FOLKLORE OF THE STUDY AREA

In this chapter on folklore of the study area (Sipajhar area), we have described some popular forms of folklore prevalent among the peoples of the area. In the next section we have discussed the folklore of the Assamese Nepalis in particular.

The culture of Sipajhar area may be viewed as a localized expression of the wider cultural tradition of Darrang District. In so far as Sipajhar area is concerned, one comes across the prevalence of various forms of folklore continuing since the past. In the following, outlines of some of the widely prevalent forms of folklore in Sipajhar area have been discussed.
It should be mentioned here that in the case of the Assamese Nepalis of Sipajhar area many of the forms of folk songs, ballads, proverbs and riddles of Sipajhar area are prevalent in addition to their own folklore. The Assamese Nepalis along with their non-Nepali neighbours also take part in various fairs and festivals of Sipajhar area.

(a) Folk songs:

The folk songs of Sipajhar area are varied and colourful. Laughter, happiness, pain, sorrow, all form ingredients of the folk songs of Sipajhar area. These folk songs are simple, charming and full of the sincerity of emotion and the serenity of feeling.

Of the various types of folk songs prevalent in Sipajhar area, mention may be made of biya pad (marriage song), bhekulibiyapad (frog's marriage song), ainam (song of goddess), dhainam (song of mid-wife), nichukoni geet (lullabies), lakhimi sabhar geet (song of Goddess Laxmi's assembly), gorokhiya geet (song of cow-boy/cow-herd), mohoukheda geet (mosquito driving away song), dehbisaror geet (song related to human body), dhulia geet (drummer's song), kahini geet (song related to story or tale), etc.

Marriage or wedding song is an integral part of marriage in Sipajhar area. Several types of songs are associated with negotiations till to the day of marriage ceremony. On the very first day when the party from the groom's home goes to the bride's
home to start the negotiations, the groom's party carries with them areca nuts and betel leaves. This custom is locally referred to as tamol kota.

Broadly, the marriage songs can be divided into two categories: decent marriage songs describing the happy union of the bride and the bride-groom and ninda pad or ninda marriage songs through which femalefolk of both bride and bride-groom's side tease each other.

Ainam and Lakhimi Sabhar geets are some kinds of devotional folksongs. Ainams are sung to appease the goddess Sitala (the Goddess of pox). Ainams are sung by femalefolk.

Nichukoni geets and dhainams are lullabies. Children are brought up in the midst of lullabies. The theme of the lullabies is invariably a mother's dreams about her children. The lullabies are sung in different tunes but the tempo is invariably slow. Every tune, irrespective of its text, tends to create a dreamy atmosphere, which makes the child sleep. Its rhyme scheme is crisp and brief and takes the form of an address. At the end of each rhyming arrangement, plain and simple syllabic sounds like "o, o, o", or "ee, ee, ee" are hummed.

Gorokhiya geets (songs of cowboy/cowherd) are generally referred to as nangeli geet in Sipajhar area. While the cowherds look after their cattle in the grazing field, they sing this type of
songs through which one group of cowherds teases the other. It should be mentioned here that some obscene words are used in the nangeli geets.

In the month of Aghon (November-December) on full-moon night, people sing mohoukheda or mohhou khunda geet. The young boys go round the village by singing these songs and drive away mosquitoes.

Different kinds of devotional songs referred to as dehbisaror geet, bhakatia geet, zikir (Muslim Sufi saint Ajan Fakir composed zikir in the late 17th century. Hence, it is also known as Ajan Fakirar geet) and sia geet are prevalent in Sipajhar area. These songs are sung during festivals, ceremonies and household functions. Of the different kinds of devotional songs mention may be made of the sia geet, which came into existence in the study area as a result of the influence of Vaishnavism. The sia geets are mostly prevalent among the Borkhelias – the followers of Vaishnavism.

(b) Ballad:

Varieties of ballads are found among the Assamese as well as other people. In Sipajhar area also variety of ballads and tales are found. Of the different ballads mention may be made of Tejimalar geet, Beular geet and Digiri pukhurir geet. The Bhuyans who ruled Darrang District between 1400 A.D. and 1600 A.D.
undertook many social welfare activities for their subjects and gave much emphasis on agricultural prosperity. They got many tanks dug. Many of these tanks are still in existence. The water of these tanks was used for both domestic and irrigation purposes. The ballad of *Digiri pukhuri* tells the story of digging the tank by the king. It is said in the ballad that after the completion of digging of the tank, water did not come out of it. So, the king determined to sacrifice his wife to the tank.

(c) Proverbs and Riddles:

Proverbs have more popularity among the people in comparison to other forms of folklore. They act as repositories of art and wisdom and transcending all boundaries intermingle with contemporary expression. The riddles are not only entertaining in characters but also help cultivate wit and intellectual capacity in an individual. A few examples of proverbs and riddles are given below that are prevalent among the people of Sipajhar area.

(i) Proverbs:

(a) *'Kodal khalaote mahar botar jabo'*

(While making the hoe the season for tilling black gram will be over).

(b) *'Seyat sota panit jota

Siyeh e bapor beta'
(He who uses umbrella in shadow and wears shoes in water is the son of his father).

(ii) **Riddles** :

(a) 'Bor sap jai sin sokor nai'

(The large snake goes without leaving any mark).

Answer : Boat

(b) ‘Kesai lutur putur pokily tan

*Bosore bosore katei tare kan’.

(Soft while unripe, but hard when ripes; every year its ears are chopped).

Answer : The long earthen boundary demarcations on agricultural fields which are also used as agricultural lanes.

(d) **Material culture** :

The houses of both Assamese Hindu and other communities are of the same type. They build houses almost in the centre of the homestead compound keeping a front yard *(agchotal)* and backyard *(pachchotal)*. In a typical residential unit, a cluster of houses is found. Different houses are used for different purposes. The houses are simple, rectangular structures. The majority of the houses are made of wood, bamboo, thatch, cane, reed and mud. These houses have raised earthen plinths with wooden or bamboo posts. The walls are plastered with mud, and mixed with cow-dung. The front house is a homestead, which is known as
choraghar (an outside sitting room/drawing room). The main house (borghar) possesses more than one compartment in which the household valuable articles are kept. Besides these houses, the randhanighar or pakghar (kitchen), gohalighar (cow-shed) and bharalghar (granary) are separately constructed. The villagers also construct small houses as poultry pen (goral), husking lever shed (dhekisal), shed for storing firewood (khari thowa ghar) and shed for weaving (tat salor ghar).

