A GENERAL NOTE ON ORAL SONGS AND ITS CLASSIFICATION
The word 'Folklore' was first used in a letter signed by Ambrose Merton, published in the Athenacum of London, August 22, 1846. Ambrose Merton was a pseudonym and the real name of the writer of that letter was William John Thoms. He urged that accounts of "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc. of the olden time.", termed 'Popular Antiquities, or popular literature' in those days be recorded and preserved for the future, and also suggested that the "good Saxon compound Folklore" be used to designate this field.

'Folk' means the people and 'lore' means knowledge, thus literally the term 'Folklore' signifies the wisdom of people, the people's knowledge. This new term 'Folklore' was quite rapidly adopted by scholars. In many other countries and thus soon becomes an international one. The term was at first used to denote only the materials included in

---

1 The term 'Folk' is rather vague and uncertain in meaning. The Folk, as it were ignorant, illiterate and based their mode of life entirely on tradition. This view has now-a-days discarded.
the scope of this study; later on it was also used to indicate the branch of science which deals with these materials. Now, the term 'Folklore' is used to designate the materials and the term 'Folkloristics' for the study of the material. Although the term 'Folklore' has gradually become the prevailing one in the majority of the countries, a single meaning has not been definitely fixed for this term. On the question of the content and scope of the concept of folklore, and also concerning the nature of folkloristics and the boundaries which divide it from related disciplines, the greatest difference of opinion prevails in the scholarly world.²

Folklore at the beginning had not only an antiquarian outlook but also a large coverage particularly in Germany, where even peasant, craft and peasant art were included. The tendency is not to compete with history and anthropology but to delimit the area of folklore. The view put forward by A.H. Krappe is this: "Folklore is a study of the unrecorded traditions of the people as they appear in popular fiction, custom, belief, magic and ritual--Folklore was "an historical science", but it could not help in the reconstruction of political history. It was solely

² Y.M. Sokolov: Russian Folklore, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1950, pp.3-4
and singly concerned with the history of human ideas and their utterance in words and gestures that is, in tales, songs, and rites".3

As far as the definitions of 'folklore' are concerned, most definitions concern the 'lore', but some concern the 'Folk'. Although different folklorists of different countries many have different concepts of 'Folklore', the twenty one definitions contained in the first volume of the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, edited by Maria Leach through light on some of this diversity and the most common criterion for definition is found to be the means of folklore's transmission. It appears from the various definitions of folklore that the 'Oral' nature is the important factor in folklore. But Alan Dundes says:

"This criterion --- leads to several theoretic difficulties. First in a culture without writing (termed "non-literate" cultures by anthropologists), almost every thing is transmitted orally; and although language, hunting techniques, and marriage rules are passed orally from one generation to another, few folklorists would say that these types of cultural materials are folklore --- . Second, there are some forms of folklore which are manifested and communicated almost exclusively in written as opposed to oral form, such as outograph-

book verse, book margnatia, epitaphs and traditional letters (e.g., chain letters) — a professional folklorist does not go so far as to say that a folk-tale or a ballad is not folklore simply because it has at some time in its life history been transmitted by writing or print—. The third difficulty with the criterion of oral transmission concerns those forms of folklore depending upon body movements; that is, there is some question as to whether folk dances, games, and gestures are passed on orally". 4

The justification for 'orality' being taken as one of the chief characteristics of folklore is that orality has preserved most of the folklore and carried it by and large. At the same time if one looks from the viewpoints of dynamics of folklore in modern times one finds that orality might be an important historical attribute and much less an organic or genetic quality of folklore. With the change of times, folklore forms seen to have changed, their contentual boundaries have undergone alternation their instructional or cultural purpose completely changed; but the creation of folkloric expressions has not ceased. Folklore is being created now and it fulfils its purpose even in the changed circumstances. 5

4 Alan Dundes, Op-cit., pp. 1-2

5 J. Hanoloo: What is Folklore And why study Folklore?
In quarterly Journal, Vol.II, No.4 (Oct-Dec)'81
Published by Manipur State Kala Academi, Imphal, p.27
Folklore consists of materials that are handed on traditionally from generation to generation without a reliable ascription to an inventor or author --- the materials handed on tradition may be physical objects, ideas or words. The folklore of physical objects includes the shapes and uses of tools, costumes, and the form of villages and houses. The folklore of gestures and games occupies a position intermediate between the folklore of physical objects and the folklore of ideas. Typical ideas transmitted as folklore are manifested in the customs associated with birth, marriage, and death, with the lesser events of life, with remedies for illness and wounds, with agriculture, the trades, and the professions, and with religious life, notable with Christmas, Easter and other holy days of saints' days.

Verbal folklore includes words considered for their own sake and words occurring as connected discourse. Typical words that the folklorist studies without special regard for their use in connected discourse are place names, personal names (both family and Christian names), and nick names. Folklore in the form of connected discourse includes tales of various kinds (märchen, jests, legends, cumulative tales, fables, etiological tales, ballads lyric folk songs, children's songs, charms proverbs and riddles. The study of folklore consists in the collection, classification and involves
interpretation to some extent. Interpretation seeks to discovers the origin, meaning, use and history of these materials, to state and explain their dissemination, and to describe their stylistic peculiarities."

Another comprehensive and inclusive definition has been offered by William R. Bascom is as follows:

"Folklore means 'folk learning'; it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or example as well as the products of these crafts. Folklore includes folk art, folk crafts, costume, folk-cuscom, folk-belief, folk-medicine, recipes, folk-music, folk-dance, folk-games, folk-gestures and folk-speech, as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called folk literature but which are better described as verbal art."  

(b) **Fields of Folklore and (Folklife) studies**

As Richard M. Dorson has observed: "In recent years another term, folk-life, has vied with and even

---


threatened to dominate folklore. The supporters of folklife studies claim that folklorists are too narrowly preoccupied with verbal forms and neglect the tangible products of folk artisans. They maintain that folklife embraces the whole panorama of traditional culture, including oral folklore, conversely, the champions of folklore stoutly maintain that their term includes traditional arts and crafts.\(^8\)

Dorson has divided the various fields of folklore (and folklife) studies in the following ways:

(1) "Oral literature", sometimes called verbal art:
"Under this rubric fall spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns."

(2) 'Physical folklife', generally called material culture: It covers the visible rather than the oral aspects of folk behaviour that existed prior to and continue along side mechanized industry.

(3) Social Folk custom: This is an important area of traditional life which lies between oral literature and material culture.

---

Investigations in this area are more concerned with the family and community observances of the people living in village, tribal belts and even industrial areas of Indian cities. Of particular importance are the rites passages such as birth, initiation, marriage, death and similar rites. These rites as is well known have special significance in Hindu life and therefore, studying them and similar rites in other communities forms a well spread field. Similarly, the ritual and custom associated with the festivals also form an important segment of social folk custom. Most of the festivals in our country are embedded with agricultural activity and therefore follow a calendrical cycle. Moreover these folk customs are closely associated with religious practices and the concept of Indian world view. For example there are thousands of customs and ritualistic practices being observed by Indian village folks for the sake of rain, agriculture prosperity and for wording off natural calamities such as foods famines etc.

(4) Performing folk arts: The fourth and last sector of folklore and folklife studies may be designated as the 'performing folk arts'. This sector concerns primarily traditional music, drama, and dance. One of the most important area of this sector is the traditional music which is passed on by ear and performed by memory rather than by written and printed musical (ore).

9 Richard M. Dorson, ed.: Folklore and Folklife, An Introduction, p.363
As we have already noted, oral literature is part of the more inclusive term 'Folklore' which includes both verbal and non-verbal forms. However verbal folklore material has always occupied the pride of place in folklore so much so that often folklore has been taken to mean nothing but oral literature or verbal art. Oral literature usually means verbal folklore only and does not include things like games and folk-dances. Although oral literature broadly viewed could over a wide variety of verbal forms from riddles, proverbs, curses, charms to tonguetwisters and puns, it is most often used as an alternate term for folk narrative or folk literature. 10

In the western countries, folklore scholars have usually based their theoretical studies on verbal material, particularly of the narrative genre. Thus oral literature comprising the verbal aspects of folklore has received more weightage than the non-verbal items.

Scholars have, however, pointed out that such terms as 'Oral literature contain a paradox. Literature is usually

---

10 R. M. Dorson: Ibid., pp.2-4
thought of as writings in prose or verse, specially those of an imaginative character. In the words of Bascom, who suggested the term 'verbal art' for the oral aspects of folklore, "The terms 'unwritten literature', 'popular literature', 'Folk-literature', primitive literature' and 'oral literature' emphasize the relations of these forms to literature, but all are premised upon the irreconcilable contradiction that literature is based upon letters and writing, whereas folklore is not ... . The concept of verbal art avoids all of emphasizing the essential features which distinguish the folktale, myth, proverbs and related forms."\(^{11}\)

'Veral art' was an attempt to introduce a new term to distinguish folktale, legends, proverbs and other 'literary' forms from the other genres of folklore, because 'unwritten literature', 'oral literature', and other terms currently in use were inherently contradictory, and because

many anthropologists had fallen into the habit of calling them 'folklore'.

Thus oral literature, which is synonymous with verbal art is the lore chiefly of unlettered peoples transmitted by words of mouth through successive generations. It is concerned with speaking and singing or listening, and this depends upon existence of living people to carry on the tradition.

