

## Neelim Kumar's 'Narakasur': A reconstruction of Mythology

Dr. Juri Hazarika

Nalbari College

---

---

### ARTICLE DETAILS

#### Article History

Published Online: 10 June 2021

#### Keywords

Neelim Kumar, Poet, Assamese Poets, Narakasur, Mythology, Kamrup, Assamese Poems, Kalika Purana, Yagna.

---

### ABSTRACT

Neelim Kumar is a celebrated modern Assamese poet whose first poetry book was published in 1985. He garnered a wide attention following the publication of his poem, 'Aprayanan' (Non-reproduction). He publishes 18 poetry books besides two novels so far. He adds a new order and dimension in the poetic discourses through his relentless artistic experimentation. In this study, we are trying to discuss the deconstruction of the mythology in his poem 'Narakasur'.

---

---

### Introduction

Narakasur, the king of ancient Kamrup, a well-known mythological character, who was decimated by Lord Krishna after he ousted god Indra from his throne. It is a fact that the Assamese poetry gets enriched and coloured through different experimentations with the passing of time. It finds a different path shrugging off religiosity and its outlook becomes realistic. We are also trying to discuss these features in the poems of Neelim Kumar.

Subject of the Study: In this study, taking as a principal resource, we are going to discuss the poem, 'Narakasur' included in the collection, 'Neelim Kumar-r Sheshtha Kavita' (The Best Poems of Neelim Kumar).

### The Scope of the Study:

There is always seen a new tendency in the field of creative literature. It is a fact that creative writers reconstruct or deconstruct ancient stories or characters keeping in mind the situational antiquities. They present it aligning with contemporary realities. Hence, a difference in the meaning of stories can be seen in the reconstruction. In his 'Narakasur', Neelim Kumar is seen reconstructing a story and saying of the 'Kalika Purana' and describing the same in a new way. There is a story about the origin of Kamakhya in the 'Kalika Purana'. According to it Sati, the daughter of king Daksha, married Lord Mahadeva. Daksha loathed Lord Mahadeva considering the latter as poor. Once Daksha organised a Yagna. But he did not invite his son-in-law Lord Mahadeva. Despite that, Sati, his daughter came to the father's place on the occasion. On seeing her, Daksha became furious and started lambasting her husband. Unable to bear with it Sati died on the spot. The tragic death of Sati made her husband, Lord Mahadeva almost mad. Badly broken down, he roamed across the world taking the lifeless body of his wife on his shoulder. During that her lifeless body rotted and its portions fell down on different places. In such places, Devipeeth came out. In the Neelachal hill, the vaginal parts fell down.

Lord Vishnu made Narak, the foster son of king Janaka, the king of Pragjyotishpur. Naraka was brought to Pragjyotishpur from Mithila by Lord Vishnu. Then Lord Vishnu advised him not to offer prayers to other gods and goddesses. It is said that one day Narkasur came across goddess Kamakhya. Her beauty attracted him towards her. At once he wanted to marry her. The goddess declined his offer and said that a marriage is not possible between human and immortal beings. But Naraka remained adamant. In order to tackle the difficult situation, the goddess said to him that she would marry him if he could construct a staircase to the top of the Neelachal hill within a night, thinking that Naraka could not do that. Meanwhile, the king ordered to construct the staircase which pushed the goddess to a puzzling condition and she found a solution to the complex problem. According to her planning, a supernatural hen cackled which signalled dawn. Learning that Narak searched the hen and killed it.

### Nilim Kumar's Narakasura

From the decade of the 1950s onwards, Assamese poetry witnessed the decline of simple, unquestioning faith in God. Instead of being regarded as a magnanimous protector, God was made to wear the garments of human emotions and cunning. In his poem Narakasura, poet Nilim Kumar brings the mythological superhuman figure into the consolidated and credible world of reality.

Nilim Kumar's Narakasura breaks free from all preconceived notions and emerges as a lover:

There was no other place for Narakasura  
where Kamakhya was not.

