CHAPTER - V
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ORAL LITERATURE

William R. Bascom has termed spoken literature or oral literature as verbal art. According to Bascom unwritten literature, popular literature, folk literature, old literature etc have established a link between verbal art and literature.\textsuperscript{38}

Verbal art generally implies such type of art, which is oral or spoken literature in nature. Verbal art is an indispensable part of literature. Literature excluding the features of verbal art in it can't reflect the picture of a society.

Verbal art includes Song, myth, tale, Proverb and riddle etc. though these are forms of verbal art; it is easy to find out the differences among myths, legends proverbs etc. In the language of W.R. Bascom, the concept of verbal art avoids all these difficulties, and has the further advantage of emphasizing the essential features which distinguished the folk tale, proverbs and related forms.

In the socio-cultural life of Garigaon verbal art has occupied an important position. Although verbal art is unwritten literature still without it we cannot determine the identity of a race or a region.

\textsuperscript{38} W.R. Bascom: Contribution to Folklorities: Meerut; Archana Publication 1980: P. 67.
Verbal art has been the principal resource of literature. Garigaon is rich in its verbal art. Verbal art can be had in various forms in Garigaon. The verbal art of Garigaon has some distinctive characteristics. As stated above the various forms of verbal art in Garigaon are: (i) Song, (ii) Cradle songs, (iii) Tale, (iv) Legend, (v) Riddle, (vi) Proverb etc.

There are different types of songs in the village Garigaon. Some of the types are described below:

1. A. **Song: (A Biya Geet) Marriage songs:**

   In Assamese society in time of Zuron (giving ornaments to the bride), bathing of bride and groom, sitting near Āgni, Ākhoitolā, Doin diyā, Pāshā khel etc. Generally such songs are sung by the relatives and the friend of the bride. Songs are recited in a procession when the relatives go to a river to fetch water for the bath of the bride or bridegroom. “A fast song on the day of marriage ceremony by bride & bridegroom, father & mother”.

   a. **Come out oh, the mother of the bride**

      Looking at the sun

      Your tender aged daughter

      Bhoge’s heart breaks.

   b. **Ram and Sita plays dice**

      The people look amazed
If Ram lose today
He will be out of work
If Ram loses he will pay
The entire property at his disposal
If the mother loses,
He will lose the golden ornament.

[This song is sung when the bride & bridegroom has playing dice].

c. **Prepare the Parched Paddy (ākhoi)**

O my dear brother

Today only you will fill up with cavity formed by joining the palms of the hands together (Ānjali).

The bride will go away breaking away all the ties.

**Suagtola song :**

d. Brought the sweet are coconut tree from dārākā

Brought the shoots betel leaf

If you do not entertain the female singers

With betel nut

We shall not prepare the paddy for the Suāg .

**Teasing songs :**

Some songs are recited by the women folk at the time of marriage when the bridegroom sits near the bride in front of sacred fire.
e. There is no dust on the road
   The face of the bride’s
   Material aunt is not a face
   But an arum leaf.

f. We have sung the *choral* (prayer) songs
   For so long
   But none have offered us betel nut.
   Whatever we got, kept it on the roof
   Chewed it thinking it be betel nut
   Mistakenly it was the cheek of the bride’s mother.  

1. **B. Apeswāri Sabhar Geet (song of the assembly of fairies):**
   When the children suffer from mums or fall sick, in south Kamrup or in Garigaon a kind of *Pujā* to *Apeswāris* or supernatural being praying the recovery of the child. In such context *Apeswāri* Sabha Geet are sung when attacked by some disease they begin to shake hand and feet, cry with staring eyes and faces then they are supposed to have got the evil eye of wicked fairies (*upādir leṭhā*) and in that case the ladies sing with enthusiasm the *Apeswari* song surrounding three or five virgin girls as *Apeswari* near a circular small *Pāndāl* built in the yard.

GHOSA:

O mother *Apeswari* you have descended down the *Pāndlā*. 

