PART - II

CULTURAL LIFE
OF
THE HAJONGS
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE OF THE HAJONGS

Literature is the mirror of culture in society. It is based on language which has played an important role in man's socialization. Rightly does observe W.H. Hudson, "Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language."1

From what has been said above, it is obvious that man is born as an asocial being, he attains sociality by going through literature. It stands for capabilities and skills acquired by man as a member of society. The study of communication, of words and symbols conveying meanings between persons in a society, would constitute the study of linguistics.

The Hajong community is rich in the domain of oral literature found particularly in their language. They have prose narratives which have been handed down orally from generation to generation. Being by nature musically inclined, the tribal people in general and the Hajongs in particular, have also an impressive store of songs and rhymes.2

Apart from the materials available in the Hajong language, there are also a fairly large body of songs composed or adapted in Assamese language current among them.

Both in bulk and multifariousness, the wealth of the oral literature of the Hajongs is producing an impression on the mind. There is oral literature of an almost perplexing multifariousness, a large numbers of prose narratives and songs apart from proverbs and riddles that are intricately woven into the fabric life of the Hajongs. In recent times there have been growing signs of consciousness among the young generation of the Hajong community about the desirability of preserving of their culture. Attempts are being made by the young people of the Hajong community to collect and study as well as bring to light such materials with a view to attracting the attention of the people outside through the radio, T.V., magazine and newspaper, etc.

At the time of field study of the oral literature of the Hajong community, it is important to put in mind a few points which are needed for maintaining a suitable vision.

The oral literature of the Hajong community has striking kindreds with those of the adjoining other people of Assam, such as Assamese, Bengali, Garo, etc. The kindreds are particularly strong in the fields of oral literature and music. But the points of commoners are so many and contact with the other adjoining people is so free and constant that the line of boundary is often negligible. In putting with the nature of the cultural pattern of other people of Assam, the oral literature of the other tribal groups contains material that bear a close likeness to similar material, procurable in the neighbouring places of Assam. So such likeness rarely overshadows the distinctive feature of the Hajongs.
There does not perplex any serious problem in the context of collection and study of oral literature of the Hajongs. But what constitutes a real problem in this field is the presence in the Hajong community of a large body of materials which is combination of Assamese and Bengali. The cultural part of this material has been assimilated with the culture of Assamese and is rarely distinguishable. Some of this unassimilated material remains practically undetected and passes off as local, thus giving rise to a confusing state of affairs.

One of the outstanding peculiarities is the fact that as they are originally migrated from the present Bangladesh, the dialect of the Hajong community has certain elements in common with Assamese and Bengali.

Thus, leaving aside the obviously imported elements, the various materials of the oral literature of the Hajongs are available in two different linguistic forms.

Among the large number of tribal communities living in the hills and the plains of Assam and contributing colourful strands that have been woven into the oral literature of Assam, the Hajongs occupy an unique position.

The oral literature of the Hajongs is considerably rich in terms of both quality and quantity. However an attempt has been made to classify the oral literature of the Hajongs into the different genres under a few relevant and convenient heads and to study them against their proper background into the following manners.

(A) Oral Literature:

The oral literature of the Hajongs may be classified into the following genres:
(1) Songs

Almost all sung, chanted and recited forms of oral poetry are regarded as songs. The language of the songs is generally different from that of ordinary speech. It is often obsolete. Rightly does observe Verrier Elwin "It is true that a great many of the songs are the possessions of the people as a whole, nobody knows when they are composed.... But at the same gifted individuals do arise in the peasant communities..."

In fact, songs exercise important influence on man's emotions and sentiments. These make human tendencies refined. Community feeling is enhanced by songs which are important in every society.

Singing is a major recreation among the Hajongs. Oral songs are simple in composition, involve simple imagination and are rendered in simple style. These are sung with an amazing clarity of expression and sometimes each line is repeated a number of times before passing on to the next line. Both men folk and the women folk sing these songs in groups along with appropriate dance movements to the accompaniment of various musical instruments.

The term *Gāhen* is used by the Hajongs to indicate the meaning of song. Again this term is nothing but an extension of the word *gān*. *Gāhen* of the Hajongs may be sub-grouped into the following genres, eg.,

(1) Songs associated with religious rites and rituals and worships.

(ii) Songs associated with festival.

(iii) Songs associated with rites of passage.

(iv) Mantras or charms.

(v) Love songs

(vi) Work songs

(vii) Ballads

(viii) Children songs.

(i) **Songs associated with religious rites and rituals, and worships:**

The Hajongs perform different rites and rituals round the year. The main object of such rites is to appease both the benevolent and the malevolent deities and spirits around them so that they can live happily and peacefully without facing undesired natural phenomenon. Community singing of hymns, both of male and female, is a unique feature of the Hajong community. The sessions of such hymn singing are held on special religious or auspicious occasions, or just as an act of merit, either in public places or in private houses. Such songs are reciting in praise of Gods or any particular deity.
The bulk of such songs are of neo-Vaishnave association and are meant for offering veneration and seeking the blessings of Vishnu generally in the form of Lord Krishna. Some songs deal with some divine deed or deeds of Lord Krishna. Such songs are characterised by the utter modesty and consecration of the devotees.

