

## **Chapter - III**

### **Duty, Spirituality and Happiness as the Base of Moral Values in Folktales**

According to the Western philosophy of morality, duty, spirituality and happiness are the principles of moral values. In this chapter, folktales are measured through the Western principles of morality. This chapter is an attempt to delve into the issue of morality in folktales in the light of the Western thoughts and to find out the moral values hidden within the fabric of the selected folk tales.

The world of Assamese folktale is a world between fact and fantasy. It is a world where birds and beasts think like men and where things change their form whenever it is necessary. Here, animal and human are rival and friends together (Goswami, *Ballads and* 84-85). Between this fact and fantasy there are the dwelling issues of violence-nonviolence, love-hatred, honesty-dishonesty and more importantly of morality and immorality. This chapter deals with this paradoxical conflict within the folktales from the collections, the *Burhi Air Sadhu*, *Kaka-deota Aru Nati Lora* and *Junuka*

#### **Duty as Moral Principle**

It has been observed that the folktales always carry the norms of duty as a moral value. Morality is determined by duty and this principle of morality gives emphasis on the importance of devotion to duty as the ethical ideal. The following tales can be categorized under this principle of duty as moral ideal.

*Mekurir Jiyekar Sadhu* (The tale of the cat's daughter) and *Cilanir Jiyekar Sadhu* (The kite's daughter's tale) are almost the same in case of commitment of individuals towards their duty for children and relatives. In the first tale, the daughters of the cat are her own but in the second tale the daughter of the kite is its adopted daughter. But both the mother performs their best duty towards their children. The gists of the tales are given below.

### ***Mekurir Jiyekar Sadhu (The Tale of the Cat's Daughter)***

Both the cat and her mistress were pregnant at the same time. Desiring to eat fish, the cat somehow brought fish to the lady to prepare fish dishes. But, the selfish mistress of the house ate the fish and gave only the leftovers to the cat. The betrayed cat cursed the woman, "May whatever in my tummy goes to her's, and her's to me."

Fulfilling the cat's wishes, in due date the lady gave birth to two kittens and the cat gave birth to two beautiful girl child. Every day the cat used to leave the little girls at home as she went out in search of food. Thus, the girls grew up and one day they asked their mother how they would come to know if someone killed her. The cat then gave them a *Tulsi*<sup>1</sup> plant and a pot of milk and said that on her death the plant would wither and the milk would turn black. The same happened after some days. The girls shaken in grief went in search of their mother. After walking a great distance the younger girl felt very thirsty. A river was at a near distance. The elder sister went to the river leaving her sister on the bank to fetch water for her. But, she was carried away by the *Jal Konwar*<sup>2</sup>. The younger sister cried bitterly. After a while, a merchant was passing by on his

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<sup>1</sup> Basil plant

<sup>2</sup> A kind of water spirit

ship and saw the beautiful girl crying on the bank. Though he had two wives at home he took her as his third wife. The other two wives became jealous and looked for a chance to harm her, as the girl became the merchant's favourite wife.

After some days the girl got pregnant. She gave birth to a healthy boy, but the elder wives of the merchant threw the baby into the river and said that she gave birth to a pedal tooth (of a rice pounding device). They did the same to the next baby boy, but this time the two wives told her that she gave birth to a pumpkin.

The water spirit's wife, the aunt of the two boys kept them under her custody and took good care of them. On the other hand the merchant had taken for granted his third wife as an evil and unlucky woman for giving birth to some strange objects and drove her out of his house. She began to live the life of agony at the backyard of her husband's house where the remnants of food thrown out. Years passed by. Once, when the merchant was travelling through the river, his ship was held up by the water spirit. He tried but could not make the ship budge. The merchant was at a loss regarding what to do, only then he heard a voice, "If you promise me to perform a religious ceremony in your home on a fix date and if you give me your stick and *hancati*<sup>3</sup> then only your ship will move." The merchant did exactly and the ship was released. Meanwhile the water spirit's wife told the boys everything from the beginning and asked them to disclose everything to the invited guests of the merchant on the ceremonial day.

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<sup>3</sup> A kind of handkerchief

On the appointed day, the boys set out for their father's house armed with the stick and the *Hancati*. They first went to their mother's hut and addressed her *Maa*<sup>4</sup> and introduced themselves to the astonished lady. They told her everything in detail. She was delighted to see her sons. Resting for a while, the boys set out to the ceremony organized by their father. When all the guests assembled at the merchant's house the boys told all about themselves and their mother and they saw the stick and the *hancati* as the proof of their saying. The misdeeds of the co-wives of the cat's daughter came to light. The merchant questioned them and whereupon they confessed about their misdeeds the merchant punished them by cutting their nose and ears and sent for exile.

#### ***Cilanir Jiyekar Sadhu (The Tale of the Kite's Daughter)***

Once upon a time there was a very rich potter. He had no sons; for his wife bore only girls. Again when his wife got pregnant, he warned her that if she again gave birth to a girl child, he would sale her to the *Nagas* (a tribal community). Unfortunately, she gave birth to a girl child again. Afraid of facing the anger of her husband, the women put the new born baby in a pot, covered it and sailed it in a river. A washer man found the pot drifting in the river and took it on to the bank. When he opened the pot, suddenly a kite came down and snatched away the new born to her nest on a tree. The kite took care of her by bringing her food, cloth even ornaments from everywhere. The girl grew up to a beautiful young woman on the branches of the tree. Thinking about the safety of the girl, the kite taught the girl a rhyme and told her that it would come immediately to the girl for her help if she sang that rhyme whenever she fell into any problem.

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<sup>4</sup> Mother

One day, a merchant came under the tree for taking rest for a while, on which the girl used to live. That day she was combing her hair sitting on the branch and a long beautiful hair fell to the merchant below. He then looked up and was surprised to see the beauty of the kite's daughter up above the tree. He asked about her identity, but the girl only sang the rhyme and the kite came instantly to the girl. The kite then explained everything to him. The kite also expressed its hope to give its daughter's hand to the handsome and rich trader. The merchant also wanted to marry her though, he had already seven wives. He promised the kite that he would keep its daughter in happiness. The kite finally gave its daughter to the merchant and reminded the girl of the rhyme and told her to sing it whenever she needs any help.

The merchant brought her to home but the other seven wives became very jealous of her and started to make her life difficult. One day, they asked her to cook for all. The kite's daughter never cooked anything in her life before and really she did not know how to cook. So, she sang the rhyme calling her mother. Immediately the kite appeared before her and instructed her to put a grain of rice in a pot full of water and one little green leaf of vegetable in another pot and to lit up fire on woods under the pots and to sit outside the kitchen. She did accordingly and found unbelievably well cooked and inexhaustible rice and vegetable. All the co-wives dug holes on earth under their plates so that they could throw their food when served. They tried to make trouble for her. However, they could not end the meal that the kite's daughter cooked.

Another day the co-wives asked the kite's daughter to clean up the cowshed. But she did not know how to clean it. So, she again called her mother kite. She

instructed her to place a bamboo strip from the broom and to trail it across the cowshed. She did accordingly and found the cowshed sparkled that day. The merchant was delighted and treated her with much love and care. In the *Bohag Bihu*<sup>5</sup>, the merchant asked his eight wives to prepare new clothes for him. The seven elder wives started the whole process of weaving including ginning, spinning etc. to weave cloths for their husband. But the kite's daughter knew nothing of these techniques of weaving. So, she again called her mother. The kite came and instructed her to keep fluffy cotton pod in four bamboo cylinders and to keep them aside. The seven co-wives thought that this time the kite's daughter would be trapped. But on the New Year day, they again proved wrong. When the other seven wives offered new cloths, called *Bihuwan* to their husband, the younger wife gave him the four bamboo cylinders. The merchant became very angry and when he asked for new clothes, she requested to see inside the bamboo cylinders. The merchant found incredible textile inside and the other clothes looked like rags in comparison. The merchant threw all the other clothes and put on the ones, given by the kite's daughter. Later on, the co-wives came to know that a kite always came to help the girl at her trouble on singing a particular rhyme. As they got this secret they planned to kill the kite.

One day, one of the co wives went to the cowshed and called the kite in exactly the same tune as her daughter used to call her. When the kite arrived, she killed it with the broom and buried it. After that day whenever the kite's daughter called upon the kite, it never came. She knew that surely, the co-wives had killed her mother.

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<sup>5</sup> The springtime *Bihu* festival celebrated in the Assamese New Year.

After some days the merchant left home for business telling the seven wives to take care of the younger wife. Then a tradesman came to the village to sell the toilette articles for women. The co-wives decided to get rid of the younger co-wife and they bought their necessities for the price of the eighth wife. The tradesman took her home and engaged her in watching over the dry fish on the river bank. At that time, she sang her life ballad that her potter mother left her in the river, the kite mother took care of her, the merchant married her and the co-wives sold her to the tradesman. The merchant husband returning home through that river heard the song sung by his younger wife. He then went to her and enquired about her. He took her home hiding in a wooden box. On his enquiry about the youngest wife, the other wives let him know that she had gone to her mother's place and had not returned home yet. Then the merchant said that he suspected of some misdeeds and so, he decided to put them in a test whether they had done anything to his youngest wife in his absence. He had dug a deep pit and fixed some sharp spikes in the pit. Then he placed a thread over the pit and asked to walk on the thread across the pit for seven times. In this test, only the innocent people could be able to cross the pit. Six of his wives failed to cross the pit and they were buried in that pit. But, the seventh wife could cross it for seven times. Actually she knew nothing about the selling of the youngest co-wife as she was busy in cooking. The merchant then lived happily with his two wives.

The first tale contains two parts one is the tale of the cat and the other is of the cat's daughters. In the first part duty of a mother is very sincerely done by the cat mother, and the elder daughter of the cat has also taken care of the children of her sister as her duty in the second part. The kite mother also did everything that a mother can do

for her child. Duty of a mother is always regarded as divine duty in the society conferred by the supreme authority. So as to the duties of the kins and relatives; this is above the selfishness of the individual. The boys also do their duty by visiting their mother first, and make her happy by their existence. Finally in both the tales the husbands perform their duties as the heads of the household by identifying the guilty wives and punishing them for their misdeed. In the second part of the cat's daughter's tale that is the merchant realized his fault and accepted his abandoned wife and the boys again. According to the theory of Mill's Utilitarianism, moral actions are those actions that decrease the pain and provide the ultimate pleasure. In this tale the merchant's realization can be regarded a moral action. There are many traits in both the tales which are established as immoral tasks such as stealing fish by the cat; cheating the cat by not giving it its earnings; carrying off the cat's elder daughter by the water spirit without her consent; killing somebody innocent; selling of a family member; feeling jealous for co-wife. Yet there is a moral trait that is the conscience of duty. Both the tales are interesting to observe according to set social norms. The act of kidnapping narrated in the first tale is generally an immoral action. But this kidnapping led to some pleasant incidents such as: for the water spirit's wife the boys could be alive and for the help of the water spirit only, the boys could prove their identity to their father. It finally gave justice to their exploited mother. Thus, from the point of *Principle of Happiness* this kidnapping converted into a moral action.

Another tale, *Ejani Malini aru Ejopa Phul* (The Flower Girl) is a good example of duty as moral value.

### ***Ejani Malini aru Ejopa Phul (The Flower Girl)***

(The tale is copied by the researcher from *Grandma's Tales* that is the English translation of *Burhi Air Sadhu* translated by Deepika Phukan.)

There was once a little girl, who doted on the flowering shrub that she had planted. She tended the shrub with infinite love and care. But years passed by, and the shrub would not bear flower. So, she asked the plant,

“Plant of mine, oh dear plant, why don't you bear flowers?”

Her plant replied, “The cow chews down my tender shoots, so why should I bear flowers?”

The girl then questioned the cow, “Oh cow, dear cow, why do you eat up the shoots?”

The cow: “The cowhand does not graze me; why shouldn't I eat the shoots?”

The girl: “Oh cowhand, dear cowhand, why don't you graze the cows?”

Cowhand: “The cook doesn't feed me; how can I graze the cows?”

The girl: “Dear cook, Oh cook, why don't you feed the cowhand?”

Cook: “The woodcutter doesn't give me firewood; how can I feed the cowhand?”

The girl: “Wood-cutter dear, why don't you bring the firewood?”

Wood-cutter: “The blacksmith doesn't give me the axe; how can I cut the wood?”

The girl: “Blacksmith, dear blacksmith, why don't you give him the axe?”

Blacksmith: “The coal dealer doesn’t give me embers; how can I make the axe?”

The girl: “Coal dealer, dear coal dealer, why don’t you give your embers?”

Coal dealer: “The clouds above let down the rain showers; how can my fire make embers?”

The girl: “Oh cloud, dear cloud, why do you send down rain showers?”

Cloud: “The frogs keep croaking; how can I not send down rains?”

The girl: “Frog, dear frog, why do you croak?”

Frog: “In keeping with the customs of my ancestors. I croak. Why should I not?”

This tale tells about the importance of duties of every individual and how individual’s conduct fulfils the demand of the society where the individual lives. In this tale, the society is the eco-system and the individuals are the existed flora and fauna of the eco-system. This tale vividly describes about the importance of the duty of the individual for the smooth running and survival of a society.

***Eta Shingara Machar Katha*** (A tale about a *Shingara*<sup>6</sup> fish) is an example of the devotion to duty imparted through a small fish.

### ***Eta Shingara Machar Katha***

One day a very poor man went out with a *jakoi*<sup>7</sup> for fishing. He tried the entire day but could not get any fish except a tiny *shingara* fish. He took the fish home and when he was ready to cut and clean the fish to cook, the fish spoke out to him requesting not to kill it and also promised to help the man by watching his

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<sup>6</sup> A tiny fish with sharp spikes found in the water bodies of Assam.

<sup>7</sup> A kind of fishing equipment

cow while it grazes. The man agreed with the fish's proposal. Next morning the man fed the fish well and sent it to watch the cow in the grazing. The fish jumped onto the cow's back and poked the cow with his spikes and pushed him to graze in the field. Time passed by. The fish one day decided to lead the cow to the forest to graze. In the forest it noticed a *Rakshas*<sup>8</sup>, lying opening his mouth. When the *Rakshas* saw the cow he rushed to the cow. The fish then challenged the *Rakshas* that he can touch the cow only if he can defeat the fish in battle. The *Rakshas* laughed at the tiny fish's bravado voice and held it in his hand to kill it inside the fist. But the fish immediately pierced the hand of the *Rakshas* with its sharp spikes. At this sudden attack, the *Rakshas* cried in pain and promised the fish to give anything it wished for. The fish did not let him go, instead, it immediately asked for the thing the *Rakshas* wanted to give. Then the *Rakshas* gave it a gold ring and also told the fish the process of worshipping of the ring. He told that the ring would make their house a house of gold and also would fill the house with wealth. Then the fish let the *Rakshas* go and returned home with the precious ring. At home the fish told everything to his master and the master did everything according to the *Rakshas's* advice. Immediately his house was turned into gold and it was filled with wealth. The master of the house then got his daughter married off to the fish. Days passed by. One day the fish went to the river and he shed his covering and dived into the river in the human form leaving his fishy cover on the bank. His wife saw the incident and she quickly brought the fish covering and burnt it. The fish was instantly transformed into a handsome young man. After this, they lived happily ever after.

