CHAPTER IV

TARUNI DEVI AND HER REPERTOIRE

Mrs. Taruni Devi is an another collaborator of this study. I have collected thirteen folktales, a mythical tale and a myth from her. All the tales she recalled from her memory. In her childhood she heard the tales from her father.

According to Taruni Devi, the meaning of sâdhukathâ (folktale) is fictional. "In a sâdhukathâ sometimes we found some description of real incident also. But maximum tales are imaginary." To lull the children she likes to tell the tales. Her grandchildren are the main listeners of her tales.

Taruni Devi's tales are very short. In her tale there is no ending formula. She sings sometimes in the midst of the tale. Her grandchildren likes her tales very much. One of her six years old grandchildren 'Trinayan' said, "I like my grandmother's tale very much. But she does not want to tell me."

Then I asked Taruni Devi, "Why?"

She laughed and replied, "It is true. Morning at 7 O' clock
he goes’ to school. At 1 p.m. he comes from there. After lunch he takes rest for sometimes and goes to play. Only at the evening I get the time to tell him story. But I donot want to disturb his study then. So I have no chance to tell him story. Only sometimes in holidays I find time to tell him a story.”

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF TARUNI DEVI

Mrs. Taruni Devi does not know her actual date of birth. But she told her age will be around 70 to 75 years. She was born at Tilikiam, Jorhat. She is a Brahmin woman. Now she is staying at Kenduguri, Jorhat. (It is located in the east side of Jorhat town.) Her mother’s name was Numali Devi. and Father’s name was Bagâi Barthakur.

She got married when her age was only fourteen. After marriage when she came to her husband's family their economic condition was not so good. Her husband had a small shop of tea and sweets. Only that shop was the income-source of their family. They had no land for cultivation.

So she got much trouble to brought-up her children. She had a loom to weave clothes. By weaving clothes in that loom she earned money and helped her husband to manage the family. Besides that she reared duck and pigeon. From those also she earned the money. By that way she bore
the expenses of her children's study.

Her husband had no savings. She thought without money how they would bring up their children. So she had started saving money secretly by five or four rupees in a bamboo post of their house. After a few months her husband saw that. Then he hollowed out the post (At that time their house was made from bamboo and thatching grass.) and brought out the money. They got two hundred rupees from there. She did not give him to spend the money. Again she saved it in the main post office of Jorhat town. Her husband had learned to save money from her by that way. After a few years her two hundred rupees become one thousand. By that money they bought a land for cultivation. After sometimes they bought a shop of sweets at Jorhat town.

Already her four children passed their matric examination. By doing tuition they did their further study themselves. So her trouble become less than before. The shop which they had bought in two hundred rupees before, that one they sold in forty thousand rupees after twenty or twenty five years. By the money they made the foundation of the house in which they were staying now. She said that after a few years by the grace of god her eldest son got a job and afterwards he had completed the construction of the house. Now, they have no want of anything.
PLATE IV

Storyteller Mrs. Taruni Devi
She is the mother of six children. Four daughters and two sons.
The daughters have been given in marriage and sons also got married now.
She is staying with two sons, two daughters-in-law and a grandchildren at home. She has eight grandchildren from her daughter's side and one grand children from her son's side.

Her parents house was at the village of Tilikiam, Jorhat. At that time the education for girl child was not available at her place. So she studied 'only upto classes one or two of L.P. school'. After that she gave up her study life. I asked her, "Why did you give-up your study?" She laughed loudly and said, There is an interesting story. When I began to go to the school, some people nearby our house told to my father that, that was not good to allow the girl child go to the school. She would learn to write letters to the boys and she would lose her character. My father listened to them and did not sent me to the school anymore."

She had married to the village Kenduguri, Jorhat when her age was only fourteen. She didnot get her father-in-law. She got her mother-in-law, her husband's elder brother's family and husband in that family. As a daughter-in-law the relationship with her mother-in-law was very good. But the wife of her husband's elder brother didnot like her. Sometimes she reported to her mother-in-law against Taruni Devi. But she tolerated everything done by them.
After a few years they became separate from her husband's elder brother's family. But her mother-in-law was with Taruni Devi till her death. She is a mother of six children. Four daughters and two sons. She worked hard to educate her children. Now all of her sons and daughters became educated. So she is proud of them. In their childhood they were very obedient to their mother.

