CHAPTER - IV

CHARACTERISATION IN THE STORIES OF BEZBAROA AND PREMCHAND
4.00 Introduction

Characters are one of the basic features of a story. A story-writer creates some imaginary characters to express his or her viewpoints through stories. Without such characters a short story can never be imagined. As remarked by Prof. Uday Dutta—

“চরিত্র কার্যকলাপ লেখে সংগঠিত হয় প্লট, চরিত্র নোহবাকে প্লট রঘিৎ
হ’ব নোবারে!”1

A plot of a short story can never be imagined without characters. But in some modern short stories it is seen that there is practically no ‘plot’, but the mental actions and reactions got their expression through the activities of the characters.

The scope of a short story is confined to some particular incidents or a small part of life. Therefore, development of characters as required for this short period for the particular incident is incorporated in the story; and as such in short stories there is practically no scope for development of characters. Only a very insignificant side of the character is ordinarily reflected in short stories. But as a matter of fact, the importance of the character is well-reflected in them. Even the whole character may be reflected through it; and therefore, such characterisation may be regarded as successful one.

The personality of the story-writer as well his viewpoint on life and truth in human psychology are generally reflected in short stories.

1. Chuti Galpa, Uday Dutta, p.58.
The different circumstances inspire the writers to pen short stories. Generally the writers write the stories as a reaction to these inspirations and influences. However, the characterisation is one of the indispensable elements of short story writing. Different writers give stress on various elements like the plot, characters or the environment. As such stories may be subdivided in accordance with laying of stress into three categories like Visaypradhān (based on the subject-matter), Charitrapradhān (based on characters) and Parivespradhān (based on environment).

In this chapter we try to analyse the characterisation in the stories of Bezbaroa and Premchand. It is a fact that unlike in novels, there are no multiplication of characters in short stories. When there are several characters in short stories, they do not have impact upon the main character. Therefore, we try to analyse some major male and female characters in the short stories of Bezbaroa and Premchand.

4.01 Characterisation in Bezbaroa’s short stories

Lakshmināth Bezbaroa travelled several places within India. He had intimate relationship with different people and therefore he got the knowledge of different people whom he depicted in his stories successfully.

Bezbaroa shaped characters out of the people he met and depicted them very minutely. Most of his characters were simple people of the villages. Of course there were different people like
people with false vanity of so-called middle class, some corrupt officials of the British administration, and some others having intimate relationship with nature. Through his characters the picture of the last part of the nineteenth-century rural and urban life can be had.2

Bezbaroa successfully depicted the bright and dark side of human psychology with his own experience and minute observation through his varied characters in the stories. Some of the important characters that are decorated through the capacity of his mind are Sukumār of the ‘Mukti’, Bhadari and Sīsurām of the ‘Bhadari’, Rameswar of the ‘Dhōwakhowa’, Lambodor Sārmā Baruā of the ‘Bhempuriā Mauzādār’ and Pātmugī of the ‘Pātmugi’.

Below we try to classify the main characters of short stories of Bezbaroa into major male and female characters for the sake of convenience of study and analysis.

4.01:1 Major male characters of Bezbaroa’s short stories

Bāpirām is the major male character in Bezbaroa’s story ‘Bāpirām’. Through this character he wanted to show the relationship between a master and a servent, love to one’s master and natural affection of human heart. In his another story ‘Malak Guin Guin’, he expressed the degradation of so-called educated class through the character of one Malakhu. He represented a class of so-called educated class who gave up own judgement due to blind

2. Asamiya Sāhityar Subās, Dr. Parikshit Hāzorikā, p.112.
following of the Western people. Malakhu even did not be ashamed of introducing his father, who was a simple villager, as his servant. Really speaking these people could not realise the real nature of English education. Bezbaroā’s another important character Bhokendra Baruā was self-educated, who took himself to be well-educated. He even gave up his traditional habits and customs:

“परम्परागत असमीया मात-कथा, चाल-चलन, रीति-नीति प्रति उदभव होवा उदासीनता आफू आनार रीति-नीति, संस्कृतिक अनुकरण करार प्रचेष्टाक बेजबुबाई बान्दराली बुलि समालोचना करिछे।”

These half-educated people began to cheat others for money to live a western life.

Again in the ‘Jagarā Mandalar Premābhinay’, the character of Jagarā and in the ‘Āmār Sansār’ the character of Dambarudhar were two famous characters of Bezbaroā. These two characters also blindly follow the Englishman and as a result they became the laughing stock for the people. Bezbaroā depicted them in humorous mood.