There was no other heart for Narakasura  
without Kamakhya.

(Nilim Kumaror Shreshtha Kabita, p. 253)

The love of Narakasura is genuine. Everything that life could offer, he surrendered before Kamakhya. Yet the lover Narakasura received only deceit. The poet's compassion towards Narakasura is expressed thus:

Poor Narakasura,

the whole night he arranged the stones' clattering  
upon his chest,  
and named that clattering—  
Love.

The use of the word *bechera* (poor) negates all pre-approved frameworks and evokes deep pain and sympathy for Narakasura. In the poet's words: "There was no mistake in Narakasura, no mistake at all" (Nilim Kumaror Shreshtha Kabita, p. 253).

For Narakasura, Kamakhya was the embodiment of love and prayer. Yet betrayed by Kamakhya, Narakasura was shattered. Kamakhya was his very soul; and when the soul is ruptured, how can a human remain human? The lover Narakasura, who carried Kamakhya in his heart, destroyed himself. He became another Narakasura:

Where was the fault of Narakasura,  
where was the fault of Narakasura?  
One day Narakasura only wished to be beside  
Kamakhya,  
as a lover seeks his beloved.

(Nilim Kumaror Shreshtha Kabita, p. 253–254)

According to the myth, the cry of the *maya kukura* (phantom Cock) was heard; but in the poet's eyes, it was nothing but betrayal.

Kamakhya had no compassion for Narakasura. While the reader's heart trembles with grief for Naraka, Kamakhya's behavior shows not a trace of empathy:

Giggling, laughing,  
the deceitful Kamakhya hid  
behind garlands of red hibiscus,  
amid vermilion red as lizards' scales  
and in the darkness of sacrificial blood.

(Nilim Kumar, 2012, p. 255)

Kamakhya's laughter is scorn poured upon the entire being of the lover. The metaphor of *ranga sendur* (deep vermilion) signals the mark of a married woman, while the darkness of sacrificial blood brings forth the anguish of Narakasura's wounded heart.

Reconstructing the myth, Nilim Kumar presents Kamakhya not as a divine figure, but as a deceitful beloved devoid of divinity, while Narakasura appears as a betrayed lover with a broken heart. In the final stanza, the poet's sympathy towards Narakasura becomes even clearer:

When people looked upon Kamakhya,  
the stones upon Narakasura's chest trembled—  
yet Kamakhya was not disturbed in the least.  
But should not Kamakhya,  
praised by the pious townsfolk,  
have been troubled even a little?

(Nilim Kumaror Shreshtha Kabita, p. 255)

The dialectic of love and betrayal presents Narakasura as a lover. Through the magic web of words, Nilim Kumar establishes love amidst the realm of the worldly.

As Barmudoi (2013) remarks, almost all of Nilim Kumar's long poems are delightful for readers because of their descriptive form. Even while making the familiar environment and situation appear strange, he resorts to narration. Through narration, he expands with similes and metaphors, creating within the mythical world a resonance of emotions through the music of words.

### Conclusion:

The poet possesses a world of his own, which he raises through the chains of words. This world may not correspond to the experiential world of the reader. In Narakasura, Nilim Kumar liberates such a world. Bringing it to light through an intellectual lens is the poet's inner compulsion, and in this presentation lies his success. The deconstructionist character of Nilim Kumar's poetry places the reader bodily within the poem. This is precisely why readers embrace the poetry of Nilim Kumar.

### References

1. Barmudoi, A. (2013). *Sahitya Samalochona: Prasanga Asomiya Sahitya*, Assam Publishing Company.
2. Das, S. K. (2014). *Kalika Purana, Banalata*.
3. Kumar, N. (2012). *Nilim Kumaror Shreshtha Kabita* (M. Sharma, Ed.). Aak-Baak.
4. Majumdar, B. (2011). *Sahityar Tattva aru Proyog* Jyoti Prakashan.