CHAPTER V

THE CONTEMPORARIES

In the middle of the sixties Assamese short story has entered a new era of creativity with the emergence of a new band of writers who prove themselves successful in the later seventies. The leading journal of the sixties Navayug, under the editorship of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, who spearheaded the literary movement of the previous era. In addition to this, some monthly magazines appeared occasionally like Manidip, Asamiga, Prahari, Nilachal and they created a congenial atmosphere for the development of the short stories, generating a new taste suited to the present time.

Though the present age abounds in stories, furnished with new ideas and new thoughts, this age is no way be said an continuation of the previous era. Though some of the writers follow the ideas and pattern of the previous era, we must mention their power of portraying the contemporary decaying society, where the standard of moral and ethical values have significantly gone down with the advent of so called modernity. The agony of the appressed class, receive sympathetic treatment in their hands. Their effort at cleansing the filth of corruption from the beaurocratic circle through a pungent satire is another feature of their short stories. The social imbalance and economic oppression gain
high ascendancy during this age. So a group become the ordent supporter of Marxian ideology with a hope to bring a new change in the prevailing condition of the society. Those who already advocated other philosophical ideas like Existentialism are also found to turn their thoughts towards a socialistic outlook.

In regard to the form of the short story most of the stories produced in this period are said to be traditional in technique. The experimental technique which was displayed by the former writers is once again taken by the writers of this age also. Some of them are writing stories in the line of the technique of stream of consciousness, already introduced into the Assamese short story in the Ramdhenu age by the writers like Saurabh Kumar Chaliha. The symbols and imageries are also used with a many levelled significances therein. The emphasis has been given on sexual psychology initiated by Freud, Havelock Ellis Jung etc. The theme and the characters have been choosen to display the ideas of these world famous psychologists. The idea of existentialism has also been the source of some unusual characterization in their short stories. The language of the story is often simple and lucid and sometimes full of suggestion and irony.
The concept of love

The present band of writers are very much concerned with fast social changes and economic problems of day to day life. Most of the new writers are propagators of Marxian theories. To make a classless society, it seems the characters are breaking some tradition with a reformative zeal. The discontentment, misery, oppression, tyranny and consequent anger, grievances and sense of revenge receive a new dimension in their stories and ultimately the sentiment of love and other human values are neglected by them. As the value has changed the conjugal love has also sometimes fallen from the accepted moral norms and physical chastity seems to have lost its significance in the face of economic distress.

The self centred modern people give more importance on passion than on idealistic romantic love. The over emphasis on sex and less emphasis on ever shifting sentimental love are the marked phenomenon of this writings of this era. Some of the contemporary writers are of the view that the sentimental love relationship mar the spirit of revolution. They are now dreaming of a beautiful dream of socialism, may be it be an utopian one. But it is also a thing to note that Marxian ideal itself a romantic dream where there is a great expectation of changing the lot of common people through a revolution. Moreover, though they are believer that theory, in their heart's of heart they possess weakness for romantic
love. We have writers of this period in whom these two things are blended very beautifully.

The age is remarkable for the popularity of the trend 'existentialism' also. To a existentialists to realise the freedom of individual all sorts of involvement with other should be avoided. On the other hand involvement is the first condition of love. To them love is a passion but not an everlasting emotion. Although the followers of the idea 'existentialism' are trying to say something new in their stories, none of the present writers can be said as a successful writer in this regard. They are only echoing the ideas and views propounded by the former writers like Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Homen Borgohain of the Ramdhenu age.

According to Freud's theory the physical urge is the base of all sorts of love (what was considered divine and holy by others) have their roots in flesh. All the fine emotions of individual are nothing but the repressed sexual desire. The modern writers of this time seem to realise that view. Due to Freud's influence the present writers could not engage their attention to depict the idealistic love of platonic or traditional design.