And have started *Puja* on the fifth pot of gold.

1. C. **Lakhimi Ādarā Geet** (song of welcome to Lakhimi)

Goddess Lakhimi stays far away in water after the season of harvest. At the time of harvesting, carrying a bunch of paddy crop to their home Lakhimi is welcome on an auspicious day.

Mother Lakhimi was eating gourd and Arum

Now have come to man's world getting *Pithā Guri* etc. 40

1. D. **Air Geet**: (Song of mother)

*Air Geet* or *Sitālā nām* is recited by the female folk when someone is attacked by small pox. The old ladies sing those religious songs in congregation:

A. O mother (Āi) you are born, mother *Tilo*

In the month of *Chāitrā*, descends mother *Ritusilā*

In the month of *Bohāg*, mother was conceived

Suffering knew no bound on the day she was born

These was hail storm

As if drums were played upon

These was hail storm

On the day mother was born
Father was out of door
On the day mother was born

_Pācheti_ was observed after five days

The houses were cleansed after one month

Mother was asked what the flowery late of the father is

Riding on me, father has moved to the _Kāilāshā._

Thus saying, mother (_Āi_) did not sit idle.

Before and after him were the _Dāsis_

One living being of my son has come near me

The daughter and daughter-in-law of the neighbouring family has
came

In truth, I say O mother (_Āi_), daughter of lord _Shivā_.

1. **Deh Bisarar Geet or Marefati song:**

Recitation of Deh Bisarar or Marefati songs are current amongst
the persons following Sufisim in Garigaon. The songs are based on
hyman and the songs which crave for such human body which resembles
the various elements of the great universe besides longing for _Mukti_ or
salvation. Such songs abound in Garigaon:

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41. Mrs. Nurbanu Bibi, Sex- Female, Age- 67 years, Address: Vill &
P.O. : Dehan Garigaon
A) Human body is as pure as Mecca or Madina. The human being will have to know his body and find them.

All the knowledge of the religion *Shariat, Tarikat, Hakikat* and *Marefat*-can be found in the human body.

The outward appearance of the human body is colourful and it has eighteen important organs.

But the most important one the human soul is hidden inside the human body.

To reach god, the human being must serve his *Guru* there is no alternative way of this.

A human being is supreme. He can create the *Lam-Lam* (Thinking, Imagine) hill applying his thinking power and the *Arab- sea* (Niyat or Belief) applying his will power only the wise can know this, not the fool.

The heart of every human being burns for the love of his *Guru*.42

1. F. **The song of frog’s marriage:**

According to a belief in Assamese society when there is drought in the month of *Chāitrā* or *Bohāg* then the ladies collect two frogs and get them married and worships Indrā, the God of rain. In this ritual some songs are recited by the female folk. Some of such songs are –

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42. Faiyez Ali Seikh , Address : Vill. & P.O.: Dehan Garigaon, Sex: Male, Age: 70 years
a) Rain Rain to the marriage of the frog
Ram Ram comes the god Indrā
Ram Ram got drenched in Rain
Ram Ram the fairy of heaven
Ram Ram has come down
Ram Ram listening the news of frog wedding.

1. G. Zikir:

Zikir means meditation or “Jāp”. The Muslim community of Garigaon sings Zikir in the following way:

a) Refrain:

Don’t leave Kālimā, hold on.

Lāilāhā, ilālāhu Mohāmmād Rāsuḥ

Don’t give Zikir, Keep it preserved on your heart.

Sāhebe jān Sāhede Jān

Rhyme:

My house will break down the bamboo, support would leave

Lāilvḥā, ilālāhu Mohāmmād Rāsuḥ

The ant will eat into the rūa (a rafter of a roof)

O my āllāh

Sāhebe jān Sāhede Jān

43. Srimoti Pratima Das Patowari, Address: Dehan Garigaon.
Sex: Female, Age: 49 years
The messenger of death will take you to hell

*Lāilāhā, ilālāhu Mohāmāmād Rāsul*

Who will stand surety for you?

