We have already taken note of the forces that led to the growth of modern Assamese prose in the beginning parts of the Introduction and the Chapter III.

The beginning of modern Assamese prose is traced in the pages of monthly journal Arunodai (1846–1882). Two distinguished contributors to this journal were Hem Candra Baruva (1835–97) and Gunabhiram Baruva (1837–94). We use the word prose in a broad sense, including in it the novel, the short-story, the essay and the other forms of writings. But we shall confine our attention on those works that are relevant to our purpose. We propose to discuss here the works of five important and representative comic authors in chronological order. They are Hem Candra Baruva, Gunabhiram Baruva, Lambodar Bara, Satyanath Bara and L.N. Bezbbaruva.

Hem Candra Baruva - (1)

Hem Candra was a master of the new Assamese prose and also the author of Hemkos, a widely acclaimed and first comprehensive Assamese dictionary.

Bahire Rongcong Bhitare Kovabhaturi is his first and most successful satirical work in prose. It is a work of fiction.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter (svargar duvarī Govardhan deu ātār caritra) introduces us to the monastic head of Korkhanīyā sattra. He is of mythical origin, belonging to the dynasty of Kujibāi, the maid of Kaūsa that used to supply sandalwood to Kṛṣṇa. His knowledge of śāstras and hymns is shallow; his concern for rules of continence, piety or for sin is hypocritical and his greed for wealth of his disciples is unashamedly great. In the second chapter, we find him involved in grabbing land of a widow through dubious means of false litigation. He comes to the town and stays in the house of an āhom aristocrat of tāntrik faith. Here he is involved in a romantic intrigue
with the childless lady of the house under the cover of religious intercourse. In the third chapter, we find him in the house of a sheristadar, Bhanḍeśvar Baruvā, a social climber shining in the new courtly atmosphere and posing as a man of blue blood. He finds the official being surrounded by people of all sorts, mostly self-seekers and sycophants. Soon he is found busy explaining the holy verses. However, he makes himself a fool by interpreting the holy verse wrongly and resorting to sophistry and malapropism. In the next chapter, a bāmācārī tāntrik enters the scene to cure the ailing aristocratic lady, who suffers from occasional fits ostensibly due to the possession by a spirit (bīrā). He becomes soon jealous of Korkhanīyā, specially after he detects his relationship with the lady and by a clever intrigue, charges Korkhanīyā with theft of six jack-fruits from his orchard. In the fifth chapter, the English magistrate, Mr Drink Brandy Eatwell, tries the case of Korkhanīyā Govardhan (who is brought before him from the lock-up) in funny and mixed anglicised jargon. He wants to give Korkhanīyā a heavy sentence but Bhanḍeśvar, who was heavily bribed by Korkhanīyā's paramour, successfully pleads for him and gets his sentence reduced to a fine of mere five rupees. Freed, Korkhanīyā restarts his clandestine love affair with the lady and soon becomes deeply engrossed in it. After the death of her husband, the lady becomes sick with a mysterious disease. All sorts of cure are prescribed. Ultimately an astrologer is engaged. The lady eventually dies without proper treatment. Korkhanīyā too breathes his last soon after. The book ends with a satiric verse.

A few instances of Baruvā's satiric composition will show its biting nature. Baruvā's skill in satirising the character of
The first piece exposes his dilettantism in the art of singing *Bargīt*, the noble sāstric hymns sung by the devout Vaiṣṇavas in Assam. The head guru of a sattra is generally regarded as proficient in this art. It says -

"Bargītat gosāi ene he pārgat ye teō puvatīyā 
niśā git dharile ocarar gaohhīlākeo pāt 
larovar calere tāl dhare, āru kukur-śiāle no 
preamat bāul hoi rāg diye."

(The religious guru is so proficient in *Bargīt* that when he sings it in the early hours of dawn, the nearby trees play the tālas by stirring their leaves, while the dogs and jackals, being deeply swayed by love, repeat the rāgas.)

There is satire not only in the fantastic irony of the piece, but also in its tone and rhythm. The contrast between the fool's degenerated art and the divine music of Vṛndāvan is obvious. Here nature does not respond agreeably to music as in Vṛndāvan where Kṛṣṇa did marvel with his world-enchanting flute. It does not evoke sānts or bhakti rasa, but only hāsyā.

The next piece exposes the superstitious nature of his reputation as a possessor of divine power. It says -

prabhur upari purus sakalar bar mahimā āchil, 
teobilakar ejanar mahimē dekhi kālsiyā noie 
mānuhar rup dhari saran-bhajan loi karar bāhe baohari pāo buri kāldhāpar kanī jogāi āchil.

Our Lord's forefathers had great divine powers. Impressed by display of this divine power by one of them, the Kālśiyā river, assuming human form, took initiation (saran-bhajan) from him and offered five 'buri's of eggs of Kālḍhāp tortoise annually as tax (religious dues). Our Lord's divine power is also not to be trifled with; for even at this kali age a princely descendant of Kīśkindhyā's monkey king has taken initiation (mālā-mantra) from him, i.e., accepted his discipleship and pays an annual tribute of Kālmou or Kāmou fruit (a wild fruit of Lāṅkā.)

The style is ironic and is replete with a rationalist spirit of criticism. The piece reveals Baruvā's art of caricature, a balanced combination of burlesque and concise narrative. The popular superstitious belief in his divine power is also ruthlessly exposed to a gale of laughter. His rage and scorn are subtly expressed in the tone of the narrative.

The third piece exposes the nature of exploitation practised by the guru upon his disciples. It says -

āmār prabhu Jagannāth jikhani śic-gāvat somāi, tār kalmas gucābar nimitte tāk jahanī e cocā petatkoīyo nīras karihe ere.

(Our Lord Jagannāth, after entering a village inhabited by his disciples, squeezes it so thoroughly that it

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3. ibid., pp. 3.1959
becomes as dry as the human belly squeezed by cholera. This he does only to cleanse the village of its sins.)

The economic exploitation of disciples under religious garb comes here under fire and Baruvā's comparison of the guru to the deadly disease (at his time, it was a fatal disease), makes the satire vivid. He uses here a simile that suggests the cruel nature of exploitation.

In the fourth piece, Baruvā directs his satire against adulterous behaviour of the guru under religious garb. He does not spare also the adulterous house-wife:

(But) in devotion, his young lady even exceeds him. She listens daily to her guru's exposition of the divine 'līlās' of Lord Kṛṣṇa and tastes the bhakti-rasa. This makes her realise the essence of spiritual truth. After things continued in this manner for some time, the guru and the disciple both come to know each other intimately and the feeling of love is aroused. The guru, being pleased with the devotion of his disciple, begins to demonstrate all

those divine līlās that the disciple formerly merely heard of, by recreating a Vṛndāvan at home. The complete demonstration includes the series of līlās from bastra-harāṇ (robbing of apparel) to māṇbhaṅjan (easing of lover's sullen resentment through entreaty etc.)

The irony inherent in the conscious distortion of the ideal situation of Vṛndāvana and its substitution by crude perverse materialism is severe and it offends as well as delights. In this piece, Baruva successfully exposes by use of a balanced verbal wit and equivocal language the decadent and gross sensuality of degenerate religious leaders.

The satiric spirit inheres in his style and is alive no less in the narrative than in the description. The language is simply adequate. The plot too is satiric. Every one of the characters presented are eccentric and have some folly in them. They are juxtaposed to create effect. One can enjoy the contents because of the modern, secular and rational approach the author adopts. His attitude is belligerent not only towards the degenerate religious leaders who have fallen from their high spiritual ideals, but also towards superstitious and unscientific modes of treatment current in those days. In the fourth chapter, we find him introducing to us to Dhekerī Bez, the quack with his jarā-phukā (magical cure by incantation), to mahantas and Brahmins with their brand of religious (secret) rituals, to the sākta brahmin with his prescription for animal sacrifice and to Kadal Doloi with his fad for propitiatory cure through worship of planets. He further shows that how irrelevant they are to the spirit of the age that knows the efficacy of allopathic and scientific treatment.
Yet the victim of the disease prefers death to allopathic treatment. None of them is able to diagnose the real disease of the young woman, who was probably with child and wanted to hide her shame through bogus treatment and ultimately, through virtual suicide. Baruvā directs his powerful satire against the hollow ritualism in the following two lines:

\[
\text{tāl, mālā, photo, puja āru homar chāi,} \\
\text{bāhirar drṣṭi, tāt patiyan nāi.}^5
\]

(tāl (crymbal), rosary, coloured mark on forehead and ashes of homa—these are merely externals. On these, no reliance can be put.)

The contrast between the ideal and the real or spirituality and gross sensuality is revealed through juxtaposition of character, through dialogue and description. His norm is clear and the note of moral negativism is informed with a purpose of destruction, destruction of false values. The norm seems to exist not in any character, but in his ideas.

Like Bhandes̱var (god of the rogues), Mr Drinkbrandy Eatwell, the magistrate we meet in the fifth scene, bears a label-name that gives us insight into the author’s conception of the type characters. His intention is to satirise the superficial living that the British Officers indulged in India or his irrelevance to the native cultural milieu. The magistrate does not understand the local language and uses a kind of funny jargon in the Court. Bhandes̱var, the sheristadar, also apes him and addresses him in the same jargon. Both become, by virtue of their malapropism, objects of laughter. The unnatural dialogue sometimes

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5. Kovābhāturī, p.46
becomes very funny. The court scene, reproduced below, is highly amusing.

Eatwell - well cirastādār, āche kon makārā tiār hunibā kāraṇ?

(Cirastādār dāngarīyāī cāhābēre soīte asamīyā bhāsāre kathā kovāt - apamān bodh kare, kintu Hindusthāni bhāṣātō bar pandīt; eikārane ei adbhūt bhāsār srṣṭi hai)

Cira - Khodābanda, Kēlectorīme ek āyanka makardāmā hai, aur -

Eatwell - well, āche dos āin ārāṣ?

Cira - nāhi khodābanda, das āin to mānuṣ nāhi, kintu likin das āin motābekkā nālic he,

Eatwell - What the dunce does this fellow mean by das āinka makādmā, I can make neither head nor tail of it.

Head Babu - A rent case, Sir, A case for arrears of rent, Sir,6

(Eatwell - Well cirastādār, what case is ready for hearing?

(The sheristadar feels it below his dignity to talk to the shahib in Assamese. But he is also deficient in knowledge of Hindi. Therefore this fantastic language is created.)

Sheris - Your highness, there is a case under clause 10 of the Collectory Act.

Eatwell - Well, Let das āin come here -

Sheris - No your honour. Das āin is not a man, but there is a complaint under the clause number 10 of the Act.

6. Kovābhāturi, p.25
Eatwell - What the dunce does this fellow mean by das āinkā makddmā, I can make neither head nor tail of it.

Head Clerk- A rent case Sir, A case for arrears of rent.)

The court of those days turned into a babel. And the author depicts the scene to create a satirical effect. And he is successful. Eatwell's pronunciation also is defective, since he pronounced the word 'nāmghar' as 'nām-gar'. Bhāndēśvar, on the other hand, wilfully distorts the pronunciation of the word 'Kathāl' as 'Kanthāl'. This sort of phonetical incongruity adds to the general confusion in mutual understanding and increased the effect of word - humour.

Baruvā's social attitudes grew through his struggle against religious and social orthodoxy in early life. Dimbesvar Neog notes that he relentlessly fought against polygamy, opium-eating, immoral deeds of religious people, child marriage and restrictions on widow-marriage. He was a great admirer of Iśvar Candra Vidyāsāgar. He was also uncompromising in his views and this spirit inspired his satire.

Dr S. N. Sarmā points out that before him and Gunābhīrām Baruvā, humour was scarce in Assamese literature and satire almost nil. Hemoandra pioneered the trend of burning social satire.

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7. Preface, Rāmnavami, pp.9-10, Edited by Jatiṇdra Mohan Bhattāchār- jee. Preface was written by Sri Tīrthnāth Sarmā.

8. NLAL, pp.372-73


10. ASI, p.238
His method of satire shows that he primarily used byāja-s-tuti, i.e., condemnation through praise and sarcastic similes. He was a master of words and much of the power of his satire stems from this mastery. However his merciless satire verge on the joyless invective. His satire is predominantly bitter. He stands for social progress and satire is used as a corrective weapon.

Hemoandra's source of satire to a great extent rests on his characters. Like Moliere's Tartuffe, it is an important satire on religious hypocrisy. Satire is his weapon for attacking absurdities and he took great care in choosing his characters. Moliere's book is a drama, while Baruña's work is a satirical fiction.

11. Turtufee (Bengali translation), Sāhitya Akādemī, New Delhi, 1963
Gunābhīrām Baruvā - (2)

Gunābhīrām Baruvā (1837-91 *), a near relation of Ānanda Rām Dhekiyāl Phukan, was a historian, biographer, -dramatist and humourist, all combined into one. In his drama Rām Navami one finds Iśvar Candra Vidyāsāgar being mentioned in the speech of a character as the advocate of widow-marriage.12

His Kathin Sabdar Rahasya-bāyākhyā (Explannation of mystery of difficult words) is the only book where we find him as a witty writer. The book was originally serialised in the monthly, Bijuli (1890) and came out in book-form in 1911. According to Dimbesvār Neog, it is a "humorous interpretation of words, which are original, innocent and kindly jokes, some almost at his oost."13 But as we shall soon see, the humour is patchy and the work lacks a form.

The interpretation of words proceeds through dialogue. The dialogue, which takes the question and answer form, often contains stories which illustrate or augment the interpretations. While explaining the meaning of the word 'satini' (co-wife), the guru relates the following story. Sage Kalpanā had two wives, Gendhelī and Fedelī. The latter requested him to compose two purāṇas which have since been named after him. These became the popular scriptures of their age. Vyāsa was enraged at this, and cursed that the purāṇas would be relegated to the background (oblivion) and become useless. Kalpanā along with the wife prayed to Vyāsa for remission of the curse. Being pleased, Vyāsa said, "till Gaṅgā exists on earth, these


13. NLAL, p.378
purāṇas would not come again into vogue." Thus a definite time limit was set for the duration of the curse. When 'ardhodaya snān' was abolished, Ganga disappeared from earth. Norāi Adhyāpāk, the Professor that figures in these discourses, derived his knowledge from these purāṇas. According to these, the word 'Satini' (śatini) means three dead bodies.

