CHAPTER – II

INSPIRATIONAL AND INFLUENTIAL FACTORS
2.00 Introduction

Sensitive litterateurs are not only influenced by their internal qualities but also by the environment of the time. They receive the influences of their surroundings of their age and depicted them in their writings. They give artistic shape to the incidents, problems, distress and happiness, love and hatred born out of the environment and give them living and eternal colour. According to Dr. Satyakām:

“प्राकृतिक परिवेश भी मनुष्य के जीवन को कुछ हद तक प्रभावित करता हैं, पर सामाजिक परिवेश ही मनुष्य की नियति को अंतिम रूप प्रदान करता हैं, जिस आर्थिक, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक व्यवस्था में आदमी जन्म लेता हैं और पल्टा बढ़ता हैं, वह उसकी नियति को हद दर्जतक प्रभावित करती हैं।”¹

In this manner, each and every writer is associated directly or indirectly with the environment.

The predecessors of Lakshmīnāth Bezbarā and Premchand wrote either for entertainment or for advisory purposes. But Bezbaroa and Premchand began modernity in their respective literature. Both of them wrote novels and short stories on the basis of reality of the society. The very intention of both of them was to bring the contemporary social, political and economic problems to the notice of the readers and thereby to reform the social set-up. Therefore it is necessary to study the inspirational and influential factors, which shaped their literary personality. It is also necessary to

¹. Alochanātmak Yathārthbād Aur Premchand, Dr. Satyakām, p.47.
2.01 Lakshmināth Bezbaroa: His life and personality

Lakshmināth Bezbaroa was born in 1868 at Āhatguri in the Nagāon district on a ‘Lakshmipurūmā’ night. Since he was born on a ‘Lakshmipurūmā’ night, he was named as Lakshmināth. This fact has been stated by Bezbaroa himself in his Mor Jiwan Sōwarāṇ (A biographical note).

Bezbaroa’s father Dīnanāth Bezbaroa was the physician to Purandar Singha, the last of the Ahom kings. During the British days he was in the post of Munshif. His mother Thāneswari Devī was the second wife of Dīnanāth. Lakshmināth was the successor of Ayurvedācharyya Kalibar Baruā and Vaishnavite Puruṣottam Baruā from his paternal line and of well-known Vaishnavite litterateur Ananta Kandali from his maternal line.2

Bezbaroa was born and brought up in a Vaishnavite family in which there was Nām Prasanga and reading of the Kirtan and the Bhāgawat regularly in the morning and evening everyday. His father was a government servant and had to live in different places of Assam as he was transferred to different places. Bezbaroa spent his first four years of life in Barpeta. He acquired Vaishnavite trend of mind while in Barpeta, one of the centres of Vaishnavism in Assam.

According to Bhuyān:

“तेतियार पराइ सत्रीया रीति-नीति, नाम-प्रसंग आदिर विषये लक्ष्मीनाथर्र
सुखद धारणा पृष्ठये गढ़ ले उठियिल।” ³

While he was at Tezpur, Lakṣmīnāth got the chances to go to the ‘Nikāmul Satra’ with his father. Most probably, these incidents were responsible for his reverence for the Vaishnavite religion preached by Śrīmanta Śankardeva. Bezbaroa also visited different places of Assam like Tezpur, Lakhimpur, Śivasāgar, Guwāhāti in addition to Barpeta with his father and was acquainted himself with traditional stories of these places. The traditional stories related to these places influenced the mind of Bezbaroa. The influence of Rabi Kakā on Bezbaroa was not insignificant. This Rabi Kakā was a distantly related brother of Bezbaroa who looked after him.

“रविकका ले’राहैतर धेमालिर लगरीया, कार्यर अभिमानव, साधुकथर
कुरळ आरु महामारत, रामायण आरु पुराणर गल्पर टोपोला।”⁴

In addition to these, Rabi Kakā told Bezbaroa stories of ghosts and spirits and of kings and ministers which had a great impact on the young mind of Lakṣmīnāth.

During the days of Dīnanāth, the condition of roads were not good enough and as such he favoured waterways while going from one place to another. The different scenes and sceneries, trees and rivers, birds and animals they came across also had impact on

³Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaroa Āru Asamiyā Aitihya, Prafulla Chandra Bhuyān, p.3
⁴Sāhityarathī Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaroa, Jatindra Nath Goswāmi, p.18.
the mind of Bezbaroa. He could never forget the reminiscence of those days and depicted them in his autobiography—Mor Jiwan Sōwaran.

Bezbaroa began his schooling in Lakhimpur, but used to go to school regularly in Guwahati. He described his first experience in school in the following words:

“স্কুলের যোগাযোগ মন্ত্ব বর ফাটেকলী যোগা যেন লাগিল। মের পক্ষে
স্কুল প্রবেশ মানে বান বিহিংগার সজাত প্রবেশ, যদিত তার অসিতিতি চারি-
পাঁচ ঘটার নিমিত্তে।”

The environment of the school frightened young Bezbaroa. The strict rules of the school decreased the attraction in the mind of the young children. Probably due to these strict rules many children ceased to go to school which was in the words of Bezbaroa—‘Skulāṭanka Rogagraṣṭa’ (suffering from abnormal fear of school). In his story the ‘Mukti’, he depicted how strict principle debarring the children from attaining learning. He writes:

“কঠোর, নির্মস্ত, নীরস এন্দা মাথোন ব্যবস্থা সলনি যদি তার উলোতা
অস্থা প্রচলিত হলহেলেন তেন্দ্র কেনে হোঁহিমায়ীয়া কার্যক্ষম আর নিজর
সাধার সীমান প্রকৃতিত প্রজা চামে-চামে বাড়ি আপার জন্মমামিক উজ্জ্বল
আর মহামালিত ফারিমেলেন।”

Bezbaroa passed the Entrance Examination from Śivasāgar Govt. High School in 1886; and afterwards he went to Kolkāta for

5. Mor Jiwan Sōwaran, Lakshmīnāṭh Bezbaroa, p.32.
6. ibid, p.33.
higher studies. He passed F. A. from the City College, Kolkātā in 1888 and B. A. from the Assembly College in 1890.\(^7\)

During his stay at Kolkātā, Bezbaroā met students from all over India. Prafulla Chandra Bhūyān remarks:

“भारतीय संस्कृतिय वृक्षपोषक तथा विभिन्न प्रदेशो परा आहा जातीयतावादी देशप्रेमी छात्रनेता आरू साहित्यिकसंस्थाण संस्पर्शले आहि बेजबरोवाई स्वदेशप्रेम भावातारे आरू अधिकामावे उदवुबळ है परिण्याल।”\(^8\)

The Jonākī, a magazine of the Asamiyā Bhāṣār Unnati Sādhini Sabhā, was first published in 1889. The ‘Trio’—Bezbaroā, Chandrakumār Āgarwālā and Hemchandra Goswāmī were at the back of this magazine. Lakshmināth Bezbaroā now came to the light completely through this magazine.

In 1891, Bezbaroā married Prajnāsundarī of the renowned Tagore family of Kolkātā. Now being related to this family, Bezbaroā was fortunate enough to meet well-known litterateurs of the time. Kaviguru Rabindranāth Tagore was the uncle of Prajnāsundarī. Bezbaroā generally met him and discussed about literature particularly about Assamese and Bengali literatures with him. This encouraged Bezbaroā to do something for Assamese literature.

The year 1895 was a memorable time for Bezbaroā. Although he lost his father in that year yet another incident made him happy.

\(^7\) Bezbaroā Pratibhā, ed. Mahēśchandra Dev Goswāmī, p.260.
\(^8\) Lakshmināth Bezbaroā Āru Asamiyā Aṭīhya, Prafulla Chandra Bhūyān, p.4.
Because his first daughter, Surabhi was born to them in the same year. On the other hand, he began his business life with well-known businessman Bholanāth Baruā in that year. Bezbaroā was with Bholanāth as a business partner till 1903, after which he carried business independently. But he was not very successful in his business. It may be cited here that he presided over the Asam Chhāṭra Sanmilan held at Guwāhātī in 1916. He was serving in the Ward Company for about one year during 1916 to 1917. He had to travel widely for the company affairs. In 1917 he was sent to Sambalpur:

“1917 चनर माजभागल समबलपुरत वार्ड कोम्पानीयेच वेहार, उठिश्या सरकार पाँच बवहर निमित्ते बन्दीवस्त्त करि जंगल लोमात कोम्पानीयेच जंगल चोवार कामत बेजबूलक समबलपुरले पश्चिमाय दिले।” ⁹

He was in Sambalpur for about 11 years under this company.

In 1924, Bezbaroā was elected to the prestigious post of the President, Asam Sāhitya Sabhā, which he successfully completed.

In 1927, the Company sent him to take over independent charge of timber business in Assam. But he resigned from the post and went to Sambalpur in 1928. In Sambalpur he began timber business independently. But his health gave away and then his daughter took him to Dibrugarh where he breathed his last on March 26, 1938.

