CHAPTER-IV

CONSTRUCTION OF PLOTS
4.00 INTRODUCTION:

In modern Hindi and Assamese literatures Bhārtendu and Bezbaroā respectively are epoch-makers and they are equally the well-wishers of the society. They are in true sense the social reformers and philanthropists. They have been crowned with success in awakening their countrymen with the help of their revolutionary and fiery ideals.

The age of Bhārtendu blossomed out to be an age of awakening of cultural ideals and national pride. The drama proved to be a very useful medium for spreading out these ideals. Bhārtendu is not only a thinker on national scale, but also an author writing on dramatic theories. He contributed immensely to the development of dramas and inspired generations to come. He wrote his dramas completely in tune with the existing social and political realities and based them on the model of Sanskrit dramatic principles. His dramas are charged with the sense of well-being to all. They are symbolical, legendary, social and love-dominated. They possess each and every kind of merit that makes dramatic creations successful.

Lakṣhmīnāth Bezbaroā is a top-ranking litterateur of the ‘Jonāki’ age in Assamese. His dramas are the invaluable treasure for Assamese literature. When Bezbaroā wrote his plays at Calcutta, there was a great impact of Indian renaissance there. Although there was a great tradition of vaishnavite religious dramas in Assam, yet the influence of Bengali dramas was growing in Assamese social life. From the point of language such dramas were found to be injurious to Assam. So, Bezbaroā began to write dramas as he realised the demand of the time.
Bhartendu and Bezbaroa took up the challenge of the time to reform the society with the help of their dramas. So they wrote farces full of humour and irony. They wrote dramas charged with the fervor of patriotism inspiring the people to regain their lost glories. Both these dramatists lived in India under the foreign rule. Hence they felt it their duty to awaken their fellow-beings to recover the lost freedom. They took up their pens to write dramas because drama are really the powerful mass media to form strong public opinion.

In order to bring the dramatic genius of Bhartendu and Bezbaroa into a focus, this chapter attempts to describe only those dramas, that can present the dramatists in their true colours and leaves aside the translated, remodelled and mini-dramas.

4.1 PLOTS OF THE DRAMAS OF BHARTENDU:

The original dramas written by Bhartendu are nine in number. They are: 'Vaidiki Hinsā Hinsā Na Bhawati', 'Prem-Yogini', 'Vishashya Vishamausahaan', 'Shri Chandrawali', 'Bharat Durdasha', 'Bharat Janani, 'Nildevi', 'Andher Nagari' and 'Satī Pratāp'.

4.1:1 VAIDIKI HINSĀ HINSĀ NA BHAWATI (1873):

The principal aim of this farce of Bhartendu is to criticise the evils of social and religious life. The animals are sacrificed at the altar of God and yet the people suffer from no scruple of conscience. The very name echoes the intention of the dramatist.

The story of this drama runs as follows:

The king Griddhoraj was addicted to drinks and meat. The dishonest priest of the king quoted the Vedas to prove the propriety of his actions. Not
only he supported meat-taking, rather he went all out for drinks and other kinds of enjoyment telling that those were compulsory for sustainance of life on this earth. In the meantime a Bengali gentleman entered who was a great supporter of widow remarriage. Supporting him (Bengali) the priest went to the length of declaring: ‘A woman can do whatever she wishes. No fault can be found in a woman’. While this discourse went on, the jester and the Vedánti also joined them. They crack jokes on each other. The Śaivite and the Vaishnavite entered into the scene. When the discussion on meat-taking ensued, they all supported it except the Śaivite and the Vaishnavite. The Śaivite and the Vaishnavite were attacked with bitter ironical remarks. Shrewd Gandakidās came in at that time. He was a Vaishnavite, but a hypocritical one. Being insulted the Śaivite and the Vaishnavite ran away from the king’s court. The king now entered the Hall of worship attended by all. The wine was served as an offering to God and the priest was thoroughly intoxicated. He was out of his wits and behaved as if he was mad. Everyone, including the king, supported drinking and praised its merits. The dance titillated their desires and they cut jokes on ‘Vedanta’ and ‘Brahmaṇad’.

At the long last a trial was held in the court of Yama (God of Death) and all the characters were brought to book. Supporting meat-taking, the king quoted ‘Mahābhārata’. He told that he had taken meat always after making offerings to God and his ancestors. He complained to Yamrāj why those Hindus were not punished who took beef. He opined that no salvation was attainable without taking drinks. But he was punished by the Lord of Death all the same.

The priest sold religion in exchange for money. He presented arguments in support of his evil deeds before Yam Raj:

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"यदि मांस खाना बुरा है तो दूध क्यों पीते हैं, दूध भी तो मांस ही है और अन क्यों खाते हैं; अन भी में तो जीव है।"

(If meat-taking is bad, why should one take milk, because milk is also a kind of meat, one should not take grains also, because there are living organism in them.)

The Purohit was also punished by 'Yamraj'. A minister always dittos his master's decisions, which somehow goes to serve his own (minister's) selfish ends. Gandakidās, symbolises those Vaishnavas, who besmear themselves with sandal and ashes, cheating thereby the common people.

While delivering judgement, the Yamraj inflicted hellish tortures on the king, the minister, the priest and Gandakidās. The Shaivites and the Vaishnavites, who enlighten the people were sent to enjoy the blessings of Kailash and Baikuntha (heavens). The subject-matter of the farce is new, educative and entertaining.

4.1:2 PREM YOGINI (1874):

'Prem Yogini' is a great literary creation of Bhārtendu even though it is incomplete. The author is inspired to take up this work by some incidents personally affecting him. The action is carried out on two levels: 1) animosity and bitterness among the brothers ensuing from misunderstanding about property-sharing and 2) to bring to light the evil deeds and hypocracies committed in the name of religion in holy Kashi. The true sense of honesty and sincerity pervades all through and it can be said that the dramatist has never been able to be so honest elsewhere in his works.

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The subject-matter of this drama runs as follows:

At the beginning, it is shown how people visit the temples with different ends in view through the characters like Tekchanda, Chakkuji, Makhandas, Dhandas, Banitadas, Mishra, Jhapati, Jal Gharia, Bal Mukunda, etc. The leading role is played by Ramchandra. He epitomises what the realities are and how they can be reformed. The characters are many in number, but each of them surely represents a particular aspect of social life prevailing in Kashi. The drama shows that, 'Chhoti Gaibi' and 'Bori Gaibi' are the two places of great eminence in Kashi.

Almost all residents of Kashi pay a visit to these places in the evening. The brokers, Gangaputra, Bhanderiya, Gundu, the pilgrims and other functionaries have been portrayed in their true colours by the dramatist. There are two songs, covering almost three pages, such as 'Dekhi Tumri Kashi' and 'Aisi Hai i Kashi'\(^3\), the former one presenting the real picture of Kashi as it is.

The temple and 'Gaibi' are the two focal points where devilish incidents take place, leaving a very bad taste. How much the Pandas were eager for Pilgrims and what a kind of strange experiences the foreign pilgrims gather are amply illustrated by a scene at Mughal Sarai Railway Station through the Dalal, a foreign pandit and Sudhakar.

Lastly, there is a depiction of South Indians living in Khasi and hence the dialogue in it has been presented in two languages—Hindi and Marathi. How hunger always haunted them and they were with thought of getting food have been portrayed through the characters of Bubhukshit Dikshit, Gappa Pandit, Ram Bhatta, Gopal Shastri, Chambu Bhatta, Madhab Shastri and others, through the discourses on scriptures also come up all along.

\(^3\) Bhartendu Samagra, 'Prem Yogini', p-411.
4.1:3 विषश्या विषामूषधधम (1876):

The changes in the society as well as in the age were at once realised by Bhārtendu. Mahārāj, Malhār Rao, the king of Barodā was dethroned in 1876 by the British for his misrule and debauchery and immorality. This made Bhārtendu greatly pleased and he praised the British in this drama, 'Vishashya Vishamaushadham'.

