



Literary account of 'Buranji' in Narration of History:

From the Perspective of Lakshminath Bezbarua

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'Buranji' can be defined as the truth and objective information laden explanation of the past. The Assamese word 'Buranji' covers writings of the past in Assam and in this sense, it is analogous to the English term 'Chronicles' in meaning. In fact, the word 'Buranji' is not a synonym for the word 'History'. Buranji is one specific medium of the many mediums of conservation of History. 'Buranji' and History are two separate subjects from this perspective. Again, Buranji loses its stature of history in case it deviates from historical truths. The history writing art of Assam tries to corroborate the position of history but it fails to present an accomplished conceptualization of history. A definition of history can thus be referred to in this context; Webster's Third New International Dictionary mentions it as *record of events (as affecting a city, state, nation, institutions, science or art) and use including a philosophical explanation of the cause and origin of such events-use, distinguished from annals and chronicle*.

The word "History" as used in Assam fails to present this whole theory. Efforts have been made to create 'History' only through narratives in Assam. History writing is worthy of attention just as literature and other subjects are penned through narratives. Even though narrative constitutes a necessary component in the writing of history, its style and methodology of analysis need to be different from lessons of literature. Literature-specific historical narrative and historical narrative in literature are two separate subjects. Bezbarua has analysed the presentation of both 'literature' and 'history' which are based on narratives. He himself reconstructed historical events in new forms of literary narratives.

Bezbarua has criticised the presentation of history in new literary frame affected through the medium of narratives. In his acclaimed prose 'tyranny of history', Bezbarua criticises newly written histories of the 19th century. It is not acceptable to him that history is composed by way of manipulating historical facts to suit personal tastes. Even though narratives act as medium of history writing, he puts forward certain own resolutions in the perspective of history writing. In his own view, *that buranji is the only medium of writing history is not the truth nor it is truth-laden. The real truth of history can be found deep underneath the water. Those who remain absorbed in the search for catching carps loitering in the water, cannot catch hold of the water-wallowing big fish*. Bezbarua's view does not implicate that earlier history was written only on the basis of truth. He criticises these facts too. In his views, Assam could be observed as shrouded in a mushroom of history. In a nutshell, barring a few universal truths, it refers to dynastic favouritism and self- aggrandisement and propelling the unfavourable towards distortion and disaster. That is why some written histories were burnt.

In Bezbarua's view, the histories which were written by instantaneous writers were not laden with history. Historical truths are not inherent in the neo-history written by manipulating



truths with different thoughts. Bezbarua believed that historical truth is inherent in history. According to that belief, it is difficult to evaluate history from the present to the ancient. It is a difficult task to write history by restoring lessons of historical truth. Bezbarua's scepticism abounds in the speed with which histories were written by the instantaneous writers.

He has written analytically in this context of description of history- --"*More than a minuscule of falsehoods enter the story of a side if it is penned by an opposite side. The brawny accounts of the heroes of one side are turned into opposite accounts in contrast after being jeopardised by the tangles of the pennings from another side*".

Still, Bezbarua believed in the objectivity of traditional history. He had profound faith in history. He himself coined certain histories as Big History (Bor Buranji). In this context he calls Robinson's history as true history. But he did not support the neo history writings. He criticised neo histories as expounding deceitful explanation of traditional history. He rather preferred to allude to the writings of foreign history than accepting neo history in the context of Assam.

Bezbarua's conceptualisation in regard of narratives are noteworthy. He seeks the literary narrative based 'Puranas' in the form of important lessons of history. In his view, ancient lessons based on the medium of narratives can form a part of the study of human history. In his own words, "*I did not feel that Puranas are the stories of hemp-addicts, holy-books of the cunning or false rendition or delirium and do not seem so even in the future. Rather, my beliefs have become more entrenched that Puranas are invaluable history of spiritual life and they represent life histories of those imperishable and inexhaustible loyalists*". Of course, I will have no regret even if my words are thrown into the wind by the market-centric historical pandits. In his view, both Purana's lessons and historical lessons constitute important subjects of the study of human history. Both are equal branches of knowledge. Narrative plays the role of a unitary catalyst in the growth of knowledge.

Bezbarua also deliberated on history by giving importance to various earlier narratives as forms of information-based models of history. He accredits even foreign historical accounts as history. He endeavours to determine the place of 'Buranji' as supplementary to the term of history. One of the instances of Bezbarua's foreign history deliberations are his lessons on German national policies and big wars of France. Beside these essays, he translated many historical lessons into Assamese. Among these, 'Bharatborkhor Buranji' (First Part), 'Bharatborkhor Buranji'(Second Part), 'Assam Buranjir Adhyaserek', 'Ghotonawolir Kalkromagoto Talika' are the ones. They crystallised this assumption as if he pointed to some ideology of history writing through these essays by giving importance to information, truthfulness and objectivity.

Bezbarua had one main concern, that is, to demonstrate historicism through narratives in the context of new history writing. Bezbarua criticised literary style laden historical words. He emphasised on presentation of history through appropriate rituals in literature. Bezbarua presents history in its original form in literary narratives. From this perspective, history as constructed by him in literature is not a new construction of period- literature. Rather, it is a reconstruction of history. The way history has been presented by Bezbarua in literature shows that literary history is as important as Buranji. It is also a process of writing of history. From



this perspective, a lesson of Buranji and a lesson of literature, both can be important in readings of history. In fact, writing of history in literature is only a new Buranji. New interpreters of history have apprised us of new Buranji writings from time to time. Various scholars wrote Buranji from various perspectives. In this aspect Edward Gibon's "The Decline and fall of the Roman Empire" is no exception. Because it is not a grey history. It still constitutes an important lesson in historical investigation of the Romans on account of being based on narratives. Among these, Regional Buranji, National Buranji, Marxist Buranji, Subaltern Buranji are notable ones. With the passage of time, new perspectives of history writing have come to be accepted. In contemporary time, writers like Hiden Huat too has mentioned of history writing through narratives in literature.