Her husband loved her very much. She always helped him in his works. Her husband got a tea and sweet shop. She helped him by making sweets and other items at home. She told, "When he abused me I kept quiet."

She is a religious person. According to her 'Religion is devotion of god. She is the devotee of both god and goddess. She is a supporter of caste-system. She does not take cooked food at others house. According to her the caste-system is also a part of the religion.

Taruni Devi has strong self confidence, she always depends upon herself. In her life some supernatural incidents had occured. She told me about such an incident — Once, about forty years ago she got a big stone in their compound. She thought that the stone would be good to wash the clothes. So she took it home. But at night she dreamt a dream. In her dream her mother told her that the stone which she found in her compound
was not a general stone. It was god 'Siva', So her mother told to keep that nicely and to worship the stone.

She awoke up in the morning and was thinking about the dream of the night. Then suddenly her mother came to their house that day. Then she told about the dream of the night. Her mother wanted to see the stone. Then they saw that in the body of the stone there was two lines like the sacred thread of the man - and in the upper side of the stone there was a line like the matted hair of god 'Siva'. Mother told her to bath that stone with unboiled milk, flower, black basil and doob grass — and to keep that in their place of installation of the idol. She did so and from that day till now she is doing worship to that stone as an idol of god 'Siva'. She told me, 'I donot know any mantra (hymn) to do the worship. I worship on my own way.'

After a few years again she dreamt that the god Siva was in troublesome condition. Next day she saw that the roof of that house where the god kept was leaking. So immediately they changed the roof of the house.

Once she went to her eldest daughter's house. She stayed there for some days. When she was staying there she dreamt that the god Siva of her house was buried with mud. She immediatly came from there. She
told me, “Actually I did not worship him for those days so I dreamt such a dream.

Her husband died in 1986. Till that time her son did not get any job. So she was with anxiety for money at that time. Because she had to give in marriage the daughters who were still with her. One night she again dreamt that someone came to their house and asked her, “What do you want? Dhan (Property) or jan (Man)?” But she replied nothing. After a few days her eldest son and the second daughter got job but suddenly her husband had died. She told me, “If I would asked the jan I think I did not have lost my husband.” By that way there is a great influence of supernatural dream in her life.

Before I told that Taruni Devi has strong self-confidence. One day she told me, “My eldest son also intelligent like me.” that means she herself thinks that she is an intelligent woman.
REPERTOIRE OF TARUNI DEVI

There are fifteen tales in Taruni Devi's repertoire. The type of the tales are showed by following table:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No.of Tales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magic Tale</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novella</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Tale</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythical Tale</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TALE NO. 1

Tale of Mahalaya

[Mahâlayar Sâdhu (Myth)]

In the Ramayana Sita was abducted by king Ravana. Rama the husband of Sita fought with Ravana to rescue his beloved wife Sita. But Rama could not defeat Ravana. Rama cut the head of the Ravana, but again that was joined somehow. Repeatedly happened so.

Then a divine message told Rama “You should worship to Goddess Durga with one hundred and eight lotus then only you will be able to defeat him.” Then Rama told Hanumana to bring the lotuses.
Hanumana brought the lotuses from a large pond. But when Rama prepared for worship of the goddess Durga, he saw that one of the flowers was missing. So he again asked Hanuman to bring the flower. But he didn't find any more.

So the divine message told Rama to do some rites in honour of his deceased father and the ancestors on the newmoon day immediately before worshiping the goddess Durga. That is Mahalaya.

Rama did so and after Ten days, on the day of tenth lunar day of the bright fortnight he could defeat Ravana. The day is called 'Vijoyā Dasami'.

Storyteller Taruni Devi told, "Till now we believe that the day of 'Bijoyā Dashami' is a very auspicious day for the people. Because that day 'Rama' the incarnate of god 'Vishnu' got victory over his enemy 'Ravana'. Actually 'Rama' destroyed a great evildoer 'Ravana' on that day." This tale taken from the epic Ramayana actually becomes a mythical tale and that explains the origin of rites.

TALE NO. 2

Tale of Stealing the Syamantak Gem.

[Syamantak Haran (Mythical Tale)]

One day the God Siva and goddess Durga was sitting together. Then Durga looked at Krishna. Then Siva said, "why are you looking at Krishna. Now you should marry him." In the later birth Durga born
as Jambavati for Jambaban's house.