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<sup>8</sup> Demon

The moral value in this tale is the dedication of the fish to its duty, which is to serve its master for his kindness. In the same manner, through the compassion of the master towards the tiny fish, the tale also imparts the message of duty towards our surrounding and the animal world without which the human world cannot survive. Thus, the master is rewarded for his act, and the fish is rewarded for its duty and honesty.

*Bhekulir Sadhu* (The Frog's Tale) is another tale similar to the above tale imparting the message of sincerity to one's duty and man's duty towards his environment. It is clearly delivered that a small action of kindness is rewarded in the long run.

#### ***Bhekulir Sadhu (The Frog's Tale)***

A very poor, old couple lived in a village and they had no children. One day, when the villagers set out with *polo, juluki*<sup>9</sup> for a community fishing the old couple also excitedly accompanied them. The villagers caught lots of fishes, but the couple could not even catch a tiny *Chanda* Fish. With utmost disappointment, the old man started to rebuke his wife. The old woman then again tried for some more times and could catch only a frog. The man in frustration took the frog to punish it for their ill luck.

At home when he was about to strike the frog with a piece of firewood, the frog spoke out and requested him not to kill it and promised to stay with them as their servant. Hearing him the old man informed him that he would even have to till his field. Then the frog agreed at the old man's proposal. The old man

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<sup>9</sup> Different types of fishing tools

thought for a while at the frog's confidence and let him stay with them as servant.

Next day, the old man sent him with his bulls and plough to till the field. The frog followed his order and worked hard in the field. At the end of the day, the frog started to build the earthen embankments for holding the necessary water in the field. In the mean time, the king's procession passed through the old man's field and destroyed the day's work of the frog. The frog then scold the king from the mud and the shocked king not seeing anyone besides the bulls lost his patience. He ordered his men to take away the bulls with them. After that, the frog came out from the mud and went home to inform the incident to the old couple. The old couple was distressed at the incident. The frog asked his master not to mourn and give him some amount of *Maah-korai*<sup>10</sup> to bring the bulls. Though, the couple requested him not to challenge the king, he went out with the parcel of the *Maah-korai*. On the way, he sang a song and befriended with many animals including tigers, lions, insects and the others giving them the *Maah-korai* to eat and told them his story. Finally, the frog waged a war against the king with the help of his animal friends. In the war, the king lost many of his warriors and two sons. After his defeat, the king felt on the feet of the frog and gave it half of his kingdom and also the princess to the frog. The frog then took the old couple to his palace and lived happily.

### ***Lakhimi Tirota (The Woman of Good Fortune)***

An old couple had seven sons and seven daughters-in-law. The seventh daughter-in-law was a woman with good fortune. In the last days of their lives

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<sup>10</sup> A mixture of roasted pulse and rice

the old couple asked the entire family members to follow the rules set by their youngest daughter-in-law. The youngest sister-in-law of the family formed a rule that the members of the house must bring something whenever they return from somewhere. They should not come with empty hand and it was strictly followed by her family members. One day, the eldest brother-in-law had nothing to bring. So, he brought a dead snake found on his way home. Leaving the snake on the bamboo fence, he informed his sister-in-law about the snake and went to fresh up. When she went out to see it, she found a bundle of jewelry on the bamboo fence. This bundle of jewelry was of a young girl. When she went to take bath keeping her jewelry on the bank of the river, a hungry kite took the bundle thinking it of some eatables. But not finding any food inside the kite left it on the bamboo fence taking the dead snake to eat. For not coming with an empty hand they got the wealth.

One day, another brother-in-law of her brought a piece of dry cow dung, instead of coming home with empty hands. This time the sister-in-law kept this cow dung in a bamboo hole of the roof of their house. After five years of this incident, the king's daughter was seriously ill and the royal doctor asked for some five years old cow dung to prepare the medicine to cure her. The king then announced for five years old cow dung for the cost of two pots of gold and silver coins. Then the sister-in-law remembered of that cow dung kept in the bamboo hole of their house roof. When this was sent to the king, the king gave them two pots of gold and silver coins.

Days passed by happily. But one day, a *fakir*<sup>11</sup> kidnapped the youngest daughter-in-law of the family. And after her kidnapping, the whole household faced series of misfortunes. One by one the family members and even the domestic animals passed away. The only living body was the offspring of the eldest son. In his loneliness, he used to wander from place to place. Fortunately, one day he met his aunt, the youngest daughter-in-law. He told her how their family had been destroyed, and he was the only person alive in the earth. She then told him how the *fakir* captured her and how her plan to escape from him failed for his *mantras*. She also informed him that the soul of the *fakir* was intucked in a sparrow living with *Brahma*<sup>12</sup>. She also told him that if he would be able to kill the sparrow, she would be free from him. The boy then went to *Brahma* and satisfied *Brahma* with his prayer. Being satisfied with the boy's devotion, *Brahma* gave his daughter's hand to him. Along with his daughter, *Brahma* gave many gifts to the boy. But the boy asked for the sparrow and *Brahma* happily gave it to him. The boy killed the sparrow and the life of the *fakir* thus ended. The boy then took his aunt with him and lived happily with his wife with the blessings of *Brahma*. The wealth and splendor of his earlier life came back with his aunt.

In the above tale, it is observed that the youngest daughter-in-law does her all duties to make her family a prosperous one. Her devotion for duty towards her family reflects her goodness in the first part of the tale. In the second part, her nephew's devotion attracts the attention of *Brahma*, the god of creation and he is rewarded by the god.

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<sup>11</sup> A mendicant

<sup>12</sup> The Creator

The next tale is all about the goodness of a father's friend and the devotion of the son towards his father's friend.

### ***Tawoiekor Sadhu (The Tale of his Father's Friend)***

There were two very close friends. When one of them was in his death bed, he requested his friend to take good care of his son after his departure. He also advised his son to obey his father's friend, his *Tawoi*<sup>13</sup>, in any case and saying that, the father passed away.

The boy kept the words to his father and he used to follow the instruction of his *Tawoi* without any question. When his wife delivered a son, he went to inform it to his *Tawoi*. But unexpectedly, the old man instructed him to bury the child in the filled up pond behind his house. The boy was disturbed by his *Tawoi*'s instruction, but remembering his father's words, he did according to the old man's instruction. Later on, the boy's wife gave birth to a boy and then a girl child again. These times also the *Tawoi* asked him to do the same as in case of the first baby. He was heartbroken but obeyed his *Tawoi*. After two years, his wife delivered another baby boy. This time again he went to give the old man the news, but he decided that this time he would not bury his son to follow the old man's instruction. But this time the *Tawoi* was happy and he advised him to take proper care of his son. Then the old man asked him to go to the burial place of his previous children and to seat on a *polo* over there and asked to observe through the night. That night, he sat on the *polo* at his children's burial place. At mid night he heard of his children's voice. They were talking about their intension of doing harm to their father which remained unfulfilled for their

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<sup>13</sup> In Assam father's best friend is addressed by this term.

father. Listening to this conversation, he realized the kind of children they were and he established good faith on his *Tawoi*.

After a couple of days, the boy had to sell his paddy because at that time the price of the paddy was very high. So he went to the *Tawoi* to discuss about it, but the *Tawoi* did not give him permission. After some days he again came to the old man to inform that the price of paddy decreased those days. Listening to him, the old man asked to sell the paddy immediately and to buy some gold with the money he got. The boy did accordingly and came with the gold to his *Tawoi*. The old man then asked him to through the gold in to the river. The boy was distressed but he did according to the old man's advice. After a couple of months, a fisherman came to his house to sell a *rahu* fish to him. He bought the fish and when he cut its belly, he found the gold he threw into the river. Immediately, he came to his *Tawoi* with the piece of gold. When he showed it to his *Tawoi*, he then delightfully asked to keep it safely with him and blessed him for a prosperous life.

In this tale the father's friend performs his duty by keeping his promise to his friend that is to advise his friend's son in his need. The boy also is always ready to follow his father's friend. As they both execute their duties they are rewarded with all the goodness of life. Devotion to duty for self and the society leads to all goodness, so duty is one of the main aspects to judge the moral values in a society. And the above discussed folktales possess some moral values as the characters are some good examples for their devotion to their duty.

There are also a few tales from the collection *Kaka-deota Aru Nati Lora* that can be justified for the moral values based on the Principle of Duty. The Tale of *Ek Hati Aru Phechar Katha* is a good example of this type of tale.

***Ek Hati Aru Phechar Katha (Tale of an Elephant and an Owl)***

There lived an owl on a tree near a river. An elephant named *Gajendra* used to go through the path under the tree to drink water from the river. Unfortunately, one day the tree fell down on the water. The owl, by doing friendship with the elephant somehow pulled the tree up. From that day the owl and the elephant became friends. One day, goddess *Parvati*'s lion dreamt that he had eaten the elephant *Gajendra*'s head. So, he asked Lord *Siva* whether he could indeed eat the head of the elephant. *Siva* then said that he could if he dreamt of eating the elephant's head. When the lion came to the elephant and told about that, the elephant was very frightened. But the intelligent owl told the lion that they must first go to Lord *Siva* to confirm whether it was true that he had allow the lion to eat the elephant's head. So, all the three set out to meet *Siva*. On the way, the owl overtook the other two and reached *Siva*'s place before them. There the owl nodded its head and acted as if it was sleeping. Observing it, when *Siva* asked what the matter was, the owl told that in his dream he had just married Lord *Siva*'s wife *Parvati* and asked whether he could marry *Parvati* as he had dreamt of doing that. *Siva* then firmly denied that. Then he asked *Siva* how he could allow the lion to eat the elephant's head. *Siva* then realized his fault and he said that the lion should not be allowed to eat the head of the elephant. At that time the lion and the elephant also arrived and heard the decision. Thus, one friend saved the life of his friend.

In this tale the duties of friendship is depicted very fascinatingly. In a society friendship, after the family relationship, is a very important relationship. Duty of a friend for his or her friend is accepted as right action. In this tale both the friends are doing their duties for their friends and it carries all the goodness of a relationship. The following tale is about a bird's devotion to its duty as a guard of a jujube tree.

***Burha Burhie Bogoriguti Rua***

**(Planting of a Jujube Seed by an Old Couple)**

An old couple one day, found a jujube seed and a *Kori*<sup>14</sup> on their way while they were walking to beg for their living. They brought their finding to home and planted them. The *Kori* had rotten but the jujube seed grew to a mature plant having fruits on it. After interviewing a crow and a crane the old couple appointed a bird, the *Phechu* to guard the jujube tree. One day, a king caught sight of the jujube fruits while he was going for hunting by the old couple's house. The king ordered his men to bring some fruits but, the bird blinded some of the king's men when they attempted to get some fruits from the tree. So, the king captured the bird and gave to his seven wives to cook it for the dinner. The clever bird however, managed to escape from the queens by tempting them to watch it sing and dance. For fear of the king's anger the queens cooked a toad for the king's dinner. The king ate the toad without any suspicion. The next morning, the bird appeared before the king and told the king that he had eaten a toad in his dinner instead of the *Phechu*'s flesh. The furious king then asked his wives for an explanation, but no one told the truth except the youngest one. The king so, got the six wives trampled by elephants.

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<sup>14</sup> A kind of shell

Here, the *Phechu* is doing its duty very sincerely while, the wives of the king forgot their duty as they were tempted by the clever *Phechu* and for that they were punished by the king.

The tales discussed below are some examples of duties to rescue the society from evil persons.

### ***Rakshyas Pundit-1 (The Demon Scholar –I)***

A demon came to a king's place in the shape of a human being by the profession of a scholar and opened a school in the king's city. He took many boys as his students except the sons of the widows. There was a widow in that city, who was in a close relationship with the king's minister. So, she went to the minister to get her son admitted in the school by saying that her son was his own. The minister agreed, and the boy got admission. The boy started to live with his teacher and continued learning.

Whenever the teacher went out for any work he warned the boy not to touch his private box which he kept in a clean and mopped room. One day, the widow's boy opened the box and found some skulls and some books. These books are all about the secret teachings of demonic magical power. The boy now came to know about the real identity of the teacher. He started acquiring the magical skills secretly whenever the demon went out and become expert in demonic skills. One day, the teacher offered his students to take them to his own place and the students got ready to go with him with lots of gifts and food stuffs with them. The demon was very happy as he and his relatives would have a grand feast of these boys' flesh. On their way they reached a river. The teacher told the boys to close their eyes and told to hold his hand to a boy then another to

hold the boys hand and thus, they linked like a chain to cross the river. They must not open their eyes until they crossed the river otherwise they would drown in the river. All the boys followed his instruction except the widow's son. He saw that their teacher using a bamboo canal sucked up all the river water and dried the river to make it possible to cross it. After crossing it using another bamboo canal he filled the river again. Then he told them to open their eyes. After going a while they reached another river and he led them cross the river same way but this time he instructed the boys to open their eyes after he hid the bamboo canals in the sand of the river. All his activities were observed by the widow's son. Their journey continued and when, the group almost reached their teacher's place he told them to stay there for a while as he had something important to do. He promise to come back soon to lead them to his house. They were very obedient to their teacher, so they stayed there waiting for him. The teacher went to his relatives to make the preparation for a grand feast. The boys kept waiting but the teacher had not come. Then the widow's son asked his friends to wait for him as he wanted to go to see the matter. He went to the teacher's house but had not found there. Then he noticed two skulls of human being and they warned the boy to escape from there otherwise the demon would kill and eat him. He then returned hurriedly to his friends and told them everything. All of them very frightened at the news. But the widow's son consoled them not to worry about and ensured them their safe rescue. He led them back crossing the two rivers with the help of the two bamboo canals. The demon came running but could not be able to catch them and he threatened the widow's son that he would be there soon for revenge.