The overwhelming majority of the people of Sipajhar area being farmers possess various tools and implements for tilling, ploughing, harvesting and fishing. They also possess various articles for preparing food. Some of the agricultural tools and implements used by the people of Sipajhar area are: nangal juanli (plough and yoke), moi dakura (harrow), bindha (rake), shisani (water bailer), holabari (both side pointed elongated bamboo stick), ukhuni (weed hook), mokhora (mask for the bullocks), kodal (hoe), kanchi (sickle) and loru (bamboo ruler to beat the bullocks).

Various implements are used for threshing paddy and storing. Some of them are moir, duli, pasi, dala, kauti, khukri, nichka, kula, saloni, bordala, borsaloni, gurasaloni.

The rural people of Sipajhar area use varieties of implements for carrying different articles. Some of them are bhar, pasi, sikia banka, bharbari and tholia.
The commonly used devices for cooking are uthan, chouka, beria, kolkhutia, dalarkhutia, loharkhutia, etc. The utensils are matir soru, kerahi, tou, jau, kotasoru, hatha, karpa, larinibari, bindhiabari, maihang, bati, lota, koloh, etc.

In addition to rivers and streams there are many beels (swampy lands), marshes and tanks in Sipajhar area. Since fish is abundant in some of these water bodies, people undertake fishing with the help of various traps and nets. Some of the commonly used fishing implements are borjal, patoljal, shewali jal, parangijal, langijal, jakoi, khaloi, polo, juluki, sepa, dingori, thuha, khulkhuli, jathi, jong and borhi or boroshi. Besides individual fishing, community fishing, especially of femalefolk is very common in Sipajhar area.

Boiled rice (bhat) is the staple food of the people of Sipajhar area like all other people of Assam. Rice is generally eaten twice a day. Tea is a part of the food habit of these people and it is generally taken with homemade cakes or biscuits purchased from the village shops or the markets. Their morning meal consists of komal saul, athiakal and sura. The people of this area prepare a number of cakes from rice flour (pithaguri) like hapeni pitha, tilpitha, lao pitha, pheni pitha, khulasaperi pitha, bhoka pitha, kol pitha, etc.
The traditional dress of malefolk of Sipajhar area is *dhoti* and of femalefolk is *mekhela chadar*. The women wear earrings of gold or silver in the earlobes. They also use different varieties of ear ornaments. The Assamese womenfolk of this area wear necklace, chain, etc. on the neck, ring on the fingers and bangles on wrist. Some other ornaments of the womenfolk include *har, moni, maduli, jonbiri, dholbiri, chandrahar, dugdugi, kharu, gamkharu, muthikharu, phuti, phutisona, anguthi, keru, bala*, etc.

As in other parts of rural Assam, handloom (*tatsal*) is a part and parcel of social and economic life of the people of Sipajhar area. Women weave most of the clothes for male and female in their handlooms. The females of the households generally weave clothes for daily use. Of these, *mekhela, chadar, gamosa, lungi, dhoti*, etc. are common.

**(e) Performing Folk Arts :**

The familiar and popular types of performing folk arts of Sipajhar area are *Oja-pali, Bhaona, Putala Nach*, and *Deodhani Nach*. All these performances have dramatic elements.

*Oja-pali* is an old folk performance prevalent in Assam prior to fifteenth century. It is still prevalent in rural areas in the districts of Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara. *Oja-pali* is a group of choral singers consisting of five or six persons. The *oja* is the leader of the group and the *palis* are his assistants. One of the
palis is called *Daina-Pali* and he is the chief assistant of the *oja*. The *oja-pali* performances are held in connection with *Manasa* or *Maroi puja, Durga puja, Lakhi puja, Kali puja*, and *Vishnu puja*. Such performances are held in some fairs and festivals.

Perhaps, *Dhulia* is a very old form of folk entertainment in Sipajhar area. The word *Dhulia* has originated from *dhol* (drum). The *Dhulias* are expert drummers. The *Dhulias* are invited to play and perform in religious functions, household ceremonies and in fairs and festivals.

The *Bahua* or buffoon is a very popular entertainer in the villages of Sipajhar area. Earlier there were many famous *Bahua*s in this area. One of them known as *Sengeli Bahua* attracted large crowds wherever he performed.

Darrang has a long tradition of a type of folk drama, i.e. *Putala Nach* (puppet show). Mythological stories mainly from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are presented by the puppet players. The puppet players have also been depicting secular stories since long time back.

Another popular form of performing art prevalent in Sipajhar area is the *Deodhani Nach*. It is somehow related to the *Dhulia* performance. The institution of the *Deodhani* may be of tribal origin. The Bodo-Kacharis also have *Deodhani Nach*. The *Deodhani Nach* has also been associated with the *oja-pali* performance.
In Sipajhar area various fairs and festivals are held at different seasons of the year. In Sipajhar area of the three Bihus (Bohag Bihu, Magh Bihu and Kati Bihu), the Magh Bihu and Bohag Bihu are generally celebrated. In Sipajhar area Magh Bihu is referred to as Maghor Domehi and Bohag Bihu is referred to as Boihagor Domehi. The Maghor Domehi is celebrated in the month of Magh (mid January). It is celebrated after the harvesting with bonfire social gathering and feasts. During the Maghar Domehi various pithas (cakes) are also prepared. The Boihagor Domehi is celebrated in the month of Bohag (mid April). In Sipajhar area Boihagor Domehi is celebrated for seven days. The first day is known as Goru Bihu (festival of cow) and the second day is known as Manuh Bihu (festival of man) and continues up to seven days. On the first day, the cattle are bathed ceremonially.

During the Boihagar Domehi, groups of boys and adult persons visit house to house to sing Bihu huchori (devotional choral song) and bless the owners of the household. Again, young boys and girls together sing Bihu songs and dance visiting house to house or in the field.

Every year the Matheni festival is held in places like Mathajhar, Hazarika para, Gorukhuti, Devananda Satra of Sipajhar area. In Devananda Satra this festival is held on the last
day of Ahin (September-October) and first day of Kati (October-November) and for the rests it is held in Bohag (April-May).

The *paseti* festival is celebrated in Sipajhar area in the month of Bhada (August-September). According to the popular belief, this festival is celebrated following the fifth day of the birth of Lord Krishna.

During the whole month of Bohag (April-May) in different places of Sipajhar area, *Deul* festival is observed during which fairs are also held. In this festival the Hindus offer prayer to Lord Vishnu.

