CHAPTER- IV

ORAL LITERATURE
Oral literature, may be called 'verbal art' or 'expressive literature' by some folklorists, is a major division of folklore as well as very important one. Oral literature are "spoken, sung, and voiced forms of traditional utterances." Traditionally this has been known as folk literature as well. Oral literature may be classified into four sub-genres, e.g.:

1) Oral Poetry,
2) Prose narratives,
3) Proverbs and riddles,
4) Folk language or folk speech.

**ORAL POETRY**:

Oral poetry or folk poetry is a major sub-division of oral literature. Sometimes oral poetry is designated simply as folk song. "Since almost all sung, chanted and recited forms of oral poetry are designated as 'song' in most communities, the category includes such diverse material as folk epic and ballad, myth and legend, hymn and invocation, and even rhymes and runes. The Assamese term for all kinds of sung forms is gīt." Folk epic,

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ballads, folksongs, lullabies, worksongs, songs associated with ritual and rites such as birth, marriage and death etc. as well as songs or poetry connected with various festivals and celebrations are included under this subdivision. We may classify oral poetry into many sub genres considering from different contents. However, here, we have adopted the classification suggested by Datta, Sarma and Das, "keeping different consideration in view, the vast body of material has been classified into some broad categories, further divided into sub-categories, within a framework that admits of logical placing and meaningful analysis of the different items. Accordingly, the following model has been adopted:

SONGS OF RELIGIOUS AND DEVOTIONAL CONTENT

a) Songs of prayer and supplication,

b) Songs of ritualistic association,

c) Devotional songs with philosophical overtones,

d) Lyrical compositions in a religious or devotional format,

SONGS OF CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS

a) Songs of ceremonies connected with some pujas and other rituals

b) Songs of ceremonies connected with the life-cycle

c) Songs of seasonal and agricultural festivals

d) Bihu songs: songs of youthful exuberance

e) Love songs in the tribal languages
SONGS OF LOVE AND YEARNING: the Enduring Passion

a) Love songs in camouflage

b) Purely lyrical compositions: bhāwaiyā and chatkā

c) Moishāli and māut songs: Varieties of lyrical compositions.

d) Bāramāhis: songs of pangs of separation:

LULLABIES, NURSERY RHYMES AND CHILDREN'S GAME SONGS

SONGS OF JEST AND HUMOUR

BALLADS AND OTHER NARRATIVE SONGS

a) Traditional ballads

b) Other kinds of narrative songs

c) Ballads in the tribal languages

MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL

The above classification has been made keeping in view the Assamese folk-poetry as a whole. As ample materials are not available in the district of Sonitpur, the scant materials collected from the district are taken up for discussion here:

SONGS OF RELIGIOUS AND DEVOTIONAL CONTENT:

There is a good number of songs with religious and devotional content. Those songs have many varieties in form, content and approach. Keeping in mind, these divergence of form, content and approach, we can categorize these into some sub-categories, which are discussed below:

a) SONGS OF PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION:

'Community singing of hymns, both by men and women, is a distinctive feature of the Assamese Hindu society, particularly of the vaishnava cult. Apart from regular and formal services held in prayer-halls, sessions of such hymn-singing are also held on special religious or auspicious occasions, or just as an act of merit, either in public places or in private houses. Such songs have the generic appellation of nam (lit.name), a term that signifies the reciting or singing in praise of God or any particular deity." These nāms are sung by both men and women. But it is to be noted that, these nāms are performed either by men or women, the choral group are always formed exclusively either by men or by women. The choral group of men use khol, khutital, bhortāl and sometimes nāgārā as instrument while the women group generally do not use any instrument though occasionally use khutital only in performing nam. Clapping is essential for both the groups of men and women.  

*Ibid p.41*
Sonitpur district, being a Vaishnava cult dominant area, most of the nāms deal with divine deed or deeds of Lord Krishna (sometimes Rāma and occasionally Jagannātha) or some episodes from the epics or the Purānas. Some songs describe the beauty and kindness of the Lord. Some examples are cited below:

1) A song related to Lord Krishna’s ‘Mathurā vatrā’, which is connected to episodes of ‘Bhāgavat Purāna’.

    rathara opare kaliyā
    chali jāy chali jāy
    mathurā nagare kaliyā
    mathurā nagare

i.e., Black-coloured Krishna is proceeding for Mathura on ‘ratha’.

2) A song related to episode of epic:

    kānde dasaratha rāi
    sindhu mukha chāi.
    marā sindhu kole lai,
    ekhoj dukhoj kai....

i.e., Dasaratha weeps looking the face of Sindu; step by step he is proceeding to Muni’s āshram (dwellings); dead Sindhu is on his clasp.

Apart from the above Vaishnavite songs, there are some songs, which are related
to the praise of Lord Śiva or Goddess Durgā or Lakshmi. Of course, the number of such songs is not very large. The songs, dedicated to Lord Śiva are particularly interesting as He is described as a cultivator or intoxicating absent-minded household. An example of such song is: bhāṅg khāi pagalā halā he Mahādev, āfu Khāi pagalā halā. (i.e. why are you become mad after taking hamp?)

Another example, which is related to a chapter of Kirtan-Ghosā by Śankardeva, is:

'harak muhīlā hari deu deu nārayan......
mohini k dekhā pāi, bāgh sāl dīlā pelāi......
i.e., Hara is enchanted by Narayan, Having seen Mohini Śiva gets naked.

Although the idea of these songs is borrowed from Puranic literature in general and neo vaishnavite literature of Assam in particular, nevertheless these are anonymous compositions transmitted orally from generation to generation through the ages. The melodic and rhymic patterns of the nāms are really attractive. On the other hand, some songs have high literary value too. A song, nilākai ākāsat tārā thupi thupi, saku tire bire kare' may be pointed out in this connection. Depiction of natural scenery and metaphorisation in the song is very impressive and heart touching.
SONGS OF RITUALISTIC ASSOCIATION:

There are some kinds of song or hymns having ritualistic significance. A kind of folksong, termed as 'āi-nām' is the chief among such songs. Bhagavati āi (lit-mother) is the goddess of small-pox, chicken-pox, measles and a number of skin rashes and there is a belief in the folk mind that, an attack of any of these diseases is 'a visit of the mothers' or 'the appearance of flowers'. During the 'visit of mothers', they want cleanliness and coolness (āi is also termed as 'Sitalā', which means the cool one) and if they are raged or dissatisfied, it becomes dangerous. Therefore, cleanliness and coolness is observed as far as possible. The women folk performs ai-nāms in a simple manner with clapping their hands in front of 'āi āsana' (seat of mother) in propitiation of the pox-goddess. Special propitiatory services are held chiefly with the singing of ai-nāms by the womenfolk which are marked by simplicity of expression and sincerity of feeling, as in the following piece:

They are coming, āi's seven sisters, across the seven mountains/All bow their heads- the grass, the creepers, the trees, for āi is coming/ The golden butterfly, round does it circle on its two silver wings/The āi's have come to visit the place, we beg our lives of them/ Unconsciously did we trespass into āi's garden, unawares we did pick the buds/Forgive our crimes this once, O Bhavani, we prostrate ourselves at your feet./ The āi's have come to poor houses-nothing do we have to offer/ We shall rub their feet with
our tresses and lie down to make fords of our bodies....

The river Bharali has a great role in the folk life of the district. The river changes its flow very frequently and therefore, the river is believed to be the water form of Goddess Bhairavi. Therefore, she is to be prayed, so that, she becomes calm and quiet during the monsoon. Songs sung in propitiation of Bhairavi Gosānī may be termed as ‘Bharali-nadir git’, which generally tells the 'real identity' of the river as in the following piece:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bhairabī gosānī} & \quad \text{bighnanaśinī} \\
\text{charāchar jagatar mātā,} & \\
\text{chandrar duhitā} & \quad \text{sarane pālītā} \\
\text{Śankarar abibāhitā.} & \\
\text{sundar dekhīā} & \quad \text{asuyā karilā} \\
\text{Pārvatī dilanta śāp,} & \\
\text{sehidinā dhari} & \quad \text{Rudrapada pāvā} \\
\text{jala hai rahilā tāt.}
\end{align*}
\]

i.e. Bhairabi goddess is the remover of impediments, mother of the world, daughter of the Moon, unmarried lover of Lord Śiva. Owing to her beauty, Pārvatī quarrelled with her and cursed. Since then, finding the foot of Rudra or Śiva, she incarnerd herself to water there.

It is worth mentioning that, the song is related to a myth.