There are also various kinds of nam of non-Vaishnava association which are songs in contact with Siva-Parvati, Goddess, Durga, Lord Ganesh, Goddess Lakshmi, Goddess Saraswati, Moon and Sun, etc. Songs especially on days sacred to the respective God and Goddess these songs can be sung on other occasions also. It can be mentioned that sometimes the singing of nam is performed either by men or women performed sometimes by both male and female. The singing of nām by male is a more vigorous kind of performance, normally accompanied by the using of the dhuluk and the khol (khul).

(a) Songs associated with God as Goddess:

A typical specimen of a Sarasvati and Lakshmi devir nam begins with the following lines:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Sarasvati & Lakshmi devi e} \\
\text{tomār charane pranām karong/} \\
\text{adham bālake dāke e} \\
\text{maa janani dayā kare l*l}
\end{align*}\]

i.e.,: O Sarasvati, O Lakshmi Devi

We are praying you,

come down near to us
O Mother, forgive us.

The main singer of a group is called Gitāl or Gitālu or Gidal. He is helped by a group of assistant singers who are known as pālis.

Another group of songs which have no mainly ritualistic content are chanted in praise of Lord Krishna only at special occasions like char khelā or char māgā.

Here is an example:

Parān kānde mulā ai kālājāne,
bānhi bājā chune mujun mulā mandā nāmāne /
hey chai,
panilau bede jāy jadi jamunā ghātani,
terā chukhe chauyau kālā jhalā dey manani /
khelāite khelāite jay jadi kadamb talani,
hey chai kadamb talani /
bānhi baujau pāglā kare dhairajya naui manani /
parān kānde mulā ai kālājane //

i.e., My soul cries for Lord Krishna, My mind does not keep hearing the tune of flute, I go to the river Yamuna for water, Lord Krishna gives trouble me seeing bendly. I go to the beneath of peepal tree with

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playing. That beneath of peepal tree also, the tune makes me mad. I have no patience.

O Lord Krishna, my soul cries for you.

**Songs associated with worships:**

The Hajongs perform different worships round the year. A number of worships, some of which are popular in the Hajong society, involve singing and dancing. As they are associated with the rites, they are in a way religious performances. And some are not associated with any ritual.

(b) **Songs associated with Bās - Puja:**

*Bās - puja* i.e., Bamboo - worship is celebrated by the Hajongs annually. In that context various songs are sung along with dances to the accompaniment of various musical instruments.

The joyfulness of this worship is echoed in the following song:

*Kanyā bhabana kiche tur

āmi jāy chahar /

thak kanya tui baper bari

ei bāra bachhar //

bachiya thak jadi kanyā*
Oire thāk kanyā tui

ei bāra bachhar //b

i.e., O beloved, what is your thought,

I go to the city

O beloved, you stay at your father house,

At least twelve years.

If I shall live this twelve years,

We shall meet again

O beloved, you stay

This twelve years.

(c) **Songs associated with Snake Goddess, **Bisahari

*Manasā pujā* called *Kāni deo pujā* by the Hajongs is celebrated from the first day to the last day of *Sāon*, the fourth month of Assamese calendar. The songs of *Manasā* or *Padmā* pujā are sung by a party consisting a *Gitālu* and eight or more *pālis* to the accompaniment of musical instruments like *dhul* and *khul*.

The song runs in the following manner:

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Ki bhāla nāche chundar kaina

bhaiya beula ai, ahare

nānān thek themak dekhāy beulā

mon bhuliya jāy /

kunbā thāki mahādev aiya dekhibāge pāi //

beulālā nāchan dekhiyā mahādev mohit haiya jāy //

i.e., A beautiful bride can dance how nicely, O Beula, she exhibits the various parts of the body. Mind can charm, Mahadev can see coming from somewhere, he has charmed to see the dance of Beula.

(d) Songs of Kartika Puja:

Kārtika pūjā is celebrated for both good crops and male issue by the Hajong women folk exclusively on the last day of the month of Kāti (Assamese month). In that context various songs are sung by women folk with dance to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

The joyfulness of the Pujā is echoed in songs like the following.

dur hāte ailare bādur

kalā khābār āshe

hāter kalā hāte roil

bādur geil mur deshere //

7. Das, B.: op-cit. P. 40
8. Informant: Rai Hajong, R.K. (45) Guwahati. dt. 11.08.98
i.e.; Bats came from the distance place,
Hope to eat the bananas,
The bananas of the hands stayed at the hands,
the bats went to my country.

(ii) Songs associated with festivals

Songs associated with different festivals may be called "calendric songs". The social life of the Hajongs is associated with many indigenous festivals of their own. Every festival is connected with some songs.

(a) Māchmāo or Mah - khedāi Dewā Song

Māchmāo or Mah-khedāi dewā is an important festival celebrated by the Hajong community in the last day evening of Assamese month, Kāti. In that context the children and youth join in songs with bamboo splits. They sing the following folk song during the Machmao festival.

