Chapter III

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The years after 1918 are a period of bewildering complexity. The disastrous effect of the Great Wars and the several minor ones has been expressed in the language of a poet (Yeats) in the following way:

"Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

Man experienced life as 'cursed spite' in "time out of joint". Shock, confusion, desolation, depression and disillusionment are the characteristic expressions of this realism in the writings of Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, T.S. Eliot and other sensitive writers. The wars released the Pandora's Box of evil, and man everywhere felt like experiencing the oppression of being evicted from his so-called harmonious existence. Soldiers and civilians alike became victims of some form of nervous disorder or other.

The effect of the wars, of course, was not outwardly so damaging in India as it had been elsewhere. The wars effected India indirectly, and left her a nervous wreck. The influx of thousands of hungry people from Burma made the general condition of living uncogential. Devaluation of money and exigency of food eventually followed. The situation was further aggravated by the alarming rise of the People's Movement of 1942, which shook every nook and corner of the subcontinent.
After a period of sentimental or patriotic restlessness India achieved independence. But neither the end of the wars nor the achievement of independence brought her peace. We were left, as it were, to be torn in tenterhooks of a mass of unrealised and tantalising hopes.

In Assam, the poverty, consequent upon the wars was not confined only to food and clothing; it went so far as to impair our cultural and literary life. Our most popular literary magazine, 'Āvāhan' (1929) and the other two monthlies, namely, 'Jayanti' and 'Surabhi' had to be discontinued for a pressing want of paper and partly for want of literary men. We bitterly experienced the rise of a group of people who were crazily up for money. The labourers in the factory, the starving cultivators in the field and the poor women were victims of their exploitation.

But this is only one aspect of the war-effect. There are other, and more important facets of the new realism. Chaos and devastation without, and suffering within gave men a heightened awareness of his own environment. He learnt to act and think anew in the different directions which the new situation opened before him. Disillusioned as he was, he felt the meaningfulness of the traditional values. The mass of immoral occurrences which he himself experienced made him sceptical about God, religion, the sanctity of sex and morality. The study of Marx and Freud established the facts of his experiences.
The new realism is, therefore, not hard to picture now. It is a kind of no-God, no-hero realism, distinctly opposed to the 'conceptual' or idealistic one, that was prevalent in the ages prior to this. It did not concern itself with man as he should be; it was content to discover man as he is. The new realism primarily based itself on Marxian materialism and Freudian determinism and evinced a decisive inclination to disbelieve, and even to disregard all traditional values centering round the 'conceptual hero'. The Marxian side of this realism made our young writers and readers socially and economically aware and taught them to remain preoccupied with the ordinary man, i.e., his ordinary likes and dislikes, hopes and sorrows. They wanted to haul the ordinary man up the evils of capitalism. The Freudian side of this realism made the writers sensitive about their individual situation, i.e., about the evils of the mind of man in general. They learnt to study "man as a victim of environment/ or biology", as one in bondage to his libidinous compulsions or to the repressions, society forced upon him, and also as 'the dupe of natural and preterhuman forces.'¹ Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua writes that those short-story writers who wrote after Lakshmidhar Sarma and up to the Second World War were influenced by Sigmund Freud."² Under the impact of the new knowledge the writers "tried to give a new interpretation of the primal relationships subsisting

between man and woman against the new social and individual background and in a broad Freudian context. The breakdown of age-old inhibitions, and the preoccupation with sex and the exploration of the subconscious and unconscious are the most characteristic literary consequence of this impact. Some of the stories demonstrating the application of the new discoveries are Lakshmishdar Sarma's Ciraj, Vidrohini (The Rebellious Woman), Bina Barua's (Birinchi Kumar Barua's) Aghonî Bî, Lâpeli, Haliram Deka's Alakâlai Cithi (Letters to Alaka), Dr. Her Chandra Barua's Jaharâ (The illegitimate), T.N. Goswami's Jâraja (The bastard), Jiyâ Mânuh (The Living Man), Rama Das's Barçâ Yetiîâ Nâmâ (When It Rains), Prema õru Pîrthiî (Love and the World), Krisna Bhuyan's Bedanâr Smrîtî (A painful recollection), Munin Barkataki's Aprakâśar Bedana (Pain of the hidden) and others. Close observation, attention to detail, stress upon fact, and bold analysis of feelings are more or less characteristic of these stories. Their interest lies in the dark places of psychology, in 'elucidation of the eternal riddle of man' - his nature, mind and spirit. The writers are conscious of something in human mind of which the average mortal are not aware. They attempt to extend sensibility from "the consciousness of personality we all possess to that hinterland of raw vitality from which personality springs."