At home he explained all to his mother. Then he told his mother about his trick to earn some money that he would become a goat and the mother had to sell him in market. But he also warned his mother not to give the tether to the buyer at any cost. Then he would be return home in human form. Next day, the woman went to sell her goat and the demon as a buyer bought the goat on the price the woman wanted for it. He then took the goat without the tether. As soon as the woman reached home her son also arrived. The next day, the boy transformed into a goose and again his mother sold it to the buyer and again it was the demon. But she did not give the cage. This time again her son reached home at the same time she reached. This time the boy transferred himself into a horse and again the demon came to the woman as the buyer. But this time the demon was very angry with the boy for escaping from his hand again and again. So this time he bought and took the horse with the reins. The woman begged for the reins but all were gone in vain. The demon led the horse with him and stopped by a river on the way to eat the horse. But the boy in the form of a horse somehow escaped and jumped into the river transforming into a fish. The demon also changed into a river dolphin and followed the fish. There a princess came to take bath and she put her ornaments on the river bank before dip into the water. The fish when chased by the river dolphin, it transformed into a precious stone and took shelter among the jewelry of the princess. The princess took the precious stone home. The demon again came to the king in human form and said that the princess had brought his precious stone with her. Now he wanted it back. The king then called his daughter and threw the stone before the man. The moment it touch the ground the stone became a mustard seed and the demon who was in guise of a human became a dove and was about to eat, the

mustard seed changed into a kite and tore the breast of the dove. The demon then fell down and died instantly. The king and his court men were astonished at the incidents taking in front of them. The widow's son then told them everything and being satisfied at the boy the king gave his daughter marriage to him.

### ***Rakshas Pundit-II (The Demon Scholar-II)***

There was an old couple. They were very rich but had no children. So they were quite unhappy. One day, a demon came to their place with the outfit of a pundit, a scholarly person. The old man offered a *pira*<sup>15</sup> to sit on. When he came to know that the old couple had no children he started calculation and after some time he said that they could have twin boys but they had to give him a bullock immediately and their elder sons after birth. For the hope of children, they gave him a bullock and promised to give him their elder son. After one year, the woman gave birth to twins. When they grew up the old man educated them very seriously. They were became experts in all skills. Besides this the younger son learnt the demonic skills also. One day, the pundit came to their home and asked for the elder son and according to the promise; they handed over their son to him. Before leaving the boy told his younger brother that he had planted a *Tulsi* plant and if the plant smashed up then he must know that he died. Telling this he went with the pundit.

The boy and the demon pundit reached a dense forest which was the dwelling place of the demon. When they almost reached the pundit's place he told the boy to stay there for a while as he had something important to do. He promised

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<sup>15</sup> A kind of wooden seat used in Assamese household.

to come back soon to lead him to his house. But the boy, in curiosity followed the pundit and after covering some distance, he observed the heap of skulls, bones of both human and animal figures. From these he came to know that the pundit is none but a demon. Then, he was extremely frightened. Suddenly, a skull asked him why he was coming to the demon's region. He told his story to the skull and the skull told that they were also brought there in the same way. The skull then told him that the demon was going to the river to take bath and if he could kill the demon with the chopper kept inside the house then only he could be able to get rid of him. The skull also advised the boy to strew some of the demon's blood on the human and animal remaining so that they could be able to be alive again. The boy did accordingly and thus the dead persons also got alive and they blessed the boy.

After that the boy took a horse from the demon's stable and went through the forest. Travelling for a while he reached another region of demons. Here, there was a demoness who used to hunt human, misleading them to a cave where she could easily kill them. This time the boy also fell into the trap and the demoness killed the boy.

At home the *Tulsi* plant died and the younger brother came to know all about the incidents for his knowledge of demonic skills. So he set out on a horse in search of his brother and reached at the place of the demoness. The demoness, seeing him became a deer to tempt him but the boy became a tiger to kill her. This time the demoness came to know that her hunt was not an easy one so she became a huge python to gulp the tiger. Suddenly the tiger transformed into a

mongoose and killed the python. Thus, the demoness died and the boy gave life to his brother by his magical spells.

The tale *Rakshyas Pundit-I* signifies one's duty for mankind and the tale *Rakshyas Pundit-II* is about the duty of a brother. Though the widow's son learnt the demonic magic secretly, without the permission of his teacher the demon; he applied it to rescue his friends and to kill the demon, who could be a danger for people in future. In the tale-II also the younger brother completed the demonic magic to do good only, which is to rescue his brother. Another tale of this type is below and this tale signifies the duty of a prince.

#### ***Chai Sakhiyek, Ek Rakshasi (Six Friends and a Demoness)***

Once five young men quarreled with their fathers and left their houses to go to some far places. The prince of the *Alagee*<sup>16</sup> queen also accompanied them as he was neglected by his father king. They became good friends and promised to be faithful to each other.

On their way, a she goat, ready to be milked followed them. When they stopped under a tree for the night, the goat also stopped with them. The young men drank the milk of the goat and went asleep. The goat was none other than a demoness. At night she ate one of them and again transformed into a goat. In the morning, when they found one of them was missing, they thought that their friend left them. However, every night the goat would transform into a demoness and eat one man. No one suspected the goat till the night when only one young man was left, and it was none but the prince. He saw everything and tried to escape by returning to his palace. When he entered his palace, the

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<sup>16</sup> Not favorite of her husband. Antonym is *Lagee*.

demoness followed him in the form of a beautiful girl. The prince then told everything and warned about the girl to his father, the king. But the king did not believe him. Instead, he was so tempted by the beauty of the girl that he married the beautiful girl and made her the queen.

Afterward, the demoness started to eat a man a day and started depopulating the palace. The king then realized that his son was true and he called on the prince and asked him to save the kingdom. The prince, according to the advice of a kite went to the land of demons. There he introduced himself as the son of the demoness and came to know about the secret life store of the demoness. Then it was easy for him to kill the demoness and her relatives. After he completed his task he returned to his father and the king gave him the respect and position he deserved.

The next tale is a tale of a brother who did impossible on his journey to save his brother.

#### ***Nimati Koina (The Silent Maiden)***

Once there was a king. He had no any children. One day, the king met a *Sanyasi* when he was going for hunting. When the king told the *Sanyasi* that he had no children, the *Sanyasi* gave him a seed to feed the queen to have children. The *Sanyasi* also told the king that he got two sons on time, but he had to give the elder son to him. The king agreed with him. In time, the queen gave birth to two princes and the king was happy. When the elder prince was about the age of sixteen the *Sanyasi* came to the king and asked for the elder prince. The king also gave his elder son according to his promise.

The prince selected a fine horse and put on a turban of long cloth then set out with the *Sanyasi*. After covering a long distance the prince saw some huts of *Sanyasis*. When he saw the huts he stopped to tear the long cloth that he put on as turban to make out the path. Following the order of the *Sanyasi* the prince got off the horse and entered to a hut. There he noticed the idol of goddess Kali and the other objects of worship. The *Sanyasi* went to take bath so the prince got the chance to observe the place fully and he noticed some human skulls in a room. The beheaded skulls laughed at the prince but said nothing. In another room he saw human blood boiling in four pots. The prince was terribly frightened at this. In the meantime the *Rakshas* in the form of a *Sanyasi* came back and ordered the prince to bow down before the goddess. When the prince did according to the *Sanyasi's* order the *Sanyasi* beheaded the prince.

The young prince, not getting any news, set out on a horse in search of his brother. Following the torn cloths of his brother's turban, he reached the place of the *Rakshas*. At that time the *Rakshas* was not there. He saw the human skulls and the head of his brother too. The heads laughed at him but his brother's head warned him of the *Rakshas*. The head also told his brother that the *Rakshas* in the form of the *Sanyasi* would ask him to bow down in front of the goddess, but he had to ask the *Sanyasi* to teach how to bow down and when the *Sanyasi* would show him to bow down, he had to behead the *Sanyasi*. The head also asked its brother to pour the *Amrit*<sup>17</sup> on them then only they would get their lives. The prince did according to his brother's advice and killed the *Rakshas* and gave life to his brother and the other princes.

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<sup>17</sup> A kind of pious heavenly food, which has the ability to give life to the dead.

The *Rakshas* had a sister. Observing the omens after her brother's death she came rushing to the place. The prince wanted to kill her too but she promised him to help him in getting his luck. She led him to a cave and inside the cave there was a beautiful city but without any populace. They entered a house and there they saw a beautiful princess sitting on an elegant bed. She was the daughter of a king, but she was voiceless. The king dreamt that the person who would be able to give her voice would be her husband. The king was also ordered in his dream to keep her in that place.

There was a tree of silver having gold leaves and gems as fruits. There were five types of instruments which would jingle automatically at the speech of the princess. The *Rakshasi* told the prince to tell tale to the princess and the *Rakshasi* would listen to the tale in the form of Maya. And she became a fly and listened to the tale sitting on a light. When the prince had completed his first tale the fly sounded "boo", took a flight and sat on the *Aan-cal*<sup>18</sup> of the princess. Then he started his second tale. After he had finished the second tale the fly said "boo". At that time the princess took a deep inhalation opening her mouth and the fly entered into the princess belly. The prince then started his third story. When he finished it the fly sounded "boo" from inside the princess. Instantly the five instruments drove all together and the princess's father the king came to the place and gave his daughter's hand to the prince with the tree of gems as dowry.

In this tale, the young prince did his duty for his elder brother and also for the human kind by killing the *Rakshas*. For his devotion to duty he was rewarded with a beautiful princess and the tree of gems.

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<sup>18</sup> The fringe part of a cloth wore by an Assamese woman.

The next tale *Kon aru Mon* represents the need of one's duty towards self, without which the duties towards a broader whole is impossible.

### ***Kon aru Mon* (Kon and Mon)**

In a certain place there were two brothers named Kon and Mon. Kon the elder brother was cleverer while Mon was very simple. One day, Kon said to Mon that they must use the things they get from their forefathers. Mon easily agreed. Then Kon said that he would use the quilt at night and Mon would use it at daytime. Mon was so simple that he agreed easily. From that day onwards, in winter, Mon as there was no use of coverlet in day time he used to spread it on sunshine and at nights Kon used to sleep comfortably using that warm coverlet. For cold Mon could not sleep well.

After some days, Kon said to Mon that there were lot of trees in their garden and he decided to share these trees. He gave the lower parts of the tree to Mon and he himself took the top of these. Mon this time also agreed and he took care of the lower part by giving fertilizers and watering and Kon picked the fruits and ate them without giving Mon. Another day, Kon said to Mon that they should share the cow also. Kon gave the forepart of the cow to Mon and Kon took the hind part. Again Mon used to feed the cow and Kon used to take its milk.

Thus, Mon was very badly deprived. One day, he was sitting in his yard in grief. At that time a beggar woman came and asked the reason of his grief. Mon told everything to this beggar. The beggar asked him why he was bearing such injustice then he told her that he must obey his elder brother. Then the beggar taught him a trick as a weapon against the injustice. She advised Mon to pour

water on the coverlet at day time so that Kon would feel uncomfortable at night. She also advised to pretend to cut off the lower part of the trees of their garden and to hurt at the forepart of the cow whenever Kon went to draw milk from it. After that Mon did according to the beggar's advice as a result Kon had to provide Mon his rightful share of all things.

Kon, at first tolerated his brother's injustice for his respect to the elder brother. But, with the advice of the begging woman his sense of duty towards himself became stronger. Consequently, he learnt to oppose his brother's unfairness, and finally justice was done to him. It is unfair to bear the injustice and it should be one's duty to stand against injustice. The wise beggar with her wit tried to support the victim the younger brother and she encouraged Mon to do his duties towards self by saving himself from injustice and exploitation.

The next tale is about a witch couple who are the victims of social injustice and who with the devotion to their duties rise to a noble position in the society.

### ***Shakhina Aru Shakhini (The witch Couple)***

Once upon a time there was a male witch and a female witch in two separate villages. They were believed to be unlucky for their communities. The people believed that they brought ill-luck to the villagers by practicing black magic. So they expelled these unfortunate people from their communities to a deserted forest giving a chopper with the man and some food with the woman. The ill-fated couple met in the jungle and started to live together deciding not to go back to the village again. In time, the woman gave birth to an owl and then to a pig. Without any grief they lived happily with their children. The owl used to

fly to the court of the god *Indra*<sup>19</sup>. One day, the owl heard the gods saying that that year the crops harvested in the low land would be benefitted for the farmers. So, the owl advised his father to cultivate the low land for that year. But the father said that they had no cattle to till the land. Then, the pig said that he would manage it and he advised his father to dig the land in some places and to bury potatoes, arums, bananas and such types of objects that the pigs fond of for he would call the pigs from the jungle to till the land. The father did accordingly and the wild pigs came and tilled all the land in the process of finding their food. The man then planted the paddy sapling there and the crop was plentiful. But the gods were unhappy with the family as they did not worship the gods accordingly, so the gods decided to send hordes of locusts to destroy the crops. The owl came to know this plan of the gods from his daily visit to the heaven. Coming home he advised his father to kill the locusts with fire as a result the plan of the gods failed. Then, the gods put a curse on the crops, but with the help of the clever owl the curse turned to a blessing and they got abundant harvest. This time the gods sent *Yama*<sup>20</sup> to take the lives of the witch couple. But, the god of death unwilling to take their lives, as it is an injustice, he promised the king of gods to eat up all the crops after harvesting taking the form of a horse. Again the owl heard the plan and he advised his father to tie up the god of death in form of a horse. The man did according to the owl and finally the god of death had to make a promise with a boon in return of his unfairness to this family. He blessed that the family would grow rich and

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<sup>19</sup> The king of heaven

<sup>20</sup> The god of death.

lives a happy life a long time and the villagers who had abandoned the man and woman believing them witches would have to work for them like slaves.

In this tale, the unfortunate couple exhibits their determination to fight against injustice in the form of societal action and action of the heavenly power. Their resolve to perform their duty towards themselves wins for them luck and fortune in the long run.

### ***Rajmantri aru Napit (The King's Minister and the Barber)***

Once, a king heard the conversation of a black and a white crow in the front yard of his palace. The white crow told the other that it used to have gems as food from trees of gems across the seven seas and thirteen rivers. After hearing this, the king called upon his ministers and the courtiers and announced that if anyone could bring the tree of gems to him he would offer him the post of the prime minister. But all the persons in the court explained it an impossible task for them. The king then announced in the kingdom that whoever could bring the tree of gems for him, he would make the person his prime minister. In the city, there was a man with his two wives. The *lagee* wife had six healthy and strong sons and the *alagee* had only one lame son. After the king's announcement the six sons of favorite wife sought permission of the king to go in search of the tree. The lame son of the man also decided to go in search of the tree. But, his mother refused to let him go. But after many arguments, she allowed him to go. The king also permitted him to go. He took some foods and a very weak and meek horse from the king's stable as the horse seemed to be a good featured one. When he thought of the horse's condition, the horse told him that it was injured at its leg so it looked weak. The horse also requested the boy to pull out the spike from its leg, and then only it would become a healthy one. The boy did

accordingly and the horse became a sharp one. He then set out to his mission riding on the horse.