Paśupati the thief is the main male character in the story ‘Chor’. The ‘chor’ i.e. Paśupati once found that a woman was going to poison her husband for the sake of her illegal lover. He saved the life of the husband from the imminent danger. After this incident Paśupati also gave up stealing. Bezbaroā here depicted the better side of Paśupati even though he was a thief.

3. Lakshmīnāth Bezbaroā Āru Asamiyā Aitihya, Prafulla Chandra Bhuyān, p.54.
In the ‘Dhōwakhowa’, Rāmeswar is a simple character. Rāmeswar was a descendant of a rich family. He wanted to keep the tradition of his family although his economic condition was going down and it was not possible for him to maintain his hereditary prestige. Another important character in the ‘Dhōwakhowa’ is Amukā Paṇḍit. He was not only hard-hearted but also close-fisted. He was prepared to give up anything for money.

Lambodar Śarmā Baruā is the main male character in the ‘Bhempuriā Mauzādār’. He tried to maintain the traditions of his family. Since he was the Mauzādār, he never forgot to show respect to the English officials. In his personal life, Śarmā Baruā was very much conservative and showed his powers to his followers, but he did not mind even when he was asked to remove the shoes from the feet of his superior officer. Bezbaroā depicted the moral degradation of some people during the British days through the character of Śarmā Baruā.

**4.01:2 Major female characters of Bezbaroā’s short stories**

The number of female characters are comparatively fewer than the male ones in the stories of Bezbaroā. His female characters live within the four walls of the house. But he depicted them after minute analysis. The eternal virtues of an Indian woman like chastity, idealism, simplicity and sacrifice etc. are reflected in the characters like Bhadari, Seufi and others. On the other hand, the evil qualities of a woman are also exposed through characters like the
new bride of Lokeswar Barua. He also depicted the injustice and atrocities committed by men against women through the character Bmda and showed the rebellious attitude of a woman. Another character Laliti in the story the ‘Laliti Kakati’ also rebelled against the injustice committed by men.

In the contemporary society of Bezbaroa the importance of a woman was much less than that of a man.

“भारतेत अन्नान्य प्रदेशाचे असऱ्या नारी मुक्त जागरण देखतो दिचिली यादो तेथे जागरणता नारीसंस्कर करण्याचा स्वयंचार करतो परानां नाहीत”

The superstitions and other traditional customs turned the life of a woman into the life of distress. Therefore, Bezbaroa wanted to infuse the sense of self-respect in a woman by relating the tortures and injustices committed by a man on a woman.

The role played by the women in the stories of Bezbaroa is not less important than those played by men in connection with the rise and fall of the nation. Bezbaroa believed that a woman is not a thing of enjoyment for a man, neither she is some type of machine before him and therefore, she should also get an independent status in the society like him.

Below we discuss about some major female characters in the different stories of Bezbaroa:

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4. Bezbaroa Pratibha (Bezbaroar Sahityat Naari), Dr. Jogendra Narayan Bhuyan, p.179
(a) Bhadari

Bhadari is the major female character of the story—the 'Bhadari'. Through her Bezbaroa tried to depict one of the most important virtues of an Indian woman, i.e. chastity through Bhadari.

Bhadari was a simple woman who was badly manhandled by her cruel husband. Even he did not care to use his knife (dāo) against her. But she saved her husband from punishment. This shows her love for her husband and her simplicity.

Bhadari may be regarded as one of the successful characters of Bezbaroa.

(b) Seuti

She is the major female character of the story 'Seuti'. She is completely an Assamese girl who was married in her childhood days. She was first driven out from her in-law's house but later she came back. But now she has been treated as maidservant to her co-wife. Finally, she was murdered by poisoning by her mother-in-law and the sister of her husband.

Bezbaroa depicted some good qualities of Assamese women like their patience, firmness and chastity.

(c) Baruāni

Baruāni was the major evil female character of the story 'Chor'. Baruāni, the minor-aged wife of Lokeswar Baruā, was a
characterless and a mean-minded woman. But she was beautiful. After her marriage she had illicit connections with others and therefore, she tried to kill Lokeswar. Baruānī is a remarkable bad female character of Bezbaroā.

