CHAPTER I.

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ASSAMESE SHORT STORY

The appearance of the short story in its fullest developed form is a quite recent phenomenon in the world literature. This perhaps is the reason why this genre has not been dealt with extensively by leading literary historians. This new form is constantly being subjected to various sorts of experimentation in recent time.

Man's interest in hearing and telling story is old. It has found manifestation in such forms of story telling as folk tales, ballads and the epics. Although these ancient forms have a certain affinities with the modern short story, still they can not be regarded as its direct forrunners. This new form is far more sophisticated and complex than those simple ancient narratives. Even in its artistic and technical qualities, it manifests a remarkable advancement. The old genres were mostly rambling accounts in story form of beliefs, customs and traditions. They totally lack the modern artistic sense of form which is an intrinsic characteristic of modern short story.

The modern scientific age creates a situation in which certain earlier figments of romantic imagination becomes a reality while the established creeds regarding God, man and the universe receives a radical jolt. Moreover,
the various social and political upheaval completely changes the prevalent social set up. The industrial development further transmutes the simple way of living to a complex one. All these factors have jointly contributed to the development of the short story. The complexity of the modern age, in fact, contains within itself the germ of short story. In this connection, Frank O'Connor's remarks that 'The short story, like the novel, is a modern art form; that is to say, it represents better than poetry or drama, our own attitude to life' is poignantly true.

Another significant factor which has led to the emergence of short story is the growing popularity of literary journals in modern times. The modern readers are now reluctant and also to unable to go through the massive volumes and they like the modern journal, where a single volume provides a number of stories, complete in themselves.

The impact of this western scientific and materialistic civilization upon India has been responsible for the development of this modern literary genre in this country. Although the ancient literary works like the Vedas, the Puranas and the Mahakavyas have come to be regarded as voluminous masterpieces of stories, yet beginnings of the Indian short story can not be traced back to them. It was only after India had come into contact with the west that Indian

short story came into being. The spread of western education created a deep stir in the Indian society. This brought about an unprecedented change in our general outlook. Even our nationalistic feelings had been roused only by western education. Along with this national awakening there was a simultaneous upheaval in the realm of literature too. Many Indian writers regard this period as the flowering time of Indian short story. Noted among these are K.S. Duggal who maintains- 'The Short Story came to India at a crucial period in the history of Indian letters. The nation was in ferment. A massive movement for liberation from foreign rule was ranging in the country. The British were in no mood to withdraw easily. The struggle was long and gruelling. It involved in particular, the imaginative youth and the creative talent of the country.'

Duggal further goes on to say that the writers of those times through various uses of symbols and imageries in their stories voice their to defiance of British imperialistic rule. He points out the existence of this uncompromising mood in the short stories, written in most of the regional languages like Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi. It is somewhat strange that no stories of this kind exist in the Assamese literature in that time. But this does not mean that Assamese literature was left untouched by the new spirit.

of western learning. All the new literary forms gradually began to emerge here too.

The pioneer journal Orunodoi (1846-1880) published by Baptist Missionaries in Assam, ushered in this new wave to Assamese literature which was predominantly under the influence of Vaisnavite tradition till then. Although Orunodoi itself was primarily a religious journal, yet reference to great world literature and latest scientific inventions found prominence in its pages. Through the translation in instalments of Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress it conveyed to Assamese literary world the trend of modern fiction. This journal also provided opportunities for both western and Indian stories and folk tales to appear in Assamese print for the first time. Most of the stories were written with a view to glorifying the Christian religion, yet these were the trend setters of the Assamese story writing tradition. Some of the notable stories published were Solomon's decision (April 1849) from old testament. The rich man and Lazarus (May 1848) Parable of the Prodigal Son (August 1848) from the new testament, stories from Indian and Greek epic, stories of jest, aesops fables etc. Both science and religion were described through stories which were very lucid and delightful like An account of Ramgati (Dec. 1880). These stories, according to Dr. Maheswar Neog, the renowned critic of Assamese literature, took the place of modern short story
in the journal. 3 Though these stories were not short stories in the modern sense of the term, it can not be denied that these stories paved the way for the emergence of Modern Short Story in the Jonaki Age of Assamese literature. Now we undertake to review the ages from the view point of artistic excellence that the story writers of that respective ages, have achieved.

The Jonaki Age

The first important landmark in modern Assamese literature was the publication of the journal Jonaki from which the entire period derived its name. This journal is the Progenitor of the romantic poetry and the short stories in Assamese literature.

The journal was first published on 9th February 1889 in Calcutta with Chandra Kumar Agrawala as its first editor. The editor declared that the aim of the journal was to bring the glow of progress in this land of darkness. His words were "Although we may not be able to bring light itself into this land of gloom, yet we will consider our efforts fruitful if we can just find our way by the small sparks of our own diligence......We have stepped out to fight against gloom, our aim is to lead the country forward to light." 4

This journal indeed brought light into our literature. The literary effort of a handful of writers of this journal created an unprecedented wave of romanticism in Assamese literature. Shifting away from the old tradition, they accepted a novel progressive outlook in both form and content. Lyrics, blank verse, drama, the novel and the short story all received an invigorating impetus during this period. In this connection what Dr. Nirmalprabha Bardaloi remarks is worth mentioning.

