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Contact Us

Dilip Kumar Kalita, Birubahar, Jalukbari, Guwahati, Assam 781030

PHONE: +91 98640 41057

EMAIL: praagyadhara@gmail.com

CONTENTS

From the Editor's Desk Mare Geet of the Rabhasof Assam	Gaganjyoti Bora
An Aspect of Music Therapy	Parismita Sarma
Custom and rituals of the Turung people in Assam	Rashmi Buragohain
Bilweswar Devalaya and Oja-Pali: A Folkloristic Appraisal	Rajesh Kakati
Fundamental Features of Author Function as expounded by Michel Foucault	Monalisha Medhi
Majuli: An Introductory Essay on its Cultural Life	Arunima Das
Cultural Identity, Ideology and Nationalism Of the Rabha Tribe: A Study from Socio-Cultural Perspective	Rumi Nath
Muga Silk Industry in Socio Cultural life of Sualkuchi	Juri Das
Films, Females and Folklore: Reading Selected Cinema of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia	Meghna Choudhury

Tarang Ahem: The Traditional Institution of
Governance with special reference to the Karbi
Community of Dimoria Karbi

Karabi Devi

The Guru Shishya Tradition

Tapasi Hajowari

Developing Students' Communicative
Competence in College English Teaching
In Assam

Daisy Kalita

Legalization of Marriage among Dumrali Karbis
Urban Legends: Guwahati

Dipankar Kayastha
Prabalika Sarma

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It is a matter of great pleasure that the Inaugural Issue of Praagya Dhara a peer reviewed research Journal of Social Science and Humanities is going to be released on the 25th of September 2022. The Journal is going to be published every year on the 25th of September on the occasion of the foundation day of Dr. Dilip Kumar Kalita Foundation.

The Foundation has been set up by the Research Scholars of Professor Dilip Kumar Kalita along with some of his Family members and well-wishers, with an aim to promote intellectual and literary activities, by publishing books, almanacs, pamphlets, magazines, journals etc. and some philanthropic work.

This year we are pleased to publish this journal as an inaugural issue. It is intended to publish the first volume of the journal next year on the same day after obtaining ISSN number for the journal.

The scholars who have contributed to this issue of the Journal deserve our gratitude for painstakingly preparing their papers. We also extend our gratefulness to our reviewers for their part of valuable contribution in bringing out this issue of the journal. I am grateful to the editorial team as well as the members of Dr. Dilip Kumar Kalita Foundation for their assistance. We hope the journal will be warmly accepted by the scholars within India and abroad.

Dilip Kumar Kalita
Editor

MARE GEET OR MAROI GEET OR MARE GAN OF THE RABHAS OF ASSAM

Gaganjyoti Bora

Introduction

Rabhas are rich in their traditional folk songs like the other tribes of Assam. There are different types of folk songs, which are scattered among them in the form of their oral literature. These songs may be categorized as (a) Devotional songs, (b) Songs associated with festivals, (c) Songs associated with rites and rituals, (d) Songs associated with love and yearning, (e) Lullaby and nursery rhymes (f) Ballads etc. “*Their vast accomplishments of folksongs range from simple cradle songs, songs of everyday life to the world of transcending mystic compositions of the minstrels. This evinces the fact that their chivalrous forefathers were capable of translating their sensitive moral and intellectual urge into poetic art.*” (Bora, M.K.: 2008:43). The Rabhas like other tribal and non-tribal people of Assam regularly perform their rites and rituals along with different fairs and festivals. Community singing of hymns, different devotional and religious songs sung by both men and women are considered as a unique and significant feature of their traditional society. However, through these folk songs of Rabhas, their traditional and cultural identity, different beliefs and superstitions, customs, social values and their overall unique tribal characteristics are reflected distinctly.

Mare geet or Maroi geet or Mare gan

The *Mare geet* or *Maroi geet* or *Mare gan* is considered as one of the more popular and interesting folk songs among the Rabhas of South Kamrup and South Goalpara areas. These songs are associated with the worship of their goddess *Barmani* or *Bisahari*, who is considered as folk and local form of the snake goddess *Manasa*. This worship is also popularly known as *Mare puja*, which is one of the most important religious festivals among the Rabhas. The puja is performed by a semi-professional troupe called *Ojapali*. In the context of the worship of the deity, various songs are sung by such type of *Ojapali* troupes and these kinds of songs are known as *Maregan* or *Maregeet* or *Maroigeet*. These songs have been prevailing among them orally from the earliest time. These were originally composed by unknown born poets or singers of the Rabha tribal people who were most probably secluded devotee or votary of the goddess *Bisahari*. No written tradition is associated with these

songs for which these are distinctly excluded in the writings of the Manasa poets of Assam like Durgavar, Mankar and Narayandeva. The text of the bulk of the songs are narrative in nature dealing with the myths and legends as well as tales associated with *Manasa*, the snake goddess and her encounter with the merchant *Chando*. The Rabha *Ojapalis* sing and recite these songs during the worship of goddess *Barmani* and also they act with the different dance movements in accordance with the theme of the songs sung by them. Therefore, from the point of view of performing art form, these songs play a very vital and significant role in the worship of *Barmani* or *Bisahari*.

It is remarkable that, the *Ojapali*, *Maregeet* or *Mareigan* and *Deodhani* are essential elements of *Mare puja* in the context of performing folk art forms in the Rabha religious culture. On the other hand, Rabha folk characters and the tribal elements are vitally established through these songs. These songs may be divided into two types depending upon its different folk elements, e.g. (1) Eulogistic and (2) Etiological. These two kinds of songs are performed by the *Ojapalis* with the accompaniment of small cymbal only. The eulogistic songs are sung and recited by the *Ojapali* performers in the context of the worship of different gods and goddesses. *Ojapali* sing the story context songs like long ballads in standing position with the help of musical instruments as such small cymbals and anklets.

The Rabhas of South-east Goalpara and south-west Kamrup institute *Mare puja* or *Maroi puja* or *Bishahari* or *Barmani puja* to propitiate goddess *Manasa*. The methods and rituals of worshipping *Manasa* are not same that of *Manasa puja* observed by the other tribal and non-tribal people of North Kamrup and Darrang district. In the *Mare puja*, in the context of the worship of the deity, various songs are sung by the *Oja pali* troupes and this kind of songs are known as *Maregan* or *Maroi geet*. The text of these songs is narrative in nature and associated with the myths and legends as well as tales related with goddess *Manasa* and her enmity and encounter with the merchant *Chando*. But, it is significant that, the *Maroi geet* sung by the Rabha *Ojapali* at the time of worshipping goddess *Manasa* are purely of their own. The text, lyrics, language of the text, methods of singing, tune etc. of these *Maroi geet* are purely tribal in nature and these reflect directly the unique Rabha traditional as well as tribal culture. From this point of view, it is clear that the composer of these *Mare geet* are some unknown Rabha devotee of goddess *Manasa* and these are still prevailing orally among the Rabha. The words used in the *Mare geet* are completely tribal spoken Assamese.

As for example, few lines from the traditional *Mare geet* is mentioned below.

*Misa katha nokang mami tora matha khang
Jodi misa kaisung mami poran horuang.*

Again

*Ghor gohani kate suta gohain siyai
Hen kale jai ganga durga bera bhonglai chai*

On the other hand, the *Mare geet* sung by the upper caste people of North Kamrup and Darrang district in connection with the worship of goddess *Manasa* are – *Sukannani Geet* or *Durgavari Geet* which are quite different with that of Rabhas. The *Sukannani Geet* are composed by the Narayandeva are known as verses of *Padmavati* and the *Durgavari Geet* are composed by the Durgavar which are known as verses of *Manasa Purana*. It is observed that the *Sukannani Geet* and *Durgavari Geet*, both kind of songs and verses are composed by the poets under the royal patronage for which its texts, lyrics, tunes and methods of singing do not reflect the traditional tribal nature like *Maroi* or *Mare Geet* of the Rabhas. Therefore, the performing art form i.e. *Ojapali* and *Deodhani* who sings the *Mare Geet* and *Deodhanis* perform dances with semi-acting in the context of *Mare Puja* also reflect the variations among the Rabhas and other tribes and non tribals of Assam. Though, there are such variations are found, in the worship of *Manasa* by them, yet it is clear that *Manasa* is the chief goddess whom they worship in the different forms like *Manasa*, *Padma*, *Bisdahari*, *Barmani* etc.

We have already found such type of variations and differences in the case of the *Mare* or *Maroi geet* performed by the Rabhas and other non-Rabha people in connection with the worship of goddess *Manasa*. The verses and songs composed by the different *Manasa Poets* also obviously reflect the certain variations in this context due to different socio-economic and socio-cultural influences of the heterogeneous people of lower part of Assam in the early days. But, the main and original myths, legends and tales are found same in the all classes of *Mare Geet*, which are prevalent among them from the early days to till days. The different parts and episodes of the *Mare Geet* from the beginning to end are – *Guru Bandana*, *Sristi Patoni*, *Padmavatir Janma*, *Bibhah Bichhed*, *Austic Munir Janma*, *Jalomalor Pora Puja Grahan*, *Chand Sadagarar Lagat Bibad*, *Beula-Lakhindarar Janma-Bibah*, *Sati Beular Devapuri Jatra*, *Lakhindarar punar Jiban labh*, *Chandor pora puja grahan*, *Beula-Lakhindarar Swarga Gaman* etc. In all these episodes of *Manasa epic*, the original myths, legends and story are found similar to the

compositions of Manasa songs and verses by the different *Manasa poets* with minor variations. But, in the case of *Marai Geet* of the Rabhas, besides these original episodes, there are other additional episodes are also composed which are of their own. Example of such additional episode is *Sristi Patoni Khanda* where the traditional rites and rituals about the social worship performed by the Rabha tribes, their composite national culture, different myths, legends and tales associated with the various gods and goddesses worshipped by them and also the causes and methods of their worship are reflected. These aspects are not found in the writings of *Manasa Poet* like Durgavar and Narayandeva. In the *Padmavati* composed by Narayandeva and *Manasa Purana* by Durgavara, these all aspects are not reflected. As for example the *Ghor Goshanir Puja, Lakhor Deo Puja, Langa Puja* etc. which are related to the traditional Rabha culture are not found in the writings of other *Manasa Poets*. Apart from these, some traditional folk beliefs, values as well as myths, legends, tales etc., which are prevalent among the Rabhas are found nowhere but in the *Mare Geet* only. Such examples are –

- 1) *Pakhi-Pakhinir Biya*
- 2) *Gohainor Nangal Sristi*
- 3) *Mul Gharar Dakhin Berot Rokha Phuta*
- 4) *Biyoi-Biyoni Bondha*
- 5) *Kawriay Shubha-Shubhor Batori Janowa*
- 6) *Sapor nej Khora Huar Karon*
- 7) *Baghor Abhisap*
- 8) *Gorokhia, Halwa Aru Rowanik diya Abhisap*
- 9) *Bhumurar Mur Sonali Hua* etc.

These are still prevalent among the Rabha society in connection with the worship of goddess Manasa from the early days reflecting their originality and uniqueness as well as reflecting their cultural identity.

As an important performing folk art form, in the context of musical and dance forms, the *Mare geets* or *Maregan* sung by the *Ojapalis* may be divided broadly into two kinds. These are (a) *Boheni geet* and (b) *Uthoni geet* or songs of *Uthoni Sirosti*. *Bohani geet* are basically songs of the worship i.e. *Pujar geet*. These songs and verses are performed in the position of sitting by the performers for which these are known as *Boheni geet*. *Uthoni geets* are performed in the standing position by the performers i.e. *Ojapalis* with various dance movements, acting and different *Mudras*. Therefore, these *Uthoni geets* are more important and popular in the context of performing art forms related to

Manasa cult among the Rabhas. Again, from the different aspects of musical elements, the *Uthoni geets* may be divided into following kinds:

- (a) *Vandana* (a hymn or salutation);
- (b) *Diha* (i.e. guiding lines)
- (c) *Pad* (a lyric or song and verses)
- (d) *Jhuna* or *kori geet*
- (e) *Samorani* (conclusion) (Sarma, N.C.: 2013: 123)

Mayavanti Bisahari

Mayavanti Bisahari is the first and only authoritative and outstanding as well as extensive collection of *Mare gan* or *Maroi geet* of the Rabhas. Praneswar Rabha, a renowned Rabha litterateur collected, compiled and edited the book in the year 1987. It is an important and valuable collection of traditional folk songs based on the myths, legends and tales of Goddess *Manasa*, her enmity and violent dispute with *Chando Sadagor* and tale of *sati Beula*. These songs are sung by the *Ojapali* at *Mare puja* performed by the Rabhas particularly of South Goalpara tribal areas. Earlier, these songs are scattered among the Rabha people of Rabha dominated areas in the form of oral i.e. mouth-to-mouth literature. These songs are also closely associated with the *Ojapali* and performing art form of *Deodhani* regarding the worship of goddess *Manasa* by the Rabhas. Therefore, this compiled work of *Mare Geet* is considered as a valuable assets of traditional and unique culture of the Rabhas.

The *Mare Geet* compiled in the *Mayavanti Bisahari* are extensively collected by the Praneswar Rabha particularly from the tribal area of south Goalpara. These songs (or *Geets*) are not composed by any other *Manasa* poet of Assam like – Mankar, Durgavar and Narayandeva. These are completely of their own in the form of oral literature. Being closely associated with the tradition of *Mare Puja*, Praneswar Rabha collected the different elements of *Mare puja* from the senior and well-known *Ojas* of Darangiri area of Goalpara district. He had collected more than five hundred songs during this period for his stupendous work from different parts of south Goalpara tribal areas. These songs are traditional and oral in nature for which certain variations are found in respect of name of the minor and secondary characters of the original story, language and structure of the words, lyrics, tune and order (position in a series) of the songs etc. Except the major characters, various names are found regarding the minor and secondary characters in these songs

due to different singers of different places. As for example we may mention – husband and two sons of *Devi Padma*, six sons and daughter in law of *Chando Sadagar*, twelve ships, six sons of *Bachu Sadagar*, two sons of *Ganga Devi* etc. Since these songs are composed by unknown persons and also prevalent orally among the people, so naturally certain variations and variety regarding its language, tune and composition of words must be distinct. On the other hand, almost all the *Manasa Poets* divided the epic into two distinct parts. In the first part, the myths and legends of the god-goddesses with their miraculous and divine powers are described. This part is known as *Deva Khanda* or *Sristi Khanda*. The second part is known as *Nara Khanda* or *Bonij Khanda*. In this part the tale of *Chando Sadagar* and *Beula-Lakhindar* are described. The myths, legends and tales described in the *Mayavanti Bisahari* through these *Mare geet* are quite different with that of other *Manasa Kavya* composed by the different *Manasa Poets*. Though this compilation is considered in the line of *Panchali Kavya* of Assamese literature, yet it reflects the socio-cultural life of the Rabhas living in the particular areas.

Raga in the Mare gan

Concepts of *Ragas* (a musical mode) are not found in the tradition of *Mare gan* among the Rabhas. Instead of *Ragas* in their tradition, practice of *dhek* and *sur* i.e. tune is present in the performance. In this context, most probably *dhek* does not mean the *ragas*, it means tune of the songs. However, the *Ojapalis* who sung such type of *Mare gan* are primarily melodious. Besides these, in the *Mare gan*, three types of *tal* are found, as for example – (a) *Akubia*, (b) *Dukubia* and (c) *Tinikubia*.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is found that different kinds of performing art forms are closely associated with the Cult of Manasa among the Rabhas. In the worship of goddess Manasa, Bishahari, or Barmani etc., the performing art forms of *Maregan* or *Mare geets*, *Ojapali*, and *Deodhani* play a very significant and vital role to fulfill the purpose of the worship. The *Deodhani* performs various types of dance movements and dramatic enactments in accordance with the theme of *Mare geets* sung by the *Ojapalis* along with the accompaniment of the traditional musical instruments like small cymbals, *dhol* and *bhor tal* (big cymbal etc.). Various types of costumes and ornaments are also associated with these performing art forms, which are related with the *Cult of Manasa* among the Rabhas. All these unique aspects of performing art forms of the *Cult*

of Manasa clearly reflect the unique and rich socio- cultural traditions prevalent among the Rabhas from the ancient time.

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Tarang Ahem: the Traditional Institution of Governance with special reference to the Karbi Community of Dimoria

Karabi Devi, Associate Professor, HOD

Department of Political Science
Sonapur College, Sonapur
karabidevi@gmail.com

Abstract:

Traditional institutions of governance in North East India largely originated among pre-literate communities in pre-colonial times. The exact origin of the self-governing institutions that the tribes came to accept as their own is unknown but the institutions have stood the test of time and continue to function even if they appear outdated and obsolete in the present. They perform the very delicate task of social control, though not always in the desired form. The robustness of the traditional tribal institutions is ensured because they all perform the work of administering a village through the village council.

Karbi is a scheduled tribe in the hills of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao administered under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution and also found to inhabit the plain districts of Assam including Dimoria region of Kamrup (M) district retaining its traditional monarchical self-governing administration. References can be found in Ahom history about Dimoria which was an independent vassal kingdom in the twelfth century. Most of the Karbi villages in Dimoria (Kamrup Metro District) have *Tarang Ahems* (village courts) which are of unique designs distinct from others. The Karbi traditional socio-political system in *Dumra Longri* (Dimoria region) is not alike with the hills of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao though the tribe belongs to the same community. This study intends to explore the role and importance of *Tarang Ahem*, the traditional socio-political institution in Karbi culture and way of living.

Key Words: *Tarang Ahem, Traditional, Governance, Pre-literate, Oral, Unique, Hereditary, Recho.*

Background:

Traditional institutions of governance in North East India as we have them today, largely originated among pre-literate communities in pre-colonial times. The numerous tribes and communities who inhabit the region have oral histories, which were useful in establishing their history since antiquity. While it might be possible to reconstruct the pre-history of some of the tribes from a study of their material remains, it becomes difficult to assign those 'ancient' and 'medieval' pasts because of dearth of written material (Syiemlieh, 2004, 22).

The exact origin of the self-governing institutions that the tribes came to accept as their own is unknown but the institutions have stood the test of time and continue to function even if they appear outdated and obsolete in the present. They perform the very delicate task of social control, though not always in the desired form.

Meitei's consider the fourth decade of the first century as the time of their settlement in the Imphal valley. Putting a similar timeframe for settlement of the Naga tribes into the four neighbouring states and for the Mizo-Kukis is difficult but has been hypothesised to be of more recent origin (Lebar, 1964). Because the 'Mosera Kehir', the tale of origin of the Karbi tribe distinctly mentions the Naga tribe, it can be assumed that they were co-settlers in this part. The history of the Dimoria Karbis is of more recent origin. The Khasis recall their transient settlement in the Brahmaputra valley that was well before the entry of the Tai Ahoms into the same valley early in the 13th century.

The Karbis, formerly known as Mikirs is an important Scheduled Tribe (hill) community of Assam in particular and North –East India in general. Ethnically the tribe belongs to the Indo-Mongoloid group and linguistically to the Tibeto- Burman. They are spread in both hills and plains of Assam and Meghalaya, Kamrup, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur districts of Assam. Some of them are also found in Manipur and Nagaland (Bhuyan, 2008, 58). Annexation of Assam by the British in 1826 with the Treaty of Yandaboo disintegrated the petty kingdoms existed during that period in which the Kings enjoyed absolute power, both politically and socially. Dimoria (earlier known as *Des Dumra* or Dimorua) was a tax bearing vessel kingdom under Khrym Recho (king of Meghalaya) ruled by a Karbi king.

The Karbi tribe in Dimoria area has a three-tier system of traditional administration and to deliver justice which has affinity with the other neighbouring tribes. The institution Tarang Ahem (village court) of the

Dimoria Karbis has affinity with the Tiwa village court *Samadi*. The Nagas have a two tier system of a strong hereditary village chief with a village council only; the Khasi-Jaintia tribe has a system involving three stages of governance - the village, cluster of villages and the state or Hima. The Garos evolved the institution of the Nokma which has got four flavors, the Gamni, the Gana, the Kamal and the A'king Nokma, the last one entrusted with the governance of the village (Sangma, 1981).

The robustness of the traditional tribal institutions is ensured because they all perform the work of administering a village through the village council, irrespective of the structure at the top. Although they have different names, the functions of these institutions are nearly same, involving administration of justice according to customary laws and practices; keeping watch; arranging the cycle of the jhum fields where this practice is prevalent; overseeing the distribution of water and other resources etc. With the changing of the rulers under whose empire they were subjects, a few more functions were added, collection of taxes and revenue and magisterial duties which continues in some states till date.