Literature as it is well known reflect the age and society which product it all, looking from the point of view of its development, oral literature is much older than a country's written literature. At a time when people used to live in integrated in social groups, the oral literature each community grew and developed. It is a product generally of the literate class community as a whole and not of any individual belonging to any particular community or group. It is generally believed that initially oral literature was the creation of an individual and a process of recreation and constant variation. It gradually became a group product.

12 William R. Bascom: Op-cit., pp. 67 and 214
While defining oral literature, it is necessary to differentiate it from written literature. Some of the important differences between oral and written literature are given thus:

In the matter of authorship there is a sharp contrast. In written literature the author of a particular item is generally known, but in oral literature, the author is rarely, if ever, known. Written literature is thus, by and large, an individual creation and the individual is known. And because of writing or rather printing, the work is transmitted to the readers as the original writer created it. At the time of printing or editing, it requires the original author to read the proofs in order to correct any errors—being here defined as any inadvertent changes or deviations from the original version created by the author. Therefore, in written literature, the literary forms are relatively fixed and unchanging.

In oral literature, its literary products are collective rather than individual creations. In case a tale is composed by a particular individual in accordance with his culturally defined compositional conventions, the tale, if
it lives after the death of its creation, must be related orally by men other than the creator, because of the oral transmission process, the work is rarely transmitted to new audiences exactly as the original creator made it. And depending upon the particular culture and specifically upon its range of permissiveness with respect to variation each transmitter of the tale will alter it in some way, one more than another. Different locales or different characters would be small changes; different plot actions for example, or a different ending, would be greater changes. Oral literature lives in tradition, as opposed to 'dead' written literature, the task of analysis is never completed. In the case of written literature, a play by Shakespeare or a novel by James Joyce may be analysed many many times, but presumably the text subjected to analysis rarely changes. The fixed nature of the text is a characteristic of written literature, but in oral literature, the text may be considered to be a continual state of change.¹³

Literature like sculpture or painting, has an independent, semi-permanent, static existence. Verbal art on the

¹³ Alan Dundes: Op-cit, pp. 118-119
other hand, is intangible and dynamic. Verbal art differs from literature not only in its method of transmission, but also in its method of creation. Where as the materials of folklore originate without writing, through improvisations, literature is composed 'with pen in hand'. Verbal art is composed and transmitted verbally, while literature is composed in writing and transmitted in writing.\textsuperscript{14}

Richard R.M. Dorson classifies the oral literature or oral folklore in the following ways:

1. Folk Narrative
2. Narrative Folk poetry
3. Folk Epic
4. Proverbs and Proverbial expressions
5. Riddles
6. Folk speech.

P. Goswami categories the oral folklore in the following sub-genres, e.g.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} William R. Bascom: \textit{Op-cit.}, pp.69-71
\textsuperscript{15} Richard M. Dorson (ed.): \textit{Folklore and Folklife; An Introduction}, p. 2
\textsuperscript{16} P. Goswami: \textit{Japanar Janakristi aru Anyāhya Rachana}, p.69
A - Imaginative tales, myths, legends and jokes.

B - Folk songs.
   i) Ballads
   ii) Religious songs
   iii) Love songs
   iv) Work songs

C - Proverbs and Aphorisms.

D - Riddles and Folk saying.

E - Charms.

K. D. Upadhyaya classifies the oral literature mainly into the following four divisions:

A - Lok-gits (Liriks)

B - Lok-gathā (Ballad)

C - Lok-kathā (Folk tale)

D - Pakirna Sahitya.

Keeping view of the above classifications we can classify the 'verbal art' or Folk literature into following sub-divisions:

17 K.D. Upadhyaya: Bhojpuri Lok Sahitya Ki Bhūmikā, p.14
1. Lok gits (Folk songs)

2. Lok-Gatha (Ballads)

3. Lok Katha (Folk tales)

4. Lok-Nātya (Folk drama, only the drama not the dramatic representation)

5. Lok-Pravasana.

From the above classifications we have seen that folk-song' is an important genre of 'folk literature'. It is transmitted orally from person to person, generation after generation.

"These are like forest trees with its roots deeply buried in the past, but which continually put forth new branches, new leaves, new fruits."18

Lok-git is equivalent expressions of the english word 'folk songs'. The term 'folk' has been derived from the Anglo Saxon word 'fole'. In the Hindi dictionary named 'Sabda Sagar' the word 'Lok' has been used to express the meaning of a particular place. In course of time, the use of this word has been extended to mean 'Log' i.e., people living in 'lok' or the world.

18 Encyclopedia Britannica, (Vol. ix), p.448
According to Acharya Dwivedi, the meaning of the word 'lok' is not 'people' or 'gram' or 'village'. It is rather used to mean the scattered section of population in both town and villages, in whose case books have not been recognised as the sources of their common non-technical knowledge. In comparison with the well-cultured and luxurious section of the town people, these people are generous over and above being simple and sincere. Moreover, the aids and equipments, which are required by the so-called well-cultured section of the town people in order to keep their luxurious feelings active and intact, are produced by them.

About the meaning of the 'folk songs', different scholars have expressed their opinions as follows:

According to Sada-shiva Farke, folk songs may be defined as "the obsession in the mind of the people of a feeling for expressing their senses of satisfaction, joy and amusements rhythmically without paying any need to the bookish or literary principles."
Again Kuber Mishra defines "folk songs as the songs of spontaneous realisation in the Chamber of the minds of the people, which do not come out of the pen of a poet or composer. Vocal legacy is the main reason for their continuance and survival."  

Satyendra opines that 'folk songs' are an embodiment of human aspiration." In this connection the opinion of Kunja Bihari Das is worth mentioning. He defines folk song in the following words.

"Folk songs are the spontaneous expression or embodiment of the life of that section of the society, who have chosen out the primitive of the ancient people, more or less.

R.N. Tripathi defines 'folk songs' as 'gram git' instead of 'Lok git'.

H.L. Tiwari has attracted the above definition given by Tripathi and offered the following definition.

"The demarcating line between the towns and the villages is sharply and gradually disappearing today. Most

---

21 K. Mishra : Marisãs Ke Bhojpuri Lokgeeto Ka Vivechanatmak Adhyan, p. 117
22 Satyanya : Lok Sãhitya Vigyan, p. 326
23 Kunja Bihari Das : A Study of Origin of Folklore, p. 24
of the people living in towns are the migrant villagers. Presently, a sense of enphoria in the minds of the aristocratic people has already replaced their previous sense of detestation to village life and culture. Certain other outstanding changes are sure to take place within the next few years. The folk songs have already transcended village boundaries to make an entry into the towns. 24

The Hindi Researcher and folk literatorist K.D. Upadhyaya gives the following definition.

"Nothing can come out of nothing, every folk songs or ballad has its own poet or composer or group of individuals. Its survival is always fundamental and that is why the folk songs or ballad bear no name of a person, composer and have come to be recognised as an instrument or element of the society or the people as a whole. 25

It becomes clear from the above definitions that folk songs are prevailing among the ordinary people and its relationship is with the heart and it comes out of the heart of the people, and not the brain. It comprises the poetry and

24 H.L. Tiwari : Ibid., p. 3
25 K.D. Upadhyaya : Bhojpuri Lok Sahitya Ka Adhyayan, p. 29
music of groups whose literature is perpetuated not writing and print but oral tradition.

The oral tradition or oral song is much older than the written literature. The word Gāthā which means a song or ballad, is of pre-Vedic origin. According to K.D. Upadhyaya, "Rgveda is considered to be the oldest book of the world, in which we find the specimens of the earliest folk songs or ballads."²⁶

Further he adds that "the Gāthās which are mentioned in the Vedic literature may be regarded as the oldest representatives of folk songs or ballads. The word Gāthain meaning a singer is found in many hymns of the Rgveda. According to him the Gāthās were regarded as hymns whereas Rgs were divine. The man played an important role in the composition of the Gāthās and they were never used Mantras. The laudatory hymns sang in the praise of a particular king or hero in ancient times were known as Gāthās."²⁷

In addition, the ballads collected by the king Hall (Chalibahan) bring to light an ancient sample of folk

²⁶ K.D. Upadhyaya: *Studied in Indian Folklore*, p.1
²⁷ K.D. Upadhyaya: *Op-cit.*, p. (i,iv)
During Mall selected out of 1000 ballads only 700 important ballads. This goes a long way to prove the fascination towards folk songs in that period. 

B. The Assamese Oral Songs: A Brief Survey:

Assam is a land of assimilation of variant races, languages and cultures. This assimilation has led to the creation of the bright, beautiful and pageant Assamese culture. The Assamese folk song is a vital and integral part of Assamese culture. It is in fact very difficult to fathom into and trace out the origin and growth of this genre of Assamese verbal art.

Assamese folk song has played an important role in shaping the life and society of Assam. It is rich and prosperous with its fine and elaborate descriptions, elucidations and delineation of the various rites and rituals, festivals and celebrations and so forth. The folk songs essentially can reflect the attitude of social service,

28 K.D. Upadhyaya: Bhojpuri Lok Sahitya Ka Adhyana, p.140
sense of sacrifice the hopes and aspirations of the Assamese society since the day of its inception. The term qit or gid is used to signify the meaning of folk songs.

The Assamese folk songs can rightly be categorized and sub-categorized into the following heads keeping in view the various implications and functions:

The following are the categories and sub-categories:

1. Songs of religious and devotional content
   a) Songs of prayer
   b) Songs of ritualistic association,
   c) devotional songs with philosophical over tunes.
   d) lyrical compositions in a religious or a devotional format.