(d) Mādhaimālatī

Mādhaimālatī is in the real sense a lover and an intelligent woman. She is the heroine of the story the ‘Mādhaimālatī’. Her father was a close-fisted man who believed in the differences between the rich and the poor class. But she loved the poor. She fled away with Sanātan, who was a good-natured young man and married him and thereby taught a lesson to her niggardly father.

(e) Fātemā Bibi

She was originally a Hindu girl, but she was the victim of superstition. She was a daughter of a Brāhmin family who incidently ate ‘Pāyas’ in a Muslim family and therefore had to give up her religion. Later she became laborious and experienced, and led a good life. Bezbaroā here wanted to show that human character is shaped by the environment and not by any religion.

(f) Lalitī

Lalitī is the major character of the ‘Lalitī Kākati’ of Bezbaroā.

Bezbaroā depicted a woman, who challenged the injustices and tortures committed on woman by a man, through this character. She was married at a quite young age. But she was always ill-treated
by her husband. Once when her husband wanted to give her up, she declared that she too has the freedom to give up a worthless man like him.

Bezbaroa wanted to show that when one girl is to be married, she should be married at a proper age and that too with a fit man, otherwise the life of the woman is doomed.

(g) Jayanti

Jayanti is another major female character of the story ‘Jayanti’. Dr. Biswanarayan Sastri remarked that this character gives us the picture of the tortures inflicted by the Burmese on Assamese people, particularly on women and children. Jayanti killed three Burmese soldiers to save the life of her husband. But she lost her mental balance for killing three persons. Dr. Sastri remarked:

"मानव आक्रमण, सिहंतर बर्बर अत्याचार, बिशेषके तिरोता आरू लाल-छोवालीय आपरत करा सिहंतर अमानुषिकता, उत्पीड़न बहुदिनले जीवन है आछिल। नियततिंत असमीया नारीय प्राणारकीय सेहं अत्याचार दर्शण नियत्तिन किलरे लैछिल ताके कल्याणार रूप दिदभोले जयन्तीर जन्म।" 5

Bezbaroa depicted Jayanti as a brave and intelligent woman who could sacrifice everything for her husband.

(h) Pātmugi

Pātmugi is another major female character of Bezbaroa’s story. In the story ‘Pātmugi’, she was married to a Brāhmin boy although

5. Lakshmināth Bezbaroa Sāhitya Pratibha, Dr. Biswanarayan Sāstri, p.68.
she was from a lower-caste family. But one year after their marriage, he left her and her distress knew no bound. She went to the court to file a case against her husband. But witnessing the corruptions in the name of justice, she came back without filing the case. Finally, she began to devote herself for the service of the nation. She lost her faith on all the men as her uncle also wanted to fulfil his lust on her.

Bezbaroa entered into the very psychology of woman in this story.

(i) **Burhi**

Burhi is the major female character of Bezbaroa’s story the ‘Bihu’. Here Bezbaroa wanted to depict the picture of dying values of life and culture in the so-called educated society. As remarked by Dr. Hiren Gohain:

“शिक्षित मध्यवर्त अन्तर कुमुद है परं भान्त मूल्योघर हेंचा निर्जीव है परं मुक्त मनुष्यत, जनजीवन सत्ते है थकार प्रमाण आविष्कार करिएँ।”

Bezbaroa depicted the free and simple life of the rural people through Burhi. Side by side he depicted the picture of the importance of the Bihu festival in the Assamese society.

Bezbaroa depicted the female characters of Assamese rural society and thereby he depicted the simple, liberal and free life of the village people where women had a particular status.

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6. Deukā, 1st issue (Bezbaroa Awadān), Dr. Hiren Gohain, p.37.
4.02 Characterisation in Premchand’s short stories

In the short stories of Premchand there are different categories of characters taken from the present society and past history. He depicted both individual and class characters. Among these characters, there were characters from the village to the city dwellers. There are some humorous characters also.

Premchand successfully depicted characters of various people like peasants, labourers, priests, *paṇḍits*, *mollās*, sāhukārs, *zamindārs*, *mahājans*, lawyers, doctors, police-men, judges, British officials and so on. In case of female characters there were mothers, daughters, lovers, sisters and progressive women.

Premchand depicted the high, the middle and the low class people in accordance with the need. But his characters are mostly from the lower and middle-class people. He also depicted the actual existing conditions of the *Dalits* and the exploited class.

Premchand successfully illustrated idealism, spiritualism, moralism and psychology of the people through his stories. He also depicted various problems of the society with minute observation.