Bezbaroā was born on the river Brahmaputra while the family was on a voyage from Nagāon to Guwāhātī and spent almost the

⁹. Lakshmināth Bezbaroā Āru Asamiyā Aithihya, Praffula Chandra Bhūyān, p.64.
whole life in the valleys of the Gangā and the Mahānādi. He came across various people of various localities and learnt about their society, literature, customs and conventions and culture, and thereby he spoke of unity, integrity and association with different peoples.¹⁰

His everlasting patriotism inspired the people to be vigilant for security and safety of Assam, and language and culture of Assam. He wanted to mingle himself with the Brahmaputra as he was born on it. In his lyrical poem the ‘Brahmaputra Sangeet’, he wrote:

“शुना हेरा ब्रह्मपुत्र
शुना असमर प्राणचित्र
येन खेलार शेषत तोमार बुकुत
मार याय मोर जीवन तरणी।”¹¹

Bezbarōa was a versatile genius. His life history is colourful and full of various incidents. He could adapt to any circumstances of life. Like his father Dīnanāth, he was quite steady, wise and firm. These qualities made his character shining. Bezbarōa was liberal, enduring, kind, dutiful and affectionate. He loved big and small alike. While he was in business, many people deceived him; but he forgave them very liberally.

Bezbarōa was firm and did not give away at the time of any disaster. He began his own business with new spirit even at the age of 60. He was a man with an independent mentality. He refused to join Government services when he was offered the post of

¹⁰ Lakshmīnāth Bezbarōa Aru Assamīyā Aitihya, Prafulla Chandra Bhūyān, p.10.
¹¹ ibid, p.13.
Extra-Assistant Commissioner twice after passing his B. A. Examination. He remarked:

“स्वाधीनताहीनतातके मोर मृत्यु श्रेष्ठतर बुलि मई सदाय भावि आहिछो।
मोर तेलिया अन्तर्तर गुड़ातिगुड़ा प्रदेशार एडु भाव आरू संकल्पश
उलाइखिल ये मई स्वाधीनभावे परिश्रम करि एमुटि भात खाम, परर गोलामी करि नहय।”

Bezbaroa’s heart was full of patriotism. He was a complete Assamese man although he married from a Bengali family and lived most part of his life among the Bengali people. Even he did not give up the practice of Nam Prasanga in his daily life.

“बरकाह बजाइ शंकरी घोषा-कीर्तन गाइ नाम गोवा तेशेतर धरा-बन्ध।
नियम आखिल।”

Everywhere he kept his Assamese identity in tact. His living away from homeland made him love his motherland more. Bezbaroa was able to depict a nation, a society and a language through humour.

“हास्य रसिकता मानव जीवनले सचाई एक ऐशवरिक अवदान आरू खुब
कम मानुसहे एडु अवदान लाम करिब पारिये।”

His daughter, Aruṇā remarks about her father Bezbaroa:

“jeevanar शेष दिनले सुख-दुख, आलै-आहुकालर कोरो अवसाथे
रसिकतार एने महान अवदानर परा देउता बनित होवा नाखिल।”

Bezbaroa did his duties keeping duties as the basic principle of life. The impact of his heredity, free life since childhood and various experiences of life gave him an uncomparable personality.

2.02 Environment during the time of Bezbaroa

The environment of the age gives birth to litterateurs and inspires them to take up literary compositions. So, the impact of the contemporary environment falls upon the life of a writer and that impact is reflected in his works. Bezbaroa himself remarks:

"जातीय साहित्य जातीय जीवनर एखनि डंगर दाघोण। कोनो एटा जातिर राजनैतिक, सामाजिक आरू सर्थ सामग्री धन धन्य कथार भु ले जातिर साहित्यर मितरेदि पोवा याय। वि देशर जातीय जीवन जिमान सौष्ठवपूर्ण सेइ देशर साहित्यउ सिमान सौष्ठवपूर्ण।" 16

Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the contemporary environment before going to analyse Bezbaroa’s writings.

2.02:1 Political environment

After six hundred year long rule of the Ahom kings, Assam came under the rule of Burma in 1822. In 1826, Assam came under the rule of the East India Company under the treaty of Yandaboo:

"इस्ट इंडिया कोम्पनीये असमर स्वायत्त असम अधिकार करा नारिहिल; तेजेविलकर आरिहल एत्य सुदूरप्रसारी औपनिवेशिक साम्राज्यवादी स्वायत्-रश। आरू लक्ष।" 17

Through the treaty of Yandaboo, Assam came under one foreign power from another foreign power. This treaty of Yandaboo is the critical time for Assam as it was the critical juncture of feudal politics and democratic politics.

As a result of the exploitation of the East India Company, rebellion began to grow in different parts of the country. An abortive attempt to free Assam from the hands of the British was made by Gomadhar Kowar in 1828. Next to it several leaders like Gadādhar, Dhananjoy, Piyoli, Jewrām etc. made similar attempts. But all of them ended in failure. Although these movements were unsuccessful yet they have given birth to a popular rebellious consciousness which opened a new chapter in the political thinking in Assam. On the other hand, with the spread of English education brought the national feeling and liberal thoughts of the Western society for the educated youths of Assam. These youths gave birth to a new national consciousness in the minds of contemporary Assamese generation.

Bezbaroa did not join politics directly. Of course he attended the Conference of Indian National Congress held in Mumbai (then Bombay) under the presidentship of W. C. Banerjee in 1892 as a representative from Assam. He became the first Assamese to address a National Conference of India. He also attended the Conference of the Indian National Congress held in 1903 under the presidentship of Lālmohan Ghose. Again he attended the Bombay Conference of
All India Congress from the Sārbajanik Sabhā. In this connection Jatindra Nāth Goswāmī remarks:

“লক্ষ্মীনাথের পোনতে সর্বভারতীয় অনুষ্ঠান এটাতে অসম প্রতিনিধিদ্বৃত্ত মাত্র ভারত রাজনৈতিক চিন্তাধারার সেই অসম চিন্তাধারার সংযোগ স্থাপন করে।”

Bezbaroā had a great respect for Mahatma Gāndhī and was inspired by his ideals very much. He read Gāndhijee’s Young India and Harijan regularly. He also wrote against untouchability.

Bezbaroā gave expression to the contemporary politics through his writings. In this connection, mention may be made to his Kāhūdi Kharali, Kripābar Barbaruār Bhābar Burburāṇī etc. He was out and out a nationalist. The basic principle of his writing is patriotism. He wanted that mass people should understand the real nature of the British. He wanted to let the school students know the reality of the British administration. He said that the school children of today are the citizen of tomorrow.

Bezbaroā expressed the contemporary political environment and thoughts through his stories. Through stories like the ‘Pātmugi’, ‘Bhokendra Baruā’, ‘Āmār Sansār’ etc. he depicted Gāndhian ideals, impact of English education etc. very successfully.

19. ibid, p.199.
2.02:2 Social environment

In the words of Bezbaroa himself, the then Assam was sick. During those days social life was quite unstable. There had been several changes in the social life of Assam due to several factors. On one hand, there was the freedom struggle of India and struggle for survival for Assamese language and on the other, the impact of Western education and culture brought about a major change.

Assam at the time of Bezbaroa was something like a big village. There was no institution for higher education in Assam during those days, and students had to go to Kolkatā for it. Bezbaroa was also one of those who went to Kolkatā for higher studies. But the students in Kolkatā from Assam thought deeply to do something for their mother tongue:

“समाज, धर्म, साहित्य आदि सम्पर्क नानान नवन चिन्तार बीर खलकि
जटिलिल।”

At the root of all these was Western education and the renaissance in Bengal. During their stay at Kolkatā, Bezbaroa and others met the students from different parts of India. The association of these students from various parts of India made Bezbaroa and other Assamese students to think over their own language and culture. On the other hand, they witnessed the positive results of Bengal renaissance:

“বাংলা নবজাগরণে আনি দিয়া বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় চেতনায় কেন্দ্রিত করে দেখা পাইছিলেন।”

The British used Bengali in the schools and the courts of Assam at the beginning for the sake of convenience of administration. Even Bezbaroa had his primary schooling in Bengali. He developed a love for mother tongue since then.

Bezbaroa’s firmness and patriotic feelings inspired him to work for the upliftment of the lost culture and to inspire the people to regain national consciousness and to get their self-establishment. Chandra Prasād Saikia remarks:

“তেজের মূল লক্ষ্য আছিল কেনাকে অগাধ সমাজে আত্ম-বিস্মৃত, স্থ্যবির, এলাঘু মানোজগত আত্ম-প্রত্যয় জগাই তুলিব পারে আরু জ্ঞান-বৃহ্দিক আলোকপাত করি সামাজিক জীবন প্রাণ সংঘালন করিব পারে।”

The social life in the times of Bezbaroa was full of inequalities and unstable. Superstitions, prejudices, casteism and so on made inequalities in the society. The stories by Bezbaroa depicted the contemporary superstitions, evil customs and such other evils of the society. He also illustrated different incidents of family life, their sacrifices, humanitarian activities etc. in his short stories. 'Seuti', 'Malati', 'Bhadari', 'Bāpirām' etc. are some of the good examples of such pictures of the Assamese families.

The British adopted the policy of ‘divide and rule’ to perpetuate their rule. As a result they encouraged communal disunity, for which the society was divided into several classes and ultimately the society became a weak one. Bezbaroā depicted the injustice that took place in the name of religion. Here mention may be made of stories like ‘Dharmadhwaj Foicholā Nabich’, ‘Nistāraṇī Devee ba Fātemā Bibi’ etc.

