Chapter VI

BOHAG BIHU AND PERFORMING ARTS:
TRADITION AND CHANGE

1. Preliminary Observations:

The traditional audio-visual art-forms of any society constitute performing arts. These art-forms include music, dance and drama. Performing art-forms may be folk as well as classical. In traditional folk festivals, performing arts are external behaviours associated with the concerned festivals. Among the traditional folk performing arts prevalent in Assam, the springtime Bihu songs and dances greatly enthral the people like nothing else. This is evident from the flocks of enthusiastic people gathered at the present-day Bihu pandals. We have reasons to believe that the underlying art-forms of the Bihu song and dance had evolved on magic and ritual of the early cultivators of Assam. The ceremonial and ritualistic character of the Bihu song and dance could be seen in a few places upto the early decades of twentieth century A.D. Subsequently, Bihu songs and dances assumed the present forms of performing art soon after the springtime Bohag bihu had turned out to be a publicly organised cultural festival.

2. Bihu Song and Dance: A Historical Perspective on the Changing Contours and Composite Culture:

Evidently, music and dance are the finest artistic expressions of mankind. They are an integral part of human life and their antiquity is as old as the story of man. Both the songs and dances associated with the springtime Bihu of Assam are also a superb expression of creative ability of human being. There is no least doubt that these songs and dances are embodiments of agricultural and pastoral experiences of the non-elite rural peasants of Assam. This genre of song and dance is associated with fertility cult. It would be logical to hold that as in other parts of the world, the early agricultural men of Assam also were not totally lacked of aesthetic sense; whether it be song or dance, all were parts of their struggle for livelihood and were associated with their basic needs which were also responded with cultural growth like aesthetic aspect of life. The magical designs of dance were enacted by primitive men out of the emotion towards food gathering. The singing of song was the integral part of magic-dance. “When the primitive men danced to the cadence of consenting feet, they sang songs to beat music to its tone and rhythm.”

Ancient song was also a magic of art as its main function was to expedite the labour of production. The early varieties of Bihu song and dance of Assam were also no exception. The songs and dances associated with

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2. R.N. Sharma, Social and Cultural Anthropology, p.260
4. J.A. Harrison, Ancient Art and Ritual, p.69
5. S.N. Barman, L.U, p 57
6. II. Barua,op, Kp. 91
springtime fertility cult of the primitive cultivators, entailed the elements of art as these were mimic representations of nature's procreative urge and desired realities. As a part of struggle for subsistence, the magical enactments of song and dance definitely involved physical labour of the primitive men. The fact therefore remains that the art-forms of the springtime *Bihu* song and dance are the outcome of the physical labour of the primitive cultivators of Assam for survival along-with their aesthetic needs.

The primitive men of agriculture created both ritual and magic out of art. The savage hunters who subsequently settled down in cultivation, had experiences in their daily life that crops did not always flourish nor could the fertility of women be always assured. Naturally therefore, they had to do something to promote fertility of crops and of women which was vital for survival. In order to achieve it, these cultivators used to retire to the field before the season of cultivation commenced and wove the drama in art in the form of ritual or magic. On this ground, we may also hold that the ancient art was communal in nature and people in primitive communities sought to celebrate their common collective experiences through song and dance. Apparently, springtime *Bihu* song and dance are also ancient art wherein aesthetic aspect of the primitive people found expression in a symbolic way through the medium of body in the early stage of the agricultural society of Assam.

Human society, through different stages of growth, contributed to the development of art-forms underlying song and dance. As has already been shown, the people of Austro-Asiatic and Mongoloid origin had contributed to the various aspects of the composite Bihu culture of Assam. Meanwhile, we have found that the Austric was the first race to introduce neolithic culture and paddy cultivation in pre-historic Assam. These people naturally hoped for abundant harvest for livelihood. The religious belief and connected rites and rituals of the Austric cultivators had evolved on their biological belief. They gathered experience that women produced children out of their wombs, vegetation also grew out of the earth; so, the fertility of women was same as that of the earth. These experiences might have got reflected in art-forms associated with their music and dance performed before taking to cultivation in order to rouse the propensities for fertilisation in earth. This form of art is also found in Java, the Nicobar Islands, Upper Myanmar and in those places of India where Austric influences were once the dominant traits. The Alpine people, who happened to come to Assam after the Austric people were also fond of music and dance; this creates a ground to hold the belief that the Alpine people played a conspicuous part in streamlining the existing music and dance-like sex appealing gestures with their identical musical and dance elements. Evidently, the racial admixture of the Austric and Alpine people had created a situation wherein cultural assimilation was possible and subsequently, as a result of further racial admixture with the Mongoloid people, springtime Bihu song and dance assumed a new

13. R.M. Nath, Background of Assamese Culture, p.3.
form\textsuperscript{15}. However, evidence is not wanting to hold the belief that the Vedic Aryans, who advocated the classical stream of dance and music, ignored the existing \textit{Bihu} songs and dances associated with sex rites\textsuperscript{16}. The fact therefore remains that at subsequent time, the high caste Hindus kept themselves away from pre-Aryan \textit{Bihu} songs and dances. Had this ancient tradition of art been incorporated into the fold of Hinduism, the Hinduism in Assam would have had a more lively and enriched form\textsuperscript{17}; it may be conceived from the present forms of the \textit{Lai-Haraoba} dance and the \textit{Vaisnavism} of Manipur.

But the present form of springtime \textit{Bihu} song and dance largely owe to the contributions of the Ahoms and Chutias who belonged to the Tai-Shan and Tibeto-Burman branches respectively of the Mongoloid stock of people. Although sex appeal in song and dance was relatively old among the Austric and Alpine people, the Ahoms and Chutias also contributed a lot to the existing tradition with their identical cultural elements and popularised and established a new tradition\textsuperscript{18}. Although Mising\s have their \textit{Ai-ni-toms} identical to \textit{Bihu} songs, it is a historical fact that the Mising\s of plains had adopted the rhythms of dancing and drumming under the influence of the powerful Chutias\textsuperscript{19}. Obviously, the Boros, who had settled in Assam much earlier than the Chutias and Ahoms, have their own \textit{Bihu} institutions; but the chords of their \textit{dhols}, songs and dances are not

\textsuperscript{15} I. Gogoi, ‘Bihur Bani’ in \textit{Bihu Samskritir Rup Rekha}, ed. J.Gandhiyi, p.4
\textsuperscript{16} Bihu Eti Samiksha, p.5
\textsuperscript{17} P. Goswami, ‘Bohag Bihur Parampara’ in \textit{Bohag Bihur Barebarania Chabi}, p.2
\textsuperscript{18} L. Gogoi, \textit{op. cit.} pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid}, p.7
harmonized with those popularised by the Ahoms and Chutias\textsuperscript{20}. However, the Boros immensely contributed to other agricultural rites of \textit{Bohag Bihu} that we have already noted. It is pertinent to note that the springtime songs and dances of the Yunnan province of south-west China sharply resemble the form now current in Assam\textsuperscript{21}. This provides us with a strong ground to come to a definite conclusion that although the springtime \textit{Bihu} songs and dances are a robust relic of distant Austro-Asiatic culture, their forms now current in Assam have been largely derived by the Tai-Shans from the Chinese springtime festivals. Evidently, the original homeland of the \textit{Tai-Shans} is south-west China\textsuperscript{22}. Predominance of Bihu dance and song is still noticed in the areas of upper Assam inhabited by Chutia, Mising and Tai-Shan people.