There was a king named Satrajit. He was a devotee of god Surya. Once god Surya gave a precious gem being satisfied for his devotion to the king Satrajit. The gem has a great device power. Where the gem was kept nothing bad could happen there. Even no one could die there where the gem was kept.

God Krishna asked the gem from the Satrajit. But he did not give, so the divine power of the gem was lost. Once the brother of king Satrajit went for hunting by wearing that gem. In the forest a lion killed Prasenjit, the brother of Satrajit and took his gem. Again a bear killed the lion and took the gem. The name of the bear was Jambavanta.

On the other side, when Prasenjit did not come back from the forest, brother Satrajit thought that God Krishna killed his brother and took his gem. Krishna heard that news. So to refute his slander Krishna went to search the gem. By searching that he reached that bear's place who took the gem. SriKrishna began to fight with that king of bear Jambavanta. After 21 days fighting Jambavanta was defeated. Then he recognized God Krishna. He gave in marriage his daughter Jambuvati to Krishna. He gave the gem to his daughter.

Taruni Devi said, “SriKrishna's father Nanda worshipped Goddesses Durga while Krishna did not come home for many days”.
One day a boy went to take bath in a river. A skull of buffalo was lying down on the bank of the river. After taking bath the boy took rest for sometime inside that skull.

A vulture flew away to the heaven by taking the skull in his mouth. The boy also reached the heaven with the skull.

A man of heaven took him to his own home. He had a very beautiful girl. The boy and the girl fell in love with each other. The man gave his daughter in marriage with the boy. After marriage they came to the earth and lived happily forever.

Taruni Devi told, "Actually it is an impossible work. No one can marry a girl from heaven. But as a tale it is possible."

Again she told, "It is a very old story." Now-a-days people do not believe such a story.

This tale presents the world of fantasy. The image of lone man by the riverside taken by chance a house of a beautiful girl in heaven looks like a tale of male wish fulfillment. However, in view of the narrator gender identity there is a possibility that the tale could also be an expression of feminine lust and desired for personal choice in marriage. The teller did not comment in the meaning but indicated that a tale is a depiction of fantasy.
TALE NO. 4

A Tale of the Son of a Widow(a)

[Bārikownarar Sādhu (Animal Tale)]

There was a widow in a certain village. She had only a son in her family. The name of her son was Bārikownar. One day the boy went to take bath in a river. There he saw that a gunny bag was floating down the river. He brought the bag to the bank of the river. When he opened the bag, he found a tiger there and wanted to kill him. Then the tiger told, "Brother, don't kill me. I will help you." Then he did not kill him. From that day the tiger gave him a deer to eat regularly to the bāri kownar. He threw away the bones of the deers everyday on the back side of their campus.

One day a man came to search his cow and entered into their campus. Then the men thought the bones as the bone of the lost cow. He told the villagers, "The bārikownar takes beef. I saw the bones of the cow backside of his house." Then the villagers came to the Bārikownar's house and saw that, that was true, they wanted to turn out him from the village.

Then Bārikowanr told everything to them. But the tiger told him not to tell anybody about the tiger's help. When the tiger came to know that he had told everything to the villagers, he came that night to his house and took the Bārikownar to eat in the forest.

At that time the Bārikownar was very hungry. So his stomach made a loud sound. Then the tiger asked him, "Who is making sound in your stomach?" Then he told, "When I was very small, my mother fed me some crabs. They are still in my stomach."
Once the tiger got the squeeze from a crab. So he ran away from there for fear of the crabs. Luckily the Bârikownar escaped from that danger.

Taruni Devi told, "The works which we can not do with our physical strength, that we can do easily with the mental power. "Thus the teller does not provide any metaphorical explanation but regards the tale as an exempla.

This tale contains episodes of two different printed folktales [Bezboroa, L.(1911) and Devi,T. (1934)]. One feature of Taruni Devi's style is that here tales are brief and she does not include details, which become explanatory for the events of tales.

TALE NO. 5

Tale of the Son of a Widow (b)

[Bârikownarar Sâdhu (Animal Tale) AT 150]

There was a widow in a certain village. She had only a son. A fox always came to their house at night and everyday ate all the cooked food from the kitchen. But they could not catch him. One day the son lied hidden in a corner of the door of the kitchen. He seized the fox that day and wanted to kill him.