Blind copying in the society created a problem in the days of Bezbaroā. The birth of a modern culture changed the nature, food habit, living style, dress etc. of the educated class and brought a new style of life. Due to the impact of Western education, a section of people became blind supporter of Western life and culture. On the other hand, some other sections wanted to live with their own ancient culture. Bezbaroā successfully depicted all these things in his writings.

Bezbaroā kept his own identity although he was educated under Western system, living outside Assam for a greater part of his life and marrying from a non-Assamese family. He wanted to look into his glorious heritage with a new outlook. This idea has been reflected in his poem ‘Bin Barāgī’:

“नन्दुन प्राणार
न चक्रुषुरि
दीपिति दालि दे तात
पुरणि पृथिवी
नके चाइ लगों
हे बीण एशारि मात!”
Problems after problems began to rise up in the society during the days of Bezbaroā. Of these problems, the problem of opium and such other intoxicating drugs created a havoc in Assam. Bezbaroā in his ‘Āmār Kāniyā Sabhār Ek Adhibeśān’ discussed about the poisonous effects of opium eating and advised his fellow Assamese to shun the habit of opium eating. He warned that opium would destroy the whole Assamese nation.

“सकलोब्रेक काम करा एक मने।
पुलाब्ल लेतिया दुखर राति,
नहले निश्चय असिद्धान मेलित।
नेपाबा आरू असमीया जाति।”

The society of the Bezbaroā era remained unstable due to these reasons. On the other hand, modern education system, modern vehicles, industries, printing machines, newspapers and news-magazines pushed Assam into modern age. Of the social reform during the days of Bezbaroā the remarkables were widow-remarriage, discontinuation of child marriage, abolition of casteism etc.

2.02:3 Religious environment

Due to lack of modernisation of education and being ruled by foreigners for a long period, the Hindu religion lost some of its great qualities. With the coming of the British, a new shape has been given to India. Western education and new communications enlightened the young generation of India. As a result, Hindu religion changed its traditional colour along with other changes.

People began to reform the superstitions and other evils associated with religion. The ‘Agni Kavi’ Kamalākānta Bhattāchāryya wrote:

“ധर্মং সংস্কার নহ’লে সাহিত্যং সংস্কার হ’ব নোংরায়.........। ধর্মং সংস্কার
করিয়া খুজিলে বিশ্বধর্মং মায়েদি যাব লাগিব”

He further remarked:

“ধর্মং বিদ্বেষঃ জাতিগত বিদ্বেষ দূর করি প্রাণে ঐক্য ভাব জাগৃত নকরিলে ধর্মং,
অর্থ, কাম, মাত্স্য একোপেক্ষ সিদ্ধি নহ’ব, সাহিত্যং উজ্জ্বলি দূররে কথা।”

During the first part of the nineteenth century, modern thought and ideals replaced most of the ancient traditions in Bengal. Most of these re formations were in respect of religious customs. In 1815, Rājā Rāmmohan Rāi established his ‘Ātmīya Sabha’ and through it he stressed the need of English education and began a movement against evils of traditional customs. Subsequently in 1828, the ‘Brahma Samāj’ was established, which introduced several re formations in the society.

The students from Assam studying in Kolkāta were greatly influenced by the re formations carried out in Bengal. Even Bezbaroā performed his marriage in accordance with the rules of the ‘Brahma Samāj’. Under the influence of widow-remarriage scheme of the ‘Brahma Samāj’, Guṇābhīrām Baruā married the widow of Parasūrām Baruā in 1870. It was definitely an epoch-making incident.

26. ibid, p.59.
27. Asamiyā Chuti Galpar Adhyayan, Prahlād Kumār Baruā, p.27.
In this manner, the idea of religious reformations took place in the mind of many. At the same time, the idea of secularism also came into existence. The Western education was solely responsible for such a change of outlook in the society. It effected literature also:

“धर्म जोज्यन जीत नीति आफ्रधर्मम गोड़मीए प्रति घोषणा होवा बिन्दोब्यो असमीया साहित्य नतुन दृष्टिभंगी बाट नुकसी करिए।”

During the days of Bezbaroā there had been reformations in religion along with other fields. Bezbaroā himself was believer in the principle of 'Ekeswarbād' (Omnipotence of one God). His faith on the 'Mahāpuruṣīyā Vaishnavism' was in fact hereditary. He was according to Jatindra Nāth Goswāmī, a modern interpreter of Śankardeva’s Vaishnavism:

“धर्म, साहित्य आफ्र संस्कृतिर प्रथम आफ्र प्रधान आधुनिक व्याख्याता।”

The association like ‘Brahma Samāj’, ‘Prārthanā Samāj’, ‘Rāmkrishna Mission’ and Theosophical Society of India had a great impact on Bezbaroā. They also inspired him to reform the society:

“ब्रेध्य व साहित्य आफ्र चित्तलक पुनर आविष्कार करि संगतिबिष्टीन बर्तमानर असमीया समाजक उदबुद्द करात प्रेरणा योगाइष्टिल।”

Bezbaroā believed that the ideals preached by the Vaishnavite preceptors would help in creating a classless and casteless society. It shows that the organisations for reformations of religion had a good impact on the writers.

28. ibid, p.28.
Bezbaroa accepted the ideals preached by Śrīmanta Sankardeva. He was greatly attracted to the social reforms and constructive works done in the ‘Ek Śaraṇ Naam Dharma’ preached by Śrīmanta Sankardeva and Śrī Mādhabdeva. He believed in real ‘Bhakti’. A real ‘Bhakta’ finds no difference between a low ‘chandāl’ and a high Brahmin. The Kīrtan of Śankardeva says:

“ब्राह्मणर चान्दालर निबिचारि कुल।
वाताल चीरत येने दृष्टि एक तुल।।
नीचत सामुतु यार भेल एक झान।
अहाके ये पिथित बुतिय सर्पजान।”31

Bezbaroa praised the religion preached by Śrī Śankardeva throughout his whole life. In reality, Bezbaroa took Śankardeva out of the 'Naam Ghar' and established him in the national life.

2.02:4 Cultural tradition

The culture of a nation is reflected in the special features of the nation. The scope of culture is so vast that it covers customs and conventions, behaviour, history, language and literature, ideas and ideals, dress, faith and superstitions and all reforms etc.32 According to Dr. Nagen Šaiķia:

“संस्कृति यदिओ मानवीय हृदयवृत्तिक सुन्दरके प्रकाश आरू प्रयोग करिबले
करा यत्न माजेदि गढ़ लय, किन्तु इयाध व्यक्तिगत सृजनशक्तिकर
अभियबाधक नुबुजाय। इ सामूहिक सृष्टिधर्मी मनर बासनार मूर्त प्रकाश।”33

Culture is also regarded as the bond of unity in the society.

"Culture can be thought of as a common learned way of life shared by the numbers of a society consisting of the totality of tools, techniques, social institution, attitudes, beliefs, motivation and system of value known to the group, or to put the distinction in different way, society means people and culture means the behaviour of the people."³⁴

The era of Bezbaroā was the era of mixture of Indian and Western culture. As stated earlier, Bezbaroā lived in different places during his childhood for which he met different people in different places. These people had considerable impact on his life. Bezbaroā depicted different people of different places in his stories. He coloured the life and tales of these people with colour of imagination in his stories. His mind and soul was burdened with folk-literature and culture, which he depicted in his stories. His stories are full of Assamese people with their traditional dresses, customs, language and food habits.

The elements of Assamese culture are the tales, ballads, hearsays, proverbs and sayings, folk-songs, bihu songs etc., which have been prevailing since old days. These are very popular and they have considerable impact on the mind of the masses. Bezbaroā took many examples from these traditional elements.

³⁴. Traditional Culture & Impact of Technological Change (Part II), George M. Foster.
During his childhood days Bezbaroa heard of many stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*, told by Rabi Kakā. He even frightened him with stories of ghosts and spirits. All these had a considerable impact on Bezbaroa. Most probably, therefore, Bezbaroa in his stories like 'Lāokhola', 'Maidām', 'Mālatī' etc. expressed such ghosts and spirits. Bezbaroa is also regarded as the first compiler-editor of Assamese folk-tales.

Bezbaroa was like the link between Oriental and Western ideas and between the ancient and modernity. Because he lived in Kolkātā, the life centre of Indian Renaissance where Western culture and ideals got their way. During his college days he got the chances to go through modern Bengali literature as well as English literature.

The writings of romantic writers inspired him to brighten the glorious heritage of Assam. At the same time the writings of Rabindranāth Tagore inspired him to re-discover ancient Assamese culture.

Bezbaroa took the help of humour and satire in almost all his writings:

He expressed all the defects and qualities of Assamese people and warned them to review their own position. He with his reformatory ideals wanted to reform the Assamese society. Bezbaroa remarked:

“असमीया भाषार उत्तरति असमर उत्तरित्र प्रथम ढाप।”

Bezbaroa used domestic words in his stories so that ordinary people may understand them.