2. Songs of ceremonials and festivals —
   a) songs connected with rites the passages.
   b) songs associated with different worships and other rites.
   c) songs associated with seasonal and agricultural festivals.
   d) songs connected with calendaric festivals.
3. Songs of love and yearning: The enduring passion.
   a) love songs
   b) pure lyrical composition: Bhāwaiyā and Chatkā
   c) Maishāli and Māhūt songs.

4. Lullabies, nursery rhymes and children games—

5. Pāramāhi, i.e., twelve monthed songs.

6. Songs of jest and humour.

7. Ballads:
   a) Mythical ballads.
   b) Historical ballads.
   c) Legendary ballads.
   d) Satirical ballads.
   e) Magical ballads.
   f) Realistic ballads.
   g) Etiological ballads.

8. Work songs and Junās.

9. Miscellaneous songs.
1. **Songs of religious and devotional content**:

Songs of religious and devotional content are occupying an important role in the domain of Assamese folk songs. This category of songs is widely divergent in form and content as well as approach. Although these songs are usually sung in different institutions of festivals. The original intention of the singing of this sub-genre of songs is to praise the gods and the goddesses.

(a) **Songs of Prayer**:

Songs of prayer and supplication are sung in the context of community singing held in the Namgharas and the Satras. Both the menfolk and the womenfolk usually sing these songs. The term 'nām' commonly is used to suggest this category of songs. The term signifies the reciting of nāmas in praise of Gods or Goddesses. These songs are generally sung in praise of Lord Siva, Goddess Dūrgā and Goddess Lakhmī, are known as Sādā-sivar-nām, Dūrgā-Gosānir-nām and Lakhmī-Devīr-nām respectively.
Lord Siva is held as the creator of the three worlds of land, air and water and so He is not only revered by angels and smaller gods, but also by human beings with the earnest hope of being bestowed upon with His blessings and veneration for the attainment of redemption and rising to higher and nobler planes through the singing of Siva-Stuti.

The following folk songs may bring out the glories of Lord Siva and this may rightly be termed as Siva-Stuti:

Dīha: O' a hetu Sada-Siva deva-dījambara /
O' hara nandi-vindi stuti kare gandharba-kinnara //

Pad: trilokara nath hari Siva jahta dhāri /
gołe sobha kare prabhu ohi lambā dārl //
kapalate sobha kare ardha chandra kālā /
kanthe pari sobhe prabhum nara-munda mālā //
kanthe sobha kare prabhum garalare jālā /
kankalate sobhe prabhum ban bhaghar chāl //

kahaya bhakala sove suna gauri māo /
henomata Sada-Sivaka karaho pranam //

29 Brajapati Mahanka: Kamrūpī Lok-gītar Saphūra, p.43
Here we get a detailed account of the out fits of Lord Siva described by a devotee. He is a Digamber (living naked). All like Gandharba-kinnara, Nandi-Vindi offer prayer to Siva. He is the Lord of the three universes. He is Hari having jonta (branches of joint hari). On his forehead is the half moon and in the neck there is a garland of skulls and in His loins there is a skin of the tiger. The Bhakat says to the mother of Gauri that this type of Siva should be offered prayer.

b) Songs of ritualistic association:

Aai-nam:

Some songs have ritualistic significance. Among these Aai-nam is most popular. Mother Small-pox is very much feared by the Assamese women and therefore with all sorts of sweet names, she is called Sitala the cool one and Aai or Mother. The pox deity Sitala-mata or Aai is supposed to be a manifestation of Mahamaya, Durga, Chandika, Brnvanti and so on. Whenever a child catches measles or any other variety of the rashes classed under small-pox it is said
to have 'flower' on it, and Aai is also said to have 'appeared' on it. When the child suffers from small-pox and shrieks with terror and pain, the women gather and sing songs to relieve the child from pain. In Assam this genre of songs is known as Aai-nām, Sītalā-nām, Bhagāwatir-nām etc.

Opesarir-nām:

The Opesarir-nām, or Opesarā sabhāhar-nām or Rabiberiār nam i.e., songs sung by the women folk to satisfy and appease the goddess Apesarī who it is believed out of anger inflicts various kinds of disease, infirmities and punishments in the form of sickness, non-attainment of puberty, dumbness, deafness etc. The above punishments may also be caused by one's faults unknowingly and wrongs shown to Goddess Apesari.

Four or five girls are decorated in the fashion of Goddess apesarī and made to sit on the altar of worship. Though songs are sung glorifying the virtues of Goddess Dūrgā, and Goddess Bhagāvatī, they are chiefly purported towards pacifying the anger and bitterness of Goddess, Apesarī and to secure her blessings, kindness and sympathy for getting
rid of the ailments imfirmities etc. Following lines are stand as its proof:

*e aî opesarî mandape nâmîlâ /*

suvarnar pancha ghate pûjâ arambhîlâ //

tulasîre pât hari tulasîre pât /

nar manîse kiba gune apesarî mât //

tulasîre gachh hari tulasîre gachh /

bidâî dia apesarî Gopini gharat pathâ /*30

-- The womenfolk sing songs in praise of devî-opesarî. They sing that aî-opesarî (the mother opesarî) has got down at the pûjā-mandapa and they begin Her pûjâ with golden Pañcha-ghat. They worship Her with the leaves of tulasi. The Gopinees in comprehensible to all, and request Her to allow her to go home.

In the same way the women observe a few rites such as Subasînîr-pûjâ, Sare-barât by singing of special songs. It is believed in Assamese society that if a rite like - Subasînîr - pûjâ is observed, it drives away all kinds of distress and difficulty. Similarly Sare-barât is observed on

30 N.P. Bardoloi: Asamar Leka Samskriti, pp.84,85
the 'full moon day of Aghan. The unmarried girls worship the Goddess Kāttyayani to get a handsome husband and to fulfil their desires of mind. The songs which are sung in this context are known as Sare-baratār-gīts.

c) Devotional songs with philosophical overtones.

**Deh-Bichārar gīts:**

There are some songs overtoned with philosophical thought which have no any ritualistic association, this genre of songs is known as Deh-Bichārar-gīts, i.e., "the consideration of body". Deh-Bichārar-gīts are generally sung by the wandering mendicant to accompaniment of tokārī, i.e., stringed instrument. Of course, certain bhakats also roam about by singing this type of songs from house to house.

Sometimes in this gīt human body is considered as a boat in the world ocean, the mind the helm, the 'Guru' the sole guide to go against the current and to fight with the current of worldly desire and to rise towards a state of bliss.31

In certain folk songs human body besides being visualised as a boat is perceived as a Bhel which implies a worth-

31 P. Goswami: *Folk literature of Assam*, p.63
less skeleton only. The following songs implies the worthlessness of the human body unless it is given to the services of the Guru and Bhakata.

kelei no phulilo rupahi maâr ai / 
kelei no pelailâ kali // 
guruto nälâge bhakatako nälâge / 
achhe tale bhari sari // 
phulote phulichho rupahi modâr / 
nepâlai pelâiso kali // 
guruto sudhichho bhakatako jachichho / 
āche asmanale lâgl //

— Alas ! what is the use of my being a lovely coral ? Why have I bloomed at all ? Neither to the Guru nor to the Bhakat am I of any use, But just lie covering the grounds. Oh, but I have bloomed, the lovely coral. I have budded too, And 'I have served the Guru and known the bhakat. And up in heaven resided'.

Čyā-gīts :

Songs associated with Barsewā, Bhitar-sewā, Purna-sewā, Meru-karan i.e., night worshipping and so on are known

32 P. Goswami : Bāra-Māhar Tera Čīts, p. 81
as či vá-gīts or či vá songs. The underlying meaning of these songs is difficult to follow to those who are not initiated in the sect.

**Jikir and Jāri**

Jikir and Jāri songs are exclusively current among the Assamese Muslims. These songs bear similarity with the Deh-Bichārar-gīts in structure and content. On the other hand both the Jikir and the Jāri unmistakable folk stamp of a class or Vaisnavite names. In a sense these songs may be termed as an Islamic edition of Vaisnava names.

These songs are religious songs attributed to Ajān-Faqir also known as Shāhmīlān. They are supposed to be eight crores in number. Ajān-Faqir has come from a different land and is a mendicant, has been able to secure the secret of the name without the help of a Guru, though he stresses the need of one in the case of others, and teaches that the soul is everything, the body having no permanence and significance, that God is everywhere, and that the name of God is the only wealth, His creed is non-ritualistic and His stress on the name of God reminds one of the neo-Vaisnavite teacher of Assam. The above ennobling ideas and philosophies of Ajān-Faqir find reflection in the following git.
Think, O my mind, of the name of Allah, pay homage, O my mind at the feet of the Guru, Water thirsts, fire suffer from cold, Rasul is hidden among the devotees.

d) Kāmrūpī-Lok-gīts:

The Kāmrūpī-Lok-gīts is an important genre of Assamese folk songs. These songs may be called lyrical compositions in a religious or devotional formant. The Kāmrūpī-Lok-gīts are very popular not because of their religious character, but because of their lyrical and musical quality. The basic significance of these songs is physiological in nature. From the angle of the subject matter these songs can be split into the following categories:

1) Physiological songs.
2) Songs bearing the virtues of renunciation.
3) Spiritual songs.

