

An Analytical Study On the Writing Style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's Short Stories.

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Abstract: Lakshminath Bezbaruah known as the “Sahityarathi” and the “Father of the modern Assamese literature.” He was a leader of Jonaki Era, pioneered modern Assamese literature by introducing realistic storytelling, satire, and social critique. He is credited as the pioneer of the Assamese short stories; his collections *Surabhi*, *Sadhu Kothar Kuki*, *Jonbiri* and *Kehokali* are among his most important works. This stories are rich in lively humor, satire and realistic social portrayals. Bezbaruah revitalized the language by using a fairy-tale style and a narrative approach that incorporated household words, proverbs and idioms. His works in further characterized by deep characterization, social reform and patriotism. In this research article, I will discuss the writing style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's Short Stories, with special reference to his collections *Surabhi* and *Sadhu Kothar Kuki*.

Keywords: Lakshminath Bezbaruah, short stories, writing styles.

I. Introduction:

Short stories, a major branch of contemporary literature, originate from ancient myths, legends and oral folktales. In ancient times, works like the *Hitopadesh* and *Panchatantra* served as didactic fables, particularly in Sanskrit literature. In contrast to ancient mythology, the nineteenth century witnessed the global rise of the modern short story, emerging in regions like America, France, Russia, and India with new themes and distinct features.

The modern short story in Assamese literature emerged and flourished in the late nineteenth century. Lakshminath Bezbaruah is widely regarded as the father of Assamese Short Story. Honored with the titles “Sahityarathi” and “Rasaraj,” he rose from the romanticism of the *Jonaki era* to became a leading figure in modern Assamese literature. Bezbaruah's four primary short stories collections are *Surabhi* (1909), *Sadhu Kothar Kuki* (1910), *Jonbiri* (1913) and posthumously published *Kehokali* (1968). His stories reflect the nature of contemporary society, emerging from the decadent atmosphere of the late nineteenth century while critiquing the empty bureaucracy of the British Empire and prevailing superstition.

Bezbaruah's short stories are also characterized by vivid humor, satire, and realistic social depictions as well as distinct linguistic and narrative style. This study provides an analytical examination of his writing styles, focusing specifically on the collections *Surabhi* and *Sadhu Kothar Kuki*.

II. Statement of the problem:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah is widely regarded as the father of modern Assamese short stories and literature, having contributed significantly across to all literary genres. His four collections of short stories serve as a mirror of both early and contemporary society. These stories represent a strong opposition to social exploitation and hypocrisy.

The primary problem lies to understanding the specific writing style Bezbaruah used to expose such hypocrisy, human folly, and social exploitation, which earned him immense popularity. Therefore, this study aims to uncover and analyse the distinctive writing style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah during the late nineteenth century, specifically focusing on his short stories.

III. Review of Related Literature:

The review of related literature allows researchers to identify existing knowledge and determine what further investigation is needed in a specific field. For this study, the researcher examine several research articles relevant to the topic. In *Asamiya Sahityar Samikshatmak Itibitra* (2009), Satyendranath Sarma discusses the styles, themes, and characteristics of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short stories. In the edited collection *Asomiya Chutigalpa Aru Biborton* (2012), Apurba Bora presents a critical analysis of Bezbaruah's works, while. The volume also features essays by Homen Bargohain and Madan Sarma, both of whom identify prominent fairy-tale characteristics in bezbaruah's writing. Futhermore, in *Asamiya Sahityar Ruparekha* (2019), Moheswar Neog discusses Bezbaruah's stories, noting his efforts in collecting and republishing many old fairy tales in a distinctive linguistic style. In the research article "The Diverse Female Characters Of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's Short Stories: An Overview"(2020), Mintu Bora analyzes various female characters – such as Bhadari, Jayanti, and Patmugi- from multiple perspectives, exploring their mental states, responsibilities, and positions within society and the family. Mulluck Chan Babu conducted research title "Impact of Lakshiminath Bezbaruah's Short Stories on Assamese Society With special Reference to North-East Region: A Case Study"(2015), concluding that Bezbaruah aimed to reform harmful social customs through his writing. Bezbaruah's short stories inspired the Assamese people to preserve their traditional customs while moving away from superstitions. The researcher concludes that Bezbaruah's stories suggest social norms and values must evolve to ensure individuals are not discriminated against based on the romanticism inherent in Assamese literature. Prafulla Kumar Nath and Chandan Barman, in their article "Reflection of Social life in Bezbarua's short stories"(2023), examine how Assamese, Bengali, and Odia social realities are through characters like Malak Guin Guin, Bhadari, Laokhola, and Ratan Munda. The Researchers generally agree that Bezbaruah was a pioneer of Modern Assamese literature whose stories provide a realistic portrait of contemporary Indian society.