The present tradition of \textit{Huchari} institution of the \textit{Bohag Bihu} had evolved on the custom of offering blessing to feudal lords and monastic heads of Ahom regime\textsuperscript{23}. Art elements are noticed in the peculiar songs and dancing styles associated with the \textit{Huchari} institution. Under the influence of neo-Vaisnavism in Assam, the traditional art of \textit{Huchari} carol singing accepted a new form in respect of content and performance\textsuperscript{24}.

During the region of king Rudra Singha, a descendant of Tai-Shan line, \textit{Bihu} songs and dances were performed for public entertainment under

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} ibid, p.8
  \item \textsuperscript{22} P. Goswami, \textit{Asamiya Jana Sahitya}, p.39
  \item \textsuperscript{23} B.B.A.B.S., p.34
  \item \textsuperscript{24} P.C. Chudhury, \textit{The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the twelfth century A.D.}, p.408
\end{itemize}
royal patronage. The oldest reference to Bihu song and dance is found in the description of a Muslim historian of the seventeenth century A.D. William Robinson, a British official, also describes the Bihu songs and dances organised and performed for public entertainment. This tradition of performing Bihu songs and dances is now alive in public platforms with further modifications to suit the changing scenario.

3. Significance of Springtime Bihu song and dance as Performing Art:

We are already on a firm ground that springtime Bihu songs and dances had evolved on ancient ritual and magic and that was also the beginning of art. As such, these songs and dances have come down to the present generation with elements of ancient art. The ritualistic and ceremonial springtime songs and dances were meant for increase of fertility in men and crops. As noted earlier, the hoary tradition of ritual or magic enacted through Bihu song and dance has now changed; instead of enactment as a ritual or a magic, these songs and dances are now exhibited as an art-form but not as tradition. The present day Bihu songs and dances are projected to culturally represent the national entity of the people of Assam. Bihu dance is now specially choreographed for exhibition; young artistes in traditional attire and ornament, perform this
dance in public platforms in front of enthusiastic audience. The *Bihu* songs are all set to a particular music and are specially adapted to dancing. The participants dance to the accompaniments of *dhol*, *mahar singar pepa*, *gagana*, *toka*, *tal*, *sutuli* etc.

The significance of present day *Bihu* song and dance does not lie only in its being the cultural symbol of the Assamese nationality. The core of enticement in *Bihu* song and dance is the elements of ancient art submerged under the present-day modified forms; this invariably gives thrilling enjoyment to the onlookers irrespective of social level and geographical boundary. And here lies the aesthetic significance of present day *Bihu* songs and dances.

4. Springtime Dance of Bohag Bihu and the Changing Tradition:

It is now difficult to ascertain the exact form and pattern of the springtime dances (subsequently *Bihu* dance) that were prevailing in the ritualistic era of peasant society. No evidence is noticed in prehistoric findings and early medieval Assamese literatures. Nevertheless, the sculptural remains of Bamuni Pahar near Tezpur and the extant dancing gestures now current in Assam provide a strong ground to believe that

Bihu dances were the fertility symbols of the primitive agricultural people of Assam.

The sculptural remains of Bamuni Pahar depict a few dancing figures of women having resemblance to Bihu dance. These sculptures are considered to belong to the eighth or ninth century A.D. This leads us to hold that the antiquity of the dance form sculptured in Bamuni Pahar may go back to early medieval time or beyond. It is observed that the dancing gestures of Bamuni Pahar have a sexual basis which may have connection with the ancient springtime fertility. The act of copulation is believed to have been expressed symbolically in the Bihu dances of prehistoric Assam. There is every reason to believe that the effects of springtime nature were positively reflected in these dances.

The crude dance forms underwent transformations over the generations. This is attributable to dynamic human culture. Accordingly, the dance forms were modified, streamlined and rhythmic. The dancers made gestures placing hands on hips, swaying upper part of the body backward and forward, sitting down suddenly, opening arms gradually and vigorously pushing out the pelvic region and breasts. Backward and forward movement of the buttocks and pelvic region, swaying arms and protruding breasts noticed in dancing gestures were associated with sexual

32. This type of dancing figures of women accompanied by men with drum, hornpipe etc. are peculiar to Bamuni Pahar remains. The dancing figures observable in the sculptural remains of some other places do not depict the type.
33. R.M. Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture, p.5
34. Ibid, p.5.
efficiency\textsuperscript{35}. Such gestures were the relics of ancient fertility symbolism and were current till the nineteenth century A.D\textsuperscript{36}. The womenfolk danced in isolated grounds forming an outer ring and sang Bihu songs beating the rhythms of hand-claps, toka and gagana \textsuperscript{37}. Dhol was not the connected instrument of dance for the womenfolk; so, their dances were soft and harmonized\textsuperscript{38}. The menfolk performed the dance in separate grounds beating dhols, mahar singar pepa, tals\textsuperscript{etc.; so}, their dances were vigorous and speedy as compared with those of the women dancers\textsuperscript{39}. These dance forms and patterns were rarely seen up to the fourth decade of the twentieth century A.D\textsuperscript{40}. The gesture of copulation made with fingers could be seen even in the modified versions of Bihu dances performed by the womenfolk in isolated places in the fifth decade of the twentieth century A.D\textsuperscript{41}. In this period, Bihu dances were also courtship dance involving sexual selection which was the part of struggle for reproduction.