The basis of the plot of this 'Bhan' is a historical one. Bhārtendu depicted this historical fact through the soliloquy of Bhandāchāryya, full of humour and satire. As Malhār Rāo was a tyrant, the British government overthrew him. He tortured his own people and his administration was slack. The then Resident colonel of Barodā reported the matter to the British government. A commission was appointed to go through the case. Malhār Rāo, in the meantime, plotted to murder the Resident. The British government was compelled to take a stern action against the king and he was dethroned. Sayājī Rāo was enthroned in his place. Bhārtendu has justified the act of the British rule through Bhandāchāryya. He was made to say that the British rule was worthy of praises:

"हे ईश्वर जब तक गंगा-यमुना में पानी है तब तक इनका राज स्थिर रहें।
अहा! हमारी तो पुरोहिती फिर जगी। हमें मल्हारराव से क्या काम, हमें तो उस गद्दी से काम है 'कोउ नृप होउ इमें का हानी। धन्य अंगेरेज! राम और युवराज का धर्मराज्य इस काल में प्रत्यक्ष कर दिखाया।""

(Oh God! May the rule of British continue till there is flowing water in the Ganga and the Jamuna. My priestly functions will now multiply. We have no use for Malhār Rāo, we need the throne, whoever may be dethroned. we

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4. ibid, Vishashya Vishamaushadham, p-423.
have nothing to lose. Thanks are due to the British who restored the rule of justice prevalent in the days of Rām and Yudhisthira).

According to this ‘Bhān’ the ruling kings of the time had many faults in their character. They were addicted to several kinds of bad habits and they had little time and energy left to conduct the business of the state. Bad practices should be rooted out by them who had extended their solemn pledge to protect the people from internal and external enemies.

The plot of ‘Bhān’ is very brief. The statement of Bhandāchāryya about women was the ‘start’ and the abdication of Malhār Rāo was the ‘outcome’. The long soliloquy covered the entire event.

4.1:4 ŚHRĪ CHANDRĀWALĪ (1876):

‘Śhrī Candráwali’ of Bhārtendu is primarily a love-play. He has been quite successful in propounding the principles of ideal love in it. The kind of love the dramatist shows in it was prevalent among the true devotees of Lord Kṛṣhna.

‘Śhrī Chandráwali’ is based on a legendary tale, which shows the very kind of love that existed between Rādhā and Kṛṣhna.

The problem of Chandrávalī was her internal problem. Her madness in love was expressed on her love-dipped conversations, simply because she had no inner conflict with Kṛṣhna, nor a conflict with the external world that might have brought into being the actions and reactions of many forces.

Nārad comes to praise Chandrávalī’s true devotion to Lord Kṛṣhna in ‘Bishkambhok’. At the very outset, Chandrávalī’s conversations with her friends brought into open her love to Lord Kṛṣhna. Lord Kṛṣhna also responded to her with a love charged with the same kind of intensity. But he
is afraid of Brajaswamini Rādhā, and so he found himself in difficult position so far as meeting Chandrāwali is concerned. The condition of Chandrāwali verged on madness due to her separation from Kṛṣṇa. She wandered about describing the pangs of separation to her friends in the garden. A long soliloquy of Chandrāwali sums up her love-lorn madness, which was rather in poetical-prose. Chandrāwali was not conscious of the appearance of the Bandevī, Sandhyā and Varāśa as she was lost in Kṛṣṇa’s love. The dramatist quite successfully showed Chandrāwali’s sincere love to Kṛṣṇa. One of her letter falls in the hands of Champaklatā in which she (Chandrāwali) expressed her inner pangs. When her friends played on the swing and were fully absorbed in enjoyment, her heart was inflamed with those pangs of separation. She described her pitiable plight to her friends, Madhavī, Kām Manjari, Bilasini and others. She depicted her spiritual love to them. When Queen Rādhā came to know of it, she took the responsibility of making Kṛṣṇa and the family members of Chandrāwali agree to her meeting Lord Kṛṣṇa.

At last Kṛṣṇa came to Chandrāwali in the guise of a Yogin. He sang the songs in praise of love as well as separation. Chandrāwali expressed her sentiments of love and surrender to Lalitā and to Kṛṣṇa. While expressing her love-lorn feelings, Chandrāwali fell unconscious. Kṛṣṇa endeared her and appeared in his person. Chandrāwali was beside herself with joy seeing Kṛṣṇa before her.

4.1:5 BHĀRAT DURDĀŚHĀ (1875):

Seeing the intolerable condition of his times, Bhārtendu was so much overwhelmed with the revolutionary ideas of bringing about a sense of awakening that he got transformed into a propagator rather than a realist. Without basing his dramas on a legendary episode or some other kind of

1. Bhārtendu Samagra, Śrī Chandrāwali, p-444.
2. ibid, p-450.
event, he undertook to explain the realities directly, clearly and boldly. Inspired as he was with patriotism in ‘Bhārat Durdasha’, he left very little room for action or conflict in it.

At the very outset, an ascetic sings a ‘Lawani’, which reminds audience of the past glories and it expresses, his grief at the misfortune of India. He describes the tyrannies of British rule in clear terms. He brings home the glaring fact that India possesses neither ample strength nor resources and at the same time she is deep down in trance and disappointment.

Bhāratdurdaiiv has complete faith on the Chakravyuh (Array of soldiers) made by Satyānāshi Fouzdār and his soldiers like Rog (Disease), Ālasya (Idleness), Madirā (Wine) and Andhakār (Darkness). Satyānāshi even praised himself in the following words:

“हलाकु चर्गेजो तैमूर। हमारे अदना अदना सूर।
दुरानी अहमद नादिरसाह। फैज के मेरे तुच्छ सिपाह।”

The soldiers of Bhāratdurdaiiv enumerated the faults of this country. First of all the role of religion is described. Religion had played havoc with the life. There are so many sects and camps, the caste-system etc. which ruined the social fabric, child-marriage was a great bane and even marine-travel was totally banned, bringing in its train the forces of destruction. Despite the presence of crores of gods and goddesses, the Peers and Auliya of other religion were also worshipped. The people invited the Mlechchas to force whistling spell into the ears of the children and as such they were at once thrown out of the fold of Hinduism. Even the serious students of ‘Vedanta’ turned into drunkards and never thought of their own

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8. ibid, p-462
9. ibid, p-462.
country. The other causes of our country's degeneration according to the dramatist were litigation, fashion, bribe and collection of donation. The characters are symbolical and they bring out statements in accordance with their apportioned roles, which are principally the comments, reactions and informations only.

Like the Saptarshi (Seven great sages), a Bengali, a Maharastrian, an editor, a poet, a patriot and others come to deliberate how the country could be brought out of the degeneration. They soften their attitude and maintain silence when they saw Disloyalty coming. Only two has the courage to face him, but Disloyalty arrested them all.

Bhārat Bhāgya tried to awake fainted Bharat. But she was helpless. Therefore, Bhāratdurdaiv did not have to face any difficulties or trouble to be victorious over Bhārat Durdasha. Being unsuccessful to awake, Bhārat Bhāgya committed suicide out of disappointment.

4.1:6 BHĀRAT JANANI (1877):

'Bhārat Janani' is an original drama written by Bhārtendu, which abounds in patriotism. It is a dramatic call to the nation to be awakened.

The drama opens with the scene of a temple ruin. Bhārat Janani was sitting there in its yard rather half-dazed, clad in a dirty 'sari' and with her hair all scattered over her shoulders. Her children lay scattered there, all in the grip of slumber. Saraswatī, the symbol of learning, 'Bhārat-Durgā, the symbol of power and Bhārat Lakṣhmī, the symbol of prosperity ran away to other lands, finding no respect for them in this country. The poor Bhārat-Jananī awakens her children:
"Bata uttho, isprakara sone se kuch kama n chalo, yah purushkala ka samay nahe, tumhara vah din gaya, ab shirom uttho aur is rang ke nivun karen ko sab milkar ankyaavatman kar swasthchait ho koed upay socho. nahin to rang badh jaane per fir kuch n ban padegi."  