While previous studies have examined his work from various angles, none have focused specifically on the perspective of his writing styles. Therefore, this research aims to provid new insights into the stylistic elements of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short stories.

IV. Rationale and Scope of the study:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah is known as the father of modern Assamese Literature. The rationale of this study is to explore the writing style found in the short story collection Surabhi and Sadhu Kothar Kuki's.

The scope of this study is limited to selected short stories from these two collections. This research focuses exclusively on the wriring style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short stories.

V. Objective of the Study:

The study aims to achieve the following objectives –

- * To explore the writing style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short stories.
- * To introduce the works of Lakshminath Bezbaruah within a limited scope.

* To provide an introduction to the short stories of Lakshminath Bezbaruah through this study.

VI. Methodology:

This research is based on primary and secondary source. The short stories collections *Surabhi* and *Sadhu Kothar Kuki* by Lakshminath Bezbaruah serve as the primary sources, while relevant books, articles, and journals are used as secondary sources.

For this research, a descriptive and analytical approach has been adopted. The descriptive method is used to describe about Lakshminath Bezbaruah's literary works, while the analytical approach is used to examine the specific writing style of his short stories.

VII. The Writing Style of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's Short stories:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short story writing style was simple realistic and spontaneous. His stories were mainly based on the following techniques.

a. Fairy tale style in Narrative:

One of the most important writing style of the short stories of Lakshminath Bezbaruah's is fairy tale style. As we all know, Bezbaruah was a great fairy tale writer. That's why his fairy tale style also impacts his short story works.

As in fairy tale, grandparents begin the fairy tale by stating to their grandchildren that they will tell them a certain fairy tale today. There is a continuation of that fairy tale trend in Bezbaruah's short stories.

In *Sadhu Kokar Kuki*, Bezbaruah begins the short story "Mula Khua Burha" (Radish-Eating old man) like a fairy tale. Such as :

Once upon a time, during the reign of a king, there lived an old couple. They both lived in a small hut at the edge of the village, somehow getting by on very little; they didn't have much in the way of farming; only with the few vegetables grown on a small patch of land in front of their house, which they would sell to buy food, they spent their days in peace.

(Bezbaruah, P.27, Translated by the paper writer)

In the same collections, Bezbaruah begins the short story "Puttraban Pita" in a fairy-tale style:

I Settled in Asansol for a few days on some occasion. Asansol is a town built by the East India Railway Company. From a small village it soon became a major city. The East India Railway Company made a tilak bell. The Achansol engine shed is one of the most famous engine sheds in the world. This is a small incident of one day in Achansol, the topic of today's Narrative.

(Bezbaruah, P.27, Translated by the paper writer)

b. Satirical Style:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah, who is known as "Rasaraj" in Assamese literature, is the king of humor. This humor is also reflect in his short stories through both his themes and characters. In the collections of *Sadhu Kothar Kuki* the short story "Bhadari," the protagonist is beaten by her husband for not serving rice on time and is admitted to the hospital. However, there is humor and irony in the situation that

emerges when she is seen searching for her husband while hospitalized. The humor found in the second and third chapters of the story is briefly excerpted below.

Chapter Two

After three days in hospital, Bhadari regained consciousness. When he regained consciousness, he first asked Deresi, “Where did he go?”

Deresi – Who is “he”?

Bhadari – (a little unprepared) He is ours. My husband.

Deresi – Oh, that person is in the lock-up.

Bhadari – Father, please! call him and send him here.

Deresi – How can I call and send him? That man won’t be able to come today. He has been put in the lock-up. Fine, you just sit still. Don’t worry about that man. If you worry too much about him, I know your illness will get much worse.

Hearing Derechi words about her husband, Bhadari fell unconscious again.

(Bezbaruah, P.72 , Translated by the paper writer)

Chapter Three

This time, upon regaining consciousness, Bhadari open her eyes and saw Shisuram standing between two police constables next to the bed where she lay; Dr. Sahab was likely nearby as well.

Bhadari – (Looking towards Shisuram) How are you feeling? Will you eat rice today? You have great hardship in getting food and water, haven’t you?

In response, Shishuram’s eyes filled with tears.

(Bezbaruah, P.72-73 , Translated by the paper writer)

c. Language style:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah’s storytelling skill is evident in the linguistic richness of his stories. His language is simple and filled with colloquialisms. His narratives abound with idioms, proverbs, and loanwords from English, Hindi, Bengali, Arabic, Persian, alongside Sanskrit and Gita verses. In a sense, a primary feature of his style is the use of mixed language.