The explanation, somewhat fantastic, is as follows: The Assamese letter 'S' (Ś) is demonlike in appearance and is the husband of two wives, Ś (ś) and S (ś). Although these three are united in life as one, their appearances differ and are eternally engaged in quarrel. Therefore they all lie unconscious as corpses. 14

To this exposition of the Professor, the student adds another story. A person called Medhi and his two wives, Rāmatī and Jāmatī had once a quarrel and as a result, they all took upon a vow of not conversing with one another. They passed the night in this manner. In the morning, Medhi's son came back from the field, but finding them not talking, took them as dead. He built a funeral pyre and huddled them together upon it with Medhi in the middle. The younger wife then cried out, 'Oh Medhi, get up'. The elder added in anger, "why did you break the silence?"

This probably refers to an orthographical and phonological phenomenon in Assamese language. S, Ś and Ś - these three letters are pronounced in the same manner and their individual distinctions are lost. These letters are often seen being arbitrarily used, but

14. KSRB, 5-7
are never treated as one. Their appearances differ like the sage's co-wives. Even if they are put on the funeral pyre, like Medhi's wives, they make their existence felt by desperate cries.

This is etymological pun, if we take the liberty of using the term a bit liberally. For the word 'Satini' can be also, by Assamese orthographical convention, pronounced as 'Sa-tini' (corpse-three) or three corpses. The stories refer to this anomaly in pronunciation, which alters the actual meaning of the word 'Satini' (co-wives). The author had to encounter these problems of language in his days. The incongruity between the ideal pronunciation assigned to a letter and the actual one used in popular speech is used here as a source of low comedy. (This can be also called a case of paranomasia, as the words are paronymous).

The new words that were coined from foreign or non-Indian sources during the period are also treated as source of etymological pun. Here is an example –

Cāhāb = Cāhena bah pātu iti. cāh khāi rakṣā pari thāke dekhi cāhāb.¹⁵

(cāhāb = cāhena bah pātu iti. A cāhāb is one who saves himself by taking tea.)¹⁶

This is not the actual meaning of the word cāhāb, for Hemoandra Baruva defines (in his dictionary, Hem Kos) it thus, "a gentleman, an European, an English man, Bhadralok". He no doubt takes tea as a beverage, but to suggest that he saves himself by

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¹⁵ KSRB, p1

¹⁶ "Cāhena bah pātu iti" – the meaning of this sentence is not clear. If we attempt at literal translation it shall mean "by (taking) tea let you be saved" or as a Sanskrit scholar suggested
taking it is simply funny. Therefore lack of logic provides us with an occasion for vacant laughter.

Baruva directs some of his etymological puns (or paronomastic use of words) to make fun of the manners of the new class of native shahibs that flourished in/early period of foreign rule. The following examples strengthens this impression -

Hākim = Hā kim padārtham, hā eito ki padārtha
Ou? (hākimak ciniba novāri, Yama, kuber, Bayu, Agni, Indra prabhṛtī daśā dikipāl yene sei rup tāre āru māre). 17

(Hākim - Hā kim padhārtham, oh, what manner of a man is this? You cannot understand a magistrate. He is like the ten dikpālas such as Yama, Kuber, Bāyu, Agni, Indra, etc. He saves as well as kills.)

It may be mentioned that Baruva himself was an Extra Assistant Commissioner, which, in popular parlance, meant "hākim". Ignorant people used to associate with the word wide powers, which Baruva regarded as his target of attack. Take also the case of the word 'Kamisanār' (Commissioner), which directly refers to his office:

Kamisanār = kam-śa-nara. arthāt nara-manisār bhitarat īśvaratkai kam mānūḥ jan. 18

(Kamisanār = Kam-śa-nara. This means that the Commissioner is that person among men who is only less than God (in stature).)

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17. KSRB, p. 2.
18. KSRB, p. 4.

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This is an indirect satire on the false belief of the multitude regarding Commissioner’s powers. It can be also interpreted as a direct criticism of exaggerated notion of official power on the part of the high officials.

The pun on ‘makardmă’ casts aspersions on the litigious habits of persons which usually ruin them. Kypabar Barbaruvă, the humorous figure created by L. N. Bezbaruva, was impressed by this manner of punning and he refers to the pun of this very word in his essay ‘makardmăr răm-tăngon’ with evident relish. According to the humorous interpretation given by Gunăbirim Baruvă, ‘Makardmă’ (law suit) means “maŋ manusyang Kardamang Karoti iti yaŋ sah” (That which turns man into a paste of clay is law-suit). Explaining further, the author says that the man who is engaged in a law-suit becomes denuded of his money and spirit and reduces himself to a paste of clay. The hint is obvious.

According to him, ‘kitäp’ is a thing that emits heat or gives pains. It thus refers to the pains associated with intellectual labour which frightens many beginners. Similarly interesting is his etymological pun on the word ‘Kamiti’ (Committee), a coinage from the English language.

\[
\text{(Kamiti = Ka ku-mati; it questions speeches or words as closely as a mole-cricket digs earth)}
\]

\[
\text{Kamiti = Ka ku-mati; kumatir dare katha khocare.} \tag{22}
\]

19. BG, p.1584
20. KSRB, p.1
21. ibid, p.4
22. ibid, p.4
This is innocent but the humorous comment on the function of a Committee in public affairs.

The etymological puns (or paronomasia) on 'Barā', 'Barbaruva', all functional titles held by a class of officials of Ahom days convey to us here the fact of their devaluation during the British rule. At the same time, the hollowness of pride associated with these empty titles is being subject to clever ridicule. The professor explains that one who raises his voice as he speaks is Barā—(yijane bar dāṅgarkoi sabda kari kathā kai seye Barā). He is the first incarnation in the hierarchy. If the vowel suffix 'ā' is removed and replaced by 'uvā', it becomes Baruvā, the second incarnation. And when 'bar' is affixed before Baruvā, the third incarnation takes place (Barbaruva). The use of the word incarnation (avatār) and reference to hollow verbalism of manners practised by this class of people, are significant. The gentle satire implied.

The ironic praise bestowed on the Europeans in India as the Brahmins of Kaliyuga is an instance of mild satire on colour prejudice, hollow scholasticism and sense of caste superiority entertained by Brahmins:


23. KSRB.H 7
24. ibid., 9
(In the kali age the Englishmen are the Brahmins. You perhaps know that the brahmins are of 'white' (pure) blood. Not to speak of the various qualifications of Englishmen, even the colour of their skin is white. It is a crime if you do not offer your respects with folded hands, when you happen to meet a Brahmin. So is the case with the Englishmen. It is a crime not to salute, when you meet him. The brahmins always receive light punishment even for his great crimes. So is the case with the Englishmen. The words of the Brahmins are Vedas. Similarly the words uttered by Englishmen are laws. The Brahmin and the fire are said to be ever pure. The Englishmen are also ever pure.)

This is a neat social satire and reflects the advanced social view-point with which he brings into focus the false social values associated with caste superiority. Here he equals Hemchandra in zeal, but being of milder temperament, his satire is never bitter or ruthless. It may be mentioned in passing that both Baruvās were severely critical of hypocritical clergy. Like Korkhanīya Govordhan ātā of Kovābhāturī and Ramāi Pāndīt in Kāthin śabdār Rahasya Bākhyā also shows his ridiculous ignorance of the meaning of religious texts. Both the writers were akin in outlook, but not in temperament. Guṇābhīrām was witty and his sense was genial. The etymological puns, taken together, can be treated as a parody of dictionary. But even as a parody it is not effective, and the form of dictionary is not a good vehicle for comedy. Words that are punned can hardly be connected with each other to give the unity of art-form. By itself, this cluster of puns does not create the effect of a good comic work. The punned words have some transposed meanings attached to it, and therefore it cannot be treated as farcical. But the basic defect of the work is that it has no form. Humour is patchy. Therefore it does not create a genuine humorous effect.
Lambodar Barā (1860-92) was a diligent stylist. According to Dimbesāvar Neog, Lambodar was one of the few Assamese writers who studied rhetorics with devotion and made distinct contribution towards development of Assamese prose style.25

Gentle irony found in the balanced satirical epistle addressed to the editor of Āśāṃ-bandhu, a contemporary literary journal, (edited by Gunābhirām) written by him under the pseudonym of Sadānanda is expressed agreeably and in delightful prose. The following sentence is typical:

"Bed parhā (padhā) bāpusakalar man dayāre komal haleo, teóloke moh chāgali ādi pasu bali diyāt bar nidāruŋ".26

(The brahmin, who is well-versed in the Vedas, possesses a heart that is softened by compassion, but he can be very cruel-hearted when it concerns sacrificing animals like buffaloes and goats (in puja).)

Literally rendered, the title of his epistle is "Light sleep of Sadānanda". (Sadānandar kalāghumati). Sadānanda indulges in empty speech-making unmatched by action, from which he usually takes holiday. He loves gossips, but takes care not to express risky opinions. He partakes of all the pleasures open to the senses and likes self-display.

There is an interesting piece in his epistle regarding search for themes. "What should I write?" (etiya lekho ki?)—he

25. NLAL, p.398
questions himself. Should he write about "short sleep" (kalāghumati)? "No it is already known to almost all the Assamese people" (nahai, eito prāi sakalo asamīyāi jāne), he persuades himself. Should he write about the taste of brandy? No, even the staunch upholders of the Aryan civilisation, the Brahmins, drink it to their heart's content. On the other hand, religion today is the most impure thing and it is expelled from every place. Even journals that publish religious topics do not sell. Everybody is indifferent to religion; this is precisely due to the impact of civilisation and science. Even God is a forbidden topic:

"Milar 'mi' to nou pāotei, ye ye Milar nām sūniche, seye īśvarar anta pāi nāstik hoiche, āru mane mane bhābiche moyo ejan Mil, tente etiyā ki lekho? he āi svarasvatī."27

(People, who have only heard Mill's name and not even acquired a smattering of his ideas, have become atheists by announcing the death of God (or by reaching the very limit of God).)

The reference here made to James Mill, the eighteenth century rational philosopher, is highly significant.

The spirit of satire pervades the piece and his tirade against shallowness of knowledge is clear. Finally, he sees a way out in the imitation of writings in Punch, a British illustrated weekly journal, devoted to social and political satire, humour and dramatic criticism, first published in June 17, 1841. But for Punch-style comic writings, the Assamese society is not ready.

27. ASC, Vol.III, p.385
he pānchar sarasvatī āi, Asamiyā samāj etiyāo sabhyā hoba novāri. etiyāo bilāti pānī, bilāti batāh, bilāti heṭ-kot, bilāti khānār mol nubujile.'28

(0 sarasvatī of Punch, the Assamese society has failed to become civilised even now. It still does not appreciate the benefits of foreign liquor, foreign ways, foreign clothes and foreign food.)

Added to this society's unpreparedness, is Sadānanda's aversion to write in his mother tongue:

"matr bhāsā lekā, kovā-bā parhā (paḍhā) sadānandar 'beneath the dignity'."29

(To write, speak, and read in one's own mother tongue is beneath Sadānanda's dignity.)

Lambodar Barā was against blind and superficial imitation of western culture. Much of his satire against blind imitation of foreign manners and disparagement of one's own language had a topical validity.

Sometimes other topics also creeps into his epistles. One is about the subscriber of newspaper, of who fail to pay his subscription:

"Chouddha bachar āsām bilāsinī parhi (padhi) tār paioā etiyāo nidilo, kāraṇ gosāir prasād eneī pāba pāo."30

(Even though I have read the Āssām Bilāsinī for last fourteen years, I have yet to pay a single farthing.)

29. ibid., p.389
30. ibid., p.384
This witty piece is satiric too. His tirade against verbal patriotism unmatched by action, and idle and parasitic living is however more effective in his short dictionary of words (like Gunābhirām's dictionary of etymological puns). The exposition of meanings in it is witty.

The method is akin to that of Gunābhirām. For 'cāhāb' is defined as biped who is elegantly dressed but a terror to the poor natives, an incarnation of death to his clerks, and an obstacle in India's path of progress. He is tongue-tied like a boar and given to anger.31 A 'patriot' is one who does not pay newspaper subscription, who gives dinner in honour of Englishmen for obtaining titles, and who is money-grabber and hater of natives; he believes in driving Englishmen out of India through newspaper-campaigns.32 A 'bābu' is one who holds an office; he imitates the English and is given to drink, hypoorisy, cheating, lying and abominable toleration of servitude. He is usually in debt and indulges in patriotic speeches unmatched by action.33 To him, female education (strī-sīksā) means learning to write love-letters, ability to read cheap novels and acquiring an attitude of aversion to house-hold duties. It also means rejection of bridegrooms and usurping the role of man.

These definitions are sufficient to show that Barā aimed at social satire. Barā has done so without lampooning individuals.

32. ibid.
33. ibid.
He has like Guṇābhirām only dealt with types. This makes his satire
mild and gentle. It may however be pointed that his standpoint is
not always in accord with the historical and progressive trends of
thought. It appears that the manner in which he defines 'female
education' (strī-śiksā) is jolly but slightly derisive. One is at
a loss to know whether he appreciated letter-writing or novel-read-
ing by women at all.
Satyanath Bara (1860-1925) was primarily an essayist with a distinct style, although he wrote some light songs and poems. A few songs are often delightful and funny:

Sunchnahne apigila khajana bareihi
dibaa nolli nibok dhari pyada logeidi.\textsuperscript{34}

(Do you know, girls, the Government has increased the revenue rate. In case of non-payment, piyadas will be sent to take you away.)

Written in colloquial Assamese, the passage evokes delight in our mind. But sustained delight is lacking. Even in Sabhyat\textbar Mathauri (A bund of civilisation), which Dr S. N. Sarma refers to in his history of Assamese literature\textsuperscript{35} as his best comic poem, we find only patchy humour. The central idea here is to resist the onrush of civilisation, which, after effectively covering the rest of the country, has reached Assam's border. Written evidently to ridicule the conservative elements in Assamese society, the poem is socially significant. Civilisation is compared to a great flood, to resist which a bund was constructed at the border, and as a result, Assam remained unaffected by it.

Ujabar upai napai sabhyata
ubhati bhati gol.
ujani-nahani goetei Asam
\text{agar nicinai rol.}\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34. Asamiya Sahitya Kos, Sarbesvar Katak\textbar, p.287}
\textsuperscript{35. ASI, p.315}
\textsuperscript{36. Marah\textbar phular karani, Editor Atul Candra Hazari\textbar (1962), pp.102-104.}
Unable to proceed ahead, the civilisation receded. And (unaffected by it) both upper and lower Assam thus remained as before.

There is wit in this comment, which enlivens the short poem momentarily.