At the call of the mother, the children laboriously tried to open their eyes and requested the mother to give something to eat. The poor mother begged assistance from Queen Victoria. The first English officer appeared there and began to abuse the mother as well as the children. The second British officer appeared at the moment. He rebuked his fellow officer, and sympathised with Bhārat Janani, fallen in bad days. He consoles her:

"Mata! ab aur rooden n karo tumhara dukh dekhane se paapana bhii dravyobhut ho jata hai."  

Through these two British characters, the reaction against the British administration was depicted. It is clear that the first Englishman is the symbol of the administration under the Company while the second represented the generous mind of the Victoria administration.

At last Dhairyya comes to help Bhārat Janani. He called upon the children to awaken and to remove the difficulties faced by their motherland. He taught them to forsake greed, false vanity and self respect, insult and told them to proceed ahead with patience as their guide. Bhārat Janani instructed her children to be bold, courageous and united. It is thus to transform the days of adversity into prosperous ones.

11. ibid, p-476.
4.1:7 NILDEVĪ (1881):

The 'Nildevī' is a historical drama and a lyrical allegory of Bhārtendu. He came to portray the women not as a commodity of enjoyment and luxury, but as forceful characters of courage and bravery bold enough to protect the society and its pride. The drama shows meanness of the Muslims and their acts of deception.

According to the plot of the drama, Ābdur Šarīf played tricks and arrested the king of the Punjab Raja Sūryyadev, while he was asleep. He put pressure on Sūryyadev to get him converted to Islam. He (king) turned down the proposal and wounded six solders even when he was under arrest and finally met his death.

The atmosphere at once changed with gloom and grief when the news of victory of Ābdur Šarīf and the death of the Raja reached there. The queen decided to take revenge against the killing of her husband and planed to fight diplomatically. Somdev, and his friends were with the traditional sense bravery of the Rajputs and were full of enthusiasm to go for an all out war. But Nildevī, the queen got them prepared to adopt diplomatic means.

Finally, Nildevī entered into the camp of Ābdur Šarīf when he celebrated his victory with great fun-fare. He took enough wine on this occasion and was intoxicated. The Queen entered their camp in the guise of a singing damsel and stabbed Ābdur Šarīf as soon as she got the opportunity. Somdev, waiting outside with the brave Rajputs came out and attacked them. Some of the Muslims were killed and the rest were taken as prisoners. The whole atmosphere resounded with loud slogans, such as victory to India, victory to the Aryans, victory to the Kshatriya, victory to the Raja, victory to the Queen and victory to Somdev etc.
In the back ground of the drama, the competition between virtue and sin has been depicted. The Raja had a firm belief that the 'Yavanás' would not attack at night. But he was deceived by the Muslims. As the Raja was killed at night, the queen also chooses night to take her revenge on Kharim in the dark. Bhārtendu has presented a superb blending of politics with the codes of religion in this drama.

4.1:8 ANDHER NAGARĪ (1881):

'Andher Nagarī' is a very popular farce creation of Bhārtendu. The dramatist wants to show that the subjects are bound to suffer from the foolishness of the king if virtue and vice are allowed to enjoy equal privileges. It is said that this farce was written with a view to reforming a Zaminder of Bihar.

The drama starts with the scene showing a monk pitching his tent outside Andher Nagarī with his two disciples, Gobardhan Dās and Narāyan Dās. The monk instructs the disciples not to be entangled with greed and sends them to beg alms. The market reflects Andher Nagarī in true colours. A glimpse of different professions in the society was found in the conversations of Kababwālā, Ghāsīrām, Narangīwālī, Haluwāī, Kunjānī, Pachakwālā, fisher-woman, Jātwālā, Baniā etc. It is here that Gobardhan Dās comes to discover the key to the entire business. The formula he gets is that everything there sells at a rupee a seer in that strange but charming city. The monk, when come to know of this dangerous situation, decides to flee from the city all at once. But Gobardhan Dās was too tempted to the attractions and does not follow his Guru, though he has been strictly warned against living there.

The 'Chaupatta Rājā' of 'Andher Nagarī' neither suffered from the scruples of conscience nor he possessed the sense of justice. A complainant goes to his court to seek justice. His goat was killed as the wall of Kallu
Bania collapsed over it. The 'Raja' inflicted capital punishment, but it went shifting and rolling from the head of Kallu to white wisher, waterman, butcher, shephard and finally stuck on the head of Kotwál, who supervised law and justice in the city. This was simply a case of discharging justice blindly without seeing rhyme and reason. Fortunately enough the Kotwál had a slender neck and the noose did not fit it as it was somewhat bigger. But absurdity reached climax when the man to be arrested and to be hanged happened to the none other than Gobardhan Dās, who has fattened himself well with ample eatables and had made his throat big enough to fit the spacious noose of the hanging rope.

Seeing the horrors of injustice, Gobardhan Dās remembered his Guru, who hurried at the call of his disciple. He (Guru) resorted to diplomatic tactics and declared that the time was auspicious enough to go directly to heaven if one was hanged then and there: A scramble follows and the Monk Gobardhan, Kotwál and the minister quarreled among themselves to be hanged all at once. But the king could not forsake such a golden chance. He was authorised to be the first and could not allow others to go to heaven leaving his own self aside. Hence he happily took the noose of the hanging rope round this own neck.

The monk possessed a pious conscience refined with ethical codes and skill. He made the king condemned with his own acts of injustice. The dramatist hinted remarkably well how a country could regain its lost freedom by sending the tyrannous king to the gallows.

4.1:9 SATĪ PRATĀP (1884):

The 'Satī Pratāp' of Bhārtendu is an incomplete drama. It is based on a famous legendary episode. The dramatist's romantic inclinations made inroads at the very start. Sāvitrī and Satyavān are attracted towards each
other at the first sight, which ripens into a sweet love-affair. The dramatist wove the cobweb of tender love with his romance and delicacy.

The drama began with the songs sung by the nymphs praising chastity and purity. These songs are couched in tunes of ‘Rag Jhinjhauti’ and ‘Pilu’ on one hand and ‘Ragini Bahar’ on the other. It is influenced by the charms as they are imagined to be in the court of God, Indra. Sāvitrī and Satyavān fell in love at the final sight. Satyavān has been introduced as Basant and Sāvitrī as Bandevī. This is a new and successful technique adopted by the dramatist. Sāvitrī was deeply absorbed in thoughts of Satyavān. Her condition was pitiable. Bhārtendu depicted Sāvitrī, separated from her lover through Baitālik. Her soliloquy expressed her tender emotions. But she was conscious of her duties as a woman. The songs presented by the girl-friends might be compared equally with those of the songs of the nymphs, which simply showed the romantic inclination of the dramatist.

“देखो मेरी नई जोगिनियाँ आई हो –जोगी घबर मन भाई हो।
खुले केस गोरे मुख सोहत जोहत दूरा सुखदाई हो॥
नव छाती गाती कसि बाँधी कर जप माल सुहाई हो।”

At last Nārad came and made Dyumatsen, father of Satyavān agree to get his son married to Sāvitrī. Though Sāvitrī had already pleaded to marry only Satyavān and none else, yet the marriage proposal was sent to the parents for their decision. It helped to show Sāvitrī at her best, sticking to the norms of ideal behaviour.

The dramatist has chosen to show chastity as the ideal of Indian Women. He presented such women who could assist in making the nation strong and fully awakened. They had been modelled on the Indian ideas.
tested through centuries\textsuperscript{13}. Though incomplete, the drama shows the artistic
taste and re-finement of its creator in ample measure.