"A new, modern age in Assamese literature was heralded in 1889, with the famous literary magazine Jonaki. Through it, there entered into Assamese life and literature not only new ideas about life and the world, but also new literary forms and modes such as the lyric poem, the short story, the novel, the epic episode and many others."^5

The revival of folk literature is one of the salient features of the romantic movement. These ancient pieces of folk literature specially folk tales, come to occupy a special status during this romantic period of Assamese literature. It was at that time that Sahityarathi Lakhminath Bezbaroa began writing his first Assamese short story basing on the existing ancient folk tales of Assam. He called them Sadhu (Tale) and not short stories. These stories, however,

contain all the common characteristics of a modern short story like the emphasis on an event of a moment, extensive use of symbol and imagery, irony and sarcasm, a spectacular beginnings, abrupt ending and analytical view of life. His first story "Bhadari" is a fully developed short story and has all the peculiar characteristics of its forms. Bezbaroa displays a reformative zeal in all his writings. He delivers his message mostly through comedy and satire. This style of Bezbaroa became a marked characteristic of almost all the story writers of the romantic period. He has also became a model for a great many of later Assamese writers. Even the romantic ideal of his love stories were being followed. These two characteristics viz. romantic love and reformative zeal constitute the key themes of the stories of romantic period.

In the aspect of technique all the writers, even Bezbaroa includes many pieces which are really dramas and light essays. Certain stories of this period are just simple narratives and some of them merely expression of a poetic mood or feeling. Minutely observing collected works of Bezbaroa's short stories, Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, the eminent critic, opines that they include some comic scenes, characters without stories and folk-tales.  

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A list of notable short story writers of this period includes besides Lakhminath Bezbaroa, Sarat Chandra Goswami, Dandinath Kalita, Mitradev Mahanta, Surya Kumar Bhuyan. Now they are discussed individually.

**Lakhminath Bezbaroa**

From the Personal Diary of Bezbaroa we gather that Bezbaroa started writing stories even before the publication of the *Jonaki*. His first story is "Bhadari". As a short story "Bhadari" is a singular achievement. Although Bezbaroa mostly deals with social problems in his stories, yet he is also capable of delineating sentimental romantic love. His stories depict a social awareness as well as individualism. They are thus concerned with the sorrows, joys and misfortune of the individuals. Like Rabindra Nath Tagor, elements of supernaturalism can also be found in his writings, although he lacks the realistic suggestiveness of the Bengali writer.

In case of technique, he was ahead of his contemporaries. Although he did not reach perfections he was a pioneer in this field.

His four collections of short stories are *Sadhu-kathar kuki*, *Surabhi*, *Jonbiri* and *Kehokali*.

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Sarat Chandra Goswami

Another remarkable writer of this period is Sarat Chandra Goswami. He alone among the other writers of his period, could keep himself free from the powerful influence of Lakhminath Bezbaroa and develop an individual style of his own. His stories lack the colour and variety of Bezbaroa; but he is very successful in giving a vivid picture of the society in which he lived. The lot of the common man and specially the plight of destitute widows are his recurring themes. Goswami has a strong social awareness, but instead of revolting against social injustice, he acknowledges a universal fatalism like Thomas Hardy.

Sarat Chandra Goswami’s love stories depict nobility which resides in the human soul. Although he sometimes delineates passionate carnal love, yet there is always a didactic moral tone of censure against them. His technical achievement is small. His language is pre-dominantly of the rural folk. Some of his stories are, however, highly refined and poetic.

His published works are Moinā, Bājiker, Galānjali and Paridarshan.
The Post Jonākī Age

After the Jonākī we had two literary journals. The 'Bānhī' (1909) and the 'Ushā' (1907). In the pages of these we had a new band of writers. But they were mostly the followers of the 'Jonākī' band of writers. Their list includes the following writers.

**Dandinath Kalita**

Dandinath Kalita is an important writer of fiction of this period. In his stories the social themes are predominant. He had the courage to revolt against the established social order. His love stories depict both idealistic and erotic love. By depicting illicit love he goes on to point out its evils.

His published collection of stories is Sātsārī.

**Mitradev Mahanta**

Generally acknowledged as a poet, Mitradev Mahanta is also a gifted story writer. A social writer he mainly deals with the corrupt practices which prevailed among the Vaisnava preachers of the Satras or Vaisnav monasteries. His stories deals with concrete problems of the society because he knew about them as a man in the profession of religious reformation. His exposition of religious exploitation of the
common men by these preachers, won him the sympathy of his readers.

His romantic stories are highly emotional. The tender sentiment of first love is beautifully described in his story.

His technique is simple and his description wants variety.

His only collected work of stories is Chandrahār.

Surya Kumar Bhuyan

Surya Kumar Bhuyan is on the one hand a romantic poet and on the other hand a well known historian and antiquarian of Assam. This perhaps is the reason why his stories have a strong romantic overtone. His stories depict of romantic love. Some of his stories give a poetic account of emotion of first love.

Panchami is his collected work of short stories.

The other writers of this school are Nakul Chandra Bhuyan and Lakhminath Phookan. But since their mature writings began to appear only in the Āwāhan age, we shall deal with them in detail later.