**FOLKLORE OF THE ASSAMESE NEPALIS**

(a) **Folk songs**:

The folk songs (*lokgeet*) of the Assamese Nepalis may be grouped into the following categories:

1. Folk songs relating to religion
2. Folk songs of nationalism
3. Folk songs relating to soldiers and wars
4. Folk songs relating to economic life
5. Folk songs relating to plantation and harvesting
6. Folk songs of love and yearning
7. Folk songs of all time
8. Folk songs relating to dance
9. Lullabies

Brief outlines of these songs are presented below:

1. *Folk songs relating to religion*

These songs are mainly related to the recitation of the names of gods and goddesses like the *Nam* recitation in the Assamese society. It would not be wrong to say that every day the Assamese Nepalis observe ritualistic religious festivals. In this occasion they sing religious verses in the form of *slokas, bhajans, sangkirtan* and *chutkabalan*, etc.

The *bhajan* and *sangkirtans* deal with the recitation of the names of gods and goddesses with great devotion, especially, of Ram and Krishna. *Sangkirtan* is mainly recited at night in which both men and women participate by clapping.

At the time of celebration of Durga puja, the Assamese Nepalis recite the *mantras* (hymns) from the *Durga Saptasati* and also *Malasree* mainly by the *Sakta* Hindus. These songs are related to Goddess Durga.

2. *Folk songs of nationalism*

The Nepalis are famous as warrior race and have become famous because of their gallantry. They are not only warriors but patriots too. In Assam, under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi
and others, the Nepalis also accepted it, which is testified by folk songs like:

“Asom hamro yo kati ramro
bhanda chhan Bordoloiji
Bordoloi hamra jatika ramra
bhai sath Chhabilal²
sutera hunna jagahoi bhai
chichyauchhan Loharji³ yehin”

(Bordoloi said that our Assam is so beautiful. Chhabilal accompanies him in his leadership. Lohar altered the people; wake up, it is not the time of sleeping).

1. Gopinath Bordoloi (1890-1950) was the first Chief Minister of Assam. He is known as Lokpriya (popular), and his contributions are numerous.
2. Chhabilal Upadhyay (1882-1980) was a great patriot, freedom fighter, social worker and philanthropist of Assam who was an Assamese Nepali.
3. Dalbir Singh Lohar (1915-1969) was a great patriot, social worker, freedom fighter and the first Assamese Nepali member of Assam Legislative Assembly in 1952.
We may cite a few more lines from another patriotic song:

"British janle loi bori gayo  
Bharat lai swadhin diyera  
sangram garoun sangram bhai  
hami sab milera"

(The British must quit India; let's struggle together for our freedom).

3. Folk songs relating to soldiers and wars

The Gorkha Regiment showed brilliant performance and courage in the wars particularly in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Chinese and Pakistani aggressions against India in 1962 and 1965, respectively. Thousands of Nepali youths are serving in the military forces to protect the sovereignty and integrity of the country. Many folk songs are found relating to their soldierly activities. Some of these songs are given below:

Advancing towards Delhi during freedom movement one Gorkha soldier spoke in soldierly words:

"Ki Gorkhe uttana tang  
ki Gorkhe Delhi ko siran."

(If fail, would be finished; if succeed, keep Delhi as pillow).
Khukuri is the national weapon of the Nepalis. The Nepalis are not only trained but also efficient for the use of khukuri. One soldier asked his officer thus:

"Dhilo hunchha bandukile, khukuri hanou?"

(It will be too late to use rifle; shall I use khukuri?)

Some folk songs depict the picture of a widow and her sufferings whose husband was killed in the battlefield. One example of such song is:

'Pansai hera chihanko pathar
samjhana rakhne gari
Gorkhali nariko sindur puchhera
chhanera hera pahadi chattan,
thupro chha hadko
parkhal hune gari
Gorkhali santan tuhuro parera'.

(Look at the stones of cremation ground for your remind. It removes the vermilion of Gorkhali lady from her forehead. The bones of Gorkha soldiers are so numerous that with these, boundary wall can be constructed. Now their children are orphans).

During Chinese and Pakistani aggressions against India, the Gorkha soldiers fought bravely for the protection of India's sovereignty. A folk song runs thus:

"Ramrari hera Bharatko sima
Gorkhali ragatle koreko chha,
kahile nametine gari."

(Look well at the boundary line of Indian union. It is written by the blood of Gorkha soldiers and would remain ever visible).

The British recruited the Nepali youths at Lahore, hence are called Lahure. After retirement when these soldiers returned home, the village maids described their dress in a folk song. For example:

"Lahure daiko fashionai ramro
rato rumal khukuri bhireko".

(The dress of Lahure is so nice, red handkerchief in hand and khukuri in the waist).

4. **Folk songs relating to economic life**

The Assamese Nepalis are peasants of fragmented lands and live on the bank of the rivers and foothills. The earthquake of 1950 in Assam; increase of population and the absence of grazing fields become the cause of their deplorable economic condition. We find in the folk songs the picture of their misfortune. For example:

"Purba ra gayen paschim ra gayen
ghumi ayen maha Chin
ghatiya din, janam bhaye chha kyara
dukhamai gaye din".

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(I have gone to the east, to the west and China too. Perhaps, I was born in an unfortunate day, as I have to pass my life in misfortune).

In their daily life, cow is indispensable such as in worship, death purification and other aspects. Hence, they love cow too much. Their sentiments towards cow find in a folk song which runs as follows:

“Amanai sanu babanai sanu Asamka goruko
eiderko jasto kalkali maya lagdoina aruko”.

(The mother and father of Assam’s bulls are short; none but I have too much love for them).

The Assamese Nepalis are too close to the rivers of Assam. As the abodes of the Assamese Nepalis are the riverbanks, every year flood, especially, of the river Brahmaputra causes sorrow for them. Their cows and buffaloes are drowned in the river. The picture of such flood affected people also found in the folk songs. One such folk song is:

“Urliyo bhela bado hoi khola, gothala karaye
ejethandai runchhan Brahmaputra ghatma”.

(The cowherd boy cries informing the occurrence of flood, elder brother-in-law is weeping on the bank of the Brahmaputra as his cows and buffaloes are drowned).
The British established oil refinery and coalmines in Assam where a large number of Nepalis become wage earners. They worked whole day and night for their employers. The employers failed to improve the economic condition of these people. The worst economic condition of these workers is expressed in folk songs thus:

"Andra lage chutti khelna tigra lage kamna
saktina maharaj pathar koila thamna".

(My nerves are weak and feet trembled, as I am too hungry. O Lord, I cannot shoulder the weight of the coal).

5. Folk songs relating to plantation and harvesting

In the grazing field or cornfield, the Assamese Nepalis youth sing many songs. They regard ploughing field as their mother and respect her with devotion. We find this in a folk song:

"Dharti amoi dharti baboi
yesbata pauchhu anna
pyar ma garchhu samman garchhu
dharti amoi dhanya".