Objectives:

The prime objective of the paper is to focus on the Dimoria Karbi folk society which is a major constituent of the greater Assamese society and to understand the community with their unique traditional self-governing village council Tarang Ahem and to analyse its importance in maintaining their customary practices and traditional way of life.

Methodology:

The present study is mostly based on primary qualitative data. Empirical data are collected through informal interview, participant observation, and interaction with some traditional knowledge bearers, photography and personal contact. Besides secondary data are collected from books and journals.

The System of Administration amongst the Hill Karbis:

In the hills of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao of Assam the Karbi is a schedule tribe hill community administered under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution but still retain its traditional monarchical administration alongside.

In Karbi Anglong, every Karbi village is represented by a Gaonbura or a village elder who is selected by the District Council for each revenue village. The Lindokpo is the traditional king of the Karbis and he exercises his power in socio-religious sphere. (Anam, 2000, 11). The Karbi settlements in the hills are divided into three broad territories (Alongris). These territorial divisions are Rongkhang, Chinthong and

Amri. The administration as well as the structure of the political system of these Alongris is pyramid like as each territory is divided into Longri, and under each Longri there are a number of villages known as Rong (Das, 1989, 88).

During field visit at Diphu, the informants Chandra Sing Kro and his associates let the researcher know that Ronghang Rongbong is their customary capital at Rongkhang in Hamren sub-division where the Karbi King, *Lindokpo* with his royal officials reside. The political system is a pyramid like three-tier structure, with the *Lindokpo* at the top of the hierarchy and a centralised authority exercises his power through the Royal Council constituted of clan chiefs. The second level is represented by the *Habe*, who is appointed by the *Lindokpo* and is assisted by some officials. But the *Habe*-ship is not present in Lumbajong or East Karbi Anglong. The third tier of village administration is under *Rong Sarthe* and he is appointed by the *Habe*. The *Sarthe* is more effective than others as he can exercise his real power in the grass root level at village council *Me* to settle intra-village problems. The administration in the village level has bifurcated after the formation of the District Council, the *Rong Sarthe* as the traditional head and the government Gaonburha as the District Council officer exercising real power.

The System of Administration amongst the Dimoria Karbis:

There is a huge difference between the administrative systems of the Karbis in the Dimoria region from that of their hill counterpart in Karbi Anglong. The traditional socio-political system of Dimoria is distinct though the tribe belongs to the same community. In fact, the *Dumrali* Karbis have followed a system which itself is unique and varies from the Karbis living in other parts of the plains of Assam except parts of Morigaon district and Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya. The traditional political system of the Karbis in *Dumra Longri* (Dimoria region) is monarchical, hereditarily administered by the Karbi *Recho* (king). They have a village court *Tarang Ahem* with the village council at the grass root level of administration under the organization of hereditary chiefs of the villages called *Ason Thongkep* and the royal organization of nine kings known as *Ason Sirkep* in second level along with the king of Dimoria at the peak of the administration.

Though in post-independence era Democracy became the system of governance, the influence of monarchy particularly in social aspect is very much present and visible as a symbol of royal tradition, but in political sphere, the king (*Recho*) possess no real power. The Karbi tribe

along with the other tribes inhabiting the region have their own customary laws but these are not in the written or codified form. Because of continuity from generation to generation orally, these unwritten rules were able to get social sanction and people owe their natural obedience to the local authority who exercise it. Every Karbi village in Kamrup (Metro) district follow the same system, with minor variations in the designations of officials of the village councils from village to village which the researcher found during field investigation.

Interaction with the informants reveal that the historical boundary of *Dumra Longri* was extended by *Nihang (Gubha Recho Longri)* in the East, *Nirep (Rani Quanchi Longri)* to



the West, *Nitor (Kolong Longri* at Panbari) to the North and *Nivang (Umroi* at Ri-Bhoi district, Meghalaya) to the South. Currently it is bounded in the eastern side by Kahikuchi village near Jagiroad, extended upto Jorabat Amching in the western side, to River

Tarang Ahem in Khamar village

Inside view of Tarang Ahem

Kolong in the northern side and bounded by east Khasi Hills in the southern side. Holising Ronghang is the present *Dumra Longri Recho* (king) as well as social and administrative head though he has no real political power. He maintains his administration with the assistance of *Ason Sirkep* (nine kings) and *Ason Thongkep* (thirty village headmen). The three tier system of Karbi customary administration assigns the supreme position to the Karbi *Recho*.

In Guwahati city of Kamrup (Metro) district, the Karbi villages are more assimilated owing to close habitational proximity of general caste Assamese Hindus and the influence of urbanization. It is to be noted that while visiting Borbari village of VIP Road, Guwahati, the informants Thakur Ronghang and Junu Ronghang reveal nonexistence of *Tarang Ahem* (village court) in their village. But they have village council with officials to administer justice related to their village problems and they resolve their issues meeting at a regular interval in the area of Dehal than or in Bangthe's (village head man) home.

Tarang Ahem (the village court) and its Officials:

In the study area the researcher observed the existence of *Tarang Ahems* in most of the Karbi villages with distinct and unique design varies from each other. Inside of Tarang Ahem is made of one wooden main pillar in the middle along with two side pillars with a design of layers of knots, signify their origin nine *Asons* constituted by five kings and four village heads. It is a two compartment house originally made of bamboo and straw in the flat ground nowadays replaced by concrete structures in some villages. Interestingly, as stated by the informants no village can follow the design of another village without prior permission. The traditional knowledge bearers during interaction reveal, in original Karbi village the head of the village is called *Bangthe* but when a new village emerges from the original village owing to the increase of population or



shifting of households to other areas, the new village head is recognised as *Rongthe*. The researcher has observed that the *Bor Bangthe* kept a kind of arm with him for his protection which is called *Tsir*. The peak position of the *Ason* is possessed by a king with five or six *Bangthes* under him in the pyramid like structure with particular areas under their jurisdiction. The *Bangthe* (village head) in Jugdol village of Dimoria is called *Borkonwar* and there are twelve villages under him.

Tarang Ahem in Nihang Dickchak Village on Raised Platform

The village council in each village is constituted by five/nine elderly village men under the *Bangthe* or *Rongthe* to assist in village administration. The *Bangthe* or *Rongthe* enjoys supreme position in *Tarang Ahem* as village head. Other village officials under the *Bangthe* or *Rongthe* are *Rong Sarpo*, *Bisarlo*, *Hurjapo*, *Richo Bangthe*, *Oklengchar*, *Karkun*, *Ronghara* and *Penpo*. These dignitaries and their designations are not alike in every village. In a number of villages, *Kathar*, *Deuri*, *Tamuli*, *Gorokhiya* are the officials distinct from *Rong Sarpo*, *Ronghara* and *Penpo*. During interaction in the field visit it was known that in Markang village, only three village men assist the *Rongthe* in their village council. The officials have different responsibilities in running the administration of the village and they acquire their positions on hereditary basis. The rules and regulations of every village are determined by the *Bangthe* or *Rongthe* without any interference from the upper level and they administer their respective villages according to their own convenience. They have full autonomy in running the administration of their concerned villages.

Collected information from the traditional knowledge bearers reveal that, village council of Dimoria Karbi villages usually consist of five to seven officials hereditarily. But in Kolongpur village, eleven officials constitute their village council. With the help of these officials, the *Rongthe/Bangthe* maintains the administration of the village.

Officials have been assigned different responsibilities in *Tarang Ahem*. *Deori* sacrifices animals in the rituals, *Bisarlo* delivers justice in the discussions of village council and acts as an advocate by keeping record of everyone's activities, *Ronghara* is the informer or messenger, who informs the decision of the village council to the villages concerned, invites people for a meeting, *Gorokhiya* – represents as the head of the cowherds, *Tamuly*- distributes betel nuts betel leaves in the discussions of village council, *Kotowal* renders his service by cutting the animals offered by the accused as part of their punishment, and *Bharalee* - the

treasurer are integral part in some of the villages as members of the village council.

Apart from these officials, two persons are appointed as *Talukdars* for one or two years in some villages to manage all the yearly rituals. Unlike the other designations, the designation of *Talukdar* is not hereditary, but is selected on rotation basis for one/two years only to supervise the yearly tasks of all rituals and ceremonies of the village. This position of *Talukdar* appears to be a new addition to the Karbi customary administration, perhaps influenced by indigenous Assamese people.

Role and Importance of Tarang Ahem:

Tarang Ahem plays an important role in the village administration as was evident from the responses of the villagers during the village level field visits in the Karbi villages of Dimoria. The officers render their services on voluntary basis for all round development of the society. Although not paid officials, socially they have enjoyed a much respectable position. The *Bangthe* and his officials tried cases and administer jurisdictions over breach of traditional norms or disputes in *Tarang Ahem* like incest (*Laichenem* or *Kurchenem*), pre-marital and extra marital relations, rape, violations of marriage rules, adultery etc. Cases of grievous nature take more than one session to resolve. While dispensing justice in a completely democratic way, punishment imposed on the guilty are generally token compensations, more in kind than in cash.

Usually *Tarang Ahem* has one compulsory yearly session in the month of October for one/two days, beside another session in March, which may vary from village to village according to their convenience. There is provision for special session of *Tarang Ahem* on exceptional circumstances. Before *Dehal puja* and other such occasions usually the officials of the village council assemble in *Bangthe's* home to discuss regarding the smooth performance of the function. Just after the *Dehal puja* (during February-March) the people of the community again meet together to discuss audit related matters of the *Dehal* festival. In certain villages they have sessions in the month of June during *Ambubachi*. The first day of the session in *Tarang Ahem* is reserved for the youth section where the *Riso Bangthe*, the head of the youth section needs to examine all cases related to the youths e.g., misbehaviour to seniors, illicit affairs of boys and girls, elopement within the same clan or outside the community etc. The *Riso Bangthe* answers for every act of the youth in the locality. The youths of the villages are also been given certain tasks and responsibilities to complete within the year. The second day of the session has to be presided by the *Bangthe*, is reserved for the problems of

elderly persons of the locality in general. The misdeeds of the *Gorokhiya's* (cowherds) during *Domahi* (spring time Bihu) are also tried here and fines imposed on the guilty.

Conclusion:

The traditional system of administration of rendering justice through Tarang Ahem for maintaining social order among the Karbi population in Dimoria has stood the test of time and is a very robust institution. They have accepted both their traditional and state democratic system of governance without allowing it to interfere with each other. The Karbis intensely follow their customary rules and traditional system for resolving problems and to get immediate justice without resorting to the lengthy state judicial procedure with a deep sense of credence and appreciation. Disputes of all types regarding inter and intra village community are resolved customarily.

As change is inevitable, no society and system can remain static. Karbi traditional administration underwent changes to make it worthy and dynamic with the changing phase of time. Religious conversion of a section of the community along with the advent of Panchayati Raj institutions in the area has seen the dilution of some of the activities of the Tarang Ahem. The need of the hour is to strengthen the age-old traditional system of administering justice by making them more productive, not only in the social and cultural spheres, but also in political and economic front, so that the community can reap the benefit of strong and stable self-governance.

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Name of the informants:

Village Name	Name	Age	Occupation
Diphu	Chandra sing Kro	63 years	President, Karbi Cultural Society
Bandargog village	Kahang Tumung	77years	Vice President, Amri Karbi Tsornam Ahartsi
Nortap Village	Akon Tumung	51years	Service
Rewa Maheswar village	Rajendra Tumung	56years	Service
Xakonibari Village	Gandhiram Kather	53years	Service
Lohit Ronghang	DakshinbamVillage	65 years	Cultivator

AN ASPECT OF MUSIC THERAPY

Dr. Parismita Sarma

Abstract: Music therapy is the skilful use of music and musical elements by an accredited music therapist to promote, maintain and restore mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health. Music has non verbal creative structure and emotional qualities. It is a non verbal approach to the person using instruments and music in general the use of interventions to accomplish individual goals within a therapeutic relationship by a professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. It is the expressive therapy consisting of a process in which a music therapist uses music and all of its facets-physical, emotional, mental, social aesthetics and spiritual –to help clients improve their physical and mental health. Modern day medical practices to bring about healing of an individual from a pathological condition had its inception after following the traditional healing mechanisms. This study is completely based on the

secondary sources. The objective of this research is to focus the approach of music therapy in the Indian as well as in Western context and how it would be useful for healing..

Keywords: Music, healing, India, western, auditory system

Introduction: Traditional healing system of music is an ancient concept. It emerged since time unknown. Taking India under this consideration, it can be said that India is the land of all religions. Therefore, different systems of Healing are practiced in India. It is the hub of traditional healing practices. The root of music therapy in India can be traced back to ancient Hindu Mythology, Vedic texts and local folk traditions. It is very possible that music therapy has been used for thousand of years in the Indian Culture by the chanting of hymns. Samveda contains many references to musical terms of India. Upanisadas derived from Samveda contain many references to musical terms. According to Indian musical mythos, '*nada*', the primordial sound is called '*anahata*', i.e., 'unstruck'. It is said that the sound that pervades the whole universe, i.e., '*Naadabrahma*'. The tradition elaborates the '*ahata*' nada produced from each of the five locations indicated. Thus naval, heart, throat, cerebrum and mouth cavity are respectively described as agents producing extremely subtle, loud, not so-loud and artificial sound. The term nada is semantically explained as follows, 'the syllable '*na*' represents the vital breath and '*da*' represents fire, it is called '*nada*'. To note few religious opinions of healing through music it can be noted that –the holy book of Hinduism that is Bhagawat Geeta promotes that music increases meditation of an individual, the Bible propagates that music contains mood altering properties, among the Muslims the recitation of the *Namaz* is done on a particular musical note which is considered to be holy in nature. Therefore traditional healing system and the modern music therapy in India has a close contact with each other.

Objectives:

- To study the ancient healing
- To study the healing ragas
- To study the western system
- To study the improvement of auditory system

Methodology:

This paper is completely based on secondary sources. Data have been adapted from books, journals etc. In the analyzing part notes, ragas are taken from Hindustani System of Music.

Discussion:

It has been known throughout the ages that music has a certain healing power and various beliefs and legends has grown up around

musical notes and melodies and several miraculous cure have been reported. These are not confined to India alone. They have been recorded in Arabia, Greece, Egypt, Persia, Rome and other countries of the world. Homer wrote that music stopped hemorrhage. Pythagorous preached that music cured ailments and inspired the mind for intellectual pursuits. Tansen and Baiju Bawra during the time of Akbar the great excited fire and water and melted stones by their music. There are other legends equally interesting connected with devotional songs of great saints. Emperor who suffered from Insomnia could never sleep without the sound of four *Thamburas* resounding in his bedroom. It is recorded that Nawab Ali Khan the great grandfather of the present ruler of Rampur was struck with paralysis and the court musician played *Jayjayanti* on the *Veena* for three years and cured the malady. There are other facts recorded in which the power of music has been demonstrated. What is the kind of music and what are the effects of each kind and under what circumstances each has its maximum effect, whether the effects of a particular type of music are physical, physiological or psychological or whether they are the complex effects of a chain reaction. These are the points on which no scientific data exist. Nor have there been as yet any really scientific investigations made. Modern science and analytical methods of investigation have advanced and new instruments and new appliances are available for measuring and analyzing the physical and emotional effects and sensations of sound and music. Music touches the deepest cords of the human soul and transports one to a higher and nobler plane.

Whatever the truth or the accurateness of the stories associated with past musicians it cannot be denied that music has a multifold consequence on matter and mind both of a physical and psychical nature. What these effects are and how they function individually and collectively on matter and mind is a difficulty which has to be tackled by modern science. No attempt has been made so far for a scientific study and analysis of the combined effects of sounds and their combinations. Modern researchers in the science of sound vibration electronic oscillation, the production and utilization of supersonic and ultrasonic sounds, i.e. sound having frequencies beyond the range of audibility have shown that by focusing sound vibrations of certain frequencies, metals like brass, copper, lead, tin, etc. can be melted and small furnaces have been designed and used for smelting purpose. It has also been scientifically recognized that a practiced and cultured voice contains not only sounds of the fundamental frequency corresponding to the *swara*

produced but also several other sounds of higher frequencies possibly supersonics super imposed on the fundamental. It is these supersonic sounds of higher frequencies that give quality to the voice which we call timber. The magic power of these bare sounds and their combinations produce the various physical emotional and psychological effects. We have several examples of such effects which have been recorded in the various legends and beliefs mentioned earlier. For example Mr. B Bellamy Gardener has recorded by experiment that nervous complaints, and obtained relief from stirring tunes also conducted tests on the psychological effects of music and found that:

- 1) Music influences the circulation of blood.
- 2) That blood pressure is increased or reduced.
- 3) That the frequency of the heart beat is increased.
- 4) That the variations coincide with changes in the breathing
- 5) That the variations of blood pressure depend upon the pitch, loudness, and tone of music.
- 6) That when the blood pressure varies the peculiarities of the individual is accentuated.

Music creates the psychological responses when the tunes and notes hit the auditory cortex of the brain and then processes the music. It is very clear that music is able to alter and modify emotions and mood through effective and cognitive recognition. According to the '*Sangita Makaranda*' by Sri Narada , a particular raga sung at a particular time period of the day and night brings happiness and claims the environment and also maintains the environmental parity, or else it disturbs the environment and distracts the social, mental, physical, emotional peace.

According to 'World Federation of Music Therapy', music therapy includes specific musical elements like sound, tune tonal quality, rhythm, tempo, harmony, melody etc. which leads to the betterment of the emotional states, movement and positive interactions. Both the World Federation of Music Therapy and American Music Therapy association has defined music therapy as the clinical evident use of music and its elements to appropriate the individual's physical and mental balance. Music therapy is of two types:-

- 1) Receptive: It allows the patient to choose music with the help of trained music therapist which will help the patient to recall the past events mainly. It allows the patient to listen to the music.

2) Active: In the western music therapy, both the patient and the therapist do action simultaneously. Both of them get involved in creating the music, it is participation based therapy. Sometimes include dance and bodily movements, playing the instruments. The patient and therapist both create music and improvise them. The therapist inspires the patient even to dance and improvise the music.

Some musical elements of healing:

Vibration: It propagates the sound from one source to another.

Naada (sound)

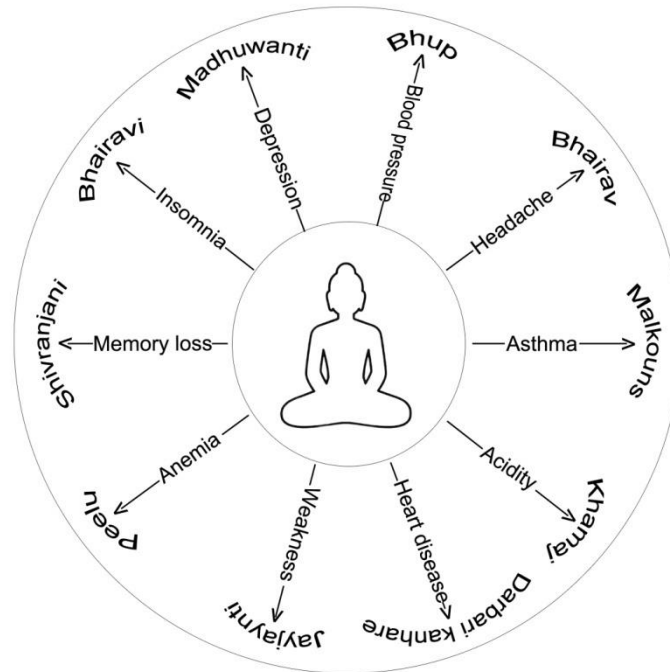
Shruti (micro tone)

Swara (tone)

Rhythm (talla, laya)

Drone: Constant playing of drone with the singer is very important to suit the voice.

Raga: The Indian melody, basically a formal sequence of all the selected notes which provides the various moods and emotions of joy, sorrow, peace, exuberance and so on. Ragas are the most positive and appropriate method of alleviating or rather eliminating the distress and ailments of the modern society. For example, it has been experienced that the tune of the raga *Malkouns* is applied to the patients of high blood pressure. Thus ragas are the classical solutions to the pathological conditions of life. Various ragas do possess certain characteristics but these have not yet been analyzed or isolated on a scientific basis. For example it is said that raga *Sohini* excites tears, *Behag* creates a sense of joy, *Jayjayanti* cures paralysis, *Nut* excites velour, *Deepak* ignites fire, *Megh* brings on rain, that Tansen sang *Megha* raga and brought on rain, that Baiju Bawra sang *Deepak* and lamps lit up shining, that Samos Khan sang *Sri raga* and stones melted, that Surej Khan sang *Jayjayanti* and cure paralysis, that Haridas sang *Asawari* and venomous snakes were subdued. Hosts of other stories and anecdotes are associated with great musicians of the past.