However, as Dr. Sarmā has pointed out, it is only in his book Kendra-sabhā that we find an attempt at sustained laughter. But here too he seemed to have achieved only a limited success.

The book contains loose sallies dished out in form of lectures in a club on problems like freedom of women, Assam's population and oddities of human desire. These can be regarded as essays with occasional sprinkling of humour and satire within them. Even here the comic elements are patchy, or commonplace.

There is for instance, an attempt at etymological humour in the piece Bhakatiyā byākaran.

\[ \text{biyā sabdar artha biyā, karāi karan} \\
\text{biyā karile śiksā hai byākaran.} \]

(The word biyā means marriage, and karan denotes performance. Therefore performance of marriage is byākaran or grammar.)

This is evidently witty, but farcical.

In another passage, he creates a successful ironic effect. It describes the unsympathetic attitude shown by the mother-in-law towards the daughter-in-law in society:

37. ASI, p.315
38. Published by Ambikā Nāth Barā, 1914.
39. Kendra-sabhā, p.69
"Sāhur bhīcēnāt bovārī sīlar mānuh; tāir bānato bhāgar nāi, gālito bejār nāi, petāto bhok nāi ..." 40

(In the mother-in-law's view, the daughter-in-law is made of stone. She does not feel tired at work. She does not feel sad even when rebuked and her belly does not know what hunger is.)

Such ironic passages can sometimes be witty too, as in the following —

"tīrotā nej-gubaruva gāi bā leṭī lovā gāharī yen haba lāge. teōlokār gār gondhat khālar jakhini āru gachar pīśācini palāba lāge. Kiyono sutirī gendhelī i dākar bachan." 41

(A woman should be either like a cow whose tail is smeared with cow-dung or like a pig that wallows in dirt. Smell of their bodies should make even the evil spirits (in the ditches as well as the trees) flee. For it is said in the aphorisms of Dāk that the good woman should be or is untidy.)

The quotation of Dāk enhances the ironic effect and the social practice of toleration of woman's miseries comes under heavy fire.

Satyanāth was by temperament a serious man. He was fairly advanced in age when he published Kendra-sabhā (1929). Patchy laughter or satire found in his essays here, are aimed at social reforms, which includes bettering the lot of women. He usually is moderate in his views and wants to avoid extremes. But his essays, as a whole, are serious, and the occasional irony or wit is too incidental to have any stable satiric or humorous effect. His style lacks imagination. This is a weak feature of his essays.

40. Kendra-sabhā, p.9
41. ibid., p.10
Lakṣmīnātha Bezbaruva - (5)

Lakṣmīnātha (1864-1939) was a versatile and talented writer. No genre was foreign to him. His writings include fiction, drama, poetry and essay. But his reputation as a writer mainly rests on the humorous pieces. The humorous pieces were mostly written under the pseudonym of Kṛpābar Barbaruva.

Before we take up these pieces, a brief discussion of his humorous and satiric short-stories may not be considered improper, as these short stories also throw light on the comic technique. Śrī T. N. Gosvāmi rightly points out that his short-stories are rich in humour and satire and they are not much different in spirit from the humorous pieces written under the pseudonym of Kṛpābar.

The most successful of his comic short-stories are caricatures. The characters of Bhokendra Baruvā, Nāngalu Candra Dās, Jagarā Mandal and Milārām illustrate this truth. His familiar technique of caricature is lampooning. A contemporary literary personality is said to have been caricatured in Bhokendra Baruvā, but Bhokendra is not merely a charlatan poet, but he is also a selfish social climber and hypocrite. He is foppish enough to change his rustic name for a refined one to prove his gentility; at the same time, he has no compunction to take dowry from his

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42. Asamīya Galpa Sāhitya, T.N. Gosvāmi, pp.139-45
43. Bhokendra Baruvā, p.718; BG.
44. Nāngalu Candra Dās, p.700; BG
45. Jagarāmandalar Pramābhinaya, p.705; BG
46. Milārāmar ātmajīvanī, p.674; BG.
father-in-law, earn money as a political spy and misappropriate public money. He is, in the final reckoning, a social type combining in his personality the elements of several other odd individuals. Lampooning is directed more against certain social tendencies than against an individual. Even though the writer had in mind certain individual at the time of writing the story, he is barely recognisable in it. In fact he is a type.

Bhokendra's name was Bhokondl. He is so much puffed up after receiving college education that he considers Bhokondl to be a derogatory name and therefore changes it into Bhokendra Baruvā to gain in respectability. Then he composes a burlesque epic in imitation of Meghnād Badha. The occasion is provided by the news of his father Gondhai's demise. Gondhai was a milk-man and had least claim to be the hero in an epic. He makes himself ludicrous by writing an epic on his life:

Samukh ranat pari bir cudāmani
gondhesvar guci yebe gol svargapurī
akaloī, kovā he amṛṭbhāṣinī
śokat karile kibā jetukā ṭisvarī?

(When the great Gondhesvar, having been vanquished in direct fight, went to heaven alone, tell me, O nectar-tongued goddess, what did Jetukesvarī who was devoted to her husband, do in her fit of grief.)

When we compare this burlesque passage with Michael's opening lines in Meghnāda-badha kāvyā, we understand fully the author's satiric intention:

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47. BG, p.719
48. BG, p.721
Sanmukha-samare pari, bīra-cudāmani
bīrabābu, oali yabe gela yamapure
akāle, kaha, he debi amṛtabhāśini
Kona bīrabare bori senāpati-pade
pathāila raṇe punoh rakṣahkulanidhi
Rāghavārī. 49

Bhokendra is uncoonsiously ridiculous in every work he does. The
author's satire against his foppishness, moral depravity and other
follies is clear, but it is often barely recognisable under a mask
of laughter.

In Nāṅgalu Candra Dās, we again meet with a similar imma-
ture poetaster. Nāṅgalu too addresses a farcical love doggerel to
an eight year old girl, Sirīṣ.

śirīṣa seuti
tomāla mālatī labāṅga bāgi gulāl.
etiyāi dekhā di, prāṇ hori ni
bāgi di koloi palāl. 50

(Sirīṣa, seuti, tomāla, mālatī, labāṅga, bāgi and
gulāl (these are all flowers). You appeared before
me just now, and they by giving a false excuse sud-
denly disappeared.)

The piece is farcical, but there may be an indirect hint that the
society at Bezbaruva's time did not take kindly to love doggerels
or any manifestation of puerile romantic love in literature. Even
a literatteur like Lambodar Barā thought that scenes of romantic
love, suicide and drunkenness in fiction or their practice in life
were immoral. 51

49. Michael Racaṇā-Sambhār, Mitra and Ghosh, Edited by P. Bisi.
50. BG, p. 701
51. Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaruva satabārṣikī smṛtigrantha; See Jonākī Yug
by Benudhar Sarmā, pp.10-11.
Nāngalu is unconsciously ludicrous; but inspite of his farcical exercises in poetry, he is, towards the end, cured of his mania and lives as a normal man. There is, however, no reason to believe that Bezbaruvā, as a detached observer, shared this prejudice against romantic love; it is more likely that as the editor of the monthly Bāhī, he came across many immature poets. This theme of satire recurs also in Endhārīr asampurna prempatra (Endhārī's incomplete love-letter) and pieces like The potion poetic and Fit Poetic, two English poems written under the name of Kṛpābar Barbaruvā. In Fit Poetic Kṛpābar defines the aim of his poetry and enumerates some of his favourite themes:

I will write sonnets on maid young and old
And epitaphs on cat and horse, monkey and ge dog;
I will sing the praise of those who give me gold,
And damn those who won't go with me the whole hog,
I will descant on themes I don't understand a bit.
In language serious and mystio
Attempts to decipher which will give you the fit.

The first line could have been written by Nāngalu as well, for he addresses doggerel not only to "gouri" (eight year old maid) but also to the old maid, Kāminī.

In Jagara mandalar premābhinaya, Jagara, the village mandal derives his idea of romantic love from a town lawyer who is a voracious reader of novels. He comes back home inspired and behaves ludicrously to his unsophisticated wife imitating the manners of lovers in fiction. The wife is surprised at his improbable

52. BG, p.1315
53. BG, p.1684
54. BG, p.1684
behaviour and tries to bring him to senses. The whole scene is farcical. The following dialogue clearly brings out the farcical tone of the narrative:

Jagarā - ehe, konti jon? eiti ne seiṭi?
Jagarāni - yoā yoā deo he, cuvā carur toli-jen mukhar baraṇ, tāk pāṭichā jon? imānkoī theta kariba lāgīche no kelei.55

(Jagarā - Which is the real moon, your face or the one in the sky?
Jagarāni - Now this is silly. My face resembles the bottom layer of a cooking pan. By comparing with moon, you are ridiculing me.)

The scene, based on incongruity of manners, is extremely ridiculous. A similar scene is found in Āmār Samsar:

Dambaru(a student of B.A.third year class) - Priye, tumi lekhā-parhā (paḍhā) sikhāne? ki kitāp parhichā (paḍhichā)? kovā kovā, mainā kovā!
Child wife - āḍipāṭh.56

(Dambaru - Oh dear, are you learning to read and write? What books are you reading? Tell me dear, tell me.
Child wife - āḍipāṭh.)

It is a funny conversation of the newly married couple in their first night. It is a travesty of love. While the child-wife is thinking of her dolls which she left at home, Dambaru is reciting lines from Romeo and Juliet. The effect of this dialogue is farcical.

55. BG, p.705
56. BG, p.693
In Malak Guin Guin, he lampoons an anglicised Assamese official, who is a fop and consciously tries to wash clean of his rural past and behave ludicrously with his parents. A typical passage of conversation between him and his father shows how Bezbaruvā contrasts parental solicitude with bourgeoisie ingratitude to create laughter:

Malak - tomar gat malire kolā kāpor dekhile mor bar 'shame' hai, bar lāj pāa, āru mor 'servant'- I mean mor loguā hotei bā mok ki bhābiba? Koṭ pentloon pindhi āhiba pārile mai bar santos pām.

Tolan - Bole sāt puruṣat nohāl gāi, karīyā loī khīrāboloī yāi. morībar kālāt mai etṭā bahuvār bhāo dim? Bopā, tohate jīmān lekhā-parhā (padhā) sīkīcha kintu, tahatar budhibilāk kalikatiyā Bekā hoi goiche. 58

(Malak - I feel greatly ashamed to see you clad in dirty clothes. And what will my servant think about me? I shall be happy if you can come here clothed in European dress.

Tolan - This is like milching a cow. One never had within one's living memory with a bamboo jug. Should I now at this old age behave as a clown? You have read a good deal no doubt, but your ideas have are crooked in the Calcuttan fashion.)

There is an undertone of satire in the mirth the scene evokes. The traditional father thinks that it is clownish to ape the European manners; the boy, on the other hand, feels that it is consistent with his self-respect. The confrontation between the two genera-

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57. BG, p.599
58. BG, p.602
tions is exaggerated to a extent where it creates a satiric effect. Tolan is a normal character who acts a foil to his foolish son. Moreover, he is the embodiment of plebian wisdom. The contrast is pleasantly portrayed and the satiric tone is tempered.

In Milārāmar ātmajīvāni, Bezbaruva uses his other usual device to create laughter through autobiographical narrative or internal monologue. There is a clear intention in the short story to ridicule the fashion in literary circles of his day to write autobiography. One visible impact of western ideas on the Assamese society was the rise of individualism. Increase of interests in the individual made the art of autobiography popular. However, some autobiographies written at the time were puerile and the authors were boastful of their lineage. Milārām's boasting of his lineage seems to be a satire on this particular foible of a writer of autobiography. He comes from a family of thieves and opium-addicts. Yet he boasts that "his family in Assam is as old as the Pātkai hills, as high as the Jai doul (an ancient temple at Sibasagar), as big as the Śibasāgar tank and as bright as the falling star." Milārām at the same time does not feel ashamed to state in hyperbolic tone that his ancestor, Sindhirūm came to Assam as the ring leader of a gang of thieves in A.D. 1619 from Kanauj and was imprisoned by the Ṭhomas King, Rudra Singha, for his 'honourable' activities. Milārām has very little education, yet he is proud of his great scholarship. Then he becomes a drug-addict and wants

59. BG, p. 674
60. ibid.
61. ibid., p. 677
to marry the daughter of an opium-eater. But his father appears in a reverie and dissuades him from marrying her on the ground that she may turn out to be as quarrelsome as his mother. 62 Throughout his life, Milārām has been preoccupied with three basic activities: eating, sleeping and getting intoxicated. 63 Keko Kaka advises him to take opium gratis by licking his skin. 64 The hint is obvious. Then he presides over a conference of opium-eaters, where a petition is drafted to be placed before Queen Victoria. Their prayer is for enforcement of measures for cancellation of opium prohibition order, 65 then current in Assam. The opium-eaters then decide collectively to denounce efforts by a section of Assamese people to rouse the Government and the people to action against opium-addiction. He then ends his account with description of a scene of drinking. 66

Milārām thus presents us with a boastful account of a base life. It can be read for fun, as well as to appreciate the implied satire directed against trivial autobiographical writing and habits or actions that hinder individual and social progress. Bezbaruva’s style is best revealed in its tone. He tries to create an inexhaustible delight in word-patterns. There is comic impropriety in his imageries and his language has a merry rhythm. The effect is better felt than described.

62. BG, p.681
63. BG, Keko kaka, p.681
64. ibid., p.682
65. BG, pp.684-86
66. ibid., pp.690-92.
Krpabar Barbaruva

Krpabar Barbaruva is the pseudonym of Bezbaruva. Under this name, he wrote a large number of personal humorous essays, which are now available in a single volume (Bezbaruva Granthāvalī, published by Sāhitya Prakāsh, Gauhati). These essays are spread over the following books - (1) Kṛpabar Baruvār Kākatar Topolā, (2) Kṛpabar Baruvār Obhotani, (3) Kṛpabar Baruvār Bulani, (4) Kṛpabar Baruvār Bhāvar Burburani, (5) Kṛpabar Baruvār Cintār Siguti, (6) Kṛpabar Baruvār Sāhityik Rahasya and (7) Kṛpabar Baruvār Sāmarapā. The first two books were published in 1904 and in 1909 respectively. The other books were compiled after his death by scholars. All these books form a part of the second volume of Bezbaruva Granthāvalī.