4.2 THE PLOTS OF THE DRAMAS OF BEZBAROA:

Lakşmīnāth Bezbaroa has enriched Assamese literature with his
creations in many literary forms. His own conception of drama and the stage
is as follows:

"रंगभूमि अकल रं-धेमालिरेंड सवर्भन हनह। \textit{रंगभूमि} \textit{रडे} जीवनक \textit{रेंजे}र
रडा करि दिये। रंगभूमि सुपरिचालित हले \textit{एटा} डाड़र \textit{शिश्नार, महतू}
जागरणर ठाइ हय। नुबा सि \textit{नरक} \textit{वा} पतनर \textit{बरखाले} \textit{हे} \textit{पंगे। प्रकृत}
नाथ्यशालाबोरे जीवनर समस्यार समाधान कार्यत सहायता करे।\textit{14}"

(Stage is not only meant for jokes and humour. The life assumes
celestial grandeur with the colourful brush of the stage. A well-directed stage
can be transformed into a place for great awakening and education. On the
contrary, it can prove to be an abysmal hell of degeneration. A true stage of
drama resolves the problems of life.)

The dramas of Bezbaroa can be classed in two divisions:

1) Farces and
2) Historical.

The humourous creations include 'Litikāi', 'Pāchanī', 'Nomal' and
'Chikarpati-Nikarpati'. On the other hand 'Chakradhwaj Singha', 'Jaymati
Kunwari' and 'Belimār' are his historical dramas.

\textsuperscript{13} Bhārtenduyugin Nātak, Dr. Sushilā Dhīr, p-105.
\textsuperscript{14} Bezbaroa Granthāwali, p-1869.
A. FARCE:

4.2:1 LITIKĀI (1889-90):

Bezbaroa entered the arena of literature with his farcical creation 'Litikāi'.

This comic depicts the unnatural, absurd and humourous behaviour of seven idiot brothers. The dramatist has attempted to show how the people of high castes do behave with the people belonging to lower castes to gain their selfish interest. At the same time he came out with penchant lesson that "the man who cheats others, comes to be himself cheated".

After the death of their father, the seven brothers named as Nitāi, Manāi, Puhāi, Rasāi, Bholāi, Satāi and Titāi had to face troubles at every step of life due to their foolishness. Their acts of idiocy had been amply portrayed. Once all the seven brothers took the ploughed field shining in full moon light for an ocean and tried to swim out it. Next day, they hold a meeting of all the seven brothers under the shade of 'Bargad' tree to decide whether they had safely come across the ocean. They count themselves one by one but left their own self out. Thus they found one missing. They expressed great sorrow thinking that one of their brothers had been surely killed by the ghost or has been lost. In the meantime, Deoram Brahman appeared and solved their problem. He engaged them all as his servants.

The Brahmin lived in his house with his wife, Chanḍī and mother, Subhadrā. The conversations between his wife and his mother showed that the mother-in-law was hot-tempered and did not take the trouble of exerciscing her brain at all. The daughter-in-law, on the other hand was talkative. The seven brothers serving as servants always created troubles of one sort or another due to their foolishness. Their foolish act cost dear to the Brahmin, when mother breathed her last due to their foolishness. They killed...
some other old woman too taking her for the Brahmin's mother. The Brahmin is quite fade up of these idiots. He wanted to take revenge on them especially for his mother's death. He killed six of the brothers on the excuse of sending them to cut trees. The youngest brother, Titāi somehow escaped. Titāi is grieved at heart to find that his six brothers had been murdered for no fault of them. His brother's death brought him to senses. He came to know that the Brahmin had cleverly got his six brothers killed. Hence he always kept himself on alert. The Brahmin made many attempts on his (Titāi's) life but got no success. Lastly he came out with a novel plan.

Titāi was sent to the Brahman's brother-in-law with a letter, in which it was written that he (Titāi) was a dangerous person and hence he should be killed all at once. Deoram did not know that Titāi had been always on guard and that he knew the art of writing and reading. Titāi opened the letter in the way and went through its contents. He wrote a new letter instead, in which he wrote that Titāi was a very honest person and he had saved the life of the whole family from the clutches of dacoits. It is also mentioned in the letter that Deoram is very grateful to him and wanted to pay back his debt by getting him married to his wife's (Brahmin's) sister. As soon as the forged letter was received in the household, Titāi's marriage with the aforesaid girl was celebrated with great fanfare.

Deoram in his house, impatiently waited to get the news of Titāi's death. No news came down for five complete days. On the sixth day Titāi presents himself at the door of the Brahmin as a well-ornamented bridegroom accompanied by the Brahmin's sister-in-law, Mānikī as the bride with a large band of trumpeters and musicians. The conditions had turned worse for Deoram and he could not stand it. He crashed down senseless. His wife treated him, pouring oil and water on his head but without great success.
Bezbaroa’s ‘Pāchani’ is a farce in humour. Pāchani is very hospitable while his wife is quite opposite to it and the quarrel between them is the subject-matter of the drama ‘Pāchani’. A conflict between the ideals set down by religion and the worldly knowledge has been dramatised. Pāchani’s wife represents worldly knowledge. Even a virtuous act, when crosses its natural limits turns oppressive or simply humourous. The drama comes out with a lesson that God resides not only in human beings, but equally in all kinds of animals too.

Dharmāi Pāchani and his wife were the only members of his family. Pāchani was hospitable by nature and does not like to take meals without having guests. Once he waited hours together on the road for having some guest. He was disappointed, but somehow got an opium eater. The man under intoxication took Pāchani for a dacoit and tried to run away from him by pushing a coin in his hand. Pāchani managed to find another two persons for his guest. He brought them home and ordered his wife to entertain them with water to get their feet washed. He, in the meantime, went to the market to purchase salt and oil. The wife made out a plan to drive out the guests away. She was tried of daily entertaining the guests. She confidentially informed the guests that they were surely to be killed with the padle of the husking ‘Dhekî’, when they would fall asleep. Their belongings would also be snatched away. The guests took to their heels out of fear. Pāchani on return was informed by his wife that the guests were offended with her as she did not satisfy them with the gift of her Dhekî Thôrā (padle of the rice husking Dhekî) and so they ran away, Pāchani was angry at his wife, who did not give the ‘Thôrā’ to the guests and thus made him lose them (guest). Pāchani followed them with the ‘Thôrā’ in his hand and called them to come back. But the guests were afraid all the more, seeing Pāchani with a ‘Thôrā’ in his hand. They ran faster and did not fall in Pāchani’s trap. The wife of Pāchani was successful in her attempts and was besides herself with joy.
Once the wife of Pâchani lovingly called her husband to take his meals and told him that she had brought a guest for making him happy. Pâchani was greatly pleased and sat down at his meal. He asked where the guest was? The wife at once brought out a cat and told that God is pleased not only by feeding human beings, but also by feeding creatures like cats and dogs. God lives equally in all the creatures. The human beings do not always pay back the act of benevolence, but the animals always do. But his wife’s pleading did not bring Pâchani to his senses. He again brought a guest to the house and himself went to the market for making purchases. His wife took out the cat and gave it a good wash with water. She told the guest that there was a great dearth of fish and meat, and so she was busy in arranging the flesh of the cat for the meal. The guest was taken aback and ran away. Pâchani on return asked for the guest. His wife answered that the guest was a queer person who wanted to get the cat washed and skin off for having meat for his meals. Pâchani was at his wits end, because such acts were irreligious. He did not repent for such a guest to go away. The wife was also pleased to see her tricks being crowned with success. She admonishes her husband that he should give up the hope of entertaining guests, as unknown guests would bring disasters instead of benefits. She had already a cat in the house. She would now bring even a dog. The cat would eat the rats, while the dog would keep a watch on the house all night.

The farce presents the picture of hospitability of the families having low income in Assam. Pâchani is the symbol of the rural Assamese family who tries to run after gaining religious virtues by feeding guests even when he has no enough provision in his house.