Music therapy for auditory system:

Music therapy for auditory system is a new learning emerged in the 20th century. For this reason clinical practice in music therapy has focused on those areas closely related to communication: auditory training, speech production, and Language development. Through working these communication defects, music has the primary importance of improving socialization and self esteem. Music therapy still seems impractical to many people. This is largely due to misconceptions regarding the hearing impaired individual's capacity to hear and appreciate musical stimuli. As Darrow (1989) points out, only a small percentage of hearing impaired individuals do not hear at all. Darrow further suggests that, because of the variety of the frequencies and the usual intensity, the perception of music is often more accessible to the hearing impaired than the complexities of the speech signal. Music is also highly flexible and can be modified to suit the client's hearing level, language level, maturity and music preference.

Robbins and Robbins(1980) who have designed comprehensive resource manual and curriculum guide for music therapy with the hearing impaired, approach the subject with the attitude that

musicality is in born in every individual. By musically they refer to our inherent sensitivities and capacities that respond directly to the experiences of rhythmic and tonal variety and order described as music. It is a medium of outward activity and inward experience, and it relates directly to speech and language, communication and thought as well as to bodily expression and wide range of emotions. Rather than excluding them, music therapy embraces and enhances the habilitation and overall development of those persons who are hearing impaired.

For hearing impaired persons, music therapy preserves to:

1) Enhance auditory training and expand the use of residual hearing.

Music has been a very sensitive course of medication that not only relaxes the mental conditions, thoughts, emotions and feelings of a human being but also reduces stress and strain of the central nervous system, muscles and relaxes the entire constitutions of the human body. Music has always been a vent in the pent up stressful thoughts and depressions. Music at it perfection, with its particular time, and tonal quality, its tunes, rhythm, everything creates an atmosphere of harmony, peace and mainly an arena of mental satisfaction that rejuvenate the forces and spirit of life, balances the mind- body set up. Music in every way praises the positive note of life and thus its appropriate timings.

Auditory training is an integral part of the habilitation process with hearing impaired persons. The central goal in auditory training is to develop the hearing impaired client's residual hearing to the maximum possible extent. Therapist of hearing impairment must learn to listen, a complex mental and analytical attention to sound in the hearing impaired client and it can become a tedious and uninteresting process. Music therefore, becomes a useful tool with which to motivate and enliven the sessions. Speech and music contain many common properties. The auditory perception of speech and music involves the ability to distinguish between different sounds, their pitches, durations, intensities and timbers and the way in which these sounds change over time. These properties aid in the listener's ability to interpret sounds and attach meaning to them. These commonalties between music and speech allow music and music therapy to provide an alternative and pleasurable tool to enhance traditional auditory training techniques (Darrow, 1989).

2) Procedure effectively addresses a number of objectives in auditory training.

Attention to sound, attention to differences in sound, recognition of objects and events from their sounds, and use of hearing to determine

distance and location of sound can all be trained through musical experiences (Darrow, 1989). Further, Robbins & Robbins (1980) found that suitable music is more easily heard and assimilated than speech and thus is more likely to stimulate a natural motivation to use residual hearing.

Amir & Schuchman (1985), American therapist employed a music therapy programme to develop and improve skills in awareness of musical sound, awareness of tempo and perception of simple rhythm patterns, awareness of intensity contrasts, recognition of musical sounds, and comprehension of musical sound patterns. An investigation into the effectiveness of such a programme indicated that certain aspects of a profoundly hearing impaired person's residual hearing may be measurably improved through a systematic programme of auditory training in a musical context. Specifically, subjects discrimination levels significantly improved and the practice the subjects received in the music setting generalized to environmental sounds as well. Amir & Schuchman further supported the use of music because it provided an interesting diversification and positive learning experience, reinforcing the clients' use of the auditory modality. Enhance speech development and improve speech prosody. These individuals commonly lack the internal feedback mechanisms necessary for monitoring and adjusting, for instance, pronunciation of words, vocal inflection, or speech rhythm. Music therapy techniques and activities can effectively aid the development of these prosodic features of speech, the rhythm, intonation, rate, and stress. Darrow (1989) discusses the use of music therapy in addressing speech intelligibility, vocal intonation, vocal quality and speech fluency. The breathing processes, rhythmic and timing requirements, and pitch and articulation needed for singing songs provide important structure and motivation for the clients. Darrow also stresses the importance of constant feedback by the therapist.

Darrow & Starmer (1986) studied the effect of vocal training on the fundamental frequency, frequency range, and speech rate of hearing impaired children's speech. Hearing impaired speakers tend to have a higher fundamental frequency and vary pitch less, producing problems in speech intelligibility. The results of this study suggest that specific vocal training and singing songs in appropriately lower keys may help modify the fundamental frequency and frequency range of hearing impaired client's speech. Another study by Darrow (1984) points to the role of music therapy in training rhythmic responsiveness, thereby refining responsiveness to rhythmic elements of speech.

Staum (1987) also successfully used music notation to improve speech prosody in hearing impaired clients. She employed a visual notation system devised to help clients to match familiar and unfamiliar words or word sounds with the appropriate rhythmic and inflectional structure. Difficulties in appropriately using language further remove the individual from meaningful communication and interaction with others. Language problems can also have a negative effect on other academic tasks such as reading, writing and comprehension (Gfeller, & Baumann, 1988). Music therapy can contribute significantly to the communicative abilities and language education of the hearing impaired client. Gfeller (1990), for instance, discusses the rich repertoire of vivid music and movement experiences in music therapy, which can be paired with spoken and, later, written words. Since language rehabilitation can be a long, difficult process, the music therapist provides important motivation by designing activities to be playful and engaging. Music therapy activities can also provide an opportunity to experience language concepts in different contexts.

3) Promote socialization, self-awareness, emotional satisfaction, and enhance self-esteem.

Some literature has characterized hearing-impaired individuals as possessing feelings of inferiority and depression, as well as detachment and isolation (Galloway, & Bean, 1974). Poor body-image and awareness, language and communication deficits, and social isolation contribute significantly to these feelings. Music therapy can provide an important avenue to address these issues and enhance the hearing-impaired individual's self-esteem.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that music is indeed one of the most accepted ways by which healing is brought about to the people in a therapeutic use. In India this method has been started to experiment on the raga (melody) basis therapy which is called '*ragackitsa*'. Kalyani, a lady of West Bengal has started to heal the acid victims through the medium of music. There is very much potentiality to develop the music therapy in the sector of disability studies. Thus different other scholars as well as practioners are using the system of music to heal the patients out of their pathological condition in the society.

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Muga Silk Industry in Socio-Cultural Life of Sualkuchi

Dr. Juri Das.

Muga silk has a high value in Assamese society. The person uses silk occupy a high position in the society. In ancient times, the royal families recognised *Muga* dresses as symbol of prestige. During *Ahom* rule, the kings used to offer *Muga* cloths as a gift to their respective

guests. Bar raja queen, Phuleswari encouraged the women weavers to spinning and weaving the silk cloths. Sometimes the kings ordered to pay *Muga* roll in lieu of taxes. It was informed that one local artisan of Sualkuchi, Gandharam Maral paid *Muga* roll yearly to the king during *Ahom* rule.

Muga silk has a great influence in socio-cultural and religious functions of Sualkuchi. The girls wear *mekhela-chadar* of *Muga silk* in all formal occasions like Bihu or any get together. In performing Bihu dance wearing of *Muga mekhela-chadar* or *riha* for girls is mandatory. The boys also wear *Muga* kurta. People celebrate the Bihu festival in the month of Bohag. Both men and women are busy in their domestic activities in this month. Men folk clean their garden, remove or repair their houses, while womenfolk engage them in weaving cloth to give gift to their near and dear one. Weaving and Bohag is intimately related to each other for the womenfolk. The Bihu songs begins as --

*“Atikoi chenehar mugare mahura
Atikoi chenehar mako.
Tatokoi chenehar Bohagar Bihuti
Nepati Kenekoi thako”.*

(meaning:

So dear is the bobbin of *Muga*

So dear is the shuttle

Dearer still is the *Bihu* of *Bohag*

What else to do but observe it?)

From the above songs it can be realised that how the *Muga silk* and *Bohag Bihu* are integrally related in Assamese society.

In wedding ceremony, there is a tradition to give a pair of *Muga* silk *Mekhela Chadar* along with other dresses from the bridegroom side to the bride. Specially, in *Jarundiya* ceremony (the day before the marriage day) the other women also wear silk attires. Now a day this tradition is changed with modernity and globalization. After marriage, the girl is completely under the bridegroom side. The bridegroom side assess the girl through her activities. By observing the efficiency of girl, the mother of girl is also assessed. There is a proverb regarding the girl and the mother who has no knowledge of weaving----

*“Makatkoijiek kaji
Dheki thorare bate paji
Makee najane pindhira riha
Jiekar gat phulam riha.”*

(meaning:

The daughter is more expert than her mother is. She reels yarn with a pestle of the wooden lever for pounding rice. Her mother does not know how to weave *Riha*. But the daughter wears decorated *Riha*.)

Muga silk culture is a part of their life. They spent lots of time in this culture from morning to evening.

Division of labour:

Muga silk industry creates division of labour among the people. Generally, in villages, women are forbidden to go outside household. In this context, sericulture is a boon to get avenue of livelihood for the village women. In early period, men folk of Sualkuchi were the main artisans of this culture and womenfolk were as helpers. But in present time men folk are engaged outside work like marketing, collection of equipments for weaving and many other household duties. Hence, *Muga* silk culture can be done as domestic activities. The silk rearing, reeling and weaving are suited for women. After finishing their household duties, the women spend lots of time in this culture. The young girls are also engaged them in reeling and spinning *Muga* in leisure time. At present some youths of new generation has shown interest in this culture.

Beliefs, traditions and superstitions related to *Muga silk*:

Muga silk culture is a labour intensive one and it is sometimes depend on the climate condition for the growth of *Muga* trees. It is believed that if the *Muga* trees are grown well then the rearing of *Muga* will be good. Sometimes some people sing as-

“*Ahu kheti Ahukal*

Muga kheti kapal bhal.”

(meaning:

Ahukheti is one of the Assamese paddy crop cultivation in summer in which the cultivators face many difficulties in this cultivation from beginning to end. *Ahukal* symbolises difficulties. *Muga kheti kapal bhal* means the rearing of *Muga* is depended on luck. Like *Ahukheti*, *Muga kheti* is also difficult culture. If luck favours them then the *Mugakheti* will be good.)

It is believed, in rearing site of *Muga*, women are forbidden to be in the vicinity during their monthly period. People believe that the presence of women in their periods will hamper in growing the *Muga* worm.

Again in rearing process, in 1st day a prayer is offered to supernatural beings with betel nuts, *Prasad*, *banana* leaf, earthen lamp, etc. in front of the *Muga* trees. The lower part of the tree trunk is wrapped by a creeper. By offering this, people believe that God will be blessed them for *Muga* rearing.

Silk related food habits and medicinal use:

Eri silk pupae are a popular delicacy among the *Rabhas*, *Boros* and many of the ethnic groups in Assam. As now Sualkuchi no longer rears silk, the native people of Sualkuchi are deprived from eating silk pupae. The silk cultivation is a most sustainable one through which silk pupae is produced a high protein food. The caterpillar and other rearing residues can be used for fishpond culture. Now a day the medicinal values of the vaccine of Hepatitis increase the importance of silkworm pupae. Silk pupae have been used in Chinese traditional medicines since ancient times. Pharmaceutical studies have shown that silkworm pupae increase immunity, protect the liver and prevent cancer. Latest information reviews that silkworm works as a helping tool in raising intellectual curiosity and scientific research spirit among developing and budding children of kinder garden stage as well as promotes the memory of elderly people. The government of India is actively promoting the development of *Muga* culture with research aimed at producing varieties that are better suited for indoor rearing and yielding larger cocoons. Silkworm pupae can be used to produce eco- friendly pesticides. The medicinal values of vaccine of AIDs, hepatitis increase the importance of silk. The pupae of *Muga* silk of Assam have high protein.

Economic activities related to Muga silk industry:

Muga industry plays an important part for the upliftment of rural people. As *Muga* silk industry is a labour oriented, all the members of the family can take part in this culture. Mainly is a women –led industry and they can be done efficiently for their patience and precision. As mother, women have the responsibilities to teach her daughter the art of weaving efficiently. Women can take part in increasing the income of the family by preparing fabric with beautiful designs. Today women train the girls the art of weaving as well as related tasks form some self-help groups.

It has a great impact in every sphere of life such as economic, social, cultural and educational. With the improvement of economic growth, the social system can be changed and its changes lead to changes in the culture of people. In Sualkuch, in earlier period due to financial problem most of the children were deprived from education at school and colleges. At present since women, earn additional income the children can go to school and colleges. Participation of women in weaving industry leads to opening of doors of education for future generation. At present *Muga* silk industry of Sualkuchi is concentrated on weaving. Due to increase of commercial activities of *Muga* silk industries; there is growing demand of yarn supply in Sualkuchi.

Muga looms survive on the quantity of cocoon supply. Cocoon supply depends on harvesting in the *Muga* growing areas and the harvesting is dependent mainly on weather condition. The production of *Muga* has not increased proportionately with the rise of demand for it rather it is on the decline due to the felling of *Muga* worm feeding trees (som and soalu) for getting more cultivable land. This in the price of *Muga* cocoon and *Muga* yarn respectively. Environmental pollution has hampered the culture of *Muga* cocoon and growing of mulberry trees and this has become a threat to its production. Particularly in Sivasagar district of Assam, due to exploration work for natural gas, *Muga* rearing is suffering the most. Due to an adverse change in environment, the chlorophyll of the leaves gets depleted thereby affecting the feeding process of silkworms.

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Urban Legends: Guwahati

Dr.Prabalika Sarma

(Abstract)

Human beings have always been susceptible to well told stories. They tend to interpret life in narrative terms while being fully aware that rarely, events in the real world unfold itself in a story fashion. They have an inherent fascination for the unreal tales which may be close to horrifying, and sometimes even absurd which infect their minds in a profound way. Such tales which are referred to as urban legends are discussed in many Folklore research journals. Psychologists explain that such stories are contagious, and potentially appealing. They abound with chilly descriptions with uncanny and strange projections. They depart from what is expected. As these are oral tales the details of the tales get lost in transmission. Thus, there may be different versions of the same tale in circulation. Such tales keep floating from different regions of the world from time to time. They are usually based on the themes of survival, of life and death. Story telling is after all a craft, which is told with the aid of various tools and techniques. The Urban legends have continued to be in circulation in different pockets of urban and contemporary life in the 20th century. As a matter of fact they have aroused a renewed interest in the study of Folklore in urban cities and urban areas. Thus, the perspective of folklore had gradually taken a turn from a past-oriented study gradually to grapple with the modern or urban perspective of the world. In these paper an attempt has been made to analyse this genre of folklore and list such tales which have continued to be in circulation in the city of Guwahati. Usually deserted places and places where few people reside, accident prone junctions, in the outskirts of a city, hill tops, etc. have been the sites of such tales. Guwahati city which was not as largely populated as it is now has numerous stocks of such tales to tell.

Key Words: Urban Legends, Modern Legends, Contemporary Legends Guwahati city.

Urban Legends, (as familiar to the general public) is a genre of oral narrative, which are referred to by folklorists as contemporary legends or modern legends. These oral narratives abound in contemporary culture, both in 'folk' (oral-traditional) and in "popular" (commercial media-disseminated versions). The internet has become a powerful channel circulating the once-strictly-oral urban legends though they are also known to spread by word of mouth or print. Urban Legends have continued to interest folklorists, journalists and academicians for decades. Also many of these stories have found their way into literature, Cinema,

television, and even popular music, often with creative as well as artistic modifications.

Modern folk (but non folklorist) who have popularised and exploited urban legends include writers of children's books, compilers of popular anthologies of amusing stories for adult readers, professional storytellers, advertising and television writers and filmmakers. A folklorist might object that the tellers of urban legends are not usually deliberate liars but pass on what they assume is a bit of truth.

Human beings have always been influenced by well told stories. They have a readiness to interpret life in narrative terms although they are fully aware that seldom, events in the real world unfold itself in a story fashion. They have an inherent fascination for the unreal tales which may be horrifying, and sometimes even absurd which infect their minds in a profound way. Such tales which are referred to as urban legends are discussed in many Folklore research journals.

Typically urban legends are attributed to a friend-of-a-friend and often their narrative structure sets some kind of a puzzling situation that is resolved by a sudden twist, at which point the story ends abruptly. Put simply urban legends are the modern narratives that folklorists have collected and studied under well-known titles like "The runaway Grandmother", Creepypasta, The Slender man and so on and so forth. They are told by the young and old, the well-read and the barely literate. Such tales keep floating from different regions of the world from time to time. Urban legends are actually migratory and like all folklore. They are usually based on the themes of survival, of life and death. Story telling is after all a craft, which is told with the aid of various tools and techniques.

The Urban legends have continued to be in circulation in different pockets of urban and contemporary life in the 20th century. As a matter of fact, they have aroused a renewed interest in the study of Folklore in urban cities and urban areas. Thus the perspective of folklore had gradually taken a turn from a past-oriented study gradually to grapple with the modern or urban perspective of the world.

Guwahati is one of the fastest growing Indian cities and an urban hub in North Eastern India. With modernization going on at such a rapid speed the city's culture and tradition is also going through transformation. Urbanization is creating a horde of urban problems leading to anxiety. With an ever-increasing population of the city, Guwahati is facing a host of problems. These problems and people's reactions to them get reflected

in urban legends. Psychologists explain that such stories are contagious, and potentially appealing. They abound with chilly descriptions with uncanny and strange projections. They depart from what is expected. As these are oral tales the details of the tales get lost in transmission. Thus, there may be different versions of the same tale in circulation. Usually, deserted places and places where few people reside, accident prone junctions, in the outskirts of a city, hill tops, etc. have been the sites of such tales. Guwahati city which was not as populated as it is now has numerous stocks of such tales to tell.

Several tales have been told about accident prone junctions, railway tracks where accidents occur frequently. Railway tracks have witnessed many suicide cases where persons jump in front of a running train. The route from Bhootnath to Maligaon Railway station has seen many accidents. This route remains busy all day long .But after dark it becomes deserted and lonely. There are many tales told by late night travellers. About the railway tract, just near the Kamakhya Gate bus stop there are many bizarre tales. Several persons who had to cross the railway tracks after midnight report of seeing young girls, sometimes a child and sometimes even a man walking alone and then suddenly disappearing completely.

On the route from Bhootnath to Mailgaon, specially between Kalipur bus stop and Kamakhya Gate bus stop, as reported by several late night travellers about seeing a lady in white . In fact one such tale was told to me by a friend, who lived just a few kilometres away from the spot. He was then perhaps around ten or twelve years. He reported to me what he had heard what had happened to his uncle Late Mr. Puranjoy Prasad Sarma long time back. One day his uncle who was a superintendent Engineer in the PWD was very late and had to cross the spot on his way home (mind you this incident must have occurred some 45 years back, when that portion of the city was more deserted than at present). He was on official duty. The driver was with him. As they crossed Kalipur there appeared in front of them a man in white. The driver stepped on the accelerator and drove at full speed. As they crossed the spot Mr Sarma got agitated. He started shouting .He caught hold of the shirt's collar of his driver and ordered him to stop the car but the driver did not pay any heed to him and drove away at full speed. As they reached Bharalumukh the driver slowed down the car and explained that they had just seen a ghost. Mr. Sarma was mad. He shouted at the driver telling him that he had ran his car over a man and killed him. No matter how much the driver explained Mr Sarma was adamant that he had killed a man. He felt so

guilty that he forced the driver to go to the spot and check. The driver explained that it was the spirit of a man who was killed in an accident. Many people who travelled at night had reported seeing a man in white. Mr. Sharma and the driver went back to the same spot. This time when they reached the spot they saw no one and they immediately drove back. The driver explained to his shocked boss that if the car really had ran over a real man then there would have been the dead body of the victim. But there was no one to be seen this time. Even today people who travel at night report of seeing sometimes a man in white and sometimes a girl in white between Kalipur bus stop to Kamakhya Gate. There are variations of the tale but the location is the same.

