Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya and his novels

(i) Rajpathe Ringiyaya
(ii) Aai
(iii) Yiaruingam
(iv) Sataghni
(v) Nasta Chandra
(vi) Pratipad
(vii) Mrityunjay
(viii) Sinaki Suti
(ix) Ballari
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(xi) Ranga Megh
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(xiii) Kalar Humuniya

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya (1924–1997) is a famous Indian writer and one of the pioneers of modern Assamese Literature. He holds a significant place in the realm of Assamese literature. He has contributed immensely to the domain of Assamese literature by writing many novels, short-stories, poems and essays. He makes the Assamese nation proud by awarding the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 1979 for his novel Mrityunjay. It will be worthwhile to mention that Bhattacharyya is the first Assamese getting this award. He had been conferred the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961 for his another novel Yiaruingam. It is to be noted that Bhattacharyya is the third Assamese getting the Sahitya Akademi Award.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was born on 14th October, 1924 at Safrai Tea garden of Sibsagar district. Bhattacharyya, the second child of
Sashidhar Bhattacharyya and Aaideu Bhattacharyya, first started his study life at Safrai tea garden. He showed his literary talent at the very early period of his life by composing a poem ‘Srimanta Sankardev’ in a hand-made magazine *Purabi Arun*. He read at Govt. M.E. school of Kakajan and after that, went to Govt. High School of Jorhat. Gradually, he came into touch with Amulya Baruah, Munindra Narayan Dutta Baruah, Jati Narayan Sarma, Rajen Hazarika, some well-known young poets of that time. Their collective effort gave birth a hand-made magazine ‘*Seneh*’ in which Birendra Kumar wrote his first essay ‘Satra Aru Rajniti’ (Student and Politics). His first short story named ‘Mahi Aair Sadar’ (The Stepmother’s affection) was published in his school magazine *Jeuti*. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya showed his literary talent at the early period of his life by getting many prizes held in various competitions in his student’s life. Once he got ‘Aauniaati Gold Medal’ in an essay competition in his student life. It would be worthwhile to mention that during his study of high school days he came into contact with the great figures of the literary field such as Dimbeswar Neog, Mitradev Mahanta, Trolokyanath Goswami, Maheswar Neog etc. who had inspired him to that field. Because of this inspiration and the intimacy with these people, Birendra Kumar started to write in a hand-made daily newspaper named *Bhogdoi*. His story named ‘Marahi Para Jiban’ (Faded life), got the best story writer award during his college life. At that time he was a student of I.S.C. from Cotton College. Birendra Kumar excelled in his academic field also. He was a meritorious student. He passed the H.S.L.C. Examination with letter marks in four subjects in 1941. It may be worthwhile to mention
that he got the highest marks in Assamese among the examinees of that year. Birendra Kumar successfully did his I.S.C. and B.S.C. from Cotton College in 1943 and 1945 respectively. After taking graduation, though he went to Calcutta in order to study Journalism and then Law, his desire was not fulfilled on account of racial conflict occurred in Calcutta in 1946, which led Bhattacharyya to return back to Assam. In that conflict Bhattacharyya lost his intimate friend Amulya Baruah accompanied with the manuscript of his (Bhattacharyya’s) first novel. Though his dream was not fulfilled to read Journalism and law in Calcutta, he was acquainted with the prosperity of cultural field of Calcutta as well as with the literary and political atmosphere. That atmosphere left a deep impact in his life. Bhattacharyya quenched his thirst by engaging himself in the field of journalism. He even proved himself as a successful journalist. He started his life of journalism as an assistant editor in a magazine named Bahi which was published from Calcutta. At the same time in 1946, he also worked in an English newspaper named Advance which was very popular at that time. However because of the racial conflict that occurred in Calcutta, Bhattacharyya came back to Assam and engaged himself as an assistant editor in a newspaper named Natun Asomiya in the later part of 1946. Bhattacharyya had a great faith upon democracy and socialism. Though, at first, he was related to ‘National Congress Party’, the ideologies of Socialist Party attracted him much. In 1947, Bhattacharyya joined in the ‘Indian Socialist Party’ under the leadership of Jayprakash Narayan. Later on, Bhattacharyya became the editor of their weekly mouthpiece Janata, published from the branch of Assam.
In 1950, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya went to Nagaland. He went to Ukhrul High School of Nagaland as a science teacher. Staying in Ukhrul was a great significant event in Bhattacharyya’s life. During his service life of one and half year of staying in Ukhrul, Bhattachryya got enough scope of studying the Nagas’ lives and cultures as well as their ideologies. The memorable experience of Nagaland led Bhattacharyya to write one of the significant novels Yiaruingam which carried the prestigious ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ in 1960. Even staying in Nagaland also, Bhattachrayya engaged himself in the literary activities. He regularly offered many articles and short-stories to Assamese newspapers and magazines. His Letters of Ukhrul, Aji Biya Parahiloi Gaon Panchayat were published in the pages of Ramdhenu, one of the significant magazines of that period.

Returning to Guwahati from Nagaland in 1952, Bhattacharyya took the responsibility of Ramdhenu as the editor. Bhattacharyya engaged himself in editing the magazine Ramdhenu from 1952 to 1963, that is, for long twelve years and it is needless to say that this magazine under Bhattacharyya’s leadership created a new era in Assamese literature. Ramdhenu became one of the ways for expanding modern Assamese poems and thought provoking writings. Ramdhenu was not only a magazine, it was an age itself, it carried proper modernism to Assamese literature. Many distinguished writers of that period discharged their thoughts and feelings on the pages of Ramdhenu. However, because of some unfavourable circumstances he left the work of Ramdhenu and engaged himself in editing of the weekly Navayug from 1963 to 1966. The great effort and endeavour of Bhattacharyya, raised the standard
of this magazine. The various columns namely art, literature, politics, cinema, sports etc. made this magazine voluminous and lively to the readers. However, because of the lack of finance, this magazine had to be stopped after four years of smooth running. Already Bhattacharyya tied his marriage knot with Binita Bhattacharyya in the month of June, 1958. Bhattacharyya got active support in his creation from his wife. His wife showed proper respect towards his literary activities.

Though Bhattacharyya engaged himself in literary activities, he also quenched his thirst for higher knowledge by acquiring the post-graduate degree in Assamese in 1953 as a private examinee. Later on, Birendra Kumar did his research work on the topic ‘Humour and Satire in Assamese Literature’ under Gauhati University in 1977. He served as a Reader in the Dept. of Journalism for many years. Later on, Bhattacharyya was appointed as a Professor in Kurukhetra University. Jabalpur University honoured him by conferring the ‘D.Lit’ title to him.

Bhattacharyya engaged himself with many institutions. He was the president of writers’ Association, life long member of ‘Institute of Gandhian Thought and Peace Studies’ of Allahabad University, selected member of Gauhati University, member of regional research adviser committee. He was the president of ‘Assam Sahitya Sabha’ held in Bangaigaon in 1983. He remained the President of ‘Asam Sahitya Sabha’(Assam Literary Society) from 1983-1985. Bhattacharyya was connected himself with ‘Assam Sahitya Sabha’ for more than a decade.
Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was a person having political and social consciousness. though he was not involved himself in active politics. Bhattacharyya’s political consciousness had been reflected in the pages of Janata, Ramdhenu and other newspapers and magazines. His political consciousness had been aroused even in his student life. He was greatly influenced by the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and Karl Marx, which paved him the way for establishing a society, based on humanism and socialistic outlook.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya was a man of multifarious personality. As a person Bhattacharyya was a simple person. Simple living, high thinking was his characteristic traits. Bhattacharyya was a thoughtful person. Because of his great mental strength, he could dare to leave his regular job of journalism, and earned his living by writing. He even did not stop writing at the harsh emergency power of India in 1975. He was a good poet, short story writer, dramatist, novelist, biographer, translator, lyricist, critic, teacher and a good journalist. Bhattacharyya started his literary career by writing poems. He was one of the creators of modern Assamese poems. Sandhya Swar is the name of his poetry collection. ‘Namhin’, ‘Arghya’, Shillongat Ratipuah’, ‘Africa’, ‘Sankardev’, ‘Naginir Sithi’, ‘Aatma Gyun’, ‘Bishnu Rabha etiya kiman rati’ etc. are his significant poems. A high idealism, humanism, respect upon people, faith upon justice and equality, dream of creating an equalistic society—all these aspects have been reflected in his poems.

As a short story writer, Bhattacharyya’s position in the field of
Assamese literature is significant. Bhattacharyya got recognition as a short-story writer in his college life. After publishing his first short story ‘Mahi Aair Sadar’ (1938) in the magazine Jeuti, he had written more than one hundred short-stories. His story ‘Marahi Para Jiban’ got the first prize in 1941. Kalong Aazio Boy (1962), Saatsari (1963) – these two are his collections of short story. ‘Maakanar Gosain’, ‘Kalong Ajio Boy’, ‘Sirala Aru Sinduin’, ‘Lalita Mami’, ‘Miya Mansur’, ‘Eajoni Japani Sowali’, ‘Pakhilai Pakhi Salay’ etc. were his successful short-stories, though at the later part of his life, Bhattacharyya engaged himself in novel writing, which carried many prestigious prizes to him and made his name famous in the field of novel writing in Indian literature. Dr. Prabhakar Machwe in his essay entitled ‘The Ever Smiling Cascade from Kamarup’ has said about Birendra Kumar,

“....yet he never loses his grip on the reader’s credibility. Herein lies the excellence of Birendra Kumar as a story-teller and a novelist who will be remembered for long, and not just read and forgotten.”¹

Bhattacharyya’s stories are generally based on idealism and are taken from the real happenings of life.

As a dramatist and as a translator, Bhattacharyya’s contribution towards the field of Assamese literature is significant. ‘Baliya Baragi’, ‘Jonali’, ‘Bharati’, ‘Sakuntala’, ‘Jagna’, ‘Mukti’, ‘Sataghni’, ‘Mukha’, ‘Aahalya’ etc. are his significant dramas. He even successfully translated French

dramatist Moliyer’s ‘Turtuffle’ to Assamese entitled ‘Brahmasari’. Bhattacharyya showed his capability in the field of translation by translating Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyya’s *Parinita* and D.D. Koushambi’s *Bharatar Itihas* into Assamese.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya got the opportunity of travelling the foreign countries for two times. He travelled Russ and Poland. *Seemai Aamani Kare* was written on the basis of his Russ journey.

Bhattacharyya’s biographical books upon Sri Aurobindo, Vidyasagar etc. were very significant. Moreover, he wrote more than two thousand articles regarding literature, culture, politics, religion and some contemporary issues very poignantly and those were scattered in various newspapers and magazines namely *Ramdhenu, Navayug, Dainik Assam, Asom Batari* etc. Bhattacharya’s contribution to the Assamese literature was really unforgettable. This great Assamese author died on 6th August in 1997, at the age of 83.