In most cases, the composers of these versions or songs are found to be indifferent to the worldly life or to the life on earth.

33 P. Goswami: Asamiya Jana Sāhitya, p. 44.
The superstructure of these songs is based on the praisable idolologies having been identified as the last resort to entwine to human soul with the soul of the Almighty overlooking altogether the pursuit of material gain or pleasure or other worldly things. In comparison with other songs, such songs are very rare. But these songs are a robust natural embodiment of the life of the village people and they depict a vivid picture of human body and life, wealth and property, kitha and kins, friends and foe, husband and wife relationships.

Besides these songs go a long way to describe the facts that all worldly things are immaterial and that only faith in and upon God, and respect and regard to the 'Gurus' may being solace to the human soul putting a seal to both mental and physical miseries of human life. The song mentioned below bears testimony to the above characteristics and traits:

**Dihā**

O monāi! ki dhan behāli tai,
Māyā jale pari michhāte gowāli, ki dhan behāli tai.

**Pād**

dhanake karichho āsā / oite rabo pari
putra bhārjāk karichho āsā / sange nājāi chali
dhan hal ekurā mor / putra hailo duil
bharja sange tinikura / sansarate jul
dhan garba, man garba / michha garba kaya
michhate bandi hallo / naratanu deha
dehak karichho asa / khaba mati jul
marile logate jabo pap punya dul. 34

— The mind is asked why it likes to get entangled for nothing in the net of the world. It did not get any wealth. You aspect wealth but it will remain there. You aspect the son and wife to do something but they will not go with you. There are three fires for me, they are wealth, the son and the wife. The whole world is full of such fire or lust of wealth. The body, all are useless for which you pride. You become a prisoner for nothing. Even your body from which you aspect much will be eaten by soil and fire. And only your good and bad deeds will go with you after death.

2.(a) Songs associated with worships:

Folk songs associated with the worships such as
Mārai pūjā or Manasa pūjā, Durgā-pūjā, Lakshmi pūjā, Kālī pūjā, Magpanchami may be termed as pūjā-gīts or songs associated with worships. Among the Pūjā-gīts, Manasa-gīts, i.e.,

34. Jay Ram Mazumdar, Informant (M.96).
Dhobargaon (Chhaygaon), Kamrup, data collected on 7.6.95
the songs of Manasa are most popular, particularly in lower Assam.

Manasa who is worshipped as the Goddess of snakes is also known as Bishari, Padmavati, Janguli, Naeswari, Nagmata and so on. Generally, Manasa is worshipped for eliminating all fears including the fear of snake-bite, for living healthily without being inflicted and attacked with diseases and epidemics and inauspicious things and happenings and even for fulfilment wishes and desires.

Manasa-puja is also called Maroi-puja. This puja is particularly celebrated in much pomp and grandeur in the districts of undivided district of Kamrup and Goalpara. Manasa-puja can be celebrated at any time of the year. Generally in rainy season on Sravana-Krishna-Panchami, this puja is observed. Many people also celebrated Manasa-puja as an annual puja at their homes. Poet Mankar through the following song-lines has highlighted on Manasa-puja:

barisek anntare barisā kālat /
chārt din pujibek srāvan -māhat //
kenekai pujim ?
pujo bishahari ek chitta karil
šata dal kamal fule /
mātir bhārti sijur dali
puje barisār kāle //35

— Here is an account of worship of Manasā-Devi, during the rainy season. In the month of Sravana She will be worshipped for four days. The question is asked, how? The answer is, goddess Manasā should be worshipped with full concentration of the mind and one should use lotus flower having hundred petals. She should be worshipped during the rainy season with the branches of siju plant putting them in an earthen pot.

Manasā-pujā has been classified into three special categories on the basis of its style of worship. Such as –
(a) Maru-pujā, (b) Ghat-pujā, and (c) Mūrti-pujā.

Pujā-function can be of a one day celebration, or three days, or five days or seven days or more than that according to the necessity of the circumstances.

35 A.C. Baruah: Manasā Kavya and Ojāpāli, p. 26
The one-day or two day puja is called *rāng-pūja* and "three-days puja" is called "*Rangiyal-Mārqi*" in which the celebration is done with much colour and fanfare. Even there is the occasion of giving sacrifice of special birds and animals like duck, pigeons, goat even buffalow.36

In *Māroī-pūja* the role of ojāpali is essential and significant. Ojāpali helps in the overall performance and completion of the puja through their songs, dances and dramatics. They sing the songs from the *padmā-purāṇa* written by Sukavi Narayana deva commonly known as Sukanani or Sukanānāni. The central theme of the *padmā-purāṇa* is the tragic story of Beula-Lakhindār.

It is said that Goddess Manasa was Siva's fanciful daughter and was born out of the semen of Śiva kept on lotus leaf. She was blessed by the Lord Viṣṇu that she would be worshipped by Gods, demons, and men of the three Loks. A legendary merchant named Chando of Champak nagar who was very affluent and adament as well as antagonistic to Manasa-cult had to submit to the feet of Manasa, so Manasa compelled

36 A.C. Baruah: Ibid., p. 21
him to bow down before her by giving punishment in several ways.

The following song projects Manasā not only as Snake-Goddess but also as Jagat-mātā and Jagat Tārini, who saves and protects all creatures starting from birds, animals, insects, angels, to human beings— from all sorts of sorrows and sufferings. The following lines reveal the idea mentioned above:

\[
devaro\; devotā\; Sība\; tahara\; jiyeri\; tumi\n\text{tumi\; devi\; jagata\; janani,}\n\text{deva\; daitya,\; magara\; pasu\; pakshi\; charachar,}\n\text{tumi\; jagatara\; paritrānī}.\quad 37
\]

(b) Songs of Ceremonial and festivals:

Human life in any society is a series of passages from one stage to another stage. Observes A.V. Gennep: "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. 38 The passages are always associated with different rites and ceremonies, such as rites connected with pregnancy and childbirth as well as childhood, rites associated with initiation and betrothal and marriage and rites connected with funerals.

37 A.C. Baruah: Ibid. 45.
38 A.V. Gennep: The Rites of Passage, (The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp.2-3
These rites of passages are always associated with various songs and such songs may be called songs of ceremonies connected with the life cycle. Of these songs marriage songs are most mentioning.

(i) **Songs of marriage ceremony**

To the Hindus marriage is not only a social necessity but becomes a religious duty. According to *Grhya-Sūtra* marriage is the origin and centre of all domestic sacrifices. This genre of *Dharma-sūtras* presuppose that every man in his normal condition is expected to marry and run a home. The most remarkable feature of the Assamese marriage system is the singing of marriage songs.\(^{39}\)

"An Assamese marriage is a musical marriage. At every stage of the celebration from the early negotiation to the end, women sing appropriate songs. The delicacy and refinement of a woman's heart come out increasing tunes when the namatī or the musical leader of the gathering has to describe the beauty and grace of the bride, when the latter

---

\(^{39}\) *Rgveda*, x.85
is bathed in sanctified water, when she sits among her companions, when the bridegroom is to be greeted, when the girl is ritually offered. The namatī's talents are revealed most when she has to give expression to the atmosphere of sadness that prevails when the dear girl is to be parted with a taken away." 40

These songs throw off the feelings of the women folk, their dreams and thoughts simply and precisely and they symbolise the ideal relationship of conjugal life. In some of such wedding songs, vivid description of union of ancient characters between Kṛṣṇa-Rukmīṇī, Ram-śītā, Usā-Aniruddha are also found. These type of wedding songs being unique and thoughtful, are also very interesting.

The most important custom of Assamese marriage ceremony is telar bhār or joran. The women folk of bridegroom party sings songs in this context, addressing to bride.

Diha: Saju howa daivaki devi rājār mādol
    subhakhane yatrā kara joran dibaloj.

40 P. Goswami: Folk literature of Assam, p. 57
i.e., the queen Daibaki is asked to be ready to start for joran in an suspicious moment taking with her bangles, pearl, earring, sataari, oil, vermilion, comb etc. arranged together in a sarāl. She is also asked to take pāt, mugā, cotton and mejāṅkari clothes. The bhar should be kept ready with care. The subjects of dbarakā should accompany in the joran and Rukminī be dressed with all the ornaments offered by Kṛṣṇa.

The above specimen gives a glimps of several aspects of the folklore of the Assamese people.

In this context it would not be out of place to mention here that another species of wedding songs called jorā-nām is more commonly known as khijā-git in lower Assam.

These songs are sing to make a mock of the bridegroom's party

41 Anima Barman: Sahaj Bīyā-nām, p.10
in an amusing way. 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 kind of things tend to get mixed up. It so happens that the bridegroom's party make slighting remarks upon the brides in order to extol the excellence of the groom. The bride's companions do not take the insult lying down and make proper retorts.

(ii) Songs associated with Bhekulir Biya:

Like the songs of marriage ceremony there are some songs associated with various rites such as Bhekulir-Biya, i.e., frog marriage. These songs are sung to bring down rain at the time of drought. The Bhekulir-Biya is a rain compelling rite. Similarly the Hudum-worship current in the northern part of the undevided district of Goalpara, performed by the women folk is a rain compelling rite. The women folk sing various songs of erotic nature in connection with the rite.