The writers of the Jonākī age prepared the way for the coming of another great age of literature. This was also marked by the predominance of the short story. This age which
is known as the Auahon age saw the introduction of various new themes and techniques in the form of the short story.

The Āwāhon age

Like the earlier age, this age too derives its name from the publication of a journal viz. the Āwāhon. The first issue of this journal appeared in 1929 under the editorship of Dinanath Sarma.

In this age, when the romantic movement reached its climax, realism too made its mark. This period also witnessed a wide dissemination of the western education. The centre of learning for Assam shifted from Calcutta to Gauhati. This gave a boost to education and enlightened thinking throughout Assam.

Meanwhile, the modern thinkers of the world had created a great tumult in the region of intellectual thought which resulted in growing complexities in the realm of literature. The simplicity of early folk literature was gradually in decline. Assamese people's concept of himself and universe was radically changed along with popularization of the theories of Darwin and Freud. Darwin's theory of evolution changed the idea of man as a divine creation and showed that man was merely a product of natural evolutionary process. The existence of God came to be questioned with Freud's new process of psychoanalysis, even the emotions and passions of man came
to be scrutinized scientifically. Delving deep into the human consciousness Freud discovered the peculiar mechanism of the libido in man. Besides it the social concepts too totally revolutionized by the writings of Karl Marx. And all these became popular in Assam in this period.

The combined influence of all these thinkers was deeply felt by the Assamese writers. Although they were not so strongly motivated by scientific materialism of Marx, yet certain instances in their writings saw that they had a preliminary acquaintance with Marx. A group of Cotton College students formed a radical club and through this club the Balshevic literature found a ground in Assam and some intellectual soon came under its influence.8

By this time the national movement had reached a critical period. The impact of nationalism was strongly felt even in Assam. The Assamese writers were fired by a nationalist zeal and this manifested itself in several ways in literature.

Western writers provided these writers with models of literary creation. Foremost among them were writers like Maupassant and Chekhov. From the Maupassant, they learnt to infuse realism into their writings. He also taught them the minute analysis of characters. Chekhov's stories had an admirable aesthetic beauty. His stories do not display any

8. Bhuyan, Arunchandra & De, Sibapada (edit) Political History of Assam, 1978, p. 246
spectacular event. He aims more to concentrate on characterization and psychology. He too came to exercise a powerful influence upon the Assamese story writers.

Of the earlier Assamese short story writers, Bezbaroa has had a considerable influence upon them. In the writing of writer like Mohichandra Bora, a satirical story writer of this period, the influence of Bezbaroa's style is clearly evident. The social consciousness of the writers of the proceeding age is also seen in the writings of these later writers. In spite of all these, it is clearly evident that these writers of the Awahon age showed a marked achievement in all the various aspects of theme, form, style and language in their short stories.

A look into the different characteristics of these writers of the age separately, will throw a little more light on their personal literary achievement.

Nagendra Narayan Chaudhury

Nagendra Narayan Chaudhury stands out among the writers of this period for his singular effort, for enriching the Assamese literature. He is a talented story writer in Assamese. He mostly deals with the social condition of the Assamese people, specially of the plain tribes. He is also a writer of beautiful love stories.
Although his technique lacks any novelty, yet his stories are very pleasant and readable. His power of delicate characterization has made his characters vivid and life like.

His two collection of stories are Vīnār jhankār and Nagendra Narayan Chaudhurir Galpa, a posthumous collection of his short stories.

Nakul Chandra Bhuyan

Nakul Chandra Bhuyan wrote stories not only for the Āwāhon but also for two other journal viz. Chetana and Bānhi. Quite a few stories are written against the background of Assamese rural life depicting their economic hardship. He also writes of the romantic love of the tea garden labourer. Some of his other love stories describe effectively the blooming of first love. This writer too fails to show any development in technique. His stories remains in the level of single narratives.

Chorāṅg Chowār Charā and Galpar Sarāi are his collected works of short stories.

Haliram Deka

The most popular writer of this period is Haliram Deka. A down to earth out look towards life is the marked feature of his stories. They also show a certain social awar-
ness. In them we find a picturazation of the lives of all common urban people. "Re Barebhāi" is one of his everlasting story of this kind. How a common man like Sultan becomes a victim of the heartlessness of so called gentlemen of the society is the theme of the story.

Haliram Deka's love stories are full of variety. He does not hesitate even to portray pure sexual love. The character of these stories are life like and Psychologically satisfying.

His technique bears a satisfactory sign of development. He excels in presenting a comic view of life by his intellectual satire and light comedy.

His only published work is Haliram Dekār Galpa Sankalan, published after his death.

Lakshmīdhar Sarma

Lakshmīdhar Sarma perhaps is the most powerful writer of this period. He is the first writer who attempted to satisfy the intellectual thirst of the modern man. His stories show a strong social awareness and are often expression of revolt against the social order. On one occasion he voices the vehement protest through the character of a widow who boldly gives birth to a child and faces the social tribunal.
This tone of revolt is also heard in his love stories. He startled his readers by the nonchalant portrayal of illicit love. Unlike his predecessors he did not attempt to impose any didactic moral through his passionate love stories. His masterful analysis of personality has made his characters stand out from others. In his attitude to bear a scientific attitude to life, he applies the libido theory of Freud in many of his characterisation. For the same reason he is also the first short story writer to show the influence of Marxism.