Since Premchand depicted a huge number of characters, we shall try to discuss about a few important characters here.

4.02:1 Major male characters of Premchand’s short stories

A poor Chamār is the major male character in the story ‘Sadgati’ of Premchand. He was a poor cultivator, who regarded
exploitation as natural to him. Therefore, he regarded the exploitation made by the *Paṇḍits* and *Purohits* in the name of religion as virtue only. He worked hard for the *Paṇḍit* who did not care for him. But he did never have any hatred for the *Paṇḍit*. Premchand wanted to show that *Kisān* did not recognise the exploiters.

In several other stories Premchand showed the helplessness and poverty of the *Kisāns*. Sankar is such a character in his story ‘Sawā Ser Gehū’. Due to his blind faith in religious matters, he had to keep his son as a slave to deceitful Brāhmin. Premchand expressed the simplicity of Sankar with great pity.

In the ‘Bābājee Kā Bhog’, Ramdhan spent all his savings for the sake of gods although he was a poor man. He did not care to keep his family starving, while supplying edibles to the Babājee. Premchand is quite successful in depicting the pitiable and helpless condition of the *Kisāns*.

The ‘Pūs Kī Rāt’ is one of the famous stories of Premchand. Here one Halku is the major male character. Of all characters Premchand created, Halku is quite extra-ordinary. In him there is a quite pitiable picture of poverty and helplessness. He paid his entire savings to the *Zamindār* and spent the cold night of the month of *Pūs* without cloth. Finally, Halku became indifferent to everything of his own. It was due to his extreme poverty. His indifference remained as a question mark to the then society.
Zingur and Buddhu are two major male characters of Premchand's 'Muktimārg'. Both of them lived in the same village. They had sufficient land for cultivation and therefore, they were proud. Some type of enmity began to grow between them. But apparently they seemed to be friendly. Premchand wanted to show that quarrels between people might become the source of destruction for both the parties. But he showed that bad is always bad:

"पुराई से सब घृणा करते है, इसलिए बुरों में परस्पर प्रेम होता है। भलाई की सारा संसार प्रशंसा करता है, इसलिए मतों में विरोध होता है।"

Finally, both of them confessed their own faults.

There may be rich and poor Kisans. In the 'Ghāswālī', Chain Singh is a successful Kīsān and similarly Raghu and Kedār in 'Algyojhā', Sujān Mahato in the 'Sujān Bhagat', and Mathurā in the 'Ādhār' were successful Kīsāns. Among the poor Kīsāns were Mādhav, Haridhan, Gharjamāī etc. in the 'Ādhār'.

Here Premchand showed that sometimes a rich may turn poor. In most cases he speaks of the greed for wealth of many people, and envy between them.

Premchand depicted the character of low-caste people in the 'Kafan'. They were Ghisū and Mādhav. Here he wanted to show that for a poor, everything in this world is secondary and only some

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is primary thing. A hungry man cares for nothing, not for his wife or
daughter-in-law but for food alone. Premchand depicted wants and
desires of a poor man here in this story.

Premchand depicted several pictures of Brāhmins and
_Purohits_ living on the income of others, who exploited the people
only. They have given up their own duty and tried only to fulfill their
own wants. With the help of one character, Moterām Šāstrī,
Premchand illustrated the evil deeds of priests very successfully.
Moterām Šāstrī of the ‘Nimantran’ was invited by the queen of
Murādpur to offer _Brahma-Bhojan_ with another six Brāhmins. He
did not care to find out another six Brāhmins; but took five members
of his family with him. But when the queen came to know his
meanness, he had to leave the court without food. Here Premchand
illustrated the so-called priest who had excessive greed.

Premchand wanted to expose the corruption and exploitation
of the then priest class. To him these greedy Brāhmins were the
disgrace to Hindu religion:

> “हिन्दू जाति का सबसे घृणित कोट, सबसे लज्जाजनक कर्लक यही
  टकेर्स्थी दल है, जो एक विशाल जोक की भाति उसका खुन चुस रहा है,
  और हमारी राष्ट्रीयता के मार्ग में यही सबसे बड़ी बाधा है।”

In his ‘Neur’, Sādhubābā wanted to attract the village people
towards him in the name of religion. He cheated Neur and left the
village. Similarly in another story the ‘Bābājee Kā Bhog’, the poor

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families remained hungry to give food to the Bābā. Babajee ate to his full content and left the poor people hungry.