(Earth is my father; earth is my mother. From it I get corn. I love you; I honour you. Mother earth thank you).

The fifteenth day of the month of Ashar (June 30th) is generally regarded as the day for paddy plantation. On that day,
the youth of both sexes besmear mud on their body and start plantation by singing songs known as Ashare geet. For example:

"Chhupu ma chhupu khetoima ropnu halile hilayeko
kanchhi ra moile maya hai lauda juwari gayeko".

(Do plantation in the muddy field prepared by the peasants. Kanchhi and I sing songs in our loving moment).

After harvesting, the process of threshing starts with the help of bullocks or with their legs. There is a song related to the threshing. For example:

"Madi khelaun badadai madi khelaun bhai
khuttaile chhutyai deo mero rajai yo paral ra dhan".

(Let's play the game of threshing paddy from its straw. Let's extract the paddy corn from the straw with our legs).

6. Folk songs of love and yearning

A large number of folk songs are prevalent among the Assamese Nepalis, which narrate various aspects of love. Few lines of such songs are cited below:

When the two lovers meet they offer presents to each other by singing:

"Sanu maya bhet hunchha bhani
phulko thungo koreli lyayeko
phulko thungo hataima liyera
dui hat jodchhu yo mala diyera".
(O my beloved, I have brought this blooming flower for you. I salute you joining my two hands and offer this garland of flowers to you as present).

The boys and girls who have exchanged their hearts sing songs of teasing each other also known as juwari geet, like this:

*Keta* (boy) – “Jaubana timro farakka phulyo jiban ko basanta ma manako kura ke bhannu saili jaubana farkera audaina;

*Keti* (girl) - “Sahasa bhaye tipera leu phaleko suntola jibana ramro jaubana ramro bageko pani ati hoi ramro.”

Boy – In the spring of life, you are like a blooming flower. O’ saili, what should I say, life never comes again;

Girl – If you have courage, you may bring by picking it. Like a ripe orange, both life and its maturity are good. The flowing water is even better.

**7. Folk songs of all time**

The ups and downs of life, sorrow and happiness, love and separation, all these find in the *jhyaure geet* of the community. These are songs of all time and most popular in the Assamese Nepali society. A few examples of *jhyaure* songs are cited below:

“Darjeeling bata rel gadi ayo”
ghumtima bhet bhayo
kakaho timi kakaho hamı
yeı thauma bhet bhayo”.

(The train has come from Darjeeling and has crossed this place. You and I may be from different places, but we have met here).

Again:

“How nice the Himalayan peak is! Like the skin of a snake. The sinner has filled my heart with sorrow, do not play the flute)."

8. Folk songs relating to dance

Balan : Balan is a devotional song relating to Lava and Kusa of the Ramayana. Only male can participate in the song and dance. Music is absent in the song and the participants generally wear their traditional dresses. The number of participants is sixteen, eight in two rows in front. Before starting it, they lit a lamp and put in high in a bamboo pole and the dancers move around it. It is called madi. Before starting, they worship gods and goddess and seek permission from the earth for dance. The balan
song is specially taken from the episode of exile of Ram to the extinction of Sita in the earth.

Sangini: Sangini is confined within female accompanied by dance. It may be celebrated in any festivals and occasions. In the dance, they move around singing song by clapping. The theme of the song mainly deals with socio-cultural life.

Sorathi: Sorathi is like a ballad whose themes are legends and tales. The participants show different incidents through dance in different gestures. One such sorathi is: A king had three wives. The youngest queen gave birth to a girl child. Being jealous, the other two with the help of an astrologer compelled the king to through the child into a river putting her in a box. She was taken by a potter and brought up her. She grew up and was a beautiful girl and the king proposed to marry her. Marriage ceremony was going on. Luckily she recognised her father. Later on, the king accepted her as his daughter and punished the defaulters.

There are some other songs related to dance. These are madale geet, jhyaure geet, Tamang selo, etc.

In the madale geet the drum beater and dancer is compulsory. The songs deal with love and picture of social life.
"Bagaicha bhari phula ra phala
chheu chheu ma karela
ankha chhan timra junkiri jasta
jhimkyau chheu parela."

(The garden is full of fruits and flowers. Round it bitter gourds grow. Your eyes are like fireflies, eyelashes winking).

The jhyaure songs are similar to that of madale geet. Youths of both sexes express their love and affection to their beloved through these songs. Music is compulsory and the dancers follow the music as well as the songs. The dancers may be male or female.

The Tamangs have their own songs and dance. Some of these are most popular such as Tamang selo. These are love songs and both the boys and girls tease each other. Nowadays, this song has become popular among all the groups of the Nepalis.

Khukuri nritya (khukuri dance) signifies the great sacrifice and gallantry of the Gorkha soldiers in different wars and battles. This dance is specially meant for the soldiers.
9. **Lullabies**

A large number of lullabies are found among the Assamese Nepalis. These are pleasant songs used for causing children to sleep. An example has been cited below:

"*Chini nini babu chini nini*

tare ankhale bolaye

*suta suta hamro babu nindrale pukare.*"

(Sleep my child sleep; the stars have invited you to sleep. Sleep my son sleep; the sleep has invited you to sleep).

(b) **Ballad**:

Varieties of ballads (*sawai*) are found among the Assamese Nepalis, which highlight the historical, culture, social and economic aspects of the people. These also highlight the worldview of the people. But in the three study villages, only a few ballads are prevalent.

(c) **Proverbs and Riddles**:

Proverb is called ‘*ukhan*’ or ‘*tukka*’ among the Assamese Nepalis. It is a short sentence, which has a long meaning and expression. In the folk society these are frequently used in
conversations. The proverbs in the Assamese Nepali folk life are numerous. A few proverbs frequently used by the people of the study villages are stated below:

*Ama bhanda chhori janne, khukuri bhanda karda hanne.*

(Daughter knows more than mother, small knife is sharper than bigger).

*Arkako kam kahile janchhan gham.*

(The sun sets too late for those who work for others).

*Chhoro paunu koilekoile, kandani batnu aile.*

(Getting ready to happen without really happening).

*Dui swasniko poi, kuna pasi roi.*

(Husband of two wives always weeps).

*Dher khaye mal, thor khaye bal.*

(Eating less is good for health).

*Ghati heri, haddinilnu*

(Cut your coat, according to your cloth).