In spite of their conscious effort to denounce the sentiment of love, the writers of the present age go on to depict some romantic scenes in their stories. The romantic love with its sweet aroma still continues to exist in the
works of some writers. The former age witnessed a sort of spiritual or idealistic glow in love which spreads a cool and noble air. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, a story writer of the previous era are very clearly sets an example of elevation of sexual desire to a spiritual experience. But such a magnificent outlook is a rare occurrence in this age. Yet the age produces some beautiful stories containing the vivid picture of love. They are discussed below. The worth mentioning writers of this age are the following:

Silabhadra

Silabhadra is a Pseudonym. The writer begins his literary career in the pages of Ramdhenu but his popularity is growing more during this period. Three collections of short stories entitled Samudratir, Kono Khobh Nai, Silabhadrar Kurita Galpa go to his credit.

Silabhadra is very conscious about the present day reality. He can bring out the significance from the insignificant incidents of common life. In his stories we find an atmosphere of frustration, aimlessness and disintegration among the middle class people. Sometimes he is moved seeing the decaying the moral and human values and he narrates it in a lighter vein. He also goes to describe the saddest stories of human love and sympathy which have no value in present society. In his story "Raurab" (a kind of hell) it is shown

1. Samudratir
very clearly that romantic outlook of the young generation is getting a great shock due to economic imbalance. Here a young girl Malati becomes the object of love of a reckless youth Parmananda who is eager to establish a physical relationship with her. Really he possesses no love, only his frustration pushes him to do something. Though Parmananda’s attempt fails Malati could not keep her chastity in tact due to her poor economic condition. At last Malati used to leave her house at evening under the pretention of undergoing an embrodiary training class and joins the class of prostitution. One day it happens that her brother Madan faces her as a commodity. The story portrays a painful experience of a girl who is deprived of love and ultimately turns to an instrument of disgraceful sexual pleasure. Her brother symbolizes a modern loafer who lacks the courage to raise a voice of protest against social evils whereas he has engaged himself in tall talk of chastity, morality etc.

Silabhadra has a psychological insight too. His another story "Samudratir"\(^2\) (sea shore) is a psychoanalysis of Prof. Dutta’s character. The story clearly evinces the view how the repression of early childhood may develop into a weak personality in later life. Prof. Dutta the hero of the story is quite unable to express his deep emotion of love for Malati because he was in his childhood under the strict

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2. *Samudratir*
control of his mother, so that he might not develop any kind of relation with the fair sex. Being vexed by his apathy, Malati marries another man. After Malati, Sewali, the sister of the former comes forward and pours her love on him. But this time also he remains inactive. He could not gather courage to respond her. Being disgusted Sewali withdraws her love and she ultimately bestows it on an engineer and they got married.

Silabhadra's style is simple and his power of narration is bold. Strong suggestion makes his stories attractive.

Gobinda Prasad Sarma

Govinda Prasad Sarma begins his literary career in the Ramdhenu age but he achieves popularity during this period. His published work of short stories are Pusita Subas, Kachar Dare Hirar Dare.

Gobinda Prasad Sarma is trying his best to record the temperament of modern individuals in his short stories. Though sometimes he is the subject of adverse criticism for expressing the passionate lust of some characters, he does in order to establish them on a realistic ground. He also depicts through them some queer psychological traits like inferiority complex and sadism. His beautiful story story "Jultular Janma Dinat"3 (on the birth day of Jultul) contains

3. Pusita Subas
an accurate picture of Utpal's mind suffering from the complex of inferiority by the side believed Manika. Earlier, such complexes are very beautifully handled by Saurabh Kumar Chaliha and Homen Borgohain in their stories. Sarma deserves the credit for his work because none else among his contemporaries is as realistic and appealing as him. Another story by him "Rāār Tāāpasī" (The nun of night) on the one hand, expresses the tone of realistic love and on the other hand his romantic temperament. This story also illustrates one aspect of Freudian Psychology viz. Sadism. Here Ramash compounder an ardent lover of Syamali seek fulfilment of his love by murdering his beloved. Though the writer has a voice of reformation in the field of child marriage and widow marriage, this reformative aspects however has not found very clear expression. Still another story by him "Etā Adhunik Premar Galpa" (a story of modern love) he very clearly shows the cowardice character of a lover which the hero conceals very intelligently, and goes on showing his attachment sufficiently.

Gabinda Prasad Sarma follows the traditional method, but in some special stories like "Tultular Janma Dinat" the treatment is exceptional.