Then the fox told, "Brother, donot kill me. I will help you sometime soon.

Then the boy didnot kill him. One day the fox told to the widow's son, "Brother, to arrange your marriage I am going to the king's house. So make some cakes for me." His mother made the cakes for the fox and hung those on his neck.
He went to the kings palace with the cakes. Then the king saw him and asked "Who are you? why have you come here?"

Then he replied, " I am Ramcharan Kataki. I have come here for asking your daughter for marriage with a boy.

The king told, " Who is that boy."

He has a widow mother only. But his father was a king.

Then the king agreed to give in marriage of his daughter.

The fox brought some ornaments and clothes for the bride by stealing from somewhere and they, the groom’s party went to the king’s house to marry his daughter. The fox invited a flock of heron to go with the bride groom’s party.

They stayed out side the palace and the fox, the priest and the bridegroom only went inside the palace and married the daughter of the king.

Next morning the fox came earlier than the groom’s party and told the groom’s mother to burn their house. His mother did so.

Then the king made a beautiful building for them. The king had no son. So after the king the son of the widow became the king of that state.

Storyteller Taruni Devi remarked, “ The fox came to their house for stealing but that incident was a stroke of good luck for them.”

The story of widow’s helpless son becoming rich figure in two tales of Taruni Devi. Although she says that the tale signifies the role of luck in life. How tale may be regard as a fantasy of a widow. Since her
husband died more than fifteen years ago she may identify her own condition 
with that of it frictional figurative widow. But in the tales the character of 
widow is passive and so is active. This is intune with the social structure 
of the Assamese society.

TALE NO. 6

Tale of Man who Climbs Tree and Cuts its Bottom

[Ã­agat Uthi Gurit Katâ (Novella) AT 923B, 881 A]

There was a king in a certain state. The king had seven daughters. One day the king called all of them and asked, "By whose merits you are feeding?" All the daughters except the youngest one told him that they were feeding by their father's merit. But the youngest daughter told, " I am feeding by my own merit."

The king got angry by listening her words. He himself took her into a forest of another state. In that forest he saw that a woodcutter was cutting a tree. But he was on top of the tree and was cutting the bottom of the same tree.

The king thought, It will be better to give my daughter to this woodcutter. Then I will see, how she will feed by her own merit!" The king left his daughter with that woodcutter.

She did not see any other means. So she stayed with that woodcutter, as his wife.
The woodcutter was very poor. He had a broken house only. Everyday he cut the wood for the king's house. In exchange of that he got something eatables from the king's house. He cooked all the eatables at a time and took all. But his wife was very intelligent. She began to cook only half of the rice and other eatables from the things that the woodcutter got from the king's house.

By that way she could save the rice and other things. One day she sold all of her surplus things. With that money she bought a goat and reared that. After a few months the goat gave birth some child. By selling them she bought a cow and began to sell the milk. Like that way she earned a lot of money. They made a new house with that money. Her husband also became healthier than before. Before he was very dirty. She made him clean.

One day the king met woodcutter and asked "How have you become cleaner and healthier than before?" He told everything about his wife.

The king called her one day and gave some gifts for her intelligence. By getting the gifts the woodcutter and his wife became more rich.

On the other side, her father lost his state and they became very poor. One day her father came to see his daughter. Then he saw that his daughter's house was no more like before. His daughter became a wife of the well-to-do family. When he entered into their house the daughter recognised her father easily and with great respect and love she took him inside the house.

Then the father realized and told, "Yes, my daughter is really a very intelligent Girl. So she is fed by her own merit."

A version of the same tale has been collected from Lahari Hazarika. While Lahari Hazarika stressed on luck and destiny, Taruni Devi
lays emphasis on intelligence. She says, “She was really a intelligent girl. For the prosperity of a home every girl should be intelligent like her.” Thus she points out that prosperity of a home depends on woman. This women centered tale depicts, qualities and struggling spirit of a woman.

TALE NO. 7

The Youngest Daughter-in-law

[Saru Bowâri (Novella)]

There was an old man in a certain village. He lived with his wife, seven sons and seven daughters-in-law. The youngest daughter-in-law beared some auspicious marks. When she went to cook rice always it became surplus.

One day the wife of the old man died suddenly. After her death the oldman told everyone of his family to give everything to the youngest daughter-in-laws hand. One day, one of her husband's elder brother got a dead snake on the road and by following his father's advice he gave that to the youngest daughter-in-law. She told to keep the snake on a bamboo fence outside of their house.