*Jasta desh, ustai bhes*

(Like the country, like the costume).
The riddle among the Assamese Nepalis is called ‘gaon khane katha’. These are used for recreational purposes. The ceremonial use of these is probably not so old. Nowadays, it has become a feature to use riddles in marriage ceremony. A few riddles frequently used by the people of the study villages are stated below:

_Ama bhanda chhori bokshi._

(Daughter is more expert in witchcraft than mother).

Answer : Chilly

_Bahir jagata, tyas bhitra khabata, khabatama masu, tyas bhitra ansu._

(Outside hairy, inside is hard and fleshy and inside it there is water).

Answer : Coconut.

_Betako lauri teki nasaknu, bhungreroti khai nasaknu._

(Impossible to trample on a stick of cane and to eat a burning bread).

Answer : Snake and Sun.

_Bhun bhun garchha bhumaro hoina,_
Aakashma udchha charo hoina.

(Creates sound ‘bhun’ ‘bhun’, but not a black bee; flies in the sky, not a bird).

Answer: Aeroplane.

Jadoi chha bato mettai chha.

(As it proceeds the way disappears behind).

Answer: Boat.

Chhor chhor buda ma aghi janchhu

(Let me go ahead of you).

Answer: Stick.

Besides proverbs and riddles, folk speech (lok katha) and idioms (bagdharā / bagbyabahār / bak paddhati) are very popular and widely prevalent. Folk speeches are similar to phrases and their motive is to impart knowledge or admire the people. Some of the folk speeches frequently used by the people of the study villages are cited below:

Akbari sunlai, kasi launu pardoina.

(Gold does not require polishing).

Alchhe tigro swade jibro
(Idle persons only want to enjoy).

_Aphoi ta Mahadeo kasle dela bar._

(Helping others by being self in trouble).

_Indraka agadi swargaka bayan._

(Talking of wisdom to a wise man).

_Gadha dhoi gai hundoina_

(Bad cannot be good).

Like folk speech, the idioms are the words when combined in one sentence; they produce a different meaning than the original one. Some of the Assamese Nepalis idioms are cited below:

_Ankhama charo halnu_ (to cheat).

_Khutta jhiknu_ (to leave).

_Godama parnu_ (to beg pardon / seek an apology).

_Tauko dukhaonu_ (to think).

_Netra jalnu_ (to be jealous).

(d) Material Culture:

The tools and implements for tilling, ploughing, harvesting, threshing and fishing possessed by the Assamese and the Assamese Nepalis are similar. In the same manner the implements
used for storing and utensils for cooking are also similar for both the communities. Only some traditional material cultural items differ from their neighbouring communities. Nowadays, these traditional material cultural items are occasionally used by the Assamese Nepalis. Details of material culture have already been discussed in Chapter II.

(e) **Fairs and Festivals**:

The Assamese Nepalis celebrate a number of fairs and festivals throughout the year. Most of these are calendared festivals but marked for their local colour. Their principal fairs and festivals are described below:

**Tij**

It has cultural as well as religious significance. It is specially meant for the femalefolk, which is celebrated on the third day of lunar night of *Bhada* (mid August).

**Dasai (Durga Puja)**

*Dasai* is the principal festival of the Assamese Nepalis. From the first day of the *suklapakshya* (lunar night) of the month of *Aswin* (September-October) marks the beginning of the *Navaratra* or *Nauratha*, which culminates into the Durga Puja. On *Aswin*
amabashya (dark moon) panchadhanya of five types of seeds are sown for germination inside or place of the house known as jamare. From the first to the ninth day, the mantras (hymns) from Durga saptasati (chandi) are recited seeking blessing from Goddess Durga, who has nine manifestations. On the seventh day, they celebrate phulpati in which he-goat is sacrificed generally in every household. On the eighth day, some people celebrate Bhimsen puja sacrificing he-goat. The celebration comes to an end on the tenth day. But especially for the Assamese Nepalis this festival continues for another five days up to purnima (full moon).

The tenth day is called Vijaya Dasami. On that day, the Assamese Nepalis put tika (tilak mark) on the forehead given by their parents and elders as a blessing of Vijaya Dasami.

In the morning of the purnima, the elders put tilak again to the youngers which is called bidai tilak and thus the Dasai comes to an end. In the night of purnima, Laxmi puja is performed who is the Goddess of the wealth.

**Dipandvita or Tihar**

The Assamese Nepalis celebrate Kalipuja, Dipandvita or Tihar. They celebrate Tihar according to their customs and
traditions, which is to some extent different from parts of India. Their Tihar starts from the 13th day of the dark moon of the month of Kartika to the 2nd day of the brighter half of the month of Kartika to the second day of the brighter half of the month of the same. It continues for five days and it is called Yamapanchaka.

**Maghe Sangkranti**

*Maghe Sangkranti* is one of the important festivals celebrated by the Assamese Nepalis of the study villages. They celebrate this festival like the Magh Bihu.

*Maghe Sangkranti* is celebrated on the last day (*sangkranti*) of the month of Poosh (mid January). On the previous day of *sangkranti*, the young boys of the villages construct *meji* (i.e. make-shift) with straw, bamboo and wood. The women prepare different kinds of food items such as *pithas*, *pounded* rice, etc. In the evening the young boys of the villages arrange a community feast.

The next day, very early in the morning, they take bath and sit near the *meji* and join in bon-fire. They offer betel nut, *pithas* and a coin in the name of Agni Devata (the God of fire) and pray to Him.
Bohag Bihu

The Assamese Nepalis also celebrate Bihu and this is because of the influence of the Assamese society upon them. Though not extensively, the Assamese Nepalis also participate in different occasions of the Bihu festival. Tilpitha, laru and other eatables and the gamosa, (traditional towel), mekhela, sarai, etc. have become part of Assamese Nepali socio-cultural life. The boys and girls equally participate in the Bihu songs, while the boys only take part in the huchori (devotional choral song). In the Nepali language too Bihu songs are prevalent.

Besides these, the Assamese Nepalis also celebrate the Holi festival with great pomp in the month of Phagun (Feb-March).

(f) Worships

The Assamese Nepalis perform various worships round the year. Among these worships, the following are important.

Madhumasa

The month of Baisakh (mid April) is regarded as Madhumasa or Purusottam month. Particularly the old people observe one month long brata (fasting) taking only one meal in the day and
listen mythical stories of Bishnu and Laxmi at night. On the last day they celebrate *udyapan* (conclusion ceremony) of the *brata*.

**Gothdhupko Purne**

A type of worship is performed by the Assamese Nepalis on the day of full moon of *Baisakh* (mid April). On this day, mostly the cattle breeders celebrate a religious festival called *Gothdhup*.