“साहित्य यदि सर्वसाधारणर उपभोगर बस्तु करिब लागे, तेनें सर्वसाधारणे व्यवहार करा भाषात निष्चय ताक गढ़िब लागिब।”

Bezbaroa spoke highly of the Assamese dresses. He once lamented when he found one woman did not use the ‘Rihā’. He said:

“एइ रिहाखेनी ये असमीया पोचाकर शोभा, सौन्दर्य आरू देखिबले शुरुनि करेक, तेंओंलेके नुबुजेकेर।”

He wore a national dress with a turban while he attended the Indian National Congress Conference for the first time. He used to discuss about Assamese refreshments in their various forms.

Bezbaroa spent most part of his life outside Assam. Therefore, he depicted the picture of social culture of Orissa and Bengal which

was well-known to him besides the Assamese one. Although he had to make his conversations at home in Bengali (his wife being a Bengali lady), yet he did not give up his own culture. He kept his traditional Vaishnavite culture in tact. He realized it deeply that the Vaishnavite culture as preached by Śrī Śankardeva and Śrī Mādhabdeva was the only way to make Assamese culture fortified. Bezbaroa was the first man to establish Śankardeva and Mādhabdeva outside the temples and to use folk-songs in standard literature. So, it was Lakshmināth Bezbaroa who re-established the importance of Assamese culture and made a high tower for Assamese language.

2.02:5 Literary tradition

Literature reflects the education and knowledge, art and culture and social and mental development of a nation. Each and every nation has its own language through which its literature is developed. So, literature is regarded as the mirror of a nation.

To discuss about literature of Bezbaroa, it is necessary that one should study the contemporary factors which had impact over him.

Bezbaroa was an epoch-maker of literature. He got inspiration from his own family atmosphere. His father Dinanāth was a devoted Vaishnavite. From his mother’s side, he descended from well-known poet Ananta Kandali, who was also a Vaishnavite. Therefore, traditionally and from the point of descendence he was a devoted

41. Asamiya Sāhityar Samikshatmak Lītrītia, Dr. Satyendra Nāth Šarmā, p.17.
Vaishnavite and related to culture and literature. Therefore, Lakshmināth had a very close relationship with literature from his childhood days.

Bezbaroa’s father Dīnanāth also had great contribution towards Assamese literature.

“तेओं स्कन्दपुराणर अन्तर्गत उक्तकं खन्डः पुरिकर असमीया अनुवाद करिञ्चिल। रूढ़मল्ल हर-गौरी सम्बादर आचायर संहति नामे पुरिकर तेओं असमीया मापत पद करिञ्चिल। शंकरदेव-माधवदेवर जीवनचरित पुरिक गुरुवरित तेओं निजे रचना करि नकल करोवाइँ बरसेता कमलावरी आदि रंत्रा दिञ्चिल।”

During his childhood Lakshmināth used to travel different places with his father, visited Satras with him and attended the ‘Nām Prasanga’ everyday with him. Dīnanāth also wrote a book entitled Bezbaroa Bansāwalī, a chronicle of their family. So it is seen clearly that there was an impact of Dīnanāth over his son, particularly on religious and literary matters.

Bezbaroa went through all news magazines available like the Asam Bandhu, the Assam News etc. during his school days with great attention. He expressed in his Mor Jiwan Sōwaran that he learnt the technique of using Assamese words and sentences from the Assam News.

In the year 1872, the literary association, the A.S.L. (Assam Students’ Literary Club) was established in Kolkata under the leadership of Gangāgobinda Phukan. Later, there were sittings of the

42. Lakshmināth Bezbaroa Aru Asamiyā Aitihya, Prafulla Chandra Bhuyan, p. 1.
43. Sāhityarathī Lakshmināth Bezbaroa, Jatindra Nath Goswāmi, p. 12.
'Asamiyā Chhātrar Teaparty', on every Wednesday and Saturday in some 'Mess' of Assamese students. Finally in 1888, the 'Asamiyā Bhāsār Unnati Sādhinī Sabhā' was established in Kolkatā. It was established to discuss about the improvement and development of the Assamese language. The subjects discussed in the sittings of the association were—use of Assamese language in the schools of Assam, collection and publication of ancient Assamese literature, to compose grammar for correct Assamese language and to compose a history incorporating religious, political, social and cultural history of Assam. This association had a great place in the literary history of Assam.

“असमीया भाषा-साहित्यर बुर्ज़ील एह सभार फल आछिल सुदूरप्रसारी।” 44

In 1889, the Jonākī, the news-magazine of the A. B. U. S. Sabhā, was first published. This paper was edited and published by Chandra Kumār Āgarwālā. The publication of this paper went on for about eight years. During these years altogether five editors took charge and the fourth editor was Lākshmīnāth Bezarōā.

“जोनाकीये एहते गमीर देशतबोध तथा सांस्कृतिक जातीय चेतना आरू आनहते पास्चात्य रोमांटिक साहित्यर पर लाम करा मानवियताबादी दृष्टिमंगी आरू संबंधनशीलतार मुक्त प्रकाशर अधिकार आरू ऐतिहासर पर लाम करा जीवनर आदर्शदादी दृष्टिमंगी आहरण करि आधुनिक असमीया साहित्यर बाबे एक नतुन आरू शक्तिशाली बौद्धिक परिमण्डल गाढ़ि हुलिले।” 45

44. Lākshmīnāth Bezarōā Āru Asamiyā Aitihya, Prafulla Chandra Bhūyān, p.4.
45. Gañyāsī (3rd year/ 1st issue/October, 1945), Dr. Nagen Śaikāa.
The first farce of Bezbaroa, the Litikai was published in the first issue of the Jonaki. In the same issue the Bankuwarī of Chandra Kumār Āgarwālā was published, which has been regarded as the first romantic poem in Assamese. This magazine created a new era in the Assamese literature. According to Dr. Nagen Šailā ā: 

“Jonakīyey suṣṭi kara bhāvaśaśaṭ kara Jonakīyey pelaḷa yovā pṛamāvar para 1940 chanaḷey pṛancha bhalāṛu aśamīya sāhīṭya pṛetaśaḷit hā aṭhitā. Seṇā bābe aśamīya sāhīṭya śitaśaṭ Jonakī kēval eṭa nām nāḥa, eṛkhā alodbhāni nāḥa, Ṛ eṭa ācāḍeḷaṇ, Ṛ eṭa yug aṛū Ṛ nijēḷ eka śitaśaṭṭaḷaḷaḷuḥyey viṭhaṭī hā ṛḥē."46

After the Jonaki, Bezbaroa edited and published the Bāhi in the year 1910, which continued its publication upto 1929 under his editorship. But later the Bāhi was published under editorship of some other persons and continued upto 1940. The last editor of Bāhi was Mādhava Chandra Bezbaroa, a nephew of Lakshmināth Bezbaroa. Bezbaroa published almost all his writings in his Bāhi. Most of the well-known writers of the time were regular writers of Bāhi. Jatindra Nāth Goswāmi remarked:

“Bōhīye aśamīya kā ṛṣike khiribale śikālaḷe aṛū aśamīya sāmājaṛ kūsaśkāṛ aśamīyaśaśabāḥār guṭhī kūṭhāraṇāṭ kāri aśamīyaśaśakara ṛmāṭ ṛjāṭīy ṛcāṭaṭaḥ jagāḷaṭuṭī ṛṣiḥ. Aśamīya nīṃjāṛ ṛcānāṛīṛi aṛū ṛjāṭīyṛtāṛ nantun sannjīvīṇī h’ṛl lakṣmināṭaṛ bōhī.”47

These two magazines the Jonaki and the Bāhi were two epoch-making magazines which gave new life to Assamese literature.

46. ibid, p.32.
47. Sāhītyarathī Lakshmināth Bezbaroa, Jatindra Nāth Goswāmi, p.186.
Bezbaroa was a versatile genius. He attempted writing in almost all branches of Assamese literature. He enriched Assamese literature with his poems, stories, dramas, novels, biographies, humorous compositions, historical writings, religious and critical essays. Bezbaroa got inspiration to write poems from the romantic English poetry and the contemporary Bengali literature. He brought the colourful incidents of the past, secrets of nature and beauty of village life with their folk-songs and culture to light through his poems.

Bezbaroa is the father of Assamese short stories. His Sādhu Kathār Kūki (1910), Surabhi (1909) and Jonbiri (1913) are the first collected and published books on Assamese short stories. His another story book Kehōkali was published posthumously. Bezbaroa’s idea of short stories developed the later part of the nineteenth century, where he depicted the fall of spineless middle class, the corrupted officials of the British days and the injustice prevailing in the society. He collected folk-songs, folk-stories and such other oral literature of the masses and published them. His Kakā Deutā Āru Nāti Lorā, Budhī Āir Sādhu are some of such collections.

Bezbaroa was successful in writing historical plays. Three historical plays, viz. Jaymatī Kūwarī, Chakradhwaj Singha and Belimār are in his credit, while Litiṅāi, Chikarpāti Nikarpāti, Nōmal and Pāchanī are his successful farces.

Bezbaroa has written only one novel the Padum Kūwarī. But, it was the first attempt to write historical novel in Assamese. In case of biography, Bezbaroa depicted the life-story of Śankardeva and
Madhabdeva taking facts from the 'Charit Puthis'. Sri Sri Sankardeva (1911) and Mahāpurūṣa Sri Sankardeva Āru Śrī Madhabdeva (1914) are the only biographical books of Bezbaroa. In addition to these, another two books namely Dāngariā Dinānāth Bezbaroār Jīwāni and Mor Jīwān Sōwarāṇ were also penned by him. The Mor Jīwān Sōwarāṇ is an autobiography. It was only his domestic influence which made him write these books.

