



Joymati Konwari : a Historical Play of Lakshminath Bezbarua

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ABSTRACT :

Historical plays in Assamese literature became more popular after the decline of the Mythological period. In Assamese Literature Historical plays are very popular and get important position in Assamese literature. In *Jonaki* Era of Assamese Literature, Lakshminath Bezbarua is one of the prominent play writers and his historical play *Joymati Konwari* is one of the great works of Assamese literature, which depict the period of revolution, sacrifice and beginning of the ruin of the Ahom period. *Joymati Konwari* Shows the sacrifice of Ahom woman for her country and also Shakespearean influence in it.

Keywords: *Gadapani, Historical, Lakshminath Bezbarua , Literature, Sacrifice.*

I. Introduction:

Soti Joymoti, also known as Joymoti Konwari, is a celebrated princess for the native Assamese, who honor her courage and endurance. The state of Assam, then under the Ahom rulers, descendants of the Shan prince, Sukaphaa, was undergoing a tumultuous period between the years of 1671 to 1681, under the rule of many inept kings who were mere puppets at the hands of their Nobles and Prime Ministers. It was at this time that King Gadapani came into power and gained full and strong control over Assam, and reclaimed the region of lower Assam and Guwahati from the hands of the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. But his ascent to the throne would not have been possible without the selfless surrender of his wife, Joymoti. The Prime Minister to the Lora Raja or boy king Sulikhpaā,



Laluksala Borpukan had ordered for all the princes of the Ahom dynasty to be mutilated, a period known as the Purge of the Princes of 1679 to 1681.

Joymati Konwari , a Historical story from the old Ahom Kingdom, was written by Lakshminath Bezbarua. Later in the 20th century mid (1935), first Assamese flim was made on this story .

II.Objectives of the Study:

- To analyze the characteristics of historical drama.
- To study the Shakespearean influence in Assamese drama.
- To analyze how Lakshminath Bezbarua represents the Joymati character in his drama.

III: Methodology:

The present work is done by a critical use of both primary and secondary sources based on internal and external criticism.

IV. Result and Discussion:

Lakshminath Bezbaruah is indubitably one of the prominent playwrights in the history of Assamese drama who have marked the tradition with their golden contributions. He has enriched the tradition of the lighter form of drama or satirical plays by his play-craft. Through his *Litikai*, *Nomal*, *Pachani*, *Sikorpati* *Nikorpati* and *Gadadhar*, Bezbarua delved deep into his contemporary Assamese society and depicted its ego, injustice, selfishness and vanity in satirical vein. In fact, he is as if a constant guard of the Assamese society; wherever he identifies the foibles and weaknesses, he depicts them with sincerity.

Bezbarua wrote three historical plays with a view to trigger the national historical consciousness of the Assamese people. They are known as *Joymati*



Konwari, Chakraddhaj Singha and Belimar. In them, Bezbarua has left no stone unturned to maintain the coherent form the Assamese historical plays. While writing the historical plays, the playwright is motivated by certain objectives in view and Bezbarua is not an exception to this. Here, we can refer to the great opinion of Dr. Poona Mahanta, who has rightfully said about the historical plays of Lakshminath Bezbarua as follows - ‘Though he had dramatized certain historical incidents from the glorious history of Assam first and secondly triggered the patriotism modeled in the form of Shakespearean dramas, yet it is indubitably true that he was greatly inspired by Shakespearian plays.’

One can’t alter the original story or incident in history-based plays. However, historical plays don’t mean the repetition of history. In the language of Bezbarua, ‘A play is a poetics, not history.’ A historical play must have the potential to unearth the glory of the past and ignite the spirit of respect in the minds of the new generation. A historical play is the snapshots of the glory of a nation. Bezbarua himself had said that the prime objective of the historical plays is to shed light on the noble characters of history and their tendencies.

There are five divisions and twenty nine scenes in *Joymati Konwari* written by Bezbarua. According to the story, on ascending to the throne, the Loraraja had summoned an order to wound all the Ahom princes befitting to be the future kings. According to this ploy, many a princes were killed and wounded. However, *Gadapani*, a prince belonging to the *Tungkhungiya* clan, fled to Naga hill, triggered by the advice of his wife, *Joymati*. He happened to meet *Dalimi* in his sojourn to Naga Hill. On the other hand, finding no clues about the whereabouts of *Gadapani*, the *Saudangs* punished *Joymati* in the middle of the paddy-field called *Jerenga*. *Atan Borgohain* himself came to the punishment ground, called *Bandisal*, and inquired about her husband, though he was



humiliated by Joymati. *Tarbari Ligiri* and *Pithu Changmai* had extended the proposal to break the *bandisal* and make *Joymati* free, which was utterly rejected by *Joymati*. *Gadapani*, who came in disguise of a *naga* to witness the plight of *Joymati*, was shocked and requested her to disclose the whereabouts of her husband. Finally, *Joymati* had succumbed to the atrocities and suffering, and died.

There are 21 characters in this play. Out of them, *Gadapani*, *Loraraja*, *Burhagohain*, *Borgohain* are the chief male characters. *Rajmau* is the chief female character. Though *Gadapani* is the chief character, its stand is not made clear. *Loraraja* is seen to be occupied with the future of the throne all the time. *Burhagohain* exercises all the state power, while turning *Loraraja* into a doll. It can be said that the playwright is successful in his delineation of the character of *Burhagohain*. The gravity and the integrity in the character of *Joymati* are not stressed, which turns into a guess work for the audience. In a sense, the playwright in Bezbarua fails in his attempt to delineate the character of *Joymati* as a leading female character. *Rajmau* has been placed as a politically conscious woman. *Dalimi* is the epitome of the best woman character of Bezbarua. He has shown dexterity in depicting *Dalimi* as a simple and down to earth sibling of Mother Nature. Though the story and characters are picked up from the pages of history, the playwright enjoys every right to include imaginary characters, actions etc while keeping the originality intact. Bezbarua gave birth to *Dalimi* with his imagination and creativity without polluting the truth of history. Prafulla Katoky said that *Dalimi* is the outstanding creation of Bezbarua.

One can find a slight historical error in the play *Joymati* written by Lakshminath Bezbarua. *Atan Burhagohain* was not the prime minister during the reign of *Loraraja* or *Sulikafa*. *Laluksola Borphukan* was the all in all in the state.



According to history, *Joymati* was punished according to the order of *Laluksola Borphukan*. However, there is no mention of *Laluksola* in this play. Instead, *Burhagohain* is made responsible for the atrocity. One should enact a historical play without distorting the history. It is an error discovered in this play.

Bezbarua has been successful in his delineation of a diabolic chapter in history through his five acts. In a poignant style, the playwright presents the sacrifice of *Joymati*, a pathetic story, in the play *Joymati Konwari*. It is a fine documentation of tyranny and power-mania prevalent in the political scenario during the reign of the Ahom king named *Loraraja*.

V. Conclusion:

Throughout the last century, and till today, she is remembered as a patriot and martyr, promoted as a national hero, cherished as a symbol of the ideal wife, mother and the adobe of feminine virtues. She is even worshipped as a divine incarnation.

Sati *Joymati* has an important place in Assam's history. She is remembered as a brave women who sacrificed her life for her motherland and husband's well-being. Her importance in the socio-cultural life of the Assamese people has remained so vital that instances of her representation can be traced, in varied themes, in almost all forms of art and literature produced in Assam at different times during the last hundred and twenty years.

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