach as a lecturer in the Department of Journalism in Gauhati University, Guwahati. In 1986, Bhattacharyya joined the Prakash, a regional journal, as the chief editor. He was a multifaceted personality who got himself busy in various social activities and literary works for the country. In the month of June in 1958 he married Binita Bhattacharyya. Mrs. Bhattacharyya always inspired and co-operated her husband in his activities.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s zest for higher academic degrees persuaded him to get Master’s Degree in Assamese under Gauhati University as a private candidate in 1953. Eventually, after his post graduation he completed research work for the doctoral degree under the same university and was awarded Ph. D. degree for his monumental work *Humour and Satire in Assamese Literature*, in 1982.

Bhattacharyya, who is capable of bringing significant recognition to the Assamese literature through *Ramdhenu*, is a multifaceted genius. He has a great contribution to the Assamese language and literature. Like many other litterateurs he also started his literary career by writing poetry. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is an outstanding modern Assamese poet whose poetic genius comes to light in the pages of the *Ramdhenu*. It has been observed that Bhattacharyya’s attitude towards poetry is completely a new one for which he will be remembered in the field of poetry forever. It is stated earlier that as a committed litterateur and journalist, Bhattacharyya did not merely confine himself with the task of writing only. He also tried to discover the hidden literary talents from our society. In the field of poetry also he was looking for such type of poets who by making revolutionary equation of age and society could provide the readers the new meaning of the mystery of this world. In an editorial of *Ramdhenu* he wrote-

*The modern poets must have the ability to provide new meaning of the mystery of the world through the lights of science in order to*
acquire greatness. Whatever amount of thoughtfulness is required for that, the same amount of genius of imagination or thought is also required.\textsuperscript{17} (Trans.)

With this attitude he started composing a new kind of poetry. Bhattacharyya composed a considerable number of poems and songs, which were published in \textit{Ramdhenu} or other contemporary journals, magazines etc. ‘Bishnu Rabha Etia Kiman Rati’, ‘Ami Bahuwam Janatar Sarkar’, ‘Ami Bahuwam Janatar Darbar’, ‘Mur Mukti Nai’, ‘Prem’, ‘Atma Gyan’, ‘Africa’, ‘Gharat Kuno Nai’, ‘Sei Pam Khani’, ‘Arghya’, ‘Crusor Bandhuloi’, ‘Shillongot Ratipuwa’, ‘Naamheen’ etc. are a few of his significant poems. \textit{Sandhya Swar} (Tune of Twilight), published in 1990, is his collection of poems. His poems like his other literary works are also based on social and political consciousness. In this regard Birinchi Kumar Barua opines—

\textbf{Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has also rallied round the left wing banner and his poetry is pungent criticism of the present day social order.}\textsuperscript{18}

The Assamese poetry has got a new shape in the hands of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Being an optimistic poet, Bhattacharyya always dreams for a bright future. In his poems he has sown the tone of liberalism and humanism. Bhattacharyya has made the Assamese poetry an integrated one.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is not only a poet but also a multidimensional genius. Ramesh Pathak rightly says in this regard—

\textbf{An ore like multifaceted genius Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is a novelist, poet, story writer, critic, researcher, editor, politician, political spokesperson and socialist. Though there is much possibility of losing this kind of genius after being divided into many fields, yet Dr. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is able to make fruitful contribution to every directions.}\textsuperscript{19} (Trans.)
While looking at his complete works, it can be noticed that Bhattacharyya wrote twenty three novels, more than one hundred lyrics and poems, sixty short stories, a few biographies and translated books, one hundred and fifty plays (including the plays broadcast in Radio) and one hundred articles. Hence Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya can rightly be called a successful writer. Malaya Khaund remarks-

*Behind his success his deep attentiveness, observation, unique and artistic way of characterization and his faith on humanistic values are mentionworthy.*

(Trans.)

It is observed in Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s writings that he was committed to the society and he tried to touch the heart of every section of people by his literary genius.