The Pujārī in the story 'Mandir' became the cause of the murder of the poor Chamrīn. The Chamrīn came to him for his ailing son. But it became a sin for the Pujārī to get touch of a low-caste person; and his men killed Chamrīn. Through this story Premchand exposed the evils committed by the priest in the name of religion.

Premchand had some policemen in his stories. He depicted them as the most corrupted and cruel people. In his story 'Updeś' the police 'Dārogā' Zulfikār Ālī Khān is a cruel, oppressive and the most corrupted police officer. In another story, the 'Julus', the 'Dārogā' Birbal Singh was an educated person. His father was also a police officer. He was also a manly and good-looking man. But when he put on police dress, he forgot everything.

Premchand depicted the cruelty of policemen during the freedom struggle over the Indian people. In the 'Julus', the major police officer is Birbal Singh, who crossed the limit of cruelty in treating with the people joining in the Indian freedom movement. But once when he saw his wife among the processionists he realised his mistake. During the British days policemen became the tool of torturing the people. Zulfikār Ālī Khān and Birbal Singh are the representative of such policemen.
The lawyer Ishwarchandra, in the story ‘Mrtyu Ke Pichche’, is a man with high character. But Premchand regarded this profession as bad one. Ishwarchandra remarked:

“इसी शहर में सैकड़ो वकील और बैरिस्टर पड़े हुए है, लेकिन एक व्यक्ति भी ऐसा नहीं जिसके हृदय में दया हो, जो स्वार्थपरता के हाथों बिक न गया हो। छल और धूलता इस पेशें का मूल तत्त्व है।”

Iswarchandra wanted to prove that the truth and justice of life can be safeguarded by the legal profession. Of course, he gave up legal profession and joined in editorial works, and published books and journals on national movement. But his economic condition was not satisfactory. His whole life was passed only in pleading for truth and justice.

Like Lakshmīnāth Bezbaroā, Premchand also severely criticised the people imitating the British. Probably his love for motherland made him so.

Mr. Mehrā is a character in the story ‘Rahasya’. He regarded himself as a modern man because he imitated the English. But Premchand illustrated the pitiable picture of these half-English people.

Paśupatināth Vermā is another character who imitated the English and to become a modern man he divorced his first wife and married the second one in the story ‘Premsūtra’. But as a matter of fact, he destroyed his domestic happiness only. He also married an

English lady who after twelve years of married life left him and married another young man. Premchand wanted to prove that Indian ideals are the best in the world.

In the ‘Mantra-2’, Dr. Chaddhā is a hard-hearted and selfish doctor. One day while he was playing golf, he refused to attend a patient, who died for want of medical care. After one year his son was bitten by snake and the father of the dead son being an ‘Ozāh’ cured the son of the doctor. As a result the behaviour of the doctor underwent changes. Premchand wanted to show that a friend in need is a friend indeed. Burḥā Bhagat, another character of the ‘Mantra-2’ is a helpful, kind and social oldman. He knows how to cure snake-bite and helped the people at the time of distress. Through the character of Burḥā Bhagat, Premchand showed that real humanity rest with the poor.

4.02:2 Major female characters of Premchand’s short stories

Premchand’s respect goes to a woman in the form of a mother. In most of his stories, while he depicted this form of woman, he speaks of her greatness, self-sacrifice and kind-heartedness towards children.

Phulmati is a female character in the ‘Bêtôwâlî Vidhavā’, who could give up everything for her children. After the death of her husband, although she was deceived by her sons she always worked for the good of her children. Premchand wanted to depict the love and sacrifice of a mother for her children through this character.
Sukhiyā is a poor and helpless mother in the story ‘Mandir’. She wanted to bow down before the temple for her ailing son. But as she was of untouchable caste, she was not allowed to do so. The other people badly manhandled her as a result of which she was dead. Here Premchand wanted to show that a mother can even give her life for the sake of her children. He spoke out:

“माता तू धन्य है। तुझ मै निष्टा, तुझ मै श्रद्धा, तुझ मै विश्वास
देवताओं की भी दुल्म है।”

In the ‘Do Kabrē’, Patitā Zuhurā and Sulochanā, who were kind-hearted mothers, wanted to do something good to their children although they were neglected by the society. Again in the story, ‘Āgā Pichhā’, Kokīlā is a prostitute, but after the birth of her daughter, she wanted to give up her tainted life. She made her daughter Šraddhā fir for the good society.