Bezbaroa wrote a number of collections of satirical articles like the Kṛpābar Baruar Kākatar Topolā (1904), Kṛpābar Baruar Obhatani (1909), Kṛpābar Baruar Bhāvar Burpuraṇi (1951), Baruār Bulani (1964) in the nickname—'Kṛpābar Barurā'. It may be assumed that these were the results of the impact of English and Bengali literature on him.

As stated earlier, his domestic atmosphere and the visiting of Satras by him attracted him towards Vaishnavism. As a result of this impact he began writing on Śrī Śankardeva and his great 'Naam Dharma'. Of his philosophical books, Śrī Śrī Sankardeva, Mahāpurūṣa Śrī Sankardeva Āru Śrī Madhabdeva, Tattwakathā, Śrī Kṛṣhnakathā and Chaitanyadev Āru Anyānya are important ones.

Bezbaroa used the principles of critical studies in his Śrī Śrī Sankardeva. Dr. Sārmā remarked that Bezbaroa is the first critic of Assamese literature:

"शाकरदेवः ग्रन्थक्षणक आधुनिक साहित्यर प्रथम समालोचनात्मक ग्रन्थ
बुलिब पारि।"48

48. Asamiyā Sāhitya Samikshātmak Itibṛta, Dr. Satyendra Nāth Sārmā, p.382.
It is seen, however, that Bezbaroa in his creation of literature was first influenced by his family affairs, i.e. from his domestic environment and then by different people he met while in Kolkatā and other parts of India. Several well-known writers of his time like Hem Chandra Barua, Gunābhīrām Baruā, Rabindranāth Tagore etc. also inspired him. Above all, the impact of Western literature, particularly of English literature as well as Bengali literature on him were remarkable. Other important writers who had tremendous impact on Bezbaroa were Anandarām Dhekiāl Phukan, Ramākānta Chaudhury, Kamalākānta Bhattāchāryya, Shakespeare, Shelley. Wordsworth, Coleridge and others.

2.03 Premchand : His life and personality

The environment of the age has a definite impact on each and every writer. The personal life and incidents related to it also influence a litterateur. As a result knowingly or unknowingly a writer reflects such influences in his writings.

The personal life of Premchand was full of struggle. But he had the courage to fight against all these odds. He had also a special view of life which encouraged him to face such odds in life.

Premchand was born in a middle-class family at a place named Lomhi near Banaras on July 31, 1880. His father Ajayablāl Śrīvāstav was a worker in the postal department. He named his son as Dhanpat Rāi and his brother named him Nawāb Rāi.
During childhood, Premchand spent his days idly. While he was eight years old, his mother Ānandī passed away. It was the first tragedy of Premchand’s life. After her death, he was brought up by his grandmother. But his father remarried at the age of fifty for the second time. Unfortunately his grandmother died two years after the coming of his stepmother. His stepmother did not give him mother-like love. Therefore, the stern dealings of his stepmother and negligence of his father made Premchand disillusioned. He did whatever he liked and as such he developed bad behaviour and even he had sexual relationship at a very young age. Although he was in a family, yet he was always alone. Such an environment at home had a deep influence on his whole life. Dr. Tandon remarks:

“बातें साथ और ममता के लिए प्रेमचन्द के हृदय में अचूकति बनी रही! ”

Books became the mates for him during his loneliness at home. Premchand himself wrote:

“उन दिनों मेरे पिता गोरखपुर में रहते थे और मैं भी गोरखपुर ही के भिजान फकूल में आठवें में पढ़ता था, जो तोसरा दरजा कहलाता था। रेती पर एक बुकसेलर बुज़िलाल नाम का रहता था। मैं उसकी दुकान पर जा बैठता था और उसके स्टाक से उपन्यास ले लेकर पढ़ता था। मगर दुकान पर सारे दिन तो बेठ न सकता था, इसलिए मैं उसकी दुकान से अंग्रेजी पुस्तकों की कुंजियों और नोट्स लेकर अपने स्कूल के लड़कों हाथ बेचा करता था, और उसके मुआवजे में दुकान से उपन्यास घर लाकर पढ़ता था।”

After his preliminary education at home, his formal education began at the age of five under a Maulavi. When his father was transferred to Gorakhpur, Premchand had to go with him and he was then admitted to a Mission school.

In 1899, Premchand passed the Entrance Examination in the 2nd Division. He was weak in Mathematics and because of that he could not get admission in college. He was sent to Banaras to rectify his knowledge of Mathematics. He earned Rs. 5 monthly by taking tuition of which he sent Rs. 3 to his family. He now began to read novels rather than rectifying his knowledge of Mathematics. In 1904, he appeared in the special Vernacular Examination in Hindi and Urdu of Allahabad University and in the same year he appeared in the Junior English Teachers’ Certificate Examination from the Central Govt. College, Allahabad in which came out successful in the 1st Class.\(^{52}\)

Premchand’s marriage took place at the age of 15. His wife was not very beautiful and Premchand was not satisfied with her.\(^{53}\) His indifference towards home became more and more. Both his stepmother and his wife were responsible for such indifference. In the meantime his father was dead and the whole burden of his house fell on him. The economic condition of their family was not all right. When Premchand was in Chunār, he began his service career. In 1900, he joined the District School as the fifth teacher with twenty

\(^{52}\) Premchand-Kahanī Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.8.
\(^{53}\) Kalam Kā Majdur, Madan Gopāl, p.37.
rupees per month. He was transferred to several places during his service upto his age of twenty years.

Premchand's stepmother and his wife lived in the village home where they quarrelled with each other frequently. Once his wife left for her father's house and did not come back. Premchand had no good feeling towards her. Later in 1906, he married a widow named Śivrāṇī for the second time.

Now freedom struggle began in full scale. Mahātmā Gāndhī travelled nook and corner of India to give publicity to his non-co-operation movement. He arrived at Gorakhpur in February, 1921. Being deeply influenced by Gāndhīje, he decided to give up government service and on February 14, 1921, he resigned from his post. After his resignation he devoted his time in writing and reading. He depicted faithfully the pictures of the then political, social, economic and religious atmosphere of the country.

He began to work in different places for his livelihood. He even joined as the Head Master of the Mārwārī Vidyālāya and the Kāśī Vidyāpīṭh for many years. He also edited two papers – the Maryyāḍā and the Mādhurī.

In 1924, when Premchand was in Lucknow and his novel, Rangbhūmi was in the press, the King of Alwār requested him to be his private secretary, with a good amount of salary and other facilities. But Premchand did not like to join in any government service and refused the offer.54

54. Premchand Ghar Mein, Śivrāṇī Devī, p.71.
Again in 1929, when Sir Malcom Henry was the Governor, he was offered the title ‘Rāisāhab’. He knew that after receiving the title of ‘Rāisāhab’, it would not be possible for him to write in an independent manner.

“वह स्वतंत्र लेखक न रहकर सरकारी पिटद बन जायेंगे।” 55

Therefore, he was not prepared to accept this title at any cost. In this manner, Premchand worked independently for the common people.

The dream of Premchand was going to fulfil when in 1923, the Saraswati Press was beginning its functions. One monthly magazine Hans was published from March, 1930 and the Jāgraṇ from 1932 from this press. In 1934, he joined service in the film world. But when he found that in films, the director is all in all, he did not like to work under anybody and came back.

In 1935, the Hans had been registered and it became the magazine of Bhāratiya Sāhitya Parisad. Premchand had a good relationship with the Hans. In 1936, Premchand chaired the Bhāratiya Pragatiśil Lekhak Sammelon at Lucknow. Many people were impressed with his presidential address. In his presidential address in the Jubilee of the Āryya Samāj he said:

“मैं तो आर्य समाज को जितनी धार्मिक संस्था समझता हूँ उतनी तहजीबी (सांस्कृतिक) संस्था भी समझता हूँ। बल्कि आप क्षमा करें तो मैं कहूँगा कि उसके तहजीबी कारनामों उसके धार्मिक कारनामों से ज्यादा प्रसिद्ध और रोशन हैं।” 56

In the month of June, 1936, Premchand fell ill and in spite of medical treatment he could not recover his health. On October 8, 1936, he breathed his last at 7.30 in the morning and there came the end of the life of a legendary writer.

The first and foremost thing about Premchand’s personality was that it was extra-ordinary although he was an ordinary man. Right from his childhood days he was obstinate and haughty. He did never thought of the result, only wanted to go on doing things.