Since the time Bihu dance had attained the status of performing art in public platforms, the forms and patterns have been undergoing unprecedented changes. The earlier traditions are seen nowhere now; the springtime effect is absent and the consequent dramatic design of the act of copulation is not enacted. What was ritualism in earlier springtime is eroticism today; all these are found to be artistically concealed in the latest

\textsuperscript{35} V. Robinson (ed.), "Navita Sex Dances" in Encyclopaedia Sexualis, p.42
\textsuperscript{36} R. K. Bordoloi, Miri Jiyari, p.£
\textsuperscript{37} P. Caliha, "Rongali Bihu : Utech Abru Upadhan" in Asamiya Bhasa Syahtya Aru Samikriti, ed. S. Bharali, p. 114
\textsuperscript{38} P. Caliha, Ibid, p. 117
\textsuperscript{39} P. Chaliha, Ibid, p. 114
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{41} P. Goswami, Op-cit, p. 38
modified versions of the dancing gestures\textsuperscript{42}. In fact, the background of \textit{Bihu} dance has shifted from rural agrarian society and settled in public platforms for entertainment.

As noticed in the tradition of the household rituals, no uniformity is also found in the tradition of springtime \textit{Bihu} dance. Here also, regional variations make our task difficult\textsuperscript{43}. Although the tradition of springtime \textit{Bihu} dance was peculiar to upper Assam region, the tradition is now widespread all over Assam as performing art in public platforms. Some specimens of the modified dance form and pattern, now observed in public platforms all over Assam, are as follows:

a) As in the past, foot movement, swaying body and hand gesture constitute the structure of \textit{Bihu} dance\textsuperscript{44}. The form of the dance is collective and is performed either separately by the womenfolk and the menfolk or by both being combined.

b) Rhythmic motion and breaking of waist backward and forward are the essence of \textit{Bihu} dance\textsuperscript{45}.

c) Dancing motion is spontaneous and advances in a circular way; pressing the toes, foot steps are glided horizontally\textsuperscript{46}.

\textsuperscript{42} This clearly reflects the changing attitude and taste of the people in a changing socio-economic scenario.
\textsuperscript{43} In this area of springtime \textit{Bihu}, a separate research may bring to light the varied forms and patterns of the dance.
\textsuperscript{44} P. Neog, \textit{Rongali Bihur Nritiya Git}, pp.19-20.
\textsuperscript{46} J. Gandhiya, \textit{Huchari : Mukali Bihu Aru Bihu Nac}, p.43
d) Hand gestures and body swayings are exhibited simultaneously with foot movements. There is no gap between fingers of the hand.

e) Dances are accompanied by Bihu songs and playing of peculiar musical instruments as already described. But the dancing gestures are not guided by the contents of Bihu song sung simultaneously, but are guided by the beats of dhol.

i) Hands are extended towards the forehead and are curved like the horns of a buffalo; palms of both the hands are broken at the joints of wrists breaking the waist simultaneously.

ii) Backs of the palms are placed at the back of waist; the face is turned towards right and left sides alternately; rise and fall of the breasts are exposed with the springings of waist breaking.

iii) Swaying of upper part of the body like a tree in strong breeze is exhibited keeping the hands on both sides of the waist.

iv) The dancer moves round on the feet like a reel extending the hands on both sides parallel to the shoulder.

v) Waist is broken keeping hands on the sides of hair-knot.
vi) Backs of both the palms are brought into contact at finger ends and are kept in between the breasts breaking the waist.

vii) Keeping the palms on the back of the waist, the waist is alternately grasped by fingers and released. Sometimes one hand is kept on one side of the waist and the other hand is kept vertically on the elbow.

viii) Both arms are kept in a straight line with the shoulder; the hands are raised vertically bending on the elbows; palms of both the hands are stirred like a tender tree leaf breaking the waist simultaneously.

ix) Hands are kept idle on both sides of the body and allowed to swing naturally with the springing of breaking waist.

x) Hands are extended parallel to the ground and strike like a bird's wings in a strong breeze.

xi) The dancer suddenly sits down bending the knees in order to keep timing with the beats of dhol.

47. This dancing gesture performed by women is observable in the Phat-bihu of Dhakuakhana, Lakhimpur district.
xii) The *mekhela* is touched at knee level by both the hands breaking the waist\(^48\).

xiii) Keeping the back of the left palm on the back of the waist, the lower abdomen and the right side of the waist are touched with the right hand.

These dancing gestures are almost commonly exhibited by the women dancers\(^49\). They exhibit these gestures in *Bihu* dance leaning the body slightly towards the front and left side. Rhythmic motion produced by gliding feet is noticed in the dance form. In the modified dance forms shared by both men and women, the male dancers are occasionally seen in dancing gestures mentioned at – (i), (ii), and (ix) above. Female dancing is usually harmonized with the medium and slow beats of *dhol*; but the male dancing is performed even in speedy beats of *dhol*\(^50\).

Besides regional variations in the performance of the dancing gestures noted here, a number of additional gestures are also noticed in some places. Evidently, this is attributable to the respective tribal influence of the region. Some verses of the traditional springtime *Bihu* song also

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48. Some women dancers of undivided Nagaon district exhibit this gesture.
49. In the platforms of publicly organised *Bihu* festival all over Assam, these gestures are observed; however in western Assam, the dancers donot seem to be adapted fully with the style. In the Barak valley region, the local people are not familiar with *Bihu* dance; but the dance is seen in platforms performed by the offsprings of the people staying there in connection with government service.
50. P. Chaliha, *Op-cit*, p.115
indicate a few dancing gestures along with the physical structure and beauty of the female dancers. Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwalla referred to the prevalence of 20 to 25 patterns of dancing gestures. However, the use of *sarudoiya japi* in Bihu dance by him was not traditional. This dance was a creative dance designed on the Bihu dance form and introduced by Rupkonwar in his Assamese feature film *Joymati*.

Modern Bihu dance is the aesthetic design of the hoary traditional pattern. To a casual viewer, there is nothing erotic. Having been based on heritage, this dance is now modified to the taste of the present society. In the process, some insignificant and tradition—deviant dancing gestures have permeated into the Bihu dance form. It is observed that the earlier softness in female dancing is missing; this is attributable to the speedy drum beats now applied to female dancing. In order to finalize certain fixed patterns of Bihu dance and allied subjects, a number of conventions have been held in different places. These conventions have gone a long way in eliminating the corrupt forms of Bihu dance. The urbanized form has transformed Bihu dance into a quasi-folk dance; the fixed patterns have further transformed Bihu dance into a classico-folk dance.