Benudhar Šarmā has noted that the figure of Kṛpabar appeared first in a cartoon (in 1890 A.D.). According to a sonnet written by Kṛpabar on himself, he is a great warrior holding a sudarśan caura like Viṣṇu and a trident like Śiva in his hands. His Kākatar Topolā is like Mahendra's bajra. He considers himself to be the pride of Assam and gracious like the wish-fulfilling tree. But the colour of his skin is as black as the cooking pot. In spite of his arduous labour, he is a poet worth only fourteen lines (a sonneteer?) and writes his life's epic all by himself. Since his mother used to take hot curry prepared from arum-leaf (during her pregnancy), he is endowed with power to kick hard at the back of wicked beings. Towards injustice, he is as piercing as the Nāgā javelin; but he is eager to reward justice. But he is given to drink country  

67. Arghyāvalī, Benudhar Šarmā.
liquor and is addicted to hemp and opium. Stout-armed Kṛpābar thinks always in terms of doing good to others, but being a bad rhym-mer, he plays havoc with poems. 68

From Jīvikār Upāi, 69 we know that he had no regular education. His first application in English for a job was rejected for his insufficient knowledge of the language. He became a school teacher, but what he taught in the classes did not please the school Inspector and was therefore sacked. His subsequent ambition to become a tea garden clerk, a shop-keeper, a pontifical religious guru, a cultivator and a pleader in turn, did not materialise. He tried his hand in journalism. Here also he came to grief. Then he attempted to live by book-writing, but that did not turn out to be an economic proposition. At last he becomes a public worker.

Compared to Kamalā Kānta of Kamalā Kānter Daptar70 by Baṅkim Candra Cattopādhyāya, he seems to have a less steady character. Kamalā Kānta worked in an office, but due to the curious nature of his functioning, he lost his job. He quoted lines from Shakespeare in official correspondence, and drew pictures on the pay-bill. In one of these pictures entitled 'real-pay-bill', he drew a picture of some Nāga Fakirs, who beg alms from the shahib. This cost him his job. He is however an opium-eater like Kṛpābar, but there the likeness seems to end. Kamalā Kānta seems to be intellectually more cogent and temperamentally more serious than Kṛpābar.

68. BG, Vol.II, p.1263
69. ibid., p.1256
Krpābar Baruvā was, if his own words are to be believed, born in saka 1780, in the month of Pousa. He was born in the evening on a amābasyā day. Some predicted that he would be a mouzādār or a Court Sheristadar; his father thought he would be a Bezbaruvā, i.e., a physician. But these predictions did not come true. He wanted to change his surname 'Baruvā' to 'Barbaruvā' to enhance his standing in society. He actually did it. The reason which impelled him to change this is somewhat in the line suggested by the professor in Kathin šabdāra rahasya byākhya. According to this line of thinking, a surname gains in respectability, if a suffix or prefix is added to it. It was a fashion in those days to adopt respectable surname and Krpābar directed his satire against it. He writes, 'Jadi etāibor enekuvā māhkhova bāndarsi, tente Krpābar Baruvāīno jāti-bhāīr lagat dui-soirā māh khāle, arthāt Barbaruvā holeno ki pāk lāgiba?' (When everyone is a pulse-eating monkey (i.e., everyone behaves in the same fashion), then nothing would happen if Krpābar Baruvā eats some peas with his kinsmen (i.e., if Krpābar becomes Barbaruvā).)

The hint is obvious. It is quite clear from the above account that the character of Krpābar is conceived as a type. He has plebeian vices, and common failings; yet he has a passion for justice.

71. BG, pp.1235-36; Mor Janma-rahasya, p.1237; Jīvikār Upāi.
72. BG, p.1237; Bisay āru Bisayā
73. See page 159 of this dissertation.
74. BG, p.1237; Bisay āru Bisayā
75. BG, p.1237; Bisay āru Bisayā
Kṛpābar's writings, on the face of it, cannot be easily classified into any known comic art-form. We get in them fiction, non-fiction and even poems in which various comic techniques are employed. There is also disparity in his literary performance. Variation of standards is often noticed between his early and later writings and as also between individual pieces belonging to the same period. The appeal of Bezbaruva's writings however lies in the very pattern of the works as a whole. Where he criticises the actual, we get satire; when he focusses our attention on human oddities and comic incongruities sympathetically, we get humour. But when he displays mere pleasant loquacity, we find him often rambling, or merely clowning.

It appears that in his first two books, Kākatar Topolā and Obhotani, Bezbaruva (or his alter-ego Kṛpābar) deals with some subject-matters that are either expanded or repeated in his subsequent writings. In Samājik,76 in Kākatar Topolā, his comic criticism is directed against corruption, foibles, selfishness and narrow-mindedness of the feudal elements in Assamese society. This is repeated in different form in the pieces like Khaahāṭā Dimaru Satrādhikār (p.1323, BG) in Barbaruvār Bulani. Similarly interest shown in political and social failings of the Assamese or Indian people in pieces like Asamiyā Jāṭi Dāṅgar Jāṭi (p.1249, BG) and Bhārat Uddhār (p.1274, BG) are repeated in pieces like Rājnīti (p.1458, BG) and Deśodhārār dihā (p.1459, BG) in Barbaruvār Bhāvar Burburani. Problems relating to marriage and female emancipation, as found in pieces like Barbaruvār Biyā (p.1260) and Ghoinī Sakalar Prati Barbaruvār Upadeś (p.1304) in the earlier books, are also dealt with

76. BG, p.1238
in Strī-Svādhīnatā (p.1462) and Brddha-bibāh Pracārinī Sabha (p.1609).

In the same way, interests in antiquarian studies, immature poetry, superstition, narrow nationalism, blind imitativeness and journalistic problems are detected both in his earlier and later writings. However, a large number of essays do not present any particular problem as such but deal with general human oddities and amusing materials.

The spirit of laughter is, as a rule, maintained through verbal devices. He is an adept in the art of caricature. He often employs singly or in conjunction monologue, dialogue, letter, oration, narrative, manners-painting, character-drawing, fantasy, burlesque, parody and other devices that suit his purpose. He also imitates different literary forms like autobiography, biography, story and Puranic mode of relating events, dramatic scenes and dialogue etc.

He plays on words. He coins mixed words (usually formed by combination of two words with dissimilar associations) in the following manner:

(1) Korhāl-prasānga: Korhāl (noise) denotes mixture of disagreeable sounds, whereas 'prasānga' denotes harmonious blending of audible and agreeable sounds for creating musical effect, and is associated with religious prayer. The combination of these words is incongruous and therefore comic.

77. Hāh-curīr Makardāmā, p. 1320, BG
78. Ānandarām Baruvārcamu Jīvan-carit, BG, p.1277
79. Barbaruvār Dinār Tebol, p.1371, BG
80. Mahābhāratar Pātani, p.1306; Manusya-purāṇ, p.1433, BG
81. BG, pp.1417-1420; Betāl Sāstha-bīngātā (2)
(2) Khāund-sahasraham: 'Khāund' is a surname of a person and 'sahasranām' denotes repeated utterance of God's name, i.e., fervent prayer. To combine the two words is to create burlesque effect through incongruity of feelings. After all, to make fervent prayers to an ordinary mortal sounds obsequious and hypocritical.

(3) Dāngariyā-lālukī: 'Dāngariyā' means a Lord or a venerable person in Assamese and 'lālukī' means 'tadpole'. To describe a person as a 'dāngariyā-lālukī' is just to ridicule him.82

He occasionally plays on the language itself. There is solecism, spelling mistakes and free violation of punctuation rules in the Krpābar's first application in English for a job:

"Dated Sibsagor the eighteenth April eighteen hundred and eighty five Sir I hope the honour to reform you that being given to understand that the post of the revenue superintendence is lying vacancy in your office and I beg to apply myself as a candidate for the situation."83

Naturally his application is not accepted by the boss and summarily dismissed. Krpābar however is unrepentent and blames the Englishmen for their failure to recognise the worth of the local persons. Such pieces based on verbal tricks, often tend to become farcical.

He uses some verbal devices like wit, irony and sarcasm for creating comic effect. There is much irony in the following piece:

82. Bezbaruvar Hāsyā-rasar Prakṛti, p.147, Laksmināth Bezbaruva, a centenary volume published by the Publication Board, Assam (writer - B. K. Bhattacharyya).

83. Jivikār Upāi, p.1256, BG
"asamiya jati—Yujarujati, mäch-pohārire soite yuddha
bā dhevāi kari māch kārhi (kāḍhi) niyā Mohirām
constabolei tār pramāṇ."

(The Assamese is a great nationality. Mohirām, the constable,
is the proof of this. He fights with the fish-selling woman
and takes away her fish by force.)

The ironic effect is also evident in another piece:

"Asamiya jatikno dāngariya—jāti kiya bulicho kiya koi diu.
Asamat dāngariya bhāg sarah. ēve, ēve, nagare, nagare
dāngariya bṛnda bṛnda, ēgeye rajār dinat asamat domāi
dāngariya nāchil svikār karo, kintu ēji kālī imān
dāngariya (bādhiche) bārhiche ye asam—barpukhuri
dāngariya-lālukāre kolā pari āhiche.”

(Let me explain why I call Asamiya nationality a community
of Lords. Dāngariyas are numerous in the community. They
preponderate in villages as well as towns. It is true
that during the Āhom reign, their number were small, but
now their number increase to such an extent that Assam
is full of them. If Assam is taken to be a tank, then
it is full of tadpole—Lords (tad—poles in shape of Lords).
The whole tank looks black for this.)

Besides irony, he uses also witticism. Take the following examples:

(1) "Tikanirupī rāvanak īngrājrupī rāmehe saṃhār kariba
pāre. Tekeli peṭiyā govindāirupī Kṛpābarar si karma
nahay.”

(The Englishman, who is like Rāma can alone kill the pigtail
which is like Rāvana. This is not the work allotted to pot—
bellied Govinda, that is Kṛpābar.)

84. Asamiya Jāti Dāngar Jāti, p.1253, BG
85. ibid., p.1249, BG
86. Samājik, p.1240, BG
"Garuṇe sahan gun āche dekhiyei, go āru brāhmaṇaṅk vede eke sāriṭe thoicche, āru brahmār mukhar para olāiche buli koicche. Asamiyāo gotike gojātir tulya, āru brahmār mukha hante bāj, gotike pujya."87

(Since the cows and the Brahmin possess this quality of tolerance, the Vedas have placed them in the same rank. And according to the Vedas, they emanated from the mouth of the Brahmā. Therefore the Asamiyas (evidently for the habit of tolerance) are comparable to the cows and as they emanated from the mouth of Brahmā, they are also to be worshipped.)

This piece is witty. And Kṛpābar uses wit in many places with real comic or satiric effect. The former presupposes that the practice of wearing pig-tail is incompatible with the modern civilisation of which the Englishman is the symbol. The second is a witticism on the habit of meek tolerance practised by the Assamese people. Their tolerance of injustice is hinted at.

Sometimes paronomasia is used to create witty effect. He tells us in cumā-bignāṅ88 that "Kiss is grammatically a noun, but practically a conjunction".

Barbaruvā employs parody for various purposes. Here is an interesting example. Kṛpābar’s mini-newspaper, Juguli publishes the following parody of news:

"Juguli, Sanibār"
"āmi śuni santos pālo ye āmār Moirāpurar
Prajārañjan hākim Śrijut Nāṅgalu Candra

87. Asāmiyā jāti dāṅgar jāti, p.1250, BG
88. BG, p.1268
We are happy to learn that last Sunday, our popular Magistrate, Sri Nāngalū Candra Pās B.A. (Sir), made his newly-wed wife a cook (evidently through the customary ceremony.)

This is a satire on the delinquent news-sense. In a newspaper, events that interest the majority of readers and are useful to them make news. A private affair is not news.

Hyperbole is his favourite device for creating comic effect. While advocating freedom for women, Kṛpāhar says,

"Barbaruvaī tomālokak teōr samāne bahiboloi rangā thangā pari diche, bahā; ān nelāge, tomāloke yadi akorgajālikoi dharā, tenehole Barbaruvā lorār māk hoboloi rāti āche." ( BG, p 1598 )

(Barbaruva has given you the privilege of becoming equal with men and is prepared to receive you by spreading red carpets. You have only to avail yourself of it. Not only that, if you obstinately stick to your demand, then Barbaruva is even prepared to become a mother.)

Bezbaruva is ever prone to resort to paronomasia. We have already given one example. Here is another from Dharmā, Sāmpradāyik Samasyā āru Svarāj -

yān thāk tā dhei
dādāo tāt tāo khiti dāo
tā, tā, tāo
tāo khikhirāo khitā khitā dhini dāo.

89. BG, p.1473
These are bols (sounds) of a musical instrument, called khol. He interprets these words conveniently to make his ideas on svaraj known to all -

rn thāk - Let debts remain unpaid (when svaraj is won).

dhini dāo - Subject to one's will. This means that svarajist would be entitled not to pay his personal debt.

tādheī - Go away. If debts are asked for, you can say 'dheī', i.e., you can drive him away.

da dāo - Instead, give me fresh loans. The svarajists are entitled to ask for fresh loans.

Khi-khirāo - In svarajya, one is entitled to milk any cow and drink milk after warming.

The explanation is arbitrary, nevertheless he hints at possible misuse of svaraj in those early days of struggle through sheer play on words. The play on words is an indispensable element of his homely and enthralling narrative. He has a strong common sense and a ready wit. His style has its characteristic rhythm and tone. It reflects the vitality of the mind of the author and his power of comic treatment of closely observed matters. His favourite mode seems to be ironic exaggeration. He has that good sense which delights without offending and a sense of proportion that harmonises the antithetical or incongruous elements presented.

He is essentially a humorist and from his essay, ḫāhi, we know that to Bezbaruva laughter is an attitude of life. Barbaruvā says,

"Bhāratbarsar mānuhar dharamā āche,
ḥāhile mānuh pātal hai ... ḫāhi
harijan, tāk chuba nāpāi. kiya nāpāi?
People in India think that laughter makes a man light... laughter is Harijan, so it should not be touched. But why? ... The answer is again "one should not"... Three-fourth of people in Assam do not understand wit and humour. They cannot relish हास्य-रसार or humour.)

The reference to wit and humour is significant. He seems to identify हास्य-रसा with wit and humour.