The significance of this festival is to appease the deities for the year round, safety of the cattle and for the welfare of the cattle breeders.

**Akshyaya Tritiya**

The third day of the brighter half of the moon in the month of *Baisakh* or *Bohag* is celebrated by the Assamese Nepalis with enthusiasm and devotion as *Akshyaya tritiya*. It is believed that any virtuous work done on that day would be *Akshyaya* (unbroken). Especially, the womenfolk wait in the crossroads and distribute juice, drinks and fruits to the passers by free of cost.

**Sansari Puja**

*Sansari Puja* is one of the most important community worship of the Assamese Nepalis performed in the month of
Baisakh or Bohag. They believe Sansari as the Goddess of disease such as mumps, measles, small pox, chicken pox, natural calamities, etc. So, they worship Goddess Sansari for keeping themselves safe from diseases and other calamities through this ritual.

**Bata Sabitri Puja**

Bata Sabitri Puja is a specific kind of ritual performed by the Assamese Nepalis. The ritual is performed in the month of Jeth (May-June). They perform this ritual for the well being of every family of the villages.

**Sikari Puja**

The Assamese Nepalis of the study villages believe in the presence of the ghosts, devil, evil spirits, etc. They opine that these things live in the forest and jungles and they do harm if they become angry. So, they offer worship and make sacrifices to these evil spirits to appease them.

**Ekadashi Brata**

The Assamese Nepalis observe Ekadashi brata throughout the year. Two of these are primary: Hari Sayani Ekadashi and
Hari Bodhini Ekadashi. The former is observed on the eleventh day of the brighter half of the moon in the month of Asar (June-July) and the latter is observed on the eleventh day of the brighter half of the moon in the month of Katik (October-November).

Asarko Pandrah

It is a ritual connected with agricultural activities. It is celebrated on the 15th of Ashar (last June). It is a virtuous work to eat flattened rice (chira) along with curd on this day. By doing so they may be reborn on the earth and enjoy the life again happily. Generally, from that day the cultivation of paddy starts. There are many songs linked with this ritual known as asare geet or rasiya geet.

Ambubachi

The Assamese Nepalis observe the Ambubachi in the month of Ashar (mid June). According to them Ambubachi is the four days of the month of Ashar when the earth is supposed to be impure.
**Nag Panchami**

The worship of serpent God (*Nag Devata*) is celebrated on *Nag Panchami* in the month of *Sawon* (July-August). On that day the priest after finishing the worship of the *Nagas* in the temple or in the house proceeds to the house of his *jajamans* (patrons of the priest) and attaches a paper of picture of *Nagas* on the wall. Since Manasa Devi is said to be the Goddess of snake, the purpose of observing this ritual is to escape from the possible snakebite in one's lifetime.

**Rikhi Tarpana or Rakhi Bandhana Purnima**

The full moon day of the month of *Sawon* (July-August) is known as *Rikhi Tarpana* or *Rakshya* or *Rakhi Bandhan Purnima*. Like other Hindu people, the Assamese Nepalis also celebrate this occasion with their own way.

**Shravane Sagrati**

The Assamese Nepalis celebrate *Shravane* or *Sawone Sagrati* on the day of *Shravan /Sawone Sangkranti* (mid August). They observe this ritual in a simple way. The significance of this celebration is to throw out different types of skin diseases.
**Janmastami**

The ritual *Janmastami* is related to the celebration of the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna. It is performed on the eight lunar day of the dark moon of the month of *Bhadra*/*Bhadau* (August-September).

**Ram Navami and Shivaratri**

The Assamese Nepalis worship Ram, Shiva and other gods and goddesses. In *Ram Navami* and *Shivaratri*, the devotees observe whole day fasting and in the evening they worship respective gods and goddesses. For the whole night they recite the names of gods and goddesses merrily through *sangkirtana*.

**Hari Talika Brata**

The female folk observe *Hari tilka brata* and celebrate it in complete fasting even without water. In this *brata* the women worship Shiva in the temple or in the courtyard of house.

**Sorah Shraddha**

From the *Bhadra Purnima* (August-September) to *Aswin*/ *Asoj Amabashya* (September-October) known as the days of
sorah shraddha. These days are dedicated to the deceased ancestors.

**Kartika Mas Brata**

The whole month of Kartika (October-November), some of the aged persons observe *brata*, taking only one meal in a day and lighting *akashdwipa* at night near the *tulsi* (basil) plant.

**Chaumasa Brata**

From the month of Ashar to Katik some men and women observe *chaumasa brata*, take only one meal daily and at night listen the mythical stories of the gods and goddesses.

**Swosthani Brata**

This *brata* is mainly related to the women. For the whole month of Magh (January-February) the women observe it with great devotion to the Lord Shiva and his consorts. This ritual is mainly observed for the well being of the married life of the couples and their families.
**Tulsi Puja**

The Assamese Nepalis perform *tulsi puja* or worship of basil plant. This *puja* is performed in the month of *Ashar* (June-July). The date is fixed by the village priest.

**Naula and Panchauli Puja**

Both *naula* and *panchauli pujas* are performed in the month of October, November and December. In rural area almost all the Assamese Nepali families perform *naula puja* annually and *panchauli puja* in every three or five years.

The main purpose of performing these *pujas* is to escape from all kinds of diseases, illness, evil spirits and familial unhappiness and to get happiness, peace and prosperity.

**Satyanarayan Puja**

The Assamese Nepalis perform this puja during different times of the year except *Sawon* (July-Aug.) and *Katik* (Oct. -Nov.) preferably in the months of *Magh* (Jan.-Feb.), *Phagun* (Feb.-March) and *Baisakh* (April-May). The village priest fixes an auspicious day. They worship Lord Krishna by keeping fasting for whole day until the puja is finished. This worship is performed in order to
fulfil the performers' desire and for the well being of the family members.

**RITES OF PASSAGE**

**Birth**

A parturient mother has a number of restrictions regarding diet, movement and work. She does not take pulse dish, spicy food, chilly or pickles. Such women are not expected to visit the cremation ground or see a dead body. An expectant mother is tabooed of slaughtering any animal. A pregnant woman's husband is also tabooed from killing animals, carrying dead body or visiting cremation ground, etc.

On the day of the childbirth, when the labour pain starts, the woman is made confined to the main living room. Sometimes, an experienced old woman helps her in delivery. Some other women also stay in the room to help her.

The part of the umbilical cord remaining attached to the baby dries out and detaches automatically. Generally, it is cut by the mother herself as it is believed that it would be good for the baby if it is cut by herself. In many cases the dried cord is used to
quiet a crying baby by allowing the baby to drink a few drops of water from a pot in which the umbilical cord is dipped.