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52. *Jyotiprasad Racanawali*, pp 494-495
55. The conventions held in Jorhat, Nagaon (Kishalay Sanskriti Gosthi) Tezpur and Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra of Guwahati prepared draft guidelines in respect of dancing gesture, costume, musical instruments, name of Bihu institutions etc.
The diverse tribes of Assam have distinct dance forms which they perform in their respective springtime *Bihu*. The Konyak Nagas of the Indo-Myanmar border have also similar springtime dance associated with fertility of the field. Besides, the Wancho, Nokte, Tangsa, Abor, Aka, Mishimi, Hill Miri of the neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, who belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of the Mongoloid stock, have songs and dances traceable to their ancient springtime fertility. The past history of coexistence and cultural assimilation of the people of Assam region gives ample evidence to hold the view that the identical dance forms of these tribes had left some kind of influence on the Bihu dance of present day Assam.

5. **Bohag Bihu: Springtime Song and Changing Tradition:**

The Springtime songs of *Bohag bihu* have been reflecting the lofty and sincere romanticism of simple rural people since time immemorial. Composed extempore, springtime *Bihu* songs are spontaneous and mostly lyrical. They are youthful vibrations and are woven round themes of love and young nature. *Banaghosa*, the pastoral song or cowherd song of Assam, is an extended version of springtime *Bihu* song. Although the *Banaghosas* are adapted to anytime, these songs are similar to springtime

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57. *Bihu* dance had naturally absorbed in the past certain identical dance elements particularly from the Boros, Misings, Deoris, Morns, Sonowals and Lalungs. It is evident from the fact that such elements are still noticeable in the distinct dance forms of these tribes.

58. II. Barua, *The Red River and the Blue Hill*, p. 173


61. P. Goswami, *Op-cit*, p.53
Bihu songs in respect of background, theme and lyrical mode of expression. Still there is a striking difference between the two. Love in Bihu songs is the simple youthful love; these songs are also known as Bihu-nam. But Banaghosas are mostly amorous wherein love is often characterized by elementary physical passion of unrestrained youthfulness. The Banaghosas were also sung as Bihu song in Rati-bihu institutions of medieval Assam. In the existing springtime Bihu songs, both Bihu-nam and Banaghosa are found to be mingled together in the modified versions.

The archaic form of the present day springtime Bihu songs is not possible to ascertain for lack of evidence in ancient literatures and inscriptions. Evidently, Bihu songs are the commentaries of Bihu dance. Leaning on the ancient sex-appealing dancing gestures we may assume that the ancient springtime songs were also the instinctive outbursts of powerful procreative urge. However, the antiquities of the old Bihu songs which have been modified presently, may not go back beyond the medieval period of Assam. In dealing with the traditional characteristics of springtime Bihu songs, we have therefore to lean heavily on the songs of this period.

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62. Goswami, Asamiya Jana Sahitya, p.18
63. L. Gogoi, Bihu Git Aru Banaghosa, p.25.
   These songs were sung by the cowherds in natural seclusions in all seasons and the songs
   Subsequently found a berth in the Rati-bihu institutions.
   H. Barua, The Red River and the Blue Hill, p. 175
64. P. Goswami, p. 18
The springtime *Bihu* songs usually refer to natural environment and day-to-day life and appeal to the softer feelings of young hearts. Youthful love and yearning constitute the theme of these songs. Like other folksongs, use of symbolism is commonly found in the springtime Bihu songs. Further, the songs are found to be embellished with the use of rhetorical expression, metaphor and simile. Spontaneity and deep-toned simplicity with the use of homely words are other characteristics of the springtime Bihu songs. A hidden meaning rather than what is apparent is often found in the verses.

The verses of the springtime Bihu songs are mostly quatrains. The first two lines often stand as a setting for the third and forth lines. The second line usually rhymes with the forth line. The quatrains are bounded in rhymed metre popularly known as *dulari chanda* or light *tripadi chanda* of Assamese literature. In the area of tune, springtime Bihu songs are often unsteady. Its plaintive and exciting tunes provide a ready appeal.

The tunes of the songs naturally entice people into dancing. First, the song starts with a *yojana*. The *yojana* is followed by the remaining verses of the song sung by the same singer in a low scale and the choir takes up the refrain; the scale rises towards the end in keeping with the rhythms of *dhol*, *toka*, *pepa* and *gagana*. Song and love have been given a divine origin in the following *yojanas*:
i)  *God planted the seedlings of song,*  
    *Brahma tended them,*  
    *so, forgive us if an unbecoming song comes out,*  
    *first, we sing of love.*

ii)  *first God created the world,*  
    *then created the creatures,*  
    *the same God made love,*  
    *why don't we?*  

This divine origin generates an attitude of reverence to dance and music.

*So colourful is the Bihu this year,*  
*the nahar is in bloom,*  
*Its fragrance so rouses my sweetie*  
*She breaks her spinning wheel stepping on it.*

The above verse shows how a young girl becomes restive at the advent of springtime *Bohag bihu.*

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74. L. Gogoi, *Op-cit,* pp. 3, 115  
75. N.C. Bhuyan (ed), *Bohagi,* p.3
In most springtime Bihu songs, youthful sentiment is compared to a picturesque scene of the natural world drawn in the song.

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\textit{kahuwa grasses have bloomed on the bank of the Brahmaputra, where the Miri (mising tribe) girls are sporting, I have not thought of meal, Since I saw you}^{76}. \\
\]

This is a modified version of Banaghosa. The original version is found to be “your breasts have bloomed------ my mind is sporting there”\(^{77}\).

Symbolism and parallelism are found to be combined in the springtime Bihu songs.

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\textit{the banyan tree putsforth new leaves, my darling is radiant with a new beauty, and she wraps a red riha round her body}^{78}. \\
\]

Red \textit{riha} symbolizes a girl’s attainment of puberty. In some other Bihu songs, the allusion to vermilion is used to suggest the growing up stage of a girl\(^{79}\).

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76. T. Phukan, \textit{Bihu Namar Taiparya Aru Nandanik Soundarya}, p. 81
77. P. Goswami, \textit{B.B.A.B.S.}, P. 54
78. H. Barua, \textit{Op-cit}, p.175
79. \textit{Ibid}, p. 175
The following song is a specimen of rhetorical expression with the use of metaphor:

*Mustard seeds slip in bell-metal cup,*  
*and feet slip on dew,*  
*with the springing of words, words slip*  
*when pressed by words*  

Amorous but submerged meanings are mostly found in the modified versions of *Banaghosa* that were current in late medieval Assam.