Bezbaroā depicted the rural Assamese life through the introduction of the ‘Thora’ as well as the process of basket making into the stage. The farce is full of humour.
Bezbaroa’s ‘Nomal’ is a farce based on the Assamese folk-tale the ‘Nidhaniyā’. The dramatist tried to present the simple and innocent life-style of an Assamese peasant. The superstitions and other social evils have been taken to task in it.

Nāharphutukā is an ordinary peasant living in the country side with his wife, Nichalī. Five babies were born to them, but all breathed their last at an early age. When the sixth one was born, Nichalī, his wife requested him to visit his Vaishnav Guru of ‘Athiabari Satra’ and bring blessing as well as an auspicious name for their son, which she thought would certainly help the baby to survive. She placed in the hands of her husband a Gamochā and a quarter of a rupee to be presented to the ‘Satradhikār’. She made her husband well provided with rice-powder and molasses for him to take in the way.

Nāharphutukā is really a good man having only one demerit of forgetting quickly whatever was told to him. He had to face several odds in his expedition to bring a name for his son. He has to bear many difficulties while bringing the name for his son. Before entering the Satra he had to answer many questions from the Dwarpal (Gateman) and the other officials. When he was asked for some bribe to enter into the Satra, he wanted to give them the Pithaguri (Rice Powder) and the molasses which was given by his wife at the time of his journey. But the gateman refused to accept them, and did not allow to enter the Satra. Later with a warning that in future, he should not come with empty hands to the Satra, allowed to go.

When Nāharphutukā presents himself before the ‘Satradhikār’, the bundle containing rice-powder and molasses got opened up by mistake, the ‘Rājmedhi’ got angry at this and ordered the assistant to push him (Nāharphutukā) out. But Satradhikar forbade the orderly from doing it.
Nāharphutukā took out the Gāmochā and a quarter rupee now and offering it he prostrated himself on the feet of the Satradhikar. Meanwhile Sadhuram Barua appeared and began to express his opinion on religion or the absence of it. He told that the right to study scriptures should not be confined only to the Brahmins. We had many examples in the Vedas and the Puranas showing a man, though Brahmin by birth got degenerated in to ‘Shudra’ by doing heinous works, while the ‘Shudras’ attained supreme knowledge by dint of their penance and merit. Rājmedhī was angry at Sadhuram. Satrādhikār thought himself to be a master-dramatist as he wrote a Bengali drama ‘Dadhi-Mathan.’ Kehorām Gāyan, a flatterer in the ‘Satra’ praised the Bengali drama and said:

"बड़ला नाट पर तेज। अंकीया नाटर निचिनाटो आरु सि मेरमेरीया।

नहय।"15"

The Satrādhikār instructed his disciples to stage the Bengali drama on the occasion of the death anniversary of the Guru. All those assembled there take the instruction with great rejoicings. The dramatist flung this ironical remark to bring home the degeneration of Assamese nationality.

When the turn of Nāharphutukā came, he requested the Satrādhikār to suggest a name for his new-born baby, auspicious enough to make his future prosperous. The Satrādhikār named the baby as ‘Nomal’ and bestow blessings.

On his way back home, Nāharphutukā went on repeating the name, so that his forgetful nature might not wipe out the name from his memory. When he reaches on the bank of a river, ‘Nomal’ reduces down to ‘Nemel’ in his memory, which means ‘Don’t go’. Just at that time a merchant was preparing to start his boat-journey. Hearing the word ‘Nemel’ from

Nāharphutukā, he was greatly annoyed. His servants at once pounced over Nāharphutukā and beat him blue and black. Nāharphutukā began to cry and utter it ought not to have happened (‘Nahabar hal ai’). Chaklá Gohain happened to pass thereby with a big procession of band party. He was promoted to the rank of Barbaruā. Hearing the remark of Nāharphutukā, he felt insulted. So Nāharphutukā was again assaulted by the attendants of Gohāin.

Now Nāharphutukā completely forgot the name, offered by Satradhikār. At home, his wife, Nichālī asked him as to what name had he brought. But Nāharphutukā was unable to tell and so he ordered his wife to offer him something to eat. He put the bag with offerings just nearby. Sukuri, a woman of neighbourhood came and curiously asked about the name given by the Satradhikār. Nichālī told her that the name was still in the bag. Sukuri advanced towards the bag to open it, but Nichālī forbade her telling ‘Nemel’ (Don’t open). This brought to the memory of Nāharphutukā the name ‘Nemel’ offered by Satradhikār. He was angry to find that the name of the baby had been already made public. So he gave his wife a sound beating. Sukuri fled away all at once. Nāharphutukā in the long last opened the bag. While distributing the offerings (Prasād) he made the public pronouncement that the baby was named as ‘Nemel’.

The dramatist hit heavily on the mismanagement of the ‘Satras’ in Assam. Those who were associated with the ‘Satras’ also shared the evils perpetrated by this institution. It evokes laughter and pleasantries when ‘Nomal’ (the youngest) was transformed into ‘Nemel’ (Don’t open).

4.2:4 CHIKARPATI – NIKARPATI (1913):

The ‘Chikarpati-Nikarpati’ is a political farce. It presents a humorous portrait of skilful the stealing of two rascals and the consequent corruptions it brought into Judiciary.
The drama starts with the exploits of the thief, Chikarpati. He was a bold thief, who was never afraid of indulging himself in the act of thieving. Once Bethâi and his wife had lodged a complaint against him of stealing away their water-pot. They did not get justice in the court and they had to come back with insults heaped over them by the pleaders. On the other hand, 'Chikarpati was proved quite innocent. It depicted how the people of higher classes neglect the people belonging to the lower strata of society. The dramatist spoke ironically of bribe-taking by the officers. Bezbaroa depicted the differences of ideas between the senior and junior pleaders through senior Advocate Gangârâm and newly educated Bisheshwar Duara.

Sutuli Gosâi is a type of Assamese character with false pride and who wanted to establish himself as a good man. Such type of people try to attract others by buying costly thinks.

Several trials were conducted in the law-courts of the king of Chikunpur, but the thief Chikarpati could never be proved guilty. Once the king announced that Chikarpati would be awarded the title of 'Borchor' (Thief the Great), if he could successfully steal away the ring from the finger of the king. Chikarpati fully knew that stealing away the ring from the king's finger would not be an easy task. Hence he went to the house of Rangdai, the maid-servant of the king. He began love conversation with her as if they were husband and wife. He collected all kinds of informations about the king. The maid-servant told him that the king slept on the right-side of the bedstead and the queen on the left. She informed that a dishful of water is placed above the mosquito-curtain and if it was touched somehow, water fell on the body awakening the king thereby. Chikarpati very cleverly entered the palace. He clothed himself in royal dress and was accompanied by his father, who carried on his shoulders different kinds of presents for the king. The gateman took him for a relative of the king and happily allowed him entry. He offered some tips to the gateman. When he entered the room of the king, the suck out water from the dish with the help of a pipe.
the mosquito curtain, he took the king's ring out of his finger. He marched out of the king's palace in the same style as he came in.

The next day, the king declared Chikarpati, 'Borchor' and praised him profusely. Further he entrusted Chikarpati with the responsibility of finding a suitable groom for the princess.

Chikarpati arrived Dinganagar in search of a groom for the princess. There lived another thief named 'Nikarpati', who might endanger his (Chikarpati's) life. Hence he advised the crews of his boat to anchor it at the Ghat of the thief himself. While he was sleeping in his 'Borkali-Nāo' (big boat) at the Ghat, Nikarpati came with some of his colleagues and robbed the goods from the small boat. But Chikarpati saw all that happened. He reached the house of Nikarpati in the guise of Nikarpati himself and told his wife (Nikarpati's) that the goods just now brought home should be concealed somewhere, because the owner got the scent of the theft. The wife of Nikarpati took out the goods and Chikarpati safely returned to his boat with all that had been looted. Nikarpati was quite astonished when he reached home and began to think who this Chikarpati really was. Chikarpati introduced himself to Nikarpati and told him why he had come for. He sought the help from his friend.