A kite saw the snake. At that time the kite was carrying a packet of gold in her beak. By keeping the packet on the fence she took the dead snake and flew away from there. From the gold their household property had increased.

Another day one of her husband's elder brother gave her some dried cow dung. She did not throw away by thinking that as useless thing. She kept that nicely on a bamboo plateform inside their house.
Once the daughter of the king of that country was ill. No one could recover her from the illness. A conventional physician of the king asked him to bring seven years old cowdung for treatment of his daughter. The king searched for that everywhere. When the youngest daughter-in-law came to know about king's need, she could give that seven years old cowdung. For that she got two pots of gold and silver as her gift from the king's house. When she got the king's favour the other wives of the family felt jealous to her. One day the other wives of her husbands elder brothers had sold her to a fish seller. When the youngest brother asked them about his wife they told that they did not know anything about her.

One day the youngest brother was going somewhere. Then on a river bank he saw that his wife was selling some dried fish there. He went near her. She could recognise him and told everything about his elder brothers wives. Then he took her to their own home. But from that day, they began to live separately. The condition of their house had improved day by day but the house of the other brother had deteriorated immediately. So again they came to stay with their youngest brother and his wife.

TALE NO. 8

An Auspicious Daughter-in-Law

[Lakhimi Bowâri (Novella)]

There were seven daughters-in-law in a certain family. Their father and mother-in-law reached their old age. They liked most, their youngest daughter-in-law. Because they saw some auspicious mark on her. They told her to cook rice. The other daughter's-in-law helped her. They didnot get the chance to cook food and in other internal works. So they did not like the youngest daughter-in-law.
The other daughters-in-law sold her secretly to a fish seller. Her husband searched her everywhere, but did not find. One day he went to a river bank. There he saw that his wife was selling the fish there. Both of them could recognize each other. His wife told everything about his elder brothers wives.

She came home with her husband. But form that day, they began to stay separately. The economic condition of their family improved day by day but the elder brothers families condition deteriorated soon.

TALE NO. 9

An Auspicious Woman

[Lakhimi Tirotâ (Novella)]

There were five brothers and their wives in a certain family. Their father died. Only mother was with them. The youngest daughter-in-law had some auspicious mark in her character. So the mother-in-law liked her most. She told his sons to give everything to her youngest daughter-in-laws hand. One day one of her husband's brother gave her a dead snake. She told him to keep that on a bamboo fence. After sometime a kite came there and flew away by taking the snake. But she flew away by taking the snake. But she kept a packet of gold ornaments, which was in her beak, in the place of the snake.

With that gold packet they became very rich. Another day one of her husband's elder brothers gave her some dry cow-dung. She kept that nicely on a bamboo plateform. After seven years the king of that state searched for some seven years old cowdung for treatment
to the queen's illness. The youngest daughter-in-law could give her preserved cowdung to the king. So the king rewarded her by many valuable properties.

The other elder brothers' wives felt jealous of her. So one day they took her to a forest for banishment. She was pregnant at that time. So after going sometime she felt tired. She wanted to sleep there. Then they told her to sleep on the lap of the wife of the eldest brother. She knew nothing about their plan. So she slept there. When she felt in sleep all of them left her in that forest and they came to their own house.

There was a woodcutter in that forest. He lived there with his family. She met them there and began to stay in their house separately. After a few days she gave birth a boy child. The child has a strange power when he cried his tears transformed to the gold coin. By that gold coin she bought everything that she needed and lived with her son.

The wife of the woodcutter came to know about her child. So one day when she went to take bath in the river she changed the child with her own child. Both the children were same to look at. So at first she did not come to know about her (the wife of the wood-cutters) cheating. But when the child cried she could recognise him. Next day when the woodcutter's wife went to take bath in the river she exchanged them and went away from their house.

On the other side, her husband searched for her everywhere. Without finding her he became like mad and went away from home and began to stay alone by making a small hut.

The woman roamed here and there and then felt thirsty. Luckily she entered into her husband's house. Both of them could recognise each other. From that day, they began to live together again. Regularly
they got the gold coins from the tears of their child. Within a short time they became rich.