Megh (1976), Sarat Konwar (1978), Munisunir Pohar (1979), Kalar Humuniya (1982), Phul Kowarar Pakhi Ghora (1988), Prem Aru Mrityu (1992), Budhi Aaitar Puran, Amit Prem (2008). It is to be noted that Bharati, Tab Aru Ida, Paribrajak, Eti Nisha- these four short novels are included within one book named Saturanga. In the same way, Prem Aru Mrityu, Agnigarh, Baliya Samay- these three short novels are included within one book, titled Baliya Samay. Among all the novels, Mrityunjay and Yiaruingam have carried ‘Jnanpith Award’ in 1979 and ‘Sahitya Akademi Award’ in 1961 respectively. Bhattacharyya’s novels are based upon the real experience of political and social happenings of Indian society. The freedom struggle of India and Assam’s contribution towards the independence, exploitation of the White upon the Indians, the socio-economic condition of the Assamese village society, the real picture of the tea-garden of Assam, the strike of the labourers of Digboi tea-garden of 1939- all these scenario have been portrayed beautifully with the help of high imaginative flavour of the novelist.

Since Bhattacharyya has written almost two dozen novels, it is not possible to make a detailed analysis of all his novels. So, here, a short glimpse of almost all of his novels, has been offered. His first novel, Rajpathe Ringiyaya was based on only one day events and predominated by his political and social analysis. The story of the novel is developed on the conflict of the mind of Mohan, the central character of the novel, on the day of getting independence of the Indians from the shackles of the British. According to Mohan, this independence that the Indians have got,
is not the real independence. It is not the real independence since some people of India have remained starved and cried in hunger. The real independence will be possible when all the poor people of India will get the economic independence. *Aai,* Bhattacharyya's second novel displays the destructive picture of Assamese villages of that time. The novel has portrayed how the landless farmers are exploited by the usurer Mahajan. Depicting the main female character of the novel, on the model of his own mother, the novelist has added the attributes of affectionate, sympathetic nature to that character which makes the novel very touching. *Yiaruingam,* another novel is the depiction of the Naga society, their customs and traditions, beliefs and superstitions. The story of the novel is developed on the basis of Naga-revolution. In *Sataghni* the novelist has portrayed the hatred and sufferings of people, carried out by the war between China and India in 1962. There is also the reference of destruction caused by the war in economic and social field of Assam. *Nasta Chandra* is a psychological novel of Bhattacharyya. It is the depiction of the miserable life of the last years of an old man. After the death of his first wife, the old man though married, could not give any satisfaction to his second young wife which led her to go to the company of another man. *Pratipad* portrays the incident of the labourer strike and the sufferings of them. *Mrityunjay* is composed on the basis of a revolutionary act of some Assamese people during Indian independence, as well as it shows the conflict of those people at the fulfilment of their actions. This novel depicts a clear picture of the struggle and commitments of Assamese people, in 1942, against
British rule. *Sinaki Suti* is another psychological novel of Bhattacharyya. This novel is the revelation of the true nature of the real love of men and women. *Agnigarh* is composed on the issue of the Naxalbadis’ movement. *Kabar Aru Phul* is written on the basis of Bangladesis’s salvation of 1971. The bad effect of war upon humanity is very distinct in this novel. *Paribrajak* is composed on the basis of the experience of his Russ journey. There is a good depiction of the cultural lives of India and Russ in this novel as well as it has shown the differences of the social lives of both the countries. *Ballari* displays the story of misunderstanding between a husband and a wife. *Eti Nisha* is composed on the issue of medium problem of Assam of 1970. On the same issue, that is, the medium problem of 1960, another novel named *Bharati* has been written. *Tab Aru Ida* is Bhattacharyya’s satirical novel. In this novel, he makes a criticism of reformative movement through the story of two simpanjis. In *Daini*, Bhattacharyya has depicted man’s usual human instinct. Another novel *Ranga Megh* is a reformative and revolutionary novel. In this novel the novelist has focused the floppery nature of the leaders who has not any real intention of improving the society. *Sarat Kowar* is written on the basis of the folk-beliefs of Mikir society. This novel specifically has led a deep influence upon the minds of the children. *Munisunir Pohar*, another novel of Bhattacharyya is the depiction of the emergency condition of India, led by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and its bad effect in the country. Some critics want to say that taking the issue of the emergency condition of India; the novelist has really
portrayed the socio-economic life of a village society. *Kalar Humuniya* is composed on the issue of the tea-garden of upper Assam. This novel displays the rules and exploitation of the white people upon the Indian labourers. *Phulkowarar Pakhi Ghora* is composed on the issue of the political and social condition of Assam of the pre-independence period. In *Prem aru Mritu*, a pathetic picture of the lives of the Nagas created by the revolutionaries has been depicted. *Budhi Aaitar Puran* is composed on the issue of the Assam movement from 1979 to 1983. Through the conflict between a father and a son, the novelist has depicted the mental conflict of the Assamese race.

The novels of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, perhaps may be segmented into two parts: political novel and non-political novel. Most of Bhattacharyya’s significant novels are political. It seems that as a novelist, the field of politics is very familiar to him. However, it is also true that Bhattacharyya’s non-political novels are also equally significant with his political novels. Some of Bhattacharyya’s significant political novels as well as the non-political novels are discussed below:

*(i) Rajpathe Ringiyaya*

*Rajpathe Ringiyaya* (1955) is Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s first novel and it is totally political. In this novel, the main character of the novel, Mohan, has shown displeasure on the issue of the independence that India has got after the long struggle. Mohan says that this freedom has not carried
the real freedom to the common people. This freedom only carries freedom
to the owners of the Mills, Jaminders and the rich people. The socialism
as well as the ideologies of Gandhi cannot be fulfilled by the Congress Govt.
of independent India. According to Mohan, this Govt. of independent India
carries only the exploitative nature of the British. Mohan wanted to change
the whole world through his revolutionary attitude. He said in the novel,

"We don't need false freedom. We need real freedom. Total
freedom. We need the darbar of the people, government of the people. We
need rice, clothes, house and immortal freedom of culture."² (trans.)

So, the central character of the novel, Mohan did not involve himself
on the enlightenment programme of the historical day of 15th August, 1947.
Rather, he expressed his own view against that acquired independence. The
novel shows that on that specific day, Mohan kept himself busy in revealing
the real truth to the people and made ready the people for another revolution.
It is seen that Mohan delivered a revolutionary speech in a meeting, that
was organized on the occasion of the celebration of Independence Day. At
that special meeting, the new chief minister of independent India would have
been delivered a speech to the people. For the revolutionary speech, Mohan
was sent to jail. Mohan's thinking of the acquired independence and real
independence of India, his distribution of the leaflets and his incomplete
public lecture, his socialistic attitude and the inability of establishing the

². Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Rajpathe Ringiyaya (Guwahati: Assam Jyoti,
1955), P.11.
socialism by the new Govt. of independent India have been focussed in the novel.

Though, this novel deals with the political issue, still, it gives reference to the issue of the love relation of the hero with a girl named Aaikan. Aaikan was a girl of a capitalist, who did not have any sympathy towards the poor. Still, both of them loved each other very much. The intense love between Mohan and Aaikan was seen in the novel, when Mohan even of his busy schedule on the historical day of 15th August, managed to meet his beloved and promised to marry her. Aaikan's interest towards Mohan was also seen, when, she went to the meeting and listened to the lecture, delivered by Mohan with care. Even being a capitalist girl also, Aaikan had respect in her mind towards Mohan. However, the novelist did not emphasize much upon this issue, which could lead the novel to be termed as a domestic novel.

The speciality of Rajpathe Ringiyaya is that the action of the novel is set within a day. The activity of the protagonist Mohan has been started from the early 5 in the morning and is ended in the evening. Within this limited time, he has met various types of people, talked with them and thus, through Mohan, the novelist has portrayed the picture of the society of that time. The special credit of the novelist is that he has described all the happenings within a day and has successfully criticised the significant Indian independence, which is a great event of World History. The independence that the Indian people have got after the long struggle against the British, becomes an irony since after independence also, some people have got
starved. The novelist, even writing a first and a small voluminous novel like Rajpathe Ringiyaya, very successfully portrays the political thinking regarding Indian independence.

(ii) Aai

*Aai* is Bhattacharyya’s second novel. In this novel, the novelist has depicted an affectionate mother who is able to win the heart of everyone through her good-natured behaviour and intelligence. The widowed mother that the novelist has depicted in the novel *Aai*, has shown her capacity in performing all the household goods very systematically. Helping the neighbours at their needs, the mother of Basa has shown her motherly qualities. The nature of her helping hands towards the neighbours at their needs, is very encouraging. Besides, her humble behaviour through which she can satisfy everybody, is also praiseworthy. The novel shows that Swarna, that is, Basa’s mother had looked after fatherless Basa alone with her utmost patience and intelligence. Even being a widow, she thought for the education of Basa, which shows her interest for education and makes her different from the ordinary village women. It seems that through this novel, the novelist has been able to portray the affectionate nature of a mother. It is true that the affectionate nature of a mother has been portrayed in various art forms. From Raphel’s *Medona* to Maxim Gorky’s *Mother*, everywhere a mother’s significant role has been portrayed. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya’s depiction of the character of the widowed mother has been respected by all and called her ‘Aai’. Because of her personality, the village people called her ‘Laksmi’.
Bholanath Sanyasi of this novel considered her as ‘Mother Jagadamba’. Even Rajat, the revolutionary character of the novel admitted that the great mother’s qualities were existed in the character of Basa’s mother.

The novelist with the help of the story of the novel has depicted the destructive nature of the village society. It seems that at that time, the villagers were away from education and agriculture. The bad effect of the town civilization, made some illiterate village youths, rootless. They were totally indifferent towards doing their household works. The sons of the old Bhakat, depicted in the novel, were indifferent towards the cultivation in the lands. Instead of the cultivation in the lands, they were interested for doing labour works in the house of another person.

In the novel, the novelist has portrayed some landless people who were not educated. The poverty also kept them aloof from going to school. The novelist has depicted the character of Rajat as the representative of the landless people. Rajat is portrayed as a revolutionary character in the novel. He protested against the act of Indreswar Mahajan. Indreswar Mahajan took high interest for the money that he lent to the villagers. Rajat was rebellious about the action of Mahajan. Rajat was seen to pour his anger upon the exploiter Indreswar by killing him. As a result, Rajat was sent to jail and finally he was hanged.