In another incident as told to me by my husband of an incident which occurred in the month of February, 1994. He had gone to attend a dinner and I could not accompany him as our first child was just a month and a half old. During that period I was staying in my mother's house at Goswami Service, Guwahati. We stayed at Kumarpara , Guwahati, so after dinner before going home he came to my mother's house. It was late and soon it started raining mildly at first. Although my mother insisted that he stay back for the night, he decided to go back home, as he had some urgent work early in the morning. So he immediately left. The weather worsened and there was lightening too. Then started a thunderstorm, and he had to stop the car. It must have been midnight. Later he drove through the main GNB Road via Guwahati Club, Ambari, District Library. He hardly saw anybody on the road as there were only a handful of vehicles. He in fact even decided to return back as the storm worsened. But on second thoughts, he decided to go ahead as he had already crossed Handique College to the west of Dighalipukhuri .He crossed the Nabin Bordoloi Hall and when he was just passing the road behind the Guwahati High Court he noticed a small girl between 12 to 14 years of age in a white frock , coming from the Latasil side towards the Nabin Bordoloi hall side. Immediately what crossed his mind was that she must been some maid who could not tolerate the ill treatment of her employers decided to run away. As he was driving, he could not stop the vehicle which was already in full speed. He decided to stop the vehicle and did stop the vehicle just while taking the right turn in front of the High Court Gate in the North West. At that time the storm was at its peak. Yet he got down from his car and looked at the girl who by then had come out of the road behind the High Court and without even looking at him turned and started walking towards Handique College. He felt very sad seeing the young girl all alone at night. He was about to stop the car.

He suddenly got an uncanny feeling and drove home at high speed. The very look and attitude of the girl did not seem normal to him as she appeared to be under no distress considering the time and the storm. This immediately sent a signal down his spine and the next moment, he jumped into his car and accelerated in full speed towards the DC court end till he reached the Sukleswar Temple, where he could see people. By then the rain stopped and there was the normal power cut off situation when he reached home. After that day, he avoided driving through that part of the city at night alone. When he reported to his friends and colleagues the next day, they all told him that there were many cases of girls committing suicide in that spot. There were similar stories heard by late night travellers.

Then there are many routes people avoid at night in Guwahati city. They may travel a hundred times via such routes in the day. But when it gets deserted and dark people avoid such spots. One such spot is in Bharalumukh. In the daytime people take the short cut near Apollo hotel to the Bharalumukh bus stop. But no driver will ever do that at night. One Mr.P.Das who was a Provisional officer of State bank of India, Bharlumukh Branch was unaware of it. It was the month of March when he had to work very late. He stayed in Dharapur. So he took the dreaded route being new to this part of the city. He banged the car against the tree opposite the Apollo hotel. Luckily another colleague who was working late was there and along with the chawkidar rescued him. To this day he never fails to warn everyone to avoid that route.

Urban legends are all those bizarre, whimsical, outrageous and unbelievable stories. They are too odd, too coincidental, and too neatly plotted to be of any literal truth where they are told. Such stories deal with familiar everyday matters like travel, shopping, pets, babysitting, crime, accidents, sex, business, government and so forth. The stories are phrased as if factual and are often attached to a particular locality. However much we argue over the literal significance of Urban Legends, it cannot be ignored. Modern urban legends have now inspired fan fiction, best selling computer games and a series of short movies, the gaming community, etc. Urban legends like Creepypasta, (horror stories) as an example, which is even though far removed from reality continue to arouse the curiosity and interest of the people. The fact that we have devised different forms of entertainment; interactive and non-interactive on this subject goes to show the amount of interest exists in the subject even in today's modern age. It would not be wrong to say that it has become an obsession of today's pop culture.

The decline of oral-traditional urban legends does not mean that folklorists have nothing left to study in the way of contemporary traditional narratives. Indiana University became the centre for collection and studies in the 60s through the efforts of Professor Linda Degh and her students and publishing their findings in the folkore Journal. There is a vast amount of legend data in folklore collections and archives awaiting analysis and interpretation. The very processes of commercialisation and the popularisation of urban legends deserve folklorist's attention. The circulations of rumours and legends via internet have opened up another new field of research. It will be interesting to see what direction it will take in the near future.

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BILWESWAR DEVALAYA AND OJA-PALI: A FOLKLORISTIC APPRAISAL

Rajesh Kakati

Abstract of the Paper:

Bilweswar Devalaya is a haven for the folkloristic activities which are involved with the various festivals celebrated in its vicinity. Despite the high literacy rate and aggression of technological inputs, the way of life of the local people is obsessed with the folkloristic activities which are being reared by the Devalaya. The most remarkable thing of the Devalaya is that it fosters the three cult of religion at the same time. These are: Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnaism. All the three cults get unique colours through the contextualization with the local fervour. The Devalaya nourishes the humanistic ideas to favour the people's aspiration in many ways. Primarily, the entire Devalaya complex is committed for the looking after the folk artisans, artists and their folkloristic activities acquired through inheritance. Modernization of everything is witnessed except than the pristine ways of worshipping the deities of which Lord Shiv is the principal deity. Durga Puja is celebrated in the most splendid way greeting a large number of devotees who believe in Shaktism from various places of the state wherein dozens of buffaloes are sacrificed including goats, ducks, pigeons and other inanimate objects before the Goddess Durga with a view to propitiating the wishes of Her and personal solace. Though the age old practices of sacrificing animals invite debate amongst the intellectual class; however, it is on rise day by day. The chief purpose of the paper is only to highlight the major folkloristic activity which is none other than Ojapali and how it becomes instrumental in narrating the significances of the religious events or festivals under the aegis of Bilweswar Devalaya. Because, Ojapali is a mandatory folk item accrued with the festivals that entertain villagers with crude taste but with most vehement effect.

Keywords:

Bilweswar, Devalaya, Sukananni Oja-Pali, Byash Oja-Pali, Ramayani Oja-Pali, Folkloristic Activity, Pykes

(i) Objectives and Methodology:

To highlight the different festivals celebrated by the Bilweswar Devalaya which accompany various folk performances, particularly, the Oja-Pali. How the three types of Oja-Pali get priority amongst all the folk

performances in the vicinity of the Devalaya; the paper intends to narrate. The methodology applied here is the sociological approach to understand the impact upon the society. The study is based on primary and secondary bibliographic sources which is supplanted by the field study and data collected through personal interviews.

(ii) Introduction:

Bilweswar Devalaya is one of the most ancient Devalaya(s) i.e. Home for God or goddess which is of Sanskrit origin-temple in Assam located at Belsor-an adjoining village of Bilweswar in the district Nalbari which is being considered as sacred place for the Hindu devotees since its erection by the king Nagakhya who is referred to as King Nagsankara also. The Devalaya is said to have built in 1443 saka (1521 A.D.) Though there is no any authentic historical records about the regime of King Nagakhya or Nagsankara; however, it may be conjectured from the pages of history that he was one of the small kings who ruled Pratapgarh of Biswanath Chariali. Like other small kings, he was also subjugated by Biswa Simha, the founder of the Koch Kingdom. Aryanization process had fostered the erection of temples throughout the country which represent the Brahmanic pattern of worshipping. In almost all temples, the Brahman priests take the leading parts in establishments which is true in case of Bilweswar Devalaya also. The origin of the Bilweswar Devalaya is also associated with a Brahmin named Rup Narayan Dev who was the forefather of the Purohit family later on known as Deuri-although the word is linked with Kiratiya tradition. Like every religious site, Bilweswar Devalaya has also an original linkage with a legend. The said Brahmin tamed a Kapili Gai(yellowish-brown cow). One day, he had found that the cow ceased to give milk without any known reason. One day he followed the cow during grazing time and could see that she was giving milk from her breast over a bunch of Birina Ban (Reed Grass). Owing to the curiosity, the Brahmin dug out the bunch of Birina Ban. He found an image of Shiv Linga-Phallus of Lord Shiva. This is the legend of Bilweswar Devalaya by which it is linked with myth.¹

Festivals are the outcome of human civilization. In forming of the society, people of a specific geographical locality assemble, interact, exchange ideas and instinctive aspirations but with commonness. As a result of these continuous activities by the mankind different festivals emerge according to the taste of the people of a particular society. Festivals mirror the folk-life and provide entertainment maintaining the cultural, religious and social legacy. In other words, thoughts of the past

¹ Dandiram Datta,Sri Sri Bilweswarar Itibritya,p-2

are transmitted to the new generation people and made a bridge between the people of the bygone days and the new times. These have opened the doors for the socialization process for the new generation people. Along with these festivals, different types of cultural events, activities take place. Like other societies in the globe, Assamese society is also featured with various such events. Due to the unending efforts of the society to hold such events moral, social codes are instilled gradually in the minds of new generation people which are scattered by the elderly experienced people. The social set-up is grounded by the religiousness of any community. Because, when the humankind was nearest to the nature with a meagre scientific bases, they had to believe utterly only in the forces or outrages of the nature. So they had to submit all the time before the nature. Even the supernatural thoughts were the natural obsession of the people as a whole. This belief is not stoppable. It continues to flow through the folk people. The folk is understood as follows- “.....the folk as an unsophisticated, homogeneous group living in a politically bounded advanced culture but isolated from it by such factors as topography, geography, religion, dialect, economics and race.”² The Bilweswar Devalaya is a monument of antiquity that rears the folk of the locality with beliefs, customs and folk practices.

Festivals are of two kinds: personal and public. Personal festivals are celebrated by the individual family patronage and the public festivals are by the collective patronages. In the Assamese Hindu society, public festivals are observed at the public venues like temple, devalaya, naam-ghar, satra etc. Bilweswar Devalaya is renowned for festivals. Durga Puja is celebrated by the Devalaya in a large scale. On the day of Navami, lakhs of devotees come to witness the ‘buffalo sacrifice’ and to have the blessings of Devi. More than fifty buffaloes are sacrificed and offered every year in front of the Devi by the people from various places wishing progress and peace in their lives. It has widespread publicity through various media. In every month, the vicinity of the Devalaya remains gorgeous, colourful and splendid. From the Shivratri to Jethua Naam, almost every kind of festivals observed in Lower Assam are celebrated. Moreover that personal festivals like-marriage, birthday, anna-praasan i.e.first meal ceremony for babies etc. are celebrated by the own family patronage. All the festivals are endowed with various folkloristic activities and performing arts basically of folk taste. These have related with the existence of the people in the society. Customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious or social groups; also the

² John Greenway: Literature Among the Primitives, Hatboro,1964,p.xii

characteristic features of everyday existence. Every kind of worship is supported by Sukananni Oja-Pali and other occasions are supported by Byash and Ramayani Oja-Pali.³

(iii) Historicity of Oja-Pali:

Assam is particularly rich in the field of folk drama. These are: bhaona, oja-pali, nagara naam, dhuliya, kushan-gan, pala-gan, khuliya-bhaona, bhaira. The Oja-pali institution also incorporates within itself ingredients of folk theatre. It is customary for the principal singer-Oja, to enter into dramatic dialogues with his principal assistant, Dainapali,. In some performances, particularly in Mare-Gowa and Ramayan-Gowa forms, more elaborate dramatic interpolations constitute a part of the Oja-Pali structure.⁴

The three books Smriti Ratnakar by Pandit Vedacharya of ancient Kamrupa(13th century), Kathaguru Charit edited by Upen Ch. Lekharu and Guru Lila by Ram Rai provide evidences about the prevalence of Oja-Pali even on the occasion of funeral ceremony of Mahapurush Sankardev and Mahapurush Madhavdev. The Copper Inscription of Banamali Dev of 9th Century is a testimony to the fact that there was a prevalence of Oja-Pali of that time.

On the basis of the subject matters, Oja-Pali can be classified into three types. These are: Byash Oja-Pali, Ramayani Oja-Pali and Sukananni Oja-Pali. Byash Ojapali is based on the stories of The Mahabharata, Ramayani Oja-Pali is based on the stories of The Ramayana. Sukananni Ojapali is based on the stories of Padmaa Purana composed by Sukabi Narayandev.⁵ Narayandev is believed to be a resident of Sualkuchi-the Silk City of Assam in ancient times though there are controversies amongst the scholars. Sukananni or Sukanarayani Oja-Pali is performed to propitiate exasperation of Manasha Debi-Snake Goddess in Hindu Mythology. Its tradition is set in Assamese society from the stories of Chanda Sadagar-a merchant king of Champak Nagar in Chai Gaon of Kamrup(Rural) district in present times whose seventh son-Lakhindar or Lakhai was killed by the biting of Manasha on the first day of his marriage with Sati Beula as result of his non compliance to worship

³ Personal interview with Madhab Nath at his residence at Barakhat, Niz Dahmadhana, Baksa on 11/02/19

⁴ Birendranath Datta, NC Sarma and PC Das, A Handbook of Folklore Material of North-East India, p-205

⁵ Bipin Ch. Deka, Loka Jibanat Ojapali aru Belsor Anchalat Iyar Prashar, Bilvashree-Souvenir of 4th Annual Special Conference of Sahitya Sabha, p-88
7 ibid p-89

Manasha as he was a stern devotee of Chandi-the other name of Durga Debi. This story is being orally transmitted through ages.

(iv) Devalaya Utility of Oja-Pali and Its structure:

Despite the aggression of technology and other items of entertainment, still, there is great prevalence of Oja-Pali primarily in the districts of Darrang, Nalbari, Barpeta, Baksa, Goalpara etc. All the forms of Oja-Pali are equally popular amongst the folk people. Oja-Pali from Muslim community in Darrang district and Oja-Pali consisting women members in Barpeta district are in practice even today. The group of Oja-Pali consisting of one Oja and four-five Pali(s) out of which one is Daina Pali. Oja sings and acts the Geet-Pad-hymns and the Daina Pali explains these in his own way in the simplified forms and in crude language to suit the psyche of the folk people. The other Pali(s) sing the hymns supporting the Oja together by playing the hand cymbals in a special rhythm. The contextualised forms of the epic and Puranic stories attract the people very easily. The features of the Oja-Pali make them very popular amongst the people. Though the Oja-Pali is assessed to be a crude form of performing arts combining songs and drama; however, some classical features are also noticed in the Oja-Pali. Use of Mudra-classical gestures and Raag-classical notes are noticed by the scholars of that domain.⁶

Bilweswar Devalaya is a localized hub for the folkloristic activities. So the traditionally acquired artistic forms are still in existence under its patronage. The troupes of such performance belonging to the adjoining area are still potent to resist the rapid extinction of many forms of performing arts. The entire west part of the Nalbari district and the east part of the Barpeta district are said to be the main operational areas of all functions of the Bilweswar Devalaya till date. All the folkloristic troupes have a fine network amongst them and they get privilege to perform their show as the Devalaya holds series of religious and family events round the year. So the enrichment of the folk performing groups is noticeable.

(v) Social Legacy of Oja-Pali and the Devalaya's Nurturing:

To understand the social legacy- examples of some eminent personalities in the field of Ojapali are to be presented. They are: Naro Barman(Naro Oja) from Kaihati, Dhaniram Daina Pali popularly known as Dhaina Daina Pali from Jagara, Dhatu Ohja from Kaihati, Bisturam Daina Pali from Kaihati. The tradition of Ohjapali of Kaihati is still maintained by Madan Ohja who is rightly considered to be the successor of the legacy. Belsor-one of the home villages of Bilweswar Devalaya is

boast of having Naro Ohja who propagated Gandhism and Marxism through the medium of Ohjapali and he was accompanied by Rango Dainapali whose acting and speech delivery attracted the spectators greatly. In present times, Ramohan Ohja of Bilweswar leads two groups of Ohjapali. The other Oja-Pali artists of the past and the present accordingly of the Bilweswar Devalaya are: Lt. Lalit Haloi(Ohja), Lt. Harkanta Haloi(Oja), Lt. Chakradhar Mena(Ohja), Lt. Nibharsha Barman(Pali), Lt. Guda Barman(Pali), Lt. Debi Barman(Pali), Lt. Jaltiram Barman(Pali), Lt. Purna Barman(Pali), Sri Harmohan Rajbongshi(Ohja), Sri Prabhat Haloi(Dainapali), Sri Bichitra Rajbongshi(Ohja), Sri Dilip Rajbongshi(Dainapali), Sri Shaniram Rajbongshi(Pali), Sri Kailash Rajbongshi(Pali), Sri Biren Rajbongshi(Pali) etc.⁷ There is a unique type of Oja-Pali in Nalbari district which is called Bhaira wherein ‘bhao(s)-gestures are emphasised during performance. The birth place of Bhaira is Jagara which is a village near to Bilweswar Devalaya. Late Baga Bhot Oja was the pioneer of this kind whose descendents continued to perform. They were: Lt. Gandharam Oja, Lt. Kinchit Oja, Satya Oja, Pratap Dainapali. In present times, Jagadish Baruah popularly known as Hukuku Bhaira- a disciple of Pratap Dainapali is performing Bhiara and entertaining the people a lot. The performers of all the forms of Oja-Pali wear different types of attire and play bell metal cymbals attracting the spectators.

(vi) Sustenance of Oja-Pali and Its Causes:

Bilweswar Devalaya, is emerging as a place for religious tourism by the governmental support in a rapid pace having newly constructed tourist lodge and other essential infrastructure in recent years. Its religiousness, myths, legends, tales are being propagated across the state due to the visits of influential persons from all fraternities with great momentum. In other words, the Devalaya converts itself to religious congregation during Durga Puja. Fairs held during it add extra dimension to the festivals giving opportunities to the local people for purchasing their essential items and domestic utensils including fancy items. People from different walks of life entertain themselves engrossing with the folk and modern performances along with Mobile Theatre groups. But the economic reality and the crudity of taste, still, compel a huge bulk of people belonging to all neighbouring villages to entertain only with the folk performances arranged by the Devalaya authority as well as the ad-hoc committee formed to manage the festivals. Pykes (a Pyke is a group of four people who are assigned with specific duty) are always ready to

⁷ Prabhat Haloi, Bilweswar, p-25

serve the functions of the Devalaya and daily 'bhog-meal for the devotees' is served to the assembled devotees including the folk performers. Folk performers are paid honorarium from the accumulated currency as offerings by the visitors. Amongst all the folk performing groups, Oja-Pali occupies a prominent place during all festivals. They are from all places of the district; sometimes, from outside of the districts.⁸ The rhythmic playing of Khuti Taal (small bell metal cymbals by single hand) by Sukananni(a derived word from Sukabi Narayandev); Baati Taal(slightly big bell metal cymbals by both hands)by the Byash Oja-Pali(s) reverberate the day and night of the Devalaya amusing folk people to a great extent.

(vii) Potentiality of the Devalaya in promoting Oja-Pali:

In modern day times, though people are materially developing in a rapid pace; however, sociological survey is indicative of people's fatigue which is born out of the collapse of the relation with the nature. There are other reasons also among which the distortion of joint family structure is a major one. The entertainment imported from the electronic media e.g. Internet, TV etc. which are based on the westernized model is found to be cannibal in case of indigenous types of entertainment. The indigenusness is perpetually intact only in the folklore. Bilweswar Devalaya is the epitome of folkloristic performance wherein a huge number of people belonging to the locality get solace for ages. The sacredness which is possessed by the Devalaya is a potential factor to entice the people by its activities. The demography says that majority people of the locality are Hindu by religion. Though the Devalaya is of original Shaivite legacy; however, it became the altar for all deities in later days. Both the Puranic and Vedic traditions are observed in every aspect of the Devalaya.

