

# Editorials of Lakshminath Bezbaroa Edited *Banhi*

**Dr. JayantaPathok**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Assamese  
NEF College, Guwahati, Assam, India

## Abstract

*Banhi* is a pioneer magazine of Assamese literature. *Banhi* was published under the editorship of Lakshminath Bezbaroa in the year 1909. Through *Banhi* Bezbaroa tried to inculcate something new in the world of Assamese journalism. *Banhi* was able to lead from the forefront the contemporary socio-cultural as well as literary and journalistic aspects of the Assamese populace of that time. The editorials of *Banhi* have a very special significance. Bezbaroa tried to portray a variety of ideas. The editorials were the results of Bezbaroa's deep studies that were inclined towards progressive thinking. His perspectives in the editorials were distinct. Apart from language, literature and culture everything from religion, society, science and arts found its place among the topics of discussion in the editorials. Bezbaroa wrote these editorials with a separate viewpoint from that of his contemporary editors of various magazines. The writings in these editorials were progressive in nature. Special reference to the welfare of the society was also given in the editorials. He tried to justify his discussions from a scientific standpoint. A certain topic was taken into account and was then analyzed critically by journalist Bezbaroa in order to establish a relationship with the readers.

**Keyword:** Bezbaroa, *Banhi*, Editorials, Assamese Literature

## 1.1 Introduction:

Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938) was a multi-talented individual in Assamese Literature. He was at the same time a poet, dramatist, novelist, biographical writer, short-story writer, humorist as well as a critic. Lakshminath Bezbaroa dedicated his entire life in studying literature and tried to bring in a new wave into the Assamese literature. Along with this he enriched the vast store-house of literature through his various contributions. Through the magazine *Banhi* Bezbaroa hinted at a sense of new consciousness in the history of Assamese magazines. Lakshminath Bezbaroa established himself as a magazine editor and a journalist with the publication of *Banhi* in the year 1909. *Banhi* was published under the editorship of Bezbaroa up to the year 1934. Through *Banhi*, Lakshminath Bezbaroa opened up newer horizons within the Assamese populace. Although Bezbaroa was associated with *Jonaki* for a few years before *Banhi*, his achievements as an editor were brought to the limelight only through the publication of *Banhi*. *Banhi* played a significant role in the development of Assamese language, literature and journalism as well.

The editorials of *Banhi* edited by Lakshminath Bezbaroa have a very special significance. In his editorials Bezbaroa tried to portray a variety of ideas. Along with the field of language and literature, Bezbaroa, through these editorials, tried to make a critical and analytical study of other fields as well like religion, society, politics, culture, science etc.

Through *Banhi* Lakshminath Bezbaroa tried to inculcate something new in the world of Assamese journalism. *Banhi* was able to lead from the forefront in the contemporary socio-cultural as well as literary and journalistic spheres of the Assamese populace of that time.

## 2.1 Editorials of *Banhi*: Discussion

The editorials of *Banhi* were the results of Bezbaroa's in-depth studies that were inclined towards progressive thinking. His perspectives in the editorials were distinct. Bezbaroa wrote these editorials with a separate viewpoint from that of his contemporary editors of various magazines. A certain topic was taken into account and was then analyzed critically by journalist Bezbaroa in order to establish a relationship with the readers. Moreover, he tried to justify his discussions from a scientific standpoint. Apart from language, literature and culture various issues from religion, society, science and arts found their place among the topics of discussion in the editorials. The writings in these editorials were reformative in nature. Serious importance was given to the welfare of the society in the editorials. We may classify the subject matter of the editorials of *Banhi* into 12 divisions:

1. Media
2. Literature
3. Language
4. Health
5. Social Values
6. Science
7. Religion
8. Indian Philosophy
9. Politics
10. International issues
11. Education
12. Contemporary issues

An elaborate classification and a deep sense of thinking can be perceived in the editorials that were primarily written on the above mentioned subject-matters. The editorials were a manifestation of the contemporary consciousness. Bezbaroa adopted an impartial viewpoint in the editorials. He was resolute in providing static solutions. A journalistic approach that was devoted to truth was also clearly evident in the editorials. He discussed on the most important matters of the society rather than spicing up the materials with valueless discussions. He emerged in the editorials as a critic who raised his voice against any unlawful

activities within the society. We can also see in the editorials that Bezbaroa adopted the role of a satirist whenever the necessity arose.