Although Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is familiar and known to the people for his novels, yet he is recognized as a short-story writer too. He is very much successful in reflecting the social realism in short stories than the earlier short story writers. However, his published collection of short-story is not much. ‘Kalang Ajio Boi’ (1987) ‘Satsari (1963), ‘Khiriki Kasar Akhon’ (1994) and ‘Eta Purani Galpar Na Rup’ (2000) are the short story collections by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. Right from his first story ‘Mahi Aair Sadar’ (1938), which was published in *Jeuti* to those stories which are written while he was studying at Cotton College, are considered as the creation of his early literary career. Sympathy towards man, images of Tea Estates, images of rural life, expression of love, expression of poverty, reforming attitude, conflict between old and new, love for city-life, impart of Freudian thinking, attitude of socialism, pictorial life of worst living artist etc. can often be noticed in the stories of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. After getting birth at tea estate, he started his life in the midst of tea estates and so the life of tea estate is reflected in most of his writings. In his short story ‘Jiai Thokar Chabi’ the life of tea labourers is depicted very beautifully. ‘Kala Dawarar Chaa’, a wonderful story
by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, is based on the rural life. ‘Duti Tarar Pohar’, ‘Pakhilai Pakhi Salai’ etc. are his stories of love life. However, in his stories of love life, he did not use the element of sex in a wide range. ‘Sio Eikhan Jagatare’, ‘Katha’, ‘Pajar Jiwan’ are some stories full of sufferings of poor families. His reforming attitude can be noticed in the stories like—‘Ejani Japani Sowali’, ‘Mrityu’ etc. During his stay at Naga village, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya gathered a lot of diverse experience with the help of which he wrote stories like—‘Sirola Aru Sinduin’, ‘Aji Biya Parohiloi Gaon Panchayat’, ‘Sermon on the Mount’ etc. Stories such as ‘Sirola Aru Sinduin’, ‘Salita Mami’, ‘Manu Aru Batshayan’ etc. are in the stream of Freudian thinking. Like that in the ‘Mass’, ‘The Rest House’ etc. the attitude of socialism can also be observed. ‘Prajapatir Pakhi’ is an example of the picture of life of the suffering artists.

As a novelist, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also occupies the highest rank in the field of Assamese literature. The novels of Bhattacharyya can be considered as the mirror of contemporary society. Moreover he brought a new trend of political consciousness into Assamese novel. Binita Bora Dev Chodhury has opined in this regard—

In Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s novels, along with his contemporary social consciousness, the political consciousness is also clearly reflected. Almost all his novels can be called novels full of political consciousness.21 (Trans.)


Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is also famous as a playwright. There are one hundred and fifty plays created by this playwright. Among those a few notable plays are *Balia Baragi,* *Jonali,* *Bharat,* *Sakuntala,* *Mukti,* *Sonor Bhogijora,* *Ahoilya,* *Jagya,* *Sataghni,* *Mukha,* *Bibek,* *Khahania* etc. Most of his plays are broadcast by All India Radio, Guwahati. He also wrote mono act plays like—*Gomdhar Kunwar,* *Ejan Khangal Yubak,* *Piyali Phukan,* *Moniram Dewan,* *Kushal Kunwar* etc. Written on the basis of social and political background, he adopted a special dramatic technique as well as specific presentation of incidents or plots in his plays.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya contributed a lot to the field of translated literature also. He translated Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* into Assamese and it was named *Debo Dundubhi Baje Kar Babe.* He also translated D.C. Kaushmbi’s *Introduction to the Study of Indian History* and it was named *Bharatar Itihas.* Apart from these, he also translated Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s novel *Parinita* and Rabindra Nath Tagore’s short stories *Akuri Ata Chuuti Galpa* into Assamese. Moreover, he translated French playwright Molier’s *Tortuffe* into Assamese and it was named *Brahmachari.* However, not a single play of Bhattacharyya has been published till now. He translated many of his novels into English and many other regional languages. His novels *Yiaruingam,* *Mrityunjay,* *Sataghni,* have been translated into English. *Aai,*
Mrityunjay and Sataghni are also translated to Hindi. The novels Yiaruingam and Pratipad have been translated into Bengali also. These translated works have found a niche among the readers of the country.

In the Assamese biographical literature, the contribution of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is noteworthy. Bhattacharyya wrote 20 biographical articles which are scattered in the pages of magazines and newspapers like Ramdhenu, Nabayug, Dainik Asom, Asom Batori etc. His Sri Aurobindo is one of the remarkable contributions to the biographical literature. In ‘Sri Aurobindo’ he introduces the reader to the Bengali revolutionary leader Sri Aurobindo and various aspect of life such as—education, passion to the Indian culture, revolution, study of yoga, spiritual philosophy, study of literature etc. Bhattacharyya’s another remarkable biographical work is Banga Deshar Naba Jagaran aru Ishwar Chandra Bidyasagar where he presents Ishwar Chandra Bidyasagar’s contribution to the Renaissance of Indian society. Karmavir Chandra Nath Sarma, Gopinath Bordoloi, etc. are other few biographical works by Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya.