The Barat or Urāl tānā, i.e., Pullinā of mortar rite is performed by both the Assamese speaking Tiwa and the
non-tribals of Dimasa area is also a rain compelling rite. The rite is always associated with different songs.

c) Songs associated with season and agricultural festivals:

(i) Bihu:

Among the seasonal and agricultural festivals observed in Assam the name of Bihu is worth mentioning. The Bihu festival is a glorification of spring and youth, and the songs associated with the festivals may be said to constitute a language of love. Bihu are of three viz.,

(a) Bohag Bihu or Rangali Bihu

(b) Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu

(c) Kati Bihu or Kangali Bihu.

The three Bihus are performed by both the tribals and the non-tribals of Assam. In lower Assam Kati-Bihu is observed by lightning, lamp under tulasi tree with singing of songs. The Magh Bihu also associated with a few devotional songs. But Bohag Bihu is mainly observed by singing songs along with dances. This festival which coincides with the advent of the spring, celebrated from the last day of the
Chaita (mid April) till the sixth day of Baisakha, but actually extending over a longer period. The formal part of the Bohag Bihu usually covers three days. The first day is known as Garu-Bihu day, meant for the welfare of the cattle. Early in the morning the women of the house prepare a paste of turmeric and Mātī-kalā pulse and the cattle are anointed with this paste at an auspicious moment. After being anointed they are taken out in a ceremonial procession to the nearest bathing ghat and each is made to have a full plunge in the water. No sooner are they out from water then their owners throw over them thin slices of green gourd and brinjal out of a bamboo fork, they are further whipped with springs two plants in the course of which a rhyme like the following is recited:

"Take gourd, take brinjal /
grow from year to year //
your mother is small, your father is small /
may you be a large one //" 42

Next day comes mānūh-bihu day or the day for man. From now onwards it is a period of general merriment, feasts

42 P. Goswami : Ibid., p.9
and fairs, and the dance. People put on fresh clothes and give present home made towels to their relatives and friends. In the after-noon and some times at night young men and women gather in field and dance and sing. Usually women dance separately, two girl taking a leading part and one impersonating the role of the male. At other times, when girls dance men accompany them on drums and piper the songs are primarily antiphonal.

The third day is Gosāi-Bihu, meant for congregational singing of devotional songs. Bihu songs are known as Bihu-gīts or Bihu-nām, i.e., songs of Bihu. Bihu songs are unique for their socio-cultural significance and their literary and musical contents. Bihu-nām may rightly be termed as the songs of youthful exuberance and they may be regarded as excellent poetry, these songs are very popular and interesting. The specimen given below depicts about the popularity of the Bihu songs.

So dear is the muga bobbin,
So dear the shuttle,
Dearer still is Bohag Bihu,
How else but to hold it.
   x   x   x   x   x
The birds peck at the paddy, O my fellow,
the crumbs get scattered,
our very dear Bihu-ground.
the dubari grass has covered.

Bihu songs are sung mainly to the accompaniment of
Dhol (drum), tāl (cymbals), singā (horn-pipe), takā (bamboo
cracker), gagana or jew's harps.

Singing of Husari song is an important part of the
Bihu festival. From the second day of the Bihu week proper,
for several days, the male folk of the village form into
bands and visit the different households, singing and dancing.
They dance a bit, sing carols wishing the welfare of the
household visited and receive presents of money, clothes
or eatables. These songs are overtuned with religious
thoughts.

*Mohohogits*:

Of the seasonal festivals Moho-ho is noteworthy
which is current particularly in lower Assam. This festival
is observed in the full moon day of the month of Āghan.
Groups of boys and elderly men holding sticks in hand and

---

43 P. Goswami: Ibid., p.17
Some of them with uncommon and grotesque makeup move from house to house by singing songs collecting money. Songs associated with this rite is called *Maho-Mo-gits*. The following song is collected from Chhaygaon area in the district of Kamrup which is still current in this area.

```
o' hari mahoho
mah khedibā takān law
mahe bule mayloo re
tapur purā khālloo re
tapurat nahal lun
chāwal lāge eko-dun
chāwal nedi dilā kari
ether ghar lari-charī
lari-charī yāote
songr kari pānote
monar kari rupar mālā
ether ghar dekhbābhālā
bhāl bhāl chātenī
giri ghar kātenī
mahar mākak pār karilā
son-rupar ghātedī. 44
```

44 collected from Binal Kalita: Dohargaon, Chhaygaon(60) on Jan'1996
3. Songs of love and yarning:

Of the Assamese love songs Bihu-giśas, Bhāwaiyās and Chatkās, Malšal songs and Māhut songs are worth mentioning. The Bhāwaiyās and Chatkās which are current particularly in the undivided district of Goalpara are rich in lyrical beauty and pathos. The Bhāwaiyā songs depict the desire and longing of the grown-up women whose desire still remain unfulfilled. The Chatkās are light hearted songs.

Malshali songs and Māhut songs:

This type of folk songs is most popular and prominent which is current particularly in the undivided district of Goalpara. The subject matter of the Malshali songs is longing to union of a newly married woman with her Malshali and who is busy in the Bāthān, far from his home.

Similarly the Māhut also live alone in the jungle, separated from his beloved wife. The joys and sorrows love and separation from his beloved are very explicitly represented in the Māhut-giśas. The love of the conjugal life, the pain of separation, and the indomitable desire for union are very beautifully depicted in these songs.
4. **Nursery Rhymes, Lullabies and Children-games**

Assamese folk song is not poor in Lullabies and Nursery Rhymes as well as Children game songs. The Assamese term *Nichukani-git* is used to suggest the sense of Lullaby. The Nursery Rhymes is often called *phāl-nām*. The aim of the Nursery Rhymes and Lullabies is to give the amusement of the bed time in the evening. Such songs attract the children for their composition but for the style of the presentation. This genre of folk songs is called *Dhāl-nām* and *Nichukani-git* in Assam. These songs are sung by the mother or grand-mother or elder sister of the child.

The moon is loved by all the children of all the cultures in world. To an Assamese child moon is an elder sister, i.e., Baidew or an elder brother, i.e., kākā, māmā and so on. A number of Nichukanis are addressed to Jonbāl or sister moon.

For example:

Jonbāl ai bejī eti diyā
bejī no kele, monā chilābalai
monā no kele, tokā bharābaloi
tokā no kele, hāthī kinibaloI
hāthi no kelei, uthi phuribaloī
kelei no uthi phuribaloī, dāngar manuh habaloī,
dāngar manuh hale kī-hai, gadhulīte, gadhulīte

dobā kobāi. 45

— O dear sister moon, give me a needle

Why is the needle?

To sew a bag.

Why is the bag?

Why is the bag?

To fill with money.

Why do you need money?

To buy an elephant

Why is the elephant?

To ride about

What happens when one rides about an elephant?

to be a great man.

What does a great man?

He bits upon the drums at evening.

Similarly children songs current in the undivided
district of Goalpara, address the moon as an elder brother,
i.e., Kākā. e.g.:

45 L. Gogol & Asamiyā Loka Sāhityar Rūprekhā, p.60
al re jon kākā, al-ai-al,
dudh dim, bhat dim
sāngar talat subā dim
hoi,- hoi- hoi. 46

— O jon Kākā, i.e., O elder brother moon, come, I will give you milk and rice and will make necessary arrangement. So that you can sleep peacefully under the bed.

Like the Nursery Rhymes and the Lullabies there are some children game-songs current in Assam. This type of songs are sung by the children at the time of playing. In Assam, specially in the undivided district of Kamrup, the children play a kind of play and sing riddle along with play. Of the children songs associated with children games the following is one. The rhyme is recited: when children play at hiding their hands:

O crane who has taken away your hands?
— The mango, when I tried to pick it.
Where is the mango? It fell into the wood.
What became of the wood? The fire consumed it.
What are the ashes? The washerman carried them away.
What the washerman did? Washed the King's clothes.

46 B. Dutta(ed): Goālparīyā Loka-gīta Sangraha, p.211
What became of the king? He is out on a deer hunt.
Where is the deer? It crossed the river.
Where are the fish? The crane ate them up.
Where is that Crane? It is perching on a bough.
See out come our hands. //47

5. **Work songs**

There are some songs which are sung by the workers or the labourers in order to beat back mental and physical miseries, and make themselves incentives to hard work. This type of songs can be included in the category of work song. Of the work songs **Hāl-bowā-git** i.e., the songs of ploughing, **Kuhiyār perā-git**, i.e., songs of sugar-cane grinding and **Nāwarīār gits**, i.e., songs of boatman are most noteworthy.

**Nāwarīyār-git**:

**Nāwarīār gits** or boatman's songs are marked by a spirit of spontaneous joy and flowing grace. They are to a certain extent like the **Bhātiālī** songs of Bengal.

---

47 P. Goswami: QP-cit, p.52
Assam is interested by rivers. The Assamese prefer moving about in the little canoes to travelling by land, waterman seen greatly to enjoy these boat trips for they are always singing songs as they paddle along.

Some of the folk songs particularly popular in lower Assam are noted for their robustness of expression and inspiration drawn from Vaishnava themes. 'Kanāi ferry me across the river' is an imploration of Rādhā to Krishna, and in this context the latter's conduct is that of a crafty ferryman. This is a real gem of poetry set in a picture of romantic assurance:

"kanāi pār-kārā he, belir dekhi chowā
Nasta hallā dudher bhāndār, bājār goilā boyā "

— Radha asks Krishna to ferry her across the river. Expressing her problem, she says that if she takes more time in crossing the river, her bucketful milk will be damaged and the market will be downed.