There was no editorial in the first edition of *Banhi* published in 1909. It was only in the second edition that Bezbaroa included the editorial section. Bezbaroa clarified that he included the editorial section only due to the tremendous demands of the readers of *Banhi*. A total of 63 editorials of Bezbaroa-edited *Banhi* have been found in its publications from the year 1909 to 1934.

### 2.1.1 Editorials related to Mass Media

The editorials of *Banhi* also included topics related to mass media. A total of 9 editorials related to mass media were published. Apart from *Banhi* the editorials related to mass media also discussed about magazines like *Jonaki and Prodipika*. In the first editorial of *Banhi* (1<sup>st</sup> Year 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue) the role of *Banhi* was discussed along with the directions to keep a magazine alive in Assam. Bezbaroa has mentioned that in order to keep any magazine alive or in circulation the interest of the readers, money and new business policies are very necessary. He has made it clear in his discussions that it is not easy to keep any magazine in circulation without effective business policies.

In the editorial (2<sup>nd</sup> year 1<sup>st</sup> Issue) 'Aatmokothe' in *Banhi*, the aims of *Banhi* and *Jonaki* are discussed. The editorial (3<sup>rd</sup> Year 1<sup>st</sup> Issue) of *Banhi* deals with the subject of responsibilities while the editorial (5<sup>th</sup> Year 9<sup>th</sup> Issue) deals with the rules to be followed while criticizing any book. In the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the 9<sup>th</sup> year of *Banhi* there is note of thanks to the readers of *Banhi* for their support to *Banhi* throughout the nine years. The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> Issues of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of *Banhi* we can read about rules concerning spellings as well as serious criticism of issues relating to Sankardeva and religion forwarded by *Prodipika*. In the editorials of these issues *Prodipika* has been challenged for its unharmonious attitudes of thinking and its comments on the Mahapurushiya Dharma and Sankardeva's position. In the editorial (17<sup>th</sup> Year 4<sup>th</sup> Issue) of *Banhi* the first Assamese women magazine *GhorJeuti* has been discussed and praised as well. (Saikia 435-436)

In these editorials relating to mass media the responsibilities of media towards its readers and masses have been discussed and published.

### 2.1.2 Editorials related to Literature

Generally discussions relating to literature and books found a place in the editorials of *Banhi*. A total of 5 editorials on literature review were published in *Banhi*.

The editorial of the 4<sup>th</sup> Issue of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of *Banhi* sheds light on the rules of criticism, especially criticisms of books in the magazines. After that Bezbaroa has presented a discussion on Lakhiram Baroa's edited book *Songeet Kush*. In the editorial of the 6<sup>th</sup> Issue 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of *Banhi*, Bezbaroa has provided a thorough review of a book named Assam, 'Goalpara Ebong Asami Bhasha'. In the editorial of 9<sup>th</sup> Issue 5<sup>th</sup> year of *Banhi* a review of a book titled 'Hindu Dhormo O Jati' is being thoroughly discussed along with various religious opinions of the people in Assam.

In one editorial (5<sup>th</sup> Issue 17<sup>th</sup> Year) there is a short discussion on some world famous poets and literary personalities like Shakespeare, Kalidas, Shelley, Sankardeva, Byron, Milton, Beethoven, Rabindranath Thakur etc.

In the editorials of *Banhi* related to literature the religious issues are simultaneously discussed with that of literature.