Once the husband wanted to dig a big pond. They called the people from nearby his place to dig the pond. His brothers also came to dig the pond. He could recognise them. They also could recognise their youngest brother and his wife.

Then they told that in the absence of their brother and his wife they became poor. They lost all of their property. So they were doing works at others house for their livelihood.

When they heard about their brothers' distress they told the brothers and their whole family to stay with them.

Storyteller Taruni Devi's tale 'The Youngest Daughter-in-law'; 'A Daughter-in-law of Auspicious Mark' and ' A woman of Auspicious Mark' are the different versions of a same tale.

In "A woman of Auspicious Mark" found more elements. It is observed that Taruni Devi can rearrange the components of a tale without changing the substance. Also she can modify a tale either by lengthening or shortening.

The 'Daughter-in-law on Auspicious Mark' is the shortest and 'A woman of Auspicious Mark' is the longest version of a same tale. In the last one she adds more elements. Like, the banishment the youngest daughter-in-law; staying in woodcutters house but did not marry him; again she met her husband; the child who can give gold coin from his tears and
unity among the family members at last, these components we found only in the last version which were absent in first and second version.

TALE NO. 10

Speech of the Speechless

[Amâtar Mât (Magic Tale) AT 670A]

There was an oldman in a village. He had one son and daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law understood the speech of animals and other living beings.

One day she went to a river to take bath. She then saw that a deadbody was floating in the river. A fox was looking at the deadbody from the bank of the river. It said, "If you bring the deadbody from the river and give it to me you will get a gem which is wearing on his neck." Then she did so and got that precious gem. But she had nothing to cut the gem from the deadbody's neck. She bit that with her teeth to separate the gem from the deadbody. She took that to her home and gave it to her husband.

But the father-in-law was looking at her when she was biting the gem. He thought that she was eating the dead body. So the old man told her husband to turned her away from home. Her husband took her into a forest and left her there.

She was sitting and crying under a tree. Then she saw a snake. A frog was sitting nearby a hole. The snake said, "If someone can give me the frog from there then he will get a big pot of money which is inside the hole." The woman understood the voice of the snake and gave him the frog from that place. She got the pot of money.
The woman's husband was looking from a distance. When he saw that his wife was bringing out something from the hole, he went near his wife. He said to her, 'What are you doing'? She said, "I can understand the speech of speechless one. From a snake I have come to know that there is a pot of money here. So now I am bringing out that money". She also told him about the incident which occurred on the river bank. Then he came to know that she had not eaten the flesh of dead body. So he took her home with that pot of money.

When her father-in-law saw that his daughter-in-law was coming home again; he took the bar of husking pedal to kill her. The son wanted to tell everything about his wife. But before he could tell anything, father-in-law killed his daughter-in-law with that bar.

Taruni Devi told, "Exactly what has happened or what she did, the oldman did not know. Owing to doubt he had killed his daughter-in-law.

It seems that the tale figuratively describe the sensitivity of a woman who can understand animal's languages. There is a psychoanalytical edge of the story where symbols like speech, bar of the husking pedal has sexual connotation. At another level the wealth she got by virtue of her knowledge cannot be described as fortune won by luck. However, Taruni Devi, tried to explain the behaviour of father-in-law. There are two distinct aspects of her judgment those are; ignorance of father-in-law and the role of doubt and suspicion in family life. Her explanation is more attentive to family tragedy and distress faced by woman because of doubt and suspicion.
PLATE V

Taruni Devi, in a moment of storytelling in her sitting room.
TALE NO. 11

A Black Cat

[Ejani Kalā Makuri (Animal Tale)]

There was a small black cat in a family. In that family, there were only three members; an oldman, his son and daughter-in-law.

One day the black cat was telling himself -

\[ \text{Gohālīt utpatāl} \]
\[ bhīrat dhumdhupāl \]
\[ mai burhi'r mājate marān. \]

"So I will not stay here anymore."

(Taruni Devi said, "At that time the animals also could talk").

The oldman liked the cat very much. When he heard the cat, he went nearby the cat and said, "what has happend to you?" The cat said, "In the cowshed one of the cows is making trouble and your daughter-in-law is making noise. "I am an old woman will die in midst of it"

Then the oldman asked him, "What should I do now?"

Then the cat said, "If you will sell your cow and will turn away your daughter in law from home, then only I will stay here. Otherwise, I will go out from your house".