Premchand was a writer of the masses. His life was the life of a peasant. Therefore, it is said about him:

“प्रेमचन्द दुखी हिन्दुस्तान के गरीबों के लेखक थे। उनका साहित्य तमाम पीड़ितों का मानसिक संबंध है।”

Premchand was leading a very simple life and was dead against to showiness. The self-confidence of a great litterateur was found in him. Dr. Sarma remarks:

“मन, वचन, कर्म की एकता उनके चरित्र की बड़ी विशेषता थी। यही विशेषता उनकी रचनाओं के नायकों में मिलती है।”

Premchand was very social and could mingle with anybody without any diffidence. He also helped others to mix up with others. He was very much spirited and light-hearted. He was never found to be confused in any difficulty. He tolerated all the odds without uttering a word. According to Šivrāṇi Devī:

57. Premchand Aur Unkā Yug, Dr. Rāmvilās Sarma, p.28.
58. Premchand Aur Unkā Yug, Dr. Ramvilas Sarmā, p.25.
Premchand was the monarch of his home. One day after school hours he came home and went through the newspapers sitting in his varanda. Incidentally the School Inspector came that way and saw Premchand sitting disregarding his presence. He stopped his car and asked Premchand about his strange behaviour. In reply Premchand told the Inspector:

"जब में स्कूल में होता हूँ तो नौकर हूँ, बाद में अपने घर का बादशाह।"  

Premchand was very kind to his students:

"जब भी कोई छात्र क्लास के बाहर अपनी अधक्षा लेख आदि लेकर उनके पास पहुँचता था वे बड़े चाव से उसे सुनते थे और अपने सुझाव पेश करते थे।"  

Premchand was fearless and kind-hearted. He also supported national and popular ideals. He put forward his own ideals with courage and fought for them. Once he contradicted Gāndhī in case of his support to Hindustani. He also strongly opposed the ideas given in the book Islām Kā Vishvārā on the following words:

"इस कम्प्युटर प्रोग्राम का जोरों से मुकाबला करना होगा।"  

60. Ibid, p.41.  
His judgement was as firm as a rock. He did not believe in the existence of God. When he was reminded of God at his deathbed, he told Jainendra as follows:

"जैनेन्द्र, लोग ऐसे समय याद किया करते हैं ईश्वर। मुझे भी याद दिलाई जाती है। पर अगर तक मुझे ईश्वर को कष्ट देने की जरूरत नहीं मालूम हुई है।" 63

All the above things clearly proved that Premchand was a versatile genius with an extra-ordinary personality. He did never try to give publicity of his own genius. Premchand had the courage to face all the difficulties of life with firmness of a rock, self-respect and self-reliance. Even he was smiling at his deathbed as if he was saying that it was difficult to win over me.

2.04 Environment during Premchand’s time

No litterateur can live outside the influence of his time. He lives within the environment of his time. That is why, a writer knowingly or unknowingly reflects such impacts of the environment in literature. Therefore, literature can be understood and analysed only on the basis of contemporary life. Literature of Premchand carries with it the political, social, economic, religious and cultural environment of the time.

2.04.1 Political environment

The era of Premchand was the age of tradition. There was no change of the fate of India although the reign of the East India

63. ibid, p.27.
Company came to an end in 1858. It was handed over to the British crown. Now the crown has taken over the administration and extended its control throughout the nook and corner of India:

"विना किसी शोरगुल के धीरे-धीरे इस देश में प्रविष्ट हो गई। नये भावों
और विचारों ने हम पर हमला किया और हमारे बुद्धिजीवी अंग्रेज
बुद्धिजीवीयों की तरह ही सोचने लगे।" 64

The most important event in our own history was the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. Interestingly, this organisation was first conceived by one British citizen, O. A. Hume. Gradually, the Indians as well the Britishers began realising that the Congress became a considerable force in the political field of India. Even in 1904, the Congress demanded that there should be a representative in the House of Commons from India. With the joining of Mahātmā Gāndhī in the I. N. C., it became a national organisation.

In 1905, the movement against the partition of Bengal gained ground, and the I.N.C. worked for the use of 'Swadeśī' and refusal of foreign goods. The iron hands used against the movement gave rise to nationalism.

"इस विचारधारा का नेतृत्व बालगंगाधर तिलक, विपिनचन्द्र पाल और
लाला लाजपतराय ने किया। उनका विश्वास था कि सरकार से अपनी
मांगे स्वीकृत करवाने के लिए प्रभावशाली राजनीतिक आन्दोलन की
आवश्यकता है।" 65

64. Sanskrit Ke Chār Adhyāya, Ramdhārī Singh Dīnkār, p.15.
65. Premchand–Kahānī Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Purī, p.32.
In 1907, a new communal organisation namely the Indian Muslim League was formed. The British made it a point to divide the nation on communal basis. In 1908, with the arrests of leaders like Bāl Gangādhar Tilak and others, revolutionary ideals came into existence among Indians.

In 1914, the World War I began. During the war period (1914-1918) there was a slack period in Indian politics. In the meantime the I. N. C. proposed for Home Rule League under the leadership of Lokmānya Tilak. After the end of the war, the condition of India remained the same. In 1919, the notorious Rowlatt Act was passed, in which attempt was made to do away with the national feeling of the Indians. Gāndhijee now thought of a new type of movement—the ‘Satyāgraha’.

Premchand did not take any direct part in the political movements. But he depicted pictures of the movement in his writings. He criticised the officials for bad administration.

In 1920, the special session of the I.N.C. held at Kolkātā approved the plans of ‘Satyāgraha’ made by Gāndhijee even at the face of opposition from certain corner. It was decided to prohibit everything that is foreign. Even the government titles and services were given up. Again in December, 1920 the proposal for non-co-operation movement was adopted in the Nāgpur Session.
Almost all the Indians were influenced by Gāndhijee’s ‘Non-Co-operation’ ideals. Even the students and teachers of schools and college quitted their classes and joined the movement. People gave up government services and titles. The lawyers also gave up attending the courts.

Premchand was also influenced by the idea of ‘Non-Co-operation’ and resigned his government service.

Some incidents of violence took place in Chauri Chaura, for which Gāndhijee temporarily stopped the movement. In the meantime Gāndhijee was arrested. A great feeling of political consciousness emerged in India as a result of this movement.

But as the movement was temporarily withdrawn political activities became stagnant.

67. Premchand–Kahāni Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.35.
68. Premchand–Kahāni Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, p.36.
Between 1922 and 1927, there were clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims. The leaders began to think in terms of communal lines. It also began to effect the national life:

“हिन्दु-मुस्लिम दैमनस्य के लिये ये सामाजिक नेता एवं सामाजिक संस्थाएँ ही मुख्य रूप से उत्तरदायी थी।”

The British government sent the Simon Commission in 1928 for reformation in Indian administration. But the Indian leaders boycotted it since there was no representative from India in it. There were strikes against the visit of the Commission, which was dealt with iron hands by the government. Disturbances took place throughout India. Finally in the year 1930, the I.N.C. proposed for ‘Purâna Swarâj’ (complete independence).

“सन 1930 को सारे देश में कांग्रेस का पूर्ण स्वराज्य विषयक धोषणापत्र पढ़कर सुनाया गया, जिसमें बताया गया कि भारत में अंग्रेजी राज्य की नीव शोषण पर आधारित है और इस शोषण से मुक्ति पाने का एकमात्र उपाय है पूर्ण स्वाधीनता।”

In the same year, 1930, Mahâtmâ Gândhî started his famous ‘Dândi Yâtârâ’ in defiance of the government’s ‘Salt Law’. Premchand supported Gândhijee. He wrote in the Hansvâni praising Gândhijee:

“हम तो महतमजी की सुंज-बुझ के कायल है, जो बात की, खुदा की कसम लाजवाब की। न जाने कहाँ से नमक कर खोज निकाला कि उसने देखते ही देखते देश में आँग लगा दी।”

69. ibid, p.37.
The movement took a greater shape. Even women took part in it, which can be regarded as extra-ordinary in Indian social life. The womenfolk took part in the burning of foreign cloths, picketing wine shops etc. more successfully than the manfolk. Sivrāṇī Devī, wife of Premchand was arrested while picketing wine shops.

Premchand witnessed the political changes although he did not take part in them. Even his family members took part in the movement. He began to write stories on the basis of all political incidents. Here the examples of the ‘Jail’, ‘Sherāb Kī Dukān’, ‘Julus’, ‘Maiku’, ‘Patni Se Pati’, ‘Samar Yātra’, ‘Suhāg’ etc. may be cited.

Satyakām remarks:

“प्रेमचन्द भारतीय जनता की आकांक्षाओं के प्रतीक थे, अत: ‘रंगमुमि’ में उन्होंने उसकी मुक्ति चेतना को वाणी प्रदान की। ‘रंगमुमि’ में प्रेमचन्द ने अपने समय के राजनीतिक वर्तमान का चित्रण बहुत प्रामाणिक रूप में किया है। इसके लिये वे एक प्रतीक कथा का निर्माण करते हैं, पर अपने विवरणों में यह कथा समकालीन स्वाधीनता आंदोलन का पूरी तरह से प्रतिनिधित्व करती है।”

According to Dr. Śarmā:

“सन 1931 में पूर्ण स्वाधीनता की प्रथम चर्चा, गांधीजी का अनशन, महाजनी सम्भाग और पुंजीवादी साम्राज्यवादी शोषण में सांठ-गांठ, सन 1936 में भारतीय प्रगतिशील लेखक संघ की स्थापना और सन 1936 में प्रेमचन्द का देहायसान आदि महत्वपूर्ण राजनीतिक घटनाएँ हैं, जिससे भारतीय राजनीति को एक नया मोड प्रदान किया था।”

72. Alochanātmak Yathārthwād Aur Premchand, Dr. Satyakām, p.92.
73. Premchand–Paramparā Kī Kahāniyon Mein Pārtvārtk Abang Sāmājik Chitrān, Dr. Rajendra Kumar Śarmā, p.45.
Premchand remained to be the eyewitness of the movement. He witnessed the movement of Indian people against slavery through various means.