*O my āllāh*

*Sāhebe jān Sāhede Jān*

Don't leave *kālimā*, hold on

Two beares lengthwise and breadth wise

*Lāilāhā, ilālāhu Mohāmāmmād Rāsul*

Who will hold on a *(chāti)*

*O my āllāh*

*Sāhebe jān Sāhede Jān*

I have gave up wealth and man's company

*Lāilāhā, ilālāhu Mohāmāmmād Rāsul*

*Mollāh saves oh My Allah*

*Sāhebe jān Sāhede Jān*

Don't leave *kālimā*, hold on

1. **H. Nichukani geet:**

Mother of a child lulls the babies to sleep reciting songs, which are known as *Nichukāni geet.*

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44. Informant: Ostad Abdul Rahim Medhi, Village: Dehan Garigaon, Sex: Male, Age: 82 years.
Some of the lullaby current in Garigaon are as follows:

(i) Duck ran after mangoes
Owl was looking
The fried fish of the kitchen
Have been eaten by the bondā

Bondā = (A big size cat)

(ii) Siyali don’t come at night
Your ear will be cut and spanned

Siyāli = A female fox

(iii) O God moon, come
We will give you rice and fish
And also a shelter under the bed,
Fall right on the head of our baby.45

II. Tales:

It was once a familiar sight in the area where at nightfall children assembled round an old lady in their courtyard requesting her to recount a tale. Through in this age of electronic media customs of story telling has become a rare sight in the village, like many parts of the Assam. Still story telling is a familiar scene in Garigaon. A few sample of tales current in Garigaon are cited below:

(a) A tale of an old man and his wife:

Many many years ago there lived in a village an old man and his wife. They had no offspring. So, they were not happy. They went to a saint one day and told him everything about their miseries and requested him to bless him with a child. The saint became sympathetic to them and agreed to bless them with a child. After few days the old woman gave birth to a male child. Day after day the old man and woman took care of the child but they became impatient and tired. So, they request the saint to make the child a grown up man. The saint agreed to help them. The old man and woman came back home and saw to their surprised that child had grown up into a full grown youth but the old man and woman became alarmed a frightened when their son started smashing their doors and windows and falling the areca nut trees.

He even ill-treated his old father and mother and ran after them to kill them. The helpless old man and his wife went to the saint and informed him everything. They requested him to transform the son to a child. The saint replied that their son behave in that manner because, he had grown up overnight without learning anything. He agreed to transform the grown up son into child again. From that day onward the old man and woman lived a happy life.
A tale of a Cunning thief:

In a certain village in Kamrup district lived a Cunning thief. He was so expert that no one could catch him red handed. He was so confident about his skill in the art of stealing that he informed the owner of the house before hand. One day a man in the village challenged him to bait and offered to give him reward if the thief succeeded in stealing. The thief accepted the challenged and said that he would come to his house the next night. As the night came on the man and his family members remained alert. It was the winter season the male members and servants of the family were busy thrashing the paddy in the courtyard. The women folk were busy preparing the nights meal in the kitchen. Everyone remained alert. Soon after the women folk completed cooking the thief came dressed in "Mēkhēla chāddār" did not come back even after an hour washing the utensils. They raised a hue and cry that the thief had taken away the utensils. They were surprised to think how could the thief come? None of them had seen him come. They had no alternative but to have the night's meal on the plantain leaves. The man went to the thief early next morning and explained what happened to him. The thief took him to the place inside the kitchen garden where, he had hidden the dishes and utensils. The man got all the stolen dishes and utensils back and rewarded the thief a prize.46

III. Legends:

There is a legend relating to the name of the village Garigaon. One such legend or interpretation is the cultivation being the main earning source of the people of Garigaon from the ancient time. From the old days the people of the area used carts or gāri to carry their agricultural products to different places such as Beltola, where they had cultivated the paddy. From the Assamese word Gāri the village came to be known as Garigaon or the village of carts.