Byārthatā Dān is his collected works of short stories.

**Trailokyanath Goswami**

Trailokyanath Goswami is a socially conscious writer. He however does not revolt in the way Lakhidhar Sarma has done nor does he show the poignancy of satire of Mahi Chandra Bora. His method is midway between the two and is marked by a general sobriety of tone. Like Sarat Chandra Goswami, his attention is drawn towards the sad plights of widows and fallen women which were the common disturbing problem of that time.

More than the romantic elements his stories depict a realistic attitude to love. Sipini is a story of this kind. Here the heroine looks for a lover, marriage with whom will be profitable for her in her weaving business.
Trolokyanath Goswami's language is always restrained. At times there is an outburst of Sarcasm and irony.

Trolokyanath Goswami's works are *Silpir Janma*, *Marichikā*, *Arunā* and *Jivanar Jīā Jui*.

**Mohichandra Bora**

Mohichandra Bora is a writer who through his trenchant satire and humour struck a virulent blow at the prevailing evils of the society and personal life. But unlike his literary mentor, L.N. Bezbaroa, he is concerned more with the urban population than the country folk. In his stories we find the description of the people belonging to various professions of urban life like professors, lawyers, clerks etc.

His love stories too are developed through the medium of humour and satire. He vividly describe the misgivings and suspicion of conjugal life. His technique is well developed and mostly bases itself on satire and humour.

His collection of short stories is *Ukilar Janma Rahasya*.

**Lakhminath Phookan**

Lakhminath Phookan is another writer who has composed his stories against the background of urban life, more than social life, the writer lays emphasis on the indi-
individuals, his joys, sorrows and sufferings, love and its accompanying pangs of separation. Many of his stories have love as the main theme. He speaks fluently both of romantic as well as carnal love as the main theme. He speaks fluently both of romantic as well as carnal love. Although his characters are basically emotional and sentimental, yet they have a basic realism about them. The writer has made accurate psychological study of these characters.

Lakhminath Phookan's style of story telling is simple but they are more or less highly suggestive on account of his extensive use of irony and satire.

Maramar Mādhuri, Ophāidāng, Ānande Nadhare Hiyā constitute his collected works of short stories.

Bina Barua

The versatile literary genius Birinchi Kumar Barua wrote under the pseudonym Bina Barua. He has a rich and varied experience of Assamese rural life as well as urban life of Calcutta. This has come very handy to him in his profession as a story writer. He sometimes even depicts the lives of the downtrodden masses of the town.

In his love stories he has included the lives of the hill people too. The story "Lāpeli" narrates exclusively the romantic love of a hill-girl for an Assamese youth of the plain.
Bina Barua's technical skill is of a high order, and his achievement in characterization is remarkable. He has to his credit two collection of short stories viz. Āghonī Bāi, and  Pat Parivartan.

Dr. Hem Barua

Another forceful writer of this period is Hem Barua. His literary qualities lies in his ability to mingle a psycho-analytical view with realism. In this he was a pioneer. He takes a penetrating view of the unrealistic and superstitious beliefs of the village people and thus tries to liberate them from these. In some of his stories, he records the history of freedom movement both in India and in Assam.

Hem Barua also shows a keen interest in delineating the love affairs of simple village folk. In "Chapanīā" he beautifully describes the simple love of two lovers which is finally shown to triumph amidst light hearted intrigues.

Hem Barua narrates his stories in a comic vein. Some times irony and sarcasm also paravade the story. Some stories of his are mere sketches and lack the technique of the modern short story. Another commandable feature of his story is the complete command over language.

Hem Barua's only one collection of short story is Chapanīā.
Rama Das

Rama Das is a writer of the Awahon age who bears a striking resemblance to Lakhmidhar Sarma. But the stories of Rama Das do not have the same social awareness of those of Lakhmidhar Sarma. He has undertaken to describe only the recklessness of sexual love. He however could not analyse the powerful hidden motives of sex as Lakhmidhar Sarma has done. His prime effort is to display different aspects of sexual passion. His characters are, as if forever only driven by concupisence.

Ramadasar Srestha Galpa, Jahnavi, Barsha Jetia are his notable collected works of short stories.

Radhikamohon Goswami

Radhikamohon Goswami is another writer who undertakes to represent social evil in his stories. Though his manner is light yet it is somewhat sober if compared to Mohichandra Bora and Trailokya Nath Goswami. In his memorable short story "State Transport" he describes the sorrows and hardship of the lower middle class people very vividly. Gifted with a powerful faculty of observation he points out characters which are true to life.
Umakanta Sarma

Umakanta Sarma we come across a writer who is more skilled in writing philosophical stories rather than social ones. A deep psychological study is also discernable in his stories. This tendency for psychological analysis intrudes even into his love stories. A characteristic story of this type is Pakhi.

Ghuraniā Prithivīr Bekā Path is his remarkable collection of short stories.

Dinanath Sarma

Another well known writer of this period is Dinanath Sarma. The writer's main concern seems to be to deal with the passion of love and hatred. He clearly unfolds the many conflicts of romantic love in his stories with remarkable dexterity. At times the psychoanalytical treatment is also seen but for the most part his stories are full of outward incidents.