48 Bindu Ram Kalita :(60); Informant , Vill. Dhubargaon, Chhaygaon, data collected on 20/1/97
G. Jest and Humour songs:

There are some songs which are meant for jest and humour. These songs are generally sung by the Bhāwariās, a semi-professional entertainers. So this type of songs is known as Bhāwariās-songs. Of the Bhāwariās-songs 'Bhuikapar-git, 'Maluwar-git', Tāmāl-chorar-git, Kalikālor-gits are most popular.

Bhuikapar-git:

Ningna Bhawaria a village baffle of Nalbari District describes certain incidents in the earth quake of 1897, which caused heavy damages to the districts of undevided Kamrup, Goalpara and the Khāshi and Jayantia-hills. Chāndduhi-bil, natural lake originally was a hilly place, caused the terrible earthquake of June 1897. The Bhumikamper-git gives a vivid picture of the confusion created by the earthquake. The earth opens up in the cracks and water and sand come out, paddy in the field are totally destroyed, even the cooking pans start floating, things like spinning wheel and the gin are sallowed by the earth. The following specimen of song may focuss the irreparable loss caused by the terrible earthquake and apprehension caused by it in the mind of people.
— Here the folk poet describe the terrible effects of the earthquake. The houses, regions and even animals fell into the water. Even the cooking utensil fell down making a ghir-mir sound. The earthquake brought out well in the middle of the house floor. All the weaving instruments like sāl, gārt spinning wheel and other things were buried. The earthquake fissures in the soil making divisions.

Juna songs:

Parallels to Bhawaria songs there are some songs named Juna in upper Assam which are sung during the spring season in Bihu festival by the Huchari singers. Juna songs i.e., light songs, the Kapāhar-juna, Naharar-juna, pachalār-juna; Nangālar-juna are worthmentioning among the juna-songs.

49 P. Goswami: Bara Mahtar Tera git, p. 108
Similarly the songs entitled Jatarar-git has a close relations with such junā-songs such as Kapahar-junā, paruwār-junā. The song describes the attempts of an unexpert woman to spin and weave. The young woman purchases some cotton and after ginning and bleaching it she starts spinning. But due to her careless all the things collected by her get damage. Even a Mikir who comes for the woven cloth is scared away by a glance at it. Then the cloth is kept in a bamboo shelf from where it is stolen by a rat. A specimen of the song is given below to signify the negligence, careless and unactive manner of the young woman.

esera katle majnisa rati, tare bāndhile dantal hāti /
esera katle sabalake saru, tare bāndhile bhatarā garu/
sutakhini kati tai thale changat tuli, hālowai lai gal mai jori buli/
kata dinar murat tair kapor-khan hal, henokale Mikire kapor bichari gal/
kapor dekhi Mikire dile dhari lar, lorā-lurie kheda dile buli dhar-dhar/50

50 P. Goswami, Bāra-māhar-Tera gits, p. 143.
—Some of the cottons she (the unexpert lady) spinned at midnight are used to tie the elephant. And some, which are smallest size are used to tie the bull. After spinning she keeps the yarn on a chang (like wooden bed made of bamboo, which is used to stock things), but the farmer takes it away in the field to use it as rope. In the long run she completes her cloth and a mixir (an inhabitant of hilly region) comes in charge of the cloth. But he surprises to see it and runs away.

7. Baramahi: i.e., the twelve monthed songs:

Baramahi, the twelve monthed song is another genre of Assamese folk songs. It may be termed as Bilap-git means song of sorrow. This sorts of song is found to hear in Darrang, Kamrup and Goalpara districts. This type of songs may exhibits the feelings of love and his damsel. Madhumati-bilap, i.e., the sorrow of Madhumati, Kanya-Baramahi, Radha-Baramahi, Sita-Baramahi are most popular of the Baramahi-songs which are current in Assam:

—Kanya-Baramahi another song of this variety is a dialogue of a maiden with a vagrant whom she happens to come across. Each line of the git well up with fragments of broken sigh. In
the manner of Assamese Baramahi songs, there are Baramasa, in Bhojpur. This type of songs describe the agony of lonely women due to separation enjoy a much wider tradition.

8. Ballads:

Ballad is an noteworthy branch of Assamese folk songs. The term ballad has no prototype in Assam. The most popular and accepted Assamese technical term to suggest the meaning of the english word 'ballad' is Kāhini-git. In Lower Assam the term like 'git' or 'gid' is also used in lieu of the term ballad, of course, the term 'git' or 'gid' may suggest most of the folk songs including ballads. 51

Although late Benudhar Sarma used the word Barāti-git to signify the meaning of ballad, 52 nevertheless the term could not enjoy popularity among the scholars. In upper Assam the term Mālīta is used for the long Ballads. The term Mālīta probably comes from the Sanskrit word Mālā, i.e., garland. It is sung in a systematic way with a story. So the term Mālā may be used in lieu of the word ballad. 53

51 P. Goswami: Ballad and tale in Assam, p.9
52 B. Sarma: Dunari, p. 26
53 P. Goswami: Ibid., p.9
The Bāramāḥī, i.e., twelve monthed song which is popular in lower Assam also may be included in the category of ballad. Creation of folk songs term as Junā can be included in the ambit of ballad.

Parallel to the Junā of upper Assam is Bhāwra songs of lower Assam, they may be included in the periphery of Assamese ballads.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that certain ballads known as gīt in upper Assam such as Manī-kowarār-gīt, phul-kowarār-gīt etc. as well as the Mālita, Junā and Bāramāḥī, which are till current in oral tradition can safely be included in the category of the Assamese ballad.
C. The Bhojpuri Oral Songs: A Brief Survey

Bhojpuri Folk-songs are occupying an important place in the domain of the Bhojpuri folk literature. The tradition of these songs is very old. Observes S.K. Chatterjee, "The oldest specimens in this speech that we possess, are probably a few songs written by the great religious reformer and mystic teacher of Northern India who flourished in the fifteenth century was Kabir an inhabitant of Bhojpur."

The European scholars paid special attention towards collection and editing of Bhojpuri folk-songs about 70 years ago. They understood the gravity of these songs and that is why after collection they got them edited through scientific methods. Dr. Griarson was prominent among them.

Dr. R.N. Tripathi, being the pioneer of Bhojpuri folk songs will remain evergreen. Dr. Tripathi's basic contribution is considered praisable from many angles. His collection and contribution strengthens the security of our culture.

54 S.K. Chatterjee: "The Origin and Development of Bhojpuri Lok-giti, Part-I, p. 15
55 K.D. Upadhyaya: Bhojpuri Lok-Sahitya Ka Adhyana, pp. 59-60
and attracted the people towards the neglected folk songs. He published in his edited book 'Kabita Kaumudī' some Bhojpuri folk-songs such as Chohar, Janew, Nirbāhi, Hidawāla, Shrāvan etc, as Gramgits.  

Mr. Durga Sankar Prasad has depicted a vivid picture of the Bhojpuri-lok-gits in his edited version entitled —  

Bhojpuri Lok-git me Karun-ras.

Then Dr. K.D. Upadhyaya as the pioneer of Bhojpuri folk songs is noteworthy. His collected book 'Bhojpuri Lok-gits' is considered as the first book of the Bhojpuri folk-songs:

On the basis of subject matter Bhojpuri folk-songs may be classified into the following subgenres:  

(a) Samskar gits or songs associated with samskara —  

1) Chohar

2) Khelawāla

3) Songs of mundan

4) Songs of janew

5) Songs of marriage ceremony

6) Gawana gits.

56 Ibid., p.64

57 K.D. Upadhyaya: Bhojpuri Lok-git ka Adhyana, p.168
(b) **Seasonal Songs or Ritu-gits** -

i) Phāguwā

ii) Chaitā

iii) Baramasā.

(c) **Songs associated with Bratas** -

i) Sitalā-mātā

ii) Nāg-panchami

iii) Bahurā

iv) Godhan

v) Piriyyā

vi) Songs of Šathi-mātā.

4. **Songs associated with race**:

i) Songs of Ahir

ii) Songs of Chamār

iii) Songs of Kahār

iv) Songs of Teli

v) Songs of Dhobi

vi) Songs of Gorerio

vii) Songs of Dusādho.

5. **Work Songs** -

i) Jhatsār

ii) Songs of roponi

iii) Songs of Sohoni.
6(a). **Children games**:

i) Kāwaddi
ii) Gulli Dandā
iii) Ānkh-michawna
iv) Chuppi.

6(b). **Nursery Rhymes**:

I. **Samāskār-gits**:

Samāskār-gits may be defined as those gits which are sung from birth to death, in the context of various rites related with different stages of life. Samāskār means religious purificatory rites. In Sanskrit literature, it means *Suddhi*, Purification, *Prāyascita*, etc.

Religion plays a peculiar role on Indian life. It is not exaggeration to say that religion is the vitality of the Indians. The place of the traditional rites observed from time immemorial in connection with the religious life of the Indians is remarkable worth noting. From birth to death we cannot escape the influence exerted by rites. It is not uncommon to find some rites which are observed according to the established practices even before our birth. Among them *garbhadvān* and *puisavana* are most noteworthy. There is a
specific mention of sixteen such religious rites in the religious book of Hindus.