Another legends or interpretation goes that the name is derived from the Assamese word gār or stockade. It may be mentioned that the village is surrounded by a number of stockades. These stockades were built during the Ahom-Mughal period. The diminutive term of gār in Assamese is Gāri. Due to existence of a number of gār or stockades in and in and around the area, it is said, the village came to be known as Garigaon.

IV. Riddle:

It is difficult to say the time of the origin of riddle. Still looking at the creative aspects of it can be concluded that riddle is the result of the experience of human kind over the years. Riddle is a part of verbal art. Many riddles are in vogue in Garigaon. These riddle confuse the mind of
the readers. Intellects get perplexed. Various riddles used in Garigaon are noted below:

(A)  *Hābit Kāhe, olāi nāhe-*  
It coughs in the wood, but does not come out.  
*Kuthār*  

(B)  *Athengiā bāgāli*  
*nītāw nāche gādhuli*  
One legged heron,  
Round and round it dances  
*Bichāni*  

(C)  *Ghār āche duār nāi*  
*māruh āche māt nāi*  
The house is there, but no door  
There is a man, but no voice  
*Kābār*  

(D)  *Khāl bil Sukāi gāl*  
*Gāchār āgāt Pāni rāl*  
Ponds and lakes have gone dry,  
But what has remained preserved at treetops  
*Nārikāl*  

(E)  *Rājāser Kāligāi*  
*Ek piān dee Mārijāi*  
Black cow of the Raja’s  
Dies offer one fruit  
*Kāl*  

*Banana*
V. Proverbs:

Assamese Proverbs are the outcome of the mode of Assamese life. Assamese customs, manners, religious usages and the mental approach towards god. World, life, technology and nature find expression in the proverbs. Assamese Proverbs are in the mouth of rural folks. But some proverbs current in Assamese society, which are known as “Dākār Bāchān”. A major portion of the proverbs deals with agriculture and Peasant Society. Various proverbs used in Garigaon are noted below:

(a)  *Pehi māhi bhārī ācheğāon*

Āi nāikiā loghone Jāon.

The village is full of aunts, but in the absence of mother, I go hungry.

(b)  *Melāt bāhi nāmāte uchit*

*Pāpe chuwe kinchit kinchit*

He is guilty who sits in a Mel, but does not speak just words.

(c)  *Akārā māit uthil*

The idiot rides on the harrow.

(d)  *Hur mur jātrā, ji kāre Bidhātā.*

Be prompt, leaving the results with fate.

(e)  *Gāt nāi chāl bākāli*

*Mod khāi tin tekeli.*
He has got no skin to cover his body, but he drinks three pot fulls of liquor.

(f) *Bhutār Mukhāt Rām nām*

The devil utters the name of Ram.

(g) *Ajāt gāchār bijāt phāl*

Wild trees produce useless fruit

(h) *Kāthāte chāul nisije*

Rice will not boil on words.

VI. *Mohoho song:*

In the month of *Aghōn*, the cows herds of this locality have sing a song, which is called in Assamese as *Mohoho* song. As for example one of this song is:

(a)

*Mohoho Mohoho*

Before mosquitoes flee away

They bite on tepo’s head

Tepo’s name is *Dun*

The host’s family winnows baskets of rice

Not finding rice, they give us coins

They make haste inside

Bring O, host a hand full seeds of
Āthiā bānānā

The belly of the host has lowest
Plate of the plantain trunk
His belly has appeared like a bag
Fat of the duck
It has truck twelve o’clock
Thirteen eggs at twelve o’clock
The two brothers quarrel
The leaves of the bamboo tree dazzles
We need coins in quarters
Bring, o host a handful
The cowherd then after blessings to
The host and his family member
Let these be cow in the cowherd
Let these be paddy crops in the granary
Let these be betel leaf and areca nut in the garden

Age:65 years