Premchand depicted the liberal, forgiveful, idealistic and humanistic character of woman and placed the woman in the form of a mother in the highest place.

Premchand also depicted women in their immoral form also. Hasina in his story ‘Dārogājee’, is such an immoral character. Hasina was a bad woman; but Basir loved her. Because–

“उसमें इतनी हया, इतनी वफा, इतनी मुरववत उसने कहीं नहीं देखा था।”

11. ibid, Part IV (Dārogājee), Premchand, p.79.
As a result the Dārogā proposed to resign his post and left the place with her. But she did not agree. When he returned after one year he found that she was with other lovers.

In the same manner, Premchand depicted Asa in the ‘Nayā Vivāh’, Kāminī in ‘Dharm Sankaṭ’ and Sitalā in the ‘Ābhūṣaṇ’ in their evil form. Such women were generally after luxury and most of them were married women.

Premchand exposed the ill fate and the low status of women, particularly of widows in the Indian society. In the case of widows of urban areas, he remarked that they had a lower status than those of rural areas.

“प्रामीण विधवाओं को प्रेमचन्द ने यथार्थ और आदर्श दोनों दृष्टियों से रचा है।”

In his story, the ‘Subhāgi’, Premchand showed that Subhāgi, who was a widow, was a good-natured and industrious woman. She became widow at the age of twelve. He depicted her as an ideal woman.

Mulīā of the ‘Sati’ is such a woman, who after the death of her husband, remained firm and rejected the younger brother of her husband who being charmed at her beauty wanted to gain her hand. Premchand depicted the struggle and internal conflict of a woman’s mind.

In the ‘Swābhīmāṇī’, Pyārī was a widow. Her character is an example of a successful womanhood. After the death of her husband, she dedicated her life for the happiness of the family. She even tolerated her in-laws who were against her.

Premchand, in his ‘Prem Ki Holi’, depicted the picture of the unsatiated life of a woman who became widow at a very tender age. Here Gangī was the child-widow. She now grew into full adulthood, but she had to remain dissatisfied throughout her life. Premchand depicted her life through minute observation and was quite successful in exposing the pitious life of a widow.

The old age has a peculiar place in characterisation of Premchand. His Burhī Kākī was suffering although she had a huge property and a number of relatives. She made a ‘will’ conferring all her property in the name of her nephew. But in return she got nothing. She had to shed tears all the times. Premchand depicted this picture of helpless Kākī very successfully. He also tried to study about Kākī psychologically. Her only helplessness was her old age.

The womenfolk of Premchand age began to be vigilant gradually. There were several women who tried to save their family against thousands of problems. In the ‘Bade Ghar Ki Beti’, Premchand depicted the picture of one Ānandī who was such a woman to fight against all odds for her family. He wanted to prove that a woman is the basis of the unity in a family. Ānandī was a daughter of a high-class family and she was married to a low-class
family. But she always endeavoured to keep the unity of the family even at her own cost.

4.03 A comparison between the stories of Bezbaroā with those of Premchand

There are varieties of characters in the short stories of both Bezbaroā and Premchand. Both of them depicted individual and class characters. They also depicted rural life with all its problems and brought out a real picture of a village.

Bezbaroā depicted the simple characters of the village and at the same time exposed the artificiality of the urban life. For example, the character of Bāpirām in the ‘Bāpirām’ and Bhairā in the ‘Bhairā’ are all living characters. The charaters of Lambodar Šarmā Baruā in the ‘Bhempuriā Mauzādār’, and Chakradhar Phukan in the ‘Chor’ are the Assamese people under the English influence. Through these and such characters, Bezbaruā wanted to depict the picture of the middle-class Assamese people who gave up their culture under the influence of the English culture.

In the same manner, Premchand depicted both rural and urban life. He exposed the problems of rural life, tortures of feudal Lords, superstitions, and such other viewpoints against humanism. The stories like the ‘Kafan’, ‘Pūs Kī Rāt’, and ‘Thākur Kā Kā’ contain several such characters showing rural problems. With the help of urban characters, Premchand exposed the characteristics of middle-class culture which is the result of the conflict between
feudalism and capitalism. The characters like Hṛdaynāṭh in the ‘Nairāśya Līlā’ and Devprākāś in the ‘Gṛhadāh’ depict such urban life problems.