The novelist has shown the changing relationship of the village people because of the changing economic situation. It is reflected through the relationship of Basa’s family and Mon’s family.
The novelist has used the mythical techniques in his novel *Aai*. The novelist has used the mythical figures to describe the nature of the characters. Rajat compared Indreswar with Duhsasan of *The Mahabharata*. He even expressed his desire to drink his blood. Just as Bhima in *The Mahabharata* drank the blood of Duhsasana, in the same way, he also expressed his desire of drinking the blood of Indreswar, which showed his disgust towards the Mahajan and at the same time, the readers were also helped to understand how wicked the Mahajan was.

The novelist has tried to portray a true picture of a village society through the novel *Aai*. The life-styles of the village people, the poverty, the jealousy and at the same time, the love and sympathy towards each other, the disease and death, the changing relationship of the people, the customs of leading a widowed life in the Brahmin society-everything are tried to portray by the novelist through his novel *Aai*.

(iii) Yiaruingam

*Yiaruingam*, the Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel is based on the Naga lives, their ideologies and simplicity. It would be worthwhile to mention that Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya engaged himself in teaching in Ukhrul High School in Nagaland in 1950 and got the scope of studying the life and culture of the Naga people. *Yiaruingam* is the reflection of his heart-felt experience and deep attraction of Naga people. In the preface of the novel *Yiaruingam*, Bhattacharyya has said that Nagas are also human-beings,
but they are some special types of human beings. Behind stoicism, one would notice the simplicity of their minds. The meaning of ‘Yiaruingam’ is the rule of people. The novel displays the struggle of Naga people for the separate land for them, their revolution, natural simplicity and the human values. The novel has focused on one side, the broad Indian nationalistic and on the other side, the separate narrow nationalistic outlook for the salvation of the Nagas. The incidents occurred in the novel, however, have proved at the end, that the broad nationalistic thinking is more acceptable than that of narrow nationalism.

A revolution was started on the land of Nagaland at the time of before and after independence of India. Some of the Nagas during that period wanted an independent Naga state and with that purpose they started a strong revolution. Videshelley in the novel *Yiaruingam* took the leadership of that revolution and Phanitphang was his companion. As a partnership of ‘Ajad Hind Phouj’ of Netaji, Videshelley believed in terrorism and Videshelley’s aim of the revolution was to make India free from the shackles of the British and tried to make a separate Naga state. But the idea to make a separate Naga state was revolted by Rishang. Unlike Videshelley, Rishang did not want only to be a Naga, but true human-being. So in the novel Rishang said to Videshelley,

“I, Videshelley, don’t want to be a Naga, I want to be a human-being”³

(trans.).

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Though Videshelley wanted freedom for Nagas, he did not have any clear idea of freedom, he even did not have any idea what he would give people through freedom. So when Rishang in the novel asked this question to Videshelley, Videshelley only replied,

“I have nothing to give people; there is not any thing except freedom.”  

Though Rishang and Videshelley believed in two different ideologies, they had respect for each other. Rishang once said in novel,

“You turned out to be much superior to what I thought you to be.”

Videshelley also showed his respect for Rishang. He therefore said that History would look into the truthness of the act of Rishang. Listening to the sound of the bullet of the armies, Videshelley wanted to leave the place. At the time of departure, both Rishang and Videshelley embraced each other. Though Rishang earnestly requested Videshelley to come to the midst of people forgetting all the terrorist works, Videshelley refused the proposal and entered in the midst of the mountains. Phanitphang, the follower of Videshelley, however, realized later on that the ideology of Videshelley was wrong. The man, who could kill people like Jiban, would not be a true Naga. People like Videshelley would only be able to destroy the Nagas. It would be a sin of killing people like Jiban. At the end of the novel it is seen that

4. Ibid. P. 235.
5. Lop Cit

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some Nagas wanted compensation for the damages of their houses, their cows and cattles; their hearts were broken at the hard rules of the time. Some people under the leadership of Videshelley still carried the violence. Like Jiban, Phanitphang was also shot dead. The peace, happiness, affection were lost from the lands. Still, like Rishang, Sarengla also hoped for a peaceful world. When Khutingla informed Rishang about their coming babies, Rishang was very hopeful thinking that inspite of his death, a human being would survive in the world as his representative and in this way, through future generations, peace would come to people and there would be the victory of the people. Rishang even thought of the name of the coming baby. He said that if a boy baby would be born, he would call his name ‘Yiaruingam’, which means the ‘rule of the people.’

The novel *Yiaruingam* is a good reflection of the lives of the Nagas as well as their likes and dislikes. The Nagas have self-ego in their minds which is reflected by the novelist through the character of Najek. Najek persuaded his son Khating to be a Naga. When asked about the meaning of ‘Naga’, Najek said that the meaning of ‘Naga’ was ‘to be independent’. He again said that the Nagas would first kill themselves, after that only they would leave the freedom. The novel shows some traditions of Naga society. The Nagas and cultivation are interrelated. The lives of the Nagas cannot be thought without cultivation. Listening to the songs of the working girls in the field, Khating thought that the true lives actually lay in the midst of the working women. Sarengla also thought that the farmers were the souls of the world; they were the sources of happiness.
The fearful aspect of war has been emphasized in the novel. Sarengla realized the fearful nature of war very well since because of the war she had to lose her virginity which is the supreme property of a girl. Loosing her virginity she was deprived of all the happiness of society. Because of the war the girls could not move freely. Sarengla was a clear example of it. The virginity of a girl is given very much importance in Naga society. It is a good reflection of the novel. Because of the illegal relationship of Ishawara, a Japanese soldier, Sarengla was pregnant which made Rishang very angry. He could not forgive his childhood friend, Sarengla for that action, though, his attitude to Sarengla was bound to be changed later on, in the novel. The role of a husband in the life of a woman is reflected in the novel through the words of Sarengla. Sarengla says,

“When a woman adopts a man as her husband, on accordance with her own wishes or upon some forces, she cannot forget him. That man binds her in such a way that she forgets her own identity, she lives in society as a legal or illegal wife of that man.”

Emphasizing about the necessity of a husband in woman’s life, Sarengla says,

“She is a woman, a woman’s life is completely meaningless without a man.”

Though Sarengla had to give affection to Phanitphang and shared his

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bed, she could not forget the memory of Ishewara. Sarengla though had hatred in her mind for Ishewara for leaving her; she could not even blame him.

Through the novel *Yiaruingam*, the novelist has displayed the inherent values and those values have been expressed by some of the characters like Jiban, Rishang, and Dr. Brook etc. When Rishang hated Sarengla for her relation with the Japanese soldier, he remembered the sayings of Jesus Christ who asked people not to hate the sinners, but to hate only the sins. The references of the *Bible*, the *Gita* have increased the dignity of the novel. Sarengla read the pages of the *Bible*, where it was said,

"Love each other in this way as I like you." (trans.).

It was also said,

"That love which teaches one to sacrifice one’s life for one’s lovers is the greatest love." (trans.).

When Rishang felt a kind of hatred in his mind towards his father’s killer, he remembered Jesus Christ’s sayings, who asked people to love both friends and enemies. In the novel Jiban also said that the true love lay in sacrifice of life. Jiban asked Rishang about the importance of repentance in course of love. Rishang showed his humanism in the novel when he ran away to save his father’s killer. He even washed his father’s killer’s eyes and mouth, fetched some waters to quench his thirst and carried him to

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8. Ibid., P. 246
9. Lop Cit.

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hospital for treatment. Sarengla also taught Phanitphang about the nature of true love,

"Making love is people's own thing. You may love someone deeply, of course, he or she may not love you, still, you should not stop loving him or her. Rather, you should be ready to do something for him or her that you can."\textsuperscript{10} (trans.).

The deep love of Phanitphang towards Khutingla only made possible for the safe arrival of Rishang from the clutches of Videshelley since Phanitphang showed the place where Rishang and his companions were imprisoned by Videshelley. Through the words of Sarengla, perhaps, the novelist made to say that the true love in the world does not die, it is scattered in every heart. There is the reflection of 'Karmayoga' of the \textit{Gita} through the thinking of Jiban. Jiban thinks that people should do their duty well as the planets and the stars do their duty on their own orbit. For that noone should expect praise or blame."\textsuperscript{11} The philosophical realization has been reflected in the novel when it is said that actually the soul does not die and develop.\textsuperscript{12} The novelist has displayed the value judgement through the sayings of Jiban. Specifically, in the conversation between Jiban and Rishang, the values are expressed very well. Jiban asked Rishang to 'spread the messages of peace to every house since the world wants peace.'\textsuperscript{13} The novelist wants to say that the idea of independence is good but it is not the life

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, P. 228
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, P. 251
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, P. 250
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, P. 265
itself. The successful picture of life is reflected in the light of the permanent values of love, peace etc. Through Rishang, the novelist wants to say that with the help of violence or by destroying people like Videshelley, peace will never come to them. The Nagas due to the servitude of violence for ages, have not learnt to become human being. They should be inspired to become human being... for improvement, peace is needed, for love, peace is needed, peace is essential.”

In every society there are some old people who generally do not want to change their old beliefs and old ideologies. They do not want to adopt the new ideologies of the changing society. Naga society is also no exception to that. Najek in Yiaruingam was such a character who wanted to lead the society with his ideology. Najek was very angry with his son Khating because Khating turned himself into a Christian. Najek could not bear the idea of Khating’s decision of marrying Philis, a Khasia girl. Listening to the news of Khating’s marriage with Philis, Najek cried like a little boy.

In the old Indian society, there were some beliefs which were not accepted by the people of the later generation. The novel reflects those conflicting ideas of the people. Looking at the south black clouds in the sky, Iyengmas, Rishang’s father was very upset since he believed that the black south cloud carried war to people, however, for educated Rishang, those were nothing but superstitions. The light of education washed the superstitious beliefs from the minds of the people.