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5Goswami, P.: Folk-literature of Assam, pp.61-62

6Infra., P.9*
c) **DEVOTIONAL SONGS WITH PHILOSOPHICAL OVERTONES**: 

There are some songs, which are not directly associated with any puja or nam, but have a high philosophical overtones. The nams are performed in choral form, but this kind of songs are generally 'solo' instead of being chorus. deh bicharar git or tokari git is of this pattern, current not only in Sonitpur district, but also all over the state of Assam. The peculiarity of this kind of song is that, the actual meaning or the saying is always cryptic besides its' metaphorical character like the Caryapadas. These songs are associated with certain sects that thrive under the cover of the overt practices. The Tantric consider the body as the small edition or symbol of the universe and they symbolize the body as a boat in the world-ocean, the mind the helm or pilot and the 'guru' the sole guide. The dehbichar songs are with such philosophical overtones and therefore, these songs are believed to be associated with the Tantric cult. As the songs are based on body, so these are called deh (lit body) bicharar (lit. analysis) git (song) and as an instrument made of a dry gourd, string and a piece of small bamboo, called tokari is used in singing these songs, this genre of songs are called tokari git. These songs are generally sung by the wandering minstrels. An example of such type of songs collected from the field is cited below:

\[
\text{jiwan nāwekhani tulbul tulbul} \\
\text{mājate dubībā nāpāo ikul sikul}
\]

.................................
It is worthmentioning that, during the time of Indian freedom struggle, some patriotic songs were performed for the consciousness of the people with the help of tokāri and an organisation named Tokāri Sangha was formed particularly at chatia area. Though, these songs were sung with tokāri and the rhymes or melody of these songs are identical, these songs cannot be included to this class as there is no philosophical overtone.

There are some religious songs with philosophical overtones among the Muslims of Assam, named Zikir, attributed to Ājān Fakir, also known as Shāhmilān. The songs are connected with Muslim philosophy, but these songs seem to be influenced by the Vaishnavite nāms of Assam and akin to dehbichārar git in content. It is a great contribution of Assamese Muslims to the folklore of Assam. These songs are very popular not only among the Muslims of the district, but also among the Hindus too.

**d) Lyrical Compositions in a Religious or Devotional Format:**

"There are current, particularly in the Lower Assam areas of Kamrup (undivided) and Darrang, a type of songs which have in recent times acquired the popular appellation..."
of Kamrupi Lokagiti. Clothed in a religious or devotional garb, these songs are extremely popular not so much for their religious or sacred character as for their lyrical and musical quality. The themes chosen for the bulk of these songs are woven around popular characters or episodes from the epics and the Purānas as well as religious myths and legends current at the local folk level.\(^7\)

Songs of this type is also found in the district. This kind of songs current in the district seems to be migrated from Kamrup and Darrang. But, in the path of migration, the dialect and tune has been changed slightly and fitted to the folk language of the district.

**SONGS OF CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS:**

**a) SONGS OF CEREMONIES WITH SOME PUJĀS AND OTHER RITUALS:**

There are some songs related to some pujās and other rituals of Assam. In this connection, the Lower Assam region is very rich and having a vividness. Bhekuli biva (frog marriage) is a common ritual of almost all parts of Assam. It is a rain compelling ceremony of Assam. Bhekuli bivā (frog marriage) is a ritual in which marriage between two frogs is performed with elaborate ceremonies including the singing of songs is an effort to bring down rains at the time of drought. Such songs are called bhekuli bivā git.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Dutta B., Sarma, N.C.; Das, P.C. :: Op.cit p.56

\(^8\) Ibid p.57.
b) SONGS OF CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE LIFE CYCLE

Every society celebrate some ceremonies at different stages in the life cycle to mark as important point of life. In Assamese society, the birth of a child, the ritual removal of pollution after birth, the first eating of rice by a child (annaprāsana), attainment of puberty by a girl, the sacred thread ceremony of a Brahmin boy (Upanayana), the sunnat ceremony of a Muslim boy, marriage ceremony, and finally death of a person etc. are considered as important points in the life-cycle and hence these are celebrated as ceremonies. Marriage is not only socially important in the Assamese society but also the most significant from the folklore point of view. Though there are some special folk songs associated with some of the above mentioned occasions, often in particular localities or by particular communities. Assamese folklore is very much rich in marriage song scattered all over the land and among all sections of people.

Marriage songs of Assam seems to have been composed by women folk and these songs are recited exclusively by women. An Assamese marriage ceremony is a musical celebration in true sense. From the early negotiations to the end, at every stage of the celebration, women sing different type of songs, which are meaningful for the celebration. The different stages of an Assamese marriage celebration are: joran divā or pindhoā or tekelidiyā, panitolā, nowā (ceremonial bath), davandiā, gāthian khundā, homargurit bahā, akhaidiyā, āngathi khelā etc. There are different songs for different rituals. The songs are simple in language and of homespun easy imagery. These are replete with simile, alliteration, wit and 'slesha'. Some songs are involved with the names

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9 Das, Jogesh: Folklore of Assam, p.104.
of Krishna-Rukmini, Rama-Sita or Hara-Gauri, the ideal couples of our legendary and the bride and bridegroom are compared with them. The neo Vaishnavite movement of Assam has given a new dimension to the marriage songs. There are some songs, which are sung with the verses of Rukmini Harana by Sankardeva. The marriage songs are composition of women folk and it reflects the woman folk mind.

Some examples of marriage song collected from the field are cited below:-

(i) Song performed when the bridegroom’s party goes to bride’s house to arrange joran:

gopal e pasat namatiiba/joran pindhaboloi jao he//ram oi batari dheki/ram oi amak bate
diyal/ram oi joran pindhabalai jao he//ram oi roija bagali/ram oi koija batar/ram oi Sitari ghare bari kene he//ram oi Sitari ghare bari/ram oi itare bandhowa/ram oi hengul tire bire
kare he//ram oi larijoaqai/ram oi Ramchandrank kowagai/ram oi Sitai barat dhari asehe//ram oi ruithai ahiso/ram oi dai lai anagai/ram oi maniki madhuri dhane he//ram oi khui thai ahiiso/ram oi biva kai anagai/ram oi hai ase kanaar saman he//ram oi alani dalani/ram oi pakha chaparani/rum oi amar hale bhar bhagehe//ram oi teo napatiai/ram amar Balorame/ram oi teobole soali anehe//ram oi lari joagai/ram oi sahurak kowagai/ram oi bandhokhi senduria alihe//

i.e. O Gopal! don’t call from the back, we are going to perform joran, clean the path, we are going to celebrate joran. Wait oh crane! inform us, how is the Sita’s house. Sita’s house is built of brick, it is glittering with hengul. Run and tell Ramchandra that Sita is on holy fasting. We have sown paddy, go and harvest maniki madhuri rice. O
Rām, we have already negotiated, you go and merry her. She is as tall as to reach your ear, O Rām!! the path is rough, O, our Balorām donot believe, he wants, bride yet, O, Rām, run and tell your father-in-law to construct a smooth (senduriā) path.

2) SONG SUNG AT THE TIME OF BRIDE GROOM’S CEREMONIAL BATH:

A) On the journey for bringing water for ceremonial bath-

saioā duralir ghat/āmar dāli loi he/kāse ghanta loā Rādhā e mure loā mālā/Jamunālalai jāba læge nakaribā helā/jai hātate Daibakir/jai hāte sasaruā/jai kānate Daibakir sonā/jai dingite Daibakir/jai swarupār mādali/jai lāh sāl Daibakir bālā/jai dhal patar mekhelā/jai ujutit singile/jai læge garganya photā/jai dighe dighall/jai chitakar māralī/jai o i jen gakular ālī/jai gakular ālīte/jaidaie khoje karhe/jai komal dhunduli hen bhari/jai ekhere eperā/jai dekhisō Jamunā/jai dhaue tale bale kare/Kadam pari ase hālīe/tulim kar ghāte pānī e/jei ghāte bopādeo qā snān karisā/sei ghāte tolagai pānī he/oparate jali āse thupi thupi tarā/Daibakie pānitole/nāse apesara/jalat bure māri phul-chandān-tulasi/ki mayā phul-chandān-tulasi/rai ki joāhe phul-chandān-tulasi/ki mayā phul chandān tulasi/ rai ki joāhe phul chandān tulasi.....(the song describes the bridegroom's mother as Daibaki, the mother of Lord Krishna. In the first part of the song, her ceremonial wearings are described, then her sensational mind and then the path is described as the path of Gokul. The tank or river, from where the water would be lifted is described as holy river Yamuna.)

When the bridegroom is late to come to the ceremonial bathing place, then, he is teased and the women folk sing that, the mother is in searching of the groom and
he is proceeding to Kundil Nagar, the place of Rukmini to play ghilā. Then they request him with song to come hurriedly, as the women folk are waiting for him.

Then oil is poured on the head of the bridegroom and the women folk sing: tāmol thiya kari dhire tele dibā/ai Rām, sugandha malati tele he/sugandha mālati haokhe parbati/ai Rām, bighini bhatiāi jāokhe/tele sikemikāi sikune bopāti/ai Rām gale sikemikāimani/muthire bhitarē kihe sikemikāi/hengul hāitālarphani he/te lisāmarpirākhani e hare/gada padmar khurā/tāte bahi nowān kare sonar sekura. i.e., pour oil slowly from the top of erected betel nut, pour scented oil for removal of all the impediments/Oil is glittering on the beautiful guy, the neck is glittering with jewel, what is there in the fist? Comb of hengul-haitāl is there. He is sitting on a pirā of good quality wood which stands (khurā) are of Lord Vishnu's material and he, who is like a piece of gold is being bathed.