In short, all the worships prescribed by both the traditions whether Puranic and Vedic are performed with continuity due to which people of all faiths of Hinduism are attracted by the Devalaya. Besides it, Vaishnavite traditions are also maintained on many occasions which started since the time of affiliation of Koch Kings. The atmosphere may be exploited by the rampant performance of Oja-Pali as it is a popular form of folk art. "For centuries India remained largely an 'oral society'. The oral mode of communication played a major role in its freedom

⁸ Ranjit Mishra, Daloi, Bilweswar Devalaya, personal interview on 7.01.2019 at his Official Chamber

movement, the incidence of illiteracy being very high. This even today remains at the level of about 40 per cent.”⁹ Of course, the situation is being changed. But Oja-Pali, still, is relevant in propagating the religious story amongst the folk people which has a widespread acceptability due to its theatrical mode and attractive attire worn by the performers. Devalaya vicinity is a vital place in enticing the people of different walks of life through its sacredness having the legendary, mythical stories and long standing beliefs including supernatural elements. The Devalaya epitomizes all these things which are affiliated with people with folk ways detaching themselves from the current scientific and so-called thoughts. Owing to this aged beliefs, the Devalaya can work in promoting happiness, peace, integrity which are the timeless demands of the society, though, our society is seen to be overwhelmed with the impacts of globalization. Oja- Pali may be used as a great folk instrument for the social sake making more productive by the addition of current subjects.

viii) Conclusion:

There are no double opinions that Bilweswar Devalaya is practicing place for all Hindu religious cults inviting pan-Indian elements also at present times with a vehement resistance to the extinction of pristine ways of worshipping and maintaining everything in concord with folkways. Oja-Pali and the Devalaya have been keeping an everlasting bond in promoting the overall magnanimity of folk life of the people of greater locality. The attachment and the interest have not been exhausted despite of imported elements changing cultural scenario of the Devalaya. The appraisal essentially does not demand the completeness but a benign effort has been made to apprise the features of the Devalaya and its relation with the major folkloristic item-Oja-Pali.

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⁹ Yogendra Singh, Culture Change in India-Identity and Globalization,p-56

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CULTURAL IDENTITY, IDEOLOGY AND NATIONALISM OF THE RABHA TRIBE: A STUDY FROM SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Rumi Nath

INTRODUCTION:- The Rabhas are one of the Indo-Mongloid ethnic groups of North-East India. They are very rich in their various tradition and cultures. Tibet region was their original homeland. In Assam the majority of the Rabhas are found in Kamrup and Goalpara district. The Rabhas have distinct folk customs, language, dress, food habit, festival, ceremony, some traditional practices and folk game in their own. About the origin of the Rabhas, Endle narrated that ‘their origin but imperfectly known but they are said to be descended from a Hindu father who lost caste by marriage a Kachari woman. The Rabhas original home and habitat was the region of bordering on the Northern slopes of the Garo Hills’ (Endle, 2012:83). Dr. Bhuban Mahan Das opined in his writings that “the Rabhas are affiliated to the Bodo groups in their physical characteristic. Among the Bodo tribes, the Rabha appear to be more closely related to the Garo than other. He again narrated that Mongoloid peoples come in successive waves from the North-Eastern region” (Das, 2008:117). The Rabhas are found in several sub-groups i.e. Pati, Rangdani, Maitari, Dahori, Bitiliya, Totla, Hana, Koccha, Modahi and Halowa Rabha. The Halowa Rabhas are not recognized socially.

The main objective of the present study is to know about the-

- i) Preservation of cultural identity of the Rabha tribe
- ii) It also aims to know how Folklore impact on the concept of nationalism among the Rabhas.
- iii) Role of Rabha tribal organization to promote nationalism.

To prepare the present topic, observation and interview method were formulated to collect the required data which I have used as primary source. As secondary source I had gone through number of published Books, Journals, Magazines, Articles to analyze the primary data.

For every society it is important to take some steps for the overall development of a community. In the context of cultural lost Arnold Toyabee stated that *“It is not an external agency that destroys a culture. It is the loss of the fire within the system; it is the absence of unity,*

harmony and cohesion within the society". For the preservation of their cultural identity and ideology the Rabhas must preserve their own language and culture through which they can identify themselves as separate tribe. They believe that due to the linguistic reasons they are backward in the present time because only three sections have and use their own Rabha dialect and other section of the Rabhas have adopted Assamese language (Rabhamese) in their day to day conversations. In this way if a community are not interested to learn their own dialect and do not speak their own dialect, a community cannot develop itself. So, to preserve their cultural identity they must develop their own dialect among all section of the Rabhas and open Rabha medium school to teach their upcoming generations. Education is the first priority for the overall development of a community. For cultural identity it will possible only collaboration with some educated people and they will be able to bring a rapid change in their society. On the other hand, it is also important to updating their new generations by creating some awareness and active steps which may update the new generation properly to conduct and contribute for the society. For the preservation of Rabha cultural identity and ideology, good and strong leadership is needed to create awareness about their tradition and original Rabha culture and ideology among the people to go ahead in the world context. The knowledgeable people of the Rabhas can create awareness in various aspects to preserve their culture and ideology. They must take some active steps against Witch-hunting, some superstitious beliefs and unscientific rules. Through changing their old pattern of social system they can accept some new ideas and ideologies to some extent to keep them active and modern. It helps them to preserve their cultural ideology in changing situations. Government active attempt is also needed to preserve their cultural identity and ideology. Because, the culture and the ideology represent to the whole of the tribe or community in changing world. They must have scientific attitude to accept new and modern aspects. If they tied up themselves with their old tradition and culture they will not keep peace in the modern world. The new generation of the Rabhas also plays an important role to preserve their cultural identity and ideology. Before losing their original culture and all tradition the new generation may take active steps to preserve these and it will try to proceed in the world context. Socio-political unity among the Rabhas is also needed for the overall development of the community. Through this unity then can preserve their cultural traits and their ideology.

Folklore is the root of every community through which a society may focus their identity and ideology. Folklore is the backbone of culture which includes culture, traditions, customs, beliefs, tales, proverbs, oral literature etc. The growth of a society mainly depends on the nationalism of the people. Over a year we have seen many nationalistic struggles for political recognition. According to J.S. Mill *“A portion of mankind may be said constitute a nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between and any others- which make them co-operate with other more willingly than with the other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be governed by themselves on a portion of themselves exclusively”*. In India there are several tribes who representing to the Nationalism of India. The Rabha tribe is one of the tribe of North-East India and representing to the Indian Nationalism. Due to the concept of Nationalism some of the tribe including the Rabhas have been demanding a separate territory with more powers and autonomy for them. It stands for self-legislation and exercising power for the community. Through the concept of nationalism, the people of the Rabhas promote the interest of a particular region to gaining the sovereignty. It is a great idea of nationalism where the people of the Rabhas are attached to their native soil, to their tradition and cultures.

The Rabhas formed different socio-political organization and socio-religious groups to promote and increase their nationalism among the Rabhas. All Rabha National Council, All Rabha Students Union, The Sixth Scheduled Demand Committee, All Rabha Women Council and Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council are some democratic socio-political organization which was formed for the upliftment of the Rabha society. All the socio-political decisions are taken by this organization. They have been demanding socio-cultural, educational, economic right and basically preservation of identity and democratic political rights of the Rabhas. For the purpose of protection of their cultural traits and political safeguard they have been demanding democratically Sixth Scheduled according to the Indian Constitution till today.

CONCLUSION:- In conclusion of the study it can be said that the sentiment of the nationalism among the Rabhas is very high. It helps them to bring unity among the people of the Rabhas. The concept of nationalism rooted deeply among them. Through their democratic struggle for autonomous council and Sixth Scheduled, they reflect their nationalism. It can be also said that they are always on the same way and

under one roof through which they are able to established unity and integrity among the people of the Rabhas.

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Films, Females and Folklore:

Reading Selected Cinema of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia

Meghna Choudhury

1. Introduction

Studies on the encounter between folklore and mass media date back to the 1960s. Alan Dundes' *Advertising and Folklore* (1963) and Tom Burns' *Folklore in the Mass Media* (1969) are important forerunners in this regard though they vary in their aim, scope, and methodology. Scholars from all over the world have brought about convergence between the fields of folklore and media, though it has never been a concerted effort.

Story-telling has been an integral ingredient of the cultures of all societies throughout human history. Narratives recounting unusual happenings accepted as truth on faith, or incidents rather vaguely believed to have taken place, and stories of purely fictitious formulations are told and retold. Correspondingly, myths, legends and folktales have been accepted as the three basic forms of narratives of universal distribution.

Speaking of Assamese cinema, starting with Jyoti Prasad Agarwala's *Joymoti*, folk motifs have found place in most of the stories. Directors have spoken their story very efficiently with the help of folk elements, be it dialogues, set designing, music or costumes. Many films have been based on folk tales of the region. Even in more recent productions like, *Village Rockstars*, *Maaj Rati Keteki*, *Xoixobote*

Dhemalite, to name a few, we find folk elements being strong carriers of the inner message of the films.

In the proposed paper a study will be made about the role of women as the carriers of these folk elements through the medium of cinema. For the ease of research, some selected films made in Assamese by an eminent filmmaker from the region, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia will be taken into consideration.

The objectives of the paper would be:

- 1) To find out the use of folk elements in story telling by the filmmakers.
- 2) To analyze the use of female characters in films for the portrayal of folk elements.
- 3) To find out the treatment of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia in depicting folklore through the female characters of his films.

2. Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia – a brief introduction

Bhabendra Nath Saikia was born on 20 February 1932 at Nagaon town. He passed his matriculation examination in 1948 and the Intermediate examination in Science in 1950, both with first division marks. He passed B.Sc Examination in 1952 with honours in Physics from the Cotton College of Gauhati University. He received a post graduate degree in Physics from the Presidency College of Calcutta University. He obtained his PhD in Physics from the University of London in 1961. He also obtained a Diploma from the Imperial College of Science & Technology, London in 1961. He later worked as reader in Physics at the Gauhati University.

Dr. Saikia edited the *Prantik*, an Assamese fortnightly magazine, and a children's magazine named *Xophura*, both in the Assamese language. He was also the President of the Jyoti Chitran which was for a long time the only film studio in Assam. He had the unique distinction of having won the National Awards for each of his seven Assamese films. For his services to the literature, culture and cinema of Assam, Dr Saikia was awarded the Padma Shri in 2001.

Having spent his childhood in poverty, Dr Saikia established the Aarohan Trust in Guwahati using the money he received from the Assam Valley Literary Award to provide free training to poor children interested in art, theatre and music. Dr. Saikia died on 13 August 2003 in Guwahati

and is survived by his wife Preeti Saikia and two daughters. The Assam Government has named a road in Guwahati and a state award in his honour.

He is recognized as one of the top ranking writers of Assam. Many of his stories have been translated into English, Bengali, Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati etc. He had also written a large number of plays for All India Radio (AIR). The plays Kolahal, Durbhiksha and Itihaas were taken up by the AIR as national plays. Kolahal was selected for broadcast from foreign centres. He was also associated actively with the stage as a playwright and director. He has written many plays for 'Mobile Theatre' of Assam, most notably for Abahan Theater and a number of One Act Plays.

Dr. Saikia was a Member, Sangeet Natak Akademi; Member of the Executive and General Council of Sahitya Akademi; Member, Indian National Council for co-operation with UNESCO; Member, Academic Council, Gauhati University; President of Jyoti Chitraban (Film Studio) Society; Member, Advisory Body, All India Radio, Guwahati; Chairman, Assam State Film (Finance and Development) Corporation Ltd; Member., Governing Body, North East Zone Cultural Centre, Dimapur; Member, Governing Body, East Zone Cultural Centre, Kolkata; Member of Court of the Gauhati University, Assam; Member, Society of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, Member, Board of Trustees, National Book Trust of India.

He also worked extensively in the proposal, planning, creation and construction of the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati, Assam, which is now a sprawling cultural center, one of its kind, and a tourist attraction for the state of Assam. He served as the first Vice-President of the Kalakshetra, under the governor of Assam as the President. This center was built in the memory of Assamese cultural legend Srimanta Sankardev (1449–1568).

3. Films by Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia

Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia had directed eight feature films. These films have been screened at International Film Festivals held at various places such as Cannes, Madras, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Bangalore, Calcutta, Karlovy Vary (Czechoslovakia), Nantes (France), Valladolid (Spain), Algiers (Algeria), Pyong Yong (North Korea), Sydney, Munich, Montreal and Toronto. Dr. Saikia has also directed one episode of a Doordarshan series on Rabindra Nath Tagore's stories in Hindi. Seven out of his eight films have been selected for Indian Panorama Section of the

International Film Festival of India. He received the Sahitya Akademi (India) Award in 1976, the Rajat Kamal Award of the Government of India for the film Sandhyarag in 1978, Anirban in 1981, Agnisnan in 1985, Kolahal in 1988, Sarothi in 1992, Abartan in 1994 and for Itihaas in 1996. He was adjudged as one of the "Twenty one Great Assamese Persons of the twentieth century" in a literary weekly news magazine of Assam.

Incidentally, Sringkhal (The Quiver), an Assamese film based on a short story written by Bhabendra Nath Saikia was released on 17 October 2014. Directed by Prabin Hazarika, Sringkhal was co-produced by the Assam State Film (Finance and Development) Corporation Limited with Preeti Saikia, Partha Pratim Bora, Sangeeta Saikia, Dipendra Patowary and Prabin Hazarika.

Here is a brief filmography of Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia:

	Name of the film	Release year	Award
1.	Sandhyaraag (<i>Cry of Twilight</i>)	1977 (B/W)	Rajat Kamal Award, 1977; screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1978
2.	Anirban (<i>The Vigil</i>)	1981 (B/W)	Rajat Kamal Award, 1981
3.	Agnisnaan (<i>Ordeal</i>)	1985	Rajat Kamal Award, 1985
4.	Kolahol (<i>The Turmoil</i>)	1988	Rajat Kamal Award, 1988
5.	Sarothi (<i>The Shelter</i>)	1991	Rajat Kamal Award, 1992
6.	Abartan (<i>On the Run</i>)	1993	Rajat Kamal Award, 1994
7.	Itihaas (<i>Exploration</i>)	1995	Rajat Kamal Award, 1996
8.	Kaal Sandhya (<i>Twilight of Death</i>)	1997(Hindi)	

4. Method:

The methodology of the research is purely analytical. For the present paper, the researcher has selected 3 films by Dr. Bhabendra Nath

Saikia, mainly based on the criteria of women-centric story. The selected films are – **Sandhyaraag, Agnisnaan and Kolahol**. The films have been watched several times and the folk elements represented in them have been carefully noted down. While observing the folk elements, the researcher carefully emphasized on the female characters of the films as carriers of those.

5. Overview of the selected films:

- i) Sandhyaraag:** Sandhyaraag was screened at the Cannes Film Festival and also won the Rajat Kamal award in 1977. Sandhyaraag is a tale of a village widow Putali and her two daughters. Like many village folks, Putali's daughters are sent to the city to work as domestic help in two different households. While the elder one Charu is accepted as part of the family and acclimatizes to city life, the younger Taru has to be on her guard and ward of the advances of the master's son. As they grow up and reach a marriageable age, the sisters come back to the village but now the village life feels too restricted for them. The choices the women make at this point makes the narration interesting. Sandhyaraag was Saikia's first award and just the beginning of a journey that would gift us more films and get more recognition for Assamese Cinema. Sandhyaraag is based on Saikia's own short story Banaprashtha.
- ii) Agnisnaan:** In 1985, Agnisnaan based on Saikia's own novel Antareep won the Rajat Kamal Award. Set in the colonial and feudal era it is a tale of Mohikanta, a rice mill owner. Mohikanta is married to Menoka and has four children with her. However, Mohikanta then decides to marry again. His second wife Kiran is pregnant and Menoka is unable to accept her husband's behavior. Instead of being a submissive wife, Menoka starts an affair with Madan, a village thief. When confronted by Mohikanta, Menoka holds a mirror to society's double standards and points out that he has also been unfaithful to her.
- iii) Kolahol:** Keeping up with Saikia's tradition of narrating socially relevant tales, the 1988 film which also won the Rajat Kamal talks about the little Moti's struggles. Moti feeds his mother and himself with stolen rice from trucks as his mother Kiran struggles to work at a warehouse. When a truck capsizes and Moti is killed, the pathos heightens as the truck driver tries to bribe Kiran with a sack of rice marked by Moti's blood. The viewer needs to watch this film to find out more about Kiran's journey. Like each of Saikia's earlier films, even Kolahol is based on his own story, a short story Endur.

6. Analysis of folklore being represented by female characters of the selected films:

i) **Sandhyaraag:** the film is a beautiful representation of rural and urban folk life of the 70s era in Assam.

- The film begins with a shot of Putali and her elder daughter Charu plucking herbs to sell in the village market. They fill bamboo baskets with bunches of the herbs.
- Charu's mother and grandmother are shown going out for fishing with traditional fishing gears called *jaakoi* and *khaloi*. Charu washes her clothes with *khaar*, an alkali.
- While the village boys come to know about Charu leaving the village, they satirically begin singing songs in tune with that of a *Bhaona*. The song narrates how Sita, the wife of Rama, enters into an ordeal to prove herself.
- On the other hand, as Charu enters her master's house in the city, she carefully looks over everything. The change in the surroundings from rural to urban is depicted by the use of different kitchen equipments like kerosene stove, pressure cooker, and refrigerator along with water taps.
- Charu's master's wife stitches using a sewing machine. Later Charu also learns the craft.
- Charu plays with her master's daughter Kanta, who belongs to her age. They play some local games.
- Charu is a good cook and a perfect housekeeper. This is depicted very strongly in the film with the help of folk cuisines like the use of fish delicacies in the Assamese household.
- On the other hand, Charu's sister Taru happens to work in an atmosphere of fear. She is being harassed by her master's son. This represents the age-old harassment on woman and her submissive nature.
- The scenes from Kanta's wedding are filled with women and folk elements starting from the bridal attire and jewellery to the use of bell metal utensils.
- A lady fortune teller is also seen in the film.
- In the later part of the film, Charu's mother is seen pricking holes in babies' ears for an earning. In fact, Charu and Taru, who move back to their village, are seen doing rural works

like grinding paddy seeds with the *dheki*, using *saloni* to clean the rice and cutting paddy bunches in the field with sickles.

ii) **Agnisnaan:** This is truly a representation of the woman who understands her rights and protests against injustice.

- The central character Menoka is seen wearing traditional dress and ornaments. She keeps her head covered in front of the elders. She is being seen as a good cook with scenes of cooking mutton and rice kheer. She makes extensive use of bell metal utensils in the film.
- Characters of a village old woman and a nurse weave the loose ends of the film. Their scenes are supported by practice of chewing betel-nut and betel leaves in the Assamese society.
- The use of presents brought with the new wife of Mohikanta including new wooden furniture sets tune to the drastic change in Menoka's life.

iii) **Kolahol:** This film is a tale of a woman, who spends long years awaiting her husband's comeback but in vain.

- Kiran tells her son Moti about the non-existence of demons, which are nothing but imaginary folk characters. She represents a straight forward and fearless woman who doesn't care for the society's norms.
- The film revolves around a bag of rice which is made of jute.
- Another female character is shown selling homemade liquor, to depict the societal strata to which the characters in the film belong.
- Kiran is seen carrying water pots and doing odd jobs like cleaning husk from rice in a warehouse, for her survival.
- Towards the end of the film she puts on bright vermilion on her forehead and hair parting to show the changes of her life from darkness to light.

7. Conclusion:

Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia has been a story teller par excellence. Whatever might be the medium, be it literature or cinema, Dr. Saikia proved his mastery over the craft. Folk elements were a part and parcel of most of his stories and thus of his films. Starting from the plot to the dialogues, costume and background music, folklore could be found in all of his films. Female characters were as important as their male counterparts in Dr. Saikia's films. Women from various backgrounds and sets of mind were well represented. They were central to the themes of the films. As such they were very well the carriers of folklore. This

character of the films by Dr. Saikia is very much vital in the Indian Parallel cinema movement. Representing the age-old fairytale pattern through stories much closer to life is an essential feature of such cinema. It has been observed that Dr. Saikia also made ample use of such folk patterns in his cinema, keeping intact the folk taste and essence.

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FUNDAMENTAL FEATURES OF AUTHOR FUNCTION AS EXPOUNDED BY MICHEL FOUCAULT

Monalisha Medhi

In his essay, *What Is an Author?* (1969), Michel Foucault explores the notion of an author as an individualization “in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy and the sciences.” The notion of author must come into question for Foucault just as it did for Roland Barthes. Similar to Barthes, he also questions the tool of “close reading” involving aspects of author’s personal background and his contemporary world. Rather it is a transactional relationship where the reader acts on the text and the text acts on the reader. **Louise M. Rosenblatt** in her essay ‘*Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading*’ writes that,

text is more than a set of stimuli...doesn’t simply set off a series of responses...reader in relationship to a text organizes the symbols, the linguistic patterns, literary experiences, socio-cultural milieu...