Travelling is a pleasant experience of man. Therefore, it becomes a unique component of creative literature. Assamese literature, on the theme of travelling is relatively a new entrant. However, one can notice its references in the pages of Ankiya Naats written by Sankardeva and Gurucharits of medieval Assamese literature. Of late travelogues, in real sense of the term as a literary genre, first appeared in Assamese literature in the last part of the 19th century. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s contribution to the Assamese travelogue literature is noticeable. In 1968, Bhattacharyya visited Russia and gathered a lot of experience. With the help of that experience he wrote a travelogue named Simai Amani Kare (1975). In 1983, he again went to Russia and returning back from Russia, he wrote Russia Yatra. Moreover, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya visited China for the first time in 1984. He completed a travelogue Chinat Ki
Dekhilo in which he depicted the scenario of the students’ movement there in China, and the consequent domination of the government.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya is also a columnist par excellence. He wrote more than twenty thousand articles in Assamese and English language regarding literature, politics, social, economics, and religions and even on some contemporary issues. In this regard Prafulla Kotoky opines—-

> The articles that are scattered in different magazines and newspapers bear the sign of the author’s thinking and intellectual attitude.\(^{22}\)

(Trans.)


It is obvious that each and every citizen of the society is directly or indirectly influenced by political circumstances. The contemporary politics of the society influence all section of people of the society including the writers. Looking at the writers around the world, it is noticed that almost all the writers are influenced by one or more political movement that took place in their own country. They are related with the social principles of their own society. It is clearly noticed in the life of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also. He could perceive the spirit of patriotism within his self, because he was able to see the preparation of freedom movement all around the country. He was attaining the age of adolescence then and it helped him to introspect the nuances of such a stir. The World War II and the Quit India movement of 1942 had a great impact
on the people of India as well as Assam. Most of the educational institutes of Assam were captured by the Army. Even Cotton College, where Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya studied was not exception of that. Like other patriotic Indians, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya too took part in the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. But he was not involved directly with any active programme of movement like strike or any political matters. He was never a political leader because he never took resort to active politics. He was an active member of the Indian National Congress. In 1934, Congress Socialist Party was formed within the Indian National Congress. The Congress Socialist Party was led by Ram Monohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Ashok Mehta, Yusuf Meherali, Joyprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev etc. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was quite loyal, committed and passionate to this party. The influence of Socialist leaders can be noticed on him. N. C. Sarma remarks on this—

Existence of deep and clear influence of socialist political philosophy is there in Dr. Bhattacharyya’s political and social consciousness.23(Trans.)

He was very much influenced by the philosophy by Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx. Like Gandhi, he advocates for non-violent way of movement. He says—

We can’t do anything with violence.24(Trans.)

It is observed that though he supported movements in order to achieve success, yet he always vied for the solution in a peaceful way and without violence. Though he was attracted by the thoughts and feelings of the socialist leaders like Rammonohar Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev, Joy Prakash Narayan etc. yet he preferred the ideas and thinking of Mahatma Gandhi more. In almost all his novels, the essence of patriotism becomes a primary theme. He dreams always about people’s government.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was a social man. Even during his busy literary schedule, he could afford to get into social matters that concerned his
social surrounding most. Whenever the common people of the society sought help from him, he always tried to do his best for them. He was closely associated with many Assamese and other Indian organizations. In 1970, he was elected as the chair person of ‘The Assam Arts and Craft Society’ and in 1980, he was selected as a member of the ‘Hindi Salahkar Samiti’ under the Ministry of Home Affairs of Indian Government. He was elected the president of Indian ‘Authors’ Guide’ in 1982. In the same year he was awarded the D. Lit. Award by Jabalpur University. Apart from these, in the year 1983, he was selected as the president of the Asom Sahitya Sabha. Moreover, in the same year, he took the charge of vice-president of Sahitya Akademi, was nominated as member of Gauhati University, became the member of Regional Research Advisory Council of Indian Council for Social Science, member of the Editorial Advisory Samitee of Man and Development, member of the University Grants Commission representing the Gauhati University, member of the National Jury, member of Indian International Centre, life time member of the Institute of Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies of Allahabad University etc. In this year he, as a peer team member of the Indian authors, visited Russia. Moreover, he was selected as the president of Sahitya Sabha, as a member of the court of NEHU, Shillong, Board of Trusty member of National Book Trust, Governing Body member of Indian Council for Cultural Relation, Selection Committee member of the Indian Jnanpith award etc.

Death is inevitable in life. It is a universal truth. No living being can get rid of it. It happened to Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s life also. On 6th day of August, 1997, Bhattacharyya left this world for eternal peace at 11 p.m.at the age of 73 years. His sad demise saddened his family and the people of the country as well. His death is a great loss for the country particularly in the field of literature. Every citizen of India particularly the citizens of North East feel his absence. His death caused a great void in the fields of literature and culture, field of journalism, field of intellect etc. forever.
References:

4. ibid. pp. 33-34.
11. ibid. p. 22.