The brothers of the lame boy were at a loss among the water of the sea. On the other hand, the lame boy, riding the horse reached the kingdom of the king of death *Yama* and met the king of death. King *Yama* was in want of a good groom for his daughter. *Yama* was impressed by the boy and he gave marriage his daughter to him and he also taught his daughter a spell by which she could be able to give life to dead person. Taking *Yama's* daughter he again set out for his journey and he reached the kingdom of *Kapou*<sup>21</sup> King. The *Kapou* king also gave his daughter marriage to the lame boy with a pair of *Kapou* as dowry with the *Kapou* princess.

After some days, he arrived at the kingdom of serpent. The serpent king also gave marriage to his daughter with a pair of serpents as dowry. On his way, he crossed about the kingdom of snakes and the snake king again gave his daughter to the boy with a pair of snakes. He arrived at the kingdom of the *Bicani*<sup>22</sup> king. The boy had to marry the daughter of *Bicani* king also and he got a pair of *Bicani* as dowry. With the five wives he proceeded to his way and arrived at the kingdom of the vultures. The king of the vultures also liked the boy very much and he also accepted the boy as his son-in-law and gifted the tree of gems as dowry. The boy then sent his men and the horse by road and decided to start the return journey through the sea with his newly married wives. The brothers of the lame boy were also in their return journey without the tree of gems. And they saw the boat of their lame brother with the six newly married wives along

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<sup>21</sup> A kind of bird.

<sup>22</sup> Traditional fan.

with the tree of gems. They felt jealous and decided to kill the lame boy to get his wives and the tree of gems so that one of them would become the prime minister of the king. Finally, they killed the lame boy. But, the daughter of *Yama* brought the dead body with her in a box.

When the six brothers reached their kingdom with the tree of gems, the king himself came to welcome them. When the news spread, all the people of the kingdom gathered to see the tree of gems. But only the lame boy could open the box where the tree was kept, so they could not be able to see the tree to the king. The boys then ordered the wives of the lame boy to open the box. But the daughter of *Yama* told the king about everything happened on their way home and also declared that only her husband could open the box. She also sought permission from the king to give life to her husband. The lame boy was brought back to life and he opened the box and showed the tree to the people. The king's court was brightened with the light of the tree of gems and according to his promise, the king made the lame boy his prime minister. The other six brothers were sentenced to death.

The lame boy now as the prime minister of the king used to live his life happily with his six wives and seeing his happiness the barber of the king became jealous. The barber was very close one of the king. He thought about the degradation of the lame boy from the post of the king's minister. With this very intension, one day, when the barber was shaving the king's facial hair, he told that only by bringing the tree of gems one cannot be the king's minister. If he would be able to strew mustard seed in a broad field again if he would be able to pick all that up in one night then only he should be regarded as the king's

minister. Next morning the king ordered the minister to perform the deed as advised by the barber and in case of failure he would face severe punishment. After hearing the king's order, the minister was in a great tension and he went home and sat down in solitude. Then his wife the daughter of the *Kapou* king asked about his tension and the minister told her everything. She then asked him not to be worried about it. At mid night the *Kapou* princess ordered her pair of *Kapou*, to pick all the mustard seeds up and to keep them in a huge container at one night. The pair of *Kapou* called upon their fellow *kapous* and completed the whole task. The next day, the king was very surprised, but, the barber again thought another way to destroy the minister.

After some days, the barber was giving massage to the king and told that if the minister would be able to dig a big plot to two big ponds and set up a water spring in it, then only he should be the king's minister. The king ordered the minister according to the barber's saying. The minister was tensed again for the king's order. But he succeeded here also with the help of the *Nag* (serpent) princess. Again the barber wanted to teach the minister a lesson. So, he again told the king to ask the minister to make a city of snakes in a night. Accordingly the king ordered the minister to build a city of snakes within a night. But this time also his wife the princess of snakes helped him to accomplish the target.

Failed in his conspiracy, the barber again decided to do something extra to kill the minister. He told the king to order the minister to bring the royal ring of their kingdom from their forefathers. The king as usual ordered the minister according to what the barber said to him. The minister went home distressed. But this time, his wife the *Bicani* princess came for rescue. But, this time the

barber followed the minister to observe his activities by which he would be able to enact the impossible deeds ordered to him. He saw that at night the *Bicani* princess took two *Bicanis*, by one she gave one blow of air and the minister died instantly and went to the place where people lived after death and asked the king's forefathers for the royal ring. After sometime she blew another blow of air on him and he became alive with the royal ring in his hand. The barber saw everything with his eyes and returned home.

Next morning the minister went to the king with the royal ring and gave the ring to the king. The king was satisfied with his minister but this time the minister decided to keep the barber away from his way. So he told the king that his forefathers were in the want of a barber as their hairs grew long enough and he requested the king to send the king's barber to the world of the dead forefathers. The king also ordered his barber to go to his forefather's place. The barber also agreed as he saw the minister going there with the blow of a *Bicani*.

The barber came home and asked his wife to blow air on him with a *Bicani* so that he could go the king's dead forefather's place. The wife of the barber was blowing and blowing air on him with a *Bicani* but he did not die because it was not a magical one, so she hit on his head. With this sudden hit on head the barber died instantly, after some time she again blew and blew air on her husband he did not come alive. The king enquired about the barber and found him dead in his house, then he enquire about the incident and the barber's wife told the truth. The king found her guilty and ordered to bury her with her husband. And the minister then lived happily.

This tale brings to light the duties of the subjects to their ruler. In spite of his physical limitations, the lame boy wished to fulfill the king's desire. And in this attempt, he was blessed with the worldly happiness. He even wins over the crooked plans of the barber with the help of his virtuous wives. The tale also focuses on the duties of a wife to help the husband to fulfill his duties and share his happiness as well as troubles. The minister's wives perform their duties that ensure happiness and prosperity to their life.

### ***Betu-Kowar (Prince Betu)***

Once there was a king and he had seven queens but had no children. He performed many rituals for having child but all were in vain. One night he dreamt that after bath if he spells "*Tamah*" for three times he got a small red pot containing a berry. If his queens eat it they become pregnant. Next morning he did accordingly and got the berry. He gave the berry to his queens. They ate it after taking bath. But the youngest queen came a little bit late and as she was not a favourite of the king, she got nothing except the *betu*<sup>23</sup>. In grief she ate the *betu*. In time the queens gave birth to one son each. One day, a *Fakir* came to the king and said that the kingdom is perfect but only one thing was missing; that was a tree of gold, leaf of silver and the peacock dance. Next tale is all alike.

The king then ordered his sons to go in search of the things described by the *Fakir*. The princes also got ready their boats and set out in search of the gold tree, silver leaves and the peacock dance. Betu Kowar also wanted to go with them but, at first they did not agree. But, finally they took him with them.

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<sup>23</sup> The part that holds the fruit from the tree.

Sailing a far distance they reached a mango tree on the bank of the river and decided to take rest there for a while. After having his meal Betu-Kowar loitered there and suddenly he saw a hole on the trunk of the tree. He told his brothers to wait there till he returns and went through the hole with the help of a rope. Through the hole he reached a city where there were dead bodies everywhere. Then he entered a big house and found a beautiful girl sleeping in the house. There were two fans of fan, one was of white color and the other was of black. When he gave air with the black fan the girl started bleeding and when he took the white fan she wake up. The girl was surprised at seeing him and told him that the city was destroyed by the *Rakshasas* and they would also kill him. So, she advised him to hide in the store of mustard seed. The prince asked her to find out the way to kill the *Rakshasas*.

Next day, very tactfully the girl asked the secret of the Rakshasas life and they told her that their lives were in a small insect under the water of the pond. The princess told the secret to Betu-Kuwor and when he killed the insect all the Rakshasas died. After that the princess showed him the gold tree, silver leaves and the peacock dance and the prince took all these in a box and came out from the hole. He then asked his brothers to wait for him and entered again to fetch the box, but his brothers went away leaving him there alone. Later on with the help of a big bird he returned home with the box. All his brothers also returned home and the people of the city gathered to see what the princes had brought from their journey. But, the other princes could not show anything. Betu-Kuwor showed all the things the king wanted for along with the beautiful girl. The king was very pleased with him and made him the king-in-charge.

The story of *Pet-Bhatou* is all about the duty of a friend for his friend.

### ***Pet-Bhatour Kotha (The Story of Pet-Bhatou)***

Once, there was a king in a certain region and he had a trustworthy minister and each of them was blessed with a son. The prince and the minister's son were bosom friends. When they grew up they decided to make a trip in other places of the world. So, they set out one day without telling their parents for fear of the obstacles by their parents.

Travelling a long distance they reached a certain king's region and decided to be the guest of the king. The king's men hosted them very well. With great satisfaction for the good food and hospitality the prince automatically sang a song. All the people heard the song and felt good at it but, the princess was so impressed that she had fallen in love without meeting and decided to marry the man of that melodious voice. She expressed her feelings to her parents and told about her decision. The king first did not agree with her but, finally he agreed. Next morning the king sent a maiden to the guests asking for the person of the night's voice. For fear of any trouble to the prince by the king, the minister's son went with the maiden to the king. But there he had to marry the princess without knowing anything.

When the prince woke up in the morning he searched for his friend but could not find him. Then he wandered hither and thither and finally took shelter in a merchant's house as a slave. But for his incapability of doing household works the merchant sent him to the prison of the king. At that night, in the prison the prince again sang in utmost grief. The princess now heard the voice and asked her husband, the minister's son, the truth about the voice. He then told her

everything and came to know about the misunderstanding. He then promised the princess to bring her love to her.

Next morning, the minister's son went to the prison to see his friend the prince. When he saw him he recognized him. He then went to the king in want of a slave from the prison and the king also granted his appeal. The minister's son succeeded to bring his friend to the princess. The prince told them everything that happened to him in the house of the merchant. The friend of the prince then decided to take revenge on the merchant and went to the merchant's place seeking job. He took the name *Pet-Bhatou*. The merchant appointed him and soon *Pet-Bhatou* became the man of trust for the merchant. *Pet-Bhatou* even had to teach cooking to the wife of the merchant. First he won the trust of the merchant then destroyed him very badly even by killing the merchant's son. He took his revenge. But the merchant was ignorant to all these and he sent forth *Pet-Bhatou* from his house for good. *Pet-Bhatou* went to the king against the merchant and the king summoned the merchant for trial. In trial the merchant was found guilty and he was punished by the king. Then the three, the prince, the princess and the minister's son went to the king and told him everything that happened to them and the king was pleased and sent them to their kingdom with a beautiful dowry with his daughter.

The tale *Shiyal Pagala* is a story of a son who re-established his father's kingdom after scores of hardships. It is not only about the duty of a son rather the tale also focuses on the duty of a prince or a future king.

### ***Shiyal Pagala (The Mad Man Shiyal)***

There was a king named *Vikramaditya*. His son married king *Bhoj*'s daughter. When king *Vikramaditya* was in his last days, he started to live in the bank of the Ganges because, his death was fixed near this pious river. His son and daughter-in-law were with him in his last days. One day, he wished to smoke with his gold smoking instrument, so the prince went to bring it from the palace. In the mean time, his last moments seemed to be very close and he called his son nearer, but the prince had not come from the palace and the daughter-in-law went near him and replied. The king thought her of his son and told about his secret treasure he stored for the time of his son's hardship and breathed his last. When the prince returned, his father was dead. The prince asked his wife about his father's last words but she answered him negative. Soon, the days of hardship started in the lives of the prince and his family. They started living by begging but the princess did not disclose about the secret treasure. In the meantime, the king *Bhoj* organized a feast in his city and called his daughter on to cook for the feast. At that time her husband the prince was not in home, so she told her mother-in-law to send him to the feast. In the evening, for his mother's request the prince went to the feast. But, there, his wife insulted him by not providing food to him. When he exclaimed of it, the princess became angry and refused to serve food to the guest until the king punished the man. King *Bhoj* could not be able to recognize the prince and ordered his men to kill him. But the minister of *Bhoj* realized this injustice, and however, managed to save the prince. King's men leave him behind the fence near the house of a *Haree* (sweeper). After the feast the daughter of *Bhoj* came to meet the *Haree* with food from feast because, she had good feelings for him. She told him about

the killing of the prince and also about the secret treasure of king *Vikramaditya*. Then they planned to achieve the treasure. The prince heard all these from behind the fence and he went and achieved the treasure, his father left for him.

For fear of his wife, from then the prince put on a jackal's leather to hide himself and started wandering to and fro and he became famous as *Shiyal Pagala*. Eventually, he was fortunate enough to marry a princess of another kingdom, even though he had no any eligibility to marry a princess. One day, a maiden saw his real look while he was taking bath and she immediately informed her mistress the princess. When the princess saw his reality she burnt the jackal's leather and he became a charming prince. When the king came to know that his son-in-law was the son of king *Vikramaditya* he became very happy. After that the prince returned to his own kingdom and established his father's kingdom again and punished his ex-wife for her wickedness and appointed the ministers of king *Bhoj* in his kingdom as for their kindness only he got his life.

The prince accepted a lot of adversities to perform the duty of a son and of a prince as well. But the princess did not do her duty and she was finally punished for that. But, the minister of the king *Bhoj* stood against the injustice and saved the life of the prince. For this bold step the minister was rewarded.

### ***Rajar Lora Aru Shiyal (The Prince and the Fox)***

A prince set out on his horse to visit different places. After travelling several places, in one evening he met a fox in a jungle path. The fox was sitting on the path without giving room to pass by. When the prince ordered him to give him

way, it ignored and told him to pass by as he could. The prince passed by the fox riding on his horse and showed temper on it. The fox also challenged him for his temper. As it was already the evening time, the prince was in search of a shelter for his night stay. He entered a nearby house seeking shelter for the night after tying up his horse under the domestic oil production shade. The host of the house agreed to give him shelter, but the prince did not tell about his horse. Next morning, the host of the house cried that the shade had given birth to a horse. Then the prince told him that it was his horse but the host did not believe it and led the prince to his king for trial. The king asked the host and the prince for the witness of their sides. The host produced his witnesses but the prince could not. Then, the king asked him if there were anybody who had seen him with his horse. The prince then was reminded of the fox and he decided to go to it.