Reading Freudian psychology these writers had come to believe that the activities of the unconscious mind are of the true personality.

The note of pessimism is characteristic more or less of these fictions. The lowest level of this pessimism was struck in Radhika Mohan Goswami's Niyati (Destiny), Prabosh Goswami's Yantra (The Machine), and J. Ahmed's Agantuk (The Imminent).

The drawbacks of these fictions are many. They suffer from a general cumbersomeness of poetic exuberance. The writers were not aware of the distinction between novel and short story, as a result of which the stories appear as bald narratives or abbreviated novels. T.N. Goswami remarks upon Bina Barua's Aghonî Bāî and those of Dr. Hem Chandra Barua and Uma Sarma as short novels rather than short stories. In Dr. Birinci Kumar Barua's opinion, T.N. Goswami's Jiya Vanūh is a short novel.

While these writers wrote profusely and vigorously about sex and aberrations of instinctive rural life, they felt inhibited by some foreign masters, who lived in social and cultural environment, unfamiliar and unholy, if not quite unnatural to us, and stuffed their fictions with contents, which the forms often failed to discipline. Dr. Prafulla Goswami marks Hem Barua's Jahara as a typical illustration on

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4. Dr. Prafulla Goswami, Galpa Desī Āru Bidesī (1960) (Stories Indigenous and Exotic), p. see the preface to the collection.


the model of the French Maupassant. But Maupassant, he explains was not concerned with ordinary psychology. His realism was embedded in the psychology of sex; and he laid more stress on the matter of his fiction and less on the form of it.

Modern Assamese fiction (short story) grew under the influence of the west, where the Russian Chekhov, and not Maupassant was preferred as the model, because the former was accepted as model by the English writers of the time. And Chekov was a writer who shifted the importance of the story from its content to the technique. Significantly enough, Assamese fiction, right from Rama Das up to now, has been paying serious attention to the form rather than to its content. Rama Das's stories are consummate blends of art and analysis. "Vividness of description, charm of dialogue, solidity of thought, and an extraordinary capacity to record nicely discriminated and artfully proportioned differences of feeling in language - all these make his short stories some of the very best we have in Assamese. Most of his stories deal with departures from accepted social canons and aberrations of conventional love, and to this task the writer has brought psycho-analysis and sympathy." 8

Dr. Birinobhi Kumar Barua points out that after the Second World War, the Freudian attitude undergoes a change; 9 and the change in the writers' attitude towards life and art makes it a new epoch of literature.

The new fiction is replenished with a new variety of experience, a new level of awareness. The individual and environmental awareness illuminated by Freud's discoveries and intensified by the psychological occurrences during the wars continues vigorously more often in discordant associations, and at times, in efficacious assimilations with other supplementary ideas, - the dynamic ideas of Marx, Darwin, the existentialistic ideas of Jean Paul Sartre, Hidegar, Karkegard and those of Hegel, Hume, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Yeats, Eliot, Huxley Maugham and others. The literary climate, however, seemed more conducive to the flourish of the socio-economic ideas of Marx.

Marxism which triumphed in Russia played a vital and far-reaching influence in Russian and English literature. Post-war Assamese writers were greatly influenced by the Russian Gorki, Sholokhov, Alexie Tolstoy, and the English George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Moore, Auden, C.D. Lewis and Stephen Spender.

A considerable portion of Syed Abdul Malik's fiction is inspired by Freud's psychology and Marx's dialectical materialism. Romanticism continued in his writing. But it is not romanticism with its love for the elemental in man, and its loving adoration for nature and woman in particular. Malik continued the romantic tradition in a markedly different way. Love is not here as it is in the stories of Rama Das a plaything and a special privilege of the aristocratic. It is a sentiment common to all. Malik's flavouring young persons are beset with the problems of food and clothing. He has hurled all the flavourings of romance to the sore world, where they
get substantiated by the accumulation of the psychological and sociological awareness without literally being either Freudian or Marxian. Dr. Birinohi Kumar Barua mentions four of his stories as "devoted to psychological dissection of the female mind." These are *Ses Upakülar Šeluwä Fär* (The Mossy Bank on the last Edge of Land), *Pran Marowä Fäcat* (After the Soul was Lost), *Jowār āru Upakül* (The Tidal Bore and Coast), and *Marahā Pāparī* (The Faded Petal). Some other stories written to demonstrate the truth of the new knowledge and frequently mentioned by critics are *Bibhatsa Bedanä* (Pain of obscenity), *Gahwar* (The Cavern), *Mukti* (Deliverance), *Tribeniir Swapna* (Dreams of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Saraswati in their Confluence), *Dumukhiya Sāp* (A Snake with Mouths at both Ends).