3) SONGS OF GATHIAN KHUNDA:

The day before the marriage ceremony, a special rite is performed in some villages. A kind of well-scented root is husked and then some specific songs are sung. Two such songs collected from the field are cited below. It is worth mentioning that, these type of songs are almost similar in the whole Upper Assam area. However, in songs given below are slightly different from those collected by P. Goswami.10

10 Goswami P.: Bāramāhar Tera Git, P.27
1) sāto āvatie ai Rām gāthiyān khundise gathiyān khundise kar para ānila ai rām gandhe 
gāthiyāne, gandhe gāthiyāne/ kar para ānila patā rām hari e e kar parā ānila patā/ ujani
raiyare ai rām gandhe gāthiyāne gandhe gāthiyāne./nāmani raiyare patā rām hari e e
nāmani raiyare patā/ sāto āvatie ai rām gāthiyān khundise ai rām gāthiyān khundise/ uruli
ejokā diyā rām hari e e uruli ejokā diyā/ darār māk ai rām sarba kulakshini sarba
kulakshini./mājate singilā patā rām hari e e mājate singile patā .kainār māk ai rām sarba
sulakshini sarba sulakshini./ apuni lagile jorā rām hari e apuni lagilā jorā/ sato
ayatiye.....etc.

2) bārite āsile kekorā kāth/bārhaie pāi pelāi lagāle sās/sāsi suruki karile nangal/bale bātile
māti hal sāh/tāle marile sariyah sāli/gajile sariyah pithibi dhāki/perile sariyah telnīr
sāle/sei tele tupi kehelai lāge/ābiai Sankarar biālai lage he ābiai Sankarar biālai lāge.

4) SONGS OF DAYANDIYĀ :

This ritual is performed at the dawn of the marriage day and curd is besmeared
from the head to toe of the bride or bridegroom by his/her mother with a betel leaf. Then
this song is sung: jai saudise pohar hal/jai banare harini/jai banate lukāle/jai pakhi
dasodise gal/dayan diā dayan diā e/aponāre āi/bhāle kari dayan diā/hrīdai jurāi."i.e.It
becomes morning, O Jadumoni (name of Lord Krishna), get up, now the deers of jungle
absconds, the birds begin to fly from their nest, perform dayan well (besmear curd well
). She is your own mother, perform dayan well, so that his heart be cooled (tranquilled).
Another kind of song related to marriage ceremony is very interesting. These are teasing songs. These songs are sometimes almost nonsensical, in the sense that hardly any coherence of thought is found in them. In the process of extemporization fancy becomes wild and all kinds of things tend to get mixed up. The veteran namatis usually possess a repertory of good and often poetic songs. Extemporization is best observed in certain humorous situations which do not quite form part of the regular stages of the marriage, but which make for fun which is expected by all. It so happens that the bridegroom's party make slighting remarks upon the bride in order to extol the excellences of the groom. The bride's companions do not take the insult laying down and make proper retorts. The contest usually ends in good humour but not in every case. These hits are known as jorā-nām or retort or capping songs in Upper Assam and khiijā git or "teasing songs" in Lower Assam (Cp.Hindi-Khijā, to tease)11. After the bridegroom's party arrive at bride's house, i.e. at the marriage pandal, the both party's namatis (women singers) exchange songs and they compose extempore songs. Each party try to lampoon their opponent with song and this is very pinching.

SONGS OF TOLANI BIYĀ:

Of the various ceremonies connected with the lifecycle, tolani biyā or Sānti biyā is another one. There are some songs connected with this ceremony and these songs are also confined to the women folk. When a girl child attains puberty, some special rites are

11 Goswami, P. ibid PP.59-60
to be observed and on the seventh day of attainment of puberty, a ceremony is to be observed which is called tolani biya, nowai tolani biya or sanctibiya. The songs connected with the ceremony are almost similar to the biyanams in form, rhythm and melody but the contents of the songs are different. The girl is advised and alerted, sometimes the mother of the girl is ridiculed through the songs. As the ceremony vis-a-vis the songs are confined to the women-folk, therefore, women folk-mind is reflected through the songs.

Examples of some songs are cited below:-

(i) AT THE TIME OF CEREMONIAL BATH:

"jai hendolat kapor thai/jai olai ah komal dai/jai tore lagar samani mite/jai satate
erili sale bare kapor/jatarat erili paji/marar bare gharat umali asili/matri madali saja........

i.e. Keeping your clothes come komaldai, you are called on by your companion. You have kept half woven cloth at your loom, half done bobbin at the spinning wheel. You were playing in your mother's room making earthen toy.

(ii) A SONG WHICH ADVISE THE GIRL IN HER NEW STAGE:

"deutar padulit raktajaba, etia tumi sant halai/ santai hai aideu santi haba, purusar
kas saja najaaba/purse nubuje tirotar mol, tiriye epahi parijatat phul/sei parijatat bhomara
i.e., There is red jabā flower at the gate of father's house, now you have attained puberty, so be calm, donot go near a male person ; they donot know the value of women. They donot think that, woman is an eternal flower (pārijāt phul). That eternal flower is neglected as madār (coral flower) if hornet collects honey from it.

c) SONGS OF SEASONAL AND AGRICULTURAL FESTIVALS :

Assam is an agricultural land and hence , like the other agricultural societies, there are also many agricultural and seasonal festivals among the tribes and non-tribes. Of these seasonal and agricultural festivals of Assam, Bihu, rather the three Bihus- the Rongāli or Bohāq Bihu, the Kongāli or Kāti Bihu and the Bhogāli or Māgh Bihu is the most important in the district. Bohāq Bihu is celebrated from the beginning of new Assamese calender and from the agricultural point of view, it comes at seed time, just after the first rains. Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu is celebrated in mid January, that is in winter and it is connected with winter harvest. Kāti or kangāli bihu is celebrated in mid-october, i.e., in the autumn season, and it is meant for the welfare of the traditional winter crop, especially paddy , the main agriculture.

The springtime Bohāq Bihu festival is the most cherished festival of joy and merry making not only in the whole district of Sonitpur, but also in the whole Upper and Central
Assam region. Singing and dancing by young men and women is one salient feature of the festival. There are two types of song connected with the festival—bihu song and huchari song. The Bihu songs are unique in their musical contents, literature and sociocultural significance. Therefore, we are discussing them separately under a separate heading. The second type, i.e., the huchari songs, although connected with the same festival, are different from the bihu songs in their content, performing procedure etc.

Huchari is performed by group of men. A huchari party visits the household and with singing and dancing like movements, they bade complements. This kind of songs usually have a religious overtune. A Vaishnava flavour is seems to be underlain in these songs. It is worth mentioning that, nāms (already discussed under the heading 'songs of prayer and supplication') are also performed as huchari in the district. Though, dhol is generally used for performing, huchari, these type of huchari is performed with khol also. These songs are the praisal of Lord Krishna and Guru Sankardeva. However, though these nāms are called huchari here, actually these are not huchari song. The actual huchari songs are seems to be composition of the Ahom period.

Examples of huchari songs:

krishnāi murare bakul phul epāhi,

niyar pāi mukali hol ai

gobindai Rām.

i.e. Being soaked in the dew, on the lord of Krishna, the bakul (a holy flower) unfloled its petals, O Gobinda, O Rām.)
deutār padulit gondhāise mādhuri
keteki malemāi òi Gobindāi Rām.

i.e., the smell of mādhuri is coming from the household of deutā (lit. father but meant for an honourable person )keteki is being smelt from there , O Gobinda O Rām!

On the occasion of kātibihu, holy tulasi plant is planted and then simple prayer like songs are sung:

tulasira tale tale mrīga pahu sare.

 tāke dekhi rāmachandrai dhenu sara dhare.

i.e. under the plant tulasi, grazes the deer, seeing which Rāmachandra gets ready with his bow and arrow.

There are practically no songs specific to māgh bihu. However, being a Vaishnavite dominant area, the Vaishnavite folk of the district perform choral nām throughout the urukā night (the day before the bihu) either in Nāmghar or bhelāghar. Vaishnavite song like rayā rayā...or āsasthar tale.............. are very common in this occasion.

'Another important seasonal festival, apart from the Bihus, is known as Mohoho which is
held in the full-moon night of the Asamese month of Aghon, (November-December). On this occasion groups of boys with sticks on hand, some of them with crude and rather grotesque make-up, move from house to house singing songs and collectings alms. The songs known as mahkheda git (lit song of driving away mosquitos) in the Kamrup region are mostly doggerels that are recited in a crudely simple monotonous tune to which time is kept by the pounding of the sticks on the ground.\textsuperscript{12} Mohoho is observed by some Baro people in the district and therefore, mahkheda git is available among them. The language and content are almost similar to the mahkheda gits of other region. The text of a mahkheda git, collected from Selaikhâti area is cited below:

\begin{verbatim}
ahoho mohoho, mah khediba tokan la.
mah khedi jei kalsi pāi, sei kalsi ojāi khāi
ojāi bole jāibo, tupur purā khāibo.
tupar porā nahai lon, sāul kare don don.
hal balo siralut, moi dilo pāli.
kheti kori pār korilo barbaruār ghāti.
parbatate marilo ring, mahar bhāgil bhāl sing, etc.
\end{verbatim}

In the above mentioned song, the society of the Baro people is reflected. The mentioning of kalasi (pitcher) in the song is nothing but the pitcher of homemade rice beer, which is the most essential thing or part and parcel of Bodo social life. It can be

\textsuperscript{12} Datta, Sarma, Das \textit{Op-Cit} P.61
assumed from the song that, the mohoho party wants to be offered with rice beer, while Kamrupi mohoho song says of offerings of uncooked rice or penny only. The Baros are basically agriculturist and therefore, there is a clear mentioning of kheti karā (to cultivate). Mentioning of tupur porā or ton and hāl bālo siralut, moi dilo pāri are common in the mohoho songs of Palasbari-Chaigaon, Sarthebari-Byaskuchi area or Nalbari and Belsor area of Kamrup. Interestingly, though the area, from where the song is collected is a Baro inhabiting area, the language of the song is in Assamese. It might be assumed that, the song is perhaps migrated from Kamrup and is transformed to a local version.