In the twentieth century itself, Bezbarua has tried to present Buranji and history as lessons in literature with narrative as the basis of explanation. The tradition of history investigation in literature initiated its journey with Bezbarua himself. Though Bezbarua criticised Neo-Buranji of twentieth century, self-contradiction of the reader-centric perspective actually emanates from 'Literary Buranji' (if the art of history writing implies Buranji itself) which is inherent in the history writing art constructed by him through literature. He makes a new presentation of history in novels and drama. It can also serve as a lesson on historical study of Assam for the readers. In the context of history reading of medieval Assam, Bezbarua's play and novel emerged as subsidiary lessons themselves. In the preface of his play 'Chakradhwaj Singha'(1915), he has mentioned that the play has been written on the basis of buranji as a reserved form of history Its main tool has been adapted from my dear friend Sri Hemchandra Gohain's prose 'Saraighat's War' (mentioned in the monthly magazine named 'Usha'). In many places of the book, numerous lines of reference have been used in the book-- *I took recourse to Edward Gait's Assam Buranji. I have adopted the biographical accounts of Mumai Tamuli Borborua from the book of my respectful and knowledgeable friend Sri Upendranath Barua.* Though Bezbarua has written the play on the basis of buranji, he has created yet another readable literary interpretation of history by making addition of a narrative of his own. This has also been mentioned in the preface of his play; the characters such as Priyoram and Gojpuria have been created by following to some extent big poet Shakespear's character of Prince Henry Falster and examples of their friends.

Likewise in the preface of his play 'Belimar'(1915), he mentions sources of buranji-- *Mainly, elements of my 'Belimar' have been obtained from the Assam Buranji of Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Barua. I took help from Mr.Gait Sahab's Buranji also...Real historical events have been untouched and characters of Real heroes of history retained. I have a perception that it is a historic act to showcase in the present such past and dead events and persons by infusing life into such characterisations.*

Accordingly, to him, it no longer remains a historical play if it is bedazzled by too much imagination. Here Bezbarua puts limitation on the presence of imaginations in narrative. He points out even where these imaginations have been forged. He says it in clear language in the preface that history has no role in the construction of the characters of 'Maju Aideu' and 'Piju'. Bezbarua also talks about main aim of the construction of plays; He identifies two main functions of plays; One, to hold the mirror up to future and to enlighten the present to propel



its momentum towards the ideal. His conception of 'Ideal' is significant. Instantaneous cultural conscience of the author represents the author in writing of narratives of history or literature. This conceptualization of the ideal in fact happens to be the consequence of instantaneous cultural conscience itself. Bezbarua wants to depict the distinction between 'Buranji' and 'Literature' by elevating the importance of author's conscience in narrative writing.

Though Bezbarua has gone after 'Buranji', he reconstructs buranji in a new form of literary frame. This is where Bezbarua's narrative based buranji writing has lost its democratic perspective to some extent. He has taken liberty in presenting history in literature though he denounces such liberty in writing of buranji. Of course, this can be attributed to many factors in 19th century. Bezbarua asserts that new 'Buranji' embraces both literature and literature specific readers. But at the same time, Bezbarua exemplifies instances of history conservation through literature in addition to the practice of history reading through buranji. He has written in the preface of the play 'Joymoti' (1915) based on history and legends--*The task of one dialogue inheres in dramatic treatise, not in buranji. Most of the people do not understand this.* No where he has given equal importance to buranji and literature in the reading of history. He did not decipher that narrative can be both 'obvious' and 'catalyst' in the writing of both literature and buranji. Notwithstanding these assumptions, he reconstructs buranji's stories again his novel 'Podum Konwari'. Here both buranji and literature merge with each other in an excellent union to create a lesson (Text) of history reading of the past. In the novel, the opinion put forward by Sailen Bharali as mentioned in 'Hundred Year's Assamese Novels' is noteworthy in the context of historicism and literary narratives: *In Bezbarua's novels, historic events and love stories have merged to a great extent--love stories have added to historical events many of their layers and alongside political turmoil, Surya and Padum's love story advances towards a tragic end.*

He is the pioneer in respect of both the conceptualizations of Assamese literature. i.e. "chronicle (buranji) based novel" and "chronicle-based play". Interdisciplinary subjects have aligned with literature through Bezbarua's writing in this regard. Writers like Birinchi kr. Barua has pointed to 'chronicle' as part of literature- critics like Lila Gogoi are no exception either; narrative-like historical dialogue is being perceived as lesson (text) of history investigation in Assamese literature. To some extent, it can be construed as the culmination of the passage of foreign literature. A trend of dialogue making on historical readings has entered through literary classics in post-colonial Haiti too, just like in India. In aftermath of the decrease in the impact of new criticism in nations like America, a discernible acceptance can be observed in the Latin American nation to take for literary narrative as history in post-colonial literature. In a grand perspective, history as directed in literature is, by nature, one kind of narrative-specific dialogue. This dialogue has required a place in chronicle too. In fact, chronicle is a information-based method of conservation of history. Since its inception, the content of narrative has been directly involved in the writing



of history. Only the aspect of investigation or inquiry gained more prominence here. It is noteworthy that buranji or chronicle alone does not suffice to constitute history. Both buranji and dialogue harbour same importance in Assam's history. Such a perspective establishes that plays and novels constructed in the frame of events and literary narrative too can become a co-curriculum in the investigation of history. Bezbarua's discussions can be largely observed to be alluding to this aspect of history.

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