Ramani Kanta Sarma mentions *Parasanā* (Touch Stone), *Ejan Natun Chowāli* (A new Girl), *Marahā Pāparī* (The Withered Petal), *Šil āru Šikhā* (A Stone and a Flame of Fire), illustrative of his sociological and psychological awareness. Malik's *Aoināki Arghya* (An Unknown Offering) and *Kabitar Janma* (Birth of a Poem) are stated to have been written under the influence of Joyce's stream-method. His *Sio Maril* (He too died), *Annesan* (A Quest), *Mariśālar Maran* (Death of a Burial) are autobiographical stories with emotional (psychological) exuberance.


12. Gunadhar Sarma Pathak, "Ābdul Mālikar Galpa" (Stories of Abdul Malik) an article.
Assamese short story achieves in the hand of Malik a limitless range and a new standard in a conversational style, which replaces the plot prominent and pictorial stories of the previous era. Malik has, of course, faced the music of such literary voracity. His lack of concentration, his failure of psychological penetration into the depth of the emotional problems of life, and his artistic failure by comparison with Haliram Deka have been ascribed by T.N. Goswami to the limitless range of his subject.13

Dinanath Sarma who started writing before the war and has since been writing vigorously has added to the pattern of Assamese fiction the influence of Zola and Maupassant. The stories included in the collection entitled Kowā Bhāturiā Othar Talat (Behind the False Lip) are illustrative of this. His stories are all plots with little artistic endowment, where wild, elemental people, women in particular, emotionally starved, revel. They are upset by situation around them, and the fiction writer generally, though not always remains content to solve their problems through the accumulation of events rather than through psychological investigations. "There are, however, a few noble exceptions, where the fears and silent sufferings, the helpless wanderings in the labyrinths of a woman's life, the complexes and conflicts are brought out impressively in a psycho-analytical aesthetic study."14 The theme, common to most of them, is 'illegitimate

love' with somewhat like a misogynist's attitude towards women, who are 'ugly and revolting.'

The Ramdhenu era of Assamese fiction starts with Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya as its editor (1928). Bhattacharya is one of our most popular writers of fictions, long and short, who has contributed a great deal to the three trends of our fictional development—sociological, psychological and supernatural, as construed by Jogesh Das in his article entitled "Asamiya Galpar Tinita Suti" (Three trends of Assamese short stories). Bhattacharya's bias for both the sociological and psychological trends is much more conspicuous than Malik's. He evinces no disregard as Malik often does, towards the two trends of thought even when he is convinced of the limitations of both in the solution of man's spiritual problems. In stories like Ward No Dui (Ward No Two), he strongly advocates the truth of psycho-analytic psychology; but the problem of Makani in Makaniir Gosai (Makani's God) is one that cannot rely on depth psychology for its solution. Marxism materialism is sure even to prove more inadequate in this. This is what T.N. Goswami implies when he says that in both novels and short stories Shri Bhattacharya occasionally leaves his persons in conflicts between Freudian truth and life's ideal, failing to hammer out a solution of their problems.15

This neurotic behaviour in the settlement of spiritual theme is common to all our writers of fiction. When they take

to write honestly under the influence of Freud or of Marx, they are seen to play havoc with all traditional values, but at other times when they write under an afflatus, they seem to atone for this by an exaggerated devotion to the God of our father - to all traditional values.

Shri Bhatta's Sio Ekhan Jagatare Katha (That too is the event of a World), Ejanī Jāpānī Cowālī (A Japanese Maid), Méya Mancur, and Idar Jone (The Moon of the Id) are illustrative of his devotion to human interest. In all his stories, sociological and humanistic, his method is analytical. He has followed Malik in the psychologising of romantic love in Cirālā āru Cinduin. His Pitani (a stale, thick grass covering on the still water) is a story, built on a pattern of supernatural awareness, - a trend introduced by Rama Das in his Marā Suti (The Dried up Channel), the best of our short fictions in this genre.