Through simple and natural spoken language, he reflects contemporary society and expresses indignation towards social evils, such as the opium epidemic, through his writing. “Heuti,” “Lambudar Deka,” “Jatiramar Jat,” “Gita,” “Jayanti,” “Bhadari,” are suitable examples where Bezbaruah utilizes these blend of languages.

d. Style of Reflection of Different Social Life:

In Bezbaruah’s writing style, one finds the pure Assamese peasant society, human joys and sorrows, the domestic environment, and the hypocrisy of contemporary society. In his collection *Sadhu Kothar Kuki*, the dialogue between an elderly couple who spent their lives farming reflects the simple life of a rural farmer. In the story “Mula Khowa Burha” (Radish-Eating Old Man), a simple picture of their life emerges through the conversation of the elderly couple:

Early in the morning, before the crows and dogs had even stirred, it was the old man's habit to leave the comfort of his torn quilt and enter the radish garden. He ate radishes all day long, and there is nothing wrong with eating radishes in even at night. In fact, if his hand happened to touch his own body while he was asleep, it felt like a radish to him. One morning at dawn, the old man called out from the garden to the old woman – “Old women! Hey, old woman!”

Old woman: “Yes?”

Old man: “Look, come here quickly!”

Old woman: “What has happened while it's still dark? I cannot get up in this cold right now.”

Old man: “My radish-eating old woman, come and see for a moment!”

Old woman: “My radish-eating old man, I cannot go. Tell me, what happened?”

Old man: “I am saying, the radish sprouts have been bitten off!”

Old woman: “What happened! Who did it? I'm going?”

Saying this, the old woman wrapped herself in her quilt and mattress and reached the radish garden.

(Bezbaruah P.72-73 , Translated by the paper writer)

Similarly, through various short stories of Bezbaruah, one can find a depiction of how society at that time was gripped by social evils like opium and tobacco. The way people, under the intoxication of opium, would wander around aimlessly without doing any work is reflected in the dialogues of his stories. In the *Sadhu Kothar Kuki*, the story of “Chenichampa” reflects the image of ‘opium’s tradition in contemporary society:

Holding two alluring bud-filled pots in his hand, Dhaniram Bhomora called out from the door, “Is the Gaonburha (the village headman) in?” Gaonburha – “Who is it?”

Dhaniram – “ I am Dhaniram.”

Gaonburha – “Oh Dhani, come in.”

Following Dhani, Moniram Bhomora also arrived with a pot of jiggery (gur) and said, “I am Moniram.”

Gaonburha – “Come in, my boy, come inside.”

Kholua-Bhabiram had been consuming a lot of opium, ganja, banana, sugar, but he hadn't firmly told anyone that he would give Chenichampa away, and it didn't seem like he would soon.

(Bezbaruah, P.178 , Translated by the paper writer)

e. Characterization style:

The Characters in Bezbaruah's short stories are simple and straightforward. Through characters from various sections of society, he reflects on different aspects of life. In particular, the problems of contemporary society, social hypocrisy, the position of women in patriarchal society, and social satire are found in his stories. Just as the mention of ‘opium’ is found between Gaonburha and Dhaniram in the story *Chenichampa*, in the stories *Bhadari* and *Jayanti*, we see the exploitation and oppression faced by

the characters Bhadari and Jayanti from their husbands and society in a patriarchal world. In his stories, female characters are often seen in simple, innocent, and unfortunate forms. Characters like Bhadari and Jayanti are prime examples of this.

VIII. Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Bezbaruah's writing style for short stories is very rich. His stories and writing styles also reflect contemporary society. One of the reasons why short stories developed and spread in the hands of Bezbaruah in the late nineteenth century was his unique writing style. In conclusion, we can reach the following findings:

- Lakshminath Bezbaruah uses the style of fairy tales to continue the narratives of his short stories.
- Lakshminath Bezbaruah often uses a satirical style in his short stories. It is observed that presenting the story through satire especially attracts the readers.
- Lakshminath Bezbaruah uses mixed languages in his short stories. His stories are enriched with proverbs, English, Arbabic, Persian, Bengali, Hindi, and other local languages, as well as verses from the Sanskrit and Gita.
- Lakshminath Bezbaruah's short story writing style can be called a living form of contemporary society and local peasant culture. In his writing style, we see a vivid picture of the peasant society - a society dominated by the poisonous influence of opium.
- Lakshminath Bezbaruah's writing style reflects the identity of different classes of people in contemporary society through his characterization. Jayanti and Bhadari are excellent example of the exploitation and deprivation of women in a patriarchal society.

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