14. Ibid, P. 274
(iv) Sataghni

The story of the novel is based on the attack of China upon India. This novel is the depiction of the real picture of the bad effect of war upon humanity. The political situation, depicted in Sataghni is very significant, since the attack of China left a deep impact not only on the Indian politics, but also on the world politics. With the advancement of the Chinese soldiers on the land of India, a terror-stricken atmosphere was created in India. The setting of this novel is Margherita town of Assam. The gathering of the soldiers created a war-like atmosphere at that small town. The attack of China increased the political consciousness of the Assamese people and helped to develop the patriotic feeling in their minds. As a socially conscious novelist, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, taking the issue of the real happenings of the attack of China upon India, depicted a picture of the Assamese society. China attacked India in 1962 and the novelist had shown the rigidity of the society of that time, its customs and rituals, in the novel. The main character of the novel Bandhuram Majumdar, at the early period of his life, lost his mother and after that, he had to bear the step mother’s punishment and rude behaviour of his father. The novelist has shown the negligence of a man from the society through the character of Bandhuram. Bandhuram had to be separated from society, since he married a widow named Pramilla. At that time, the widow-marriage was not appreciated by the society. Pramilla was a brahmin girl, and was married very tender age with an old man. As a result, she had to embrace the sufferings of a widowed life very soon. Later on, she wanted to be self-sufficient and became a nurse. Suddenly, one day she
met Bandhuram and gradually, their relationship had become deeper and ultimately, they were married with each other. The rigidity of the society was intense in the novel, when the villagers though were invited, did not come to Bandhuram’s house at the occasion of his son’s marriage-ceremony which was held at his house. At the same time, the novelist has mentioned some old customs which are related to the sufferings of a girl. The issues that a girl was married at her very tender age, the disapproval of the marriage of a widow by the society, have been very clearly portrayed by the novelist, through the characters like Bandhuram and Pramilla. Though, the new relationship between Bandhuram and Pramilla was not approved by the society; Bandhuram had the respect in his mind about the customs existing in society, and it was seen at the arrangement of the marriage ceremony of his son. The novelist has shown the relationship of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law of the Assamese society, through the characters like Pramilla and Amala. Though Pramilla at first, was very interested to welcome Amala as her daughter-in-law for his second son Prasanta, later on, showed very harsh behaviour towards her. In the old Assamese society, the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law was not satisfactory. It is true that the daughter-in-law generally has to suffer a lot, specifically from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Generally, the daughter-in-law in the Assamese society is very submissive. The daughter-in-law generally obeys every order of the family members without any objection, which is focused by the character of Amala of Sataghni. In the Assamese literature, from the Jonaki era (1890-1940) itself, the sufferings of the daughter-in-law in the hands of her mother-
in-law have been portrayed in the history of Assamese literature. Specifically, in the story of ‘Seuti’ by Lakshminath Bezbaruah, the character Seuti suffered a lot from her mother-in-law. She was even tried to murder by giving poison to her. In the novel Sataghni also, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya had shown the rude behaviour that Amala had got from her mother-in-law. In Sataghni, Amala, even after doing all the household works very systematically, had to listen to the harsh words from her mother-in-law, Pramilla. Amala did not make any protest at the behaviour of Pramilla. The novelist has shown the contrast of characters between Amala and Bimala. Amala did not dare to protest against the injustice that was done to her, but, Bimala had shown her courage through her actions. When Bimala knew that her husband was terribly connected with the conspiracy of her own country, she decided to divorce him. After that, Bimala decided to open a school and to teach the boys and girls of the dead soldiers. Since the soldiers sacrificed their lives for the motherland, she wanted to help their children by teaching.

In the novel, the novelist has shown the mental conflict of Amala. Amala faced mental conflict, when Rajat, the fiancée of Amala returned home after a long gap. Actually, Rajat was arrested in the Chinese war and no clues had been found about him for many days. Suspecting Rajat to embrace death, his beloved Amala was welcomed to Rajat’s house as the wife of his brother Prasanta. But surprisingly, one day Rajat returned home. The return of Rajat to his home was like a storm in the life of Amala. Rajat’s return to his home made complicated the life of Amala, the triangular relation between a woman and two male persons had lost the happiness of the family.
Amala was misunderstood by the family including her husband Prasanta and father-in-law Bandhuram Majumdar. Finally, Rajat left the house. The novelist has beautifully portrayed the mental turmoil of Amala.

The novelist has shown that the society of Sataghni, was not rigid; at the same time it was not also well developed to give due respect to women. Amala's wishes were not given importance by the family. The novelist has also depicted the character of Beli as a symbol of women exploitation. At that time, the marriage of a girl was fixed at the wishes of the guardians. The wish of the girl to choose her life-partner, was not counted. So Beli, though her admired person was Bandhuram Majumdar, unwillingly had to marry a man whom was selected by her guardian. But the marriage did not last long. However, returning her father's home, Beli felt miserable and for the hope of financial engagement, entered into the life of a Bihari man. But unfortunately, one day, that man who was already married and came to Assam for his business purpose only, left Beli, and the daughter Amala. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya revealed the tragic truth existing of that time through his novel. Ultimately, Beli, the exploited woman had to lead a solitary life with her daughter Amala. Moreover, through this novel the novelist wanted to show that the society of Sataghni was not totally reserved. It was somewhat developed because of which Beli could dare to adopt the second husband; Bimala could also dare to give divorce her husband and thought to open a school. The women in the society of Sataghni wanted to become self-sufficient, which was focused by the action of Bimala. The novelist has portrayed another fact of helping the soldiers by Indian women by donating
many valuable things to them, which has shown their helping minds as well as the patriotic feelings. History shows that during the attack of Chinas, the Indian soldiers had to fight in the winter season and many Indian women saved the soldiers from cold by knitting sweaters for them and by donating gold, money etc. for them. In the novel *Sataghni*, it is seen that Pramilla and Bimala helped the soldiers by knitting sweaters for them. Bimala wanted to repent of the guilty action of marrying the Chinese man, who cheated her own country, by donating her own property with free hand for the welfare of the country.

(v) Nasta Chandra

*Nasta Chandra* is Bhattacharyya’s psychological novel. In this novel, Bhattacharyya has shown how an aged person, not abling to satisfy the sexual urge of his young wife, bears mental sufferings and his young wife has to go to another person for fulfilling her sexual needs and at the same time, she also bears the mental sufferings for her immoral action. The novel has shown the relation between an aged husband and his young wife, as well as the natural outcome of their relation and the psychological relation between male and female. The novelist is very successful in delineating all the issues in the novel. Bipul, an old man, after the death of his first wife, married a young girl named Suwanikan. Bipul had two sons, who had already married and a matured unmarried girl, from the side of his first wife. Suwanikan, however, did not get any child or sexual fulfillment from Bipul. Unknowingly, Suwanikan felt a kind of attraction towards Durlav, the brother
of Bipul's first daughter-in-law. Suwanikan created an illegal relationship with Durlav. She, however, felt very unhappy for her illegal relationship with Durlav and for cheating man like Bipul who was very sympathetic to his wife. The significant point was that Bipul was also aware of his inability to give pleasure to his young wife and felt very unhappy for the injustices done to Suwanikan. Bipul's unhappiness had been raised because of the unhappiness of his two sons and for the wrong doing action of his unmarried daughter. Jiban, the first son of Bipul, was an idealistic youth and fought for the freedom of the country. However, after independence, Jiban was defeated in the election of the country and was unable to lead his family for the financial crisis. His father Bipul was also not able to help him financially. Still, Bipul had faith upon his son. Bipul sadly said to Manju, Jiban's wife,

"Don't be afraid...nobody will understand him except me."\(^{15}\) (trans.)

Manju, the wife of Jiban also said to her husband,

"Your party is a very exploiter."\(^{16}\) (trans.)

However, finding a job in a newly established college, Jiban left the house. Ajit, the second son of Bipul, was a meritorious student of the science stream and had an earnest desire to do research work in the foreign countries. His dream, however, was not successful since he could not go to foreign countries for doing research and his research work could not be done in

his own country also. Bipul had sympathy for Ajit. Ajit did not get mental happiness since his wife Anita forced him to leave that house and proposed him to live separately in another house. In the novel, she offered the reason of leaving the house in this way,

“In this house, on one side, are the scarcity and the other side, the immorality of the people.”

Anita saw the immorality in her sister-in-law Madhuri and step mother-in-law Suwanikan. Madhuri had a love relation with Hiren, an unemployed lower-casted boy. When the marriage of Madhuri was fixed with Gunajit, a boy from a well to do family, Madhuri eloped with Hiren. The another illegal relationship that Anita had seen in that house, was the love relation between Suwanikan and Durlav. Bipul along with the other family members, though were aware of that relationship, did not say anything to Suwanikan since Bipul knew his inability to give proper dues of a husband to his wife. The novel shows that hearing the news of the death of Durlav in a motor accident, Suwanikan did not show any abnormality in her behaviour. Rather, at that time also, she showed very normal behaviour by engaging herself in helping Anita who was suffering at her delivery pain. After that, Suwanikan, wearing the gifted saree by Durlav, was seen to go to the airport to welcome her step son Jiban and grand child Bijoy. She, however, did not return to the house. The novel shows that the pregnant Suwanikan embraced death. The novelist successfully develops the subject matter of the novel. Bipul felt very unhappy at the death of his second wife; he did not consider his wife as the

17. Ibid., P. 49.
exploiter. Suwankan, inspite of maintaining her illegal love relation with Durlav, showed proper respect towards her aged husband, Bipul. Likewise, Bipul also did not show the traditional male domination in the novel towards his young wife. Rather he was very sympathetic to his wife since his wife could not lead a normal life because of the inability of his old age. The novelist has shown his creativity in portraying the characters like Bipul and Suwanikan and depicting the mental conflict that has been aroused in their minds for their wrong-doings. The novelist has successfully shown the mental world i.e., the psychological world of the characters through this novel.

(vi) Pratipad

Pratipad (1970) is another significant novel of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, through which he portrays a true picture of the neglected common people, their lives and aspirations and their revolt against the British. A picture of the last phase of Indian independence has also been reflected in this novel. Though the time of sunset of the British rule arrived in India, still, the exploitation of the owners of Digboi Refinery was visible and made the lives of the labourers unbearable. The society depicted in the novel Pratipad consisted of the British employers and the labourers and the workers, belonging to the mixed races and castes. The labourers and the workers, coming from different states of India, had to satisfy themselves in working under the exploitation of the British employers in the very low wages.
The novelist, in *Pratipad*, has successfully portrayed the political happenings of India through the revolutionary attitude of the labourers of Digboi Refinery. The plot of the novel develops on the basis of the labourer-strike of the labourers in the oil-city of Digboi in the pre-independence period. On the one side, the labourers and workers and the other side, the white employers- the conflict of these two classes as well as the labourers’s hope for better society, their despair, sufferings all are beautifully portrayed in the novel. Though the novelist has referred to different casted people like Ismail, Giasuddin, Jebennisa, Sandi, Baruah, Chatterjee, Durga, Bodhan, Malsing, Lasmi, Panna, Nayanmani etc. and their conflicts and quarrels, still, the importance of the novel has been given to the collective attempt of creating ‘labour-revolution’ bravely against the conspiration and the exploitation of the British. In the preface of the novel, Bhattacharyya has said that no heroes and heroines are there in *Pratipad*. The lives of the labourers are imagined in collective form here.