In the Vedic—there was a special celebration of Punsavana festival in Bhojpur in the event of Pregnancy of a woman. The intention inherent in the celebration of such Punsavana festival was that the pregnant woman would give birth to a male child and it was celebrated in complete disregard of the fact that the pregnant woman might give birth to a female child.

These two rites have become outdated in Bhojpuri society at present. That is why it becomes a bit difficult to comment on the songs connected with and observed in respect of celebration of such Punsavana rite. So birth rite is celebrated as the 1st rite in Bhojpur. The songs which are sung in this context are called Sohar. 58

(a) Sohar:

Love is the subject matter of Sohar. Here lies the description of sexual intercourse between husband and wife, pregnancy etc. along with comprehensive description of

58 K.D. Upadhyaya: Ibid., p. 165
aspiration to have a male-child, relief of pains of a pregnant woman. In certain songs the description of the pathetic feelings of a childless barren woman. The following songs gives such a feeling of a childless woman:

jeison ban ke koiriā, bane-bane kuhukele ho,
ae ram aison e jiarā hamār kuhukelā, ackare
balak binu ho.

jeison bora; thag have dhire-dhire sunugela ho,
aise jiarā hamār sunugela ackare bālak binu ho. 59

— Here the poet talks about the mental agon of a barren woman whose heart keeps cooing like the cuckoo in the jungle. She always craves for a child. The poet refers to a brazier which keeps burning slowly and slowly in the same way the heart of the woman keeps burning with great eagerness to have a child of her own.

(b) Khelewālā :

This song, like sohar, i.e., is sung in a situation dominated by moments of joy on birth of male child. But there are certain differences between the two. In

59 K.D. Upadhyaya: Ibid., p. 163
Sohar, the description relates to a stage immediately proceeding to birth of a male child. In these gits usually the description relates to the pains at the time of delivery, the treatment and behaviour displayed towards the pregnant woman by the other members of the family.

(c) Mundan-gits:

Mundan-gits are associated with mundan samakār. Mundan-samakār is observed at the third, fifth and seventh year. It is considered irreligious if hairs of the new born child are not dressed within the stipulated period specified above. Mundan-samakār is instituted as a sacred day in a temple or like places. In songs sung during mundan-samakār, the women sometimes prays to the God Indra for not showering rainfalls.

In certain songs there is a specific mention about taking ornaments etc. as gifts to new born child from their aunts or fathers. The following lines depict a vivid picture of woman's heart as follows:
— Here the aunt (sister of the father) is praying to God by
standing in the orchard that there should be no rainfall so
that she could get something on the shaving ceremony of her
nephew.

(d) Janew-gits:

Songs which are sung to perform the Janew ceremony
are known as Janew-gits or songs of upanayana. Janew means
imperting of knowledge. It is one of the important rites of
human life. In the Satapatha Brahmana the word upanayana is
used in the sense of taking charge of a student.

In the Sutra period the proposal of the students
for studentship and its acceptance by the teacher is the
central point in the Samkara.

60 K.D. Upadhyaya: Ibid., p. 168
In these songs, specific reference is also made to various activities to be undertaken in a particular samskāra.

In certain other songs, specific mentions about asking or praying for gifts by Brahmācharīś (Student) from woman addressing her as mother, going for acquiring knowledge to either Kāśi or Kashmir etc. are available. Following lines which are sung at the time of janew ceremony give us such an indication.

kiyā lebe baruā re dhoti re pothī,
kiyā lebe piyār janew,
kiyā lebe baruā re sowaran bhikhiyā
jahī ghare kanhār janew.61

— This song refers to the beginning ceremony after the performance of the sacred thread ceremony. The boy asked the lady for some alms. So the lady asked him whether he wants dress or books or yeallow sacred thread? Does he want gold to adorn his sacred thread.

The rich and the established families invite the scholars from Kāśi in order to celebrate this festival. The boys have to observe fasting on that day prior to the day of the festival 'upanayan'. The beduwa performs the religious

61 K.D. Upadhyaya : Ibid., p. 170
rites of the **samskar** the very next day. The barbar dresses the hairs according to the rites and they accept some honorarium for performance of these rites. When the boys on the occasion of 'upanayana' take bath with turmeric, the women assembled being overwhelmed with joy, set the following song into tune:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pāch sakhi āhi milike} \\
\text{haradhi charāv hamāre lāl ke,} \\
\text{baraho wajan bajāike} \\
\text{haradhi chareva hamāre lāl ke.}
\end{align*}
\]

—You give sakhi (girl friends) are too use turmeric to my son. It should be performed with the full ceremony of all the types of musical instruments played upon.

After bath the child is given a **kaupina** over his private parts. The child went near the **Achārya**. (The main object of the janew was the acquisition of knowledge and the building of character) who has already been appointed in the ceremony and announced his intention to become a **Brahmachāri**. Having accepted his request, the **Achārya** offered him cloth for the sake of his life. The **Brahmachāri** begs only from

---

62 K.D. Upadhyaya, Ibid., p. 169
those who do not refuse him. He begs from his mother and from other related women.

After this the novice wants to proceed for an educational mission. But he is persuaded by promising a bride or to make provision of study at his residence etc.

6. Marriage songs:

Marriage songs associated with marriage ceremony are treated as one of the important songs among the songs of saṃskāra. These songs are sung by the womenfolk in the various stage of the ceremony. Songs associated with the marriage ceremony can be divided into two categories:

(a) Barpakā, i.e., songs of bridegroom's party.
(b) Kanyā pakhyā, i.e., songs of bride's party.

The songs of the bride's party are found to be far more pathetic and sweet than those of the Bridegroom's party. The pomp and grandeur that is the magnificent ceremonious display on the Bridegroom's side is more enchanting. The following are the songs relating to wedding ceremony sung by both the parties:
The description of the wedding songs is infinite.:

The subject matters of these songs relate to the requests made by the daughters with their entire willingness, before their fathers to provide them with worthy and handsome husbands, request made by the bride's mother for going in search of bridegroom before the bride's father, choes of sorrowness for not getting worthy bridegroom for daughters, cursing one's own fate for bad luck for giving birth to a girl, etc.

The following song gives a vivid description about the requests made by a girl before her father for fetching a worthy
husband:

bar khaju, bar khaju, bar khaju re bābā,
ab bhallō biyāhan yoq re,
bhai hamare ke bābā sundar bar khojle,
hans janī dusarawa ke log aē. 63

— When the girl becomes marriageable, she request her father to search for an eligible handsome bridegroom. She is now already marriageable. So the father should find out such a bridegroom who should not be an object of laughter for the people sitting in the Varanda.

Similarly the following Bhojpuri song gives vent to the natural feelings of one overwhelmed with grief and despair is vary rare.

Puraba khojolo beti
are tino bhuvan, tohare bar khojalo
kahati na mile sūrirām aē. 64

— The father talks about his failure of finding out suitable bridegroom for his daughter. The father has made search in the east, in the west and even in Orissa of Shree Jagannath. He has made a search of all the three universes. But he could not find a Ram like match for her.

63 K.D. Upadhyaya: Bhojpuri Lok-gīt, p.178
64 Ibid., p. 178
The word 'gawana' derives from Sanskrit word - 'gaman'. The rite associated with taking of farewell by the bride, from the paternal home is called 'gawana' and the songs sung on this context are called 'Gawanā ki-gits'.

The moment we bid farewall to the bride is a very pathetic scene, specially when the bride is carried in to the pālki. This is heart broken moment. At this moment all parents, brothers, sisters, kiths and kins and neighbours are found to shed tears. But the elder sisters-in-law seldom shed tears. The following song is a glaring example of the above situation:

kekara hi rovale ganga bārhi aili,
kekara ke rovale anor
kekara hi rovale charan dhoti bhīge
kekora nayanawā na lor
bābā ke rovale ganga bhāhi aili
amā ke rovale anor
bhiyā ke rovale charan dhoti bhije
bhowji nayanawā na lor. 65

Here the folk-poet describe through a series of question about the farewell ceremony of the daughter. The questions

65 K.D. Upadhyaya : Ibid., p. 183
are whose weeping will increase the water of the Ganga? whose weeping will cause maximum noise? whose weeping will make the dhoti wet and whose weeping will not sad even a drop of tears? The answer is given that weeping of the father will increase the water of the Ganga and mother's weeping will produce maximum noise. When the brother weeps his dhoti and dress will get to wet. But there will be not even a drop of tears in the eyes of the sister-in-law (Bhāvi).

2. Ritu-gits:

The change of the seasons can influence the heart of the human beings. There are some songs in Bhojpur region which are sung only that particular seasons. This type of songs is a kind of reflection of the spontaneous of feeling of a man or woman. Among the seasonal songs, which are current in Bhojpur, kajeli, Fāng, Chaitā are most noteworthy.

In the month of Srāvana when the nature turns out to be green a rare and extraordinary feeling tauches the natural world on the threshold of innumerable patches of clouds haverering in the sky, Kajeli is sung very joyfully in Bhojpur region. Thus Fāng, i.e., Holi songs are sung at the time of holi festival. Chaitā means the songs which are sung in the month of Chaitā. In this month the whole earth becomes colour­ful due to the presence of spring season. People's mind also
become colourful and they sung Chaitā the songs of spring very joyfully.

3. **Songs associated with Vrata and festivals**

The women-folk celebrate different festivals like Puja, Vrata etc. in different times and months. The Bhojpuri women celebrate [Sitalā-Pūjā, Nag-Panchami, Bahura, Tlj, Pirhiyā, Godhan etc. according to different religions' rites.