When the fox saw the prince, again it showed its attitude to the prince but the prince told it about his problem and requested it to be his witness. The fox sincerely agreed to be his witness and promised to go to the king in time. Next day, the king and the other persons were waiting for the fox and it entered the court late with a body covered with ashes. When the king asked it about its appearance and the late entry, it replied that the sea was burning and he was busy in putting out the fire. The king was surprised at his reply and said that burning of sea is an impossible incident. Then the fox said that if a shade can give birth to a horse then the sea also can be burnt. The king then realized his fault and gave the horse to the prince and the fox and the prince became very good friends.

In the above tale, the fox helped the prince with his wit and saved his life in return of nothing. In folktales Fox is usually portrayed as a character that is cunning and full of wit. In this tale the character of fox is presented as a selfless character with full of wit. Here the fox's help is selfless and it represents humanity and kindness through the character of a fox. Here, through the character of the fox, the tale promotes the duty of an individual as a member of a society.

Story of *Numal and Sonpahi* also conveys the message individual's mysticism, that no earthly force can influence individual's fate.

### ***Numal Aru Sonpahi (Numal and Sonpahi)***

Once in a village there was a couple Rodai and Dabohi and they led a contented life with their six sons and daughters-in law. The younger son of them was Numal and he was very much beloved to his parents. So, he was brought up like a prince. At the proper age parents brought a daughter-in law for Numal also and her name was Sonpahi. She was also very much active lady and the dear one to her parents-in-law.

One day Rodai arranged a feast for his grand family with various delicious food items. After having it he sat with his sons and daughters-in-law and asked them the reason of the feast. But, they knew nothing about the reason behind the feast. Then, Rodai said to them that he would ask something to them and they had to give the proper answer. He asked his boys to whom they were indebted for their comfortable living. All his elder five sons and daughters-in-law except the younger couple said that they were indebted to him for all their luxurious life. But, the younger couple Numal and Sonpahi replied that no one should be indebted to anyone else as every person earns his or her own destiny. Hearing

the answer the old man declared them ungrateful and expelled them from his house.

They went out from their house. After covering a long distance, they reached a pipal tree near the river and decided to sit there for a while. Numal slept there and Sonpahi went to the river to wash her feet. There she saw some footprints and following them she reached a house near the forest. There she met an old couple and told her story to them. Then, they requested her to live with them as their own children. Sonpahi then returned to her husband and told him about the old couple. They decided to live with the old couple and went to them.

Time passed away, Sonpahi felt exhausted for living without any work. So she requested the old man to give her a loom to weave cloths as she was an expert in weaving. The old man happily managed a loom for her and she had woven a fine silk cloth. One day, she gave the silk cloth to her husband and told him to go with the merchants to sell it to the king. Numal did according to her and set out to the king's place with one of the merchants passed through the river near their house.

It was not easy to meet the king but however, he managed to meet the king and showed him the silk cloth. The king liked it and bought it for proper price. When the king asked about the weaver he simply said that he had got it as a share of his father's property. The prince was there when Numal showed the cloth to the king. He thought of the weaver of the cloth that she must be a woman of great excellence. The prince called the merchant in private and asked about the weaver of the silk cloth. The merchant told him that the weaver was Numal's wife. Then, the prince ordered the merchant to bring the woman to

him. The merchant asked the prince to bring the ring from Numal which was given by Sonpahi at the time of his journey. The prince however, got the ring from Numal and gave it to the merchant. The merchant took the ring and set out to bring Sonpahi to the prince. The merchant, when showed the ring to Sonpahi she got ready to come with the merchant thinking that her husband might be in danger.

After a series of adventure, Sonpahi and Numal reunited and however, the young couple became the king and queen of the region where their parents and brothers lived. But, their family had to face the misfortune after the young couple had left the house. At the end the old man and his sons when came to the queen Sonpahi for begging she recognized them. Finally, the king and queen Numal and Sonpahi brought the whole family to the palace and started living together. The old man then declared that his youngest son and daughter-in-law were correct that every man earns his or her own destiny.

This story tells that an individual can earn his or her own destiny with the dedication for their own duties and obligations. In this tale, Numal and Sonpahi had no objections for their parents' ill treatment for their frankness. Instead, they had faith on their own obligations. They did their own duties sincerely and for that they achieved the best in their life. They even carried out the duties for their parents and family though the family expelled them from home some time ago.

The next tale is about escaping from one's own duty.

### ***Son-Borish Raja (The Gold-Showering King)***

Once, there lived a rich old man and his sons. All his elder sons were got married and he finally brought a woman of good qualities as his daughter-in-law for his youngest son.

She definitely was a woman of good qualities having the characteristics of *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth. As she entered the house of the old man the household was blessed with prosperity and all the ills had gone far. The Brahmin priest of the old man got troubled for it, as he earned his living by performing various rituals to drive out the problems of the old man's family and of others also. So, he wants troubles in the family of the old man so that he can earn by performing maximum rituals to fight off evil. But for the youngest daughter-in-law, the family was free from all ills and bad omens. So, the priest gradually was deprived and he decided to go to the *Ganak*<sup>24</sup> to know about his misfortune. The *Ganak* told the priest that the reason of the prosperity of the family was the youngest daughter-in-law having the quality of the goddess of wealth. The priest then thought that if it would go on this way he would loss his way of living. So, he asked the *Ganak* a way to get rid of his problem. The *Ganak* then said him that to solve his problem he had to expel the youngest daughter-in-law from the old man's family. After discussion, both the person made some tricks to expel the woman and did accordingly but, they did not succeed. When the priest wanted to know about their failure, the *Ganak* by his calculation told him that he would be able to succeed if he could kill the woman. The priest thought a lot and finally, he got an idea. He went to the old

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<sup>24</sup> Astrologer.

man and told that last night he dreamt of a very frightening nightmare. He said that in his sleep a divine man came to him and told him that the youngest daughter-in-law was a misfortune for the family and the family would suffer soon for the existence of such an evil person. He also told the old man that the family would be able to get rid of her if she is killed soon. Thinking of the welfare of the family, the old man decided to kill his youngest daughter-in-law and after a secret discussion the misguided family gave the charge of killing the woman in the hand of her husband.

At that night, when the husband attempted to kill the woman first, their bedroom prevented him and then the lighting lamp. Suddenly, she woke up and saw her husband ready to kill her and with great surprise she asked him the reason of his attempt to kill her. When he told that their priest told them to kill her then she said her husband about the priest's trickery and they decided to leave their house that night. The woman only took a rope and fishing net with her.

The woman was pregnant at that time. Travelling a long distance they entered a deep forest and the woman gave birth to a baby boy there. The woman then asked her husband for some water to drink and he went in search of that. When he reached a lake he saw a bird with three beaks asking him a question, "I have three beaks, and how I make my life?" The man then thought about the difficulties of living with the new born and to escape from these he went away leaving his wife and son in the jungle. He went to a far place and there he started living in a house as a servant.

The awaiting woman, on the other hand, when realized that it was too late to come her husband followed the way her husband went in search of water and reached the lake. She saw the bird asking the same question as to her husband. She then came to know what happened to her husband. There she relaxed herself and caught the bird with the help of the fishing net and set out for a shelter. She reached a house of a king's *Malini*<sup>25</sup> and the woman of the house let her live in her house. One day, the woman told the *Malini* that she wanted to earn her living and she went out giving her baby to the *Malini*. Suddenly, the *Malini* noticed that the boy tried to eat mud and when he split it out it turned into gold. Seeing this incident, the *Malini* decided to get the boy from the mother. When, the woman returned home the *Malini* claimed the boy as her own. The problem was so tough to solve that they went to the king for trial. In the court, fortunately the woman got her baby and she started living in another house. One day, the king of that region died childless and the ministers searched for a boy having king's quality. They found the woman's son and made him the king and named him Son-Borish.

One day, the king Son-Borish asked his mother about his father. His mother told him the story till the three beaked birds. She asked him to dig a big pond by engaging all the people of his region. She placed the bird in the place of the digging place and ordered a man that whoever he would see crying near the bird he must led the man to her. Her husband also came to dig the king's pond and seeing the bird he started mourning. Then, he was led to the woman and thus, she met her husband. And they started living happily. The king searched for his

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<sup>25</sup> Garland maker.

father's family but all of them died except one of his father's brothers. The king kept his uncle with him and punished the Brahmin priest and the *Ganak*.

The father of the king Son-Borish escaped himself from his duty as a husband and as father also, as a result of this he had lost everything in his life. But, the mother of Son-Borish did not surrender herself before the misfortune, indeed she struggled to live and to bring her son up. For her devotion to duty as a mother and as a wife she comes up as a morally strong character.

The following tale, taken for analysis is from the collection *Junuka*.

#### ***Tokora Carai aru Cital Mach (The Tokora Bird and the Cital Fish)***

In the remote past, the birds and the fishes did not know the skill of nesting. So, understanding their disgrace, the elders arranged a meeting for seeking the solution of the problem. In the meeting it was decided that two of them should have to go to the God. These two representatives were sent to God for asking the skill of nesting, so that their kin can live the comfortable life. The birds sent the *Tokora* and the fishes sent the *Cital* to the God. They walked and walked a long distance and finally reached the God. God then asked the reason of their approach to him. Both of them knelt down before him and asked about the skills of making nests so that they could live a life of safety and comfort. God also taught them the skills. On the way back *Tokora* said *Cital*, "Brother *Cital*, I have an opinion in mind. What about you?" *Cital* replied, "I too have one. At first, I want to hear of you, and then I shall reveal my own." *Tokora* said, "Brother, we have learnt the skill of making nest after so much of difficulties. Why should we teach it to others? Who is our so dear that we share our

earnings? That bastard crow, whenever he gets chance, he harasses me. I decide that I won't teach the skill to others. What do you think?" Hearing this from *Tokora*, *Cital* jumped in excitement and said, "Honestly speaking, brother *Tokora*, I also want to tell you the same. Don't teach anyone and I too won't. We shall tell them that we even could not meet God at first. After waiting a lot we met Him but He threw us out from his premise." Finally, they decided not to share their knowledge to anyone.

After they reached home, the birds and the fishes asked the *Tokora* and the *Cital*, "What have you learnt about the nesting skill?" Both shed tears and replied, "Oh brother, don't ask anything of our distress. At first we even could not meet the God. Three days we spent in front the gate. The guards also insulted us. When we met God after three days, we spoke out about our sufferings; but he sent us out rebuking from his premise."

The rabble became sad hearing both *Tokora* and *Cital*. As time passed by, they saw that *Tokora* had made a fine nest up above the areca nut tree and the *Cital* made its nest deep under the water and started living a comfortable life with their families. The other birds and fishes noticed and understood that the *Tokora* and the *Cital* had betrayed them. They became very angry. The birds dragged out the *Tokora* holding its hair and beat him badly with fists and kicked and said, "We won't kill you, but we won't let to go such a betrayer like you without any punishment. So, we all will kick on your face one by one." Saying this all the birds kicked the *Tokora's* face one by one. Being beaten so badly, *Tokora's* hair felt down from his head. So, from that incident onwards there is

no hair on *Tokora's* head. The fishes also treated *Cital* in the same way. As all the fishes kicked the *Cital*, so the head and the body of *Cital* became flat.

Both the *Cital* and the *Tokora* were sent to the god to learn the skill of making nest for the entire race of fish and bird but they selfishly cheated their respective communities. The duty, they were provided by their entire race was very honest but their selfish nature came on the way of their duty and finally they were punished for that.

From the above discussion and analysis of the folktales, it can be summarized that duty is the very base of morality. On the way to one's duty all the activities are considered as right and just. Dedication and obligation to duty always leads to the path of goodness and prosperity and it is the straight way to morality.

### ***Principle of Men's Spirituality***

This principle leads to the moral values through spirituality. Spirituality in this context is all about the liberation from the materialistic life rather than belief on and practice of a specific religion. Living a life of love and compassion, without any material ego should be the aim of life. This liberation from the material life inspires individuals to inculcate moral values. Following tales are some good examples showing individual's spirituality through both human and animal characters. And these tales signify how this spirituality of human mind leads to some moral actions. The tale of the Raven and the warbler discussed below is a good instance of this type.

### ***Dhora Kauri Aru Tipoci Carai (The Raven and the Warbler)***

(The verse portion of the tale is copied by the researcher from "Grandma's Tales" that is the English translation of *Burhi Air Sadhu* translated by Deepika Phukan.)

A Raven and a Warbler became friends. One day, as they set cozily on a branch, they saw an old woman was spreading out boiled paddy to dry in her courtyard. Seeing this, the raven said to the warbler that they must pick up some that paddy, but along with this the raven also put a condition that whoever would pick small amount of paddy in his beak must be the food of the other. Hearing that, the Warbler could realize that the Raven was planning a conspiracy against him. But, he took the challenge. As expected, the quantity of paddy carried in the beak of the Raven is large than that of the Warbler. As per agreement now the raven could eat the Warbler. Then the warbler also put a request that as the Raven used to eat corpses, he must need to wash his beak before eating the Warbler. The Raven also agreed at his request. To wash his beak the Raven then went to the ocean and called out, "Brother Ocean, listen to me."

The ocean asked, "What is it?"

The Raven Said,

"To wash my beak

Your water I need.

So that the Warbler

I can eat."

In reply the ocean asked him for a pot to give him water. Then the raven went to a potter in want of a pot and called out, "Are you at home, Brother Potter?"

The potter asked, "Yes, I'm home. What can I do for you?"

The Raven then said,

"Give me a pot, the water to keep.

To wash my beak,

So, the warbler I can eat.”

The potter then replied that he could get a pot if he only he could bring some clay to make a pot from it.

Hearing this the Raven went to a clay mound and said’

“Pray, give me your clay for the potter,

To make for me a pot,

For the water to keep,

To wash my beak,

So, the warbler I can eat.”

The clay mound replied that it could give some clay if only the Raven could bring something to dig some clay. The Raven then went to a buffalo asking its horn for digging clay.

“Give me a horn to dig for clay,

To give to the potter,

To make for me a pot,

The water to keep,

To wash my beak,

So, the Warbler I can eat.”

The buffalo replied that it could not give its own horn. But if the Raven can get it somehow then, he would give its horn. After that the Raven went to the dog to request,

“Kill the buffalo, to get me his horn,  
To dig for clay, to give to the potter,  
To make for me a pot, the water to keep,  
To wash my beak,  
So, the Warbler I can eat.”

The dog then whispered that he had no strength and if the Raven would give him some milk to eat then he could kill the buffalo. Then the Raven flew to the cow and made the request,

“Give me milk to strengthen the dog,  
The buffalo to kill for his horn.  
To dig for clay, to give to the potter,  
To make for me a pot, the water to keep,  
To wash my beak,  
So, the Warbler I can eat.”