The plot of the novel *Pratipad* is based on the labour strike of 1939 in Digboi. The British people kept the labourers away from the minimum priviledges of life; they could not get the treatment for disease, could not even get leave in one’s death-all of which made the labourers angry and frustrated. If they made any complaint against the British employers, they were threatened to discharge from their jobs. But the souls of the labourers cried to get their actual shares. So they were attracted by the ‘Trade Union’ which already thrilled the whole India. The labourers believed that through the activities of the Union, the British rule from India would be abolished
and the labourers’ socio-economic condition would be developed. The British employers considered the Union unreasonable. They took various strategies to abolish the Union, sometimes by dividing the unity of the people with the help of starting a quarrel among them in the name of religion, sometimes by discharging the people who were involved in the Union, from their jobs and sometimes by giving promotion to some selected people who believed the employers’ ideologies, and the employers engaged those selected people to abolish the Union. The novel Pratipad shows that the British employers engaged the corrupted Birbhadra Singh to divide the people in the name of religion and to lessen the strength of the people in doing work for Trade Union.

The novel focuses a glimpse of the Second World War which carried a bad effect on India. Taking the issue of the Second World War, the British employers refused to accept the demands of the labourers. Rather, the employers chased the old labourers and appointed some new labourers in place of the old labourers. The labourers, without thinking of their own lives, attacked a truck which was used to carry the chasing labourers and as a result, many labourers had to sacrifice their lives, the place was filled with blood. With the advent of the Second World War, the whole Digboi town was announced as a ‘protected area’ and the reason behind that announcement was to arrest the labourer leaders with the purpose of stopping the strike. The powerless Congress Government was also unable to help the labourers in continuing the strike. People like Giasuddin were very frustrated for their unsuccessful attempt in doing the labourer strike. Giasuddin realized the fact that unless the British people were chased, the success of labourer
revolution or the dream of getting Indian Independence would not be possible. So when soft-hearted British woman Mrs. Flemming praised labourer strike, Giasuddin in the novel said in a loud voice,

“This strike would not have been broken illegally if we had our independent Government. What will happen chasing us from here? We will start chasing this British Government.” (trans.)

The novel thus displays the political scenario of India very poignantly.

Under the political happenings of India, the novelist also throws light of the social atmosphere of that period. The exploiters and the exploited—these two classes of people have been vividly portrayed in the novel. The novel shows that against the poor condition of the labourers, the British people lead very luxurious lives. The British people also lead immoral lives. The labourer girls did not have any safety. They had to lose their virginity in the hands of the white people. Those victimised girls or women did not get any sympathy from society, rather they were considered as untouchable. Jebunnisa is the representative of such women who had to bear the negligence of society. The society of Digboi Refinery was consisted of various people, coming from different parts of India. Though this novel has displayed different traditions, customs and behaviour of different people belonging to different castes and religions, still, it has focused that these people are of only one caste and that is the labourer class. The lives, aspirations and social system of this labourer class have been collectively displayed by the novelist

18. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, Pratipad (Guwahati: Banalata, 2007), P. 206
in Pratipad. The labourers had to spend their lives in poverty. The poverty stricken lives of the labourers have been displayed in the novel very touchingly. At the very beginning of the novel the novelist has referred to the poverty stricken life of Sandi Aahir. At the last stage of Sandi Aahir’s wife, the doctor did not arrive since he was busy for the treatment of a British woman.

Inspite of the poverty, the labourers had great faith on the customs and rituals. They enjoyed by engaging themselves in various occasions like the Holy or Dolyatra, Idd, Gurunanak Jayanthi etc. The labourers were very religious; they had great faith on spirituality. Inspite of the poverty, the labourers were very enthusiastic to perform different festivals. They enjoyed in taking part of different dances like Jumur, Bihu dance and forgot their own poverty stricken lives. It has been mentioned in the novel that with the help of financial support of Birbhadra Singh, Kali Puja was held in the house of Sandi Aahir. The novel shows that people observed some rituals. One such ritual related to birth was that Baruah at his son’s birth distributed fish among the people.

The labourers’ minds were loaded with many superstitions. Some labourers in the novel Pratipad, for recovery of their illness, preferred to observe some pujas instead of better treatment. The superstitious minds were reflected in the novel when Sandi, losing two children consoled his daughter Pannu in this way-

“Pannu, don’t cry. What will happen by crying? The Kali mother has
The novel shows that there is the unity among people of different castes and religions. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain—all these people lived in the small town very peacefully. Though these people had their own religious traditions, still they were not rigid. Sandi’s son Durga married Nepali people Pradhan’s daughter Nayanmani; Dimbeswar Baruah married Jahanara; Lasmi married Ismail. However, it would be worthwhile to mention that they got hindrance from society in performing their tasks.

Bhattacharyya’s women were not passive. The novel Pratipad focuses the activeness of the women by portraying characters like Lasmi and Pannu. Pannu had the courage to say to her father about opposing Ramu who was very much aged, as her life partner. Even born in an ordinary labourer house, she wanted to become self dependent with the help of learning. Like Pannu, another woman character Nayanmani also engaged herself in learning, imparted her by Mrs. Flemming. Even after marriage also, she thought to learn music. She also showed her courage by selecting her life partner in accordance with her own choice, though, she got hindrance from her guardians. Lasmi, the daughter of an ordinary labourer Bodhan, also chose her life partner. She even made unsuccessful all the bad attempts of contractor Birbhadra of seducing her. Her mental strength was the inspiring factor for the other men and women. Inspite of marrying Ismail, the other casted people, Lasmi did not lose her individuality. She wanted to show that

19. Ibid, P. 37
the females were also equal with male. Lasmi had the courage to criticize the male characters for showing their disappointments.

Though the novel has displayed the free women, still, it would be worthwhile to mention that some people were not interested in the education of the girls. They thought that marriage was the prime thing for the girls. Sandi Aahir in the novel showed total indifference towards girls' education. That people like Giasuddin were also unable to understand the mental condition of women was proved by his action of chasing his first wife Madhuri since Madhuri could not give him any child. In this respect the novelist made to say, "The women are always exploited in this way in the society of men." However, the novel has shown that the female classes depicted in the society of Pratipad were very much of improved nature. The female characters in Pratipad were very much inspired by the female white characters like Mrs Flemming. The close connection with the white people's society also had a great effect in the removal of illiteracy from the labourer society. It has been referred to in the novel that Jebunnisa learnt English from one Governess and could fluently read the English book written in simple language.

(vii) Mrityunjay

The story of Mrityunjay is based on the political happenings of India. It reflects the impact of the '42 movement on Assamese society. The novelist,

in the preface of the novel has said that the happenings of the novel belongs to the time of 1942 though the characters, here, are imaginary. The memorable incidents of real happenings of the last phase of Indian independence has been depicted in the novel since the novelist himself has seen, felt and engaged with that great movement of India.

Like the other parts of India, the wave of the struggle of Indian independence touched in Assam also. Like the other people of different states of India, the Assamese people also tried a lot to save their motherland from the clutches of the Red people. The Indians under the leadership of Gandhi took resort of non-violence in the fight against British though some of them were not interested in the process of non-violence. They believed that India would never get independence through the process of non-violence. The limitless torture and exploitation of the British led them to adopt the ways of violence. Those people were ready to fight with the British with the help of violence under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose. The call also came from Jayprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia to continue the attempts to impede British war activities with guerilla tactics. The novel Mrityunjay shows how the characters like Rupnarayan, Dhanpur, Aahina Konwar, Bhibhiram, Mahada Gosai etc. were involved in the derailment of the train which took lives of many Red soldiers. Though they were successful in taking the lives of the English soldiers, they felt unhappy. Their act of violence, however, made them restless. Repented Gosain therefore said that it would be very beautiful if they could have fought without killing people. At the same time, consoling his own mind, he wanted to justify his own
act of killing people, thinking that he and his fellow people had done their duties only for the sake of their country. In order to justify his act of killing people, Gosain said that Lord Krishna also killed many demons with the help of his ‘Chakra’. Still, the question of value judgement made him restless. He sometimes thought that the history would not pardon him. Rupnarayan who was adamant in taking violence against the English, who exploited the Indians a lot, did not get any mental happiness after killing the English soldiers by derailing the train. Though Rupnarayan wanted to convince his mind by putting various arguments in favour of his job that the English soldiers also made a great crime by killing the innocent Indian people, even the history shows that in France, Russia, China, Yugoslavia, Burma-everywhere people have done revolution with violence, empty hands with non-violence can never be a step of chasing the English from the lands of India, still he was not happy. The heart-broken shout in pain from the soldiers, had shattered Rupnarayan’s heart. Though they were successful in their aim of killing the English soldiers by derailing the train, later on, Rupnarayan, Gosain etc. were forced to think that they would have felt very happy if they could achieve their goal by the strength of love. This novel raises the question of violence and non-violence as instrument of political struggle. In *Mrityunjay*, Bhattacharyya has not only depicted the attempt of people of chasing the British from the lands of India by adopting the way of violence, but also has made a great focus of the mental conflict of the characters. Through the conflict, that has been displayed in the novel, the novelist wants to focus upon humanism. He perhaps wants to say that revolution should be based
upon humanism. The people doing revolution, also should display the basic human qualities through their acts. The passive tone of humanism is the philosophy of *Mrityunjay* and this philosophy has made the novel dignified.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has depicted the socio-economic scenario of pre-independence India through the novel *Mrityunjay*. Society and literature are interrelated. *Mrityunjay* also reflects the real scenario of Assamese society; its customs and rituals, beliefs and manners, myths and value system, superstitions and casteism etc. are vividly displayed which have made it a social document. In the pre-independence time, casteism prevails in Assamese society. When Gosain was ready to take and have the tea prepared by Dimi, a Garo girl, Aahina Konwar hesitated to have the tea prepared by Dimi. In return, Gosain answered Aahina Konwar, “Even Rama ate in the home of Guhak Sandal.”21 However, Aahina Konwar was dissatisfied and expressed his doubt that if they could not maintain the rules, they would not be able to go to heaven. Bhibhiram raised arguments against the aspect of false casteism,

“If Lord Krishna can eat rice at the home of Kuji gardener, if Sita can lead his life eating the food boiling by Rakhyasas in Ashok Bana, why don’t we keep our race having foods prepared by Dimi?...the true sign of a human-being lies in his work.”22 (trans.)

Through the words of Dhanpur also, the novelist has shown the evil

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22. Ibid, P. 94
scenario of casteism. Dhanpur said that everywhere, even to enter in the temple also, Gosain, Mahanta people got privileged. Brahmin people had enjoyed in the name of religion. Though Dhanpur hoped that after getting Swaraj, the differences of rich and poor and casteism would be abolished, Dimi, however, was not sure. So, she said to Dhanpur that even after getting Swaraj also, the aspects of Brahmin-Bhakat, Garo-Kasari, rich-poor would exist in society. A note of self-criticism was also focused between the conversation of Dhanpur and Dimi. Dhanpur said to Dimi,

"You are a girl of Mikir; I am Kasari, Dili Garo. Rupnarayan is a Kaibarta man. We are not even Assamese, when will we become human being? You have stayed with the people belonging to Garo community for many days, still, you have not forgotten that you are a Mikir, and they also have not forgotten that."23 (trans.)