4. Dusita Subāś
5. Ibid.
Pranabjyoti Deka

Pranabjyoti Deka is one of the young writer of this generation who occupies a place of prominence for his brilliancy. Though his creation is small in number, it is certainly praise worthy. Only one collection of short stories entitled "Kailāshnath" goes to his credit.

Pranabjyoti Deka is a realist. He is a pungent satirist and outspoken critic of his age. He beautifully exposes the evil practices of the beaurocrates as well as of the hypoeracies of political and social leaders.

Though, it seems Pranabjyoti Deka is less concerned with the emotional ebbs and flows of human heart, but he does not forget to caricature at the modern attitude towards love which is intermingled with the economic problem of common people. The collection 'Kailāshnath' contains only one story wherein love is dealt from a realistic point of view. In the story "Bewarich bahi" (a dead body without claim) a glimpse of a conjugal love suddenly appears and in the next moment it goes behind the screen of economic problems. Sajina Begam suddenly come across the dead body of Moti driver who was once her life partner. She has a long wait for the police to come and by this time she is painfully recollecting the memory of their conjugal life. She intends

6. Kailāshnath
to perform the last rites for the dead body of Moti, as an emblame of her past love. In the meantime the police came to fetch the body. Sajina also accompanies them. The police make her aware of the fact that Medical College purchases the body of dead person. On hearing this Sajina gives up her idea of cremating the dead body and decides to sell it to meet up her need. On the whole journey she is enquiring the police how much money the Medical College authority offer on a dead body? What kind of size of body is necessary to get a huge sum of money etc. And thus a soft emotion of love is marred by the gross reality faced by a poor fellow.

Pranabjoyoti Deka's style of narration is marked with a chiselled and precise language, which makes his weapon of satire a very powerful one.

Apurba Sarma

Apurba Sarma is a story teller of unique merit. His only short story collection entitled "Subhabarta" reveals how the everyday reality could be shaped into a modern short story.

Apurba Sarma's stories are endowed with a realistic temper and sometimes the Marxian ideals also found in them. The wit and intellectual shrewdness are in abundance in his romantic stories and love has been expressed in a realistic tone. To some of his characters, the experience of love is a
new thing. Again some characters after experiencing the softness of love become unable to hold it strongly. It is also a firm conviction of his rebellions characters that love or romantic involvement may lead to frustrate the revolutionary spirit. But in one of his stories "Joto Juddhaya Jugasy" (war for war) a revolutionary youth come across a pure sentiment of love while he is fleeing from a police chase by takes shelter in a house of a prostitute. A physical and mental contact grow between them. Afterwards the police come and just before his surrender to police personnel the hero delivers an optimistic lecture to his beloved that the oppression has to be end and one day he again will come to rescue her.

The careful construction, the different style, and the ever dominant intelligence are the remarkable things in his stories.

Nagen Saikia

Nagen Saikia begins his literary career as a traditionalist in his early part but after years he develops the new techniques of story telling.

His collections of stories Kuber Hári Barua, Astityar Śikali, Pārthib Apārthib, Chabi āru Nakṣa are pieces of remarkable literature.

7. Subhabartā
Nagan Saikia is neither propagating for a social revolution nor he is a true recorder of social and political development of his time. He scarcely lavishes favours on the down trodden masses as some of his contemporary writers do.

Nagen Saikia reveals his interest in narrating universal love stories. He mainly sings of its sentimental aspects. His recent absurd stories also do not miss this tone.

Love has been idealized in his stories. The charm of romantic love, the vivid picture of lustful passion get importance in his stories. The story "Brintyachyut" (fallen from bough) has glorified the conjugal love. Jahnabi a widow at last commits suicide in utter repentance when she has lost her purity involving in a sexual intercourse with a person. The story records the regard for chastity of a widow as well as her deep reverence to her deceased husband.

"Ugata Sura Dura Gayure Gabinda" (sun rises and Gabinda goes for) exposes the hypocracies of a person who is a religious priest by profession. Being slave of passion he has an intercourse with his maid Sumita and made her pregnant. The priest is however unaware of his potency as he has no child and when he comes to know about Sumita's:

8. Kuber Hati Barua
9. Ibid.
pregnancy he is in a great joy that he is also a potent one to give birth to a child. In order to keep his position in tact in the society, he gives lots of money to her and manages to leave her the village with one of his servants and thus he proves his innocence.

