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## Lakhminath Bezbarua: The Pioneer of the Assamese Language and Literature

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**Abstract** Laxminath Bezbarua was a pioneer of the Assamese language and literature. He has enriched Assamese Language and Literature through his great contributions like short stories, novels, plays, poems, biography, autobiography, Philosophical essays and satirical pieces. Lakshminath Bezbaruah became one of the most noteworthy people in Assam. The entire era is reflected in his works. While doing so, 'Jonaki', an Assamese Magazine, became his first stepping stone in his literary journey. 'Litikai' was his first effort. Through this magazine, he strived to introduce modern literary thoughts and ideas into Assamese literature. In the 6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> edition of the second year of 'Jonaki'(1890)s publication, Lakshminath Bezbaruah started writing under the pseudonym *Kripabar Barua*. But after the 11th edition of 1890, it changed to *Kripabar Borborua*. Lakshminath Bezbaruah also discusses the changes in Assamese culture, women's rights, the new Assamese language, influence of Bengali language, etc. They reflect his desire for social amendment. He was honoured by a unique title on 29 December 1931 as '*Roxoraj*' (The King of Humour) by Asam Sahitya Sabha at its Sibsagar session. In the felicitation letter by Asam Sahitya Sabha, the word 'Sahityarathi' was used for the first time for Bezbaroa.

**Keywords** Laxminath Bezbarua, Enriched, Contributions, Autobiography, Noteworthy, 'Jonaki', 'Litikai', Kripabar Barua, Assamese Culture, Social Amendment, Asam Sahitya Sabha, 'Sahityarathi'

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### Prologue

Laxminath Bezbarua was born in the famous Rajbaidya Bezbarua family of Assam in 14<sup>th</sup> October 1864 at Ahat Guri Chapari in Nagaon. He was a Brahmin from Kanauj who was well versed in the scriptures. He was particularly proficient in Ayurveda and was appointed by His Majesty Jaidhwaj Singh as the chief Bezbarua of the Bejs. Bajbarua's father Dinnath Bezbarua was the personal physician of the Ahom king Purandar Singh. Later, at the end of the monarchy in Assam, he was appointed as Munsif and Extra Assistant Commissioner under the British Government. Dinnath Bezbarua had two wives. He was the son of Dinnath Bezbarua's second wife Thaneshwari Bezbaruani. Laxminath Bezbarua was the fifth of thirteen sons of Dinnath Bezbarua. One of the people who had a special influence on his childhood was their relative Rabinath Barua (*Rabi Kaka*). He told Bezbarua various stories, taught various old songs and moral lessons. After his father's transfer to Lakhimpur bezbarua met a great personality named Durgeshwar Sharma, who taught him drawing and sculpture.

Although Bezbaruah learned Assamese Alphabets from Rabi Kaka in Lakhimpur but he started his school life in Guwahati . He did not like school life at all. His experience in this regard was as bitter as that of Rabindranath Tagore. But he did not drop out of school like Rabindranath. With infinite patience he obtained his B.A., M.A. He even got a law degree. He passed the entrance examination in 1886 from Shivsagar High School He then overcame his father's objections. His father did not want to send him but with the support of his brothers Govindra Chandra and Binanda Chandra Bezbarua he went to Calcutta for higher education. He was a member



of the Assamese Language Promotion Society (AVUSA) in 1888 and published the magazine Jonaki under the editorship of Chandra Kumar Agrawal in March In 1890. In 1891, Bezbaruah married Pragya Sundari. They had four daughters Surbhi, Aruna, Ratnavali and Deepika. But Surbhi died of diphtheria in 1900, just five years after her birth.

### **Epicenter**

Laxminath Bezbaruah was a legendary figure in Assamese literature who carried Assamese literature forward with the chariot of his pen. Therefore, he has been given the title of Sahityarathi. He has also been called the king of humor for his humorous writings. Laxminath Bezbaruah was a poet, lyricist, essayist, playwright, novelist, biographer, short story writer, critic, satirical writer, magazine editor and journalist at the same time. He was the father of Assamese short stories. There is no way to imagine Assamese literature without Laxminath Bezbaruah. He lived in Bengal for most of his life on business but his passion for Assam and the Assamese language did not disappear. He was a veteran of the 1980s and 1990s. Bezbaruah's desire was supported by Hemchandra Goswami, Chandra Kumar Agarwal and other Assamese students studying in Calcutta at the time. They published the magazine 'Jonaki' at their own expense.