Bezbaruva liked to appeal to audiences at different levels, and relied on farce for provoking an immediate response in them but he never lost sight of the comic view of life. The piece quoted from द्वार्म, सांप्रदायिकसमस्याः आरु स्वराज is farcical enough to raise loud laughter; but as soon as the words reveal their meanings, the satire on the degradation of the svarajists becomes clear. But the satiric elements are not bitter or oynic. Towards the end, he simply reminds the svarajists that svaraj is for all in the spirit of humour; he even moralises when he suggests that the best education has to be received in the hard school of life. Bezbaruva recognised the importance of style and spirit in comic literature, and this is what makes his particular kind of comedy appealing.

In आवरोहण-पर्व, 90 we find genial comedy. It is a narrative where the character of the horse-rider is finely drawn; the horse seems as eccentric as the rider. The description of बर्तरुवा’s journey on horse back from चिंतामुख to सिबसागर is

90. Bg, p.1297
homely and enthralling. He doubts his own equestrian skill; this added to the shying horse, on which he rides, is enough to make the journey interesting. Like the horse, which takes Mr Winkle to the manor (Pickwick Papers, chap 5), this horse too has his peculiar emotional moods. Both the horses shy on the way and give the riders much trouble. Like Mr Winkle, Kṛpābar also has his considerable misgivings in the lowest recesses of his own heart, relative to the equestrian skill. Kṛpābar too confesses, "I can no longer hide the fact that I am a novice, so far as equestrian skill is considered" (ghorāt uṭhā bidyāt ye mai eva āchilo, seiṭo kathā dhāki thorb. upāi nāchil.).

Mr Pickwick too meets with a similar fate with his four-wheeled chaise. It meets with an accident and he along with his companions has to carry the horse with them. "It is like a dream", ejaculated Mr Pickwick, "a hideous dream. The idea of a man walking about, all day with a dreadful horse, he can't get rid of". Kṛpābar also has to get down from his horse and walk the last few miles of the journey on foot with the horse. Kṛpābar says, "I shall never ride a horse from Dichāngmukh again."

The likeness of the episodes is however only facile, but what is remarkable is the akinness of spirit of humour in Kṛpābar's and Dickens' pieces. This is the spirit of the comic. The pieces are informed with 'power of goodness', 'the freedom of the heart'
and 'a ringing and affirmative laughter'.

The subject-matter is trivial, but Bezbaruva uses the cunning horse as a foil to the good-natured and conscientious horse-rider. He stops 21 times on the way and the rider persuades him each time to move forward, first by kindly patting and then by striking it with a rod, without any sense of despair or anger. The mood is neither farcical nor satiric, but kindly and delightful. Till the eighteenth stoppage, the genial rider does not even realise that the horse is a rogue; till then he thought that since it stopped each time at the gate of some family quarters, he was fond of human company and sociable. His punishments, however, bore little fruit, for when the horse stops for the twentieth time, it is only to express sympathy for its rider, who has fallen from his back with the tattered saddle, suffering injuries. After the twenty first stoppage, the horse is made to gallop, but the rider, feeling heavy pain in his buttocks, gets down and carries the horse the rest (three) of the 12 mile-long journey by holding its reins. It is then that he promises not to ride a horse from Dichāngmukh again. This contrast between goodness and folly, humanity and animality, morality and wickedness is finely balanced here; the final rejection of the horse is not only moral, but proper. The effect it creates is genuinely comic, and its significance cannot be missed.

The style is as idiomatic as it is jovial; the tone and rhythm of the narrative are characteristic of comedy. It is rich in comic similes and witticism. Here is a simile which raises the

94. Introduction, Pickwick Papers, Edgar Johnson, pp.35-36
comic effect: "Mohan responded to every stroke of the whip by jumping; the continuous jumping affected me in such a manner that I fell down from his back and almost levelled with earth. I fell down exactly like the Gauhati Church that had toppled down in the earthquake of 1897, unable to stand its tremors." 95

Samājik (dream) 96 has, on the other hand, a satiric substructure in it and in the scene of hell, we meet with an inverted world of justice. The narrative is not realistic, but fantastic. It is a significant piece through which an undercurrent of satire on the erring men of actual world runs; nevertheless it is still informed by a ringing and affirmative laughter. The predominant tone is comic.

Barbaruva dreams a dream. Under the spell of opium he is transported to a fantastic world. The messenger of Yama comes to take him to the nether world. He appears in the classic guise; his black colour evokes terror in the man’s heart. He has an iron rod in one of his hands; the other hand holds a binding rope. His look is terrible. His knee-calf is plump. But strangely enough, he is vulnerable to human follies. Barbaruva says, "bhāvilo khābaloi pāle deu, brahmā, rāja-prajā, santa-mahanta, cor-dakāt sakalo baś." 97 (Then I thought that all beings—the gods, Brahma, the king, the subjects, the virtuous, the thieves and the dacoits—are prone to taking bribes.) This proves correct. The messenger, who seems to be no better than a human police, takes bribe and lets him go scot-free in hell before he reaches the court of Yama. Before they set

95. BG, p. 1296
96. ibid., p. 1238
97. ibid.,
out, the messenger gives an account of his past life and describes how, despite his numerous sins, he was able to escape punishment in hell through the instrumentality of a lawyer called Mithya Kumar Ghosh.

After some time, they reach the river that separates the human world from hell, and find a ferry ready for sailing to the other bank. According to him, the ferry is exactly like those that ply in Assam rivers. After boarding the ferry, they scrutinise the passengers. Besides the familiar crew, the ferry has in it two Assamese passengers with long pigtails. "Oh Lord, save me from the demon of pigtail", he wails; but he knows that the pigtail-demons can only be killed by the Englishman, who is like reincarnated Rama. Their orthodox manners too are repelling.

Now let us examine his actual experiences in the hell after he becomes free. The following events he witnesses there highlight the sense of comic justice sought to be projected:

(1) A beautiful 16 year-old girl is entreating a monkey to receive his favour. But the monkey is simply indifferent. On inquiry, he finds that in the former existence, a boy was deeply in love with this girl and became almost mad for her. But she was indifferent and despised him. To compensate this sin, this girl, now in her after life, is trying to win the affection of this senseless monkey in a mood of repentence. Krpabar reacts emotionally, for he too was refused love by quite a good number of beautiful girls on earth. His conclusion is: "such pretty but haughty girls would meet this fate" (gotike ei gopal
sundarīsakalar ene dasāi lag loba).\(^9^8\)

(2) Then he sees a professor who is engaged in beating a number of men for not being able to read a newspaper written in Devanāgarī script. On inquiry, it is found that these men are Assamese, and in their former birth, they did not care to read Assamese newspapers. For this act of sin, they are being compelled to read newspapers in Devanāgarī script. This they fail to do and as a result, are being subjected to punishment. One of them was brought there just a day before. He is getting the heaviest beating for not having read the recently published \(\text{Jonākī}\) (a journal with which Bezbaruva was closely associated) while on earth. This sends a shiver through Kṛpābar's body, for he too does not read \(\text{Jonākī}\). He however resolves to make amends for it, as soon as he is back on earth.

(3) Then he meets an Assamese Gosvāmī who is sitting on hot sand and crying out in pain, while his disciples, pleased at his fate, are looking on. He is being punished for making his disciples sit on wet and damp earth in former existence. Kṛpābar's ire is aroused, but he is helpless to offer any aid to him in the other world.

(4) Then he meets a Brahmin and a Gosvāmī, who are being punished for religious exploitation of disciples. This is followed by other scenes. But everywhere the major target is feudal exploitation and corruption. Injustices relating to man-
woman relationship as well as human nature are also there, but these are being treated with kindliness. The bringing in of the issues of non-payment of subscription to the monthly Jonākī and of non-reading of newspapers appear to be disagreeable, but these issues are a direct projection of writer's own experience in the field of journalism and are human. His personal involvement in the issues is so real that even at the end, he hears some defaulting subscriber crying out to him in despair:

"Jonākī kākatar bec nidiyākoī marā bābe mor iyāt yatanāt prān yāi, heri Baruvādeo, lauk, ei pāc siki rup loi yāuk, kākatar sampādakak dibagoi." 99

(As I died without paying the subscription of Jonākī, I am made to suffer so heavily that my life seems to give way. Baruvâ, please take this sum (of Rupees one and twenty five paise) with you and hand it over to the editor of the paper.)

The passage is tinged with mild satire and is directed at those follies and of erring men, which appear to be odd to him. The phantasy shows his sympathies and antipathies which influence the shaping of the world of inverted justice. He is however detached and his imagination harmonises the incongruities in a balanced manner. The satire is admirably tempered by the comic spirit of the whole piece and the effect is therefore humorous.

While the general tone of his writing is comic, it does not exclude the satiric mode completely. In some pieces, we

99. BG, p.1243
particularly get irony. Bezbaruva is adept in this mode too. In Jugulî (the journal which Kripabar sponsored), Barbaruva gives a few fantastic suggestions for running the monthly:

(1) **On agents:** "Grāhaksakale yadi takā diye, dayā kari, eōlokar hātat dilei eōlokar bajār kharac calībar upāi hai." 100

(If the subscribers pay money at all, then it should please be paid to the agents, so that they can meet their personal expenses.)

(2) **Advertisers:** "jānanīr sārīe patī jāmanī diutāk du anākoi bātā diya hoba." 101

(For every line advertisement, the advertiser will be paid two annas as reward.)

(3) **Subscribers:** "Bhai asamīya tomāloke dayā kari Jugulīk grās kari grāhak hovā." 102

(My Assamese brethren, please become subscribers of Jugulî in order to kill it.)

This mode of ironic presentation is intended to create the opposite effect. But the satiric digression of the piece does not alter the general tone of the whole of his work, which are presented in a kindly light. They accept human nature and view its weaknesses with interest and sympathy.

In Kripabar's writings, a deep interest in the contemporary scene is evident all throughout. This interest is varied, but attention is here being drawn particularly to the political pieces.

100. BG, p.1269
101. BG, p.1268
102. ibid.
Political themes are dealt with in the pieces like Bharat Uddhār (p.1274, BG), Bande Mātaram (p.1280, BG), Rom (p.1652, BG), Aikya (p.1647, BG), Hindu-Muslim (p.1647, BG) and Barbaruvar Pras-tāv (p.1653, BG), etc. His performance in these pieces are however not uniform; therefore it is better to deal with some successful pieces in which political humour or satire is typical or representative. Out of these, Bharat Uddhār and Bande Mātaram deserve special mention.

Barbaruva finds that there are four different kinds of plans for liberation of India. The first one is to liberate it through speech-making. Second one is through charkhā and weaving. The third is through boycotting foreign cloths and foreign salt, and the fourth one is through conferences. None of these has his approval. He therefore puts forward his ingenious proposal to raise a batch of 500 volunteers. Of these, 100 will be from West Bengal, 200 from East Bengal, 50 from Madras, 100 from Bombay, 50 from Panjab, 50 from U.P. and 25 from NWFP. Every volunteer must be strong, beautiful, of sufficient height, big, immaculate, unmarried and of an age between 25 and 30 years on the average. They must be under the command of Captain Barbaruva. They will be europeanised in dress and food habits, and will be taken to England to marry equally accomplished girls, each of an age between 20 and 22. Their only duty will be to procreate prolifically in order to increase the number of the new species of Indians. He hopes that "within 20 years their number will be raised to 5 lakhs 63 thousands" and "within 500 years India will be country of shahibs." 103
The stress is apparently on eugenics and Europeanisation. The fantastic plan is more comical than satiric. The various ideas on liberation of India current during Svadesī movement are here lightly touched on, but never rejected in the satiric spirit. Barbaruva ingeniously puts forward the idea that Indians will be fit to liberate India only when they will be equal with the Europeans in physique and character. Here too, the desire is not purely to evoke mirth, but to stress a point which, when looked closely, appears to be meaningful. For he expects that they will be able to secure their dues and rights unafraid (nijar pāonā ... āru adhikār-bilāk buku phindāi teō loke bicāribā). Apparently what he prizes most in an Indian is efficiency and fearlessness. What he suggests by way of oomical criticism is morally inspired, and the presentation is sympathetic.

In Bande-mātaram, he attacks the wrong and undignified use of the public ory (Bande-mātaram) in West Bengal in his days. Bande-mātaram used to be sung then not always in the proper tune; even panvālās (betel-nut sellers) named their wares as Bande-mātaram pān. He expresses surprise at this pān incarnation of Bande-mātaram and apprehends that the misuse may be greater in future. The hint is enough to show that his concern is not negative; his constructive attitude is both moral and sympathetic.

In some essays, Barbaruva's concern is with political hypocrisy. In Ricced (p.1453, BG) he comes to the conclusion that

104. BG, p.1277
105. ibid., p.1280
106. ibid., pp.1281-82, Ricced
patriots are "mere worshippers of money." Three tales, in which the campaigners of Svadesī movement, directors of a company and an editor of a newspaper were carried away by greed of money, are related here in the sarcastic vein. At the conclusion, Barbaruvā says:

"ei goṭeikhan eketa jāt āru eketa dharma, dakoi bhāvi nocovāsakalehe bahu jāt āru bahu dharma dekhe. samudrar bukut pānīr anek burburanī yenekuvā, jāt-ṭor bukut, upare upare cāle dekhotājanaloi ān sarusūrā jātbor tene-kuvā. kintu āchalate mahājat eketahe tār nām takār upāsak. prakṛtate ei prthībīr sakalo mānuh ek īśvarvādī, ek advītīya īśvarar pūjak. seijan mahesāvar hoiche takā."107

(All of them belong to one caste and one religion. Only those who do not think deeply see the existence of many castes and religions. As there are bubbles in the sea-surface, so there are many small castes in society. But this is only superficially true. In reality, there is only one big caste, known as the caste of worshippers of money. Verily, all people in this earth are worshipper of one peerless God. This great God is money.)

This comment is grim and undoubtedly a satire on the acquisitive society. But he does not give any indication of rejecting human nature. Instead he takes delight in creating fun out of this greed. This is evident in the following passage:

"prabandhaṭo parhi (paḍhi) mor sarbāṅga jvali uthil. prabandhaṭor sehar sārī hoiche - 'ini nākī āmāder desēr namjādā baḍa oāventist. ekhon bujun ākkel bharā nā kādā bharā nā phākā.' 'oi lähekoī talate esārī yog dilo, 'Kāraṇ ini 'Netār' sampādak ke den nā tākā.'"
(No sooner I finished reading his (the editor of Netā) article, my whole body began to tremble in anger. For the last line is as follows: "he is the renowned scientist of our country. Now judge for yourself whether his brain is empty or filled with spirits or mud.")

To this I added a line, "All this is due to the fact that he (the scientist) has not paid a single farthing to the editor of Netā."