### 2.1.3 Editorials related to Language

Language is the lifeline of any religion or literature. Without language literature cannot be created. Language is neither created in a single day. Any language proceeds forward along with various other characteristics. The Assamese language was also created in due course of time. The editorials of *Banhi* chiefly deal with the characteristics and features of a language especially that of the Assamese language.

In one editorial (10<sup>th</sup> Issue 1<sup>st</sup> Year) the history of the Assamese language is discussed while in another editorial (1<sup>st</sup> Issue 2<sup>nd</sup> Year) the importance of *Hemkosh* is the topic of discussion. In an editorial (11<sup>th</sup> Issue 4<sup>th</sup> Year) the false accusations and comments made by the 'Bengali Pandits' regarding the Assamese language are discussed. Besides this, in a particular editorial (6<sup>th</sup> Issue 5<sup>th</sup> Year) there is a discussion on the writers who cannot use the Assamese language properly and correctly with suitable examples.

In the editorials of *Banhi* related to language Bezbaroa's deep concern for and interest in the Assamese language and its beauty are reflected.

### 2.1.4 Editorials related to Health

Topics concerned with health found its place in *Banhi*. Bezbaroa composed five editorials related to health.

The first editorial related to health was published in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Issue of 1<sup>st</sup> year. The topic was 'common cold'. The symptoms, causes, relief methods, medications etc are discussed herein. Bezbaroa wanted to depict through the editorials the fact that – Health is Wealth.

The other editorials related to health were published respectively in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>& 9<sup>th</sup> Issue of 1<sup>st</sup> Year. The diseases discussed in these Issues are cholera, malaria and plague respectively. Apart from this he also wrote editorials wherein was discussed ways to attain a long life.

We can see editor Bezbaroa trying to create awareness on various diseases and his knowledge of diseases in the editorials. He worked for the creation of a disease-free society.

### 2.1.5 Editorials related to Social Values

In the editorials of *Banhi* social concern also is an important issue. Keeping in mind the importance of social welfare Bezbaroa has created several editorials.

In the editorial (5<sup>th</sup> Issue 1<sup>st</sup> Year) a social evil i.e. alcohol and its ill effects has been taken up. Showing the ill effects, Bezbaroa tried to create an alcohol-free society.

In the (8<sup>th</sup> Issue 4<sup>th</sup> Year) Bezbaroa has discussed on the impact of foreign clothes on our national character which might get lost if not checked. (Tamuly 505)

In the editorials (4<sup>th</sup>& 5<sup>th</sup> Issues 5<sup>th</sup> year) the ill effects of discriminations on the basis of caste, creed, religion etc are discussed. Such discriminations are a hindrances in the progress of any community.

Regarding religion and culture discussions were made in the 3<sup>rd</sup>& 4<sup>th</sup> Issues of the 9<sup>th</sup> Year. He made an appeal to the young boys and girls to work together for the upliftment of religion and culture.

In the editorials related to social values Lakshminath Bezbaroa makes an appeal for the creation of a classless society apart from the creation of a religious and cultural consciousness.

### 2.1.6 Editorials related to Science

Science also found a place of special interest in Bezbaroa's *Banhi*. The scientific editorial named 'Bishesworor Biswaroop' published in the 11<sup>th</sup> Issue of 1<sup>st</sup> Year is considered to be a significant one. Through the editorial we get a glimpse of the scientific temperament of Bezbaroa. The secrets of the universe is being tried to simplify in the editorial. Discussions are made on planets, stars, The Milky Way etc. in the editorial.

### 2.1.7 Editorials related to Religion

Bezbaroa was a religiously conscious person and it is evident from the editorials of *Banhi*. He composed a total of 25 editorials on religion especially of Sankardeva's religious teachings and principles.

The editorial 7<sup>th</sup> Issue of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year was composed to serve as a warning to the people who created strafes in the name of religion and one editorial (9<sup>th</sup> Issue 4<sup>th</sup> Year) was a warning to the pundits who provided wrong facts about Sankardev.