His stories are published in different collections under the title of Dulāi, Akalsārīā, Kōwā Bhāturiā Óthar Žalat, Pohar etc.

After dealing in some detail about the wellknown short story writer of this great period we can now take a casual look at. Some other writers who produced some short
stories worthy of note. The most notable among these are Munin Barkataki and Krishna Bhuyan. Both these writers have produced stories of high technical excellence and their psychological approach too is noteworthy. Another writer is Nalini Barua. His stories are imbued with strong passion of love and have a deep psychological insight. In his story 'Āmār Jāhāj' he portrays a bold girl who is able enough to overthrow the social bindings which come in her way for the attainment of her lover. A decisive boldness is evident in the writings of Sadananda Das of this period. He has no inhibitions in even exposing the loose moral life of ancestors through one of his leading character. Passionate love mostly paravades the stories of Jamiruddin Ahmed. His noteworthy achievement is that he has been able to depict both the Hindu as well as his own Muslim society quite accurately in his stories. The problems of middle class and their sufferings constitutes the subject matter of the stories of Probodh Chandra Goswami who records their mentality very accurately.

The age is undoubtedly under the charming influence of the journal the Āwāhon but besides this journal there appeared time to time some other magazine like the Chetana, the Bānhi and the Jayanti etc. which too had an important role to play in fostering the development of Assamese short story till the publication of the Rāmdheny literary magazine bringing the wave of modernity to Assamese short story. A few
minor writers like Tirthanath Sarma, Tilak Kakati, Ananda Chandra Barua, Daiba Chandra Talukdar, Kumar Kishor, Mahendra Saharia, Golokeswar Barua, Tulsi Prasad Dutta, Sudha Barua, Bipin Kumar Buragohain, Chirajuddin Ahmed, Mohendra Nath Bhattacharyya, Harendra Nath Kalita, Kamaleswar Chaliha etc.

These writers of the Pre-War period have solidly paved the way for the later post writers of the modern outlook. Realism, which made a faint appearance during the Awahon period, acquired a definite form in the writings of the modern writers of the post-war period. Thus this age of the Awahon can be considered as a great prelude to the modern period of short stories.

Post War Period

Although the Awahon age heralded the advent of modern literature, yet the modern tendency began to actually assert themselves only towards the middle of the twentieth century. The widespread havoc which the second great war wrought on the population, changed entirely the outlook of the people politically, socially, and intellectually. The perverse influence of the war left an indelible scar on the literature of the world.

The war which broke out in 1939 soon engulfed almost all the nations of the world. Man suddenly witnessed the impact of naked brutality and loss of all human values.
All human civilization and culture were ruthlessly trodden under the fatal feet of war and innocent lives were lost. All traditional values of life disappeared. The humanism of romantic age was brushed aside. This resulted in utter disillusionment and the future became uncertain.

The widespread devastation of the war and its accompanying menace was strongly felt in Indian life too. A great perturbation was stirred up here with the influx of war refuses from Burma. Along with the spread of epidemic and economic distress the country also experienced devastating famine in many parts. Assam being a frontier province of British India, the impact of the war disturbingly felt here. The arrival of allied power and the establishment of various Military bases speeded up war production and construction. The new generation of contractors who undertook the jobs became rich over night. They began amassing wealth by resorting to all sorts of corrupt practices. A total change in the Assamese society and outlook in the common people began to take place.

In addition to this, there appeared in the political life a new ray of hope. National movement for attaining freedom reached in high degree and it ultimately led to the independance of India. This new found independance in its turn created an atmosphere in which the mental, social, political and intellectual life underwent a major transition.
But the political freedom could not wipe out the feeling of depression from among the common people. After independence, a sense of class distinction and mainly economic and social imbalance cropped up. The new born freedom profited the upstarts only and their tendency to oppress the common people generated a sense of anger in them. With the coming of independence it was the upstart who monopolized all the facilities of the society, even to the extent of trying to grab the political power. The deprived classes gradually started becoming restless and soon this social ferment erupted in a series of scattered and disorganized revolt of peasants and labourers.

All these new social factors naturally engaged all the attention of the writers of this period. The Marxian thought with which the writers of the earlier period showed only a preliminary acquaintance found a congenial atmosphere to flower in full bloom now. The various tenets of Marxism like the materialistic conception of history, communism as the goal of the society, Marx's concept that the each method of production is an advancement upon the last stage reached through centuries of co-operative living, found an ardent expression through the writers of this period. The earlier Assamese writers proclaimed the glory of humanity but they were hardly aware of the great latent power which lay hidden in common men who can bring about a great change through
organised revolution. Their concept of humanism was mingled with that of divinity. They saw man as the instrument of God and apprehended that there was a link of fatality or divine force in performing all their activities.

The Marxian view is very detached from the previous notion. It maintains that man is the nucleus of all powers who can produce all the elementary needs of livelihood and at the same time is able to thwart the yoke of oppression by bringing about a radical change in the structure of society. They are therefore the makers of history. Although they are not endowed with any divine power, yet they are the embodiment of a powerful energy which can bring about the ultimate stage of communism to the society.

Impelled by this view, the modern writers are instigated to write about the lives of the deprived classes of the society. The short story of this period gives us a panoramic view of the activities of the peasants, labourers and common working class people.