### **Short story of Laxminath Bezbaruah**

Laxminath Bezbaruah was the pioneer of Assamese short stories. He has written about the shortcomings of Assamese society, superstitions, customs, national consciousness, etc. through his valuable short stories. His short stories reflect the Assamese society of the time. The story '*Kanya*' is widely recognized as the first short story by Laxminath Bezbaruah, but in fact Bezbaruah's first published short story was '*Seuti*'. This story '*Seuti*' was published in the fourth issue of Jonaki magazine in its fourth year.

There are four books of short stories by Laxminath Bezbaruah, who pioneered Assamese short stories with '*Seuti*'. Three of them were published during his lifetime and one was published posthumously. There are three books of short stories published during Laxminath Bezbaruah's lifetime – *Surbhi*, *Sadhukathar Kuki* and *Jonbiri*. His posthumously published book of stories was '*Kehokali*'.

The 1909 '*Surbhi*' was published by Laxminath Bezbaruah. It contains a total of twelve short stories. '*Surbhi*' was the first collection of Assamese short stories. His '*Sadhukathar Kuki*' was published in 1910. It contains a total of twenty-seven short stories. His '*Jonbiri*' was published in 1913. It contains sixteen short stories.

Laxminath Bezbaruah collected old Assamese oral fairy tales from various sources and published them in his own language. His three published books of fairy tales are '*Budhi Ayeer Sadhu*' (The Tale of the Old Woman), '*Kokadeuta aru Natilora*' (Grandfather and Grandson) and '*Junuka*'. There are thirty-one (31) tales in *Budhi Ayeer Sadhu*, thirty-nine (39) in *Kokadeuta aru Natilora* and ten (10) in *Junuka*. Bezbaruah's fairy tales are very popular among children. His book '*Budhi Ayeer Sadhu*' (The Tale of the Old Woman) is equally popular among young and old.

### **Poetry of Laxminath Bezbaruah**

Laxminath Bezbaruah was also a poet. His poems graced the pages of the magazines Jonaki and Banhi. But Bezbaruah did not consider himself a poet. Laxminath Bezbaruah was one of the pioneers of Assamese romantic poetry. There were two books of poetry published by Bezbaruah. One of them is *Kadamkali* which was published in 1913 by Laxminath Bezbaruah during his lifetime. There were forty-eight (48) poems in the *Kadamkali*. *Kadamkali* contains the poem '*Mor Desh*' by Laxminath Bezbaruah which is known as the national anthem of Assam '*O Mor Aponar Desh*'. His second book of poems, *Padumkali*, was published after his death in 1968. It consists of 28 poems.



### **Drama of Laxminath Bezbarua**

Lakhminath Bezbarua has a great contribution to Assamese Drama Literature. He began his play writing in the pages of Jonaki Magazine. The play *Litikai* was his first play published in 1894. The plays *Nomal*, *Pasni* and *Chikarpati-Nikarpati* were published by Bezbaruah in 1913. In 1915, he published three plays *Jaymati Kunwari*, *Chakradhar Singh* and *Belimar*.

There are two types of plays written by Laxminath Bezbarua comedy and historical drama. His comedy plays are *Litikai*, *Nomal*, *Pasni* and *Chikarpati-Nikarpati*. His historical plays are *Jaymati Kunwari*, *Chakradhar Singh* and *Belima*.

### **Novel Literature of Laxminath Bezbarua**

Laxminath Bezbaruah was also one of the great novelists. His novel composition is '*Padum Kunwari*' The novel *Padum Kunwari* is about the betrayal of Haradatta and Biradatta. The novel *Padum Kunwari* was published in parts in 1891 in the third year of the magazine *Jonaki*. The novel *Padum Kunwari* was published fully in 1905. After Padmanath Gohain Baruah's novel *Bhanumati*, *Padum Kunwari* was the second novel in Assamese Literature.