Then the oldman sold the cow and sent his daughter-in-law to her mother's house. The oldman again married his son to another girl. Then their condition of the house improved. The cat stayed with them happily.
Taruni Devi told that the oldman liked the cat more than the man. Again she told “Because of the cat only their family had survived without any mishap.”

Cat is a symbol of reproductive power of woman. Cats are considered also as good for the family. In this tale there is a conflict between two aspects of feminity like progeny bearing capacity and indiscipline a loud woman. The normative cultural woman and biological woman are contrasted in the tale. It is clear from Taruni Devi evaluation that the cat ensured the continuity of the family. Taruni Devi ignored the bad behaviour shows towards the daughter-in-law probably because the tale as a whole deals with the cultural aspect of feminity. The feminine role probably cannot be views isolatedly ignoring symbols and norms.

Tale No. 12

A Tale of an All Knowing Man

[Assamese : Sarabjānar Sādhu ]

There was an old cultivator with his old wife in a certain village. His name was Pharing. They had no children. One day the old woman made some pitha(cakes). But she had alone ate all the pitha. She did not give even a single pitha to her husband. But when the old man saw a dala (a bamboo platter) in the kitchen with some marks of pitha he came to know that the old woman made pitha and took
alone. He counted the marks of pitha and told to the old woman.

\[
\text{Nangalate tikitiki} \\
\text{echarita deo} \\
\text{ekuri etā pithā khāle} \\
\text{nājānile keo}
\]

(Strokes in the plough, the spirit in the whip, one score and one cake she eats this none knows)

When the old woman thought that her husband came to know about the pithā. But no one was at home to tell him. So she thought he became Sarabjān (the all knowing one).

Next day the old woman, when she went to fetch water from the river, in the river bank she told to the other woman that her husband is a all knowing man.

Within a few days by spreading from one ear to another everyone came to know that ‘Pharing’ became an all knowing person.

Once a neckless was lost in the King’s house. Then the people of the king took him to the kings house to asked him about the neckless. He was given a jalpān (light repast) by the king before he started his work. As he was eating he told to himself – ‘Taihe jāna āru dai.’ (Only you know the ‘dai’)

Here ‘dai’ means curd and he was referring to the curds given to him. But one of the king’s maid servant’s name was ‘Dai’ and she was the thief. When she heard that Pharings voice, she thought that she would be convicted. So she confessed to him. Pharing asked her to put back the neckless in the king’s box. Like that way he came out successful for that day.

One day he went somewhere with the king. A Pharing(a grass hopper) felt down on the king’s chest. Then the king caught the grass hopper
felt down on the king's chest. Then the king caught the grass hopper and said to him, "Sarabjān, can you tell what is in my hand?" Then he thought himself and told, 'Now has come Pharing's moment of death.'. The king did not know that Sarbān's name was 'Pharing'. So he thought that he had guessed correctly. His reputation grew.

Again one day the king took a Seluk (a root of the water lily) and asked him what it was. Then Sarabjān replied "Bāre pati Selukne?". The king thought that again he had guessed correctly. So the king made a house for him as his reward.

Storyteller Taruni Devi commented, "It was his luck only. In his destiny it was written by the God. Otherwise how he would get the property of king".

This is a humourous tale but Taruni Devi gives more stress on the change of fate of the old man thus to her it is not only an entertaining tale but also of the role of destiny written by God.

TALE NO. 13.

Tejimala

[(Magic Tale) AT 510, 780]

There was a merchant with two wives. He had a daughter named 'Tejimala'. When Tejimala's mother died she lived with her father and with her stepmother. She (the step-mother) had no issue.
Once the merchant went for trade for a few months. Tejimala stayed with her stepmother. One day she went to her uncle’s house. Her stepmother gave some burning charcoals and mouse inside her clothes. When she came back from her uncle’s house Tejimala told her mother that her all clothes burned somehow. Her stepmother severely beats her for that. One day, she went to help her mother in husking paddy. The evil stepmother killed her by crushing her with the husking padel (dheki). Then her stepmother burned her under the eaves of the husking room. There a lau (gourd) grew. One day a beggar came to there house and would to pick a gourd. Then the gourd said.

Hāto nemelibā lāu nisingibā
kare maganiā toi,
mor kaporar lagate māhiaye khundile
Tejimalāhe moi.