The scientist referred to in the passage is no less a person than late Sir P. C. Roy of Bengal. Barbaruva here is depicted as an assistant to the editor of Netā; when he comes across his boss's blasphemous article at the sub-editorial desk, he is inclined to tease. He adds this farcical and concluding line to it surreptitiously. Of course, he has to lose his job for it, but he succeeds in saving his readers from the pain of seeing Sir P. C. Roy being publicly defamed. For Roy was neither a man without spirits, nor did he lack in brain-power or talents. Barbaruva not only saves Roy, but also humanity.

In the same piece, Barbaruva shows his ready capacity for creating a burlesque effect. He joins a Svadesī-jātra-dal, as a singer and once, when the party is busy singing a patriotic song, he is again inclined to tease. He improvises a farcical line and actually sings it:

"Jatrār ostāde gāle,
'māyer deovā moṭā kāpor māthāi tule nebe bhāi
āre svadesī-premik bhāire, O bhāi
svadesī-premik bhāire"
bidesi jinis barjan karbe, se sabai ye phakai'.
gayakjane paccar sarigovar age-ei mai uthi purai dilo-
'are bhairo toder neta bhairo
deo amai kichu takai'.

(The master of the chorus (jatra) sang: Accept, O brothers, the rough cloths given by our Mother in a respectful attitude. O my patriotic brethren! discard foreign cloths as these are without any value." But before the singer could begin the next line, I added a line to complete the couplet - "I am your leader, brethren, I am your leader. Now give me some money.")

The effect of this is more farcical than satiric. Thus in Bicced, there is close juxtaposition of satiric, farcical and comical elements. The piece, as a whole, gives the impression of comedy. For the satire is not steady and the farcical elements enter casually; the author stands by his comical criticism and does not aim at destruction or merely at hollow mirth.

The two pieces we propose to discuss now are difficult to judge. The structure is somewhat complex, for what we get here is not plain narrative. This is only one side of the structure; the other side is that these pieces form parts of Kripabar's autobiography, which he dictates to one of his ardent admirers to be duly recorded and printed. The intention is to donate the proceeds from the printed book to the svadesi fund and to finance a project for recultivation of opium and hemp. The hint at ridiculing the misuse of the autobiographical is perhaps implied. He dictates his autobiography in parts to an ardent admirer of his. The first part

108. BG, p.1454
109. BG, p.1319, Hah-curir Makardwai
refers to his involvement in a duck-theft case and consequent humiliation. The second piece consists of his narration of amusing events connected with Difalu Sattradhir's visit to Calcutta and the latter's funny encounter with people there.

The first part tells us how Barbaruva comes to Khoingpur on a pleasure trip but as the town has not many wine shops, he is deeply dissatisfied. Then he sees a neighbour's ducks roaming about and immediately his appetite arises. He dreams of ducks and becomes gradually overcome by a poetic fit. He writes a poem:

"Lodor podor hâh keiṭi
Kon bane yāihe
Khoje khoje pāche pāche
Mor mano dhāihe
Āmraliyā āgat ohare
Kolā bagā pāchat phure
Ene tetāl hāhar maṅgah
Saragato nāihe."¹¹⁰

(The corpulent ducks go towards the forest. My mind follows their gaits. The āmraliyā ducks go in the front, while the black and white ones follow them. The duck-meat is fatty and it is even rare in heaven.)

Then his friends come to know of his desire and a plan is hatched to steal the ducks. He is chosen to do the job. When he approaches the enclosure where ducks are kept, he hears their quacking. His friends observe his performance from a safe distance. Unfortunately before he can lay his hands on them, he is detected. Seeing this, his friends flee in haste leaving him to be caught

¹¹⁰. BG, p.1521
redhanded. He is then taken to the rice-pounding shed and is beaten black and blue. A case is duly filed before the court by the owner of ducks and he is about to be convicted. But he manages to escape conviction by clever dodging. He is acquitted on the ground that his deed was not intentional, but was performed in a fit of somnambulism. This clowning is highly amusing. The piece is most enjoyable in original Assamese, as it abounds in funny narrative. The episode appears to be farcical, but it is embedded in a piece which is on the whole comic.

In the second piece, we find the pontiff of Nifalu Sattra going to Calcutta for a pleasure trip. Although inexperienced in the ways of city life, the pontiff poses as an experienced being. He wants to show off his knowledge on all matters relating to the city even before experienced Calcuttan Kṛpābar, who comes to receive him at the railway station. Kṛpābar, however, trickly persuades and brings him to the coach; but he refuses to sit inside the coach, and mistaking the height for dignity, he ascends to the coach-box. Barbaruvā describes his experiences in a humorous vein:

"Prathame ocarat thāṁ trāṁ gārīkhan dekhuvāi mok kole ye teō sei gārīt he yāba khoje. Kāran sihe pariṣkār paripāṭī, trāmat yoār kathā āru seiṭo tekheto pakṣe alap sanmānar lāgghavjanak, mai eibuli bujani di kolat yadiyo tekhet nirstra hol tathāpi tekhete nōko novārile ye trāṁ gārīhe prasata ... yi nahauk, sehat dvitiya śrenīr thikā gārīte uṭhibaloī mai tekheta mānti karālo. Kintu karile ki hoba, oparat koicho ye tekhete ye ḍharile ye gārīr wūdhat thāṁ 'coach-box'-at he tekhete bahība, gārīr bhitarat koi 'coach-box' okha āru oparat."

111. BG, p.1524, Khahāṭa Dīmaru Sattrādhikār
(At first he pointed out the nearby tram car and said to me that he wanted to travel in it. For it was cleaner and tidier. When I pointed out that it would be derogatory for his lordship to board a tram car, he somewhat cooled down. Of course, he still insisted that the tram car was better of the two ... However, he condescended to travel in a second class hired coach at my persuasion. This hardly improved matters. For, as I have already said, he stubbornly insisted that he would sit only on the top of the coach-box, as the coach-box is higher than the low seats below.)

The pontiff takes his seat on the coach-box beside the coachman because he associates his prestige with the high seat. The piece is comic, because the way the subject is treated is jovial and interesting; but the satire on the pontiff's false sense of prestige is clear. This element is admirably harmonised through the comic treatment of the whole episode.

The caricature of the wayward pontiff is however momentarily carried to the farcical limit in the scene of his love encounter with the betel-nut seller in the street.

"gosāiye adbhub rakamar bāngalā bhāṣāre kibākibi anek rahasyālāp kari ebār lāhe lāhe git dharile – sakhi mor marama bedana
kabohu najāi
 dibasa rajanī hāma cintite cintite
 ākula parāṇā govāi

git suni pānvalīe micikiyāī āhāi māri lājar bāhā juri oranikhan kapālar ocaraloī tāni ene bhābe madhur ka- takṣa-pāt karile ye khahaṭā Dimaru sattrāḍhikārar hṛ- dayat thakā moubichāni khan moure bhari gol. gosāi gadgad hol āru pānvalīye mrdū manda svare bulile
"yāona bāṅgāl bābu, ār jvāliō nā, bhāla lagenā."
Gosaye kole, "kene sakhi mor opare roš karichā kene?
āmi tomake bhal pāihe enekoi koicho. āmāk bōngāl
koichā kene? āmi bōngāl nā āche."112

(The pontiff carried on amusing conversation (with the
woman at the betel-nut shop) in an astounding kind of
Bengali on a large number of things, and burst out into
a song:

"O friend, the pangs of my heart is difficult
to express

My days and nights pass in remembering; the
eager heart pines away."

The betel-nut seller, on hearing this song, smiled and
behaved as if she was overcome by shame. She drew her
veil over the forehead and cast a sweet sidelong glance
in such a manner that the pontiff of Khahaṭā Pimaru
Sattra was affected by its tenderness. The beehive with­
in his heart became filled with honey. He choked with
love and was unable to speak. Seeing this, the betel-nut
seller said, "Oh Bāngāl bābu, do not make me suffer any
more. It is unbearable." The pontiff replied: "Why friend,
why are you offended with me? It is my love towards you
that prompted me to utter those words. Why are you addres­
sing me as Bōngāl? I am not a Bōngāl.)

This highly grotesque scene causes farcical laughter be­
cause of its absurdity. The conversation is enjoyable not only
because it is exotic, but also because of the pontiff's slipshod
Bengali and his gross sensuality.

There is thus a mixture of farce and comedy in the two
pieces of the autobiography. The farcical element is prominent in
the first piece; in the second piece it is not so dominant. The
comical caricature of the pontiff is highly entertaining. Viewed
as a whole, the autobiography seems to be more comic than farcical,
for laughter here has some purpose: it is in the form of autobiographical writing.

In several essays, Barbaruṣā caricatured the figure of the researcher in the field of historical archaeology or history. In Pratnatattva, we find Barbaruṣā dwelling upon the origin of hair, beard and moustache. Imitating the style of contemporary Puranologists, and inspired by the researches carried on by them to reconstruct history, he ransacks the family archives and discovered a 'puthi' in which a dialogue between the sage Jaiminī and Dharmapāksī on the origin of hair, beard and moustache was recorded. According to Jaiminī, Prajāpatī was once recording the fate of a man on his forehead on a wintry morning while he was inclining on a pillow in his bed at home. Suddenly the ink spilled from the pot over the pillow on which he was inclining. The human head was wet with ink. The pillow was torn in parts and some cotton inside it was exposed. The exposed cotton also became wet with ink and got stuck to the head and other parts of the face. The cotton that got stuck to the head became hair, that stuck to the cheek beard and that stuck to the upper chin became moustache. As in Kathin Śabdara Rahasya Byākhya by Guṇābhīrām Baruvā, meaning of the words 'dāri', 'culi' and 'goph' are also explained etymologically.

dāri - kokilā-matsya-dandaśa Lakṣanam bidyate iti dāri ..
kokilā matsyar dārar lakṣan āche dekhi dāri.114

(Since it resembles the teeth of kokilā fish, it is called dāri or beard.)

113. BG, p.1243
114. ibid., p.1244
Culi - calatibāyubharena iti culi ... bāyur kobat lare dekhi culi. 115

(As it moves at the lash of the wind, it is called culi or hair.)

Goph - go phalatyatra gophah iti dugdhabodhah. 116

(According to the Tugdhabodha grammar, it is called goph as it yields the same benefits as the Vedas.)

Sage Jaiminī also did forecast that in the kali age people would adore hair, beard and moustache.

"culiye phakīrar mūrat mohani-bhāng koli yen hoi, dāriye brahmacārīr galat makarār jāl hoi āru gophe sonārīr mukhāt mohar śīṅg yen hoi śobhā kariba. bhāratbarsar uttar pūb phāle kāmpīth bā kāmrupa bā asam nāme pradeś āru Utkalat culir prabhāv bar hoba." 117

(Hair would adorn the head of a fakir exactly like the buds of a 'mohani' hemp tree, beard would shine like the spider's net in the oheek of brahmacārī (a man who observes continence) and moustache would adorn the upper chin of a goldsmith like the buffalo horn. In Kāmpītha or Kāmrupa or Assam in the North-eastern India, and in Utkal (or Orissa), influence of hair would be great.)

His subsequent research shows that at least would-be brides and women (as also the Chinese) are not very fond of beard. In Boston, he informs us, at least 300 young women held a Beard

115. BG, p.1244
116. ibid.
117. ibid., 1245
Prohibition Conference. They threatened to divorce those husbands who had beard and refused to enter into marriage with young men with beard. Here, the humourist seems to play with anatomical laws by the familiar method of comic evasion.

The subject is trivial, the puthi is imaginary and Jaimini's forecast is simply fantastic. The subsequent information are too funny. The whole piece is aimed at parodying underserving antiquarian researches which generally deal with trifles and yield doubtful results. The intention is however not purely satirical, as the general comic view is prominent here. The girls of Boston who boycotted their bearded husbands, remind us faintly of the Greek women in Aristophanes' drama Lysistrata (44 B.C.) who expressed their determination not to have sexual relationship with their men unless they bring the war to an end.

Barbaruva refers to the universal regret among writers, readers and speakers that "records of activities in ancient Assam, history and events have all got lost in the (deep layers of) ocean of time." He however hints in parenthesis (and therefore subtly) that some of these old records might have been lost due to personal misappropriation or grabbing.

Barbaruva continues his interests in antiquarian researches many years after the aforementioned piece was written. In the piece Barbaruvār Pratnatattva written eleven years after 1915,

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118. BG, p.1246
119. ARCVL, p.27
120. BG, p.1245, Pratnatattva
121. Barbaruvār Pratnatattvar Pratibad, BG, pp.139§-91
the subject of inquiry is 'Sri Radhā in Assam'. His paper is apparently to be read in the Asiatic society session of Rangīya Sāhitva Parisad. According to Barbaruva, he collects his data from some puthis including Sādu Ratnākar. Rādhā was born in Rādhānagar in West Bengal and was a Bengali daughter-in-law of a tantrik Basu family. She was married to one Ayāncandra Basu. She held distinct opinions on religion and therefore could not put up with the family for long. She left for Vṛndāvan, where she met Śrīkṛṣṇa. Later she came to Assam in search of Śrīkṛṣṇa, after the latter had departed for Mathurā (apparently without her knowledge). She passed through Gauhati and ultimately reached Parasurāmkunda, where she died. At Gauhati, she met a cow-boy near Latāsil and asked for Kṛṣṇa's whereabouts. Failing to get any reply, she turned to a Muslim at Māchkhovā in the same town and repeated to him same question. Nothing came out of it. Then she met a Hindi-speaking man and a Mahāpurusīya devotee in turn. Failing in her mission at Gauhati, she repaired to Parasurām-Kūnda and died there after a brief sojourn. From these facts, the learned antiquarian comes to the conclusion that (1) Rādhā was born in Bengal, (2) from there, she went to Vṛndāvan and joined Kṛṣṇa in his rāsa-līlā, (3) after Kṛṣṇa's departure to Mathurā, she came to Assam and died at Parasurām-Kūnda, (4) The Mahāpurusīya and Muslim religions flourished before Rādhā came to Assam, and (5) before Kṛṣṇa-līlā was staged for the first time in the Bengal Theatre of Calcutta, Rādhā came to Assam.