The present trend of Assamese short stories is towards psychological analysis of man's behaviour, social, sexual and cultural.

Assamese writers of fiction with pronounced Freudian bias are Homen Bargohain, Bhaben Saikiya, Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Jogesh Das, Kumar Kishore, Nirode Choudhury, Sada Saikiya, Padma Barkataki, Nava Barua, Chandra Prasad Saikiya and others.

A host of short stories has been created on the subject of man's love and sexual relationship with woman, where the writers aim at realising that sex lies at the root of all human
abnormalities and also all creative activities. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua has brought to our notice the abundant use of sex and factual realism in Bargohain's stories, and his preoccupation with the Freudian theory of libido. Persons with unusual behaviour abound in his fictions. They are hard to recognise conventionally. To identify them we must first be acquainted with the psychology of Freud, Jung and Adler, the existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre and with many more -isms. The two collection of short stories, namely, Bibhima Korac and Prem aru Mutyur Karane (For Love and Death) and the collection of essays, namely, Dhusar Diganta (The Dim Horizon) are psychological studies of persons' behaviour through sexual relationships between them. Bargohain's Mahaswetar Biya (Mayriage of Mahasweta), Parda (The Soreen), Oktopas (The Octopus), Narakat Basanta (Spring in Hell) are novel creations on psycho-analytic discoveries of Freud. The influence of existentialism is well apparent in Hrdyar Prayojanat (In Need of the Heart), Yauvan (Youth). His Cikar (Hunting), Sisur Habi (Smile of an Infant) and Etta Matun Bhikhari (A New Beggar) raise social problems in conspicuous leaning towards Marxism, and are replete with a deep feel of humanism. His Hatil (The Elephant) and Silpa (Industry) are successful experiments on symbolic pattern.

Inspite of the artistic failure of his fiction ascribed by T.N. Goswami to his faithful adherence to the modern philosophical and psychological data (which we have reserved

17. B.K. Barua, History of Assamese Literature, p. 182.
for the concluding chapter for discussion in detail), his daring experiment on the study of phenomenal or abnormal behaviour on the basis of the truths of depth psychology is unique in our literature. His symbolical stories chart out a new future for our fiction.

Bhaben Saikiya's stories represent the other extreme of the psycho-analytic method and are more promising perhaps than any fiction in our literature. He is Freudian, but not in the way Shri Bargohain is. Bargohain concerns himself exclusively with unusual sexual behaviour of men and women. His people are either eccentric or insane, far apart from the world of sunshine and rain. Shri Saikiya never moves away beyond the bounds of what is normal or natural in psycho-analysis. No Assamese writers of fiction have expressed so suggestively and significantly the small cravings of normal life like him. He is acquainted with the common problems of life. Persons lose in his treatment all regional colours and take a universal significance in his heart-felt pity. His Bāna Prastha (the stage of life when a man leave the world for meditation in the woods), Bānabodh (Sensations of Colour), Upagraha (The Satellite), Upapatni (The paramour), Lāj Lāge (I'm shy), Ganga Snān (Bath in the Ganges) and Satkār (Service) are successful blends of art and psychology. For a study of the sexual behaviour of prostitutes, Bargohain shifts the canvas to a whoredom, but the credit of comprehending the truth that "every woman by the logic of her nature is a prostitute" is Saikiya's. Most of his stories are experiments on patterns. Mention may be made of his Dhorāsāp (a kind of snake, not very poisonous),
Sendur (Vermilion), Bāranda and Daridra Kuwer (The poor God of Wealth) as illustrative of a triangular pattern, which he employs for the purpose of analysing persons' emotional behaviour.

T.N. Goswami notices a general lack of depth in his fiction. This is certainly because of his almost exclusive preoccupation with the minutest detail of human behaviour and his insistence on art or appreciation of the beautiful. His stories are amusing, for they are artistic analysis of normal man, who suffer slight disturbances in the heart or head; but they are not so impressive or captivating as those of Homer Bargohain, populated by hysteries lying fainted beside the alley. And here his stories suffer by comparison not only with those of Bargohain, but also with those of Malik and Padma Barkataki. But his fusion of normal psychology with consummate art is much more than a compensation for what he has lost by comparison, – a unique contribution to our fiction.