Though casteism prevailed in Assamese society, still at the time of danger, people were bound to forget their differences. The same thing happens in Mrityunjay also. At the time of the freedom struggle of India, as depicted in the novel, people including Gosain, Aahina Konwar, Dhanpur, Bhibhiram, Dimi etc. though belonging to different castes, forgot their own identity and they submerged themselves in the identity of totality.

Assamese society is loaded with many folk-beliefs which are focused in Mrityunjay very beautifully. At different times, these beliefs have displayed different attitudes; sometimes the beliefs have shown the religious

23. Ibid, P. 104
outlook of Assamese people, sometimes it shows the supernatural attitude and at other times, these have shown the different tradition of Assamese society. In the novel, Dhanpur felt a kind of attraction in his heart towards Dimi. In order to fulfil his desire, he offered black goat to the Budha-Budhi Than. Another belief prevailing in Assamese society was that Tirtha (Mandir) going people had to leave their favourite thing. Aahina Konwar had a bad habit of taking snuff which made him lazy. Konwar was suggested that since the freedom struggle for the sake of their own country, was like a temple and for the sake of it, one had to leave one’s favourite thing, which was snuff in case of Konwar who was not ready to leave it.

The village people because of the lack of education, had many superstitious beliefs. The novel focussed all those beliefs. It was believed by some villagers that many evil spirits dwelt on a big tree and Subhadra, one of the female characters of the novel had to leave the worldly happiness because of the evil shadow of one of the spirits. However, Gosain was free from such supernatural beliefs. He was sure that the unlimited sorrows only bound Subhadra to kill herself.

Assamese society is loaded with many folk-beliefs. Sometimes, these beliefs are related to the animals and birds. When Gosain and Rupnarayan decided to go to see the caves where they would shelter at the time of danger, Gosain suggested Aahina Konwar to be very careful. Looking at the flying vultures in the sky, Gosain was afraid that perhaps they would get some bad news since, it was believed that flying vultures in the
sky carried bad news to the people. Those traditional beliefs, however, were neglected by the educated Rupnarayan who thought that vultures only had flown to eat something. The novelist, in this way, has shown the differences of thinking of the educated and uneducated people of the society. He also has shown the changing scenario of society since society is not static; it grows and develops with the advent of time.

*Mrityunjay* is enriched with the depiction of mythical stories. The stories of Rama-Sita, Ajamil have been described in the novel. The mythical stories have enriched the dignity of the novel. In order to console Subhadra, whom was rapped brutally by ten soldiers, Phukan has referred to the mythical story of Rama and Sita. Rama, even after rescuing Sita from the hands of Ravana, like an ordinary man, hesitated to adopt Sita suspecting that perhaps Ravana had corrupted her body. Phukan also added saying that Sita, however replied that though Rakhsas had touched her body, they were unable to touch her soul. Subhadra, being unable to bear the mental agony had committed suicide. Again it was said that afflicted with mental agony Sita entered into the lap of her mother, at the same way, the unbearable pain bound Subhadra to leave the love and affection of the world. The mythical story of Aajmal has been referred to in the novel by Manik Bora, one of the characters of the novel. It was said that Aajmal, at the time of his death called the name of ‘Narayana’ which mitigated all the sins committed by him. It was seen in the novel that when Dhanpur, Madhu etc. were going towards their destination, that is, to derail the train, Madhu was restless. His heart trembled with the fear of killing many people by the incident. The fear that arises
in his mind, has been compared with the fear of Arjun, one of the mythical characters of the Gita. The mental agony of Arjuna has been referred to in the Holy Gita in this way:

“Dristemong swajjanang Krisna uuthsung samupasthitam.
Sidanti mama gatrani mukhang saparisuswati.
Wepathussa sarire me romaharsaswa jayate”24

It means, when Arjun was ready to kill the people, he had seen his relatives everywhere. Looking at them, he was restless. His heart trembled, his face faded. Arjuna said to Lord Krishna,

“Etanna hantumissami ghnatohapi madhusudana.
Api trolokyarajyasya hetoh king nu mahikrite”25

It means that Arjuna was not ready to kill the people for the sake of the kingdom. He said that he would not be able to kill them, not only for the kingdom of the earth, but also for the kingdom of the three worlds even.

Like Arjuna, Madhu also felt hesitation in his mind to fulfil his job, though ultimately he was ready to do his job just as Arjuna was ready to fight against his relatives and the Gurus.

24. Kiran Sarma, Sri Madbhagawadgita, (Translated into Assamese), (Gorakhpur : Govind Bhavan-Karyalaya, 2002), P. 31
25. Ibid., P. 33
The inherent values that make people as well as society dignified have been prevalent in *Mrityunjay*. The values have been expressed by the words of different characters at different times. When Bhibhiram, Jayram were discussing about the different ways of religion about Sankardev, Chaityanyadev, Gosain clarified them by saying that the goals of them or the goals of different religions were same, inspite of having the different ways among them. It has been referred to in the novel about the sayings of the great saints that in the soul of the dog, the fox, and the ass- everywhere God dwells and so people should respect them all. The novelist has made to say through Gosain that cowards have no religion. The Assamese race has turned into cowardice which has to be removed by the process of sacrifice. The inherent values are displayed by the sayings of Bhibhiram, when he says that woman, cow, rice, moon of the sky –all are only illusion, one has to come to the world alone and also has to leave the world alone. This spiritualism of Indian society has made dignity to the novel. The 'Karmayoga' of the *Gita* has been reflected in the novel. Kali, one of the characters in the novel has asked Gosain and some other characters to do their duty well. In the course of their action, they should not even think of their lives. Gosain persuaded his companions to do their duties very attentively. He said that doing the duty was the true religion of human-being. At different times, the same ideology has been expressed by different characters. In the Holy *Gita* Lord Krishna persuaded Arjuna again and again to do his duty. Krishna even tried to give knowledge to Arjuna by citing his own example. In the *Gita*, Krishna said to Arjuna in this way:
"Na me parthasti kartabyong trisu loksu kinsan.
Nanawapta mawaptawayong warta eba sa karmani."\(^{26}\)

Through this sloka, Lord Krishna told Arjuna that in this universe he has nothing to do and there is no any object that he has not achieved. But still he is working.

Bhattacharyya has depicted the socio-economic condition of people of that period through his novel *Mrityunjay*. At that time, the socio-economic condition of people was not very satisfactory. Mahada Gosain, inspite of being a Satradhikar was very far from leading a life of economic prosperity. The economic condition of other characters like Dhanpur, Bbibhiram, Madhu Keot, Dadhi Bardoloi, Kali Baideu, Subhadra, Ratani, Rasaki, the representatives of different categories of people were also not developed. Afflicted with economic poverty, Dhanpur could not take higher education. Aahina Konwar also faced economic poverty for which he could not provide good treatment to his diseased wife. The Second World War, which led for the increasing of the prices of the things, was also responsible for the economic degradation of the people. It was reflected in the words of Dimi when she said that the clothes of eight annas had to be paid eight rupees.\(^ {27}\) On the other hand, taking the issue of World War, people like Layram had become very rich. The novelist, in this way, has portrayed the true scenario of village society in *Mrityunjay*.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., P. 72
\(^{27}\) Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, *Mrityunjay* (Guwahati : Sahitya Prakash, Tribune Buildings), P. 107
The village people of that period paid little attention for the education of their children. Through the words of Dadhi Master, the novelist has portrayed a naked scenario of village school of Assam of that period.

“Dadhi Master remembers the L.P. school of Mayang. That has become closed for four months...what will happen by reading?-this is the attitude of the guardians”\(^28\) (trans.)

The negligence for women education is reflected very clearly in the pages of *Mrityunjay*. Dadhi Master says in the novel,

“...there is no habit of the people of sending girls to schools...what the girls will do by reading; they are resting bees, today they are staying here and tomorrow they will go to another house, after that they will be mothers”\(^29\) (trans.)

Though Dadhi Master and Gosain tried hard to convince the people to send the girls to school, their efforts were useless. So it is said in the novel that the condition of literate person among the illiterate villagers were like the white crows.\(^30\) However, the characters like Arati and Anupama have shown that there was the provision for women education in some of the families. Some old people did not consider the English education fruitful for the students. They rather thought that these types of education had destroyed the students.

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28. Ibid, P. 177
29. Lop Cit.
30. Ibid, PP. 177-178

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The women's contribution in the freedom movement of India, was very significant. History shows that women were not passive; they engaged themselves in the freedom struggle of India. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also has focused the contribution of Assamese women in the freedom struggle through the characters like Dimi, Kali Baideu etc. They involved themselves in sending or keeping the important documents related to freedom struggle. Kali Baideu inspired the volunteers to engage themselves in the struggle without even thinking of their lives. She tried hard to make the struggle succeed. These women without having the formal education had shown their courage, intelligence, responsibility towards their country.

Moreover, the novelist has shown another picture of Assamese women and it was the picture of exploitation and sufferings. The women from the primitive ages, had to bear the sufferings in life. Bhattacharyya also at the very beginning of the novel, has shown the sufferings of women through the character of Subhadra. Subhadra was wrapped brutally by ten soldiers; the unbearable mental agony and the negligence from the society made her to commit suicide. At the time of pre-independence, many girls like Subhadra had to lose their virginity. Bhattacharyya has depicted the character of Subhadra as a symbol of exploitation. The novelist has also referred to some traditions of Assamese society of that period which are related to the sufferings of women. At that time, the girls specifically the Brahmin girls had to be married before puberty. In this respect, the novelist has referred to Kasanmati. Kasanmati, the poor Brahmin girl was married to an old man before puberty. But, for the natural death of that old man, Kasanmati was made responsible, she was neglected by the society and at last Kasanmati
had to be the second wife of Layram. The miserable life of a widow has been explicit in the pages of *Mrityunjay* through Anupama. It has been said in the novel,

"The widow of a Brahmin and the death are same."\(^{31}\) (trans.).

The widows had to spend the whole life in negligence from society. In the old Assamese society, the girls had not any right to choose their life-partners. Dimi, the main female character of *Mrityunjay* and another female character Arati also did not get their life-partners of their own choices.

Assamese women were very adept in weaving. Even Mahatma Gandhi was very much impressed by the art of weaving of the Assamese women. When he came to Assam in 1921, he praised the women. In this respect, Gandhi wrote an article named 'Lovely Assam':

"Every woman of Assam is a born weaver... she weaves fairy tales in cloth."\(^{32}\)

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya also reflects the weaving capacity of Assamese women through Kali Baideu. By weaving clothes, she tried to make economic development as well as self dependent in society.