Foucault cites that the problem with the conception of author as the source of meaning is, that the meaning gets restricted solely to the author’s intention, confining the proliferation of meaning thereafter. The author is an ideological construct, that is, the work, which at some point of time had the ability to immortalize the author, now possesses the right to kill, to become its author’s murderer. Creating a space in writing where the writing subject disappears endlessly. Foucault attempts to historicize this notion of authorship but also

understands writing as an interplay of signs. He discusses the relationship between the text and the author, the system of ownership and author being seen as the Derridean center by the end of eighteenth century. He deconstructs this center and tries to study the space thus left vacant in relation to the text giving rise to the idea of Author-function. New Historicism connects literature with other discourses disturbing the status-quo of the author. One of the claims is that author is an unreliable entity and authorial intentionality is being questioned. New Criticism, on the other hand, according to Roland Barthes, still keeps alive a certain shadowy image of the author. Work has a faint author lurking somewhere. But intentionality cannot be equated with work, also, as we get rid of the idea of the work, we remove the notion of the author along with. Foucault also questions the concept of 'Work' - its definitions, boundaries, what may or may not be included under a specific author's body of work.

The proper name of an author can be explained at two levels – Designation and Description. Designation, referring to the person and description involving the ideas, the works that are associated with the name. It serves as a 'functional entity' assisting in establishing the relationship among varied number of texts which may trace their authorship to one (or more in case of historical ambiguity) particular proper name. The author oscillates between these categories. Rather than the physical existence, the author-function gives a sense of homogeneity, interpolations, and circulation.

In relation to the author-function, Foucault discusses four different characteristics.

Firstly, "discourses are objects of appropriation" implying that texts are forms of property associated with the ideas of ownership and copyright rules. A transgressive discourse or a discourse caught in the dynamics of the sacred or the profane and other such binaries will have to be traced back to a locus which is ultimately the author/writer. The ideas or the work cannot be punished but the physical presence behind those written/spoken words can be subjected to punishment involving the Law and therefore, institutionalizing the whole system. Towards the end of eighteenth century, the rules were enacted pertaining to author's rights, reproduction and circulation rights, the relationship between the author and the publisher too came under the purviews of these laws. So, discourses "became goods caught up in a circuit of ownership."

Next, he says that though author-function imparts a certain commonality to the texts but its effect is neither universal nor constant,

that is, the truth value is not an objective principle rather derivational in nature. Earlier, the scientific discourses needed a mark of an author for its authentication and validity (Pliny states or Hippocrates said), while the literary texts were accepted without too much thought on the identity of author, anonymity did not diminish the statements of truth/value (For example, myths, folk tales, oral literature, fairy tales, jokes). But in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, the reverse held true wherein texts on cosmology, natural sciences, medicines, and other scientific discourses achieved credibility based on their truth value, the arguments presented and the facts stated and not on the author's name but the literary texts were recognized only if stamped with the author-function.

Third feature that Foucault enlists is the becoming of author-function as an index of reality. Here, he takes St. Jerome's analysis of authenticity and further builds on the similarities that the definitions of author of the ancient and modern times have. For St. Jerome, author is always a constant level of value and standard of quality. Also, author is a field of theoretical or conceptual coherence, stylistic unity, and a historical figure where the posthumous events are considered interpolated and not coherent with author's life trajectory. Author-function results from several ideological and cultural constructions over a span of time. It's a series of complex and intricate operations wherein 'authorial' attributes are accepted or dismissed to give form to a rational being called as an "author," to rediscover that entity from their works and discourses, and to be able distinguish one such particular form from another.

"The author is a principle of unity of writing...serves to neutralize the contradictions...where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction. Finally, the author is a particular source of expression manifested and validated in works, sketches, letters, fragments..." (Foucault 151)

Final feature of the author-function deals with the notion of plurality. 'I' in the text, particularly, first person narrative is often confused as the voice of the author. But it is one of the several selves of the author, a persona, or an alter ego, with a varying degree of distance from the author signifying different ideas at different points in the text. Author-function is basically a conglomeration of simultaneous selves that diverge into existing multiple discourses that may or may not have a direct bearing to the text and even initiate possibilities of formation of new discourses and are thus, trans-discursive. For instance, Marxism can

be understood differently, be given several new dimensions with re-examining of Marx's works.

Foucault's '*What is an author?*' is not an emotional retrieval of the author. Instead, he attempts to remove the author from the pedestal of 'The Creator,' from that of the transcendental status to bring him into the field of free play of signifiers where Author is no longer the center or the sole determining force. He admits that imagining a culture completely without the notions of author and authorship is 'pure romanticism' – not an indispensable entity yet not dispensable. But even then, the text and its content should be held supreme because there is nothing beyond the text.

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CUSTOM AND RITUALS OF THE TURUNG PEOPLE IN ASSAM

Rashmi Buragohain

Introduction:

Folk customs of any community reflects their culture and social life of the people. One may find different forms of rituals, customs, norms and practices which are unique to a particular community. Moreover, it has been noticed that the nature of habitat, food habits, attires, rituals, customs, religious and folk belief systems which are collectively practiced and preserved from one generation to the other. Every nation is comprised of its own cultural institutions. Moreover, the cultural manifestation of a nation helps its own people to imagine and sustain the sense of belongingness, togetherness and mutual identification with a common cultural inheritance.

Assam is one of the states of our country with diverse community and their unique folk culture. The state Assam is a rich confluence of folk culture. The people belonging to various ethnic communities have contributed immensely to the enchanting tapestry of folk-culture. Among the several ethnic communities of Assam, the present study intends to discuss the *Custom and rituals of the Turung people* in Assam

Custom and rituals of the Turung people:

Folk beliefs and customs related to the child birth:

From the onset of pregnancy, a woman needs to observe various custom followed by the society of Turung community. During this period both

the expectant mother and the husband should refrain from killing any form of life. An expectant mother is prohibited from walking into a forest. She is not allowed to pass under a *Aikhe* tree during this period. To assuage the labour pain a woman is given bath with charmed water. Following the birth of a baby, both the mother and the baby are isolated into another room. In that room a hearth known as 'Dabkap' is arranged. The baby is cleansed with lukewarm water. Thereafter the umbilical cord is cut with the help of a scissor. In earlier times, edgy bamboo internodes were used to do the same. Such similar practices are to be seen among other tribes of Assam as well. As prevalent amongst the greater Assamese community, the Turung people to observe a ritual where a newborn is shown the daylight on the seventh day following the birth of the child. The practice of naming a boy child and a girl child is different which is also seen in other Tai communities. When a boy child is born then the names will start from Aai, Lyngi, Sam, Sai etc. are used according to the number of children. Similarly, Lipi, Lii, Laam etc. are used for girl children. The naming ceremony is called 'Mingsming.' On that special occasion the attendants are offered a feast and the baby is 'Pankhan'(or blessed)

Funeral rituals and folk belief about death:

Turung people have specific death rituals as well. If a deceased person's eyes remain open then the eyes are gently closed and both the thumbs of legs are tied together. A deceased body is covered with clothes inside out and the monk recites traditional hymns known as 'Chiya.' Moreover, the deceased person's is either buried or cremated according to his/her last wish. Generally, a deceased person's body is put into a coffin and buried placing the same in the north-east direction. As the custom goes, at first the monk put some soil with his left hand into the burial ground. While returning home from the graveyard following the burial of the dead, the thorn of a 'Jetulipoka' plant (*Rubus moluccanus*) is thrown on the path. The person returning home would then spit upon those thorn (thrice) and jump across it. This practice is called 'Morongfu.' Unlike most other tribes and communities living in Assam, the Turung people do not consider the homely space of the deceased to be 'polluted' during the immediate mourning period. As and when required people may follow the normal diet. The death rituals commonly referred to as 'Shradha' is conducted on the seventh day of the mourning by the Turung people.

Marriage custom:

Mostly there are two traditional systems through with marriage is conducted within the Turung community. They are as follows:

1. By seeking the bride/suitor (Arranged marriage)
2. Wedding that takes place following the elopement of the lovers

Apart from these two types of marriages, there are two other minor wedding rituals which are prevalent among the Turung people. They are: a) 'Khung Khui' (where the groom is adopted by the bride's family) b) 'Garathfetha' (where a widowed sister-in-law is accepted as the bride).

In case of an arranged marriage, the initial mediation is carried by a specifically chosen person known as 'Kasa' i.e., the interlocutor, a 'Kotoky' in native Assamese. The appointed interlocutor must not have any familial lineage from the bride's side. While looking out for a prospective bride, the 'Kasa' is accompanied by a responsible man from the groom's side along with couple of men from who don't have any direct affiliation to either the bride or groom's family (third party). During the very first visit to a prospective girl's home, as the custom goes, the team would announce the reason for their arrival at the entrance itself. One of the men would say, "We come to you with an auspicious proposal." The host could infer the purpose of the visit and receives the visitors. The intended discussion is initiated by the 'Kasa' with the offering of Tanul- Pan to the bride's family in a traditional 'Ban Xarai'. Generally, the parents depending upon the girl's own opinion or that of the relatives would take the final call. If the decision is affirmative then the girl would return the 'Xarai' with a '*Cheleng*' or '*Gamusa*' upon it. After this ritual, the both sides sit for discussion and mutually finalizes the day and the date of the wedding. Moreover, in this very meeting both the families mutually decide the requirement for 'Xarai(s)' and the other commodities. In earlier times, all the necessary arrangements for the wedding along with the expenditures had to be supported by the groom's side. But at present, keeping the nature of the rituals intact, all the arrangements and other requirements are mutually taken up by both the families. On the day of wedding, an affluent woman is allowed to light the vessel on the hearth. Moreover, after the arrival of the guests, the middleman calls them to sit under the pandal. The groom is taken to another room. In that room only the groom and his accompanies are offered meals. The 'Kasa' seeks the permission of the elderly people to begin the marriage ritual. Meanwhile the father of the bride and an elderly person makes sure that every member of the relatives are duly present at that time. Then the middleman is asked. "Has all the arrangement been made according to the list given by the bride's family?" The groom's family replies in the affirmative. As part of the custom, the groom's family offers individual 'Xorai' as mark of reverence to the father-in law,

mother-in-law, grandparents, uncle, and other elders from the bride's side. After that the invited guests are called for a sumptuous meal. After the feast, the bride and the groom sit together. The father of the bride seeks blessings for the bride and the groom from the elders. Once the elders offer their due blessings and advice to the young couple, the uncle (mama) of the bride offers a customary blessing to the couple with "Fogoilap Sakhro" known as 'Panakhan.' At first the right and the left hands of the groom are tied with a special thread to perform a ritual known as 'Asu Woi' and then the 'Panakhan' ritual is done for the bride by tying a thread to her left and right hands accordingly. After this custom, both the groom and the bride are taken to another room and offered a meal consisting of rice and other delicacies. Once the couple reaches their in-laws, the groom and the bride are welcomed by performing another ritual at the very entrance to the premises of the house known as 'Murongfu.' At the doorstep (Lakang), the mother-in-law awaits for the couple holding new clothes and a few garlic in her hands. As the groom and the bride approach the mother-in-law, she applies the garlic to the bride's body and performs "Pak Pak" and puts a veil of 'Nungwat' (a traditional garment) upon the bride. Then the bride climbs upon the ladder of the 'Chang ghar', enters a room and sits on the mat arranged on the floor along with her accompanies. Then the groom's family host a meal with tea and traditional cakes and sweets. Thus, the bride is blessed and adopted into her in-law's family and the rest of the members return home.

Popular folk beliefs in the Turung society about the animals:

Like any other society, in the Turung society too, one may observe many popular folk beliefs associated with the animals. If a cat crosses the path, a journey is taken to be ominous. On the other hand, if an owl hoots sitting on the empty branch of a tree, then it's feared that somebody might die. If somebody hears the sound of a crow at dawn, it is believed to be ominous. If an owl screeches in the evening, it's feared that somebody should die. Again, if a dog barks facing its jaw upwards, it's believed to be undesirable. If the cows after being tied in their sheds in the evening behave wildly, then it is feared that something undesirable might occur. If crows make noise while taking their flight from West to East, it is considered to be good whereas if a group of crows keep cawing sitting at the same spot, it is considered to be bad. If somebody supposedly moves under the belly of a tiger it is thought to be good. That's why in earlier times there was a practice among the Turung people to hang the carcass of a tiger at an elevated position and pass under its belly.

Folk beliefs about birds:

If a Hudu bird's (the Great Horned Owl) voice is heard in a village or in somebody's roof, there is an apprehension that something sinister might happen in that village or that particular house. On the other hand, if an earthquake strikes while mother chicken is hatching her eggs, it is assumed that the chicks would suffer from dizziness. That's why the eggs are later sieved with the help of an 'chaloni'(or Sieve).

Beliefs about the Spirits and Gods:

From the primitive ages, human beings have conceded or associated with the various workings of nature to all pervasive and omnipotent force. For time and again, to appease such dominant forces of nature, man have observed various rituals and ceremony. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that eventually such omnipotent spirit could only protect the home and the society from any possible peril. Though the Turung community mostly practice the Buddhist faith, nevertheless there are several pegan deities and spirits being worshipped by the community. Some of these are mentioned below:

Khouja:

The people belonging to Turung community still hold on to their beliefs about the persistence of a supernatural entity- a soul/ spirit known as 'Khouja.' If somebody in the community falls sick or becomes severely ill, then the family members would invoke the spirit of 'Khouja.' As part of the offering, a special curry of leafy, vegetarian delicacy is prepared and served to the holy spirit along with 'Khou Ho' (steamed rice wrapped by a broad and large leaf). During the process, such wrapped items are decoratively placed in a traditional bamboo plate . Then an elderly member of the community would bring the plate to a close bodily contact of the sick person and thus pray-

Endai Raibak Nang Takhan Joh Yahah

Nana Jangna Khyam Gajana Misiho Maima

English translation:

We are offering our prayer

You will recover soon

Following the prayers, the offerings are moved to secluded site of the village. There too, the elderly person sings:

Khouja Natoya Ynife Nang Dopmokop Lau

Nang Phe Joh Ya Raitheng Ladikhoung

La Na

English translation:

Thou lord Khouja shower your grace towards the sick,

We offer this generous delicacy at thy feet.

The elderly person hereafter returns home after offering his prayers.

Mulla Siga:

If someone at Turung family suffers from abnormal bodily undergrowth and thought to be possessed by some evil spirit or suffers from severe illness, the spirit of 'Mulla Siga' is evoked to rescue 'Mulla' (the soul) of the suffering person. To evoke the spirit of 'Mulla Siga', following ingredients are arranged: 'Khuk' (a traditional fish catching tool), rice cooked the flour of 'Bora Rice'(a kind of rice). An elderly woman goes to the site carrying a 'Khuk' where the sick person was supposedly thought to be possessed initially. The woman brings home whatever she could catch on the site, wrapped in a white piece of cloth. The people gathered at the home of the sick person, upon the arrival of the woman would enquire what she had brought. In reply, the elderly woman would reveal that she has brought home 'Mulla' (the soul). Following which an elder person sing the 'Hongkhon' taking a dry shell of bitter bottle-gourd.

Turung: *Mulla Wallau Wallau Na Na Dum Ynaa*

Dalau Inta Ynaa Dalau Na Na Yong Ynaa

English translation: Oh soul, you come back to your home

We will take care to you

Following the recitation, the '*Khou Ho*' (wrapped rice) is open and a holy mark is given with a boiled egg in various parts of the body of the sick person. The elderly woman performing the rite also tries a thread on the wrist of the sick person. At last, the sick person is blessed and the ritual is concluded.

8.0 Conclusion:

Based on the current study of the Turung community focusing on several aspects of their existing *Custom and rituals of the Turung people* , we may conclude the following observations:

- Though noticeable changes have occurred with regard to the unique costume, customs and rituals of the Turung community, the certain folk elements are still being preserved, and thriving.
- A majority of the mainstream Assamese society are yet be familiar with the Turung people, their culture and language. Therefore, it really important that more and more people educate themselves about this small linguistic community and collectively work towards the perseveration and dissemination of its culture and language.

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**MAJULI:AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY ON ITS CULTURAL
LIFE**

Arunima Das

Introduction:

In Majuli, the religious-cultural institutions like Satras have seamlessly blended with the unique physiographical and ethnographic composition of the region, thereby giving rise to a society where human associations irrespective of their caste, creed, ethnicity and religion is organic and democratic in nature. The inherent cultural tolerance, empathy of the people towards the socially diverse groups, and their willingness to live in tandem forces of nature, renders Majuli a peculiar identity in the world

map. Majuli thus truly epitomizes the significance of cultural integration, at a time where many present-day societies are divided under sectarian fissures.

Cultural life in Majuli:

It is often argued that both society and culture are coalesced into an organic whole. A society attains its identity, social security through a sustained culture. On the other hand, no culture may survive for long shunning a society. Thus to allude a metaphysical proposition, the relation between the culture and a given society may be similar to that of the *Atman* and the physical body. Characteristically the cultural practices of Majuli are deeply rooted in the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition of Sankardeva. The predominance of the Satriya tradition makes it's a distinct cultural phenomenon of its own. In the cultural life of Majuli, the Satras continue to play a significant role. These Satras have shown the path of morality, spirituality, righteousness and social conduct to the ordinary people thereby helping them to lead an orderly and steadfast life. The teachings of various Satras help the ordinary people to imbibe the values of righteousness, cleanliness, spirituality. Moreover, it educates the disciples as well as the ordinary people the teachings of the Bhagawata, and prepares them for an altruistic way of living, improving the both psychological and emotional health of the followers to lead a life of inner fulfillment. The values and principles of Satras promote a holistic way of life and inculcate the ways to co-habit with mother nature and other species in the ecosystem. Moreover at an early age onwards, children in these Satras, get to learn various dance forms, traditional instruments, along with the lessons on spirituality and human values. Such kinds of trainings help building a cultured generation for the future. Further young minds in a very conducive environment of these Satras, are trained in acting, bhaona performance, mask-making, and martial arts too. The Satras of Majuli have also significantly contributed to the rich heritage of art and sculpture in Assam. Especially in these Satras, people of different age groups are engaged in the making of wooden artifacts such as *Sighasan*, idols of different gods and goddesses, costumes used in bhaona performance, various bamboo products, and ornaments as well. It must be noted that the mask-making tradition of ShamuguriSatra, the handicrafts of Auniati, Bengena-Ati and KamalbariSatras such as: hand-made fans, *gosa*, *khundona*, *xorai*, *sighasan* painted with hengulhaithal, and the pottery of Salmara village are major attractions for the people Majuli and beyond.

The Satras of Majuli have also been leading cultural space in the island. Time and again these institutions have served as performative spaces where various dance and musical forms including jhumura, ojhapali nritya, natua nritya, nadubhogi, dance drama, devotional songs such as bhatima, tutoi and chopoi are performed keeping the Satriya tradition alive for the progeny. Moreover the celebration of bihu, raas, palnam, jonmastomi, holi, birth and death anniversaries (tithits) of the Mahapurushs in the month of Bhadra month of Assamese calendar, death anniversaries of the *Satradhikars*, kirtan path and coronation ceremony of the *Satradhikars* are some of the major cultural/spiritual events in these Satras. During such auspicious occasions it is mandatory to hold *Naam-Kirtan*, gayan bayan, nritya and bhaona performances in the Satras. Also, there are certain rituals where devotees seek the blessings of various associates of the Satras by offering ceremonial feast, *Bhujoni* to BurhaBhokot, Borpujari, Bhorali, Muktar, Baagin, Deuri, BorGayon, Oja Pathak. Bokakhel during Bohaagbihu and Naat khel during the rainy season are some other prominent festivals in Majuli. On the other hand, AuniatiSatra observes annual Palnaam with great spiritual fervour. It must be noted that Naam- kirtan holds immense spiritual significance in Assamese Vaisnavite tradition.

In Majuli, Krishna Janmotsava or *Janmastami* is celebrated with immense devotion and spiritual fervour. On that day, the devotees observe day long fasting, take part in Naam-kirtan, and acting performances are also held in the Namghars and Satras. Likewise annual *Raasmahotsav* is a significant aspect of Majuli's cultural landscape. Both in the Satras as well as in public places *Raasmahotsav* is organized with great enthusiasm and extraordinary public participation. Often *raas* celebrations are held for three to four days in different parts of the island. It is noteworthy that Dakhinpatsatras especially known for the annual *raasmahotsav*. Also, with regard to the adaptation of the traditional form of *raas-leela* according to the convenience of the present day stage, *Satradhikar Sri Sri Pitambar Dev Goswami* has played a pivotal role.