The idea of pollution or impurity is associated with the birth of a child. So, the Assamese Nepalis perform some purifying rituals after the birth of the child. In the post delivery period, the mother has to perform certain restrictions. She is tabooed to enter the kitchen. She is also tabooed to come outside of the house. She is also not allowed to mix up or touch others. This period is regarded as pollution period. Neither the mother nor the father of the baby can cook for public for that period.

The pollution period continues for eleven days. On the sixth day from the birth, they perform a special ritual, which is known as chhaithuh (sixth day). They believe that God writes the fortune of the child on that day. For this occasion the village priest performs worship. Generally, on the eleventh day, they do nwaran or namakaran (name giving ceremony) with the help of a priest. In this ritual a sacred fire called hom of rice, sesame with ghee is made in the pedestal of the Agnisthapana established by the priest. From the day of birth of the child to its naming ceremony birth pollution is observed. Only after taking and scattering cow’s urine, the birth pollution comes to an end. On that day they wipe
their houses and courtyard with purified water and wash their cloths. The baby is bathed with purified water. Then the priest performs worships.

The next religious ceremony performed by them after the birth of a child is the first solid food giving ceremony, which is called by the Assamese Nepalis as *annaprasan*. From that day the child takes solid food. This ritual is observed separately for male and female child. It is observed in the sixth, eight or ten month for male child and for female child it is observed in the fifth, seventh or ninth month from birth.

*Kanyaveddan* (perforation ceremony) is performed on the day of *Sripanchami* or Saraswati puja where the female child’s ears are perforated celebrating some rite and rituals.

*Chhayar garnu* or *Churrakaran* (hair shaving ceremony) is another important ceremony for the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Baishyas among the Assamese Nepalis where the child’s hair is shaved off for the first time when the child attains the age of 3 to 4 years. The child’s maternal uncle starts this ceremony.
Puberty

The most important phase in the life cycle of a girl is puberty. Among the Assamese Nepalis, observing several taboos and performing rituals mark the puberty of a girl. After attainment of puberty of a girl, she has to be abstained from her several normal activities.

During first day of puberty, the girl is tabooed to touch any thing or go outside the home. She is tabooed to look at a male and face the sun during these days. She is also tabooed to drink cow's milk.

When a girl attains puberty, she is kept inside the house of any neighbour of different clan. She is regarded to be polluted till fifteen days from that day. On the fifteenth day, they clean and wipe the house, where they had kept the girl and purify with holy water. Then the girl is also purified by the holy water. Then she is regarded as sacred. The girl is prohibited to enter the kitchen and touch pond, well, etc. and doing religious work for 22 days. After that she can follow her normal life.
Sacred thread ceremony *(Upanayana)*

*Upanayana* is also known as *bratabanda*. On this day the boy wear *jonoi* or sacred thread. Sacred thread taking is a pious obligation for the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Generally they prefer the ages between six to thirteen for wearing sacred thread.

**Marriage**

The Assamese Nepalis of all the three study villages prefer arranged marriage. Generally all of their traditional customs are observed in this type of marriage. They call the process through which they perform marriage as *Arya bibah*. It is a long process constituted of many rituals and ceremonies.

In their society, when a girl attains 18 years and a boy attains 22 years, then people say that the boy and the girl have attained marriageable age. The person who acts as a middleman between the girl and boy’s family is called as *lokante* by them. They call the bride as *beuli* and the groom as *beula*.

In the Assamese Nepali society, girls are highly esteemed. So, the parents of a girl do not search for a groom for their daughter. Generally, the parents or families of the prospective groom offer the proposal of marriage.
After the finalization of the negotiations between the families of the boy and the girl, the father of the groom with three other elderly persons formally go to the bride's house and propose the contracting of marriage. The visitors are called by them as *kanyarthi*. The *kanyarthi* is generally consisted of father or elder brother of the groom and three other relatives or co-villagers. On that day the girl's family also invites some of their relatives and co-villagers. The priest is also invited and he matches the horoscope of both the bride and groom. After the discussion and negotiation, a date is fixed for marriage. After fixing the date of marriage, the parents of the bride offer a sacred thread (*jonoil*), dried areca nut (*supari*) and sum of amount of money to the father of the groom and promises in front of guests that they give the hand of their daughter to their boy. This step of marriage is called by them as *jonoisupari*. This signifies a formal beginning of the marital alliance; the *jonoil* and the dried areca nut are kept out to the groom's house until the day of marriage.

The next step of marriage among them is called as *patra lagaone*, the fixation of marriage date. On that day the groom's family through a special person sends a letter to the bride's family. They mention the day and auspicious time (*lagna*) of marriage in
that letter. They also take sweets made from milk to the bride's family on that day.

The marriage ceremony as performed may be divided into two parts. The part performed in the bride's house and the part performed in the groom's house.

On the previous night of the marriage, they offer worship to Lord Ganesh for the well being of the new couple. They prepare a special kind of sweets from rice powder and sugar called *kasar* for Lord Ganesh and offer it at the time of worshipping.

On the auspicious day of marriage in the morning, the priest performs *grahashanti puja* and sacred fire is lit which is called *hom*. Thereafter, the groom has to take a ceremonial bath. In the evening, the priest recites hymns and after the end of it the groom proceeds to the house of the bride to bring her with his friends, relatives, co-villagers, etc. Before starting their journey, the parents and other elderly persons put *tilak* on his forehead with rice and bless him. Nowadays, some of the Assamese Nepali grooms wear *dhuti* and *punjabi*. And over the *punjabi* they wear a sleeveless garment called *oscoat*. The groom must wear a *pheta* (turban) on his head. But in earlier times, the groom wore the traditional Nepali dress consisting of *daura*, a long sleeve garment,
oscoat and the turban. The party goes to the bride’s house playing some traditional musical instruments, such as jhyamta, damah, nar singa, sahnai and bansuri. They call it panchai baja. They call the groom’s party as janti.

On the other hand, in the bride’s house, the day of marriage begins by reciting rudrapath for the peace and prosperity in the conjugal life. Thereafter they offer worship to their ancestors by the priest and sacred fire is also lit. The father of the bride is also required to participate in this occasion. The bride also has to take a ceremonial bath on the day of her marriage.

When the groom’s party proceeds the bride’s house, they send four persons to the bride’s house to give the information about their arrival. They put tilak on their forehead. These four persons are called bhatkharau (messenger of the groom). They are warmly greeted in the bride’s house. They give information to the bride’s family about how many people have come with him.