Through the novel *Mrityunjay*, the novelist has shown the love and respect, in other words the good bond between wives and husbands which is one of the important characteristics of Assamese society. About the relationship of husband and wife, it has been referred to in the novel,

\(^{31}\) Ibid, P. 239
“What the relationship of husband and wife is! One thinks for other in this way! This thinking is the symbol of humanism.”

Ratani even after bearing the unbearable sufferings from police in her state of pregnancy also, thought for the safety of her husband. It was seen in the novel that once she was very hungry, still she could not eat and waited till her husband to come. The novel shows that Gosani, the wife of Gosain cared a lot to suppress the cough her husband.

The traditional food-items of Assamese people have been very beautifully portrayed by the novelist in *Mrityunjay*. It is said in the novel, in this way:

“….kankan jaha saular bhatar dhowa ahi ataire nakat lagilhi. Dhanpurar mukhat lelawati olal. Pataloi sai dekhile, ‘khariya maser anja patar datit baki dise. Bilahi-bengena dise, kaldlar bhaja, petur bhejayo eta batit mok kha, mok kha kari ase.’”

At another time, it is said in the novel in this way,


The novel focuses the food habits of Assamese people as well as

34. Ibid., P. 31
35. Ibid., P. 222
it shows the real picture of family life of Satradhikar’s family. It shows the lifestyle and rituals of tribal people. The society of Mrityunjay’s time is loaded with people consisting of different tribes. The important and significant thing is that all of them were united for the salvation of their country forgetting their own limited identity and it exhibited the inherent glory of the novel.

(viii) Sinaki Suti

*Sinaki Suti* is another significant novel of Bhattacharyya, in which he has portrayed the human emotion, the relation between a male and a female and the real nature of love in the lives of the male and female very beautifully. Unlike other novels of Bhattacharyya, *Sinaki Suti* is totally free from the hints of the political matters. Through a triangular love story among Arpana, Anath and Pamela, the deep relation between a male and a female and the position of women in the lives of a man has been explored. Arpana, the main character of the novel is a highly educated unmarried girl; she met Anath, a young architect. Anath was deeply attracted by the physical beauty as well as the intelligence of Arpana. The attraction of Arpana’s beauty had aroused a desire in Anath’s mind to go very close to her, though Arpana prevented him from doing that. Anath, before meeting Arpana, loved a Panjabi girl named Pamela and their marriage was almost fixed. Pamela, knowing the attraction of Anath towards Arpana, showed natural jealousy to Arpana and tried to snatch her would be husband Anath from Arpana. The novelist has depicted the character of Arpana in this way that she does not want to bind Anath.
by her beauty. She even falsified Anath’s previous notion regarding women that every woman was the animal and if secrecy could be maintained, every woman would be ready to enjoy sexual pleasure with men."  

Arpana said about the philosophical aspects regarding God, science and love, that where there is no love, there is no God.. Anath did not have any idea that a female could be so philosophical. Arpana as shown in the novel, had a deep attraction towards Jiban Dasgupta who was a married person and the father of two sons. Jiban lived separately from his wife. Though, Arpana and Jiban loved each other very much, they did not marry because of their different outlook regarding love and marriage. Arpana wanted a child from Jiban, through marriage, though Jiban did not want the bondage of marriage. Jiban emphasized upon the free love. According to Jiban, marriage does not reveal the normal picture of the sexual relationship between male and female. According to him, without marriage, a true relation can be created with the help of free love. Since Jiban had the experience of marriage, he had seen the bad effect and the problems of marriage, for which, he was not ready to be connected his life with the marriage. Gradually, a mental distance between Arpana and Jiban had been developed. Arpana confessed in the novel that there was not any institution excluding marriage, through which a man and a woman could socialize themselves with each other. At the end of the novel, Arpana became a sanyasi and donated her belongings to the child of Pamela and Anath, though Pamela did not want to accept it, for her natural

37. Ibid., P. 64
jealousy towards Arpana. She even forced Anath to return the belongings to Arpana. Arpana shed her attraction towards Jiban also. In the novel, she said that she handed over Jiban Dasgupta in the hands of his wife.

Through this novel, Bhattacharyya has shown the role of a woman upon the life of a male. By giving prominence upon the female characters, the novelist has shown that though the physical attraction between a male and a female cannot be overlooked or ignored, still, that relation should be morality bound. This morality led Arpana in the novel, to leave Dasgupta and Anath from her life. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has been successful in delineating the idealism in the relationship between a male and a female.

(ix) Ballari

_Ballari_ is another non-political novel of Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya. The subject matter of this novel is developed with the misunderstanding of the married life of Nalin Duwara and his wife Ali. Nalin Duwara was a high ranked officer of Assam Oil Company of Digboi. On the other hand, Ali, though an educated girl, was brought up in a village atmosphere, because of which Ali could not manage to suit herself in an aristocratic atmosphere. Nalin Duwara went to club to maintain the aristocracy of his job, took wine and engaged himself in dancing with the beautiful women. He also took Ali to that atmosphere. Unknowingly, Ali felt a kind of attraction in her heart towards Sengupta, the Geologist of the company. Soon, the news was spread in the whole city of Digboi. Nalin was very
ashamed of the news of his wife and sent Ali to her father’s house. Ali, though was successful to lead an honest life in her father’s house, became very sad, since her husband misunderstood her. Ali was a mother of a child. Her mothership and growing up in a reservative family prevented her from going very near to Sengupta. Ali’s second pregnancy emphasized Nalin to suspect the purity of her character. Ali, however, said to her husband that her love towards Sengupta was not physical. Nalin did not believe his wife and afflicted with mental agony, she, finally committed suicide. Before the commitment of suicide, she wrote a letter. In her letter she revealed,

“I loved Sengupta for his poetry. The mind goes to very high.... You don’t bear this little happiness”\(^{38}\) (trans.)

Ali confessed in her letter that she loved Sengupta only for his poetry. The death of Ali, finally changed Nalin’s mind. At last, Nalin had understood his mistakes and repented for his action. The mental unhappiness was faced not only by Ali and Nalin, but also some other characters. Ali’s father, Dutta was seen in the novel to suffer from mental unhappiness because of the action of his daughter as well as his deep attraction towards wealth. However, Ali’s mother was shown in the novel as a very religious woman. She had not any interest in the matter of wealth. Though she had to go to town with her husband, her behaviour was not changed like her husband and her daughter. She was the only character in the novel, who had not changed her behaviour till the end of the novel. Dutta, though previously was familiar

\(^{38}\) Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya, *Ballari* (Guwahati: Lawers Book Stall, 1973), P. 164
as an honest person, gradually changed his behaviour. He was attracted with the matter of wealth. However, the death of his daughter turned Dutta to the root of the true religion. He then shed his attraction of wealth.

The novel is enriched with the mythical figures of Sita and Ravana. Ali, in order to support her relation with Sengupta referred to the mythical stories of Ravana and Sita. She said that just as Sita had depicted the picture of Ravana on the floor, Ali also depicted the picture of Sengupta. The novel Ballari is enriched with the moral disorder of the affluent person. Moreover, the influence of the western like civilization upon the Indian lives and its bad effect have been explicit in the novel. The reference of the mythical elements has enriched the grandeur of the novel.

(x) Daini

Daini is Bhattacharyya’s another novel, through which he has analysed the relationship of male and female. Though, the issue of politics has entered into this novel, the novelist has not given much emphasis on the issue of politics. In the novel, Apurba Chaliha and Malati were the lecturers in a college and gradually, a love relationship was developed among them. Suddenly, Malati changed her decision to marry Jiban Kalita. Apurba was not very much surprised at the decision of Malati, since Apurba did not go forward to marry Malati. However, the story turned another mode when Apurba was invited to a village for campaigning in election, in favour of his friend. Thus, politics has entered into this novel though, the novelist
has not given much emphasis on this issue. Apurba stayed at the house of Ambika Bora, whose daughter was Padumi. Padumi was known as 'Daini' since, she could challenge the naughtiest boy in the village. The issue of politics has been disappeared in the novel when Apurba was suffering from typhoid fever. Since Ambika Bora, the owner of the house could not stay at home, Padumi had to take care of Apurba. Thus, a deep intimacy had been created between them. Apurba confessed his previous love relationship with Malati, though Padumi did not care of it. Soon, the marriage between Apurba and Padumi was fixed. Hearing the news of the marriage between Apurba and Padumi, Malati rushed to the village and expressed her love towards Apurba. Malati felt sorry for Padumi because she thought that Padumi would be the guest in the life of Apurba. The novel shows that Padumi though was not intellectually equal with Apurba; they tied their marriage knot with each other. It is significant to point that at the time of Apurba's illness, though the doctor was also not sure of his cure, Padumi cured him with the help of her simple religious belief and her utmost devotion towards him. The novelist through this novel, perhaps wants to show that for a successful marriage, it is not necessary that the bridegroom and the bride would be equally intellectual, which was shown in Bhattacharyya's novel Sinaki Suti. In this novel, the novelist perhaps wants to show that a marriage can be successful between an educated, rationalistic, intellectual boy and a religious, simple-minded girl. A marriage can be successful between a boy and a girl having different outlook.
(xi) Ranga Megh

*Ranga Megh* is a political novel of Bhattacharyya, through which he wants to establish Marxian socialism in the society. Through this novel, the novelist wants to say that after the independence of India, though the greedy politicians cheated the common people for many years, in future, there would be no place for those powerful, greedy politicians who won several times in the election. The novel shows that those politicians actually did not have any good will for the country. The novelist hopes that the red clouds will be visible in the sky. The novelist hopes that in near future, the reign of the country will be shifted from those powerful, greedy political leaders to the people who do not have any attraction towards wealth and power and, not economically and socially prosperous and, have earnest eagerness to establish a new society in the real sense. Choudhury in the novel is the representative of those greedy, selfish political leaders and educated youth Ananda is the representative of the future leader of the country. Ananda had a desire to change the country for bettement and for that purpose, he felt the necessity of a good administrator. So he said in the novel,

“We must not depend on secretaries or back-benchers. We must do things ourselves.”

He again said in the novel,

“Now-a-days every minister has one secretary. Get rid of them. This extra people should be engaged in cultivation... You are afraid of the changes, want to avoid revolution. That is why, you have not done anything”\textsuperscript{40} (trans.).

Ananda was seen in the novel, as a free-frank and courageous youth. So, after talking with the politicians, Ananda said to them,

“After reading much about your party for many days and after examining it, I have seen that each of you is a counter revolutionary. Counter revolutionaries are those who raise fires and instil poison. I don’t want to include myself in this party”\textsuperscript{41} (trans.)