Bezbaroā depicted a class of people who wanted to show modernism by imitating the English people. He used humour and satire to expose these so-called modern people. He compared the young people who wanted to imitate the English to monkeys. His Malakhu in the ‘Malak Guin Guin’ and Bhokondāi in the ‘Bhokendra Baruā’ are some examples of such characters.

Premchand also humoured about people imitating the English. Mr. Mehrā in the ‘Rahasya’ and Paśupati Nāth Vermā in the ‘Premsūtra’ are such characters imitating the Englishmen.

Both Bezbaroā and Premchand illustrated the status of women in our social life. Both of them depicted women in their different forms; they are sometimes mothers, sometimes daughters and so on. Both these writers illustrated the various virtues like self-sacrifice, patience, love, hatred etc. and gave importance to uprising in women.

There is a vast difference between the Assamese womenfolk of the Bezbaroā age and those of North India of the Premchand age. Bezbaroā depicted women from Assam, Orissa and Bengal in his stories. Comparatively the Assamese women are in a better position than those in other parts of India. Bezbaroā depicted the simplicity, self-sacrifice and freedom of the Assamese peasants. Bhadari in the
'Bhadari' and Mādhaimālati in the 'Mādhaimālati' are good examples. Again in the stories the 'Jayanti', the 'Malati' etc. characters like Jayanti and Mālāti are the representatives of power, bravery and chastity of Assamese women.

Bezbaroa depicted the picture of one Nistārinī Devī who was the victim of superstitions and had to become Fātemā Bibi afterwards. But he showed her as an enduring, laborious and a bold woman. He wanted to show that a man was shaped by environment and not by religion.

Bezbaroa showed how the male society tortured the womenfolk. In his story 'Rachhit', Brnda and in the 'Lalitī Kākatī', Lalitī was the victim of male chauvinism. Bezbaroa was against such evils. For him a woman has equal rights with a man.

Premchand also spoke of exploitation of women, who were illiterate. He had a soft corner for such exploited women. He was dead against to child-marriage, unequal marriage etc. and against the dowry system. He exposed the evils against women in his stories like 'Kusum', 'Uddhār', 'Bidrohi' etc.

Bezbaroa also depicted the picture of widows in the society in his stories like 'Erābāri', 'Lāokholā' and others. In the 'Erābāri', one widow had to commit suicide and in the 'Lāokholā', one widow being allured by riches, had to die. Again he depicted one old widow in his story, 'Bihu'. She was a fine lady who had good relationship with her in-laws. Here he wanted to show that widows of Assam
enjoy greater freedom than those in other parts of India. On the other hand, Premchand regarded widowhood as a curse for women. He was in favour of widow remarriage and in many of his stories he showed such remarriages in rural areas. He was dead against to dowry system, and inequal marriages. Due to this inequal marriages the number of widows grew more and more.

Premchand depicted the problems of child-widows and young widows in his stories ‘Swāminī’, ‘Nairāsya Līlā’, ‘Ādhār’, ‘Prem Ki Holī’ etc. For him these problems are not only ‘economic’ but also ‘biological’. In his stories the ‘Burhī Kākī’ and the ‘Betowālī Vidhawā’, Burhī Kākī and Phulmati respectively were forced to be maidservants after the death of their husbands. The reason of it was quite economic.

Premchand also depicted the problems of prostitutes. He regarded the evils related to marriages is the sole cause of this institution. He exposed this evil of the society in his stories like ‘Narak Kā Mārg’, ‘Lanchhan’ etc. For him the defective economic system encouraged prostitutes.

Finally, it can easily be assumed that characters of both Bezbaroa and Premchand are living ones. Both of these two writers were far-sighted. They witnessed several problems—social, economic, religious and so on. Therefore, both of them could narrate them in their stories vividly. Some of their characters took the shape of individuals while others of class-character. Premchand depicted
various characters and in comparison to him Bezbaroā dealt with few characters. The reason of it is not far to seek. The people of the Hindi belt lived a very complex life and were more prone to superstitions than those of Assam, Bengal and Orissa. The society in which Premchand lived was full of superstitions, illiteracy and such other evils of the time. That is why the stories of Premchand are full of varieties of characters. In contrast to it, Bezbaroā’s society was not so complex. Even the societies of Bengal and Orissa were to a great extent free from such evils. As a result Bezbaroā’s characters are simple and less superstitious. But as a matter of fact, there are very many similarities between the characters of Bezbaroā and those of Premchand. In the same manner the characters depicted by both of them are still true to the social context.