BIHU SONGS: SONGS OF YOUTHFUL EXUBERANCE:

The most distinctive type of folksongs of Assam is the Bihu song, songs of youthful exuberance, which are associated with the springtime Bihu festival—the most celebrated festival of Assam. There are two aspects of the Bihu songs—some are meant for the Bihu festival and some other are songs of love and yearning. Bihu, being a community festival, and that all members take part in it, there cannot be any obscene or objectionable elements in them—such songs are performed in a huchari party with huchari nām. But there are some other songs, which are sung exclusively by the young people which depict their youthfulness and love. These are sung by young men and women taking shelter in


14 Goswami, P.: Bāramāhar Teragit, PP 122-123.
the groves to dance and sing. It is often seen in the district during the days of the month of Bohāg that the young men and sometimes women also perform Bihu song and dance on the village path at night. The Bihu festival itself is considered to be the relic of a bygone fertility festival: through it primitive men wanted to "encourage" the fertility of Mother Earth.\textsuperscript{15} There was a time, when bihu songs are treated as 'uncivilized' and then these songs were performed in a lonely place, specially at late night in a grove exclusively either of young men or young women. Some songs composed in such a situation had a distinct erotic sentiment and these songs (or this character) are current now-a-days also.

"The Bihu songs are normally quatrains with alternate rhymes. While minor modifications to suit individual purposes are made. The songs on the whole circulate like much handled coins, and boys and girls repeat them in certain exquisite melodic patterns suitable for the rhythm of the Bihu dance. There are hundreds and hundreds of such songs. Some of them, judged by language and tone, must be more than a century old; some are of comparatively recent origin, and the stock is constantly being added to with up-to-date compositions. Sung antiphonally, Bihu songs are excellent poetry. They describe beauty, both of nature and of the loved one, express adoration of the sweetheart, glorify youth, and speak frustration and sorrow."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Das, J: Folklore of Assam, P. 101.

\textsuperscript{16} Datta, Sarma & Das: Op-Cit P.62.
Some examples of Bihu songs having erotic sentiment collected from different old people are cited below:

1) tai jābi moholoi /mai jām jākailoi /dingi meli meli sābi/biringā murhatēlāmol thoi āhime/herā pālo buli khabī. [you will go for tend buffalo, I shall go to fishing with a jākai, you will look at me expanding your neck, I shall keep arca-nut under biringā creep, you will take it pretending to be lost and found.]

2) Čāpāri ĉāpāri mai tolo bābari/bāye singile pāt/bāye nemātotei bhinihīye mātīle/Khulsālee āji ṭhāk./thākili thākili bhālakē karili/mekhelāti kihare sekā/bhinihirghārata kaladi kātote/sitiki parile ethā.

3) Khulsālee khulsālee nakaribi khulsālee/bukute nerengā lai/bukure ai nerengā bhāngiba pāro mai/pathālī kolāte loi.

4) tomar kathā bhābī ráti nāhe topani senāi ráti nāhe topani/thāko tomarē kathā koījētene kori rātī to kātālo rātī to kātālo/soā gāru sābati lai.

5) tomarē chobiti kāqajat ānkilai/O duārat olomāi thalō/āhote esumā jāote esumā/O pathālī kolāte lalo.

Presently these songs are considered as vulgar ones. Now-a-days, as Bihu songs are performed openly, so, songs are sanskritized. However, there are some songs, which are
composition of recent times. The idea of the above mentioned fifth song is similar to a song of recent time: \textit{loi áhisa camerá, tuli loi jám ceherá, duárat olomái tham, batáhate hālibá, molaino sáí hāhibá, dāngi áni esumá khām}. Present day Bihu songs often reflect some contemporary events. Sometimes, some contemporary social problems are also focussed through these songs. As for example, once, intercaste marriage was not sanctioned by the society. So through Bihu songs, lovers of low-caste express their agony as: \textit{tomálai sáote japana deote/phutile ághayá hule/tomár mane gale moro mane gale/ki kariba kalitá kule}. \textit{i.e. while looking for you and crossing the fencing, a thorn pricked on my foot. If you desire, if I also desire, what can the kalita caste do? or áh au sariháni, jáo Sariháni, khāo sariyah phul. Koneno bujiba hariyáni soáli māri jáo Kalitá kul}. But now-a-days, there are some other burning problems. A song \textit{Hāyai Gopal porá kapál, bhāgyat nái sākari} (Oh Gopal, my luck is burnt, no employment in my luck.) is an example of reflection of young men's aspiration as well as the burning problem of unemployment in recent time. On the other hand, there are numerous Bihu songs current in the area, which express development and change of the society such as the opening of tea gardens, introduction of modern transport and communication system, the advent of westernization, infiltration of foreigners etc. Even, though introduction of Maruti car, T.V., V.C.P. etc. are very very recent event in Assam, they are also covered by the Bihu songs.

Some recent national events also managed to take place in Bihu songs. References of Indian freedom struggle, attainment of India's freedom in 1947, Chinese
aggression of 1962, the anti-foreigners movement of 1979-84, ULFA problem etc. are found mention in some Bihu songs. These songs obviously provide us material for social history of Assam. One example of such song: Simántaloï gaisâne, NCC laisâne, Chinäi jadi guli kare buku pāti labâne? Unnaïssha bāsasthi san, Chinäi kare ākraman. Unnaïssha unasi san, bidesire āndolan etc. (Have you gone to the border? Have you registered yourself as an N.C.C.? 1962, it was Chinese aggression; 1979, it was anti foreigners movement.)

Though Bihu songs are basically lyrical compositions, thus some songs are important from socio-cultural point too. Mentioning of various aspects of social and cultural life of Assam is very often in Bihu songs. Sonitpur district is rich in Bihu song, which bears the salient features of Bihu songs. However, due to some socio-economic change, like urbanization, and industrialization, spread of modern education system etc., the festival and the songs too losing its old functional character.

(e) BIHU-LIKE SONGS IN TRIBAL LANGUAGES :-

It has been mentioned in the introduction chapter that, there are a considerable number of Mising, Boro and Karbi people in the district. They have their own festivals similar to Bihu festival in significance and manner of observance. The identical festivals are, āli-āve-Irigāng of the Mising (they observe Bohag Bihu also) and baisāgu of the Boros. All the festivals are considered to be relic of a bygone fertility as like as Bihu
festival and the songs associated with those festivals are also of love and yearning like the Bihu songs.

'The Mising oi-nilam songs are particularly rich specimens of love poetry, often with an air of sadness about them. The compositions, which are short pieces and changed with such restraint, suggestiveness and delicacy that they almost defy translation'.17 There are numerous oi-nilam songs current in the Mising dominant areas of the district. Example:

Kombong po:to a:dubong
nevi nengan ngandubong
kebang gvkm suvemvl
asin me: po sakpodung.

i.e., as soon as the spring season comes, the green vegetation of the Nature germinates and in keeping tune with this germination, regeneration when the common masses in the society assemble thier minds fill with unfathomable jubilation.

The Boro-kachari lives in the district have also their own love lyrics which depict their agony of love-sick heart and simplicity of mind. Though the songs are simple, the poetic beauty of some songs are very fine.

17 Datta, B: The Misings and Their Folklore quoted from 'A Hand Book of the Folklore Materials of North East India by Datta, Sarma & Das, p.65.
SONGS OF LOVE AND YEARNING: THE ENDURING PASSION:

While Assamese folklore is rich in songs of love and yearning that expresses enduring passion, particularly in Goalparyiya dialect, Sonitpur is almost untraced in this regard. However, there are a lot of songs of love and yearning among the Nepalese of the district. These songs are lyrical in nature and flowered with literary beauty. Examples of such songs are cited below:

1) pānirā pāro rimi rā jhimi, baleshi tururu
   lāgāko mayā samjhēra lyauda mon runcha dhururu.
   i.e. It is raining and the water is pouring from the roof of the house. My mind weep when I remember my love and lovers.

2) Himāloī culī tyo pari pattī/hiun kahīle jamin chā/bageko pānirā undekā citta/kāhāgoi thāmin chā.
   i.e. when will the snow gather over the Himalayan peak?
   when will stop the running stream and flying heart?

3) Yes bālā Maicāng ke gārdoī holi
   Pidimā bāserā keke kurā soctiho
   maloi noi samjhērā
   Chang chang gaire chāhāre kholā
abta choro kudne bho holā
Rāt pare pāchi āmālai soddho ho
khoi bābu bhanerā.

i.e., This time, what is doing by my beloved? Perhaps she is sitting on the floor and thinking about me. The river is flowing and like this my son may run to and fro. At night, he might asked, O mother, where is my father.

As most of the Nepali youth serve in Army and they reside far from their beloved, so, the songs are the expressions of enduring passions. In the first two songs, the enduring passion is poetically metaphored with natural phenomenon and in the third song, an imaginary picture of a household's daily life is depicted. Such songs are very popular among the Nepali people of the district.