The cow then said that she was getting old and she was hungry for a long time. If the raven could give her some grass then she would give him milk. The raven then approached to the grass and asked for some of it.

“Give me grass, the cow to feed,

For enough milk the dog may need.

The buffalo to kill, for his horn.

To dig for clay, to give to the potter,

To make for me a pot, the water to keep,

To wash my beak,

So, the Warbler I can eat.”

But the grass also had a problem that it could not cut itself. Then the Raven went to a blacksmith in need of a sharp thing. But the blacksmith lamented that his fire had died and if he got some fire he could make the thing the Raven need. Then the raven noticed a glance of smoke beyond the ocean. He crossed the ocean and came to the smoke. There an old woman was boiling the paddy on an open fire. The Raven asked the woman some embers. The old woman asked, “In what will I give you the embers?”

The Raven replied, “Tie the ember up in my wings.” The old Woman did accordingly. As the Raven carried the embers across the ocean, the wind fanned the embers into a fire. The raven’s wings got burnt and he fell into the ocean.

The condition that they fixed was all in favor of the Raven. Yet the warbler agreed on it. Later, when the Raven came to eat the warbler, the warbler only asked it to wash its beak first. Here, the warbler signifies that kind of individuals that are without any mundane desires. Even, it had no aspiration for its own life and so it would not dump the friendship with the harmful Raven. On the other hand, the Raven was

quite a selfish and greedy one. It was such a greedy one that it even wanted to eat its best friend the Warbler. Greed is the only reason of the Raven's downfall.

### ***Ow Kuwori (The *Ow*<sup>26</sup> Princess)***

There was a king and he had two wives. Both the queens were pregnant at the same time and delivered off on the same day. The elder queen gave birth to a boy and the younger unfortunately, gave birth to an *Ow*. She was very upset and threw the *Ow* away; but the *Ow* used to roll on to the queen's side whenever she was at work or on bed. However, the queen always threw it off.

Time passed on, one day, when there was nobody around, the *Ow* went to the riverside and at that time a prince was angling for fish in a corner of the river bank. The prince surprisingly saw that beautiful and stunning maiden emerged from the fruit, bathed in the river and again went back into the fruit. Then it again rolled away. The prince went home and entered the *Roh Ghar*<sup>27</sup>. Finding him unhappy his parents asked him what had happened. The prince told them that he wished to marry the *Ow* princess whom he met on the river bank. His parents at first tried to discourage him but finally they agreed and started negotiation with the parents of the princess. But finally, the marriage of the prince and the *Ow* was solemnized. The prince, from then, used to keep the *Ow* with him, but certainly unhappy for not finding the beautiful princess he had seen earlier. Every night the prince used to keep a part of dinner for his wife, eat his own portion and go to sleep. In the morning he was surprised to see that his wife's portion vanished. One day, when he was sitting in grief, a beggar woman

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<sup>26</sup> Elephant Apple, a kind of local fruit found in Assam

<sup>27</sup> A room in which a person enters to declare about any displeasure and to give pressure for a demand.

come to him and advised the prince how he could get his princess from within the *Ow*. She advised him to keep two things ready at night, a small fire by paddy husk and a paste made of *Athiya kal*<sup>28</sup> and curd. After this preparation he was to pretend to sleep and wait till the princess emerged from the *Ow*. When the princess came out from the fruit, he immediately burnt the *Ow* in the fire. Then the princess fainted down immediately and he nursed her by using the cool paste on the forehead of the princess. The prince did all these accordingly and got united with his beautiful wife the *Ow* princess. The parents of the couple were happy and arranged a fabulous wedding for the couple.

In the above tale the parents of the prince agreed the marriage of their son with the *Ow* without any expectation from the daughter in law. Here, their love and responsibility for their son is above all material ego. There is another tale above, which is the *Bhekulir Sadhu*, where the defeated king surrendered himself before the frog and handed over half of his kingdom and his daughter also. In this tale the surrender signifies the king's submission of his material ego. In the father's friend's tale, the old man through his advice taught his friend's son to live a life of love and obligation by submitting all mundane desires.

The tale of *Kanchani* is a most tragic one.

### ***Kanchani***

Many years ago, a couple had seven sons. The old man passed by very early and the old woman also died after got six of their sons married. After their mother's death, the seven sons and their six wives lived together as an extended family.

Among all the seven brothers, the youngest was very handsome and well-

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<sup>28</sup> A kind of banana.

mannered. So, his elder brothers entrusted him for looking after their property instead of their wives. Without the permission of the brother-in-law, they could not give anything to anyone. But they could not do anything for fear of their husbands. This enraged his sister-in-laws.

One day, a beggar woman came to their home to beg for some rice. They could not give anything to her as their brother-in-law was not at home. The beggar woman was surprised knowing their situation. She insulted them for their hard luck. She then gave them an idea to get rid of their problem. She gave them a spelled thorn and advised them to stick it at the back of the ear of their brother-in-law. Then, he would turn into a dog and they could get rid of his custody and saying that, the beggar woman went away. The sister-in-laws did according to the advice of that beggar and as a result the brother-in-law turned into a dog. He sorrowfully left home. His brothers tried hard to trace but failed and sorrowfully accepted their destiny.

Having turned into a dog, the youngest brother roamed around place to place and finally, he went to a house far away from his own where there were only a couple lived without any children and relatives. He started to live there. In that household the couple used to earn by petty things. The woman of the house had a loom and the dog usually sat for rest under that loom after having his food of the couple's leftovers.

One day, the woman was working at her loom and suddenly her shuttle felt from her hand. Lazily she instructed the dog under her loom to bring the shuttle and if he would bring it, she promised to give marriage her daughter to him, if ever they had a daughter. The dog instantly picked the shuttle to her. She was

surprised at his behaviour. Fortunately, after that incident the woman was blessed with a daughter. They named her Kanchani. Time passed by and *Kanchani* grew up to a lovely little lady. The dog also became a permanent member of the family. When Kanchani got the marriageable age, the mother remembered about her promise to the dog. The father tried to ignore the matter but Kanchani's mother said him that perhaps Kanchani was born after so many years due to her word to the dog. So she decided to give marriage of Kanchani with the dog.

Kanchani's father was a very simple man and he agreed with his wife. Kanchani also obeying her parents got married to the dog. After the marriage both Kanchani and the dog used to live with the couple. Kanchani took great care of the dog. She used to feed and wash the dog. She tried to keep the dog very clean. One day, the dog was very dirty, playing on dust and dirt. So Kanchani took him to the river to give a good wash to him. In water, when Kanchani was scrubbing the body of the dog she touched something rough behind the ear of the dog. She found the thorn there and pulled the thorn out. Immediately, the dog turned into a handsome man. Kanchani was surprised and happy at the incident. Her husband then narrated the whole story to her.

She again put the thorn onto her husband's head and turned him to a dog again so that her parents and the neighbours would not blame her character. She returned home with her dog husband and in front of her mother she pulled the thorn out. The dog turned into a handsome young man and the mother was surprised and happy at this incident. The incident of changing a dog to a man was great news and it spread even to the king also. The king then called the man

and the man explained everything about his life to the king. The king was impressed and appointed him in charge of the royal stable.

Meanwhile, the words spread that the wife of the king's stable keeper was a very beautiful woman and she possessed many good qualities. The king also heard it and he thought that such a woman was worthy of being the king's property. He decided to make her the queen and ordered the stable keeper to handover his wife to the king. When he refused to follow it, the king ordered him to be punished by squeezing him to death. The death sentence was carried out in front of the royal palace. But Kanchani was unaware of this incident and she was busy with her loom. Suddenly, a crow gave her the news of her husband's execution by singing a song. Hearing the news, Kanchani dropped her weaving and dressed up in her best attire. She put on all her jewelry and putting the red vermillion on her forehead she ran through the paddy field to the place where the execution of her husband was taking place. She reached her husband and stuck her head to the press with her husband. At the same moment both their souls left their earthly bodies.

The king was shocked at this news and he ordered his men to cremate the bodies separately on the two banks of the river. He ordered that the body of Kanchani must be cremated with pious woods and objects and the body of her husband must be cremated with impure sticks and dry leaves. The king's order was followed strictly, but both the flames of the cremation fire from both sides of the river rose high and united there. The king and his men were surprised at this incident. The king then ordered to plant a pipal tree on the cremation ground of Kanchani and a banyan tree on her husband's. After a few years the branches of both the trees extended and united in the middle of the river.

Here Kanchani is presented as a dutiful and obedient daughter and an obedient wife. She was so obedient that she agreed to marry a dog without any question, because her parents had decided her marriage with a dog. After marriage she appeared as a completely docile and obedient wife whose devotion was entirely to the duty to her dog-husband. However, the attractive part of the tale is the liberation of the souls of the couple from this mundane world and their eternal reunion.

The tale of *Gangatop* or a glob fish is about the meaninglessness of individuals' monotonous ego.

### ***Gangatop* (The Proud Glob Fish)**

Once in an afternoon, in a wetland all the fishes assembled for a meeting. The discussion of the meeting was on the possibility of waging war against the fish-eating animals. All the fishes of the wetland the *rau*, *bahu*, *borali*, *saol*, *saal*, *kavoi*, *goroi* and even the tiny *Darikona* also came to the meeting. The bald-headed old *goroi* was made the president and the little *cengeli* was appointed the messenger. *Gangatop*, the glob fish appraised about the objective of the meeting before the gathering. In his long speech *Gangatop* described about their enemies, especially about the humans and their way of hunting fish and eating fish. He also describes that humans are inhuman only in case of the fishes; either they used to serve other animals such as the cows, goats, horses and buffaloes. He also said that the human kind is very foolish and hopeless so he had the confidence that the race of fish could easily defeat this kind of enemy. In his lecture he also informed that his aunt *Gedgedi* is much more informative on the topic of human behaviour.

After the speech of *Gangatop*, realizing the importance of *Gedgedi* in the meeting the president sent a tiny *Goroi* to invite *Gedgedi* to the meeting. The

insolent *Goroi* asked her, “*Gedgedi Bai, Gedgedi Bai!* Are you coming to the Meeting by and by?” hearing his form of address, the *Gedgedi* flew into a rage and answered that she would not go to the meeting. Then *Goroi* came back to the meeting and informed the *Gedgedi*’s reply. Then the *Gongatop* himself went to *Gedgedi*’s place to call her upon. Meanwhile the *Gedgedi*, though sent the *goroi* with a negative reply, now was ready to go to the meeting. Just then *Gongatop* arrived and called out her with immense respect. So, the *Gedgedi* was very much impressed and praised him whole the way to the meeting. The *Gongatop* had never before experienced so much praise. He swelled up with profound pride more and more. When he reached the meeting, suddenly there was heard a thunder like sound, it was his that burst like a water gun and the assembled gathering disappeared in utter surprise and fear.

Through the character of globefish, this story tells how the human ego and prejudices leads individuals to the ultimate downfall.

The very first story from *Kaka-deota Aru Nati Lora* is a priest’s tale and it is a very good example of an individual’s liberation from the material aspirations

### ***Kuruwa Carai Aru Bamunar Sadhu***

#### **(The story of the Fishing Eagle and the Priest)**

There lived a very simple minded priest and his wife. One day, the priest on his way home, saw a fishing eagle was sitting down in a reaped paddy field with a *rahu* fish for eating. He then rushed to the bird and drove it off to grab the fish. The bird flew giving him curse that he would have to feel the sorrow for deprivation of something, he actually needed. Thinking of the fish the bird died one day. The priest brought the fish home and ate it happily. After some days of this incident the priest couple was blessed with a handsome son.

The boy grew up and became incomparable in all sides. But, unfortunately he died one day in his tender age. The priest was so depressed that he began to pound the *dhenki*<sup>29</sup> always saying that he was pounding the heart of the god of death *Yama*. As the priest always did it, one night he had a dream. In his dream he was advised to sleep in his prayer room for three days locking the door from inside without any disturbance. This way he could meet his dead son. He told everything to his wife and then he decided to do according to the advice he got in dream.

Next morning, the priest went to the prayer hall and closed himself from inside. When he went to deep sleep, the *yamdoor*<sup>30</sup> came to him and took his soul to his king *Yama*. There, in the *Yamllok*<sup>31</sup> he shocked observing the punishment given to the souls for their misdeeds on the earth. *Yama* asked him to find out his son from amongst the young people standing in a group. The priests found his son and called him for several times, but he did not respond. Then he went to his son and introduced himself as his father; but the son replied him that he was not his son rather he was that hungry *Kuruwa* bird whom the priest deprived of the fish. The bird took birth as his son to take revenge upon him. As the priest hurt the bird by depriving it of his food, likewise the *Kuruwa* as his son, hurt him by abandoning him. The priest then realized his mistake. He came back from *Yamllok* in his sleep and told everything to his wife and from then gave up mourning on their son's death.

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<sup>29</sup> Traditional rice pounding device.

<sup>30</sup> Messenger of the god of death.

<sup>31</sup> Hell.

God of death *Yama* very practically taught the priest about the meaninglessness of earthly relationships and he also learnt that individuals' actions become their destiny. It signifies the value that 'do good and earn good'.

In the collection *Junuka*, there is a tale *Hati aru Sap* which is about an elephant and a snake, relating to the impact of false pride and prejudices.

### ***Hati aru Sap* (The Elephant and the Snake)**

A king had an elephant of great affection. The king loved the elephant so much that he even did not tie it up. So, the elephant used to move freely and did not do any harm to anyone. His only folly was his pride because of the king's love. One day he met a big snake on his way out. The snake thought that all the animals are afraid of snake so he thought that he had no need to go aside from the path of the elephant. The elephant thought that he was the elephant of the king and ignoring the snake as nobody, he put his foot on the snake. The snake then bites the elephant and as a result, both died immediately. Then a vulture came to the elephant's body and started to eat the meat by making a hole. After sometimes, the hole got dry and the vulture died within the belly of the elephant. A hunter also came and tried to pick the ivory. But he too died as the ivory accidentally pierced his belly.

A peasant observed all the incidents and he remarked that the elephant and the snake died because of too much proud and the vulture and the hunter died because of their greed.

This entire tale is about earthly desires and prejudices that lead individuals to their fatal end. This tale values about the liberation from the mundane and material attractions, so that individuals can gain morality or the ultimate good.

### ***Teliya- sareng and the Phechu***

After the betrayal of the *Tokora*, the birds decided that they should have a king for the smooth running of their kingdom. Otherwise, the birds would do anything they want and no one would listen and think of the others. So, the community of birds decided to make *Teliya- sareng* to be their king. They sent the crow to *Teliya- sareng*'s house to give him the news and to invite him to be their king. Hearing this news the *Teliya- sareng* started to behave like a king. However, for slow, arrogant and king-like preparation *Teliya- sareng* could not be able to present in the coronation in time. And *Phechu* took the advantage and became the king of birds; while *Teliya- sareng* yet not finished with his pompous kinglike preparations.