With the stories of Saurabh Kumar Chaliha Assamese short story trends trenchantly towards impressionism. The ramshackle mentality of the 'age of restlessness', the obscure dreams and ideals have nowhere been so beautifully symbolised as in the impressionistic stories of Chaliha. His Asānta Elektron (The Disturbed Electron), Dūparīyā (Noon), Deuta āru Āmi (Father and We) are difficult experiments on scientific, symbolic pattern. "A new pseudo intellectual eloquence" is

18. T.N. Goswami, Ādhunik Galpa Sāhitya, p. 241
characteristic of his stories, says Bargohain. 19

Some of our psychological stories worth mentioning are Mahim Bora's Bahubhuji Tribhuj (A many sided Triangle), Keyā Ānguli (The little Finger), Jogesh Das's Ābīskār (Discovery), Sonār Harin (The Golden Deer), Ekhan Sarga (A Heaven), Baruāni (Mrs. Barua), Parakīyā (Other Man's woman), Chandra Prasad Saikiya's Edin (A Day), Rohini Kakati's Mrīttikā (The Earth Dug-out) etc. An attempt to raise real problem to the psychic level is evident in some of Lakshminandan Bora. Some of his persons are very sensitively reactive to the stresses of environment. Dr. Nilima Sarma seems bent on portraying women in her psychic enigma. Morbidity and obsession are characteristic of the few stories of Gobinda Sarma. His stories are autobiographical, diffuse in style, a near approximation to those of Dinanath Sarma in their aesthetic inaccuracy.

A number of short stories with predominance of sex and analysis has been written by Imran Shah, one of our promising young writers. The stories of Mamani Goswami - a few of them at least, are worth mentioning (though not mentioned here) for demonstration of a variety of conflicting experiences of normal woman.

The output of Assamese novel immediately after the war is scanty. After a teasing gap of literary inactivity

since the fall of the literary magazine, The Awahan, we, however, abruptly arrive at an adult level with Birinchi Kumar Barua's Jīvanar Bātāt (On the Highway of Life) towards the end of the fifth decade of the present century. It is the first and perhaps the greatest of our psycho-analytic novels. Jīvanar Bātāt is a realistic novel 'on the rural life of Assam', built against the background of all political, economic, social and moral agitations caused by the 2nd World War and the Peoples' Movement of 1942. The novel is free of any regressive illusionment for the past, which abounds in the historical romances of Rajani Kanta Bardaloi, it also discards the sentimental idealism of Muhammad Peer's novels, so popular among a section of our readers from 1947 to 1950.²⁰ Peer's plot-prominent novels, however important they are from the historical point of view as social portraiture, suffer pathetically by comparison with Jīvanar Bātāt by their almost complete lack of analytical investigation of emotional and intellectual problems.²¹

Psycho-analytic novels, i.e., novels with minute or detailed explanations of person against environmental background, and novels dealing with the intricate problems of emotional life are very limited in our literature. The two novels mentioned as on a par with Jīvanar Bātāt are Prafulla Datta Goswami's Kecā Pātar Kapani (The Quivering Foliage), and Radhika Mohan Goswami's Cākmaiya (The Vortex). They are acute penetration

²¹ Ibid.
into the problem of adjustment in the new situation. The first demonstrates the idiological unrest of a young man and the second portrays the life of a frustrated young man who could not adjust himself to the present day society.22

Dr. Hemanta Kumar Sarma includes Premadhar Rajkhowa's Bhular Samadhi (The Interment of Errors) and Dandinath Kalita's Sādhanā in the psycho-analytic group. Seujī Pātar Kāhini (Story of Green Leaves), 'the second novel of 'Bina Barua' (pseudonym of Birinchi Kumar Barua) is a fine picture of the modern socio-psychological restlessness. Jogesh Das's Dāwar āru Nāī has been described as the portrayal of the disruptive effects of the last world War upon the ethics and manners of our society.23 Dinanath Sarma's Nadāi, Sangrām (Struggle), Mathura Deka's Humuniāh (Sigh), Saumer's Kēranīr Jīvan (Life of a Clerk) etc. can be classed to form another group. These are social novels, not on a par with the likes of Jīvanar Bātat or Navakanta Barua's Kapilipariyā Sādhu, another psycho-analytic novel of some distinction, in point of analysis, but are meticulous pictures of rural as well as urban life.