The structure of the society now shifts from an agricultural background to that of industrialization. The new circumstances give rise to a sense of alienation in the people's mind. This spirit of alienation found an abundant expression in Assamese literature.

Like Marx another protagonist who cast a tremendous influence upon the intellectual thought of this period
is Sigmund Freud. Apparently Marx and Freud appear to be quite antagonistic. Marx is presumed not to have been much concerned with the individual man and their behaviour but only with the laws of society and its evolution. Freud whereas is primarily concerned with the view that consciousness is the ultimate datum of psychic law. Though there is dissimilarity of these two propositions yet these two streams of thought are seen to exercise a simultaneous influence in writings of post war Assamese writers. Most of the powerful Marxian writers like Abdul Malik, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Homen Borgohain are generally imbued with the Freudian spirit of Psychonalysis.

A faint trace of Freudian Psychology was found even in the short stories of the preceding Awahon age. Lakhmidhar Sarma made use of Freudian Concept in delineating his characters of the stories. Moreover Haliram Deka also produced a character of a lady professor who showed a keen interest in Freudian Psychology in his memorable short story "Re Bare Bhāi." But it is only in this post war period that the real florescence of this epoch making behaviouristic psychology actually takes place. Freud's conception that the unconsciousness is the offspring of all human action and motive, his idea that history of man is the history of his repression, his realization of the great power of 'libido' and 'Thanatos' over human psyche are fully understood by the writers of this
period and they employ these very aptly in their writings. Religion, culture, art all are viewed from the viewpoint of Freudian theory of sex. In this way the arrival of Freudian Psychology dismantles all the prevailing traditional values and concepts.

Besides bringing about a radical change in the trend of thought this new psychology adds a new dimension to the technique and the form of short story. As it happens in the other parts of the world the technique of stream of consciousness which is the by-product of Freudian Psychology becomes the appropriate vehicle of expression for the Assamese writers too. The inconsistencies of our psychic world can be adequately revealed by this new method. This medium projects well the world of unconsciousness which was discovered by Freud. Its most important feature is exploitation of the element of incoherence in our conscious process. It reflects consistency and consecutiveness. Time, place, mood and people are more or less interchangable. Past is mixed up with present and retrospect often intrudes prospect. Here there is no chronological story. It is like a movie picture which makes plentiful use of flash back technique, symbolical theme, dessolving views and mixing. This technique has of late been used very efficiently by writers like Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Homen Borgohain, Gobinda Prasad Sarma, Nagen Saikia, Apurba Sarma etc.
Another philosophical speculation which gains prominence during this period is the existentialism. The idea of existentialism has a long history but it comes to the foreground only after the outbreak of Second World War. The first statement of the theory was made by Soren Kirkegaard, to whom all the existentialists thinkers acknowledge their indebtedness. Nietzsche too can be regarded as an existentialist to so far as he had stressed the importance of individual being. But this philosophy reached its culminating heights in the hands of Jean Paul Sartre, who gave it a wide popularity though his numerous short stories, novels and dramas. Although his works have been severely criticized as being documents which represented only the dark side of human life, yet Sartre professes himself a to be a humanist as he feels that he has much emphasis on the greater possibility of human beings. He gives a free hand to the individual and thereby affirms his faith in human subjectivity. Sartre explains lucidly in his great work "Existentialism and humanism" thus—

"Man simply is not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism and this is what people call its 'subjec-
tivity" using the word as a reproach against us. But what do we mean to say by this that man is of a greater dignity than a stone or a table. For we mean to say that man primarily exists—that man is before all else, something which people itself towards a future and is aware that it is doing so. Man is indeed, a project which possess a subjective life instead of being a kind of moss or a fungus or a cauliflower. Before the projection of the self nothing exists not even in the heaven of intelligence. Man will only attain existence when he is what he proposes to be not, however, what he may wish to be. For what we usually understand by wishing or willing is conscious decision taken—much more often than for after we have made ourselves what we are? 9

The arising circumstances of Assam did not favour the growth of existentialist literature during the post-war period. But some modern writers of Assam began to write stories in the light of this philosophy initiating their western counterparts. Thus in their stories existentialism assumes a form of oratory and often these stories lack asthetics. But inspite of this, certain existentialist element like the human subjectivity find a moving expression in works of writers like Homen Borgohain and Saurabh Kumar Chaliha.

The short stories of the post-war era, remarkable for their technical excellence. The Assamese writers of this period were influenced greatly by different foreign writers. Some of them on account of their scientific bent of mind produced stories which were markedly complex. It is, however, queer to note that even during this time of high technical development the style of Lakhminath Bezbaroa, the Pioneer of Assamese short story and some other traditional writers still hold good, specially in the matter of satire and sarcasm. All the other writers of this period barring only a few, like Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Homen Borgohain, Nagen Saikia, Apurba Sarma etc. are just traditional story teller.

Now we take a casual look at some of the notable writers of this transitional period of Assamese literature which flourished after the second world-war. Almost all the leading writers of this period wrote for the epoch making journal the Rāmdhenu edited by the well known story writer Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya. Thus the period can also to be referred to as the Rāmdhenu age.