Nikarpati advised Chikarpati how he could kidnap the prince of Dinganagar. When the king took out all his apparels and ornaments and went to take meal, 'Chikarpati stole all of them. He wore all those ornaments and sat down on the throne as the king. He kidnaped the prince successfully and got away to Chikunpur.

Chikarpati, the great thief was received at Chikunpur with great celebrations. The prince was married to the princess and Chikarpati was rewarded appropriately.
Apart from humour and irony, the dramatist showed hollowness of the Judiciary. The king himself sided with the corrupted to serve his own ends. It was a hitting irony on the administrative system of the British. Bezbaroa portrayed effectively the plight of common men when they went in search of justice. Sutuli Gosai is a character modelled on Western middle class.

B. HISTORICAL DRAMAS.

4.2:5 JAYMATĪ KUNWARĪ (1915):

Lakṣmīnāth Bezbaroa wrote the drama, 'Jaymatī Kunwarī' basing it on the life-story of a brave woman of Assam. The reign of the Ahoms covering almost five hundred years abounded with glorious feats but at the same time it was also full of heinous crimes and tyrannous misrule. A few events had divine significance and crystallised deep into the memory of people crossing the limits of their earthly bounds.

Bezbaroa has himself admitted that this drama of his initial stage had been influenced by 'Shāh Jāhān' of Dwijendra Lāl Roy. Dr. S. N. Sārmā has remarked:

'The historical plays of Girishchandra and Dwijendralāl of Bengal probably inspired Bezbaroa to a certain extent. He had candidly expressed his indebtedness to Dwijendralāl in designing the first two scenes of his 'Jaymatī'.

The 'Jaymatī Kunwarī' portrays the pitiable plight of Assam under the inefficient and power-loving Ahom king, 'Chulikaphā' (La'ra Rajā). It simultaneously showed the supreme sacrifice of the life of Jaymatī Kunwarī for the interest of the country as a whole.

Assam was ruled by 'Chulikaphā' at the end of the Seventeenth Century. As he was a minor, he was also known as the 'La'īā Raja' (young king). He surrendered himself to the close grips of Burāgohāin and Barpātra Gohāin and entangled himself in works verging on tyranny. He wanted to make his throne secure from the hands of Ahom princes. There was a tradition among the Ahoms that none with amputated limb or defective organs would be enthroned. Hence he ordered all the eligible Ahom princes to be amputated. The work got a start in all seriousness. The turn of prince Gadādhar was just on the cord. His wife Jaymatī came to know of it and advised him to fly away. So escaped from the king's anger, Gadāpāni ran away to the Naga Hills.

The King inflicted punishment on Jaymatī on the advice of Burāgohāin and Barpātra Gohāin. He turned a deaf ear to the requests of queen-mother and Borgohāin who opined against the punishment. Jaymatī was tortured in an open field called Jerengā. Chulikaphā was so afraid of Gadāpāni that he could not enjoy even a wink of slumber. He was often haunted by nightmares and got awake all of a sudden at midnight. The prisoner Jaymatī was put to interrogations by Burāgohāin and Borgohāin in turn. Jaymatī never opened her mouth to give a clue to the whereabouts of her husband. Buragohain was greatly angered at the firmness and self-confidence of Jaymatī, whereas Borgohāin was equally pleased with her behaviour. Pithu Changmai tried to save his Lady even at the cost of his life. Jaymatī told nothing about her husband's whereabouts even when she was tortured quite inhumanely. Everyone was moved to see Jaymatī so cruelly treated. The queen-mother tried to make the king see realities, but he inflicted insults even on his mother by calling her a frail woman.

Gadāpāni happened to meet a tribal girl, Dālimī in the Naga Hills. She was an innocent girl, dancing, singing and playing all through her life. It was said that she was the brain-daughter of Bezbarōā born out of his
imaginations. She loved Gadāpāñi more than her life itself. She called him by the nickname of 'kechā son' (raw gold). Her love was not something physical, but divine. The love between them served as a bridge unifying the bond of unity, love and co-operation between the hills and the plains. Gadāpāñi in the Naga Hills was always anxious of how to save his country. He was greatly hurt when he heard how his wife had been put under tortures.

Burāgohain ordered to torture Jaymatī more and more, even though his wife and Dakśinpatiā Gosāin advised him to the contrary. Gadāpāñi in the Naga Hills grew more and more restless as he heard about the inhuman treatment meted out to his wife. He visited his wife in cognito and advised her to give out the whereabouts of her husband. Jaymatī to recognised her husband, even in disguise but pretended not to know him. She told him to get out of the place. Being tortured continuously for fourteen days, Jaymatī breathed her last keeping her ideal unfaded. Gadāpāñi was inspired by this selfless sacrifice of her life and mustered all his prowess to restore peace and amity in Assam.

Jaymatī was the portrait carved out of the history of Assam at an unfortunate moment. The sacrifice of Jaymatī’s life does not only symbolise a sacrifice for the welfare of the people, but it also poses a challenge to the rule of tyranny. Jaymatī sacrificed her life and paved the way for the restoration of peace and good government. Bezbaroā might have been inspired to write this drama as he thought that the plight of India under a foreign rule resembled to the cruel and inhuman condition of Jaymatī. There was no alternative but to muster courage and put a challenge to the rule of tyranny as was done by Gadāpāñi against the Ahom misrule.
4.2:6 CHAKRADHWAJ SINGHA (1915):

Chakradhawj Singha represents the golden period of Ahom rule in Assam. Dr. Satyaendra Nāth Sārmā, remarks: “Chakradhwaj Singha unfolds a glorious chapter of the history of the Ahom rule.”

Bezbaroa has based his drama on an easy, ‘Śharāighātar Yuddha’, written by Pandit Hem Chandra Goswāmī. According to Goswāmī the battle of Śharāighāt came to an end in 1668 and Chakradhwaj also met his end in 1670. According to another historian, Edward Gait, the battle ended during the reign of Udayaditya. Bezbaroa the opinion of Goswāmī and showed the end of the battle was during the regime of Chakradhwaj Singha.

‘Chakradhwaj Singha’ is a drama covering five acts. It is based on the story of Mughal invasion of Assam. The Ahom army under the indomitable command of Lāchit Barphukan registered a decisive Victory on the Mughals. This is known in history as the famous ‘battle of Šharāighāt’.

The Mughal army under Mir Jumlā came to attack Assam when Jaydhwaj Singha ruled. A treaty was signed and Mir Jumlā returned without fighting. Chakradhwaj Singha was crowned after Jaydhwaj Singha, who ruled from 1663 to 1670. According to the terms of the treaty Mir Jumlā demanded Rs.7 Lakhs from the King, which he refused to pay. It sets in motion the preparations for the battle of Šharāighāt.

Chakradhwaj Singha conferred the title of Barphukan (Commander-in-Chief) on Lāchit Barbarua and ordered for the preparations of war. The Ahom army under the command of Lāchit Barphukan fought against the Mughals and achieves victory at ‘Bānhbari’ and ‘Kajalimukh’. The Mughal commander, Mir Jumlā was killed and a vast area including Guwahati was freed from the clutches of the Mughals.