LULLABIES, NURSERY RHymes AND CHILDREN GAME SONGS:

Nisukanigīt and dhāinām is meant for lullaby and nursery rhyme in Assamese. Nisukanī is the word used to mean the act of soothing a weeping baby to be silent and Dhāi means a nurse, who takes care of a baby. The difference between the Nisukanigīt and Dhāinām is rather thin- and hence both terms are considered to be identical. The Nisukanigīt or Dhāinām current in the district are almost similar to those of other districts. The most popular Nisukanigīt of Assam is perhaps bārite bagari ruba e and it is equally
popular in the district too. [The song is translated as "Our little one will go to sleep/He will plant a bagari plum in the orchard/The bagari plums will ripen and drop./Our little one will pick them up and eat."]

Another popular song is: sivali e nāhibi rāti ,tore kāne kāli lagāme bāti can be translated as: O Sivāli (vixen), donot come at night; otherwise I shall cut your ears and will make säki (lamp) of it'. Sometimes one suffix is added with the song: 'Sor,sor,sor,Sivāli sor, dharibā pārile nāk kātim tor which means,"thief, thief, thief, vixen is thief ; if you are caught up, your nose will be cut". Apart from these popular Nisukanis, some other Nisukanis are also current in some places of the district. Examples of such songs collected from the field are cited below:

1) Āmare moinā subalai dharise/Oi rām khābalai āmani karehe./māk gol kehelai bisāri ānagai/Oi rām moinā laghone āsehe/bāpek nāikiā gol banijaloī/Oi rām moināoi āniba ki-he/Moināoi āniba junukā lagoā/Oi rām hatidātar phanihe. i.e., Our little one is going to sleep , O Rām, he is refusing to take food, where has mother gone ? Find out-her whereables. O rām, moinā (the little one) is abstinent from food. The father has gone for trading (banij). O rām, what will he bring for moinā. He will bring a comb of irory ornamented with junukā.

(ii) raba lāhari nāpāiso āhari/barār juriso āsahe/kino barā bāni khundu pithāguri/tomāloī

handhi jam laruhe. (wait dear, I cannot manage time, I am husking barā rice. After grinding barā rice, I shall prepare lāru for you.)

There are some lullabies which are akin to what is known as formula tale which can be spun out indefinetely. Songs such as Jonbāi e beji etā diā, bejino kelai monā, silābalai, monāno kelai, dhān bharābalai, dhanno kelai hāti kinibalai, hātino kelai, uthi phuribalai... [O sister moon, give me a needle, why a needle? To sew a wallet, why a wallet? To keep money. Why do you want money? To buy an elephant. Why an elephant? To ride on it ...] or 'O phul O phul nuphula kiya, garueje āq khāi moino phulim kiya? O garu, O garu āq khawa kiya .....[O flower, O flower, why donot you bloom? The cow rips my shoots, why then should I bloom? O cow, O cow, why do you nip the shoots? .....] etc.

There are some lullabies among the tribes of the district. An example of a song collected from a Boro village is given below:

Beng kānde tararat saparamatir talat/na-bowārir sāna kānde, phatā kānir
talat/kaur kānde keleng keseng, bāhar āgalat hai bāhar āgalat/jāhibi jāhibi, dhamak
maribi, nisala phandat pari bhīji maribi.

The above mentioned song is a humourous song and the language of the song seems to be in Kamrupi dialect. Perhaps, the song is migrated from Kamrup.
The area is rich in rhymes associated with childrens' game song. These songs may be termed as Larā dhemālir git (Childrens' game song). These songs are filled with the mention or depiction of birds, beasts and other objects of nature, as well as the social surroundings too. Some songs, current in the area are:-

(i) bagali e sabāhalai mātisilo nagali kiya/gaisilo qaisilo bālate barasune pāle/sakhir ghar somālo sengdai kukure khāle/sei sei nāhibi nāhibi japaṇā dei.(O crane why did not you attend the sabāḥ (congregational prayer), I went, I went, it rained on the way, I entered my friends house, but chengdoi (name of fiery dog) bit me. Chei chei (off with you, you cur), donot you jump over the japaṇā (fencing/hurdle/fencing of bamboo).

(ii) Sālikī e latu thou/bhāt hal sāk hal-dālat pari khā/sālikir mākar tinidāl sulī/eikhinte āsile gobar khusari/konobāi lai gal dingi musari.

(iii) āgor gor māgur jāli/qhorār nākat dilo jāli/qhorā gal uttare, sāl mase gojare/sālār girgirani māgurar dhou/Sitale sit khāi kare rou rou.

It is observed that most of the songs are having alliterative effect and the songs are usually fanciful. Most of the songs do not carry a meaning or central idea, but the alliterative sounds and rhymed endings produce a pleasant sensation in the minds of the children participants.
All the songs mentioned above are very popular among the children of the district, particularly in the rural areas. It is worth mentioning that as childrens of now-a-days are more interested in the games like cricket etc. and enjoying T.V. programmes, these folk-games and rhymes are losing their popularity gradually.

SONGS OF JEST AND HUMOUR :

Jest and humour in some folk song is very often. Though jest and humour is underlying in different types of folksongs discussed already, there are some songs in Assamese oral tradition, which are concerned to humourous entertainment only and those could not be discussed under the aforesaid headings. Hence those songs are discussed separately. Sometimes banter and social satire run through some of these songs. Tāmol sorar git (song of betelnut thief), Chāhpuranar git (song of evil effects of tea drinking) etc. are such kind of song current in Lower Assam region and some junā's with lighter vein as like as Pasalār junā (which describes the poor culinary skills of the daughter-in-law of a household), kapāhar junā (describing the outrageous deeds of a house-wife whose skills at spinning and weaving are atrocious), Nāngalarjunā (the funny song of the plough) etc. are current in Upper Assam region. The culture of the district is akin to the culture of Upper Assam and hence the junās are by and large current in the district.

There are some poetry associated with the Bahuās. These are humorous songs or poetry recited or sung by bahuā in a gathering with some hilarious acting or body
movement. Bahuā goā is a part and parcel of a Bhāonā performance. Wit and retort is a remarkable character of these songs. One example of a rhyme sung by bahuā is cited below: Āi sakale uruli diba, rājie haridhwani kariba, āsirbād kariba gosāideo, moi mandamotie kariso sew, kheno āhise māhi pehi, kheno āhise khuri, sabāko pranām kariso moi hātior kari.... āitkai bopāi āsile sāt basarar saru, moi rokhisilo tetiā garu; bopāir tiritrotā nāikiā bopāi āsile danguā; ujani-nāmoni keu tāṅgani soālinidile bopāi heno bhanguā.... etc.

BALLADS AND OTHER NARRATIVE SONGS:

A tale or story in the verse is generally termed as ballad. The term used in Assamese in this connection is Mālitā. The Assamese ballads so far collected either in full or in part might be classified as:

1) Historical ballad: these ballad are related to historical event and character e.g. Barphukanar git, Manirām Dewānar git etc.

2) Ballads of wonder tale: this kind relates to wonder tale e.g. Phul-konwar Monikonwarar git.

3) Ballads of cante fable: ballads which are components of narratives of the cante fable type e.g. Kamalā kunwarar git, Tejimalār git etc.

These ballads are current in Sonitpur district as well as other parts of Assam. However, some wordings and the tune of singing slightly differs from place to place. One segment of Manirām Dewānar git collected in the field is cited below:
āji kīye bāre, sukur Manirām
kāli kīye bāre, sukur Manirām
Manirām Dewānak phāsilai nilegai
gharare sālate uthile kukur.
Manirāmar jīyeke dhān bāndisile 
tale khurā lagā pāsi 
Mangal bārar dinā milile amangal
Manirāmak dilegai phāsi.

i.e., What day is today? It is Friday, O Manirām. What day it was yesterday? Friday, O Manirām. Manirām has been taken to hang. Dog has climbed the roof. Manirām's daughter husked rice, under a pāsi with khurā (stand). As ill luck would have it on Tuesday, Manirām was hanged.

The song has a pathos tune and some beliefs of our folklife is depicted here. Climbing of dog to the roof is a sign of misfortune and that is mentioned in connection with Manirām's slain in the first freedom struggle in Sept. 1857. Apart from this song, other Assamese ballads are also current in the district. As, those are already discussed by many folklorists, so, those have not been repeated here.

One narrative song, may be termed as Pagalā-pāgalir git current in the district is similar in content to pagalā-pārvatir git. "Here, pārvatir of pagalā-pārvatir git is replaced by pāgalā. This song is nothing but dialogue between pagalā (mad man) and his wife
pāgali (mad woman) and their squabble. This song may be called as a realistic ballad, as ordinary affair of quarrel between a man and a woman is the theme of the song. The narrative thread in this ballad is very thin.¹⁹

It is worth mentioning that, the term mālīṭā is used for ballad in Assamese and the same term is also used for songs associated with dhulīyā ojā (lit. dhuliyā -drummer, ojā-expert). The drummers recite and sing some narrative songs when they perform ojā with a dhol. These mālīṭā's are etiological with a myth of creation of dhol or betelnut etc. Along with these mālīṭā's sometimes some satirical compositions are also performed where extempore satire and humour is the core of the song. As these satirical songs donot contain any story, therefore, these are not ballads. The bahuā songs, described in the previous heading are also narrative song and sometimes they carry a humorous irrelevant story, but here also the narrative thread is very thin.

MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL:

There may be some other songs, which are not included in the already discussed categories or sub-categories and those may be placed in this category. Songs related with rowing of boatmen, elephant catching, fishing etc. are to be called as 'work song'. There are a few songs categorised as 'work song' in Assamese folk-lore as a whole.

¹⁹ Goswami, P.: Ballads and Tales of Assam, p.53.
There are some rhymes, which are used by the adolescent boys to tease their mates. In this connection, the adolescent boys of a particular village (say the name of the village is Mālar gaon) tease their mates of other village (say, the name of the village is Bhakat gaon) and vice-versa, as the example cited below:-

Boys of Bhakat Gaon :- "mālargāor maluā
tinipukhurīt paloā."

Boys of Mālar gaon :- "bhakat gāor bhagā saru
tāte sijāy gelā ganu." etc.

These rhymes are generally short, two three lined and nonsensical. They vary from village to village but the rhymes transmit from generation to generation. They create rhymes according to the name of a village and always try to creat alliteration.

PROSE NARRATIVES

Prose narratives or oral narrative in prose is an important division of oral literature and it is important from the point of bulk and significance. Oral narratives may broadly be classified in three categories, viz.myths, legends and folktales. The natures of the three forms of narratives have been brought out by W.R. Halliday as follows. "Myth represent the answers given by the human imagination to the problems of how did evil enter the world?.... Myth... represents an early and simple form of science, marchen or fairy story
represents the simple antecedent of imaginative literature. It has no ulterior object, as a rule, except to afford entertainment, though it is true that certain specialized forms...e.g., the beast fable of the parable... may be used to illustrate or point a moral... If myth is the prototype of science and the fairy story the prototype of imaginative literature, legend is history of a primitive king. It differs from fairy story being related, to some actual person, place or social or religious phenomenon. It may so far overlap with myth that its purpose may be aetiological. Its object may be to explain the origin of an institution, place name or social custom, or why a particular religious ceremony is performed. The classification here of myth and legend is not exclusive.²⁰

"In Assam, Hindu mythology in general is as much a part of the religio-cultural heritage of the Hindus of Assam as of Hindus elsewhere. But at the same time, as the Hinduism prevalent here has its own peculiarities, as also has the local stock of Hindu mythology its own character. Vaishnavism having a pervasive influence among the Hindus, Vaishnava myths, particularly those associated with the Neo-Vaishnava order, are extremely popular.²¹ Apart from those, as Assam as well as Sonitpur district was a centre of Śaivism and Śaktism, so there are a large number of stories or myth-legend related to Lord Śiva and Mother Goddess. Moreover, the creation myths of Boro-Kachari, Mising and Karbi are also current among the respective tribe in the district.

²⁰ Halliday, W.R.: Indo-European Folktales and Greek Legend, PP 5-8
It is worth mentioning that the difference between myths and legends found in the district, as well as Assam as a whole, is very thin. However, many legends current in the district are rather combination of the myth and legends, which have religious and ritualistic significance. Example of such myth-legend current in the district is cited below:

1) Once the āśhrma (dwelling) of the great saint Vasistha was near the modern city of Tezpur. One day, when the saint was praying, suddenly he found a little baby in the jungle. He brought the baby to this āśhrma and it was brought up there as the saint's daughter. (He adopted the child as his daughter). The girl was named as Kanyakā. The girl grew up day by day like the moon and attained youthful age. From her youth, she wished to get Mahādeva as her husband. She prayed Mahādeva for the purpose and Mahādeva denied to fulfill her wish without the consent of his beloved wife Īmā. Then Kanyakā ran to Īmā and begged her recommendation. Īmā hesitated to permit her and told that, if she could melt herself with tears to touch the feet of Mahādeva and be unite with Umā, then her wish might be fulfilled. Then Kanyakā incarned herself to Bhairavi with untied hair and she began to flow tears. The flow of tears became to be a river and it touched Rudrapada (foot of Mahādeva- a holy rock known as Rudrapada on a hillock near Tezpur). The river is known as Bharali (derived from Bhairavi) which was also known as Bhattārikā or Bhairavi. 22 The target of the river is Biswanath, where is Umātumoni (Umā's dwelling) to unite with Umā.

22 Chaliha, S.: Sonitpuer Sandipikā, P.5
Biswanath is about 60 k.m. from Tezpur in the eastward by the water route. The river Bharali is changing its direction gradually to the eastward direction and therefore, it is believed that, it would unite with the Brahmaputra at Biswanath one day. The legend (may it be a myth) represent the answer given by the human imagination to the problem of why the Bharali river changes its flow, though it is a geographical problem of natural phenomenon.

2) the story of Vānasura, Ushā, Anirudha and battle of Hari-Hara is a religious myth-legend. The story deals with how the name of Tezpur (the present head quarter of Sonitpur district) derives.

3) Another story, which is also religious and connected with Purana-mentioned event, tells us that the temple of Nagsankar in the district was created for the nose part (nāg<nāk, lit. nose) of Umā fell down there when Mahaveda carried the dead body of Umā after the death of Uma at Daksha Yajna.

Apart from those myth-legends, there are innumerable legends connected with local deities of Assam and shrines, holy men and women, rivers and hills and so on. Legends connected with Vaishnava saints and historical and semi-historical figures like Ārimatta, Jongal-Balahu, Gadadhar Simha, Jaymati etc. are also widely current. It is said that, once the district was under Arimatta's kingdom. Therefore, legend about

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Arimatta is a popular legend of the district. Arimatta killed his father Ramchandra on the bank of the river Dikrong, now in Lakhimpur district and to free from the sin committed by him, he arranged to perform śrādha and grinded rice powder was prepared to entertain the brahmins and other invitees. But, nobody accepted the invitation as Arimatta was sinful of his father's slain. The pithāguri (rice-powder) kept in a place now known as 'Karchantala' were in vein. In the course of time, the heap of pithāguri there, transformed into a mound. The heap is still there and is called pithāguridoul.

Apart from the myths and legends, there are some purely entertaining folktales. In case of Assamese folklore, a term 'sādhukathā' is used for an oral tale. The term is derived from Sanskrit sādhu, a marchent and kathā, a tale, meaning thereby that a sādhukathā is a tale told by a wandering marchent. The word sādhu usually means good natured or having morality and as most of the tales have a morality, therefore also the term might have been used. "It is a generic term signifying anything from a myth to a fable, though of course, the term 'upakhyana', episode in an epic like the Mahabharata or in some old Purana, for instance, the upakhyana of Savitri. The tale told to amuse, the true tale in English is usually called nursery tale or fairy tale. The term folktale is also used." P. Goswami suggests a term Āmodi Sādhu (Entertaining tale) to mean folktale or German term 'marchen'. Assamese folklore, as well as folklore of Sonitpur is very rich
in this type of tales. The vast body of the Assamese folktales may be classified as: 1) animal tales, 2) tales of supernatural, 3) jokes on humorous tales, 4) trickster tales, and 5) cumulative tales. 27

**ANIMAL TALES** (Type 1-299): There are some tales, where animal plays a great role; sometimes exclusively animals are the characters and sometimes both animal and human being take part as characters. The animal characters also behave like a human-being—they can speak, think, and act as like as a human being up to a limit, where there is no difference between man and animal. The animal tales, collected by Laxminath Bezbaruah and P. Goswami are very popular in the district. However, two examples of most popular animal tales current in the district are cited below:

1) THE FOX AND THE MONKEY: A fox and a monkey are two friends. They observe that a man comes forward with a plentiful of banana in a basket (pāsi) on his head. They play tricks to frighten the man making some noises. The man has thrown away the basket. The monkey tells the fox that the man may come again to take the basket and hence the banana should be kept on the top of the tree. As the fox can not climb a tree, so, the monkey tells him that he would carry on the basket to the top of the tree and he would throw down one banana after another to the fox under the tree. The basket is lifted to the tree and the monkey begins to take banana one after another and throws down the peelings to his friend. The fox asks the monkey what is done. The monkey replies that

27 Goswami, P: *Ballads and Tales of Assam*, PP. 85-113.
although he has thrown banana to him it was taken by the tree and the peeling was thrown to him. The fox being disappointed, leaves the monkey's companion.

He is thinking about a way of revenge. After some days, the fox is waiting by a patch of black arum. The monkey comes and asks what the fox is doing. The fox replies that he has been keeping watch over the king's sugarcane. The monkey wants to chew sugarcane. The fox replies that he will pay for it if he do so. The monkey requests him again and again and the fox tells him to chew one only. The monkey chews sugarcane and starts to cry and jump in the pains. Another day, the fox is sitting by a hornet's nest. The monkey comes and asks what his friend is doing there. The fox replies that he has been keeping watch over the king's drum. The monkey wants to beat it and inspite of the fox's obstruction, he beats the drum and he is bitten well by the infuriated hornets. One day, the fox is waiting by an abandoned well which is covered by spider's web. The monkey comes there and asks the fox if he is busy doing anything. The fox replies that he is appointed to watch over the royal bed. The monkey wants to sleep on the bed and inspite of the monkey's refusal, he requests him again and again. Then the fox advises him to sleep for a moment only. Then the monkey sleeps there and drops into the well and dies.