Listening to Ananda, Choudhury decided not to nominate his name in the coming election. He had the realization in the novel that like the appearance of the ‘Ranga Megh’ in the sky, the inevitable revolution was coming very soon and Choudhury was seen as the escapist. The novel shows that he had not the dare to face the revolution. In the novel, he said to his companion,

“...terrible revolution will come, what will you do then? So I want to leave”\textsuperscript{42} (trans.)

The idea that Choudhury would not feel unhappy if Ananda took his place, was not believed by Mahajan. The political leaders’ sayings cannot

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, P. 104
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, P. 104
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, P. 108
be believed easily specifically at the eve of the election - this realistic picture has been depicted beautifully by the novelist. Choudhury's realization that Ananda would do something to the society, was focused in the novel in this way,

"Surely he knows that this poor boy from Kaibarta class will only honestly bear the responsibility of this ....... He stays with them; he has spent his time with their sorrows. He too cannot mitigate their sorrows, but he is the light of this area. He will bring the message of hope to the area; he can bring a kind of self-respect to the lives of these poor, diseased, deprived people" (trans.).

Though the sudden realization of Choudhury seems inappropriate, the novelist tries to make it realistic by some events. The novel shows that once, the honest, simple fisherman Priyaram asked Choudhury why the sorrows of Priyaram had been raised inspite of Choudhury being a membor for many years. Choudhury felt hesitated to answer the simple question of Priyaram. Choudhury admitted in the novel that Priyaram's question had sweated him. He said that the answer could be given, but he could not say how their sorrows would have been mitigated. Another incident also made Choudhury to think about his new realization. Choudhury, going to his own village, had seen that his childhood companion and intimate friend Janardan Bapu did not visit him. Even the villagers also did not come to visit him. The villagers previously at his arrival at the village, visited him. Actually, they visited him for the

43. Ibid, P. 62
hopes of the fulfillment of their dreams such as, getting jobs, advantage of reading and contract etc. When their hopes were not fulfilled, they neither came to him nor interacted with him. In the novel, Janardan Bapu said to Choudhury,

"My wife has died. She is suffering from unknown stomach-pain. The sin of the kings is the sufferings of us. You people are the responsible of killing these people" (trans.)

He again said to Choudhury,

"Day-by-day, the symbol of Kali Yuga has been seen" (trans.)

Afflicted with mental turmoil, Choudhury thought for retirement from politics. This mental conflict was clear through the dialogues of Choudhury. Choudhury said,

"The heart is not only filled with repentance, but also with scandal. This scandal is the scandal of the soul. His conscience tells him to serve people not by the power of politics. It is the order of the God" (trans.)

However some critics want to say that this repentance of Choudhury that occurred in a day seems inappropriate. However, it can be said that Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya has been able to portray the political scenario of independent India through the novel.

Besides displaying the political happenings, Bhattacharyya has shown

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44. Ibid, P. 50
45. Lop Cit.
46. Ibid, P. 62
some other pictures of Indian society. The picture of the responsibility of a father towards his daughter, the elopement of Rumi, the daughter of a Brahmin widow who worked in the house of Choudhury, with Ratan, the son of Kaibarta Priyaram and their marriage, performed at Kamakhya temple, the preparation for the marriage between Ananda and Kasanmati, the picture of poverty stricken village life etc. are cleverly included with the main story of the novel. Like Bhattacharyya’s first novel i.e., *Rajpathe Ringiyaya*, this novel also includes the happenings within a day. The unities of time, place and action of the Greek drama are tried to maintain in the novel.

Like the other novels of Bhattacharyya, the language of this novel is also very simple and straightforward. However, in some cases, the novelist has used some indicative and pictorial languages in order to suit or explain the subject-matter of the novel. The novel is enriched with the similes and metaphors and images which have helped to enrich the grandeur of the novel. The description of Choudhury is given in this way,

“The man, though not white, the face is bright. His eyes look like the eyes of ‘Rou’ fish. The colour of the body is also like the colour of ‘Rou’ fish, only the skin is smooth like ‘Pabha’ fish”\(^{47}\) (trans.).

At another time, the novelist has given the description of Priyaram and Padumi in this way,

“Though Priyaram is an aged person, his body is fresh like the banana tree, she (Padumi) is also not faded like the cutting bamboo.”\(^{48}\) (trans.).

\(^{47}\) Ibid, P. 4
\(^{48}\) Ibid, P.P. 12-13
Munisunir Pohar is another political novel of Bhattacharyya. This novel has depicted another problem of the time of post-independent India. The disgusting picture of the emergency, declared at the reign of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during the middle part of 1975, the provocation against the emergency are the subject matters of this novel. Taking the issue of emergency, the novelist has also depicted a socio-economic scenario of the villages of Assam.

At the time of the emergency in India, the political condition was so severe and dangerous that the voices of the true patriots were tried to stop and instead of that, some showy false patriotic people took the leadership of the country. The subject-matter of the novel has been developed with the help of the married life of Mindhar and his wife Alaka. The novelist has tactfully analysed the issue of the emergency held in 1975-76 in India. The novel shows that the married life of Mindhar had not become satisfactory since his ideology and choices were different than that of his wife. Alaka did not have any respect for his village people. For her, the ideal people were the owners of the industry or the managers or the high-ranked servicemen. For his materialistic wife, Mindhar after getting the prestigious job of a principal at a college, which was established at his own village, had to leave that job and had to go to Guwahati. Alaka, without informing Mindhar, managed the upper level officers for getting a job of social welfare for herself, though, the irony was that she did not have any wish for the
welfare of the society. She even tried to become a candidate of the ruling party. During the time of emergency, the power of the ruling party was scattered to a group of people and Alaka did not have to try much to get the candidature and she, though did not have any good feeling towards the village people, selected the village of Mindhar as her own political constituency. Alaka after marriage, showed her aversion to stay at village and went to Guwahati, but ironically, she selected the same village to fulfil her high ambition. The novelist has shown in the novel that because of the time of emergency Alaka, though was not selected with the help of the votes of the villagers, had established herself as the powerful leader. The villagers, for doing anything in the field of political agenda, had to take permission from Alaka. The desires of the villagers would be fulfilled at her wish only.

The situation became so worsened at the time of the emergency that the true patriots of the country had to suffer a lot. It was seen that Mindhar, the true patriot at the end of the novel, went to Guwahati to resign the post of lecturership in order to stay at his own village permanently and do something good for the society. But the arrest warrant was prepared against Mindhar because of the charge of involving himself with the Farmers' Association and because of the instigating people against the emergency. The novel shows that at the time of going to Guwahati, though Mindhar was tried to arrest, the attempt was not successful because of the intelligence of Aaidhan, the former beloved of Mindhar. The novelist has shown in the novel that at the time of emergency, many honest people were sent to jail, which made their family lives unbearable. At that time, many disorder happened
in the preparation of the lists of the landless people, in the distribution of the farmers' loans. Educated Mindhar tried to make conscious the simple villagers by distributing leaflets among them against the disorder of the emergency time.

Besides portraying the political scenario, the novelist has shown the socio-economic picture of a village life. In this novel, the novelist has shown the custom of marriage relating to the matching of the horoscopes of the bridegrooms and the brides. The guardians became the hindrance in the marriage of Mindhar and Aaidhan though they loved each other very much. The novel shows that Mindhar could not marry Aaidhan since their horoscopes did not agree. So Mindhar had to marry Alaka with whom his horoscope matched. However, the novelist is very sarcastic at this point, because the married life between Mindhar and Alaka was not happy and satisfactory. Alaka, the highly materialistic girl did not try to adjust herself with the village atmosphere. In the same way, Aaidhan was also married to another person with whom her horoscope agreed. Ironically, the novelist has shown that Aaidhan became a widow at her young stage. Taking the issue of the matching of the horoscopes between the boys and the girls, the novelist wants to show that instead of matching the horoscopes, the emphasize should be given upon the similar ideological beliefs between the boy and the girl. The novelist's scientific attitude has been clearly explicit at this point.
Kalar Humuniya is composed on the settings of the tea garden of Shillong of Safrai, under the ownership of the British people. The time depicted in the novel is 1921, the country was still under the domination of the British and the tea garden was under the reign of the British. These two issues are referred to at the very beginning of the novel. The labourers’ displeasure because of the harsh behaviour of the owners of the tea garden, i.e., the red people and their rebellion against the owners are the subject matters of this novel. The characters who revolted against the domination of the owners of the tea garden were- Begal Budha, Kahni Budha, Rukmini, daughter of Sita, Lasia, the daughter of Kahani Budha, Baka, the son of Arjun. Taking the advantage of the displeasure of the labourers against the white owners, the workers of the Congress, extended their field of work to the inner side of the tea garden and their action helped the labourers. Lalit and Bhuban Gogoi were the two Congress workers, who frequently went to the tea garden and investigated about the displeasure and difficulties of the labourers. However, the white owners got the hints about it. The labourers, who stood against the owners, got unbearable sufferings from them.

There are basically two revolutions occurred in the novel. The first revolution started at the beginning of the novel regarding the issue of the attempt of sexual harassment of Rukmini by Douglas, which made the labourers angry and forced the owner of the tea garden for resignation of Douglas from work, though the owners did not comply with the demand of
the workers. Later on, it is seen that Douglas was sent to another tea garden by getting promoted to him which made the labourers dissatisfied. The labourers, because of the unfulfillment of their demands, took the path of revolution though the Red people strictly dominated the revolution. The labourers were wounded, because they were beaten severely by the police. Basa’s father, because of the charge of writing the application, was called ‘instigator’ and was beaten heavily. Baka, the son of Arjun and the husband of Rukmini was also beaten severely. Both of them were ordered to leave their job. The other labourers, hearing the announcement of chasing their two companions from their works, did not go to their works. But they were also beaten severely. At the same time, the announcement was made that the labourers who were not willing to do their works, would be given resignation from work and the other labourers from another tea garden would be appointed in their places. The labourers, being unable to gather strength to unite themselves, finally decided to join in their works. Thus, the novelist has shown the domination of the British people upon the Indians.

Besides depicting the domination of the owners of the tea garden, the novelist has also depicted the cultural lives of the labourers. The Jumur Dance of the labourers has been successfully depicted by the novelist. Moreover, the pictures of the love relation between Baka and Rukmini, the British character Henry’s wife Sara’s love of India and sympathetic attitude towards the Indian people, the sexual harassment of the British upon the female labourers are also portrayed in the novel. The fact of sexual
harassment was shown by the characters like Rukmini and Sita. Rukmini was tried to rap by Douglas though his attempt was not successful. On the otherhand, it is shown in the novel that Rukmini's birth was the result of the destruction of virginity of Sita by Mecheperson Sahib.