**Songs associated with Vrata and Puja**:

The Bhojpuri women sing some prayer songs on the different contexts to satisfy their different Gods and Goddesses such as Sitalā-mātā, Ganga-mātā, Chathi-mātā, Nag-mātā etc. These songs are known as Sitalā mātā ki-gīts, Ganga mātā ki-gīts, Chathi mātā ki-gīts, Nag-Panchami ki-gīts respectively. These songs arouses a religious feeling in the minds of the people.

**Sitalā mātā ki-gīts**:

This type of songs is most popular in Bhojpur region. Perhaps no disease is worshipped as god or goddess except Goddess Sitalā. When a child suffers from small pox and shrieks with terror and pain prayers to the Sitalā-mātā for curing the disease. The Bhojpuri generally do not use
any medicine. It is a common when Sitālā mātā is satisfied and pleased she cures the patient of the disease. For this the mother of the child thinks herself to be guilty and sinful. Then she offers her prayer to the Sitālā mātā to free her son as follows:

nimiyā ki dālī maiya lawal hlorowā ki jhuli jhuli,
maiyā gawalī, gīt ki jhuli jhuli
jhulata, jhulata, mayā ka logelī plyāṣiyā ki
chali bhailī

mālahorīā abasa ki jāgali ae mālin
uthi ke mohi ke paniyā plāw.
pāṇi pikar prasanna hul mātā asirbād deti hai,
dhīyāwā jurasu mālin apan sasurawā
palohiyā to jurasu netharawā.66

— Goddess Sitālā is singing swinging on the wings hanging on the branch of the Neem tree. While singing she sung song also. In course of singing she felt thirsty and went to the house of the mālin (gardener's wife). After going there she asked the wife of gardener if she was lying a sleep or awake. She should awake up and gives her water to satisfy her thirsty. When she becomes satisfied after taking water she blessed her "your daughter should satisfied and pleased her father-in-law and the daughter-in-law should satisfy."

66 K.D. Upadhyaya : Ibid, p. 201
Nag-Panchami:

The Manasa-puja is performed on the auspicious day of Nag-panchami falling the month of Sravana. On the morning of Nag-panchami day the girls just after leaving bed leap the whole house with cow-dung and draw lines with the same. At the front of main door of the house they draw the picture of two snakes with cow-dung. In towns and cities where cow-dung is not available they draw snakes on paper and set it on the front door of the house. Thereafter in conformity with tradition, worship is performed. By putting milk and fired rice in a pot, they kept in a lonely spot within the premises of the house for the snake goddess-Manasā. It is believed in the Bhojpurī society that Manasā would come and accept their offer. The purpose of the worship is to get oneself rid of the fear of snake biting and if at all the snake-bites, the poison will not affect them. Like all other parts of India Nag-panchami is celebrated with traditional devotion and sincerity in the Bhojpurī area and in the context of Manasa-pujā the songs are sung by both the men and the women-folk.

Work songs:

Fatigue approach as a consequence of mental or physical labour. In order to beat back mental and physical miseries the workers or the labourers sing certain songs,
called "work songs". Among the work songs — Jhatār, Sohani, and Ropani — are noteworthy which are current in Bhojpur region.

Songs by driving away annoying feelings and the feelings of lethargy provide strong incentives to hard work. As a result, a worker can summon all his stock of will power to finish his job. Although the modern computer era where manual labour is sharply being replaced by machine power, the importance of physical or manual labour in many spheres can not be ignored. It is not uncommon to find that certain songs related to a particular religion or caste. These songs reflect the national characteristics and cultural feelings also. These songs are different from the work songs to a great extent. Absence of common feeling is the characteristic of the work songs. The songs of Ahir, Teli, Kohar, Chamār, Dhobi which are current in Bhojpur region are of this category.

Birahā:

It is the national song of Ohir. The Ohirs sing Birahā in different seasons of a year and even while celebrating religious festivals they sing this type of songs while ploughing in fields, going with the bridegroom's party etc. Even competitions are organised in wedding ceremonies in Birahā songs.
The cow is an invitable unit of our rural economy. The Ahirs or cowherds are an important functional group. The Bhojpuri is considerably rich in songs of cowherds. Mysteriously enough, these songs are known as Biraha songs. They embrace a wide avenue of social and individual experience.

The biraha we raise not like a crop, brother,
Nor it ripens on a branch,
The biraha lives in the heart, O Rama,
Sing it while the heart is full. 67

The Ahir's heart and soul are lost in the cow. Often, he dreams of a thirsty goddess of the pastures whose thirst he thinks of quenching with the cow's fresh milk.

Like the Ahirs, the Somars, Teli, Dhobi etc. also pride in singing their national songs. The songs of Teli is known as Kolhoo, i.e., Oil grinding machine. It is the only source of their livelihood.

Similarly the Dusadh's also sing their national songs. The song of Dusadh is called Pachar.

6. Children games:

In all most all the countries, the children sing songs while playing. No preponderance is given an sense and

67 Hem Barua: Folk songs of India, p.70
language of these songs. Only in order to give the status to these being called as songs, they are sung.

The following songs are prevailing as children songs in the Bhojpur region.

i) Kabaddi

ii) Golli Dongā

iii) Miktas Mudowbal

iv) Chooppl

v) Songs about the animals.


Kabaddi

Of the children games which is popular and prominent in the Bhojpuri society is Kabaddi. The play ground where the game (Kawaddi) is instituted, in between the two parties a straight line is drawn. This line allots two equal halves of the playground to the parties to the game. One of the players of a party moves to the other party's plot singing, to touch someone of that party and to come back to his own party's plot. He is always careful about his safe arrival at the plot of his own party demarcated by the straight line drawn. This game of singing and entering the opposite party's plot is commonly known as kabaddi pahranā. Then the second party try to capture him within their own area. If they can capture him then he will be out from the game. In Bhojpuri
language it is called Mar-janä. Otherwise if the singing man comes back tauching their opposite members then they will be out and his party will won the game. The following lines are commonly sung as song of \textit{Kabaddi} in Bhojpur region.

\begin{verbatim}
chal kāwāddī nārā
sitar ganja mārā
kharbujje par lot-pot,
paltān ko mārā,
koyī nam le hāmārā --- 68
\end{verbatim}

This song refers to certain words is spoken by players in sports of the play of \textit{Kabaddi}. The player speaks out that he has won Chittarganž. Perhaps he fell down on a flat player and he says that it was like falling watermelon and that way the army was killed. Some one should remember his name.

\textbf{Palne ka gits, i.e., Nursery Rhymes :}

In order to please and keep the children satisfied, in mothers and grand mothers sing different songs different moments. This type of songs can be categorise into three categories :

a) child pleasing sons
b) child feeding songs
c) child sleeping songs.

\footnote{68 H. Tiwari : \textit{Ibid.}, p. 139}
When new-born baby keeps on crying and is found to be indifferent to food and milk then the mothers begin to sing songs like the following:

Chānā māmā āre āw, āre āw
nadiyā ke kīnēre āw
babuwa ke mahuwa me
ghut ghuṭ ghuṭ. 69

The songs appear to be the grand panacea to pacify the crying or the weeping baby. Vibrations of such sweet music transport the crying baby to the world of peace.

Besides some other songs current in Bhojpur region known as Bibidh gits. This type of songs are sung by the children at the time of playing. Therefore this type of songs can be included in the category of childrens.

7. Bāramāśā:

Bāramāśā, i.e., the twelve months songs is most popular and prominent in the Bhojpur region. From the method of description and the aspect of subject matter

69 K.D. Upadhyaya : Ibid., p. 228
Bāramāsā is derived from Sanskrit literature. According to Krishna Lal, Sat-ritu division of Sanskrit is originated from the Aryans who lived in Saptasindhu. But as they stretched to the east and the south, the existence of the seasons one could notice the inconsistency among them. The month of Māgh and phagun were included to the winter season. In fact from the fifth day of the full moon in the month of Māgh the spring season is welcomed.

Due to this inconsistency of the season and month, the description of Sat-ritu's eliminated from the people's mind and the Bāramāsā occupies the place.

The Bāramāsā is sung specially in the rainy season. But there is no any restriction to sing it in the other season also.

It can be sung according to sweet will of any person. Bāramāsā prevails greatly in Bhojpur region. The inhabitant of rural areas like to enjoy this type of songs. Because this sort of songs exhibits the picture of well and woe of the Bāramāsā. Bāramāsā often begins in the month Āsār and ends with the description of Jeth. The main content of the
Bālamāvā-gīt is to narrate the grief of the separation of love. The pangs of separation is so much, so untolarable that some thlms in order to mitigate her sorrow has expresses it before the Sakhī (friend). In this context we can cite the following verses.

Bhād mās bhayabaha e sakhī,
ghan bahut gharāl,
keharā saranewā ham jāike baithi
jib more bahut darāl
kātik me sakhī kātiki lāge
sabhe sakhī Gānja nahāl
hamaro lalana parades e sakhī,
keharā sange ganjā nahāl. 70

— O' friend when cloud thunders dreadful in the month of Bhādra, I am afraid of it. Who will give me shelter?

In the month of Kārtik, it falls the fullmoon day of Kārtika, friend take bath in the holy water of the Ganga with their husbands, but she is unfortunate as her husband is yet to arrive back.

70 K.D. Upadhyaya: Ibid., p. 197