Dr. Saikia's recent stories witness his strong weakness towards the absurd world. Here are some characters endowed with existentialist view. He finds that life is meaningless and the beauty and virility of youth decay with the advancement of time. In this meaningless absurd universe, finding no way out he turns inward in search of the mystery of existence. These stories are also full of romantic fancy and sorrow.

These type of stories of this modern trend can not touch all the levels naturally, except few sensitive readers. Moreover, Saikia's style is not simple and it is often full of symbols and imagery. As he is experimenting the new techniques he could not acquire a distinctive individualistic style of his own.

Arun Goswami

Arun Goswami is both a novelist and story writer but his chief claim of reputation rests on the short stories. He is producing stories incessantly and they come in the form of books under the title of Muktiśām, Pratipadarjōn etc.
Arun Goswami has a strong social awareness in his stories and he strongly believes that only the Marxian ideology can change the present form of society. But at the same time, the traditional romantic flow is also forceful in his stories. Arun Goswami is basically a romantic person but consciously he tries to be a follower of Marxian ideas. He is mainly concerned with the miseries of have not classes but the glory of human love in these lives is also fully realised by them. In some of his stories the revolutionary fervour and romantic air go hand in hand. Unlike his contemporaries Apurba Sarma he can not accord an extreme realistic tone to his love stories. The revolutionary youth of his stories are full of sentiment of love and they know how to respect it. In the critical point of the life the hero realises the importance of this noble sentiment. In the story "Prastavana Drisya"10 (The prelude) Aparajit the hero of the story recalls his beloved Ruplekha when he is in police custody in charge of a revolutionary activities. He desires to see her for once but already married, Ruplekha refuses to pay a visit condemning him as a murderer. In the story revolutionary spirit of Aparajit disappears, as the romantic dream come to the forefront. The another story entitled "Mukti snan"11 (a bath of salvation), also contains a

10. Muktisnan
11. Ibid.
romantic outpouring of a revolutionary youth while he is 
beside his mother's death bed. Here the youth recollects the 
memory of his beloved from whom he got a refusal.

Arun Goswami gives value to the idealistic pattern 
of love. Also in "Yuddha aru Sānti"12 (war and peace) he 
elevates the love of chandrama for Biplab to a considerable 
height. Chandrama the daughter of a police superintendent 
lost her lover Buplab at her father's action on revolution­ 
aries. Chandrama is urged by her father to forget her lover 
and renew her life marrying somebody. But she remains unmarried 
for life with the memory of Biplab. Being repented for his 
doing Chandrama's father at last dies leaving a huge some of 
money, at the disposal of his daughter. Chandrama establishes 
a school after the name of Biplab by the money inherited from 
her father and she begins her career as a teacher in the 
school without remuneration. Here we see the noble aspects 
of love. The love not only refines the character of the 
Police Superintendent, Chandrama also gather moral courage 
to lead a noble life by sacrificing herself for the cause of 
humanity. Though Goswami takes a field to fight for the 
oppressed class he deals with the subject of love in details. 
In this age of utter disillusionment and despair Goswami 
sings the glory of love and thereby he enlivens the tradi­ 
tion of love projected earlier in the Assamese short stories.

12. Ibid.
Arun Goswami is a good story teller with well made plot and simple language. But his motive of propaganda is so strong that his artistic expression is often hampered by it.

Kesab Saikia

Another story writer of this period is Kesab Saikia. He writes some beautiful love stories in the traditional way of glorifying this universal sentiment against the background of village life. His book of story is "Aji Mor Mon".

His story "Bhao" (a part of a play) unfolds the simplicities of village people and their outburst of ardent love. Rupram, the hero of the story has a devotion to the art of acting. He intends to act on the stage and expects his beloved Makani, to witness the theatrical performance. But to his utter despair, she has left the village on that very day of staging his drama, to enjoy the movie picture. This apathy of his lover snatches away all his zeal to act in the drama.