Holi (Fakuwa) is another important festival in the Satras of Majuli that brings immense joy to the devotees and common people alike. *Fakuwa* celebration notably at Bengena-AtiSatra dates back as far as the days of Ahom rule. Observed with both spiritual fervent and public spectacle, the festival of Holi holds a deeply rooted religious significance

for the followers of Neo- Vaishnavism in Majuli. Many religious beliefs are found to be associated with the festival of Holi. Especially the people hold the belief that this festival of colours symbolizes the lord Krishna's playfulness with his *gopis*. Such playful indulgences of the *gopis* with the lord Krishna further alludes to the intended association of the *Jiva-atman* (the individual soul) as personified by the *gopis* with that of the *Paramatman* or *Paramatma*(the Supreme self) as personified by the Krishna Himself. Therefore, it is believed that the colours being associated with none other than the Lord Krishna, if applied on the body of the mortals on such an auspicious occasion could indeed be a blessing for a blissful life. Thus, every year on the auspicious *Purnimatithi* (full moon day) of Chaitra month, the people of Majuli offer their prayers to the Lord Krishna and participates publicly in the Holi playing at various attractive events.

Majul happens to be the confluence many ethnic cultures along with the rich heritage of Satriya tradition. The cultural practices of different tribes and communities such as: the Misings, the Deuris, the Sonowals and the Kacharis have indeed enriched the cultural landscape of Majuli. On the other hand the cultural practices of non- tribal communities such as the Brahmins, the Kalitas, the Konchs, the Keots, the koiwartas, the Baniyas, and the Kumars have added to the cultural fabric of the island. We may opine that the cultural flow of Majuli has incorporated mainly three different streams. These are: the ethnic culture, non-ethnic/tribal culture and the other common cultural practices observed by the people irrespective of ethnicity, caste or religion.

Though community life of the people of Majuli exhibits certain similarities with the other regions of the Brahmaputra valley, yet the tribes living in the island have certain elemental characteristics of their own. The way of livelihood and nature of living among various tribes and communities of Majuli island is significantly influenced by the strong sense of brotherhood and sisterhood among themselves, overcoming the differences in the immediate geographical features of the island. These simple, rustic people are deeply guided by the Vaishnavite principles propagated by the institute of Satra(s) located in the island. Such features of the island have consistently appealed to the concerned socio-ethnographic and cultural researchers associated with various scholastic works on the island.

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The Guru Shishya Tradition

Tapasi Hajowary

Introduction

Guru is a Sanskrit term that signifies a 'teacher, expert, master or a guide'. The word guru is more than a teacher. He is someone who teaches explicit type of knowledge and is someone who is also a mentor, who helps in molding moral values and who divulge the meaning of life. The Syllable 'Gu' means darkness and the syllable 'ru' means he who eliminates them. Thus the word 'Guru' means someone who 'relieves one from darkness'. He is the spiritual adviser that leads the way to the light of knowledge. The concept of Guru is found to be mentioned in the earliest texts of Hindu mythology such as the Vedas. It is a type of school

of India. Gurukuls are the centers of learning in the ancient India. In the gurukul tradition, a pupil or a disciple or the shishya lives in the house of the guru or 'kula', studies the Vedas or Upanishads and the other Classical arts for a period of nine to twelve years. The gurukul institutions are well established by the financial support of the Kings and was attainable only to the upper-class families or kings. At the beginning a disciple or student has to prove his ability to get the discipleship of the guru. After getting the discipleship there is the sacred thread ceremony commencement or initiation, when the guru ties a thread in the hand of his disciple. This ceremony binds the relation of a guru and his shishya and in return the shishya or the disciple must abide by the rules and regulations of the guru. He must follow the words of his guru in any event of his life. The system of Guru-Shishya Tradition has been in practice in India since ancient times and it has occupied an important place in Indian culture.

Discussion

Gurukul literally means a school run by a guru. It is an established institution found in the culture of India by the 1st century BCE, though there is no any such evidence in its establishment. It has helped in the composition of various Vedas, the Upanishads, Hindu philosophical treatises, post-Vedic shastras extended from metaphysical knowledge to varying art forms. It is a face-to-face learning process or 'Seena-ba-seena' process or through verbalization where the students learn not only Vedic texts, literature or philosophy but also the performing art which is a Gurumukhi vidya. A guru is graded higher than the biological parents and is regarded as the metaphysical father of the disciple. He is the spiritual guide who helps the disciple to unearth the same proficiencies that the guru has earlier perceived and can achieve the ultimate level with his excellence in each and every discipline. In the Guru Shishya tradition the student learns not only from the Guru but also from the environment and a community of Practice. In this tradition the learners learn by involving or participating in the socio-cultural activities.

Guru is revered with shlokas and prayers in the scriptures. To acquire any kind of skill weather it is archery or painting or any performing art, a guru's blessing is essential. Gurukuls were situated far away from population and distraction and a disciple spends his childhood in the gurukul to learn for his future. Scriptures have promoted guru a higher place than god, because the way to god was shown by guru. Guru is said to be the incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. The main subjects that are taught in the gurukul system are the Scriptures such as

Vedas and Upanishads, Vyakarana(grammar), Jyotisha(Astronomy), Dharmashastra(Laws), Sastravidya(Art of Fighting in a War), different kinds of kala (arts) etc. In the Indian tradition guru is given the highest position which is focused in the following shloka:

*“GururBrahma GururVishnu
GururDevo Maheshwaraha
Guru Saakshaat ParaBrahma
Tasmai Shri Gurave Namaha”.*

Meaning: The Guru is Brahma(God of Creation), the Guru is Vishnu(God of Sustenance), The Guru is Shiva(The God of Annihilation). I bow to that Supreme energy which has neither beginning nor end.

In the guru-shishya tradition of education the admission process was not so easy. Only the students of the first three classes- Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas can abide by the gurukul tradition of education. According to the rule of this education system only the quality student or disciple must be imparted with the education. The students or disciples who joined the Gurukul have to pass through three essential practices: They are. i. Upanayana, ii. Vow of brahmacharya and iii. Ashramavasa.

i. Upanayana is a Sanskrit term which is derived from ‘upa’ means ‘near’ and nayana means ‘carry’, (literally) means, ‘carrying student near to the teacher’. Thus, Upanayana is a sacred ceremony of wearing the thread which formalizes and regularize the student’s entry to the gurukul.

ii. Brahmacharya is named to a student who comes to the guru with the (aspiration) to become great. According to the Vedic education system, a student admitted to the gurukul is not only called as a shishya or Vidyarthi but also brahmachari. That means the observance of celibacy is highly (stressed) in the gurukul system of education.

iii. Ashrama-vasa means apart from (imbibing) the knowledge (imparted) by the guru, the shishyas also need to (shoulder) the household chores of the guru. The pupils in the Gurukul goes through an exhaustive discipline. They had to live in a very strict and well-mannered environment, perceive complete chastity, practice yoga and meditation under the (supervision) of the guru and perform many jobs related to household chores of the guru. The (fundamental) spirit or the disciples in a gurukul must abide by the rules and regulations such as they have to work hard, never to sit idle, loose temper, never to lie someone and never to sleep

on a luxurious bed. The foundation of a Gurukul system is hard work. The disciple must dedicate himself towards his work and it is believed that leading an (austere) life in the gurukul would remove the (discrimination) of the rich and the poor. In the Ashram of the guru all are treated equally and as the same level. (Irrespective) of their social standing, they help the guru in the day-to-day life including the (mundane) chores such as washing, cooking, cutting woods to cook etc. (Typically) a guru does not receive any money from the shishya while studying in the gurukul. After completion of his course in the Ashram or Gurukul, the shishya offers gurudakshina before leaving the Gurukul. Gurudakshina is a traditional (gesture) of (acknowledgement), (respect) and (thanks) to the guru, which may be (monetary) or any kind of (task) asked by the guru to (accomplish) by his student. The Gurudakshina means offerings to the guru.

Stages of Gurukul Education in different time periods:

The Gurukul education system in India can be divided into different periods that can be summarized as follows:

- i. Ancient period
- ii. Medieval period
- iii. Modern period

Advantages of Gurukul System

The advantages of learning under the gurukul system is discussed in the following given points:

- i. The status of guru is more than a teacher and had a gigantic knowledge of many things.
- ii. The system of imparting knowledge through this tradition is time consuming and struggling, due to which the students or disciples turned up with a very glorious means.
- iii. In the gurukul tradition the learning process is face-to-face and the disciple can fully focus on their concern subject.
- iv. Since in the gurukul tradition of knowledge the disciple needs to stay with the guru, he gets enough time and can get dedicate much more time in his art form. The time of conveying a lesson is at the consideration of the guru.
- v. The gurukul system not only provides a better knowledge to the disciple but also provides an environment where he can get cope up with and could establish himself as an artist.

vi. In this learning system, the students deliver or shows very humble respect towards their teacher and this leads them to learn the moral and spiritual values from their gurus.

vii. The teaching learning process in the guru-shishya method helps to maintain the traditional aspect of Indian classical music and dance. A guru who belong to a particular gharana or school will progress on the traits of his gharana to his disciple and the shishya assimilates all the necessary features, characteristics and style of this gharana or school and in this form the pattern continues and passes on.

viii. This system of imparting knowledge does not lay down any fixed format for teaching. It varies from teacher to teacher.

Disadvantages of Gurukul system

Though the guru shishya tradition is full of advantage but it also possesses certain limitations. Some of the limitations or disadvantages are pointed below:

i. The tradition of imparting knowledge in guru shishya tradition does not depend on any time period. There is no any assigned time period for the course. The student had to depend on the guru.

ii. The students do not get in touch with other genres and he comes in contact with only one guru which might limit his knowledge.

iii. The guru may also hide certain things from the students and there is the chance of partiality to take place among the guru-shishya relationship.

iv. Since the students stay with the guru, they also have to help the guru in doing the household chores.

v. The gurukul tradition essentially imparts education to the upper class of disciples, which diverts the lower class of students in getting their knowledge.

vi. Dependence on a single teacher may affect the pupils. The overall personality of the teacher becomes important constituent at the time of teaching.

Conclusion

Education during the ancient period in India, was free and the students are not required to pay any fees. The gurukul education system is based on the talent of the students or shishyas. A devoted mentor would confer all his knowledge and ability to the fullest and make his student a perfect and learned disciple. The success of the shishya becomes an aim of the guru and he gives full effort to make his disciple not only a knowledgeable person but also a good human being that reveals in his behavior and manner. The traditional way of imparting knowledge in the

guru-shishya Parampara is an assured way of teaching. There are several Shastras or treatises that explain about dance, music and drama, which have been possible by the guru-shishya Parampara taught orally and verbally learning processes. In some Hindu temples, the guru-shishya tradition helped to preserve various fields of knowledge. The gurus are responsible to study not only the Hindu scriptures but also Buddhist texts, philosophy, mathematics, martial art, music, dance and also painting and many more. This tradition of imparting knowledge is the soul of the oral tradition and concretize the living learning relationship between the master and the disciple. Developing from the era of the great Indian the tradition manifests complete emotional, intellectual and spiritual acquiescence of the committed shishya to the guru. In the present period the tradition of gurukul is abolished. In India the teacher is treated next to god. But now the place of guru has become negligible. Gurus have become greedy and the disciples are no more dedicated to their gurus and the artform. The disciples have become unstable which led them to leave training half way to earn money and there are some teachers that do not impart right education, they are partial to their students and leave them with incomplete knowledge.

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Developing Students' Communicative Competence in College English Teaching in Assam

Daijee Kalita

Abstract: Recently much emphasis has been put on the improved methods to develop students' level of English as there is a development and wide spread need of the use of English around the world. This paper analyses the necessity and the scope of developing students' communicative competence in College English Teaching in Assam as the need of learning English is increasing day by day even in Assam. The paper also discusses the advantages and difficulties of applying communicative language teaching for College English Teaching. The aim of this paper is to focus on the implementation of Communicative

Teaching Approach in the colleges of Assam to bring some reformation in the teaching and learning processes.

Key words: English language teaching, communicative competence, communicative teaching approach

Introduction

With the trend of globalisation in the 21st century of all different languages, English is widely used for communication among the people of different countries. English is an international language and becomes the Lingua Franca all over the world. Earlier the reason for learning English was a sign of a well-rounded education and students who had specialised in English joined either teaching or the job related to bank, civil services etc. But at present along with teaching, English is accepted as language of technology and commerce which has opened a whole new spectrum of job opportunities. There are call centres who need trainer to train their employees with communication skills, the medical transcription centres are always in a need of efficient translators and reporters. Students who are interested to do job in western countries or do some professional courses need to qualify tests like IELTS, TOEFL etc. and they must be effective communicator in English. Businessmen and women have to use English to sell their products and engineers, mechanics have to read the instruction manuals while working with different instruments and machines, doctors need to keep up with development in their field by going through the textbooks and journals available in English. Hence there is a need of focusing more on English Language Teaching in the colleges Assam as most of the undergraduate students are not aware of the importance and necessity of learning the language skills and acquiring the communicative competence in the English Language.

English Language Teaching in Assam

At present English has reached the status of a global language, but the teaching and learning of English in our state, especially in small towns and villages, is not very adequate and productive. Students easily pass the examination without making much effort to learn the English language properly. The objective of college English is to develop students' ability to use English in different situations so that they can communicate effectively through both written and spoken modes. Their English language learning should help them to study independently and communicate with people from all over the world. But the method implemented in colleges for teaching English do not help the students to reach those objectives of learning English at undergraduate level. The

basic function of language is to communicate properly and effectively, which is same even with the English language. But most of the time it is observed that students are unable to speak effectively in English as their main focus is on passing the examination by memorising the contents and answers necessary for examination. Their unwillingness to learn the English language properly, lack of confidence, frustration become barriers to improve their skills. Even some students have the misconception that as they have the vernacular medium schooling background so they face more problems in speaking comparing to writing something in English. While writing something in English very often they stop at the very beginning because they are unable to find out right words appropriate to context as they have limited word stock or vocabulary, they use sentences which are full of grammatical errors and most of the time they use inappropriate format, style and tone in their writing. With the help of their ability to memorise the content they pass out their examination and become graduate, but most of them do not have a good command over the English language and that is one of the reasons for not getting a good job or opportunities.

As English teachers, we should not leave them without doing anything to improve their different language skills like reading, writing, speaking, listening etc. which help them to communicate effectively. We should make our best effort to solve the problem of inefficiency of using the English language in real life situations effectively. For that we need a positive approach which can help students to develop their communicative competence.

Concept of communicative competence and its relevance in English language teaching

The term and the concept of communicative competence were introduced by Dell Hymes in 1972. According to Hymes to communicate effectively in different social situations one should have the mastery of pronunciation, of grammar and of vocabulary, along with ability to begin and end conversation with proper knowledge of when and how to maintain politeness and also use proper addressing terms. The prime concern of Hymes' communicative competence is the importance of appropriate language use.

The concept of communicative competence plays an important role in the students' use of the English language in different situations. Our students attend the English class regularly and always eagerly wait for a good lecture or explanation delivered by teachers. But whenever the students are asked something, most of them like to remain silent without

giving a response. If a few of them try to respond, the sentences are incomplete and full of grammatical errors, the pronunciation is not correct and very often they remain stuck at certain point as they do not have sufficient knowledge of vocabulary to express their thoughts and feelings. Some of them can express with proper words and sentences but they cannot maintain the necessary politeness or formality in the tone while speaking. The problems they face in college classroom environment while giving a response to teachers or speaking about something, the same they face in real life situations outside their college as they have to communicate in English with different people for different purposes.

The same thing happens even while writing something in English. It may be answers for questions, letter writing, report writing or paragraph writing. Most of the time they fail to answer according to questions. They are unable to maintain the grammatical accuracy and punctuation in their writing. They get confused in using appropriate words, tone and style to fit the different contexts. That means they do not have the communicative competence to face different situations. If the students can use the knowledge, skills and different cultural aspects while communicating with the people of different cultural backgrounds, they use English not only as a language, but as a tool of communication which can help them to reach their desired goal.

Importance of students developing communicative competence

In Assam, only a few students obtain English as an honourable subject and a large number of students choose different careers such as businessman, lawyer, journalist, communicator in call centres, where they have to use English as a tool of communication to deal and negotiate with different types of people from different backgrounds and fields. Instead of focusing on exam oriented education and lectures we have to develop students' language skills, so that they can communicate effectively with different types of people in different situations. Along with the development of language skills we should make them aware of using multimedia tools effectively as they play vital role in learning the English language effectively. Nowadays most of the students carry a smartphone with them and use laptop or desktop computer for different purposes. The teachers can help them by instructing and advising how they can use their technological aids even in learning language skills. For example they can install good dictionaries in their smartphone or computer, they can also download and store audios and videos which can help them to learn the English language. The dictionaries, audio, video etc. help them to

enhance their vocabulary skill, pronunciation, listening skills, fluency, knowledge of grammar etc. and to develop their communicative competence.

As the main objective of teaching and learning English is to communicate competently, the English teachers have to bring a significant change in the existing situation of teaching and learning the English language. For that we need to bring changes in many aspects of college teaching. It may be English syllabus or approaches and methods adopted to teach English. In the history of English language, teaching many methods and approaches Grammar Translation Method, Situational Language Teaching etc. have been used and followed to teach English. The latest approach which is influencing English language teaching practice is Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching as the goal of this approach is to teach communicative competence.

Communicative Approach and its importance in College English teaching in Assam

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from the theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes(1972) referred to as “communicative competence” (page 159, Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Wilkins who was one of the experts investigated the possibility of developing language courses on a unit credit system (distribution of syllabus into small units) proposed a functional or communicative definition of language to develop communicative syllabuses for teaching language. Wilkins’ book *Notional Syllabuses* (1976) had significant impact on the development Communicative Language Teaching.

The main features of Communicative Language Teaching are:

- The desired goal language teaching should be communicative competence and learner should be able to use language effectively and appropriately in different contexts
- The main focus is on understanding the meaning with the help of context
- Learners learn the language through trial and error and struggling to communicate
- Teachers should help the learners in any way to motivate them to work with the language
- Use of Comprehensible pronunciation plays important role in learning a language

- Students are encouraged to interact with other people either through face to face communication or through writing
- Learners are encouraged to use any device or tool which can help them to acquire the language skills

In Assam only a few students choose or are selected to study English as major subject and maximum number of students study English as general subject for one or two semesters at undergraduate level. Courses like B.A., B.Sc., B.B.A., B.C.A. etc. have different syllabuses for English and students must study and appear in the examination. As the number of students who attend English classes are greater than any other subject in the colleges, the teachers have to face many problems to practise approach like Communicative Language Teaching. There is always an inadequate interaction between teachers and students as teacher spend much time in delivering lectures and students note down the important points listening to these lectures. Most of the English teachers and students are adapted to this familiar method of teaching and learning English. Another problem is the social, cultural and educational background of the students. In the colleges of Assam the students who have vernacular and English medium background attend the English classes together and most of the vernacular medium background students are very much reluctant to speak in English because of lack of confidence and their misconception that they cannot speak in English as they have done their schooling from vernacular background. Some students find it difficult to communicate in English although they are from English medium background because they get little opportunity to use English in real life situations because of their cultural and social background.

If the Communicative Approach is applied effectively, the teachers and learners of the English Language can overcome from most of the problems. To make the teaching more learner centric the English teachers can use such activities or tasks which make all the students interact with one another. The English teachers can use task or activities like role play, pair work, group discussion, surveys, information gap activities, interviews, picture description etc. If the student find difficulties in understanding the meaning, teacher can help them translating text or conversation

even in native language. The active participation of the students help them to overcome from the psychological barriers of communication like hesitation, lack of confidence or some misconception regarding language proficiency.

Conclusion

In Assam, Communicative Approach can introduce new methods by using different teaching processes. The teacher can use different techniques and methods to develop students' communicative skills. The proper application of Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching in the colleges of Assam can produce a group of learners who are communicatively competent in using the English language. As this approach always focuses on developing the language skills and fluency, it can be applied at undergraduate level to help the students for success and achievement in many fields of employment.

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Legalization of Marriage among Dumrali Karbis

--- Dipangkar Kayastha

The Karbis constitute an important ethnic group in the hill areas of Assam. The Karbis popularly known as Mikirs, consider that the term Mikir is given to them by the neighbouring people, but its origin is unknown. They prefer to call themselves as Karbi and sometimes Arleng which literally means a man. The Karbis are the principal inhabitants of Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Although they are found in North

Cachar Hills, Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat and Sonitpur Districts of Assam.

From the point of view of habitation, the Karbis are divided in to three groups namely- Chinthong, Ronghang and Amri. There is a fourth section of the Karbis called Dumrali and they popularly known as plain Karbi.