After the Rāmdhenu age a band of writer came into prominence. This group of writers display some peculiarities in their form and contents of their stories. A chapter is devoted to these writers to assess their achievement accurately.
Now we may take a look at some of the notable writers of this transitional period chronologically.

Sayed Abdul Malik

Sayed Abdul Malik started writing stories long before the arrival of the Ramdhenu. His earlier stories had already appeared in the journal Awahon. But those were the product of his years of apprenticeship. His matured works were published in the pages of the Jayanti and the climax of his reputation reached in the period of the Ramdhenu.

Abdul Malik's popularity perhaps lies in the fact of his being an advocate of traditional method of story telling. The fact of popularity of stories is borne out by the following comments of John C. Garber.

"The aim and method of the traditionalists are easier to identify and describe because their basic intention has remained consistently understandable namely, to write interesting, well wrought stories without departing radically from the conventional plot framework and standard devices for evoking suspense through the intention of the character and incident. Their stories are thus more nearly like the standardized commercial stories, though elevated above the mediocrity of the popular magazine type."  

Inspite of his resorting to the conventional style of commercial story writing for gaining popularity, Abdul Malik none the less infuses the new thoughts initiated by Marx and Freud into his short stories. From the very start of his career he shows his revolutionary idealism which is impelled by the Marxian thought. His main endeavour seems to be to unfold the distress and oppression suffered by the havenots of the society and his conviction is that communism alone can change their plight. His stories contain a general panoramic view of human life and they especially highlight the conditions of the social outcasts and the downtrodden masses. He is also capable of representing the tender emotion of human heart amidst the raising passions of the devastating war.

Besides being a social revolutionary he is romantic too and this tendency is perceptible in his sentimental love stories. His love stories are often full of romantic outburst and rich imagination. Though his characters of the stories are highly emotional, yet they are imbued with the psycho-analytical senses of Freudian philosophy. Credit of Malik lies in the fact that whatever novelty he introduces in the Assamese short story, he has done it in a very agreeable manner.

Malik essentially a popular story letter, who has modelled his stories upon such foreign masters of short
story as O. Henry and Anton Chekhov. In the startling ending of his short stories the influence of O. Henry is clearly discernible. Some of his stories are memorable for their suggestiveness. He has also a keen interest in jest and mockery.

Malik has produced a lot of story books in Assamese. A few among them are Parasmani, Rangagara, Marah Pahari, Sikhares Sikhares, Pranadhi, Bivatsa vedana, Ejani Natun Chowali, etc.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya is not only a great architect of modern short story in Assamese literature but also a pioneer who champions the cause of the Assamese short story by providing an opportunity to many Assamese writers to express their literary talent through his journal the Ramdhenu.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya is a writer of great merit. His stories have a classical grandeur and are invariably tinged with an universal appeal. In his immortal short story Ejani Japani Chowali, the anguish of humanity at the heart rendering effects of devastation of Atom Bomb is expressed through the character of a simple Japanese girl. The story, however, ends on a powerful optimistic note that human suffering can be alleviated by common human endeavours.
His sympathy is equally great for his fellow countrymen. Here he seeks to find a lasting solution to the problem of oppression of one class by the other. He vociferously declares that mere political freedom cannot by itself bring about an ideal society so long as economic liberation is denied to the people. In this regard he maintains that a radical change can be brought about in the economic structure of the society by the common effort of the oppressed people themselves. His short story *Kalonq Ajio Boi* retains such ideas.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya is always interested in the hill tribes of Assam and he dreams of their union with the Assamese people. This very idea is expressed in some of his stories. Most of his love stories are devoid of romantic elements. His realistic bent of mind is often Freudian in line. Freud's Psychoanalytical method in fact receives a great impetus in the hands of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya.

Bhattacharya displays an uncomparable maturity in the art of story telling in comparison to other writers of his time. Unlike his predecessors Malik he is not a story teller but essentially a maker of characters and situations. His characters are complex and their complexity and abnormality springs from the various operation of the Psychic elements.

*Kalonq Ajio Boi* and *Satsari* are his two remarkable short story collections.
Jogesh Das

A more sober and simple writer of this period is Jogesh Das. His stories are set mainly against the background of modern mechanical society where men have became basically self centred and feel a callous attitude towards external life. He paints a realistic picture of the modern man and the general melancholia which is the outcome of the distinctive war. There is a note of realism in his love stories. They also focus the economic problem of the present time.

Jogesh Das's stories are simple and deeply suggestive. He hardly deviates from the traditional style of story telling.

His stories are collected under the following titles: 'Andhārār Āre Āre Papiyā Torā, Triveni' etc.

Homen Borgohain

Being more indebted to western thinkers, Homen Borgohain produces stories of somewhat outlandish in nature. The short stories of his early days show that he is strongly influenced by Freudian Precepts of repression, sadism, machoism, which find ample treatment in his stories. He also experiments with the concept of existentialism. In his later stories he professes an earnest zeal for Marxian ideology. But recently he has developed an individual style of his own.
and these can perhaps claim to have a more permanent literary value in Assamese literature. Borgohain is adept in character sketching. His portrayal of the life of the social outcast is very realistic. He shows a considerable dexterity in the treatment of abnormal and depraved characters. Some characters of his stories are endowed with a psychological subtlety. A typical characterization is evident in the character of Piyara, the Protagonist of his short story "Parda", who deliberately maims himself and endures lifelong suffering in order to win the love of a woman married to another man.