### **Humorous and Satirical Writings of Lakhminath Bezbarua**

Lakhminath Bezbarua presented the ideals of patriotism and social reform through Humorous and satirical Writings. These writings were published in the pages of *Jonaki*, *Banhi*, *Usha* and other magazines. He published these satirical works under the pseudonym *Kripabar Barbarua*. In 1904, Bezbaruah wrote a series of satirical articles in the *Jonaki* magazine under the title '*Kripabar Baruah Kakatar Topala*'. In 1909, he published his satirical essays in the magazines *Jonaki* and *Usha* published from Guwahati under the title '*Kripabar Barua's Ufatani*' (Return of *Kripabar Barua*). He published his satirical articles in the *Banhi* magazine in two books, '*Barbaruah's Bulni*' and '*Kripabar Baruah's Bhabar Burburani*'

He also published a collection of essays entitled *Barbaruar Chintar Hilguti*, (The Stone of Barbaroa's Thought) *Barbaruar Sahittik Rahashaw*, (The Literary Mysteries of Barbaroa) and *Kripabar Baruar Samarani* (The Conclusion of *Kripabar Barua*). The entire collection of humorous essays by Laxminath Bezbarua, who wrote under the pseudonym *Kripabar Barbarua*, is called '*Kripabari Sahitya*'

### **Biography Writings of Laxminath Bezbarua**

Laxminath Bezbarua was also a biographer. In 1911, he wrote a biography entitled '*Sankaradeva*', giving a brief overview of the life and works of Srimanta Sankaradeva. He published a biography of the two gurus in 1914 entitled '*Sri Sri Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhavadeva*', giving a comprehensive discussion of the lives and works of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhavadevas. These two books are a rare contribution to Vaishnava literature in Assam. He also wrote a biography of his father Dinnath Bezbarua in 1909 entitled '*The Life of Mr. Dinnath Bezbarua*'. Bezbarua has written his own autobiography entitled '*Mor Jiwanar Showarani*' and divided it into two parts.

### **Religious Books written by Laxminath**

Laxminath Bezbaruah also wrote religious works. In 1915, he wrote the religious discussion book *Bhagavat Katha*. After that he composed another two religious books, '*Sri Krishna Katha*' and '*Tattva Katha*'.

In addition he wrote three more books, *Sanket*, *Bakhar* and *Assamese Language and Literature*. He translated a historical work entitled '*Bharatbarshar Buranzi*' (The History of India) into Assamese.

### **Laxminath Bezbarua as a Editor**

He was the editor of the magazine '*Banhi*' The magazine *Banhi* was published from Calcutta under the supervision of Laxminath Bezbarua. At first magazine '*Banhi*' was published in November 1909 under the editorship of Laxminath Bezbarua. The magazine was published until 1917 under the editorship of Laxminath Bezbarua. Laxminath Bezbaruah wrote an editorial in the *Banhi* magazine under the title '*Kahudi and Kharli*'



**Laxminath Bezbarua with various Organizations**

Laxminath Bezbarua was involved in various literary and student organizations of Assam. Laxminath Bezbaruah and the students who were studying in Calcutta formed 'Assamiya Bhasa Unnatishadhiny Shabha' in Calcutta. Bezbarua was the second year's editor of A.B.U.S. The first conference of the 'Assam Satra Sammelan' was held on 25 December 1916 at Latashil ground, Guwahati under the chairmanship of Laxminath Bezbarua. The seventh session of the 'Assam Sahitya Sabha' was held in Guwahati in 1924 under the chairmanship of him.

**Epilogue**

Laxminath Bezbarua is the crownless emperor of Assamese literature. His contribution to Assamese literature is immense. Through his literary works Lakshminath Bezboruah was able to expose the social system of 18th - 19th Century Assam. His works for national awareness and political views greatly influenced the society. The conclusion that we can draw after studying Lakhminath Bezboruah that he is the Pioneer of the Assamese Language and Literature. Through his writings, Bezboruah was able to portray the true face of Assam's social system. Such a great personality and human resource of Assam who spent most of his time outside of Assam but finally passed away in his native Assam on 26 March 1938 in Dibrugarh. Bezbaruah died but we still remember him for his literary works.. This proves that Laxminath Bezbarua is still holding the chariot of Assamese literature as a literary hero.

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