18. ‘The Historical Plays of Lakshminath Bezbaroa’, Dr. Satyendra Nath Sārmā, p-141.
19. ‘Asomiya Nātya Sāhityar Jilingoni’, Dr. Harischandra Bhaṭṭāchāryya, p-156
As the previous treaty was broken, a big Mughal Army under the command of Râm Singha, the Râjâ of Ambar was sent to invade Assam. The Ahom army under the leadership of Lâchit Barphukan and Aton Burâgohâin stopped the march of the Mughals on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. This conflict lasted for six months. The battle of Sharaighat decided at last the fate of the armies. It was on this occasion that Lâchit Barphukan slaid his maternal uncle who was found neglecting his duties on the front. His utterance at this event the, 'uncle is not more valuable than the country' came to stay in Assamese as a popular idiom. The Mughals were defeated in a big way in the battle. The armies fought on water in the river itself. Though Lâchit Barphukan was not in good health, he inspired his army to fight well. The Mughals were frustrated in their attempts and had to give up their dream of a victory on Assam. Râm Singha remarked:

"असमीयाबोल कि भयानक योद्धा! कि साहसी बीर! सकलों काम्यते
निपुण! मझों देखि ताजजप मानिलो ! प्रत्येकतो असमीया सेनाक जि
कामते लगाई दिया, तेहि कामते सि पका। नाओ बाबले लगाई दिया, आमार
देशर भाल नावरीयाहाओ तार निनिकानके नाओ बाब नोचारे। माति खानिचले
लगाई दिया, देखिबा सि सुन्दरकाह माटि खानिछे। हिले मारिखले, चन्दूकु
मारिखले, काँकर मारिखले दिया, सेहि सकलोबोरते सि सुनिपुण। मह
भास्तवर्ष कत ठाहित कत रकम मानुह देखिलो, कत रकम झुँझार सेना
देखिलो, कतो एने सेना हिन्दुवीह होक, बा मुसलमानेह होक-कतो एने
सेना देखा नाखिलो। आरु जेने असमीया सेना तेने असमीया सेनापति। कि
कौलाली ! कि दूरदर्शी ! एइ लाचित बरफुकन। बास्तविक एनेपन
बुद्धिमान सेनापति मह आगेये लग पोवा नाखिलों।20"

(The Assamese are brave fighters of course. They have the skill to do well all kinds of works. I am rather surprised to see their keen sense of duty. Whatever work they are assigned to, they prove themselves successful.

They ply their boats so well and I can say that the boatmen of our side cannot compete with them. If they are engaged in digging earth, they do the same beautifully well. They can handle the gum as well as the bow very skilfully. I have seen in India many kinds of people, many kinds of warriors, but I have not come across such brave warriors as Assamese are. The Assamese commander is a great strategise and possessess strategist keen foresight. Lāchit Barphukan is really a great commander and I have not the privilege of meeting such a brave soul in all may life before.)

Two sub plots are interwoven with the main story of the drama. They are 1) Gajpurīā sub-plot and 2) Chenehī-Rupahi-Šhadiyakhowā sub-plot. These two are the sole new inventions of the dramatist himself.

The character of Gajpurīā has been modelled after Falstaff of Shakespeare's Henry IV. He is surrounded with his cohorts, such as Priyarām, Japarā, Takau, Tokorā and Sindhirām. Gajpurīā passed the prime of his youth, but he was quick-witted and bold in his actions. He indulged in drinks in company of friends and grew sentimental when Gajpurīānī (his Mistress) handed the drinks over to him. He was womanish to a certain extent and he had no courage to face the battle-front of Šharaighat, but whiled away his time in the company of his wife, Gajpurīānī. He made a variety of fans even in the field of battle. The husband and the wife were caught red-handed while stealing clothes out of the body of dead soldiers. They were presented before Lāchit Barphukan for punishment but they were taken for idiots and were let off.

Barphukan was blessed with two daughters, Chenehī of sweet sixteen and Rupahi aged fourteen. Shadiyakhowā Gohāin was madly in love with
Chenehī and as there was no competitor, he was successful in marrying her Priyarām, only son of Barphukan. He had no aptitude for attending the affairs of the State, rather he was lured to drinks in the company of Gaipuria. Barphukan did not seem to like him, nevertheless he proved his military talent on the battle front.

The drama presents two battles between the Ahom and the Mughal armies. In the first two acts, the Ahom army fights against the Mughals at Bānhbarī and Kājālimukh with a view to occupy Guwahati. The rest three acts present the battle with Rām Singha, the commander of the Mughals. The most remarkable trait of the dramatist has been to present the battle without showing the true actions on the stage. The strategies and the actions are brought to the stage with the help of messages and letters. Hence the drama suffers from lack of forceful actions. Though the drama has been named after Chakradhwaj Singha, he appears only in six scenes out of the total twenty-six. Dr. S.N.Śārmā remarks in this context: "Chakradhvajasimha, after whose name the title of the play is given, however, appears only in six scenes out of total twenty six scenes in the play. Like Julius Caesar of Shakespeare, where the spirit of Caesar pervades the entire play. Chakradhvajasimha also is pervaded by the spirit of patriotism and independence which marked the characters of King Chakradhvajasimha." In fact the hero of the drama is the brave commander of the Ahom, Lāchit Barphukan.

4.2:7 BELIMĀR (1915):

The ‘Belimār’ is the most important drama of repute Bezbaroā wrote. The royal court at the time was a hot-bed of intrigues and a cobweb of personal animosity. This leads to the loss of independence of the Assam and the drama comes to portray the different kinds of pulls and plots leading to the catastrophe. The ‘Belimār’ literally means setting of the sun and the

21. The Historical Plays of Lakṣmināṭh Bezbaorā, Dr. Satyendra Nāth Śārmā, pp-141-142.
drama shows the end of Ahom rule in Assam. Three consecutive attacks of the Burmese on Assam between 1818-26 broke down the backbone of Ahom military power and ultimately pushed it under the colonial rule of the British East India Company.

The Ahom king Chandrakānta Singha was a weak and feeble ruler. His prime minister, Pūrnānanda Burāgohāin was the de facto ruler of the Kingdom. The first three acts presented the conflicts between Pūrnānanda Burāgohāin on the one hand and Badan Barphukan and Chāringiya Phukan on the other. Satrām was dismissed on the charge of treachery. Badan Barphukan is made an associate in the plot of treachery with Satrām and the Prime minister sent a contingent of troops to arrest him. But Pijau, daughter-in-law of Burāgohāin and Badan’s daughter sent a letter to him (Badan) warning him in advance. Badan fled far away from Guwahati. He approached the East India Company at Calcutta for help but got no favourable response. He visited Burma thereafter and was able to persuade them. Pūrnānanda Burāgohāin was frustrated at the prospect of imminent invasion of the Burmese and committed suicide by licking the diamond. Badan was made the ‘Montri-Phukan’ at the demise of Burāgohāin. But the queen-mother was never pleased with the workings of Badan. She thought that the man, who could bring foreign army to gain his own ends can very well sell the motherland for the same kind of self-interest. Hence she plotted against Badan and killed him. Hearing the death of her father, Pijau turned mad and drowned herself in water.

After Pūrnānanda, his son, Ruchināth was elevated to the post of Burāgohāin, Chandrakānta Singha was dethroned and Purandar Singha was crowned instead. Chandrakānta requested for help from the Burmese. There was an open revolt raised by the people and unity was greatly weakened thereby. The Burmese army attacked Assam again to take revenge for the murder of Badan Barphukan. Chandrakānta was again made the king. Ruchināth and Purandar Singha run away to some distant place. On the
advice of the royal court, Chandrakânta sealed the North Eastern border, which infuriated the Burmese immensely. To take revenge for this treacherous act, the Burmese attacked Assam for the third time. Chandrakânta fled away to Kamrup. A fierce battle was fought between the Assamese and the Burmese in which a crushing defeat of the Assamese was registered. Chandrakânta sought help from the British army. The British army made inside the Assamese territory which sent alarming signals to the Burmese. The Burmese proved themselves a very poor match against the superior force of the British. They were repulsed back but while retreating they inflicted unbearable atrocities and miseries on the common people.