"आतंकवादियों ने हिंसात्मक तरीके से देश को आजाद करना चाहा, नरसंधलवालों ने अनुय-विनय का मार्ग अपनाया, गांधीजी ने अहिंसा और सत्याग्रह का रास्ता अपनाया और प्रेमचन्द इन सबके बीस विन्यास की राह दूर्कट रहे।"74

Premchand's heartfelt attitude towards the movement can be proved:

"वे इस संघर्ष को दूर से देखनेवाले दर्शकभात्र नहीं थे बल्कि अपने राजनीतिक और साहित्यिक लेखन के जरिए इसके हर चरण के साक्षी भागीदार थे।"75

2.04:2 Social environment

Premchand was a writer, when India was under the foreign rule. The British extended their education and cultural rule along with political one, for which Indian have to give up progressive ideals:

"सदियों की गुलामी तथा विदेशी शासन के परिणामस्वरूप दीर्घकाल तक प्रगतिशील मान्यताओं से कटा रहा।"76

With English education came the Western culture. As a result of such a mixture, the path for co-ordination with Western culture was opened. A new life was started for the Indian. In the meantime, there had been certain evils in the Indian society. Western education gave birth to a consciousness against these evils:

74. Alochanātmak Yathārthvād Aur Premchand, Dr. Satyakām, p.117.
75. Premchand–Ek Ithās Ek Vartamān, Chandrāweli Sinhā, p.15.
76. Premchand–Kahāni Sāhiya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Purī, p.21.
Indian people now realised their own weakness through English education:

“Indian people now realised their own weakness through English education:

Although English education began, yet side by side old traditions were also present. Women had to suffer for such traditions. Since a woman was dependent on a man, she was treated very badly.

All these evils rooted in the fact that a woman in India was illiterate. Now many writers who wanted reformation of the society began to write against the practice of sati, child-marriage and such other evils for which the womenfolk suffered.

77. Hindustan Ki Kahani, Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 386.
78. op cit (No. 76), p.21.
79. Premchand–Kahani Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.22.
It was Rājā Rāmmohan Rāy, who created public opinion against the practice of ‘Sati’ made the government pass an act declaring it as illegal. The ‘Brahma Samāj’ openly supported widow remarriage. In this connection, names of Iswar Chandra Vidyāsāgar and Shashijoy Mukherjee are worth mentioning.

The women of Premchand era had manifold problems like old-marriage, child-marriage, unequal marriage etc. as the problems of widows grew more and more. Even the problems of prostitutes also began in those days.

Premchand was influenced by the reformatory ideals of the ‘Aryya Samāj’. This Samāj established resort for helpless, widows and made arrangements for women’s education. Premchand supported these ideals. In his novels he spoke of one ‘Sewā Sadan’ for widows. In the same manner he suggested the establishment of some type of houses for the exploited women which can easily be regarded as his reaction to the fate met by widows and other exploited women of the time. Dr. Purī remarks:

“एक वर्ग प्राचीन रूढियों और अनधिकृतवासों को हड़दाय से लगाए हुए था,
दुसरा वर्ग उनमें परिष्कार करके नवीन जीवन मूल्यों की स्थापना के लिए
संघर्ष कर रहा था।”

Premchand wanted to uncover the problems of the society and to suggest solutions for them. It is seen, therefore,
Premchand laid much importance on the family in a society. He was in favour of a joint family. He depicted the problems of a broken family in his stories. Although he was Western educated yet he loved his own tradition and old customs.

With the passing of time, his social outlook and views became more and more wide and did not confine to one or few problems of the society, but he viewed almost all of them.

2.04:3 Religious environment

In his writings, Premchand depicted the exploitation in the name of religion. Premchand depicted a true picture of exploitation of the Pândus and Purohits over the common people in his famous novel Godān. There is a satirical picture of the sinful activities of the priests as follows:

“भारत में पौरोहित्य की बड़ी शानदार परम्परा रही है। महर्षि बशिष्ठ, बुधस्पति, मुक्खायां आदि भारत के महान पुरोहितों में परिगणित होते हैं। पुरोहित का कार्य अपने यज्ञाण का चतुर्दिक कल्याण तथा शाष्ट्रसम्मत

81. Alochanātmak Yathārthavād Aur Premchand, Dr. Satyekām, p.119.
It seems as if the Hindu society had bestowed all the rights of religion on the priests and remained satisfied.

The society was found to be divided by Hindu religion of the age of Premchand. The self-styled contractors of religion namely the Purohits and Pândás divided the society in the name of caste and creed, high and low and touchables and untouchables. They became richer and more powerful. They owned different techniques for the exploitation of the poor section of the society. Because it is the poor, who always are afraid of religion. These contractors of religions took all laws of religion in their hands and applied them in accordance with their own wishes. The same law was applied in different forms for different people.

"सनातनी पुरोहितों में इसे अलिखित कानून सा बना दिया था कि ऊँची जातिवालों को शुद्ध के साथ पशुवत व्यक्ति करने का जन्मसिद्ध अधिकार है।" ⁸³

Alakh Nāráyan further remarks :

"हिन्दु समाज धर्मशास्त्रों के नियम-कानूनों पर कटोरतापुर्वक अमल इस विश्वास के साथ करता रहा है कि ये कानून ईश्वर के बनाये हुए हैं। वर्ण-धर्मशा और जातिवास्त्र के आधार पर इसे शक्ति और समर्थन मिलता रहा है, आर्थिक स्वायां से जोड़ देने के कारण यह समस्ता में परिणत हो गयी।" ⁸⁴

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⁸². Alochanāmak Yathārthavād Aur Premchand, Dr. Satyakām, p.156.
⁸⁴. ibid, p.45.
During the British rules with Western education, the Indians turned their attention towards the evils in their society and came forward for reformation. Rājā Rāmmohan Ray came first in this regard.

"इनका कार्यक्षेत्र राजनीति और समाज होते हुए भी धर्म के लिये उन्होंने मौलिक संदेश दिया। उन्होंने भारत के विभिन्न धर्मों में प्रचलित मूर्तिपूजा और अंधविश्वास का खन्डन किया, साथ ही इस बात पर बल दिया कि संसार में एक ऐसा मानव धर्म चलाया जाना अनिवार्य है जो ब्रह्म की एकता को आधारभूत तथ्य स्वीकार करे।"\(^{85}\)

In the same manner, the ‘Brahma Samāj’ was established in 1828 and the ‘Prārthana Samāj’ in 1867. Again in 1875, Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī established his ‘Āryya Samāj’. Later Swāmī Vivekānanda established his ‘Śankar Mission’, and Madam Helena Petrobhana and Col. Anncot their Theosophical Society.

All these societies and organisations had the intention of reforming the Indian society against religious customs, superstitions and such other evils in the society. All of them place ‘Mānava Dharma’ at the top of all religions and believed in the co-existence of all religion.

In addition to all these societies, different progressive minded people in different parts of India tried in their individual capacities to do away with the evils of the society.

\(^{85}\) Premchand–Kahārīl Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.24.
Premchand witnessed the evils in the name of religion during his time. He was very much critical about the Pāndās and Purohits who exploited the people in the name of religion. He wrote critical notes in support of the movement for the upliftment of the untouchables.

The literature of Premchand is really the symbol of the contemporary religious thoughts. He favoured one equal ‘Mānav Dharma’ in place of traditional religions for the people; which could work for peace and tranquility of all. Therefore, literature of Premchand becomes, what Dr. Puri calls:

“धर्म के उस रूप का प्रतीक बना जो लापराओं और परम्पराओं से लाँछित न होकर धर्म के वास्तविक स्वरूप को प्रसार में सहायक हुआ।”

Now, therefore it is clear that the contemporary religious environment had deeply influenced Premchand.

2.04:4 Cultural environment

Men, living in the society, make such laws through which they can advance in the path of progress. Therefore, each and every people have their own culture. Literature is one of the mediums of culture, which reforms the society:

“जिससे मनुष्य की औसत वृत्तियाँ को संस्कारित करके उसे सत्य, शिव और सुन्दर की साधना के लिए प्रस्तुत करती है!”

86. Premchand–Kahānī Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Raksha Puri, p.27.
During the renaissance of the nineteenth century, India emerged with a new appearance. The contemporary reformists and the influence of the Western education helped in the way of reformation.

The foreign rule on one hand and the evils in the society on the other made Premchand quite sad.