When the results of the research have been made public, a great controversy takes place and a sharp rejoinder comes from a Bengali correspondent named Kenārām Dhol (śukulā Hudu, Vidvāthunupāk), author of a book Pratnatattva Keyā-han. He was awarded the

122. Barbaruvar Pratnatattvar Pratibād, BG, p.1391
titles of Sukulā-hudu (or white horned-owl) and Vidyā-thunupāk (a purse of learning) at a village nāmghar in Čāring in Assam. In the book referred to above, he already conclusively proves that ten incarnations took place in Dacca alone. His other findings are as follows: (1) Bhīma, Chirāj and Archimedes were born in Okhāurā; (2) Hanumāna and Jāmbavanta were born in Tezpur, (3) Whagadatta in Dacca; (4) Usā in Sylhet and (5) Buulā in Bangāl Des. Apparently the correspondent holds the view that Dacca is a birth place of heroes, Bangāl Des' of chaste wives and Sylhet of beautiful women.

This renowned correspondent refutes the suggestion that Rādhā was a Bengali. He argues that in the land of Pratipādityas, a woman is unlikely to forsake her husband and go in search of another man. The truth is that Rādhā was born in Rādhā-kuchi in Kāmrupa. However she had an unfortunate marriage with Āyān Candra Ghos. Later on, she was enticed away by Kṛṣṇa Candra Ghos of Vrndāvan. He informs Barbaruva that scholars have conclusively proved that Kālidāsa was born in Nadiyā Sāntipur, and the Japanese were originally the children of Bengalis.

Barbaruvā believes that before Rādhā came to Assam, the Assamese people did not know the other side of love, pangs of separation. This is however a subjective conclusion unsupported by facts. Similarly his methodology is quizzical and unconvincing. To prove Rādhā's influence on Assam's culture he cites the following facts:

123. BG, p.1388
"Guāhāṭīr baśÎsthāsrāmat pānîr tinitā dhārā āche - Sandhyā, Lolita āru Kāntā, Lolita Śrīrādhār asta sakhih bhitarar ek sakhi. Rādhār pāche pāche sam-bhavatah unmādini, pāgalinī rāik bichāri Lolitāo āhichil. āru baśÎsthāsram pāl rāik nāpāi, tāte bahi kāndi tinidhārā cakulo bovai dile. tāre mājar dhārīc hal teor nāmerei boi gol."

(In the BaśÎsthāsram of Gauhati, there are three streams of water—Sandhyā, Lolita and Kāntā. Lolita was one of the eight companions of Rādhā. Probably she came here immediately after Rādhā in search of her. In a state of self-forgetfulness and near-madness, Rādhā had come to the place. Lolitā could not find her friend and was overcome by sorrow. Tears rolled down her eyes and out of her tears three streams flowed. The middle of these streams was named after her.)

An antiquarian who puts credence on such nonsense is no better than a parodist of antiquarianism. For what is being regarded as facts here is simply a myth or figment of imagination. But the intention is to laugh at immature scholarship or charlatanism in contemporary antiquarian pursuits.

Like Pickwick's antiquarian interests, Barbaruvā's interests in these researches are simply comical and non-sensical. None of the seventeen learned societies can make anything of Pickwick's lengthy note on the inscription but all of them agrees that it is extraordinary. In the same vein, we can say that Barbaruva's speculations are extraordinary, but we cannot make anything of it. Yet it is 'illegible monument' of Barbaruvā's greatness.

125. Pickwick Papers, p.188
His speculations are absurd, but it arouses our merriment and laughter.

Barbaruva's interests in child marriage and old-age marriage are prompted by a desire to defend a monstrous custom from the onslaughts of enlightenment, but we know that the ironic piece produces an opposite effect.

In Byddh-bibäh pracār samiti, Barbaruva argues his case in the following manner -


(Whom did old Siva marry? (He married) nine-year old Gouri. Whom did Visnu, who had been in eternal sleep till the end of the great deluge, marry? A tender girl named Kamala. It is enough to say that these young people, by putting forward amendments to our original proposal, are trying to emasculate it. I want to frankly state that they are not fit to be members of our society.)

In Dambhi Candra Barbaruvār āvirbhāv also, he repeats the plea -

"desāt bālya-bibāh yimān cale simān bhāl".

(It is good for the country to have as many child marriages as possible.)

126. BG., p.1612
127. ibid.
128. ibid., p.1617
In an ironic vein and amusing manner, Barharuva brings home to us the sense of ludicrousness inherent in the custom of child and old age marriages once in vogue in society. His positive statements produce a negative effect. As with Pickwick in *Pickwick Papers*, Barharuva too does not aim at defeating or destroying the world of evil, but transcends it "by the sheer vibrant affirmation of the human spirit."\(^{129}\)

Barharuva adopts an ingenious device to create burlesque effect. In *Barharuvā Mahābhārata Rātani*,\(^{130}\) he retells the story of Śāntanu, Satyavati and Bhīṣma in a humane setting, but his stress is on the erotic and his language is witty. In fact, he draws Śāntanu as a self-indulgent amorous king, Vyāsa as an adulterous sage and Satyavati as a polyandrous and lewd woman. There is an ironic but vulgar touch in the following confession of Satyavati to Bhīṣma: "Mok yetiyā tomār deutarāi hīyā karāi ānile, Dvaipāyane mok mane mane koioil, 'āi, ketiyāhā tumī dukhat parile mok māti-ba'."\(^{131}\) ('When your father married me, Dvaipāyana secretly called me and said, 'Madame, whenever you are in troubles, just call me'.) And Bhīṣma called Vyāsa and as a result of his union with her three daughter-in-laws, three sons were born to the latter. Barharuva's intention is perhaps to deride the too crude or literal approach often applied to the study of Purāṇas by vulgar materialists.

This ironic vein is best evident in the opening passage:

\(^{130}\) BG, p.1306
\(^{131}\) ibid., p.1309
"Candra-Sūryai ājikāli kāliyugat prthīvit pohar pelai;  
kintu āgar satya, tretā āru dvāpar jujat eōlokār duīyo  
ei kāmar upariyo prthīvit āru ētā kām karichil, seīto  
hamsa bāṛadhi."\(^{132}\)

(The sun and the moon now-a-days, i.e., in the Kaliyuga cast  
their light on the earth. But in Satya, Tretā and Dwāpar  
ages, both of them did, in addition to these duties, some-  
thing else; reproduction of species.)

The same vein of comical speech is noticed in other pieces where  
the puranic mode is imitated (i.e., manusya purāṇa).\(^{133}\)

Sometimes he indulges in biography-writing. In the piece,  
Bārajan Bikhyāt Lokar Camu Jīvan-carīt he narrated the life of  
Nepolean Bonaparte also:

"Nepoliyan Bonāparti - eō bar dāṅgar bīr ēchil, Bālī,  
Bali, Hanumanta āru Karna teōr ageei mari bā ān  
prakāre ātar hoī gol. nojovāheten Nepoliyan teōlo-  
kār soite ekokhunda lāgi cāle heten ei anumān karibā  
pāri. abhāvat Welington āru Blucere soite teō lāgi  
phākat paril. teō Cent Helenā nāme dvīpat ingrāi  
senāpati lo cāhābar tattvāvadhānat maril, āru namarā-  
loike teōr sarīrat prān ēchil buli jānā yāi."\(^{134}\)

(Nepoleon Bonaparte: This (man) was a great warrior. Bālī, Karna  
Bali and Hanumanta died or disappeared in a different man-  
nner before him. Had it not been so, that Nepolean would  
have liked to have a bout with them can be well guessed.  
But in their absence, he fell into a trap having had to  
confront Wellington and Blücher. He died in the St. Helena  
island while in the care of Lowe, the English General. Ac-  
cording to knowledgeable sources, there was life in his  
body till death overtook it.)

\(^{132}\) RG, p.1507
\(^{133}\) ibid., pp.1433-38
\(^{134}\) ibid., pp.1302-03
Probably the intention here is to parody the contemporary biography writing, which is unbalanced and deals with trifles of a great man's life.

Barbaruva often creates fine and agreeable humour out of little dilemmas of life. This is evident in the pieces like Jīvan-marap-bichār. 135

Take the following passages from the piece, Jīvan-marap-bichār:

(1) Mai hole ketiyābā ketiyāhā bhāvo, jīyāī nathakāi bhāl. kāraṇborar kichumān koi diu sūnā, yetiyā dekho ye ore dinto kām kari khātiluṭi āhico, athaca laguvātovē dāpāt ecilimake sajāi divā nāi, gharar ghoinīye ki kāraṇat mukh ophondāi bahi āche, puvā dāri khurābaloi tapat pānī diute lazuvaī palam karičhe, cāhar mejat ādhāsijā kaṇīt jālukar guri āru lon nāi. 136

(Sometimes I think I should not live. Let me tell you a few reasons. I feel like dying when coming back after the day's hard labour, I find that my servant has not prepared my tobacco; when I see that my wife is sitting wearing a long face for reasons not apparent to me; when the servant delays to serve me warm water for shaving in the morning and when I find in the tea-table that the half-boiled egg is served without pepper and salt.)

This innocent and nice family humour, somewhat naive and commonplace, evokes just the feeling opposite to dying.

135. RG, p.1440
136. ibid.
Again when I see that my purse is being filled with coins, my barn is full of paddy and paddy-sheafs, I have been addressed by the District Magistrate as 'coṭacahāb' or 'raibāhādur', etc. and my wife, ceasing to put on a long face, is talking to me smilingly or is taking out ripe hair from my head and easing the prickly heat on my back ... I feel i should not die.)

The reasons for living may not be profound, but the attitude is innocently comic, and he smiles at his own cost, compelling us to reciprocate.

Kṛpābār is a prolific writer, but it appears that he often repeats the same theme and similar techniques to achieve his purpose. Often it becomes monotonous and at other times, he appears to be extra-vagant in use of verbal devices. In some passages of his vast sprawling literature, we often come across the real man, his ideas on humour and society and his essential comic philosophy. Without having some idea of this ideological complex, we cannot explain the juxtaposition and co-existence of humour and satire in his writings.

137. BG, p.1480
In *Kavi Ribhratar Pharpharan*, Barbaruvā claims that this world is a zoological garden, where man is a compound animal. There is something of the tiger in him, something of the jackal, something of the lion and something of the horned buffalo. This reminds us of Cervantes's hero Don Quixote, who said, "The world is nothing but schemes and plots, all working at cross purposes."  

Barbaruvā is the alter-ego of Bezbaruva; therefore it is only proper to digress a bit to examine Bezbaruva's literature as a whole to get an idea of his sense of the comic. Bezbaruva wrote an editorial on humour or satire in *Bahi*, which is quoted in parts below:

"In all the literatures of the world, since the time of Aristophanes till today, satire (it is not invective or scorn) has been assigned a very high place. I do not see any reason why it would not occupy such a position in Assamese literature. Of course, Assamese Kṛpābar's (imaginative) flight may be just a birdie-version (tipaci-tāngaran) or mini-version compared to the Garuṇḍa version (macro version). But would it be too much to expect that the master humorists of the stature of Addison and Swift should in good time emerge in our literature and would take the place of tiny Kṛpābar, in the same fashion as a king would take the place of a messenger. Genuine debates and criticisms are strong weapons to fight the lapses of society and to undo its mistakes. But false criticism is a hydra-headed monster (or a ten-headed Rāvana). Behead him as many times as you want, he would come alive again and again. Vanquish the dissenter, he would still go on arguing. Even when death

138. RG, p.1480
139. ARCWL, p.135
140. 7th issue of *Bahi* (4th year): Translation- R. K. Bhattacharyya, Quoted in Bezbaruvār Sādhukathā Carcā by Dr P. N. Gosvāmi in Publication Board, Assam (p.138).
comes to him, he does not accept death. Even in his defeat, he refuses to acknowledge it. On such occasions, satire is the only weapon effective. That is why in all the literatures of the world, a place has been assigned to it."

In this piece, Bezbaruva makes no fine distinction between comedy and satire or comedy and farce. It is difficult to bracket Cervantes and Swift together. It is therefore interesting to find Barbaruva comparing himself to Aristophanes, Cervantes and Jonathan Swift in the piece Nobel Prize. 141 (In this piece, he spoke of a oila kavya, for which he hopes to get a nobel prize. He feels that once his oila is translated into good English he would, like Babindranath, get the Nobel Prize.) Of these three writers, Aristophanes is not easy to explain. His comedy is directed towards "modifying public policies and correct certain tendencies in the cultural life" of his times. 142 This is true of Bezbaruva to a great extent, for he directs his satiric comedy as we have already seen, against many evils of his day. But essentially he is not a satirist; as we have seen, although there are satire and farce in his writings, the spirit of his writings is essentially comic. As Potts points out, to a reader of comedy, who has the finished product, the recipe counts for little (Comedy, p.14). If it is true that by measuring a collection of human eccentricities against each other we get comedy (Comedy, p.109), then Aristophanes and Bezbaruva may be bracketed together. Aristophanes however is a rare genius, his range is cosmic, and his art is of a different order. Both of them lived no

141. BG, p.1481
142. ARCWL, p.29
In creative periods of literature, but Aristophanes, who was a member of the unique democratic society of ancient Greece, was more favourably placed to make widest choice of subjects and express the most daring thoughts with perfect freedom. Both of them used different vehicles for comedy.

In Samājik, we find that he creates an inverted comic world of justice to present human follies and vanities in the most ridiculous light. In the pieces on antiquarian studies, he offers comic criticism against false cultural tendencies manifested in the contemporary research works. In Dhārat-uddhār, we find him laughing at political ideas current in his times. In Juguḷī, we get polite satire on Assamese journalism, which was incipient and immature in his times. In many of Bezbaruva's short stories, we find caricature of types of immature poets, false patriots, opium-eaters, mean social climbers and vain persons. With Jonathan Swift, Bezbaruva could perhaps say of his Krpābar:

Perhaps I may allow the dean
Had too much satire in his vein
And seemed determined not to starve it
Because no age could more deserve it
Yet malice never was in his aim
He lashed the vice, but spared the name
No individual could resent
Where thousands equally were meant;
His satire points at no defect
But what all mortals may correct. 143

Swift however allowed himself to be overcome by the destructive impulse in the Part IV of Gulliver's Travels. Here he is bitter, and seems to attack human nature itself. Bezbaruvā is, unlike Swift, not bitter or cynic, he accepts human nature and sees human follies in a kindly light. The difference is important, for in Bezbaruvā's works, satire is usually embedded in comedy. It is never allowed to obscure his comic vision.

In his essay, Ḡāhi, Barbaruva draws our attention to the lack of a serious tradition of laughter in Indian literature. He refers to an experience of his early life when he was not allowed to laugh at a clown in the village theatre. Laughter, it seems, was almost socially prohibitive. He feels that three fourth of people of Assam cannot appreciate humour. He asks them to read Aristophanes, Punch (an English humorous weekly), writings of Dvijendralāl Roy and Kṛpābar and listens to the recitations of the traditional rural comic poet in lower Assam, Niṅgni Bhāvariya. This shows that he is interested in the whole range of comic literature, including the oral.