Assamese novels synchronising the clatters of socio-political injustice on the down-trodden and common restlessness in an analytical 'flavour' are now numerous. The characteristic note of these novels is the call for a world "in which sweet and toil must lead to the vindication of the right of the worker

22. B.K. Barua, History of Assamese Literature,
23. Ibid., 172.
in field and factory. The novels of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya and Syed Abdul Malik merit attention for their psycho-analytic treatment. Bhattacharya's *Rājpathe Ringiyāi* (The Call of the Highway), and *Iyāruingam* are two socio-political novels in analytical style. The first depicts the life of a young revolutionary, who wants to set right the wrongs of society. It claims again the credit of being the first of our stream novels. The second is analytical in a more complex way on a theme of the Tangkhul Nagas.

 Some of our socio-political novels, which merit to be called psycho-analytic in treatment:

2. Kumar Kishore's *Kumthi Tarār Jilimili* (The Twinkling of a handful of Stars), *Kinkinīr Kalanka*;
3. Padma Barkataki's *Bisārār Hābe* (For Judgment), *Eti Kahan Māgo Mai* (I Want a Moment);
4. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Pratipad* (The First Lunar Day), *Mrtyunjoy* (One Who Wins Victory Over Death);
5. Jogesh Das's *Dāwar āru Nāi* (Clouds No More), *Jonākīr Jui* (The Flame of a Firefly);
6. Chandra Prasad Saikiya's *Edin, Mandākramā* and *Meghamallār*;
7. Nava Kanta Barua's *Kapiliparīyā Sādhu* (Story on the Bank of the Kapili), *Kakā Deutar Hār* (The Necklace

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of the Grandfather); (8) Homen Bargohain's Pitā-putra (Father and Son), Kusīlaw (The Actor), Hāladhiyā Carāye Bāo Dhan Khāya (The yellow Bird is loose on the Crops) etc.

These novels, most of which have been listed from Ramani Kanta Sarma's Abhibhāgan (1976)25 are Freudian in technique and treatment of matter, i.e., they depict the subconscious motives and urges of the human heart in a realistic technique. Social interest in them is an artistic inevitability.

Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma mentions a few novels as written solely under the influence of Freud's Abnormal psychology. 26 Malik’s Trisūl (The Trident), Kabitār Nam Labha (Poetry, a Stream of Lava), Padma Barkataki’s Dusmantar Cuma (Kiss of Dusmanta), and Najalā Dhupar Itikathā (The Last Words of an Unlit Incense), Nirode Choudhury’s Banahamsa (The Wild Duck), Kumar Kishore’s Emuthi Tarār Jilimili, Banya Dhout Bā Dwip (The Coral Island on the Flood-wave), Kinkinir Kalanka, Rohini Kakati’s Rad āru Kuwali (Days and the Dews), Homen Bargohain’s Tāntrik (a follower of the Tantra) are included in the group. The novels of Padma Barkataki and some few of Malik can also be added to enlarge the list on the merit of their possessing one or more phenomenal persons.

Dr. Hemanta Sarma mentions a number of novels, where the novelists' concern is exclusively with the sentiment of love. These are Premnarayan Datta’s Pranayār Suti (The

25. See infra, p. 99 (11).
Channel of Love), Kumar Kishore's "Śīkār Kāpani (The Vibrating Flame), Cāyāpāth (The Shadowy Path), Kapili Nirave Kānde (The Kapili Weeps in Silence), Kawar āru Kankāl (Skeletons in the Grave), Arun Das's "Sapon Yetiā Bhāngē (At Break of Dream), Adya Sarwa's Jīvanar Tīnā Ādhyāya (The Three Chapters of Life), Hitesh Deka's Ācal Mānūḥ (The Real Man), etc.

Love here is treated seriously; and in some of them, even psychologically, though not in a specifically Freudian method; and some attain to that height as a result, which is characteristic of Nava Barua's Kapiliparīyā Sādhū and Bīna Barua's Jīvanar Bātāt.

Dr. Maheswar Neog criticises some of our fictions without specifically mentioning any one of them as

The chance romances of the street
The Juliet of a night. 27

Such fictions as these, he continues, have no greater interest than sickening the readers by their exotic impositions. Dr. Neog may by this remark have referred to those fictions where the writers attempt to restore them from what may appear obscene is almost absent. These novels are stuffed with sexual superfluities, - 'dalliance' and 'dandyism', exposed without psychological observations of persons and environment.

A marked deterioration in the treatment of love is characteristic of present day Assamese fictions, long and short.