His another story "Kenekai" (How) depicts the inner mind of a mother who is reluctant to give marriage to her daughter Konpona because of the fickle and irresponsible nature of the suitor. After the death of his wife, Konpona wishes to have Premada as his second wife. He is so much

13. Borgohain, Homen (Edit) Asomiā Galpa Sankalan
14. Aji Mor Man
enthusiastic to get her that he is running after her being careless to his children, left by his first wife. This sort of carelessness to his children poisons the mind of the mother of Premada and she comes to a conclusion that one who is utterly callous to his own children will not be able to take care of her daughter, Premada.

Kesab Saikia's style is very simple. His method of characterization is also simple. The characters are established on a realistic ground.

Bijoy Sankar Sarma

In this age of realism, Bijoy Sankar Sarma is different and has concentrated on unreal world of ghosts. His stories aim at rousing a sense of terror and mystery by depicting the ghostly affairs. But it is to be mentioned here that though they are full of ghostly activities, there is a glimpse of worldly love and that is the reason why they are dealt with in this chapter. His stories are collected in a book entitled Golap aru kankāl.

In the story "Golap aru kankāl" (The rose and the skeleton) he narrates very beautifully the story of a girl who turns to a ghost after her death for her unfulfilled passion of love. The story "Jighansā" (The revenge) Jayanta

15. Golap arū kankal
has killed his wife and remarries Madhumita. But on the very
day of their union at the dead of night the ghost of first
wife of Jayanta makes an appearance and her fearful presence
frightens Madhumita and she dies out of fear. In the story
"Amariri"\textsuperscript{16} (bodyless) the lover of Samim meets her lover
after her suicidal death as a living being. But later on, he
is sensible of the matter that she is really a ghost.

Though the stories are full of ghostly affairs
there is a universal appeal of human heart and perhaps this
is the reason why they are becoming more interesting and
life like. The writer has developed the power of vivid des-
cription and it attributes to his stories an air of realism.

\textbf{Kumud Goswami}

Kumud Goswami is a young writer of seventies who
used to write in a conventional manner. He is not interested
in social problem nor is he trying any effort to clean the
filth of rotten surroundings of his age. He has a poetic
vision and with a keen observation he paints the joys and
sorrows and sufferings of love and separation of the indivi-
dual being. In his short story "Dwar"\textsuperscript{17} (The door) he beauti-
fully expresses the yearning of a widow for love which she
lost forever. The story begins with a sense of misuder-

\textsuperscript{16} Ib\textit{id.}
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Asamia Galpa Sankalan}
standing springs in the mind of her mother-in-law, who on hearing a cracking sound of the door comes to her room. She is under the wrong impression that somebody comes for secret moving with her daughter-in-law. But ultimately she penetrates into the mystery of observing that the wind makes such a sound in the loose broken door. The suspicion of her mother-in-law has aroused in her a deep sense of sorrow. Her deprived womanhood awakens and tears comes down from her eyes. She now refuses to stay in such a lonely house.

Kumud Goswami is a vivid narrator and has a tendency to follow his predecessors.

Nilima Sarma

Nilima Sarma is a remarkable writer from feminine group, who produces a lot of short stories on woman psychology. Her collected works are "Anyasuti" 18

Nilima Sarma very realistically records the emotions and feelings of woman heart. In her story "Anyasuti" (other stream) she portrays the changing mood and feelings of a girl after the attainment of puberty. The age attributes to her the general character of a young girl viz. the hesitation and yearning for love. She bears a traditional Indian type femininity tenderness which ultimately makes her unable to

18. Anyasuti
protest against the arrangement of her marriage with one Sunil Bhagavati who once wrote some love letters to her friend Jaya. Though she is enraged at his betrayal to her friend and is willing to turn down the proposal but she can not do this. She reluctantly put on the engagement ring.

In another story "Phalgu" (a name of the river) a youth bears a deep love for a young widow. He also determines to marry her but it could not be materialised due to some homely protest and ultimately the widow dies by burning herself.

In addition to the writers mentioned above some new writers come to the forefront also. Such writers are Riju Hazarika, Nalini Sarma, Debabrata Sarma, Polen Barkataki, Pranati Goswami, Gayatri Konwar etc. These writers though meritorious are less concerned to depict the love episodes in their stories. So their stories are not discussed extensively.

19. Ibid.