His love stories are unusual and some of them are nothing but the manifestation of downright sexual perversion. He revolts against the conventional idea of love and boldly represents the powerful drive of human urge.

Borgohain's reputation rests on these collected works of his Bibhima Chorus, Prem Āru Mrityur Kārane, Galpa Āru Nakshē etc.

Lakhminandan Bora

Lakhminandan Bora begins writing short stories about the village life of Assam. But of late his attention has been shifted to an urban setting. The foibles and corruption of the modern urban life become a recurring theme in his stories. His popularity and talent, however, rest with his
earlier stories of village life.

His collections include *Dristirupa*, *Gauri Rupak Achin Koina*, *Man Māti Megh*, *Sai Sure Utalā*, *Majut Trisāre Noi*, *Nisiddha Chetanā*, *Gopon Gadhuli* etc.

**Chandra Prasad Saikia**

Another prominent writer of short story is Chandra Prasad Saikia. The method he follows is a continuation of early romantic tradition. Still he has a distinctive style of his own. Most of his stories are some romantic episodes and they exhibit very clearly the eternal values of this everlasting human passion.

His collections include *Nachpati Phool*, *Māyāmrīga*, *Adin* etc.

**Saurabh Kumar Chaliha**

Saurabh Kumar Chaliha is the most intellectual writer of his generation. He is the only modern writer who has been able to capture the intellectual idioms of the urban elites of Assamese society. He is a staunch apostle of existentialism. He too primarily was influenced by the philosophy of Marx which fact is evident from the titling of his first short story as *Karl Marx*. But he soon losses enthusiasm

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for this first love and is more impelled by a desire to give expression to the utter hollowness of modern existence in a scientific world. This later mood pervades the stories of his collection *Asanta Electron*. His other collections are *Golam*, *Dupariya*, and *Ahat Dabai*.

**Bhabendra Nath Saikia**

Bhabendranath Saikia is another remarkable writer of this period. He deals largely with the problems of lower middle class but the note of challenge against social injustice is not so persistent in his stories. He is to some extent romantic in his outlook. In some of his stories he penetrates deep into the human heart and unfolds the miseries in a very fascinating way. Though a man of science, the scientific bent of mind is less evident than his artistic outlook. He has written certain beautiful love stories and these are excellent specimen of romantic love.

Bhabendranath Saikia is an acute observer and like Maupassant and Chekhov he takes a keen interest in depicting the realism of day to day life. Though his method is basically traditional yet he has added certain new elements to it as a result of which his style betrays a marked departure from the traditional method of story telling. His language though simple is full of suggestiveness. His descriptions are both realistic and accurate. Although he does not propagate any
scientific idea yet his treatment is highly logical and scientific. His main indebtedness is to Chekhov the great master craftsman of the short story but the abrupt ending of his stories have a strong resemblance to the style of O. Henry. A pleasant and agreeable tone of humour enlivens most of his stories.

His story collections are Prahari, Gahbar, Sendur, Srinkhal and Taranga.

Mohim Bora

Mohim Bora is both a satirist and a humourist. He mainly ridicules those people who hanker after the mirage of luxury and worldly temptations. He has also written some fine stories against the background of village life. Though fundamentally light hearted he has also been capable of writing some serious stories like Kāthani Bārīr Ghāt.

Mohim Bora is noted for his elegant style. The most characteristic fact about him is that he manages to touch the pathetic mood of life through sheer humour. He is also an acute observer of man and manners which capacity brings a sense of actualities to his characters and situations.

In his love stories he depicts the charm of the outburst of first love and its attended fear and misgivings very beautifully.
The collections of short stories Kathani Barir Ghāt, Moi Pipli āru Puzā, Rātiphoolā phool, Bahubhuzī Trivuz, go to his credit.

Besides these writers the Ramdhenu produces some significant writers. Among them the worth mentioning names are Rohini Kumar Kakati who used to write on love and affection of human heart. Medini Chaudhuri paints mostly the picture of a tribal society to where he himself belongs. Nirod Chaudhuri is essentially a romantic writer but his story "Sairabānu āru Mantri" has an added appeal on account of the social criticism. Some other writers of this period are Padma Barkatāki, Golap Khound, Imvan Shah, Saidul Islam, etc. who are dealt with broadly in a subsequent chapter.

The Ramdhenu has also deserved credit for growing up a band of women writers who show a proficiency and extraordinary talent in narrating stories. These women writers are Sneh Devi, Nirupama Barghain, Mamani Goswami, Anima Bharali, Priti Barua etc.

After the Ramdhenu age there appeared in the literary scene of Assam, a band of new writers with a new promise and they are also discussed in the same detail in the latter chapter.

The tradition of Assamese short story though relatively new one, yet it has made a rapid progress in a short
span of time. Today the Assamese short story can claim a place of distinction among the stories written in other Indian languages for its intrinsic qualities and originality. Although various aspects are contained in this new form of literature and much study can be undertaken regarding each of these aspects, we shall here attempt to take a close view of the treatment of love in Assamese short story and a study of its origin and development.