*The elephant drank in this or that river,*  
*the horse drank by stopping,*  
*my treasure drank in the spring of love*  
*planting his feet on the steep bank*  

Here, the process of copulation is hidden in the last two lines. This is natural in case of an agricultural fertility song like the *Bihu*. The images used in such songs often serve as a clue to hidden meaning. It is more comprehensible in the following song:

*The bird with its broken thigh enjoys*  
*its life crawling on its breast,*  
*The reptile thus crawls and lives.*  
*I crawled into the gate-way of my love's Father,*  
*And she did not wash the stains off*  
*My clothes*.
The following is the modified version of this song:

The bird with its brocken thigh crawls,
The iguana thus crawls.
I slipped down on the muddy gate-way
Of my father-in-law.
She did not wash my clothes.\(^83\).

In most cases, springtime *Bihu* songs are courtship song like the dances. This is evident from the *joranams*. In these songs, the boy tenders his love for the girl through a verse; the girl immediately reacts and replies in another verse\(^84\). This alternate singing is observed now-a-days between two groups, one consisting of boys and the other of girls.

**Boy:** Lay the marana of ahu paddy,
Shake the straws and keep aside,
Your mother will know your father will know,
So, cease loving me.

**Girl:** Let mother know, let father know
And let younger brother know,
If I happen to cease loving you
I will die consuming venom\(^85\).

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83. A *bihu* song sung by K. Mahanta, a reputed singer of this genre of songs.
84. T. Phukan, *Op-cit*, p. 69
85. L. Gogoi, *Op-cit*, pp. 174-175
Hunger and love are complementary aspects of life; if an agricultural household cannot flourish, love appears like weeds. So, the folk poet gives expression to the disappointment of young lovers.\(^6\)

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\begin{align*}
\text{The flood washed away the ahu paddy,} \\
\text{On it grew the kami grass;} \\
\text{The birds and beasts made love,} \\
\text{We only could not be like them.}\(^7\)
\end{align*}
\]

\textit{Bihu-nam} is also sung connecting with a \textit{jatnam}. In this style of singing, the \textit{jatnam} is complementary to the \textit{Bihu-nam}.

\begin{verbatim}
Hai Ai jali japi
bhangono sali kathi
mahurare mukhaloi
chayeno jali japi
bhangono sali kathi
niyarateti tiyai jao bharti.\(^8\)
\end{verbatim}

This \textit{jatnam} refers to some components of spinning wheel and is usually sung as a complementary to the following \textit{Bihu-nam} which glorifies the \textit{Bohag bihu}:

\(^6\) S. Biswas, \textit{Harvest Festival and the Bihu Songs of Assam}, p. 9

\(^7\) P. Goswami, \textit{The Bihu Songs of Assam}, p. 69

\(^8\) T. Phukan, \textit{Op-cit}, p. 133
Atikoi senehar mugare mahura  
atikoi senehar mako  
tatokoi senehar Bohagar Bihuti  
nepati kenekoi thako \(^{89}\).

(So dear is the *muga* silk bobbin, so dear is the shuttle; *Bohag bihu* is dearer still, how can we remain without celebrating it.)

The accent of singing *Bihunam* connecting a *jatnam* is peculiar. The main singer sings on the *Bihunam* while the group takes on only the refrain of the *jatnam*. Evidently, the *jatnams* which now occupy an important place in the performing *Bihunams* are not found among the *Bihunams* of medieval Assam\(^{90}\). *Jatnams* are therefore subsequent to the *Bihunams* in respect of their antiquity. Besides all aspects of agricultural household and love for Bohag Bihu, the contents of the *jatnams* incorporate the contemporary events.

Late Hemanga Biswas observes, “what is embedded in Assam is depicted in *Bihu* songs, what is not depicted in Bihu songs is not embedded in Assam”\(^{91}\). In fact, the traditional springtime *Bihu* songs cover almost all aspects of individual and social life of the unsophisticated people and draw magnificent landscapes of rural Assam. Love in these songs is suggestive of the fact that youthfulness is to be enjoyed in time since it goes

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\(^{90}\) T. Phukan, *Op-cit*, p. 133.

As evident in some songs, the folk poets never ignore their fondness towards the *Bohag bihu*, the only occasion for mirth and lovemaking. The tribes of Assam have their respective springtime songs with the themes identical to that of the *Bihu* song. The melodies of *Bihu* songs of the Deories and *Ai-ni-tams* of the Misings are found to be harmonized with the melodies of springtime *Bihu* songs. Evidently, springtime *Bihu* songs have already absorbed the tunes of Mising *Ai-ni-tams*.  

The tradition of springtime Bihu song we have so far discussed, was associated with the distinctively festive character of *Bohag bihu* in the early decades of the twentieth century. These songs have now been detached from their rural background; hence, they are no longer in the lips of rural youths and cowherds. They have ultimately rested in printed collections and their melodies are confined to audio cassettes. In order to keep pace with the fast fleeting times, the songs have now crystalized and are surviving as natural features in the platforms of annual Bihu festivals.

In a changed socio-economic scenario, springtime *Bihu* songs are now modified to suit stage performance before audience. In the modified versions, the traditional forms are found to be almost intact; only the earlier depictions of physical passion are now replaced with simple love appeals retaining the original flavour. Such refined songs are also found

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92. P. Goswami, *B.B.A.B.S.*, p.54
93. P. Neog, *Rongali Biher Nritya-Giti*, pp. 139, 149
94. P. Goswami, *op.cit.*, p. 69
95. *Ibid*, p. 50
96. Some specimens of the modified versions have been quoted in this discussion.
in other higher forms of culture. The real and dynamic history of Assamese life preserved in the traditional Bihu songs are consistent in the revised songs.

A new tradition associated with the recording of Bihu songs in audio cassettes has flourished in the recent years. Barring only a few, these recorded songs composed anew are mostly the narrations of youthful love. The eternal relation of the Bihu songs with springtime nature and life of the unsophisticated rural folk are not depicted in the new verses. The traditional usages of symbol, metaphor and similies which increased the epic beauty of the songs are hardly seen in the new songs. Most of the songs are not flavoured with the traditional melodical patterns of Bihu song. Perversely, the songs of the new variety are attuned to the music of Assamese marriage songs and other modern songs; at times, the melodical pattern is also traceable to western music:

Tok dekhi mor ga
Keneba keneba lage

This is definitely a contra-flow of Bihu song and is not a modernization in the true sense of the term. The melodies of pepa and gagana are seldom heard in the recorded new songs; instead, bānghi is used

97. P. Goswami, op. cit, p. 59
100. N. Barua, ‘Bolag Bihu Samayar Prabhab’ in Amar Asam, ed. H. Borgohain, 12th April, 2001 issue, p.5
101. This modern Bihu song with western music and style is ‘often heard in present day Bihu plat-forms.
102. The music used in such songs naturally entices one into western dance and not into Bihu dance.
to produce modern music. It is observed that the indigenous people are not reverential to such handicapped *Bihu* songs. Further, the *songs* of the *Huchari* institution and *songs* of the springtime dance are traditionally varied in content and method of performance; the fusion of these two varieties of song in some audio cassettes is not a change, but a corruption of both the forms103.