This tale tells how the sense of excessive self-importance leads individual towards his or her downfall. Lack of spirituality in human mind directs people on the way to wrongness. In this tale, the character of *Teliya- sareng* is the good example of the extreme self conscious individual, whose downfall is sure for their mundane ego without any spiritual insight.

These earthly material ego, prejudices and greed, that represents the lack of spirituality, are observed in the co-wife and step-mother type tales. The tales of *Tejimola*, *Tula aru Teja*, *Campawati*, *Mekuri Jiyekar Sadhu* are some examples of the tales having this greed and ego. Without spirituality these shortcomings in human character lead to the downfall.

### ***Happiness as a Base of Moral Value***

According to the Principle of Happiness, individual's aim of life should be to be Happy in total. Happiness is the base of morality and this happiness is viewed in a

broader humanitarian outlook by the Utilitarians. Here individuals' soul concern of their life should be maximization of pleasure and the moral quality of the individuals' action is judged by the production of happiness. It is claimed that morally good actions produce greatest happiness for greatest number of people or for everyone. According to this theory, moral actions are those actions that produce ultimate pleasure and decrease the pain. The discussion on this area is left for the last as this principle of happiness is the heart of all folktales and it is observed that almost all the folktales and fairy tales end up with a sentence "...and they lived happily ever after." According to the Utilitarians it signifies that all the folktales must have some moral values as almost all the folktales somehow deal with happiness, it may be the happiness shared in the storyline of folktales or the happiness achieved by the listeners overall.

There are three Cinderella type tales in *Burhi Air Sadhu* that are *Tejimola*, *Tularu Teja* and *Campawati* and all these three have almost the same motifs such as jealousy of co-wives, torture by step-mother, conspiracy, murder and other immoral actions. But still there is happiness at least at the end of these tales.

### ***Tejimola***

Once upon a time there lived a merchant with his two wives. The elder wife had a daughter but the younger was childless. Tejimola was brought up by her step mother as her mother was died in her infancy. She was very dear to her father. The step mother however did not like her but had to take care of the girl only because her fear for her husband. When Tejimola was ten or eleven years old, her father got her to befriend a girl of her age from a family of reputed background.

Once, the merchant had to go for a business trip for six-seven months and he instructed his wife to take care of Tejimola in his absence. But, the step mother got an opportunity to get rid of this girl. She thought if Tejimola lived, her father would wed her off with an affluent dowry, but if she died the step mother could send the valuable objects to her mother's place. Keeping these thoughts in mind, the step mother began to torture Tejimola from the very day her father left for the business trip.

Meanwhile, the marriage of Tejimola's friend was ahead and she was invited to be with the bride for a few days before the wedding. Tejimola asked for permission to her step mother. This was the opportunity, the step mother was looking for. She gave Tejimola the permission and this time she made a big show of her love towards Tejimola in front of the neighbor and the relatives. But behind this she had a plan. She gave Tejimola her fine clothing but hid a mouse and an ember in the dress. She told Tejimola not to spoil the dress by wearing it while travelling but to change it only when she got nearer to her friend's house. Following her step mother's instruction Tejimola opened the packet of dress when she reached quite near to her friend's house but she was shocked observing the dress shredded to bits by the mouse and also burnt by the ember. She got frightened thinking of her step mother's anger at this incident. Somehow, she attended the marriage ceremony by borrowing a dress.

After attending the wedding when she reached home with the borrowed dress, her step mother asked about the dress. Tejimola told her everything what happened to the dress, then the step mother scolded and beat Tejimola very cruelly for spoiling the dress. She dragged her to the pounding machine and

commanded her to sit near the pestle attached to the paddle to stir the paddy. Then the step mother started working heavily on the paddle and pounded upon and broke Tejimola's hands, feet and finally the head and killed her. To hide her crime, the step mother buried the dead body bellow the eaves of the pound shed. Very soon, a gourd creeper grew at the place where Tejimola was buried and the plant soon laden with healthy gourds. At that time, when the neighbours enquired about Tejimola, the woman just said that she had not yet returned from her friend's wedding. One day, a beggar woman saw a large number of gourds hanging from the pound shed and she asked Tejimola's step mother for a gourd. Then the woman said that she did not have gourd, but when the beggar told about the gourd creeper on the pound shed she allowed her to pluck some from there. As the beggar stretched her hands towards the gourd, the creeper started singing requesting her not to pluck any gourd and declared that the creeper was Tejimola, killed by her step mother. The beggar then rushed with fear to the step mother and told about the singing creeper. The woman however realized the matter and immediately cut up the creeper and threw it off to the backyard. Again Tejimola grew as a kind of citrus plant called *Jora Tenga* and in time it was laden with fruits. One day, some cowherd boys, came to the woman and asked for some fruits and she answered that she knew nothing about the plant. Then the boys told her about the plant in the backyard and she allowed them to pluck some of the fruits. But, when the boys approached the plant, it sang out not to pluck any fruit and declaring the fact that it was Tejimola who was killed by her step mother. The frightened cowherds ran away telling about the singing citrus plant. Again the woman cut the citrus plant and threw it into the river so

that could not grow again. But it became a lotus plant producing a lot of lotus flower.

After some days, Tejimola's father was returning home in his boat through the river where Tejimola was blooming in the form of lotus flower. He asked the boat man to pick some flowers up for his beloved daughter Tejimola, but as the boat man stretched his hands towards the flower it began to sing and forbade him to pluck the flower and declared that the flower actually was Tejimola who was killed by her sep mother for a mere pair of dress. To examine the fact the merchant took some chewed areca nut in one hand and a sweet *laddu* in the other and told the lotus flower that if it was his Tejimola then it would transform into a *Salika*<sup>32</sup> and eat the chewed areca nut. And if however, the plant was not Tejimola, and then the bird would eat the *laddu*. Then the lotus transformed into a *Salika* and ate the chewed areca nut from the merchant's hand. He came to know everything and he took the bird into a cage to his home. Reaching home when he asked his wife about Tejimola, she told that she had gone to her maternal uncle's house. But on being repeatedly questioned by the merchant, she told him the truth. The merchant then threw his *gamoca*<sup>33</sup> to the *Salika* and asked her to come to the human form. The bird immediately transformed into Tejimola again and the merchant drove the cruel step mother away from home.

Though the step mother tortured Tejimola and murdered her without her guilt, yet Tejimola's rebirth is a cause of happiness; and finally when the step-mother was

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<sup>32</sup> A kind of local bird found in Assam.

<sup>33</sup> A traditional piece of cloth used to honour people and also to wipe body according to the need of circumstances.

punished for all her unpleasant actions is quite a pleasant feeling for the audience of the story.

### ***Tula Aru Teja (Tula and Teja)***

Once there lived a farmer and his two wives. The elder was not lovable to him but the younger was the beloved and favourite for her husband. From the elder wife he had a daughter and a son named Teja and Kanai respectively. The younger had only a daughter named Tula. The younger wife of the farmer treated shabbily her co-wife and her children even in front of the farmer. As the farmer was a henpecked husband, he could not take care of his elder wife and her children for fear of the younger wife. Teja and Kanai had to go out to graze their cattle in the field every morning. They had to have their breakfast with the previous day's leftover rice. On the other hand Tula stayed at home having good food and cloth and enjoyed all luxury.

The younger wife always served her husband hot and delicious food when he came from the field after tilling soil. But, he liked the food served by his elder wife, the previous day's rice soaked in water with roasted and smoked fish. He liked this type of rice after the summer day's work; as it was cooling to the stomach. So, he used to go to the elder wife frequently and this made the younger wife very jealous. She planned to remove the co-wife away from her husband. One day she invited the elder one for fishing with *Jakoi*<sup>34</sup>. In the fishing spot, the younger wife could catch only some useless creatures; on the other hand the elder wife's *jakoi* was filled with various types of fishes. This made the younger wife very angry. After fishing, they went to a near pond to

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<sup>34</sup> One kind of fishing device.

take bath. The younger wife pretended to scrub the back of the elder wife and pushed her into the pond saying “Be a big tortoise!” She returned home alone, but the husband made an enquiry and the children cried for the loss of their mother.

One day, when Teja and Kanai felt thirsty in the grazing field, they went to the pond and there they met their mother, the big tortoise. She told them all the misfortune that had befallen on her. Then, she gave them some delicious food, brought from the *Jalkuwari*<sup>35</sup> on the arum leaves. She also asked them to keep her gift of food secret. From that day, she used to supply them this delicious food every day. For the effect of the food the health of the children got improved even though their step mother gave them only stale and the unhealthy food. Observing that, their step mother sent her daughter Tula with them to the grazing field to find out if they ate anything out from the house. Though, they tried to conceal the secret of eating from their tortoise mother; but, Tula caught the sight of eating something by them. She also tested the leftovers from the arum leaves.

At home Tula’s mother asked whether she noticed anything in the grazing field: but she did not say anything as she promised to Teja and Kanai. When she asked again and again, and frightened her then she let her know that she licked the food waste from the arum leaves. The woman then came to know everything that the tortoise used to give food to her children. She planned to kill the tortoise and pretended as if she was very ill. When the husband discussed about his wife’s illness, the woman, as planned earlier told that the illness would be cured

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<sup>35</sup> River spirit, female

by eating the big tortoise of the large pond near the grazing field. The farmer requested the villager to catch the big tortoise. But, after greater effort they all failed to catch her. Then Teja and Kanai caught her even with a broken *Jakoi*, as their mother taught them the trick to catch her. It was because the tortoise did not want to be captured by others. She also instructed them not to eat the flesh of the tortoise but to bury the limbs near the big pond. Both the children did according to their mother's instruction.

Later on at that place, where they buried the limbs of the tortoise, there grew a *Jora* tree and a Hibiscus tree and soon these trees were full of fruits and flowers. One day, a king was passing by there and saw the flowers and fruits. He sent his minister to bring some fruits and flowers. But the children stopped him and said that if the king wanted the fruits and flowers he himself had to come for it. When the king came, Kanai said that he would give him the flowers and fruits only if the king would be ready to marry his sister Teja. Then the king promised to marry that girl after she grew up to a young woman. After the promise, they gave the king the fruits and the flowers and they also gave him a *mynah* and a pomegranate plant. Kanai told the king that when the *mynah* started to talk and the plant started to produce fruits, then Teja would become a young lady eligible for marriage.

Time passed by. The *mynah* started talking and the pomegranate started producing fruits, but the king forgot about the deal. One day, he was resting in his palace, then the *mynah* remembered him about the deal by singing a rhyme repeatedly that Teja was becoming a young woman and he forgot to marry her. Then the king remembered everything and went immediately to marry Teja. The

king told nothing to the queen but the queen's maid disclosed about the king's outing and she also advised the queen to interrupt the king's plan and started planning to get rid of the co-wife. Teja was given no dowry; but as she left home with the king, all the valuable goods of her father's house started to follow her while she moved out without looking back. Her father begged her to look back so that at least some of his wealth might remain for him. Teja then looked back a glance and one fourth of the wealth remains back for her father's family. In the king's place the queen tried to stop her to enter to the palace by trying to prove her an evil omen. But the king ignored all and she started staying in the palace as a queen.

The step mother of Teja was very jealous at her good luck and tried to harm her any way. One day, she came to the palace to meet the king and requested the king to send Teja with her for a few days. The king agreed seeing her motherly care for the step daughter and sent Teja home with her step mother. But actually, she looked for a chance to harm her. One day, the mother instigated Tula to request Teja to let her wear the royal ornaments for some time. Innocent Teja saw nothing wrong in that and gave her ornaments to Tula to wear. In the meantime Teja's step mother came to her to check her hair for lice and suddenly she stuck an iron pin into Teja's head saying 'Become a *mynah*!' becoming a *mynah* Teja flew away. After a few days the king sent man to bring Teja to the palace. Teja's step mother, instead of Teja sent Tula, who looked a lot like Teja, dressed up in Teja's cloths and ornaments. The king did not find any unusual and accepted Tula as his wife Teja. But the *mynah*, who was actually Teja, had followed Tula to the palace. When Tula started to spoil the loom work of Teja

in her attempt to finish the work that Teja left unfinished, the *mynah* warned her not to spoil her weaving. Hearing this, the king was surprised.

Another day, the king was playing dice with Tula, then the *mynah* asked singing why he was playing dice with his wife's elder sister. The king heard everything and he went inside to bring two *laddos* to test who the *mynah* was. He took the hunger *laddo* in one hand and the thirst *laddo* in another, and then he said that if the *mynah* was a near and dear one of the king then it would eat the hunger *laddo*. The *mynah* immediately came and started eating the hunger *laddo*. The king then started stroking gently the bird and saw the iron pin on the head of it. When he removed the pin the bird turned to Teja, his wife. She told the king everything.

The king ordered to kill Tula and to send her flesh, limbs and blood in separate packets to her parents as a gift from the king's side. The king's men first gave the flesh and blood for feast. Tula's parents had feasted on her flesh. The king's men did not eat anything in the feast and at night they kept the packet of the head and limbs at the door and left immediately. In the morning, Tula's mother found the packet of head and limbs of her daughter and cried bitterly realizing that they had eaten the flesh of their own daughter the night before.

The same things as happened in Tejimola are also observed in the tale of Tula and Teja. Tula's mother made conspiracy against her co-wife and her step children; however she was finally punished by the king, Teja's husband not by any summon to death but by sending flesh and blood of her daughter to her. In this tale, the punishment to the woman is extremely cruel and it is observed less happiness at the end. Tula was victimized for her mother's misdeeds and it is somehow seems unpleasant in any

circumstances. So from the point of view of the principle of happiness, the step-mother and the king both are accused of immoral actions as their action cannot be able to provide ultimate happiness. Still the audience or the listeners of the tale finally achieve happiness for the smooth and happy future of the orphan kids Teja and Kanai.

The same thing is happened in the *tale of Campawati*

### *Campawati*

Many years ago, there lived a man with his two wives, one of which was *lagee* and the other was *alagee*. They both had a daughter each. Following the suggestion of the *lagee* wife, the man built a hut near the place of garbage disposal for his *alagee* wife and her daughter Campawati. Campawati grew up in that hut amidst a lot of hardship.

