Preface

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land?

Sir Walter Scott

Lakshminath Bezbaroa had perhaps said many a time
'O Mor Aponar Des' (Oh, my mother land) not by way of
soliloquy alone, but loudly, to inspire innumerable people
to utter the same on countless occasions. My first
acquaintance with Lakshminath Bezbaroa was when I was a
school girl, and it was affected through 'O Mor Aponar Des'.
The sweet patriotic sentiments of the song had inspired me
profoundly, and I unconsciously nurtured the aspiration to
know this great personality of Lakshminath Bezbaroa a bit
more intimately and more elaborately. The aspiration was
perhaps rising in me with passage of time. After many years
later after I took the Master's degree from the University
of Gauhati, with great trepidation I revealed my ambition to
Professor Maheswar Neog, the former Jawaharlal Nehru Professor
and Dean, Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University. In his usual
inspiring tone Professor Neog smilingly advised me to read
some books on creative literature written by Lakshminath
Bezbaroa. That moment shall ever remain a memorable one in
my memory. I had never expected such a positively
constructive response, and that too so instantly, from such a
stalwart like Professor Neog.

I began my research under the guidance of Professor Neog, of course, in my own humble way. I read quite a good number of books as recommended by my guide, but could not make any headway in the research project. How to begin, how much to write, what to write and scores of like dilemmas had constantly kept me in a state of bewilderment. Moreover, the chores of an Indian housewife were already there not to allow me the speed I contemplated. However, I did not lose heart. As if the towering personality of Bezbaroa had all along been beckoning me from afar not to despair!

In the socio-cultural and literary field of Assam, Lakshminath Bezbaroa's position is that of the Pole Star; and to enquire into the contributions of such a stalwart was indeed an uphill task for an incognito like me. However, Professor Neog's constant inspiration was invaluable to me and it had all along been encouraging me to go on holding the ring. But for his lovingly inspiring guidance, this work would not have seen the light of the day. I have no words to thank Professor Neog adequately for this act of paternal kindness on his part. I deem myself lucky to have the privilege of being guided in my research effort by a versatile scholar like Professor Neog.

Lakshminath Bezbaroa's versatility is indeed unfathomable. He was the founder of the second era of
Renaissance of Assamese literature. Bezbaroa's achievement in creating the link between the spiritual values of the Vaishnava literature of Assam and the humanistic approach of the western writers in forming the composite modern Assamese literature of to-day is indeed praiseworthy, and it shall keep its mark for all times to come.

Bezbaroa's patriotism was profound and this immense love for his mother land had inspired him to shine virtually in every branch of Assamese literature. His marriage into the illustrious family of the Tagores of Jorasanko facilitated his gaining further insight into the socio-literary heritage of Bengal. But, at the same time, this had also ignited the patriotic fervour in him and kindled the urge to do something worthwhile to give the socio-cultural and literary heritage of Assam the national glory which it deserved. In this noble aspiration of his, Lakshminath Bezbaroa attained tremendous success. Unlike the frequent patriotic outbursts of to-day, Bezbaroa's patriotism was solid and it was not confined to mere conceptual rhetorics. Bezbaroa believed in applied patriotism, and he bore the patriotic obligations by deeds, not by the movement of the lips alone. Lakshminath Bezbaroa had shined brilliantly as a litterateur of the first order, as a businessman of high calibre and as an orator of excellence in national assemblies of scholars and academicians. In 1933 Lakshminath Bezbaroa was invited by the Maharaja of Boroda to deliver lectures on Vaishnavism.
It was a rare honour which was given formerly to personalities like Rabindranath Tagore, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sir C.V. Raman and Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar. The two lectures delivered by Bezbaroa were highly penetrating and they are till now deemed masterpieces on Vaishnava philosophy and Krishna cult. These two lectures were later edited and published in book form by Professor M. Neog in 1968 with the title, The Religion of Love and Devotion.

An attempt has been made to dwell upon the creative writings of Lakshminath Bezbaroa in the various literary spheres like drama, novel, poetry, short stories and essays. It is not an analytical assessment of Bezbaroa's literary works, it is only an attempt to portray him in totality in the rays of his own creations.

The thesis has been split into eight chapters. Chapter I is Introduction which gives a general review of the literary characteristics of the age of Bezbaroa, particularly the Jonaki age. Chapter II is entitled as The Impact of Environment. This chapter describes the literary environment and its impact on the life of Bezbaroa; Bezbaroa's early life, his student life in Assam and Calcutta, the New Awakening at Calcutta, his marriage into the Tagore family and his life at Sambalpur. Bezbaroa's main literary output has also been enumerated in the chapter. Chapter III is Bezbaroa as a Dramatist. The dramatic genius of Bezbaroa has been examined in this chapter. Types of his dramas, his
Farces, chronicles, plays and funny stories have been described. Bezbaroa's skill in plot construction and characterisation have also been dwelt upon. The influence of Shakespeare and Bengali dramatists on Bezbaroa has also been examined. Chapter IV is Bezbaroa as a Poet. Thematic analysis of Bezbaroa's poetry has been made in the chapter. A broad classification of his poetry has also been shown here.

Chapter V is Bezbaroa the Novelist. Bezbaroa wrote only one novel, but its "style was outstanding and predicted a masterly writer". The historical background of the novel has been described in the chapter. Plot creation, characterisation and social reflection in the novel have been examined here. The style of expression is also appreciated in this chapter.

Chapter VI is Bezbaroa the Pioneer Short Story Writer. The elements of folk tales and modern short stories in Bezbaroa's stories have been examined in this chapter. The classification of his short stories has been shown here. The technique of Bezbaroa and the social reflections in his short stories have been elaborately described in the chapter. Short stories for children are also included in the narrative of the chapter.

Chapter VII is The Essays of Bezbaroa. The autobiography, biographies, personal essays, formal essays and miscellaneous essays of Bezbaroa have been described in this chapter. The last chapter, i.e., Chapter VIII is Conclusion. Bezbaroa's creativity and his total personality have been portrayed in this chapter. Bezbaroa's role as a journalist and cartoonist have also been touched in this chapter.
At the various stages of writing the chapters of the thesis, I had been receiving valuable assistance and guidance from the library staff of Krishna Kanta Handiqui Library of Gauhati University, Pandu College Library, and the Central Library of Gauhati. I offer them my hearty gratitude and deep respect. I recall with pride and pleasure the sympathy and valuable suggestions that I had received from Dr. P. C. Sharma, Principal, Pandu College; Dr. N.N. Acharya of Gauhati University and Dr. A.K. Dutta Choudhury, Principal of Pailapur College, Silchar. I offer them my most heartfelt regards. My children Sanjiv, Sharmila and Sumita were constant sources of inspiration and encouraging companies for me in this research pursuit of mine. I give them my blessings for high attainment in their educational career. But for the high moral support of my husband Professor Anil Kumar Sarma, this work would have perhaps remained a mere contemplation. Shri Bhaben Das deserves high credit for the masterly and quick way he had typed the pages of the thesis, and I unhesitatingly give it to him. It shall perhaps be a flagrant case of ingratitude if I do not thankfully recall with a wet-tongue the sweet taste of the sumptuous dishes prepared by dear Sulekha while finalising the chapters at the residence of Professor Neog.

I shall deem my labour fully rewarded if my analysis of the subject-matters are found rational and convincing by the learned readers.

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