The fact therefore remains that the new wave of change in the tradition of *Bihu* song has failed to adapt the original form to a changing milieu. The new variety of *Bihu* song lacks the typical characteristics wherein lies the aesthetic beauty and flavour of the songs. Although specified as *Bihu song*, these are mere illusions of *Bihu* music which may be appropriately placed in the category of *Bihu Suria-git*104. Admittedly, the stream of Assamese modern song had evolved on the *Bihu* music105.

6. Huchari Song and Dance of Bohag Bihu and the Changing Tradition:

The song and dance associated with the *Huchari* carol singing of *Bohag bihu* are playful as well as spiritual in intent. The Kacharis of Upper Assam trace the dance and music of *Huchari* to *Bathou*106. The Tai-Shan people trace it to the song and dance associated with the worship of *Somdeo*107. Each and every tribe of Assam belonging to the Mongoloid

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103. J. Gandhiya, *Huchari : Mukali Bihu Aru Bihu Nac*, pp. 87-88
104. Ibid, p. 89
106. P. Goswami, *B.B.A.H.S.*, p.34
stock practice the custom of Huchari carol singing in the context of Bohag bihu in some way or other; they have their respective song and dance forms to be performed in Huchari institution. Admittedly, the Tai-Shan people established and popularised the custom of Huchari singing now current in present day society of Assam\textsuperscript{108}. The tradition of Huchari is also found in Arunachal Pradesh. The contributions of the other tribes to this field cannot be ignored.

Huchari dance is a circle dance performed collectively by males only; the leader at the centre sings the song and the other participants take up the refrain\textsuperscript{109}. Dhol, tal and toka are generally played with Huchari song and dance. The participants, forming a ring, take up the motion of equal time allowing uniform foot steps to take a right turn; at a regular interval, stop for a moment and come one step back and then repeat the initial motion\textsuperscript{110}. This specimen of Huchari dance is seen in undivided Sivsagar district. The dance form and style of performance slightly vary from place to place. Admittedly, local influence is exposed more on Huchari than on other aspects of Bohag bihu\textsuperscript{111}. In middle Assam upto undivided Sivsagar district, Huchari singing is regulated by the dhuliya and in places beyond Sivsagar, it is regulated by the namoti. In some places, the participants perform Lahori khel as a dance in Huchari; they hold on the waist of one another forming a ring\textsuperscript{112}.

\vspace{20pt}
\textsuperscript{108} L. Gogoi, *Bihu Eti Samiksha*, p. 8
\textsuperscript{109} P. Goswami, *Op-cit*, p. 35
\textsuperscript{110} P.D. Chaliha, *Asamiya Samskritir Subhanda*, p.37
\textsuperscript{111} J. Gandhiya, *Op-cit*, p.3
\textsuperscript{112} *Bihu Nritya Git Khacara Niyamawali*, ed. Sadou Asom Bihu Nritya Git Niyamawali Prastuti Samiti, Tezpur, p.28
After the formal *Huchari* dance is over, an informal *Bihu* dance is performed by the participating young boys; the dance form is distinctively different from the romantic *Bihu* dance. This custom is a subsequent addition to the *Huchari* institution. The tradition of this *Bihu* dance is not found in undivided Nagaon district. The dancing gestures of this dance are guided by the measures of *dhol* beats that comprise the pulses of a particular *cheo*. Each *cheo* is associated with the particular dancing gestures adaptable to the pulses of that *cheo*. The dancing gestures meant for male and observed in such dances include extension and bending of hands with foot steps given one after another in equal time with the measures of drum beats, breaking of waist keeping hands thereon, sitting down on bending knees etc. To some extent, these dancing gestures resemble the *Satra* style practised on ground. Besides the dancing gestures mentioned at (i) and (ix) of springtime *Bihu* dance, breaking of waist by gliding feet horizontally keeping palms of hands on the back of waist is also performed by the male dancers. *Bhura cheo*, *Mising cheo*, *Dhemelia cheo*, *Khara cheo*, *Huchari cheo* of *dhol* are generally played with the dances of *Huchari* institution. The *cheos* of *dhol* and dancing style of the Tai-Ahoms had an assimilation with those of other Mongoloid tribes. This is evident from the *Kachari cheo* and *Mising cheo* of *dhol* incorporated in the *Huchari* institution. We have ground to believe that playful *Bihu* dance and song became a part of the *Huchari* institution soon.

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115. These dancing gestures are performed after a *yojana* of *Bihu-nam*; but *Bihu-nams* are not sung simultaneously with these gestures.  
116. P. Neog, *Rongali Bihu Nritya Git*, p. 69  
117. These three dancing gestures are exhibited simultaneously with *Bihu nam*.  
after Huchari had reached the yards of the households. The ring dance of Huchari performed in a reverential way is clearly an influence of the Vaishnavite hymn singing style. As a performing art, Huchari dances are now more disciplined with further modifications; but the earlier reverential way of performance is missing. Also missing are the slow, steady and variegated drum beats traditionally adapted to Huchari dance. The dancing gestures of the springtime Bihu dance are also noticed in the Bihu dance part of the present day Huchari; this is contrary to the ideal of the Huchari institution.

The songs of the Huchari institution can broadly be divided into two categories i.e., Huchari-nam and Bihu-nam. The suffix Nam is traceable to Vaishnavite hymns sung by choir. The songs of the Huchari institution are also sung by choir with a reverential attitude. Huchari-nam generally comprises nonsensical verses, benedictory songs, ballads, fragments of Vaishnavite scriptures etc. A Huchari-nam may be said to be a medley and there is no logic in it. This is evident from the following verses of Huchari-nam:

i)    O' Huchari choit,

dubari grasses do not sprout

where do we sport

ii)   New house and old bamboo laths,

We are here to sing of Huchari

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120. P. Goswami, B.B.A.B.S., p. 47
121. Ibid, p. 36
122. N.C. Bhuyan, p. 205
123. K. Gogoi, Huchari Gaboloi Ahiso Ami, p. 3
iii) A bakul flower is
On the head of Krishna,
It opened its petals getting wet in dew
Govinda Rama\textsuperscript{124}.

iv) In the gateway of my lord
The madhuri flower smells,
The fragrance of keteki flower
Spreads Gobinda Rama\textsuperscript{125}.