Here he speaks of various comic traditions in literature. He is also conscious of the nature of comic art. "Success of literature is not in the dignity of subjects", he argues in Sāhityar Utpatti, "but in the creation of rasas." The writer of comedy has the widest choice of subject matters; it may be society, human nature or anything that suits him; since comedy has no hero in the

144. BG, pp.1492-94
145. ibid., 1495-97
146. ibid., 1496
usual sense and deals with human follies or commonness of human beings, it does not appear to have dignity. But human eccentricities, which it sets against one another, are needed to develop the comic pattern. The ultimate purpose is to present a comic view of life, and to create an effect. The quotation from Hāhi shows that Bezbaruva is conscious of this aim. He no doubt emphasises here the necessity of social satire, but in the last sentence, he simply pleads for assigning satire a place in literature. This is perfectly legitimate, and in fact, this is what he does in case of his own literature.

If we integrate the inherent ideas in the above two paragraphs, we can form some idea of his thinking on hāsya rasa. He believes that form is more important than contents and without the form, which reveals itself in the language, style and mode of presentation, no aesthetic laughter can be created. This is significant, because it is in style that we recognise comedy easily.

We have noted that Bezbaruva uses various verbal devices—modes of ironic presentations, parody, punning, paronomasia, witticism and apt quotations etc.—to arouse various moods of laughter. The sense of humour is pure in some of the pieces like Āsvārohan-parva, where laughter is all throughout genial. In pieces like Samājik too, the caricaturing is largely balanced by a kind of fantastic transcendence. His moral intention, so clearly expressed in Kṛpābar's sonnet on himself, to use comedy as a weapon against injustices, is not foreign to the comic spirit; in fact as Potts says, comedy is a natural ally of morality (Comedy, p.113).

Bezbaruva is himself never tired of telling us that his comedy is a weapon to fight not only injustice, but also for
appreciation of justice. This shows his sense of proportion. This moral intention informs most of Barbaruva’s writings. But this is not the only characteristic of his comic writings. He had seen much in life and nature and this gives him scope to create situations out of materials that appear to be morally neutral. This is seen in अस्वारोहन-पर्व and जीवन-मरण-रिखर, etc. Kesharuva does not reject human nature or aim at destruction; his imagination can harmonise between the ideal and the real, and hold contrasts in fine balance.

There is however an element of plebeian humour spread throughout Barbaruva’s writings. In संता, Barbaruva refers to the peasant servant of संता, who says,

“दूतार नाम बाँदीये अगे सुनिचिलो, आरुणोदै काकाटु दूताये सदैि हाहि उठाक। काकाटु लेके आमार गवत लोराः। देकाः, बुरहा (बुकाल) सकाले सेि काकाटु परहि (पाड़ि) बागारि बागारि हाहे।”

(I (your slave) have heard your name. You always write comic pieces in आरुणोदै. All men of our village—whether old or young—read these pieces and laugh heartily.)

This shows that Barbaruva is aware that his writings have appeals to all classes of readers. In कृपाबर Baruva’s Will, he gives us a list of his property, which includes Assamese folk festivals, villagers’ favourite dishes, their folk-songs and dances, rural theatre and popular smoking habits. The sympathy for all

147. BG, p.1332
148. ibid., pp.1317-18
classes of readers makes him aware of appealing to the rural audi­
ence also and serve them with a kind of humour that they appreciate.

Barbaruva always gives the impression of being the national
clown, who believes that the world is a zoological garden and every
man about the country is something of a compound animal. He takes
liberty to make fun of everything around him, and this he precisely
does with all the comic tools or paraphernalia at his disposal.
These include his clownish appearance, garrulity, his colloquial and
racy language, his open-heartedness, and his complete identifi­
cation with the national spirit. This plebeian laughter is not always merely
mirth-evoking, but witty and comic. It expresses the inner contra­
dictions and vices of the community in an unconventional form. Take
the following instances:

(1) Indrar bhūsaṇ meghā-dambar, asamīyār bhūsaṇ bāhyā-dambar. 149

(Indra's ornaments are gorgeous clouds, the ornaments of
the Assamese people are the outward pageantry.)

(2) "bahut naiṣṭhik asamīyā bhaktai kālītkoi pāthāt īsat bechī
tatpar hai ... śvaratkoī ... śvarar prasād dāngar." 150

(Many orthodox Assamese devotees are a little more con­
cerned about the young goat than Goddess Kālī herself
... Things offered to God are more important than God
Himself.)

(3) Michā2 + bhandāmi3 = asam samāj
bhitar-kolā2 + bāhir bagā = asamīyā. 151

149. BG, p.1250, Asamīyā Jāti Dāngar Jāti
150. BG, p.1251, Asamīyā Jāti Dāngar Jāti
151. BG, p.1257, Jīvikār Upāl
(Falsehood$^2 +$ hypocrisy$^3 = $Assamese society.
spiteful heart$^2 +$ outward amiability$^3 = $Assamese)

These random examples however only give a partial idea of his ready wit and comic intelligence. In a lighter vein, he always plays with what he thinks to be national follies or vices of the Assamese people.

In the first two passages quoted above there is wit. We notice in the first passage, both a resemblance of words (meghādambar, and bāhyādambar) and resemblance of ideas. It gives delight, and some sense of surprise also. In the second one, there is a paradoxical statement in that the food offered to God is more important than God himself. We have already referred above to Barbaruvā's capacity for playing on words (punning etc.). According to Locke, wit lies "most in the Assemblage of Ideas, and in putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any Resemblance and Congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the Fancy". Addison, commenting on it, adds that two properties, delight and surprise seem essential to wit.¹⁵² We also says that wit often deals not only with incongruity of idea, but also with their opposition.¹⁵³ This is true of the second instance.

We have so far analysed the comic elements in Bezbaruva's diverse writings and pointed out also those which do not appear to be strictly comic. We have also stated that essentially he is a

¹⁵³. IDT, p.47
comic writer, and has a style and a spirit that admirably suits the comic art. We are inclined to think that it is not any isolated piece, but his writings as a whole are significant. The whole work is centred round the character of Krpābar. And the very figure of Krpābar is comic. He is creature of imagination, 'a miscellany of images' drawn from many men, an abstraction so to say. He is eccentric like Don Quixote, but less pure. George Lukacs observes that Don Quixote's eccentricity has never been surpassed by those that have followed him. He suggests that in Don Quixote's case, eccentricity "originates in misguided heroism" and it is "the great rearguard action of the best moral qualities of a decaying feudal world." According to him, the specific problematic of the human realisation allowed by modern bourgeois society finds its most typical artistic expression in various forms of humour. The first and the most magnificent appearance of this modern literary genre, Don Quixote, according to him, attains an individuality never again achieved, an indivisible unity of objective humour and subjective grandeur, in that the human self-realisation of the hero possesses a capacity for action which objectively has been made obsolete by historical development, but which subjectively viewing, is spiritually and morally unshakable. He says:

"this unmediated subjective principle can however become an effective and active force compelling an inner recognition only if it can express an actual and permanently progressive motive, permanently progressive, that is, from a human point of view, not necessarily from the point of view of the contemporary situation.

154. IDT, p.218
The eccentricity of the later comic figures originates in an internal intertwining of the genuine and subjective spirit of opposition with the objective possibility of realisation." 156

Rezbaruva's comedy has a form that is difficult to categorise. The interest no doubt is centred round the character of Krpabar. It is not merely a kind of comedy that is embodied in thought and style; a large part of it is narrative. It even gives the impression of a loosely written personal account and hence of being autobiographical. Yet it is, strictly speaking, not a one-character novel. It does resemble Pickwick's Papers or Kamalã Kãnter Daptar in this respect, although the pattern is complex. There is however least doubt that the character of Krpabar belongs to the world of comic fiction. The comedy combines in it narrative, description and analysis, and does not dispense with imagination or fancy. The last quality, along with his characteristic style, gives it a sense of unity and harmony. These again give him the needed spirit to transcend the satiric impulse. His comic criticism is never therefore destructive and is free from resentment.

The character is eccentric. He behaves abnormally, but is not insane. There is a centre from which his eccentricity can be judged. This centre is not in any other character, which is used as a foil. It is the society itself of which Rezbaruva, his alter-ego, the foremost representative. The norm can be best described in terms of particular ideas of life. Rezbaruva has vitality of mind, power of observation and the ability to adapt his

mind to what he observes. His ideas are partly negative, because he rejects certain forms of society of his times. He cannot approve of false manners of society, puerility in literature, insincerity in politics, ditettantism in criticism, frivolity in research, corruptions in public life, ignorance and hedonism in virtuous persons, human indifference for progress, toleration of social evils, injustices in sex-relationship and foreign rule in the country. Since he does not aim at destruction, and at the same time, wants to convert this rejection into individual proxis, he offers comic criticism of life. His ideas express a permanent motive of human progress and provides the norm. The ideas are not merely negative; invested with the possibility of objective realisation, these acquire a positive and moral meaning. He is not neutral in man’s fight for moral victory or defeat. He stands for justice and progress.

This norm is however nowhere explicitly stated, but only suggested. Kypabar brings it into focus by constantly violating or dodging it. He advocates those very ideas, which he inwardly rejects. This is how comedy makes us aware of the norm. The style is intrinsically comic with its word-pattern, fanciful monologue, amusing dialogue, burlesque narrative, improbable description, and inverted analysis. He has the courage, cleverness and good sense of a comic character. He compels us to recognise that he has a permanent progressive motive in his eccentric behaviour. To angry readers, he unhesitatingly replies, "whether it evokes anger or laughter, my purpose is fulfilled. For my purpose is to instil life into dead bodies." He reminds us that he is well-wisher of all and he is trying his best to make his comedy serve
humanity, the well-being of human mind and body. His norm and moral motive is here expressed positively.

The norm is not super-human. It is within the realm of objective realisation. However, there are moments of oomic despair. He feels that time is eternal but round and he cannot afford to move ahead. To him, God also has a smiling face and with him all things of creation laugh. God does not allow any one with a sullen face to live in his created world. He asserts that lack of capacity for laughter is a sign of disease. And what is more important, he sees no necessity of passing one's life, which is already overburdened with pain and sorrow, in lamentation. There is thus a suggestion that the burden of pain and sorrow can be lightened by laughter. This is a call for adjustment with the world around us and Kṛpā바bar himself does it. It is the society which he attacks tells him to adapt himself to it. He however adapts himself to it in the oomic sense. He never entirely leaves his ground or forgets his norm. He reminds us with a hearty laughter that his rejection of certain forms of society is still valid. Subjectively speaking, his general support to the cause of progress still remains; it is implicit in his advocacy for abolition of untouchability, Hindu-Moslim unity, freedom of India, emancipation of woman.

157. BG, Jok, p.1645
158. BG, p.1645, Barbaruvar Phorohani
159. BG, p.1493, Nāhi
160. BG, p.1493, Nāhi
161. BG, p.1494, Nāhi
162. BG, p.1539, Mok Nuchubi, Nuchubi
163. BG, p.1474, Dharma Sāmpradāyik Samasyā Āru Svarāj; p.1647, Hindu Musalman
164. BG, p.1459, Desodhārar Dihā; p.1458, Rājnīti
165. BG, p.1462, Strī-svādhinatā
and renewal of Assamese life etc. There is a duality between his subjective attitude, and the objective possibility of its realisation in society. This gives rise to comedy.

Krpabar thus offers us a comic criticism of society. Sometimes he does merely smile, but that is in the relaxed mood when his mind is not bent upon appealing to the crowd, because he loves company. This is only to forget, for the moment, his inward agony in adapting himself to a society which leaves for him no other alternative. He uses the duality between his inward attitude and the objective possibility of realising it, as a basis for his humour. Since this duality is expressed in juxtaposition of ideas and temperaments, he makes it a point to use verbal devices to the maximum. Bezbaruva's comic art therefore revealed in the character as well as his style. And it is in style that we most recognise his comedy. We have already seen how he uses the verbal medium and plays on words. His style has its characteristic tone and rhythm. He has imagination and it gives his writing a kind of appeal which is poetio. This can be more felt than described or analysed. His comic criticism is not theoretical, but artistic. Krpabar creates a world of his own, in which he acts, thinks, and reacts to situations with the freedom of the most ingenious clown. Through his eccentric behaviour, he reveals in a human and individual manner the inner contradictions of social acts and ideas of his age. The Assamese readers see in him a synthetic image of themselves, comically portrayed. The created world is a mirror in which they see the limitations of their cherished actions, ideas and institutions in the comic light. He presents the comic incongruities of social life and manners with artistic detachedness and as a rule, rests at showing how his subjective attitudes are at
variance with the objective reality and its dynamic. This duality gives rise to humour. This humorous picture of reality is essentially a sympathetic reminder to his readers to guard themselves against misanthropy or bleak vision. He resorts to all sorts of comic devices to preserve his inner integrity. His self-realisation is ironic in the sense that outwardly he seems to conform with the objects, ideas or situations which he inwardly rejects. His humour is informed by the permanent progressive motive for human self-realisation.

Some resemblance between Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* and Bezbaruva's comic writings is striking as Dimbeșvar Neog points out. But this similarity is not broad. Both of them serialised their humorous pieces in journals and both of them became immediately popular with readers. Their writings lacked any design or plot. Both of them provided their readers with a synthetic image of the people of which they formed a part and a picture they would like to see. Their appeal were therefore instantaneous. Both of them had vitality and a flair for the comic, which springs from a lively sense of buoyant curiosity full of instinctive trust in life. But the similarity seems to end there. Bezbaruva's writings are not easy to categorise, at least when we see it as a whole, and it is not a novel. Dickens's humorous stories, on the other hand, have the form of a picaresque novel.

Bezbaruva's patriotism was well-known; he loved his people, its culture, religion, literature and character so much that he

165. NLAL, p.413

167. AHEL, pp.1129-38
used them as materials for his comedy. His popularity as a comic writer, however, does not rest on his patriotism. This helped him to broaden his comic vision and recognition of the need to merge his separateness in the life of world into which he was born.
Reproduction of a sketch of Kṛṣṇa Barbaruva as found in BG (p.1456). The sketch is by L. N. Bezbaruva. Reproduction of the sketch is by Śrī Nani Bhattāchārārya.