As soon as the groom and his party arrive in the bride’s house, the bride’s kith and kin welcome them. The bride’s party is termed as ghar gamle. Then they receive the groom. This process is termed as barni. Thereafter the bride and the groom exchange garlands which is called sayambar. The groom also puts ring on
her finger. Then in the kitchen the groom is given eatables in two plates, same is done to the bride in the groom's house for the first time. Both the bride and the groom remain busy whole night in celebrating different rituals of the marriage.

Feet washing ceremony (*gorradhune*) is an important custom where parents, uncle, aunts, brothers and relatives wash the feet of the bride and groom and offer presents.

The parents, grandparents, brothers and relatives of the groom mainly perform *kanyadan* ceremony. It is a ceremonial offering of the bride to the groom. It is followed by another custom *sindur-pote lagaone* (putting vermilion and glass bead giving) where the groom puts *sindur tilak* on the forehead of the bride three times and gives the pot of *sindur* to her. He also puts glass bead (*pote*) garland on her neck.

In the *yajnya* other rituals such as curd feeding (*dahi khuwaone*), pole star showing (*dhruba tara dekhaune*), heart touching (*hridoy sparsha*) of bride by groom, a game of dice between the two (*juwa khelne*) etc. go on side by side. In the morning the parents and relatives put *tika* or *tilak* mark to the bride and the groom and give farewell.
When the groom reaches home along with the bride, there too they have to celebrate some rituals at the time of their entering home. At the door two pots full of water are placed to welcome them. When they enter home, the groom's mother blesses them. One custom in this regard is *mana pathi bharne* (filling of two copper pots) by the bride and the mother-in-law. Another tradition is called *chultho jorne* (hair tie) of the bride and the mother-in-law chanting some epical hymns. On the same day there would be a feast known as *jante bakhro* and in the bride's house would be a *runche bhater* (weeping feast). On the fourth day, they celebrate a ritual of *sila puja* (stone worship). Within sixteen days they must visit bride's house, which is known as *sindure sait*. After returning from their family the marriage ceremony comes to an end. But in the first year of marriage, they must go to the bride's house in the month of *sravana/Sawon* (July-Aug.) to observe a ritual known as *Sawone* or *Sravane pani chhalnu* of the Assamese Nepalis.

**Death**

Among the Assamese Nepalis some special kind of pre-death rituals are observed. These rituals are generally performed in the case of very old persons and those persons who are suffering from death.
disease and no hope of recovery, and then they perform such rituals. They perform it for painless and peaceful death of the person. This ritual is called as *baitarani puja*.

In this ritual, they dig a small pit and term it *Baitarani Nadi* (*Baitarani* is a Hindu mythical river. They believe that the soul of men has to cross the river after death). Some of them also make it on a large metallic plate instead of digging pit. The village priest in most cases performs the worship. The priest makes two idols of soil and puts the idols near *Baitarani Nadi*. The idols are called as *Dharmaraj* and *Yamraj* (Hindus mythically believe these two as the king of death). A small boat is also made of bamboo and kept it on the water of the pit or plate. Then the priest performs worship by reciting hymns. The person for whom worshiping is arranged is also set near the priest and has to follow sometimes to the priest by reciting hymns. After the end of reciting hymns, the sick or old person has to touch the boat with his great toe and push it slowly to the other end of water of the pit or plate. Then the priest again recites hymns and the person follows him.

There is a custom to offer some articles to the Brahmin before the death of a person. It is the second phase of pre-death
ritual. There are mainly two aspects of gifts – *dah dan* and *asta dan*.

*Dah* means ten and *dan* means gift. Hence, *dah dan* is a type of gift where the sick or old person offers gifts of ten articles. These are: 1. cow, 2. land, 3. sesame, 4. gold, 5. ghee, 6. cloth, 7. uncooked rice, 8. molasses, 9. silver, and 10. salt.

On the other hand, *asta* means eight. Therefore, it is a kind of gift where the person offers gifts of eight articles to the Brahmin. The articles are 1. Sesame, 2. wooden slipper, 3. a staff or walking stick, 4. umbrella, 5. woollen cloth or thread, 6. five wood, 7. cow and 8. land.

The kinsmen of the family of the sick or old person help them in performing this gift giving ritual by supplying different things or money. They think that it is a holy work for them.

If a person has no capacity to perform *dah dan* or *asta dan*, then he just pays a sum of Rs. 1.50. But before gifting he touches the above mentioned articles of *dah dan* or *asta dan* by the money. The Brahmin also accepts these as *dah* or *asta dan*. It is believed that a person would be relieved from sin and guilt that
committed by him or her in lifetime and may die peacefully without any suffering by performing such rituals.

Just before death the man is given holy water, mixed with ghee, milk, tulsi (basil leaf), sesame, gold washed water, etc. known as pancharatna or panchagabya in his mouth. When death takes place, the neighbours, relatives and the whole village in general are informed. They cremate a person who dies in normal circumstances.

The dead body is first taken out to the courtyard and kept it near the basil plant until the arrangements for taking the dead body to the riverbank is made. If the husband dies, then his wife will have to break the bracelets, tear glass-bead garland and rub away vermilion from her forehead and all these are placed on the dead body. If the wife dies, the husband puts tika of vermilion on her forehead. With the dead body, procession starts to the cremation ground. Somebody keeps asthi (a bone) from forehead to be floated away preferably in the Ganga. From the day of the death, the death pollution is observed for thirteen days. Almost all the rituals relating to death rites are observed by the son. The observer of death rites is known as kriyaputra. Up to thirteen days he observes different types of rituals in the morning, at noon and
in the evening. For the observer, only one meal is allowed devoid of oil, salt and vegetables except ghee, ginger and sugar. On the tenth day malim khodashi shraddha, on the eleventh day madhyam and uttam khodashi and pathe shraddha are observed. On the twelfth day all other rituals relating to death rites are observed.

From the fifth day to the tenth day, Garuda Purana is read by the Brahmin priest before the observer and the relatives. On the thirteenth day, feasting of the malamies (participants in the funeral procession) is arranged with ritual gift. In the whole year every month and on the same tithis (dates) monthly shraddha i.e. mashe (monthly death rite) and after the completion of one year barshik (annual) shraddha is performed. During this period of one year the son uses only white cloth. The wife of the deceased person also follows it. They must observe some taboos regarding dress and food. Every year the son observes shraddha and tarpana (libations) to the mane. The rites for a particular mane may stop if the deceased person’s son makes elaborate libations and pindadana (offering of rice ball cooked in milk) at the holy places of the Hindus such as the Gaya, Kashi, Varanashi, Ashwaklanta, etc.