Love at its best, i.e., love as an ideal of higher life, once so popular, is not at all inspiring to the present day writers. Love as sex, once a literary taboo, is the material of the new realism. Young boys and girls loitering amidst splendid sights and frivolous talks to the cinema hall or to the river-side, young brides suddenly revealing on their wedding beds that their husbands are impotent, are some of the common stuffs of our light fictions.\textsuperscript{28} The writers in their frank but frivolous treatment of sex often obliterate the difference between fact and 'truth' or between the mere semblance and form of things and the essence of truth, which life so often hides.\textsuperscript{29}

Dr. Hiren Gohain attributes this deterioration or profanation of love's traditional grandeur and chastity to the pressing rise of capitalism.\textsuperscript{30} But the remark seems prejudicial. The more convincing explanation of the situation has been given by Sigmund Freud through his remark: "The most pronounced difference between the love life of antiquity and ours lies in the fact that the ancient placed the emphasis on the instinct itself while we put it on its object. The ancient extolled the instinct and were ready, to ennable through it even an inferior object while we disparage the activity of the instinct as such and only countenance it on account of the merits of the object."\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} Hiren Gohain, \textit{Bāstawar Swapna} (Dream of reality), p. 64.

\textsuperscript{29} S.N. Sarma, \textit{Asamīyā Sāhityar Itibṛtti} (History of Assamese Literature), p. 323.

\textsuperscript{30} H. Gohain, \textit{Bāstawar Swapna}, p. 64

\textsuperscript{31} \texttt{BW.}, p. 563 (footnote).
The general deterioration in the fictional treatment of love is, thus the inevitable result of a shift of importance from the instinct to the object of love, - from the ideal to the real. A faithful portraiture of the object as it is, is sure to become varied but aesthetically infidel. Precise art is possible to incise only on the ideal, and not on the real or exact picture of an object.

Assamese fictions like all provincial fictions in India is an exotic product and has more or less comprised within itself the ideas at work in the continental literatures. V.K. Gokak in an attempt to illustrate the opulent and integral nature of the Indian Renaissance, and of Kannada literature in particular has mentioned eight trends, perceptible in all modern Indian literature, namely, realism, progressivism, traditionalism, scepticism, ethicism, humanism, aestheticism and gnosticism. A curious reader would never fail to find these ideas flowing singly or in confluence in Assamese fictions, long and short. Traditionalism, ethicism, realism, even humanism are characteristic of our early modern fiction; progressivism, scepticism, aestheticism and gnosticism of our present day fictions. We have stressed on the appreciation of beauty in the stories of Rama Das, Bhaben Saikiya, Chandra Prasad Saikiya and Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, and on traditionalism, humanism, progressivism and realism on those of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Malik and Bargohain. Most of Shri Bhattacharya's fictions are experiments on revaluing the old ideas, i.e., on a compromise between the old and the new ideas. Scepticism, which was first
sounded in the stories of Haliram Deka is, more than anything else, characteristic of such experiment.

A recurring tendency of modern fiction has been to concern itself with the subjective aspect of the writer's experience. The fiction-writer, most often, expresses his sentiments and ideas or philosophy directly in his fiction. The autobiographical novels of Lakshminandan Bora and Sila Bhadra, namely, Uttar Purus, Madhupur, Āgamanir Ghāt are demonstrative of this trend in Assamese fiction.

There is another kind of subjectivism, i.e. 'dramatic subjectivism', in which the writer concerns himself with the states of mind of his characters, to be more specific, with the motives of their action, and the action itself. The novelist passes no comment or explanation on it, nor does he intrude himself in the scheme of his story.

Assamese fictions achieving this ideal is hard to find out. Birendra Kumar Bhatacharya is too prominent with his progressive and analytic and traditional bias to achieve effacement of self-intrusion in the characterisation of his persons. Homen Bargohain's persons gasp under the heavy weight of psychological and philosophical impositions from sources hard apparently to identify. Malik's urban people are too much vocal with their creator's sophistication to betray their own identity. The fictions of Bhaben Saikia, Chandra Prasad Saikia, Rama Das, the impressionistic stories of Saurabh Kumar Chaliha are fictions bent on exploring without any apparent bias, the psychological motivations of characters or 'the
atmosphere of the mind'. Theirs are an approach to if not an achievement of the dramatization ideal of subjectivism, I think. Their persons have both social and individual existence.