2) One day, an old man is planting arum. A fox comes and advises the man to plant arum after roasting and bundling with plantain leaves. The old man does so. The fox with his companions comes at night and steals all the bundles of roasted arum. The old man
comes to realise and he tells his wife to cry so that the foxes can heard and think that the old man is dead. They do so, the foxes comes there and want to see the kind hearted oldman's dead body. The old woman permits them to enter into the room one by one. Then the foxes enter and the door of the room is closed tightly and the oldman who is on the bed pretending death, gets up and beats them to death with a nāhar stick.

TALES OF SUPERNATURAL: WONDEROUS TALE OR MAGIC TALE OR ROMANTIC TALE (Type 300-749):

"In tales of this sort "the reins are thrown on the neck of the imagination," in the words of Hartland; and heroes and heroines with marvellous skills and achievements supernatual adversaries, magical means, often with a complex plot, are their features."\(^{28}\)

There are innumerable magic tales in Assamese folklore, as well as in Sonitpur district too. There are some tales, which are almost similar in content or motif, but slightly differs from place to place. The story of Tejimalā is one of the popular tales in the district, as well as other parts of Assam and the motif (or content) is similar to the cyndrella tale of Europe. A tale, Tejā and Tejī found in the district is slightly different from the tale collected and described by P. Goswami.\(^{29}\) The story as found in the district is described below:

\(^{28}\) Goswami, P.: Ballads and Tales of Assam, P.94
\(^{29}\) Ibid PP 95-96.
A king has two wives. Both of them has one son each. The senior wife is simple whereas the junior one is wicked. The king has gone abroad. One day, while both of the co-wives are bathing on their pond, the junior one pushed the senior into the pond and mutters: "As a big tortoise, may you stay." She changes to a big tortoise. The wicked step mother begins torture on his step son. The step son goes to the pond, the big tortoise comes and she gives him retching to eat and he becomes plump and strong. The stepmother observes it and she suggests his son to eat retching of the tortoise. The husband returns and the wicked wife pretends to be ill and tells her husband that if she is fed on the flesh of the big tortoise that is in their pond, she will be recovered (cured). The big tortoise is hunted and arranged to be cut. The son of the elder wife begins to cry. The king enquires of the reason of crying and then he expresses that, the big tortoise is nothing but his mother. Then the wicked step-mother is axed instead of the tortoise and the son of the elder queen is given the throne[ Type S 31/Q 211]

Another example of a tale of supernatural with a theme of step mother's attitude to her step child: There was a merchant (king) and after his wifes death, he marries a girl. The king has a daughter from his dead wife and his daughter is very good in weaving. She weaves jālisolā (perhaps shirt of netcloth) for his father. The merchant always uses cloth woven by his daughter only. The new wife, i.e, the step mother of the girl cannot tolerate it. Once, the merchant goes abroad. The girl is weaving. The stepmother goes to the weaving equipment, a weaving needle is taken and pierced on her head muttering as,"Go, and be a common maina." The girl transforms to a common maina. The step
mother tries to weave, but she cannot. She becomes angry and begins to tear out the weaving equipment (talsal). The bird cries, "Do not tear King's loom, do not break King's loom." She hurts on the bird with a piece of bamboo and the wings of the bird break. The merchant returns and inquires of his daughter. The queen says that she has gone to her maternal uncle's house. The girl has not come though already one month has gone. The merchant has come to know of the matter at last. He takes a clad of gold and a clad of silver on his hands at his courtyard and mutters: "Wherever my daughter is, come and touch the silver clad," The needled wingless bird comes and touches the silver clad on the merchant's right hand. The merchant confirms that the bird is the girl and he embraces the bird, keeps away the needle. The bird transforms to his daughter again. The merchant (king) ordered to kill his wicked wife with elephant stepping [Type S 31 Q 235].

**JOKES OR HUMOROUS TALES** (Types 1200 - 1999): Most of the Assamese animal tales, especially concerned with cleverness, deception and absurd situation usually contain joke and humour. Apart from these, there are some independent humorous tales too. Generally simple jokes are more confined to literate people, but the tales as for example, tenton tales, purblind son-in-law, Pharing the All knowing (Sarabjan) etc. are very popular humorous tales not only in the district, but also throughout the state. An example of a humorous tale, collected from the district is cited below:-

A girl is to be married to a boy of a different village. The guardians of the boy has selected the girl and the girl's relatives want to see the boy. Therefore, the boy is sent to
the girl's house. He has the nature of walking speedily and roughly and his voice is very hard. Therefore, he is told to walk like a cat and to speak like a kaku at the girl's house. He goes to the girl's house and there he is asked by his would be father-in-law, "How are you?" He replies, "Kuo,Kuo." The man does not understand what he tells. He is taken to the dining room for taking tea and snakes, then he walks and pronounces, "Miu,Miu, miu,miu." Then his would be mother-in-law tells him, "Do not be shy, take on, take on." He begins to pronounce, "kuo,kuo" like a kaku. The family thinks him as a mad man and they refused the proposal.

**TRICKSTER TALES:** *(Type:1200-1349)* "Tales of this class usually cluster round a clever rogue who goes about cheating other persons. The interest is in the cleverness of the trickster who goes about his work with comparative impurity. The trickster may on occasion be deceived himself.... Trickster tales in Assamese centre mainly round Tenton, a human being, and the fox" 30

Some trickster tales are included under the heading 'animal tales' where, the trickster concerns to an animal, especially of fox or jackals in Assamese tradition. However, we consider those tales as trickster tales, where trickster is concerned to human characterization. The tale of the Tenton, who is taken to court for crime of stealth, but he is freed from punishment and gains money and even the king's daughter by virtue of his trickster is very popular in the district.

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30 Goswami, P: *Ballads and tales of Assam*, PP. 106-107.
Another tale of this type collected from the field is cited below:-

A poor young man wants to marry, but no one wants to offer their girl to him as he has a half-broken house only and his body is suffering from skin disease. He goes to a household of a distant village and there is a beautiful girl. He tells the girl's mother

"Hātidatar ruā, rad pare puā; dingit nakaukuā, pithit bākhar kхоa, tāke sāi soāli diya ne nidivā." [The roof is of ivory, the sunshine is available from the dawn, the neck and back are decorated with jewel. It is upto you, whether you want to give your girl to me or not.]

The mother accepts the proposal immediately thinking him a very rich man. The boy marries the girl. At night, the girl cries, "Āye dīle mok kharuā darati, thāko kare kathā guni, rātir rātī topani nāhe kharar khajuti suni." [Mother has given me a bride-groom with ringworm, how can I live with him, I spend sleepless nights hearing his scratchings.]

CUMULATIVE TALES [Type 2000-2199] : "In this type as in all formula tales, the pattern is more important than the plot. Cumulative tells are told often in the spirit of pure fun. In the cumulative tale proper "the action, characters, names, speeches, or whatever is the feature of the accumulation, builds up to an impasse or a climax and often, but not always goes through the list again in reverse in order to resolve the plot of formula tales the cumulative usually has a definite narrative core."\(^{31}\) In fact, this type of tales is not very common in Assamese folklore. There are hardly three or four tales of this type; the ant and the frog or the crow and the wren etc. These tales are current in the district as well

as in the state, but no other tale of this type is found. However, the tale of the ant and the frog deals with a problem why frog's back becomes rough and the ant's groin becomes waisted; hence it is etiological in character.

PROVERBS AND RIDDLES:

Proverbs and riddles are most important part of oral literature. Proverbs and riddles are highly structured form of oral literature and owing to their various functions in societies it is now an inseparable part of written literature too. They play a great role in the society and folk life. The village folk of Assam, as well as Sonitpur, often use proverbial expressions and aphorisms in their day to day business.

PROVERBS: Proverbs may be defined as 'the terse didactic and metaphorical statements containing concise homely truths on various aspects of life.' Proverbs are considered as 'essence of thoughts and philosophy that a group of people acquire through the ages.' They are the wisdom of a community and 'the capsuled wisdom, the distilled knowledge of the people.' Proverbs are expressions of the folk, based on their observation to the mankind and nature, as well as experience and they transmit orally from generation to generation.

32 Krappe, A.H: The Science of Folklore, P 143.
33 Milner, G.B: What is Proverb, P 353.
34 Duncun, Emrich: Folklore on the American Land, P. 62.
Assamese folk literature is not poor in proverbs. The term *Phakarā-jojanā* is often used to indicate proverbs and aphorisms. The *phakarās* are actually meant for a philosophical expression which has a suggestiveness in meaning and commonly have a secret meaning. These are called *bhakatiā phakarā* and most of them are created as a result of Neo-Vaishnavite movement. These *bhakatiā phakarās* are common for all over the state. Apart from the *bhakatiā phakarās*, there are some other often called as *jojanā* or *patantar*. Most of the *jojanās* are comparison only and the term *jojanā* itself means comparison. As for example, when a person goes to do something as another person has done it, then it is said as: *Adāk dekhi keturir uthil gā /Keturive bole moko khā*. [*Adā* means ginger, *keturi* means a arrow-root which is unlike *ādā* not eaten in crude form; it is said here that, seeing *ādā*, *keturi* also invokes to eat it too] On the otherhand, when something is told to someone, but the listener is absent minded, and the sayings are in vague, then often calls, "*Garur āgat tokāri bajay/kān jokāri ghāh khāi.*" [If *tokāri* (a stringed musical instrument) is performed, in front of grazing cow, they go on chewing grass without paying heed to it] When fake affection is showed to someone, then it said thus; *Senahate maro, khalihā māsār dosohā khāi esohā ero* etc. To indicate that the reason given by a person for his or her inability to accomplish a task is only a cover for lack of skill, generally it is said, *nāsiba nejāna, sotālkhan bekā* (one who does not know how to dance (well) blames it on the platform.)