"पश्चिमी संस्कृति के समर्पण में आने के कारण विचारशील शिक्षित समुदाय को समाज के दृष्टियों अन्तर्विध्यासों और रुढ़ि रीतियों विशेष रूप से खलने लगी थी।" 88

Premchand was progressive amongst the progressives. He was a stern supporter of freedom. Therefore –

"समाज की व्यवस्था को क्रस्तिक कुल बनाने वाले उन सब अभाव रीति-रिवाजों, रूढियों, अन्तर्विध्यासों और पिछड़ी हुई धारणाओं को दाह देना चाहते थे। जिनकी वजह से समाज के कुछ लोग लाखों लोगों को गुलाम बना लेते हैं अथवा उन्हें सामाजिक व आर्थिक वृद्धि से पराधीन तथा पशुओं से भी बदतर जिन्दगी बसर करने को विकस कर देते हैं।" 89

Premchand wanted to reform the society. Since he had a very wide outlook, he did not make an individual the central point but the society itself and talked through individuals. Through his writings Premchand reflected his ideals of social change:

"जीवन के प्रत्येक क्षेत्र में नवीन सामाजिक मूल्यों तथा सांस्कृतिक प्रतिमाओं की प्रतिष्ठा का प्रयास किया। ये भारतीय समाज के मूल जीवन मूल्यों की पृष्ठभूमि पर समकालीन समाज का पुनर्निर्माण करना चाहते थे।" 90

88. Premchand Ke Upanyās Sāhitya Mein Sanskṛtik Chetnā, Nityānand Patel, p.584.
89. ibid, p.589.
90. Premchand–Kahānī Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.173.
A faithful and true picture of the mass-life in India can be had in the writings of Premchand. It is said about Premchand—

“अगर आप उत्तर भारत की समस्त जनता के आचार-विचार, भाषा-भाव, रहन-सहन, आशा-आकांक्षा, दुख-सुख, सुझ-बुझ जानना चाहते हैं तो प्रेमचन्द से उत्तम परिचयाक आपको नहीं मिलेगा। झोपडियों से लेकर महलोतक, खोमेवालों से लेकर बैंकरोतक, गाँव से लेकर धारा-समाजोतक आपको इतने कौशलपुर्वक और सामाजिक भाव से कोई नहीं ले जा सकता।”

According to Rāmvilās Sarmā—

“प्रेमचन्द के उपन्यास एवं कहानियाँ विराट मानवसंस्कृति की धारा में भारतीय जनसंस्कृति का रूप है।”

Premchand witnessed that the Indian society had lost its own specialties. Today only the corrupted form of the previous society remained:

“पश्चिम से आई हुई भौतिकवादी अर्थमूला संस्कृति ने इस प्राचीन मूल्यों के अवशेषों को छिन्न-मिन्न कर दिया, किन्तु यह संस्कृति बालसव में कोई नया उदात्त मानवीय मूल्य स्थापित करने के स्थान पर अभूतपूर्व की अद्वितीय लालसा, भौतिक सुख-सामृद्ध की अपार तृषणा, दान, लाभ सेवा के स्थान पर असीम धन संघर्ष की जघन्य भूख और इन उद्देश्यों की पूर्ति के लिए लुट-खसोट, घुसघोरी, बेईमानी, असत्याचरण, दोष, फरेब आदि साधनों की स्वीकृति देती हुई दिखाई पड़ी।”

The result was ‘shinning outside and hollow inside’. Premchand depicted one true picture of the falling of Indian values and rising of sensual values of the West. He also depicted the picture of human life

91. Kathākār Premchand, Dr. Rāmdarās Misra and Dr. Jnānchand Gupta, p.73.
93. Kathākār Premchand, Dr. Rāmdarās Misra and Dr. Jnānchand Gupta, p.11.
with all secrets of human mind, the basic queries of life, the impacts that change human life in their individual relationships etc. He was an Indian to the backbone. Dr. Puri remarks:

“प्रेमचन्द श्रद्धा भारतीय थे आर्य अतिकृत जीवन मूल्यों को सामान्य भारतीय जीवन के लिए ये अनिवार्य मानते थे।”\(^{94}\)

Dr. Puri further remarks that Premchand was successful in reflecting the social values, cultural image and values of life of a certain era.\(^{95}\)

### 2.04:5 Literary tradition

Modern Hindi stories appeared from the beginning of the twentieth century. It began with the publication of the Saraswati, a monthly magazine. Right from its first issue, short stories began to be published majority of which were translations from Bengali literature. Side by side with these translated stories, few original ones were also published.

Premchand wrote short stories in Urdu at the beginning. His collection of stories, the Soje Wātan was published in 1908 from the Jamana Press, Kanpur under a forged name ‘Nawâb Rāi’. This book revealed his love for motherland. The British government banned the book; and when it came to light that Dhanpat Rāy, i.e., Premchand was the real writer of the book, then he was warned against writing such books.

\(^{94}\) Premchand—Kahānī Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.182.
\(^{95}\) Ibid, p.2.
In 1910, his first story, the ‘Bade Ghar Ki Beti’ was published from the Jamana Press in his own name, Premchand. In 1915, his ‘Saut’, the first short story in Hindi was published in the Saraswati. It was the beginning of his short story writing which he successfully carried upto the end of his life.

There is a realistic picture of the Indian life in both his stories and novels. In his writings there are some ideals but these are reflected only when he writes about the stern realities of life.

"प्रेम्बन्द का समाज प्राचीन मूल्यों पर लब्ध नहीं हुआ भी पारंपरिक मूल्यों के प्रति आस्थावान नहीं था।" ⁹⁶

Premchand believed that it was necessary that there should be freedom to reform the society, because without freedom the economic and political reforms could not be carried out. Premchand indicated the living problems of life with hints to their solutions.

The environment of the time along with the family environments give life to the personality of a writer. Being influenced by the environment of the age, Premchand depicted the problems of the time in his writings. He shaped the stories and novels of his time in an interesting line.

Premchand converted himself to a Hindi writer from Urdu one. He always used simple language, which is full of proverbs and sayings and is quite living one.

⁹⁶. Premchand—Kahani Sāhitya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Raksha Purī, p.183.
The Russian revolution also influenced Premchand. In his writings, there are descriptions of peasants which indicated this influence over him. According to Alakh Nārāyān:

"प्रेर्मचन्द की विरासत का सर्वाधिक उज्ज्वल पक्ष है, समाज की सबसे अधिक सेवा करनेवाले, फिर भी सर्वाधिक उपेक्षित वर्ग को महत्व और प्रतिष्ठा देना। सामाजिक, आर्थिक, राजनैतिक अधिकारों से इस उपेक्षित वर्ग को 'अजुल' कहकर वंचित कर देने की खिलाफत करते हुए उन्होंने वर्ण व्यवस्था की बुनियाद पर ही हमला किया।"  

The pitiable condition of women in the then social set-up is found everywhere in his writing.

"यह युग एक ओर नारी की अस्मिता की तलाश से जुड़ा था तो दुसरी ओर आर्थिक विभाजन से संबंधित परिवारों के विघटन की आणविक परिवारों के उमार को रेखांकित कर रहा था।"

Premchand was seeking for a middle way in the midst of such conditions in which the society could be reformed; and the cultivators and labours were not thrown out of their work and where the status of a woman is changed. He dreamt of a society where there was no exploitation and where there was economic and political freedom. For him only transfer of sovereign authority was not freedom.

"प्रेर्मचन्द आर्थिक सम्पत्ति को स्वतंत्र समाज व्यवस्था का प्रमुख आदर्श स्वीकार करते है।"

98. Premchand–Kahānī Sāhiyya Mein Vyakt Yugbodh, Dr. Rakshā Puri, p.4.
Premchand was dead against the inequal economic system in use in the Indian society. In his story ‘Kafan’, ‘Paśu Se Manusya’ etc. he indicated the evil effects of such economic system.

Premchand was also influenced by Gāndhism. He depicted a real picture of Gāndhijee’s non-co-operation movement and the ‘Dāndi Yātṛā’ in his stories – ‘Lālfītā’, ‘Lāl Dāg’, ‘Chakma’ etc. The Rāi Sāhebs, the Rāi Bāhādurs, Leaders etc. worked against their own people only to fulfil their own self-interest. Premchand depicted just pictures of these people in his stories.

“उनकी जीवन दृष्टि किसी भी व्यक्ति, नेता अथवा राजनीतिक धारा ने बंधी हुई नहीं थीं, प्रत्येक मानवतावादी भावना से अनुभावित थी।”

In this manner one can find a living picture of the time of Premchand. It rather proves that Premchand was also influenced by the environment of his era. Unlike his predecessors, he did not write magical or advisory stories but his writings give a real picture of his time.

The writings of Premchand were influenced by realistic thought. His writings depicted a voice against the Brahmanic tradition, religious superstitions, exploitation of the Purohitis etc. Amrit Rāi remarks:

“उनके दृष्टिकोण पर सबसे पहला प्रभाव आर्य समाज का पड़ा जिस में आगे चलकर गोंड़े और रानाड़े के समाज सुधार संग्रह के प्रभाव भी सम्मिलित होते गए।”

100. ibid, p.110.
Tolstoy also exerted certain influence on Premchand:

“प्रेमचंद के लेखन पर ताल्स्टाय का प्रभाव भी था। ताल्स्टाय की 23
कहानियाँ को प्रेम प्रशाकर शीर्षक से हिन्दी में उन्होंने अनूदित किया।”

Premchand was also at the same time a crusader against reactionary forces in the society.

“भारतीय समाज की प्रतिक्रियावादी और जनविरोधी शक्तियों के खिलाफ
उनका अपरांजेय संघर्ष है।”

It is clear that Premchand gained the benefit from his contemporary literary tradition. But at the same time he tried his best to establish a short story on its firm basis, for which he arose himself to a position of matchless story-writer.

103. ibid, p.105.