One day, Campawati's father sent her to guard the ripening crops in his field. In the middle of the field there was a *tongi ghar*- a small bamboo hut on the top of a tree. She climbed there and watched over the whole paddy field and chase away the birds singing a song addressing the quail not to eat the ripe crops. Suddenly, one day, a voice replied from nowhere that he would not only eat the crops but also would marry Campawati. She looked around in surprise, but could not see anybody. Returning home she told her mother everything. To examine the fact, the next day, her mother went with her to the field. She told her daughter to sing the song again. When Campawati sang the same song, the voice again replied the same thing. The mother was surprised and startled. They returned home and the mother informs the incident to Campawati's father. The man then went to the field with Campawati and a few neighbour in search of the owner of the voice. In the field he asked Campawati to sing the song. When she

sang the song the voice again replied. The men who came with them searched the whole field for the voice, but got nothing. Then the father announced that if the voice really wants Campawati's hand then he should come out. And he promised to give the hand of his daughter to him. At these words a huge python came out in front of them. The father invited the python to his house.

The poor mother and daughter wept bitterly. They requested the man not to marry Campawati to that python but he preferred to listen to his *lagee* wife and finalized Campawati's marriage with the python. He married Campawati off with a ceremonial offering of betel nut and leaf. The python from then started to leave with Campawati and her mother in a separate house.

At that night Campawati and the python shared the same room and the poor girl in fear surrendered herself to her fate. But, in the next morning when the mother came to see her daughter, she was surprised to see Campawati alive wearing a lot of gold ornaments on her body. On the other hand, father and the step mother came to see if the python had swallowed their daughter. Looking at Campawati they were shocked and disappointed to see her alive wearing gold.

The step mother was jealous of the incident and she requested her husband to marry off her daughter to another python. The husband went to the forest and brought a python and married off their daughter with that python. As with Campawati, she gave her daughter and the python a bridal chamber, expecting that her daughter would also be rich with gold next morning.

But inside the room the big python began to swallow the girl and she called her mother again and again in pain but the greedy mother tried to convince that the python was giving ornaments on her body. In the morning she went to her

daughter's room and found the only python lay there with a bloated heap. She cried bitterly and all the people gathered there. They blamed the parents for their foolish deed.

The man and his *lagee* wife started to hate Campawati and her mother and one night they tried to kill both of them. But the python husband of Campawati came suddenly and swallowed them. He carried the mother and daughter to the jungle for their safety. Next morning, when they found themselves in the jungle they were frightened but the snake convinced them and they started to live there happily. Days passed and one day, the mother died suddenly. After that, Campawati started living with her python husband. One day, in the absence of the python, a beggar woman came to Campawati's house and told her that the python is actually a god. And she suggested some ideas to have her husband in his real form and went away. The girl did accordingly and achieved her husband in his real look.

Another day, the woman again came to Campawati in the python's absence. She again suggested her something to do for her wellbeing. Campawati, as she had great faith on that woman, did according to her advice. But this time, she lost her husband. The woman, actually, wanted to separate the couple following the order of her mistress the *Rakshasi*. The *Rakshasi* was the mother of Campawati's husband. Campawati's husband left her giving her a ring for her safety from his *Rakshasi* mother. Likewise, they lived separately for six years. After that period, one day they were reunited and began to live happily.

Resembling to the case of Tula, Campawati's step-sister is also victimized for the greed of her own mother and in the next half of the tale; Campawati was allured by

the beggar resulting desertion by her husband for six years. So, it can be said that both Campawati's step-mother and the beggar had not done any moral job; their actions provided nothing but pain only. It was not pleasant in any form; yet the ending of the tale is somehow a pleasant one.

There are certain tales in the collection of *Burhi Air Sadhu* that cannot be discussed under these duty, spirituality and happiness principle. Yet, these can be categorized in the realm of the principle of happiness as these tales are purely for entertainment and provide happiness and escapism from the mundane discontents.

The son-in-law and the trickster tales are of this kind. In almost every region there is found interesting son-in-law tales which are very much entertaining. In *Burhi Air Sadhu* also there are two son-in-law tales that provides happiness to the listeners and readers.

#### ***Jowair Sadhu (The Tale of the Son-in-law)***

One day, a man invited his son-in-law on the occasion of *Bihu*. The father-in-law invited him alone, so, he went out alone in the evening. But after going a short distance, he noticed that his shadow was also following him. He thought that his father-in-law would be angry if he noticed the shadow. So, he asked the shadow not to follow him. After going a short while, he noticed that the shadow was still following him. Then he asked it what it wanted from him. He gave his *Celeng* thinking that it wanted his *Celeng*. After sometimes, he again noticed the shadow following him. Then he gave his *curiya, gamoca* to stop it following him. Meanwhile, the darkness began to fall and the shadow disappeared. The man thought that satisfied with his clothes the shadow stopped following him. The man lost was a *Kukuri-kona* (one suffering from night blindness). As it got

darker, he proceeded but, he could no longer see. Luckily, he caught sight of his father-in law's bullocks with his dimmed eyes and caught the tail of the bull and reached the in-laws' place. He felt ashamed to appear before his in-laws as he gave all his cloths to the shadow. So, instead of going inside the house he sat under a shrub of banana tree near the rubbish dump. After a long waiting for the son-in-law, the father-in-law had his dinner and went to bed but he did not come. The mother-in-law cleaned up the kitchen, washed the dishes and came to the rubbish dump with a basin to dispose the remaining dirty water. When the water fell on the son-in-law he uttered "Oh! Oh!" and then the mother-in-law noticed him under the banana tree in the light of a lamp. Then she helped him taking bath, gave him fresh cloths and sat him down to a meal.

With the meal she gave him some molasses but never having seen molasses before, he refused to take it. The father-in law insisted him to have the molasses as it was the best one. He tested it, liked it to a great extent and asked where the molasses was kept. The mother-in-law then pointed to a pitcher kept on the rafter above the fireplace. After the meal, the mother-in-law prepared the bed for the young man and went to sleep. The son-in-law could not sleep but thought of that tasty molasses. When he was convinced that his in laws were in deep sleep, he went to the rafter where the pitcher of the molasses was kept. He made a hole at the bottom of the pitcher from beneath the rafter and let the liquid molasses fall into his open mouth. When he had as much as molasses he could he went away. He noticed that some of the liquid molasses fell on his body and cloth and all his body became sticky. Walking around blindly his hand touched a pile of cotton kept for stuffing mattress. He threw himself onto the

pile of cotton, but instead of cleaning him the cotton stuck to body because of the molasses covering his body.

A few goats were tied nearby. He decided to spend the night among goats he went to the goats. That night thieves entered the house to steal goats. They planned to steal that one whose fur comes off easily, because, such type would have much fat. The first they touched was the son-in-law. With a soft touch they pulled off the cotton on his body and thought of the fatty goat, they pick him up with them hanging on a bamboo bit. On their way they had to cross a river. As they reached the middle of the river the bottom of the son-in-law touched the water and he cried immediately:

“Oh thief! Lift me up, my bottom is getting wet.”

The thieves were surprised at the voice of the speaking goat and dropped him there in fear and fled away. The river was not so deep. The son-in-law went to the bank and meanwhile morning light came over. Searching him everywhere, the father-in-law found him sitting on the river bank. He took him home, fed him and sent him back his own house.

### ***Kukurikona (The Tale of the Night Blind)***

There were two beautiful daughters of a man in a certain village. The name of the elder one was *Rupeswari* and the younger one was *Guneswari*. *Rupeswari* was married off to a boy of some near distance. Her husband suffered from night blindness but, he had hidden this truth. So, his in-laws and the villagers did not know this fact. He once, borrowed a bullock from his father-in-law to till his land. One day, the father-in-law asked him for the bullock back. The son-

in-law was at a loss, how he could manage to go to his in-laws' house to return the bullock after sun set. Finally, he decided to let the bullock to go to his master's house and he would go with it holding its tail. He did accordingly and went with the bullock and reached his in-laws' cowshed holding the tail of the bullock. When, the father-in-law saw him in the cowshed he greeted him and the son-in-law replied that as he had asked for the bullock he brought it and now then tied it up there. When the father-in-law observed, that after quite a while the man remained in the shed, he called him upon to be fresh himself. Then, the man replied that he was counting the cattle. Then, the father-in-law sent his younger daughter *Guneswari* to welcome her brother-in-law. When *Guneswari* invited him to fresh up he asked her to take him out respectfully, otherwise he would not go. Simple-minded *Guneswari* obediently held him by hand and respectfully welcomed him and helped in having a wash of his hand and feet. Then spreading a *dhora* (mat), she got him seated on it and sometimes later, his mother-in-law called him for dinner. But after repeated calls the son-in-law had not come, instead he said that he was so tired that he could not even go to the dinning place. So he requested to give his meal right there where he was. The mother-in-law then gave his dinner in his seating place. But, not being able to see the plate he did not start. Seeing this *Guneswari* asked him to take his food. Then the man replied that he would start only when she would place his hand on food. To please her brother-in-law, she placed his hand on rice and went to have her meal.

After a little while the mother-in-law came to ask if he needed more food, noticed that a cat was also having food from the same plate of his. Surprised at this, she asked him how he could have his food in the same plate with a cat. To

hide his blindness, he said that eating food is not only human's right animals should also be fed. She refused in utter distress and gave him firewood to chase the cat away. After a little while, mother-in-law came to him to give him fried fish, but he thought that the cat had arrived again and he tossed a blow on his mother-in-law's hand. She cried in pain and asked why he hit her. The son-in-law replied eagerly that he felt asleep during his meal and dreamt of cat's coming. So, he hit her thought of the cat. And he pleaded for it.

The mother-in-law forgave him but, he felt ashamed of all the incidents. So he decided to exit for home quickly without telling anyone. After a few steps he could not move forward and landed himself into the shrub arum plants. He thought that he had arrived into a great forest and sat there to spend the night. At that time the mother-in-law threw the leftover onto the arum patch. The water fell upon the son-in-law as some droplets and thought of it as rain he murmured praying god to give mercy to the night blind stopping the rain. Hearing the voice of the son-in-law, the mother-in-law came with a lamp and could understand that her son-in-law was a night blind. She rescued him and got him to bathe and put on dry cloths.

There are three trickster tales in *Burhi Air Sadhu* the function of which are only to provide entertainment to the listeners and not to give any moral lessons.

### ***Dui Budhiyok (Two Clever People)***

One day, a young man decided to take some *keturi*, a kind of wild arrowroot, to the market to sell it off as ginger. Similarly, on the same day, another young man decided to cheat by selling *bhomloti* seeds on the place of black pepper. As they both were going to the market, they met mid way. Talking to each other

they came to know what the other wanted to sell. The pepper merchant thought that it would be very profitable if he could barter his fake pepper- the seeds of *bhomloti* for the gingers and return home as soon as possible. The other man also thought the same, to barter his fake ginger, the *keturis* for the basketful of peppers. When they expressed their thoughts of exchanging their objects, both agreed happily. So, the ginger merchant took the load of the pepper and the pepper merchant took the ginger and left the place as soon as possible. Looking at their baskets they thought that they had vanquished the other.

After long time of this incident, they met again and humorously asked about the ginger and the pepper. At their conversation, one of them said that their re meeting indicates some good luck for them. And he proposed the other to start business together. Finally, they started business together with the intension to make money by cheating people.

They first went to a priest's house asking for job. The priest employed the pepper merchant to look after his cow and the ginger merchant to water the *Tulsi* plant. It was very tough to control the cow of the priest as the cow was very uncontrollable. Watering the *Tulsi* plant was also very difficult. Because the water poured to the *Tulsi* plant disappeared in a moment. The 'cowherd' and the 'gardener' when met they talked about their job. As they found their jobs difficult they both cunningly decided to exchange their jobs. So, each of them tried to establish their jobs as the easiest one. With the intension to cheat each other, they exchange their jobs and later found the reality.

But the young man who was on the duty to water the *tulsi* wondered where the water poured at the root of the *tulsi* plant always went. They spoke about it and decided to find out the fact. Next night, when the priest went to bed, they both

dug the *tulsi* plant out and found a large pit under. The pepper merchant went down to the pit and found a number of pots filled with silver. Quickly he climbed out and said his friend about the findings. They then decided to steal the silver. The ginger merchant asked the pepper merchant to fill the bag and then lift it up to him so that he could keep it out. Accordingly, he filled the first bag and lifted it up to his friend. Then, the friend out of the pit threw another bag. The friend in the pit had a doubt on him that he might cheat him and might bury him in the pit after getting all the wealth. So, he filled the bag half with the silver and then got into the bag himself. Then he called out his friend to pull the bag up. The ginger merchant who was out of the pit, pulled the bag up and then he did exactly what the pepper merchant thought. Thinking that he was burying his friend, the ginger merchant filled up the pit with earth and left the place with both bags on his baskets-on-bar. Baskets were too heavy to carry, so he put down the bags under a tree and sat for a while to take rest. He was too thirsty and leaving the bags under the tree he went to the nearby pond to drink water. Taking the chance of the situation the pepper merchant came out from the other bag and fled with the loads of wealth. Returning from the pond the ginger merchant was shocked at the incident of vanishing of the bags of wealth. But, he realized that the pepper merchant had cheated him so badly.

After a long time, when they met again, the pepper merchant questioned the ginger merchant how he could think of burying his friend in that pit. The ginger merchant then answered that then he not only took all the wealth but rode on his shoulder too. After that joke they again became good friends. But, somehow, the ginger merchant could not forget that the pepper merchant had ridden on his shoulder.

One day, the ginger merchant thought of a plan. He instructed his wife to cover him up like a dead body then to start crying loudly. He also told her to convey the message about his last wish that his dead body should carry to the cremation ground only on his friend pepper merchant's shoulder. Hearing this, the pepper merchant immediately realized that it was a trick of his friend to ride on him. So, he planned an idea and told the wife of his friend that since he could not carry the dead body alone, better he would cut the body into two pieces then carry them one by one. To follow his words the pepper merchant took a *da* (a chopper) and went as if he is going to cut the body. In mortal fear, the friend sat up on the bed and declared that the pepper merchant was cleverer than him.

These trickster tales full of trickery, cheating and cunning actions only can provide amusements.

Though these tales are included in this Principle of Happiness, these tales basically the son-in-law tales (*Jowair Sadhu*, *Kukurikona*) and the trickster tales are mainly for entertainment.

From the above discussions of the tales from Bezbaroa's three folktale collections, it is found that in the light of the Western thought of morality; almost all the tales reflect some kind of moral values except some son-in-law tale and trickster tales from the collection *Burhi Air Sadhu*. Along with these tales there is another tale, the tale of the youngest son *Numaliya Po*, *Sarabjan* have their entertainment value only. Individuals can develop a positive attitude towards life besides all the ailments of life by the interpretation of the 'Do's' and 'Don'ts' manifested in the folktales.