On the otherhand, there are some *jojanās*, which contain generally two expressions, one is meaningful and the other is in most cases meaningless and used only
for the purpose of alliteration and maintain the rhythm. These *jojanās* are the creation of natural folk poets. There are some persons, who can speak *jojanā* for every expression. Some *jojanās* collected from the field are mentioned below:-

Regarding women: 1) *tinidāl suli, tāke bāndhe tuli*

    *girieke māte rupahi buli.*

    [She has few hairs, she ties it with care and her husband calls her a handsome woman]

2) *pausuagī tirotāi sitanāt pāde/*

    *girīyeke, bole telet puthimās bhāje.*

    [To take the sound of wife's fart for the sound and smell of frying of *puthi* fish]

3) "*boārī ānilo beti, tair nuguse kāsar kalasi*

    *mor nuguse dheki.*"

    [Remains busy all the time in getting water while I am to husk always.]

4) "*bogī dhakdhaki rupar pithi/*

    *kāuriye hāgile pithit uthi*"

    [The crow has evacuated its bowels on the silvery back of the lady]
Regarding idle person:

1) *dingol helāi, rāti gol hepāi.*

āh ou okani såo jonākat pelāi.

[The day as well as the night has passed off idly, now let us be busy in weeding out lice from our heads]

2) "*sit khāi mārali lekhe/*

dinate sapon dekhe.

[He passes his sleepless night counting bamboo pole of the roof but spends the time in day dreaming i.e. a worthless person]

Regarding fake affection: 'topola dekhi topola jāse, rara topola toloio āse.' etc.

APHORIMS (MAXIMS)

John Morley observes that, “The essence of an aphorim is the compression of a mass of thought into a single saying.” It is as he says, good sense brought to a point. The ‘Dākar bachan’s (sayings of Dāk Purusa) are of an aphoristic character and some of the bachans (sayings) are of the nature of maxims, in that those enjoin rules of conduct.” These dakar bachans are ‘utterances of full of worldly wisdom and practical knowledge about agriculture, preparation of meals etc.’ Some sayings ‘prescribe hospitality, the

35 Goswami, P: Folk Literature of Assam, P. 76.

36 Ibid. P. 77.
plantation of trees, construction of tanks, and on the aspersions cast on women in
general.\textsuperscript{37}

These sayings 'bear upon all aspects of a Hindu peasant's daily routine: birth, rituals, morals, politics, the choice of a wife, cultivation, purchase of cattle, auspicious days, cooking, the rains in relation to crops.'\textsuperscript{36} These \textit{dākar bachans} are very popular among the people of Sonitpur district as well as Assam as a whole. Most of the people refers to \textit{Dāk Purusa}'s sayings in their expressions wherever necessary. A few of the most popular \textit{dakar bacans} are cited below as for example:

1) \textit{māti kinibā kuniākuni, garu kinibā gai},

\textit{chowāli ānibā leterā peterā, ghar dhariba tāi}.

2) \textit{garu kinibā ringtor bātat, sowāli ānibā dintor bātat}.

i.e, cow should be purchased from a familiar place, girl should be married from a day's walking distance.

3) \textit{sāt po terā nāti, tehe karibā kuhīār kheti}

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.} P. 77.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.} P. 77.
111

i.e., You should undertake cultivation of sugarcane only when you have seven sons and thirteen grandsons. (As it is a very laborious job)

4) uttare gājile khar, dakhine gājile māriba bhirai lar. etc.

RIDDLES:

A riddle is defined as 'ingenious question, expressed usually in the form of a metaphor, not in the form of a direct question, without any figurative meaning of the words which enter into it'39. According to Aristotle, "a riddle is also a well composed metaphor." It describes 'a question primarily, in which a fact is concealed in the form of a metaphor, and an answer secondarily to which the hidden meaning or the real content of the implied sense is fully revealed or expressed. Concealment thus becomes the most vital one"40. The proper riddles are brief and precise. Alliteration and rhyming is often observed and personification is very common in the riddles. Riddle solving is considered as the sign of intelligence, therefore riddle solving is very popular in the folklore of Sonitpur district, as well as in Assam as a whole. Example of a few most popular riddles are cited below:

1) ejani koligāi, ghāte ghāte pāni khāi : (A black cow, takes water from bank to bank) : fishing hook (barasi)

39 Sokolov, Y.M: Russian Folklore, P. 282.

40 Bhagawat, Durga: The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore and Literature, P. 1.
2) *māke barasi bāy, puteke ākas sāy*. (The mother fishes with hook, the son looks at the sky): bamboo tree.

There are some riddles, which deal with the various meanings of a word. Say, the word 'na' is a word of duel meaning, one is 'new' and other is 'nine'. Hence there is a riddle, *ephāle naghar, ephāle chaqhar, pahu mārile sātotā, bhāge prāti ekota* (Though the meaning of *na* seems to be nine here, it means 'newone' here). There are another kind of riddles current in the district, as well as in Assam as a whole, which are associated with a tale. As for example, in the tale of the poor people wants to marry described under the heading 'Folktales' (sub heading 'Trickster tales') in this chapter, there is a riddle. *hāti dātar ruā, dingit nakau kuā, pithit bākhar khouwā*. It is nothing but a metaphor, that is a riddle. There are one or two more tales, which contain such kind of riddle. These tales attract people not only for their content, but also for those riddles too.

**FOLK SPEECH:**

"Folk speech " embraces the local and regional turns of phrase that deviate from the standard language " (Dorson, 1972:2) which is usually taught in schools in an informal manner. One of the main characteristics of folk speech is that it is more restricted to oral circulation. Within the total vocabulary of every speaker there is a large number of words
that he never writes and seldom uses in formal situations. These words or expressions may be taboo words or expressions or they may be a kind of passive vocabulary. Moreover, these characteristics of folk speech are not only limited to vocabulary but these exist at the level of grammar, idiom and phonetics. For example, slang in this respect is folk speech. India abounds in language diversity....Besides these major forms of oral literature, there are minor forms which also fall under the above rubric. These are, chants, prayers, laments, ories and even hollers.

It has been observed that, proverbs and riddles, which are important genres of folk speech have attracted the attention of Assamese folklorist, whereas other genres of folk-speech are still neglected though there is a great scope of this aspect. Assam abounds in language and cultural diversity. The people of Sonitpur district generally use the vocabulary of standard Assamese language and hence the folk speech of the district is almost identical to the standard Assamese language ; yet, slight differences can be observed in some cases. A few of them are cited below:

### RELATIVE PRONOUN:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term used in the area</th>
<th>In st. Assamese Language</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bou</td>
<td>āi</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dotā, detā, doutā, pitāi</td>
<td>deutā, pītā</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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VOCABULARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bāri</td>
<td>Stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>māri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dorolā, khol</td>
<td>Container of plantain bark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daghur</td>
<td>heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gadhur</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saja</td>
<td>to sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khema</td>
<td>to forgive etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kshama</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>mer (Specially at Jamugurihat)</td>
<td>fenced compound of cultivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOME ADJECTIVES OFTEN USED IN FOLK SPEECH:

- kebeli or lebā chāgali - Talkative, Conversable,
- phopjahi - A vainglorious person
- gawanigoā (sometimes verb) - to mischief or mischief maker.

A prefix 'bare' is used in some terms as like as 'bare bankara' (A combination of many worthless things) bare bhasahu (trifling), barowari (a wandering woman), bare bangalua (mixed or composed of various kinds) where the prefix is used in a bad sense. Sometimes, the same prefix is used to mean 'collection' or 'many' as like as, 'bare
sahar or bare sohoria (a group of villages).

There are some words often used in folk speech, which are originated from the languages of tea-tribes as for example, phalna (some one), phaltu (extra), bihan, phajir (dawn/morning), daga (lazy) kacakacif (almost) etc. On the other hand, some words derived from English, but pronounced in a local form e.g. avelbhel< available, palet< plate, bustan< bustand, soloping< sloping etc.

In the folk speech of the district, there are some phrases, which are used in the sense of abuse, curse and treatment with slight or contempt. Some of those phrases are mentioned below:

1. PHRASES USED TO ABUSE: Kukur poāli, jahanitjōā, jahara, bāghar āgtel khowā, marati, pāji, maurat marā, chaidhya gosthi, jui, lāgati etc.

2. PHRASES USED TO CURSE: jahanname jābi, jahanit jābi, hāijat jābi, rou rou narakat paribi, bhetit tila lāo jajiba etc.

3. PHRASES USED TO TREAT WITH SLIGHT OR CONTEMPT: heriar putek/ ghainiek (meaning son/wife of someone)
Apart from those, some people, especially the illiterates often use some slang words to speak something with force and to abuse someone. Those slang words are generally derived from the names of secret organs.

lāt sāhābar po (son of a magistrate!)

bagā dhanir po (son of a rich man!)

bhākari tirotā (nonsense woman),

bāperar/mārar murto (head of your father/mother) etc.