The \textit{Bihu-\textit{nams}} sung in the \textit{Bihu} dance part of the \textit{Huchari} institution mostly glorify the \textit{Bohag bihu}. In late medieval Assam, complimentary remarks were also incorporated in some verses in order to please the Ahom monarchs and feudal lords. Humorous and satirical verses are also found in these \textit{Bihu-\textit{nams}}.

i) Choit is gone and Bohag comes in,
Bhebeli creeper is in bloom,
It does not come to an end
When we speak of Bohag Bihu\textsuperscript{126}.

ii) My lord is out of the parlour,
The dola (sedan) is laid by the carriers;
\textit{Nara jangfai} (amber) shines in his ears,
\textit{On his body is a gomsengar sola} (coat of chinese silk)\textsuperscript{127}.

\textsuperscript{124} N.C. Bhuyan, \textit{op-cit}, p. 204
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Op-cit}, p. 205
\textsuperscript{126} L. Gogoi, \textit{Bihu Git Aru Banaghosa}, p. 14
\textsuperscript{127} N.C. Bhuyan, \textit{Op-cit}, p. 217
The following songs are humorous and satirical:

i) you the kachari boy, a blunt switch;
you have cast off chensu on the way;
you have lost your mother;
you the lightning eyed boy,
play on the horn pipe
and let me dance to the rhythm\textsuperscript{128}.

ii) you have hoarded cloth in japa;
you have hoarded money too;
the cloth will decay in japa,
grasses will grow on your bones\textsuperscript{129}.

These are a few specimens of the traditional songs sung in the \textit{Huchari} carol singing of \textit{Bohag bihu}. The songs and the methods of performance have their regional variations. As a performing art, the tunes and the styles of singing have now changed noticeably. Some fresh elements have naturally embedded in the \textit{Huchari} songs\textsuperscript{130}. But like the springtime \textit{Bihu} songs, newly composed or collected \textit{Huchari} songs are not found. Instead, verses of springtime love appealing songs are found to

\textsuperscript{128} J. Gandhiya, \textit{Huchari: Mukali Bihu Aru Bihu Nac}, p. 7
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid, p. 7
\textsuperscript{130} L. Gogoi, \textit{Op-cit}, p. 13
be mistakenly used as *Huchari* song. This practice has demolished the age-old idealism of the *Huchari* institution in public platforms.

7. **Folk Musical Instruments: Their Importance and Changing Tradition in Bohag Bihu:**

Among the folk musical instruments of Assam *dhol, pepa, tal, toka, gagana, banhi* and *sutuli* have been playing a conspicuous part in the musical arrangement associated with the *Bohag bihu*. The usage of these instruments was associated with the fertility belief and agricultural operations of the early inhabitants of the land\textsuperscript{131}. In subsequent ages, these instruments were incorporated in *Bohag bihu* as the accompanying musical instruments of song and dance\textsuperscript{132}. Art element is found to be involved with the playing of these musical instruments.

The importance of *dhol, pepa, toka* and *gagana* in *Bohag bihu* is evident in some of the verses of traditional *Bihu* songs\textsuperscript{133}. The *dhol* is an *unaddha badya* made of wood and animal skin\textsuperscript{134}. The use of *dhol* in Assam is traceable to the ancient Austric culture\textsuperscript{135}. *Dhols* of different size

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{131} N. Bordoloi, "Asamar Loka Samskritit Loka Badya" in *Asamar Loka Samskriti Samiksha*, ed. N.C. Sarma, p. 183
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid, p. 179
  \item \textsuperscript{133} T. Phukan, *Bihu Namar Taiparya Aru Nandanik Soundarya*, pp. 112-116.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} P. Neog, *Rongali Bihur Nritya Git*, p. 54
  \item \textsuperscript{135} L. Gogoi, *Bihu Eti Samiksha*, p. 4.
\end{itemize}

- The instrument is still noticed among the Austric inhabitants of Paccidc islands.
and shape are now seen among the tribals and non-tribals of Assam and are played in various auspicious ceremonies. The dhols of the size and shape belonging to the Moran, Mising, Deori and Tai-shan people of upper Assam are commonly used in Bohag bihu all over Assam. This dhol is popularly known as Bihu dhol; the size and shape and the performing style of Bihu dhol resemble those still current in south-east China

Bihu dhol is associated with some folk belief. The frantic music produced by dholar capar is believed to have a magical power which can entice one into dancing. The taboo on playing this dhol in Agrahana, Sravana and Bhadra is associated with the belief that the transplanted seedlings are destroyed by insects if dhol is played in these months. The sound of Bihu dhol suggests the sound of rain-bearing cloud. The smaller end of the Bihu dhol symbolizes female and the bigger end symbolizes male; dholar mari is the symbol of male organ. In the case of Bihu dhol, the smaller end i.e., the female is beaten by the mari. Bihu dhol is exclusively a male instrument; in the past, women did not dance to the rhythms of dhol beat. Instead of dhol, female dancing was associated with toka, gagana and hand claps.

The Bihu dhol is played in accordance with the pulses of some traditional cheos. Each cheo is known by a traditional name e.g., Buhra

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136. G. Barua, 'Bihur Badya-Juntra' in Asam Bant, ed. D. Chundan, 14th April, 2000, p.17
137. L. Gogoi, Op.cit, p. 89
138. P. Goswami, Festivals of Assam, p. 17
139. N. Bordoloi, Op-cit, p. 179.
140. It is observed that the bigger end is the tali of Bihu dhol struck by left hand and the smaller end is the kobani struck by the mari of right hand. This is peculiar to Bihu dhol only. All these customs and usages of Bihu dhol are associated with agricultural fertility of the primitive people.
cheo or Kachari cheo, Dumuni cheo, Mising cheo, Khara cheo etc.\textsuperscript{142}. But there are variations from place to place in respect of the names and number of pulses associated with the cheos. These cheos are generally adaptable to male dancing gestures of the Huchari institution and excepting the khara cheo, these are not suitable to female dancing in springtime Bihu\textsuperscript{143}. The drum beats of female dancing generally fall within the circumference of the khemta and kaharba tal of Hindustani Music. These beats are played in springtime dance in mild speed in order to facilitate female dancing\textsuperscript{144}.