The Burmese gathered at Jorhat to have the last fight with the British. They hold conflicting views regarding fighting or surrendering to the British consequently the army under Śyām Phukan assassinated the Burmese commander Burā Rajā. Col. Richards with his British army was in camps at Gauri Sagar near Sibsagar and a fierce battle was fought at Rangpur (Sibsagar). The Burmese were squarely defeated and now they fell divided between two warring comp. Those who supported to have a treaty number more than those who did not. Hence the Burmese under the command of Bagalī Phukan and Śyām Phukan with an army numbering to seven hundred surrendered to the British force. Their treaty with Scott left them free to choose between living in Assam or leaving for their own country. Hence an army consisted of two thousand soldiers with nine thousand males and females go back to Burma. They wished to take away some thirty thousand Assamese with them, but this plan failed due to the presence of the British army. Even then some five to six thousand helpless Assamese have to cast away their caste and nationality and they were carried away by the Burmese.

The drama ends with signing of the ‘Treaty of Yandabu’ between Śyām Phukan and Bagali Phukan of Burma on the one hand and the East India Company on the other. The Ahom King was given pension and thereby
Assam lost its sovereign status. The kingdom passed to the rule of East India Company.

The 'Belimār' of Bezbaroa does not portray the tragic end of a historical character, rather it focuses on the personal animosities of the nobles and the officers, their self-interest and lust for power leading to the degradation of social and moral values. No single character or hero is made responsible for this degeneration. It was shared by Purnānanda, Badan Chandrakānta Singha, Ruchināth and others. The plot has no compactness as the loose-ends of many events spread over a vast tract of time are made to fall in line. The lack of a central theme to fall back upon sends the events in disarray. Regarding the dramatist's feat of interposing comic and tragic scenes, one after another, Dr. S. N. Sārmā remarks.

‘In the development of the plot and arrangement of scenes, the writer has followed the pattern of Shakespeare by interposition of comic and rustic scenes either immediately before of after highly strung tragic scenes’.

The drama hold in its frame work a sub-plot which shows the family life of Ruchināth and the episode of Bakatiyāl Phukan and Dhanśhiri.

4.3 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PLOTS OF THE DRAMAS OF BHĀRTENDU AND BEZBAROĀ:

Bhārtendu and Bezbaroā were not simply the dramatists, but also the vigilant watchmen of their times. They had the capacity to feel the pulse of the age they lived in. Hence they portrayed the social anomalies and absurdities through the medium of their stories as well as the characters of their dramas.

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22. The Historical Playa of Lakshmināth Bezbaroā, Dr. Satyendra Nāth Sārmā, p-144
The two dramatists (above-noted) have taken recourse to humour and irony in order to showing the social, political, religious and cultural ills. Whenever they wanted to make a direct attack on British rule in India, they did it through their expressions, moulded in the forms of farces and 'Bhan'. We can take the examples of Bhartendu's 'Vaidiki Hinsa Hinsa Na Bhaawati' and Bezbaroa's 'Nomal' in this regard. Both of these are comic creations and the dramatists have thrown their ironical remarks, on religious life beset with corrupt practices. The king, the minister, the priest, Bhattacharya, Gandakidas, Yam and Chitragupta are all symbolic figures. The dramatist made fun and cracked jokes at the priest together with Shaivites and the Vaishnavites for their indulgence in taking wine and meat. They are called hypocrites by the dramatist. In the same way Bezbaroa has focussed on the blemishes of Satriya System of Vaishnavism in Assam through his comic creation, 'Nomal'. He has brought to light the lust of money ingrained in the Officers of the 'Satra' and oppressions carried out in the name of religion. Innocent people like Naharphutuka, had been cheated by religious tricks of the monks. Pachani made fun at the traditional system of false religious senses in showing hospitality even at the cost of domestic peace in family life. The low-income group had blind imitations of century-old traditions that did no good but make them poorer. It is surprising that injustice and hollowness of the system do not come to their notice. Bhartendu and Bezbaroa were against those usages in the society that bring more harm than the advantages.

Lack of education is another cause of the country's degradation and both the dramatists, Bhartendu as well as Bezbaroa have pin-pointed to it. Bhartendu's 'Prem Yogini' and Bezbaroa's 'Litikai' are cases in point. Bhartendu has severely criticised those who idly while away their time. It presents beautifully the degenerated life of Kashi. Bhartendu has portrayed this degeneration through the characters of Gappa Pandit, Ram Bhatta, Gopal Shastri, Chambu Bhatta and Madhab Shastri. Bezbaroa has also shown through humorous portraiture in 'Litikai' that idleness and lack of
wisdom are passports to nowhere. The comics present through humour how poor and common people lack of education and foresight due to which they are cheated and oppressed.

Bhārtendu and Bezbaroā passed their entire span of life in India enslaved by a foreign power with the stabilisation of British rule in this country, so many problems were being created in the life of the people. The social values were wearing out due to the blind imitation of English life-style, oppression in the name of justice and increasing trend of atrocities as well as corruption. In this context the comic creations like 'Andher Nagari' and Bezbaroā's 'Chikarpati-Nikarpati' can be referred to. There is no fundamental difference between the 'Choupatta Raja' of 'Andher Nagari' and the King of 'Chikarpati-Nikarpati'. Both of them make fun of justice and introduce a corrupt system in which the criminals safely escape out whereas the innocents are punished. Bhārtendu and Bezbaroā have portrayed the corrupt Judiciary of the British rule through symbolical representations and have done it quite successfully.

The most common characteristics of the age were the animosities among the Indian princes and their all-consuming self-interest that led to the consolidation of British rule all over India. Both the dramatists seem immensely concerned with this trend of the time and they have transformed their heart-felt pains into their dramas. Bhārtendu has made caustic remarks on the atrocious misrule of Gayakbār of Barodā, which led to his abdication. But the medicine applied to cure the disease was more injurious than the disease itself. The replacement of the rule of Indian princes by British rule was the common feature of the contemporary political reality. Bezbaroā in his drama the 'Belimar' has also focussed on the mismanagement in administrative systems leading to the harassment of common people. The governing machineries were brought to a grinding halt and a destructive poison pervade the society as a whole. The foreign enemies come to usurp power and all kinds of atrocities were inflicted on the people. While removing
this kind of misrule of the King, the people of Assam also had to swallow down their throat the British rule instead. British colonial rule was established only as a consequence of the tyrannical misrule of the Ahom Kings.

Bhārtendu and Bezbaroa did not sit satisfied only with their criticisms levelled on the ills, but they also went on awakening national consciousness by their portraiture of past glories. Bhārtendu's 'Bhārat Durdashā' as well as 'Bhārat Jananī' and Bezbaroa's 'Chakradhwaj Singha' and 'Belimar' are cases in point for illustrations. Looking at worsening conditions and sitting tight doing nothing cannot bring the desired results. Awakening to the real situation and struggling hard to achieve the objective can only help Bhārtendu brought India in human shape on the stage in 'Bhārat Durdasha' and in 'Bhārat Jananī'. Mother India reminded her children of the past glories and challenged them to be active. Lāchit Barphukan in Bezbaroa's 'Chakradhwaj Singha' also did the same work. He even slayed down his own maternal uncle, who was found unmindful of duties on the war-front. He cautioned others by his remark-‘Uncle is not worthier than the motherland’. It surely shows the sense of new awakening and nationalism working into the consciousness of the people. Examples in this context can be cited from ‘Nildevī’ of Bhārtendu and ‘Jaymati kunwarī’ of Bezbaroa. Jaymati and Nildevī, though they belonged to the weaker sex, yet took revenge on the traitors in their own inimical styles. They keep the fire of nationalism burning even at the cost of their lives.

It can be safely concluded that Bhārtendu and Bezbaroa came to share the same kind of ideals and emotional backgrounds inspite of the fact that they faced different kinds of situations of life and write farces and dramas based on different kinds of story-elements. Comparatively speaking, there are more similarities in their writings than what the dissimilarities appear to be.