(Donot reach out your hand, donot pick the gourd. Where ever you come from, O beggar? Crushed to death for my clothes it is Tejimala I am).

The beggar was too scared and went away from that place. The stepmother cut down and threw that into her backyard. There grew up a lemon tree, soon that was full of lemon. One day some cowherd saw that and came to pick lemons. Again the lemon tree said -

Hāto nemelibā
jarāo nisingiba
kore garakhīā toi
mor kāporar lagate māhiaye khundile
Tejimalāhe moi.

(Don’t reach out your hand, don’t pick lemons, where you come from O cowherd? Crushed to death by my stepmother. It is Tejimala I am).
Scared cowherd ran away from these, when her stepmother came to know about that she cut the tree and threw that into the river. There from the tree grew a lotus plant and it was soon became full of flowers.

After a few months the merchant came home by that river. When he saw the flowers, he wanted to pick the flower for her daughter. But as soon as he wanted to pick the flower the flower turned into a myna and myna turned into a girl and told everything to the merchant and again she became a myna.

The merchant took the myna with him and reached home. At home he asked about Tejimala. But she told him lie. Then he told the bird to tell everything. His wife confessed everything. In annoyance and anger the merchant killed his wife.

Storyteller told, “The nature of the stepmother is always same. But Tejimala’s stepmother is more than others. That is why she was killed”.

The texts of the tale is slightly different from the printed version the storyteller regards it as an a tale about stepmother’s cruel behaviour.
Champavati

[(Magic Tale) AT 433C, 425D]

There was a cultivator with his wife. He had one daughter named 'Champavati'. When Champavati's mother died the man again married. But the stepmother didn't like champavati. She didn't give her rice to eat.

So she went to the field to scare away the birds from the paddy. In the field she sang like that -

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hur hur batā charāi} \\
\text{mor dhān nākhābi} \\
\text{tok dim gotā karāi}
\end{align*}
\]

(Away the quils, donot eat my paddy, I shall give you the parched rice).

Then from the nearby forest someone responded -

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dhāno khām, chāulo khām} \\
\text{champavatik biyā karāi lai jām}
\end{align*}
\]

(I will eat peddy, will eat rice too I shall go by marrying Champabati)

Champabati reports the matter to her father. Then he came to see. When her father promised to give the girl in marriage then a large reptile appears. The father gave Champavati to the snake.

The snake was a son of deity. When she felt asleep he went to the heaven. Someone cursed him to be a snake. A beggar told that.
The beggar woman said to her, “when will go out at night leaving his snake covering, you will burn it up. When he would smart in burning then you will give him to take Bhimkal (a kind of large banana) and Karkarā bhāt (stealed rice). Champavati did so and found her husband as a lovely handsome man. From that day they lived happily.

But at the other side her stepmother also got a daughter. By seeing her stepdaughter’s happiness she wanted to give in marriage her daughter with a snake. She told to her husband. They searched for a large snake and give her daughter in marriage to a large snake. But at the first night the snake devoured his bride.

There is a printed version of this tale. Which is more complex an elaborate. Taruni Devi explained the success of the elder daughter had god’s blessings. She took the instance of younger wives daughters desire to marry a snake as jealousy. Even related the tale to her teachings to children.

TALE NO. 14

A Tale of Demon

(Magic Tale)

There was a demon in a country that ate the people. All of the men of a village were eaten by him except two daughter-in-law of a family. One of them was very beautiful and took by demon and other one lied hidden and sowed by that way. After a few months a boy child was born of that woman.
When he grew up he went to play with the boys from other village. But everyone teased him by saying that he had no father. One day the boy asked his mother, "Mother, why have I no father?" Then his mother said, "You had your father. But before your birth a demon had eaten him. Not only him all of our family members he had had". Only you had your aunt from our family. But demon took her to their own place."

Then he took permission from his mother and went to the demon's place. When he reached that place the demons were not there. Only his aunt was at home. She asked about him. Then he told everything about his family. She gave her to eat something and told him to hide in a large basket of mastered seeds.

At the evening the demons came and asked his wife, any man came here?" She said, "No, I think you have got the smell of man from me." The woman told the boy to ran away from there. She told him to go to a pond before going home, where there were the lives of their family members.

The boy took out the tube from the pond and went to the place of Yam the god of death. On his place he gave the lives to Yam. In that place they were as some hens. The Yam transformed them to their original shape. They came to their own home.