The editorials of the 10<sup>th</sup> Issue, 4<sup>th</sup> Year deal with the greatness of Sankardev, the 11<sup>th</sup> Issue deals with the debates related to Sankardev, 12<sup>th</sup> Issue deals with the role of Sankardev in the creation of the great Assamese community. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Issue of the 5<sup>th</sup> Year the chief book of the Neo-Vaishnav Dharma *Shrimadbhagawad* and Sankardev is discussed, 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue deals with Assam's 'Satra' rituals and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Issue makes a thorough analysis of the importance of the religious leader in one's life.

In an editorial (7<sup>th</sup> Issue 5<sup>th</sup> year ) the opinions of different people on religion in Assam is given, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Issue there is a discussion on the religious principles of Sankardev, In the editorials of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>& 12<sup>th</sup> Issues of 5<sup>th</sup> Year the religious opinions of Sankardev, the omnipotence of Sankardev's religion, his importance respectively are discussed.

In the editorial of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue 6<sup>th</sup> Year the importance of God, 8<sup>th</sup> Issue deals with Sankar-Madhab, in the 9<sup>th</sup> Issue there is discussion on the form of God, in the 6<sup>th</sup> Issue the subject is the superiority of *Kirtan*. In the 11<sup>th</sup> Issue of 8<sup>th</sup> Year the importance of all religions is expressed.

The false propagations related to Sankardev are thwarted with relevant examples and a severe criticism of *Prodipika* is made in the editorials of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> Issues of the 10<sup>th</sup> year.

In the editorials related to religion we can see the clarity of Bezbaroa on religious matters including on Sankardev. Bezbaroa was dedicated towards the removal of all the hindrances that were created by the wrong facts propagated in relation to religion, thereby welcoming religious discriminations.



### 2.1.8 Editorials related to Indian Philosophy

Several editorials related to Indian Philosophy, ideals and spirituality were published in *Banhi*.

Discussion related to 'Brahma's Swaroop', Ideals of Vedas, Ideals of God, 'Patanchal' Philosophy, Devotional Ideals, Devotee rituals, Krishna Ideals, 'Namkirtan Dharma', etc. are published in 11 editorials of *Banhi*. These loaded topics dealing with ideals of God and religion show Bezbaroa as a person having deep idealistic and spiritual knowledge.

### 2.1.9 Editorials related to Politics

No individual can remain separated from politics. Politics remains merged with social rules. Thus, the editorials of *Banhi* included politics too.

Starting from topics related to the Indian National Congress to Indian Struggle for Independence, Mahatma Gandhi and his principles find place in the editorials.

From the editorials the political maturity and knowledge of Bezbaroa can be seen.

### 2.1.10 Editorials related to International Issues

International issues and affairs do find a place in the editorials of *Banhi*. Discussions on German community (11<sup>th</sup> Issue 8<sup>th</sup> Year), European rules (1<sup>st</sup> Issue 9<sup>th</sup> Year), Russia and expertness in work by the Russians (6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Issues 17<sup>th</sup> Year), Rules of England (8<sup>th</sup> Issue), Britain's Rules (9<sup>th</sup> Issue) respectively are made. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue of 18<sup>th</sup> year the condition of the Hindus outside India during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and international politics is discussed to a large extent.

### 2.1.11 Editorial related to Education

Editorials related to education were also published in *Banhi*. The fundamental right to education should be given equally to the females and is not meant for the male only. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue of 9<sup>th</sup> Year he advocated for female education. He expressed his opinions in the editorial for the need for female education for the realization of womanhood. He also advocated for the need of colleges for women.

In the editorial of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue 18<sup>th</sup> Year he made a detailed discussion on the need of female education.

### 2.1.12 Editorial related to Contemporary Issue

Lakshminath Bezbaroa also wrote editorials on contemporary issues, meetings and associations etc. of his time.