Playing of dhuliya hat by dhuliya ojha in Huchari singing is also a performing art associated with present day Bohag Bihu. A dhuliya hat refers to the recitation of malita of dhol; every word of the malita is reproduced by the dhuliya ojha in his dhol. Maghai Barua, who had far-flung reputation in the art of drum play, popularized this tradition in Assam\textsuperscript{145}. Besides the platforms of Bihu festivals, the dhuliya ojhas perform dhuliya hat in marriage and other socio-cultural ceremonies.

Like the other aspects of Bohag Bihu, changes have naturally come to the tradition of dhol culture. Bihu dhols have become the inevitable musical instruments for female dancing now. The drum beats are speedier than before. Some new cheos have flourished in addition to the existing ones. But such new cheos are merely the syntheses of pulses of the traditional cheos\textsuperscript{146}. Likewise, the dhuliya ojhas also perform some extra

\textsuperscript{142} J. Gandhiya, H.M.B.B.N., p. 47
\textsuperscript{143} P. Neog, Op-cit, pp. 95-96
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid. p. 97
\textsuperscript{146} This new development has been pointed by J. Gandljiya, a noted critic of Bihu song and dance.
dhuliya hats in entertaining styles. The proficiency of a dhuliya ojha is now dependant on how many dhols he plays in a dhuliya hat. Surprisingly, female dhuliya ojha is also seen now-a-days although the art is not suitable to female hands.

Mahar singar pepa is a sushira badya and is a contribution of the Mongoloid people. This indigenous flute is overwhelming in its vibrant musicalness and lends a sort of haunting melody to the atmosphere of springtime Bihu. Horn pipe blows and rouses the softer notes of the young herarts and entices lads and lasses into dancing. Some cheos are associated with the blowing of horn pipe; but the bols of the cheos vary from place to place. Horn pipe is generally played by male in Bohag Bihu. In the past, Assamese girls occasionally played this instrument; but this is not seen now-a-days. Some minor changes in respect of melodical pattern and style of playing are now observed. This may be an endeavour to add novelty to the art.

Toka is a ghana badya. The ancient Mongoloid cultivators of Assam made this instrument and used to drive away the birds that had come to eat up the matured paddy seeds. In the subsequent ages, the instrument got involved with the song and dance of Bohag Bihu. In lower Assam, toka is popularly known as tharka and is used in some folk songs and dances. Toka is widely used by almost all tribes of Assam. The Sonowal Kacharis

147. II. Barua, The Red River and the Blue Hill, p. 92
148. P. Neog, Op-cit, p. 115
149. P. Chaliha, Op-cit, p. 115
150. N. Bordoloi, Op-cit, p. 182
of upper Assam have the tradition of using a sizeable *toka* made of *bhaluka bānh*.

_Gagana_ (Jew’s harp) is made of a small strip of bamboo. This instrument is a contribution of the Mongoloid culture to the springtime *Bihu* of Assam. Evidently, _gagana_ is also used in the springtime festivals of south-east China. The sound of _gagana_ is traceable to the croaking of frogs. According to a folk belief prevailing among the peasants of Assam, the croaking of frogs is a forecast of rain; so, the ancient peasants made _gagana_ and played whenever they required rain for agricultural operation. Subsequently, this instrument became a connected musical instrument of *Bohag bihu*: The _gagana_, where _muga_ silk thread is used, is known as _lahari gagana_ played by girls; the other is _ramdhan gagana_ played by males where the thread is not used. These names are not widely known all over Assam. The _lahori gagana_ with _muga_ silk thread is hardly seen now playing in _Bihu_ institutions; for the complicated technique required to follow in playing the _lahori gagana_, the _ramdhan gagana_ is alternatively played at present by both male and female.

_Tal_ is a _ghana badya_ and is made of bellmetal. This folk instrument has various sizes and each size is known by its respective name e.g., _bortal, bhortal, patital, khutital_ etc. _Patital_ is generally played as a connected instrument of _Bihu dhol_ in _Bohag Bihu_. It has no any _cheo_ of its

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152. L. Gogoi, ‘Bilinur Bani’ in _Bihu Sanskritir Rup Rekha_, ed. J. Gandhiya, p. 4
153. N. Bordoloi, _Op-cit_, p. 182
In the present day Bihu institutions, tal is played in attractive gestures.

Bānhi is a sushira badya. Its usage in Assam is traceable to ancient Mongoloid culture; along with other items, bānhi also came to Assam and other parts of India from south-east China. Evidently, the cifung is the oldest form of bānhi in Assam. However, the form of bānhi, presently noticed in the performance of Bihu song and dance, resembles the form current in other parts of India. But the use of this bānhi, also known as muruli, with the songs and dances of Bohag bihu is not a time honoured tradition. We have ground to believe that banhi or muruli found a place firstly in Huchari and subsequently in springtime Bihu song and dance under the influence of neo-Vaishnavism in late medieval Assam. This instrument does not have any cheo befitting to the nature of Bihu song and dance and is also not allied to any of the traditional instruments of Bohag bihu. The music it produces, is inimical to the rhythms of Bihu songs. Evidently, bānhi or muruli lacks the haunting melody capable of enticing one into the peculiar dancing gestures of the springtime Bihu dance. This is done by horn pipe. These reasons are attributable to the rare use of bānhi or muruli in the group Bihu dances of present day Assam. However, in most of the recorded Bihu songs, modern music is produced by bānhi; the

154. P. Neog, Op-cit, p. 131
156. Not only of the Boros, but the flutes of the other Mongoloid tribes of Assam are also longer as well as bigger in size and shape than that prevailing in springtime Bihu and Huchari.
157. P. Neog, Op-cit, p. 134
158. Playing of bānhi or muruli with the song and dance of Bohag bihu is traced to the sport of Srikrishna by playing muruli with the women in Vrindavana.
pleasant taste of traditional Bihu song is therefore found to be missing in these songs.

Sutuli is a sushira badya. Imitating the whistling sound of squeezing lips, the early cultivators of Assam made sutuli by boring carapace. Now, this sutuli has been substituted with the one made of clay and is played in Bihu song and dance. Plucking fingers on the holes of sutuli, a rhythmic sound adaptable to Bihu song and dance is created. Both male and female play this unsophisticated instrument in Bihu song and dance. Sutulis of varied size and shape are also played by the people of Mongoloid origin in their respective Bihu institutions.

The other folk musical instruments played in Bohag bihu are kali, been and tokari. But these folk instruments are hardly seen in the Bihu institutions now-a-days.

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159. N. Bordoloi, Op-cit, pp. 182-183