The Karbis have five clans called '*kur*'. These are Terang, Teron, Enghee, Ingti and Timung. Each of these clans has a number of sub clans. These clans are completely exogamous and marriage between the same clan can never take place since the children of the same clan are considered as brothers and sisters. Cross-cousin marriage is a preferential one. Marriage by negotiation and marriage by selection of life partners are prevalent among the Karbis.

Among the Dumrali Karbis of Guwahati and its nearby areas, marriage between same clan (*Kur*) is not socially permitted hence the marriage between same clan is not a valid marriage even if both the boy and girl belong to different village or area. If any such marriage takes place, the villagers consider it as illegal marriage and socially boycott them until performing of certain rituals. By following some social customs, they can revert back to the previous social position. As per the prevailing social system, firstly both the families go through a purification process (*bir-kilut*), secondly offering a feast (*utha-boha-bhuj*) in case of boy who marries Christian or Muslim girl, thirdly conversion of clan (*ajon-karchichum*) of the girl to a opposite clan of the boy where the society permits marriage, fourthly hand over the girl to a Karbi man who acts as a father of the girl (*bapdai*) and finally arrange a formal meal to the bridegroom at the bride's house on the eight day after marriage (*aath-mongola*).

As per the prevalent social belief a Hindu Karbi boy cannot marry a Christian or Muslim girl and it is totally prohibited in their society. Previously this restriction is also imposed on a girl belonging to other Hindu caste or tribe. But due to impact of modernization and mixture with its nearby populations the Karbis of Guwahati and its nearby areas accepts the changes and try to make easy their strict social norms as far possible.

There are three steps by which an illegal marriage can be legalised by the society –

- i. *Bir-Kilut* (purification process by which a non-Karbi girl covert to Karbi)
- ii. *Ajon-Karchichum* (by this process the girl enter into a Karbi clan which is opposite to the boy's clan that make her eligible for marriage)
- iii. *Bapdai* (hand over the girl to a Karbi man who acts as a father of the girl)

Bir-Kilut:

Bir-kilut is a purification process that performed in the bank of a river or a stream or any flowing water. In case of illegal marriage both the families of bride and groom need to go through this process. The Kathar (priest) plays a major role in *bir-kilut* ritual. He collects and prepare all the required materials for the ritual (collection of different wild grass, making different bamboo pots and other materials also) and by chanting *mantras* he purifies all the family members and relatives one by one. After completion of purification of all members the boy's family need to give a feast with rice, chicken, pork, rice beer etc. at the opposite site of the river bank or stream. This fest is compulsory for the boy's family who marries a Christian or Muslim girl. In case of the girl belonging to Hindu caste or tribe only *bir-kilut* is need to perform.

Ajon-Karchichum:

It is one the most important process for legalising a marriage. After *bir-kilut* ritual the girl became Karbi who was from another caste or tribe or religion. Now the girl needs to obtain one Karbi clan which is different from the boy's clan so that the society accepts their marriage. There are two basic ways for conversion of clan-

Firstly, it is well known that a Karbi boy can marriage his maternal uncle's daughter and this marriage is a preferential one among the Karbis. Therefore, the boy's maternal uncle is the first choice to whom the responsibility of the girl is offered or requested to act as her father (*dharam-pitri*). Here the decision of taking the responsibility of the girl is totally depend on him.

Secondly, if the maternal uncle refuses to be the father of the girl or if there is no maternal uncle from the boy's side, then another man present there is try to convince to be the father of the girl who must belong to a clan which is outside boy's clan. This process is called '*bapdai*' in Karbi society.

Sometimes in case of a groom who is a non-Karbi and desire to become a Karbi, then by following their social norms he can convert himself to Karbi. But before conversion he must obtain consent from his biological parents. After that he can approach a Karbi person who is of outside of his wife's clan and convince to take the responsibility as a father (*bapdai*) of that man.

Aath-mongola:

Aath-mongola is a formal meal given to the bridegroom at the bride's house on the eight day after marriage. In *bapdai* system *aath-mongola* is an important part of marriage. The newly couple after formal recognition from the society need to go for attaining *aath-mongola* custom at *dharam-pitri* (solemnly accepted as father in the name of religion)'s house along with a young couple who act as *samari* (a young boy or girl whose duty is to offer betel nut, cigarette etc. to guests at a marriage ceremony), two aged persons from their village and the boy's parents with them. While going for attaining *aath-mongola* ritual at *dharam-pitri*'s house they need to carry few items to offer at *nung-pe-arumu* (house hold God). These includes rice beer, rice, betel nuts, dry fish, black peeper, mustard oil, clay lamp etc. Along with these they also need to carry cloths for *maan-dhora-parbo* (ceremonial respect by giving presents) to *dharam-pitri-matri* (father mother) and the closed relatives if possible. From that day onwards the family of the *dharam-pitri* considers the girl as their own daughter and allow her to use their surname.

Here it is noted that if the biological parents of a girl who belongs to Hindu caste or tribe desires to organise *aath-mongola* ritual at their home even after the same is celebrated at *dharam-pitri*'s house earlier, there is no restrictions from the Karbi society in organising the same. But it is restricted to the Karbi family of the same clan, Christian or Muslim.

The impact of grater tradition over little tradition is clearly noticed among the Dumrali Karbis living in and around Guwahati. Guwahati city is the hub of North East India and therefore impact of modernization is

more among the people living nearby areas and it is a continuous process. Through acculturation, cultural traits are move from one society to other and it is basically impact upon simple societies. It is observed that the Karbis living in Guwahati and its nearby areas are trying to keep their customs and traditions in this era of globalization in a reformed manner.

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Legends and Popular Beliefs associated with Place Names of Assam

Karuna Kanta Kakati

Abstract:

Legends are short and simple prose narratives which are regarded as true by the narrator and the audience. The legend telling takes place

interactively. The legend represents a negotiated process in which the teller and audience exchange role frequently (Degh 1965: 85-86). “Legend typically is a traditional, mono (episodic), highly ecotypified, localized and historical narrative of the past events told as believable in a conventional mode. Psychologically, legend is a symbolic representation of folk belief and reflect the collective experiences and value of the group to whose tradition it belongs” (Tangharlini 1994: 22). Legends are such kind of genre which contains elements of different genres like myths, folktales and epics. A place name is a word or words used to indicate, denote or identify a town, river, mountain etc. Place names reflect the history of a particular locality. Legends associated with place names tell how the places are originated, etymological derivation of the names of the places and its associated historical events.

In this paper an attempt is made to collect and classify the legends on the basis of similar thematic content. Another attempt has been made to collect the text of the legends to understand what kind of ideas, beliefs and historical consciousness are reflected through these legends.

Key word: Legends, Place names and Assam

Introduction

Legends are short and simple prose narratives which are regarded as true by the narrator and the audience. The legend telling takes place interactively. The legend represents a negotiated process in which the teller and audience exchange role frequently (Degh 1965: 85-86). “Legend typically is a traditional, mono (episodic), highly ecotypified, localized and historical narrative of the past events told as believable in a conventional mode. Psychologically, legend is a symbolic representation of folk belief and reflect the collective experiences and value of the group to whose tradition it belongs” (Tangharlini 1994: 22). Linda Degh (1996) argues that the ‘belief and knowledge-that is religion and science’ play an important role in the legend process. Legends are such kind of genre

which contains elements of different genres like myths, tales, epics, saints and

local heroes. Place names reflect the history of a particular locality. Legends associated with place names tell how the places are originated, etymological derivation of the names of the places and its associated historical events.

Place names reflect the history of a particular locality. Oral history is one of the main sources to derive the etymological meaning of a place. Myth, legend, clan names, local heroes, rulers and ruling dynasties, natural objects etc. are the main sources to derive the name of a particular place. In case of place name, influence of vaishnava saints and vaishnavism are found particularly in different places of Brahmaputra valley. Both the vaishnava saints Sankardeva and Madhavdeva established *Namghar* (a village prayer hall) and *Satra* (a vaishnava monastery) for preaching vaishnavism among the people of different parts of Assam and people try to connect the name of the *satra* or *namghar* with the name of their locality. The place names reflect some historical evidence regarding the war, rulers and other socio-cultural phenomena.

The names of small places are associated with rivers, mountains, flora and fauna, clan names etc. Place names associated with rivers are Kishnai, Dhudhnoi, Mordoi, Sobansiri, Ranganadi, Kapili, Kolong, Boginadi etc. Place names associated with locally available flora and fauna are Ahatguri(Banyan tree), Amguri(mango tree), Bagaribari (*Zizyphus jujuba*), Belguri (*Aegle marmelos*) etc . Likewise place names associated with clan names are Borua Souk, Kalita para, Saikia chuk, Gohaigaon etc.

Aim and Objectives of the study

In this paper an attempt is made to collect and classify the legends on the basis of similar thematic content. Another attempt has been made to collect the text of the legends to understand what kind of ideas, beliefs and historical consciousness are reflected through these legends. Another intention is that how the place names are derived in terms of geographical

parameters like rivers, hills and flora and fauna. For data collection, I used both primary and secondary sources.

Classification of Legends

I have collected many place name legends of Assam from different social situations which can be classified broadly in following ways. This classification is done on the basis of similar thematic contents.

- (1) Place names associated with puranic story
- (2) Place names associated with the rulers of various dynasties
- (3) Place names associated British rulers
- (4) Place names associated Vaisnava gurus
- (5) Place names associated local heros
- (6) Place names associated clan names
- (7) Place name associated with natural objects.

In this paper, I am trying to discuss only three legends collected from different parts of Assam. The legends as well as a brief analysis on them are given below.

Tezpur

The legend revolves around Banasura, Shiva and Lord Krishna. Sonitpur is a historical place of Assam where lots of historical monuments, archeological sites, mythical events and characters are found. Besides, Tezpur is a very beautiful and pleasant place. It is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra consisting with beautiful hills and plains. It is almost 200kms far from Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. There is a hillock called Agnigarh where Banasur keep his daughter Usha in isolation. The following legend narrates how the name of Tezpur is originated.

The great Asura King Banasura was a great devotee of lord Shiva. He had a beautiful daughter named Usha and Chitrlekha was her friend. The ancient Sonitpur was the

capital of the Asura dynasty. The princess Usha saw a handsome prince in her dreams and fell in love with him. Chitrlekha, a talented artist, not only painted his portrait from Usha's description but also recognized him to be Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Krishna. With her magical powers, Chitrlekha spirited Aniruddha away to the boudoir of Usha where they got marry according to *Gandharva* rites. It happened without the knowledge of the king Banasura. When Banasura learnt of the clandestine romance, he imprisoned Aniruddha, which led to the arrival of lord Krishna to Sonitpur to rescue his grandson. A fierce battle was taken place between lord Krishna and Banasura and the entire city was drenched in human blood, from then the place came to be known as Tezpur.

This is an etymological legend which deals with the derivation of etymological meaning of the place 'Tezpur'. The name Tezpur is derived from the Sankrit word 'teza' which means blood and 'pura' means city. Here, a battle was taken place between lord Krishna and lord Shiva which is known as *Harihara-yudha* where hari denotes lord Vishnu who defeated hara, i.e., lord Shiva. Lord Krishna fought in favour of Aniruddha and lord Siva fought against him to save his great devotee Banasura. When battle was going on, Shiva realized that Krishna was none other than Vishnu, who is Paramatma the supreme soul and thus undefeatable, so he surrendered. Krishna was successful in defeating Banasura and rescued Aniruddha, but he spared Banasura's life because Banasura was the grandson of Prahlada, a great devotee of Vishnu. At last, Banasura became friendly with Krishna and agreed to marry his daughter to Aniruddha. After completing the marriage rituals Aniruddha, Usha and Krishna came back to Dwaraka.

According to *Bhagavat* and *Purana*, Dwaraka is regarded as one of the seven Hindu pilgrim places. In this narrative, the importance of a devotee is shown very prominently. Banasura was a devotee of lord Shiva, so, Shiva fought in favour of him, on the other hand, Prahlada was a devotee of lord Krishna and Banasura was his grandson, so, Krishna

spared his life although he fought against him. Here, the paternal relationship between Prahlad and Banasura is observed for which Krishna didn't take any drastic step against Banasura. In this story lord Siva regretted for his power and position and considered Krishna as the supreme one. Power and hierarchy is also reflected in the story.

Satrasal

Another legend is collected from Satrasal. Satrasal is a place of Dhubri district of lower Assam. This narrative is associated with a *vaisnava* saint Sankardeva and Koch royal family. Naranarayan (1540-1587) was the ruler of Kamatapur, a Koch kingdom. His brother Chilarai was the chief commander of military and with his bravery; he was able to subjugate the entire Brahmaputra valley, including a portion of Ahom kingdom besides Kacharis.

Chilarai, the general of the Koch kingdom fell in love in the hypnotizing beauty of Bhubaneswari or Kamalapriya, the daughter of Ramrai Ata. He wanted to marry her. Ramrai Ata, a cousin brother of Sankardeva discussed the matter with his brother Sankardeva. Farsighted Sankardeva readily agreed at this proposal of marriage between Chilarai and Bhubaneswari. Koch king Naranarayan also welcomed his brother's decision and they fixed a date to perform the marriage ceremony. King Naranarayan presented a special *chatri* (umbrella) on the occasion of his brother's marriage and all the rituals were performed under this *chatri*. In Goalporiya dialect the word *chatri* means umbrella. This special *chatri* was used to make a *chal* (shade) and the marriage ritual was performed under the *chal*. Later on, the name of the place is known as Chatrichal (Combination of two words, i.e., *chatri* and *chal*) and at last, it becomes known as *Satrasal*.

This legend tries to establish a relationship between *vaisnavism* and Koch royal family through marital relations. Ramrai ata is a follower of *vaisnavism* and Chilaray was the brother of Koch king Naranarayan.

Although Naranarayan is a king, he offered a very simple thing 'umbrella' as gift to his brother which reflects his simplicity as well as folk mind of the people. It may be symbolic representation to unite both the *vaisnava* followers and the members of Koch royal family together under one umbrella. On the other hand, Sankardeva did get advantage to propagate their religious faiths (new *vaisnavism*) among the people of lower Assam and Kamatapur in the patronage of Koch king Naranarayan. This story reveals religion and power.

Kamrup

Another legend has been collected from Guwahati which is associated with Kamrup. It tells us how the name 'Kamrup' is originated. Earlier, Kamrup was a large territory consisting of western Assam and North Bengal. Now, Kamrup is a district of Assam where the temple of Mother goddess Kamakhya is situated in Nilachal hill. It is regarded as one of the pilgrim site of the Hindus. The legend mentioned below revolves around Daksh, Parvoti and lord Shiva.

Daksh, father of Parvati was a powerful king and once, he organized a *Jagna* (Vedic ritual of fire sacrifice) ritual to where Parvati and his husband was not invited . Parvati could not resist from attending the ritual and went there with due permission from her husband. When she reached the venue of *Jagna*, her father Daksha did pass on many insulting and derogatory comments on her husband in front of a huge gathering. Then she felt shame and became very annoyed and got disgusted and sacrificed her life on the spot itself. Hearing this new, Shiva became too much angry and began to start *tandava nritya* (dance of destruction). He put the body of his beloved wife Parvati on his head and went into different parts of the universe. Seeing this terrible scene, Vishnu the supreme God became afraid and decided to cut her body into several pieces with his '*Sudarsan Chakra*'. Different parts of her body fell down in different parts of

India and later on 51sakti pith were emerged from where her body parts were fallen down. Then Shiva sat on deep meditation. The gods of heaven feared that the entire world would be destroyed as the balance of the universe is depending on Tridev (Brahma, Brishnu and Shiva) and Shiva is one of them. They requested Kamdev to break the meditation of lord Shiva. Accordingly, Kamdev succeeded in his job but paid a heavy price as Shiva destroyed him with his third eye. Rati, wife of Kamdeva pleaded before lord Shiva for forgiveness and entreated to revive him. Accordingly Shiva decided to revive Kamdeva though he accorded only a bodiless form to Kamdeva. It is believed that Kamdev regain his form here. So, the name of the place becomes Kamrup which means *Kam* regain his *rup* (form in Sanskrit) in this place.

This legend consists of two parts, part one deals with *Jagna* situation and second part deals with how Kamdev regained in his form. It can be regarded as myth and the characters mentioned here are taken from the classical text of the Hindus. First part elaborates, the family conflict occurred among Daksh and his daughter and daughter in law. In this part devotion to husband is well established by Parvati by sacrificing her life due to passing derogatory comments to her husband. On the other hand, Shiva also established the sense of true love to his wife by putting her body on his head and wondering different parts of the universe. In the second part, Kamdeva sacrificed his life due to welfare of the universe. So, love, sacrifice and welfare of the universe are the silent features of the story. There is a popular believe among the people that if someone want to success their love affair, they must enchant *kamdeva's kleem mantra* 108 times

Conclusion:

It is observed from the above mentioned place name legends that people have a tendency to glorify their localities, so, they add some motifs and metaphors to the stories which are collected from *puranic*

characters or classical texts. Mythical figures, local heroes, gods and goddesses and some supernatural characters are added in the stories to establish the importance of the places. Besides religion, power, hierarchy, politics etc. are the silent features of the legends. Traditional belief system is also reflected through the legends. Sometimes people localized the narratives of the classical text according to their local socio-cultural set up and use the name of the characters accordingly.

It is observed that place names of Assam are related with some natural objects like rivers, hills, lakes, old tank etc. Likewise, place names are also derived from some locally available flora and fauna. Besides place names are derived from clan names, local heroes, *vaisnava* gurus, rulers and ruling dynasties. Place names also reflect the colonial impact of the Britishers, for examples Digboi, Cotton road and many others. The indigenous people of Assam keep the names of their localities/villages according to their own meaningful ethnic term.

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Our Contributors

Dr. Gagan Jyoti Bora is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, Paschim Guwahati Mahavidyalaya Dharapur, Guwahati, Assam.
Email: gaganjyotibora123@gmail.com

Dr Karabi Devi

Dr Karabi Devi is currently working as an Associate Professor and HOD in the Department of Political Science, Sonapur College, Sonapur.
Email: karabidevi@gmail.com

Dr. Parismita Sarma is an Assistant Professor, in the Department of Performing Arts, Baihata Chariali B.Ed College.
Email: ragsohini@gmail.com

Dr. Juri Das

Juri Das is currently working as an Associate Professor in the department of Political Science in B.Borooah College, Guwahati.
Email: daschoudhuryjuri@gmail.com

Dr. Prabalika Sarma:

Prabalika Sarma is currently working as an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Paschim Guwahati Mahavidyalaya, Dharapur, Guwahati.
Email: prabalikasarma999@gmail.com

Dr. Rajesh Kakaty

Rajesh Kakaty did his Doctoral study under the supervision of Prof. Dilip Kumar Kalita, Director, ABILAC (Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture) kakaturajesh@gmail.com

Dr. Rumi Nath

Rumi Nath did her Doctoral study under the supervision of Prof. Dilip Kumar Kalita, Director, ABILAC (Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language Art and Culture)

Email: ruminath12@gmail.com

Meghna Choudhury

Meghna Choudhury is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University.

Email: meghnachoudhury@gauhati.ac.in

Monalisa Medhi

Monalisa Medhi is a research scholar in the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University. medhimonalisha@gmail.com

Dr. Rashmi Buragohain

Rashmi Buragohain is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Assamese, HPD Girls College, Golaghat.

Email: rashmigohain1@gmail.com

Dr. Arunima Das

Arunima Das is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Assamese, HPD Girls College, Golaghat.

Email: arunimadas1976@gmail.com

Tapasi Hajowary

Tapasi Hajowary is working in the Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Studies in Performing Arts, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh.

Email: tapasihajowary@gmail.com

Daisy Kalita

Daisy Kalita is a Research Scholar in the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University under the supervision of Prof. Dilip Kumar Kalita, Director, ABILAC (Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language Art and Culture)

Email: daijeekalita1982@gmail.com

Dipangkar Kayastha

Dipankar Kayastha is a Research Scholar in the Department of Folklore Research, Gauhati University under the supervision of Prof. Dilip Kumar

Kalita, Director, ABILAC (Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language
Art and Culture)
Email: dipangkarkayastha@gmail.com

Dr. Karuna Kanta Kakati

Karuna Kanta Kakati is currently working as an Associate Professor in
the Department of Culture, Art and Music, ABILAC (Anundoram
Borooah Institute of Language Art and Culture)
Email: [katicaruna2012@gmail.com](mailto:katikaruna2012@gmail.com)