'Assam Sahitya Sanmilani' (1<sup>st</sup> Issue 9<sup>th</sup> Year), 'Kachari Yubak Sanmilan' (2<sup>nd</sup> Issue 18<sup>th</sup> Year), 'Hindu Mahasabha' etc were discussed in the editorials.

Editorials were written on the death of Sudhalata Dowarah, Padmawati Phukanoni etc. and their qualities (4<sup>th</sup> Issue 17<sup>th</sup> Year). In the 6<sup>th</sup> Issue 18<sup>th</sup> Year Bezbaroa wrote an editorial on the martyr of Bengal Jatin Das.

The editorials of *Banhi* were composed of contemporary issues that had some relevance with the society of that time.

### 3.1 Conclusion

We have discussed the editorials of *Banhi* by dividing them into 12 classes. The divisions are as follows: Editorials related to Media, Editorials related to Literature, Editorials related to Language, Editorials related to Social Values, Editorials related to Health, Editorials related to Science, Editorials related to Religion, Editorials related to Indian Philosophy, Editorials related to Politics, Editorials related to International Issues, Editorials related to Education and Editorials related to Contemporary Issues. Analyzing the editorials on the basis of the divisions it has come to light that the quality of the editorials is very high.

Editor Bezbaroa's deep thinking and knowledge of the topics in the editorials can be seen. While analyzing any topic he made no partiality and use of logical views characterizes the editorials. He never discussed any topic without using logic. He analysed every topic very clearly so that the readers can understand the topics. He created the editorials in simple and lucid language so that readers of any quality can read and understand them.

The topics included almost everything ranging from contemporary society and language to literature, religion, science and international politics. It seems that Bezbaroa gave place to those topics that had their importance in the contemporary society of that time. The chief characteristic of Bezbaroa's editorials was contemporary consciousness and it is evident in most of the editorials of *Banhi*. He created the editorials by keeping in mind the social issues, religious and political affairs, health etc. of his time.

### References:

- Saikia, Nagen. ed. *Bezbaroa- Rachanavali*. Guwahati: Banalata, 2010. 435-436. Print.  
 Tamuly, LaxmiNath. ed. *Banhi*. Guwahati: Publication Board Assam, 2008. 505. Print.

### Bibliography

#### Assamese:

- Deka, Namita. ed. *BanhirPatatChintarRengani*. Guwahati: Banalata, 1994. Print.  
 Deva Goswami, Mahesh Chandra. *Bezbaroa-Prativa*. Jorhat: AsomSahityaSabha, 1968. Print.  
 Goswami, Jatindranath. ed. *Banhi* (First and Second Year). Jorhat: AsomSahityaSabha, 2001. Print.  
 ---. ed. *BezbaroaGranthavali* (Second Volume). Guwahati: SahiyaPrakash, 2005. Print.  
 ---. *SahityarathiLakshminathBezbaroa*. Guwahati: JyotiPrakashan, 2014 (1968). Print.  
 Hazarika, Atul Chandra. ed. *BezbaroaGranthavali* (First Volume). Guwahati: SahityaPrakash, 1998. Print.  
 Kotoky, Prafulla. *Sahityarathi*. Guwahati: JyotiPrakashan, 2013(2006). Print.  
 Saikia, Chandraprasad. ed. *AsomarBatoriKakat- AlochanirDersaBasariyaIti hash*. Guwahati: Prafulla Chandra Barua, 1998. Print.  
 ---. ed. *LakshminathBezbaroa*. Guwahati: Publication Board Assam, 2007 (1968). Print.

Saikia, Nagen. ed. *Bezbaroa-Rachanavali* (Fifth Volume). Guwahati: Banalata, 2010. Print.

Tamuly, LaxmiNath. ed. *Banhi* (Third to sixth Year). Guwahati: Publication Board Assam, 2008. Print.

**English**

Neog, Maheswar. ed. *LakshminathBezbaroa the Sahityarathi of Assam*. Guwahati: Publication Department, Gauhati University, 2014(1973). Print.