āghon āhe

kāti jae

mosomāo porā jāi / ⁹

i.e., Aghon will come, Kati has gone, mosquitoes have burnt.

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⁹. Informant: Same as the reference No. 8, dt. 11.8.98
(b) Songs connected with *chormāgā* or *chorkhelā* festival:

*Chormāgā* or *chorkhelā* is a popular festival observed by the Hajongs on the eve of two or three days of *Dewāli* and continued one week. The Hajong boys and girls sing various folk songs and dance together during the *chormāgā* festival. The following song is sung by the boys and girls to the accompaniment of musical instruments.

\[
\begin{align*}
nirpāni & \text{ parile} \\
\text{chorkhelā āhile} & \\
āi āni & \text{ chorkhelā jāng} / \\
pāthin & \text{nēkā sāj nāi} \\
\text{chorkhelādhak parb nāi} & \\
āi āni & \text{ chorkhelā jāng} /^{10} \\
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., Dew drops have felt,

Chorkhelā has come

Mother, we go to the chorkhelā.

There is no dress of *pātin*,

No more items have in *chorkhelā*

Mother, we go to the chorkhelā.

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(c) Songs associated with Thubau Māgā festival:

Thubau māgā festival is celebrated by the Hajongs from first seeing moon to the full-moon night of the Assamese month, Puh. In that context groups of young boys sing various folk songs along with dances to the accompaniment of sticks.

The joyfulness of the festival is reflected in the following song:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{thubau thubau} \\
\text{thubau māgā āilungre} \\
\text{dash tākā pāilungre} \\
\text{gai kiniba gelungre} \\
\text{gaiyer nām tārāmani} \\
\text{dudh dei othar hāri} \\
\text{rājā khāi prajā khāi} \\
\text{ai dudh furāyā jāi} \\
\text{thubau thubau} //^{11}
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., Thubau māgā has come, we have got ten rupees, we go to buy the cow, the cow's name is Tārāmāni. The king drinks, the citizens drink, we go to thubau, thubau.

11. Das, B.: op-cit, Pp. 29-31
(iii) Songs associated with the rites of passage:

The life of a man of any culture is a series of passages from one stage to another. Observes Arnold Van Gennep, "Transititions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings; birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialisation, and death." 12 All these events are always connected with ceremonies and all these ceremonies are generally performed by songs and dances.

Among the Hajong society, in the time of a child birth's purification ceremony the performance of songs is not organised. Of late, the Hajongs profess Hinduism and as such all the rituals connected with death of a person are performed in the Hindu way. The actual Srādha or death ceremony is observed on the 11th or 13th day in Hindu way and songs are not performed by the Hajongs. 13

Songs associated with marriage:

Among the ceremonies of the life cycle of the Hajongs the marriage - rite holds an important role. Marriage songs called Biā-git have been never sung by the Hajong womenfolk. But the songs are always sung by menfolk.

Here is a piece from a marriage song sung at the time of sitting both bride and bridegroom on the marriage day.

12. Arnold Van Gennep: The Rites of Passage, P. 3
13. N. M. Hajong (45), Dhamar, Dist. Goalpara dt. 10.9.98
Here is a specimen:

\[
\text{ai chai mandape bichhinā dil pāti} /
\]

\[
tāhāte bachil alā Gaur - Parvati //
\]

\[
dāyne bachil Har Gauri, bāye bīyāri /
\]

\[
brāhmīne āchiya gāthil lagun gāthi //
\]

i.e., Beneath the pandal, a bed is lying, on the bed, Gaur-Parvati have sat. On the right side, Har Gauri have sat, on the left side there are bride and bridegroom, the priest comes to add the lagun gathi.

(iv) **Mantra**

The words which are uttered in the *puja* or ritual to involve with some purpose, called *Mantra*. The performance of mantras has been playing an important part in the Hajong society from time immemorial.

*Mantra* holds an important part in the oral tradition of Hajongs. *Mantras* are sung by the *Deoshi* (eg. the village priest) on the occasions of *pujās*. Among those *pujās*, we can cite as an example that the Hajongs perform *pujā* in honour of *Paglā deo*, God of rain, when there is a long spell of drought, the *mantra* is sung by the *Deoshi* (eg., the village priest) at the ritual performance of the *paglā deo* pujā in his own language for the common welfare of the villagers.

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14. Das, B.: *op-cit.*, P. 38
Here is a specimen.

\[ \text{hat guru, p\'ao guru, bandong dikshy\'a guru p\'ao/} \]
\[ \text{jei guru shikh\'ache mole d\'a\'ine ar b\'ao//} \]
\[ \text{ateke bandan\'a gaiti je char\'\'be gh\'ao/} \]
\[ \text{\'ar kichhu n\'adong kib\'a dharmer m\'ath\'a kh\'ao///}^5 \]

i.e., join the hands, invoke at the feet of the honourable *Gurus* (teachers).
Safe from the wrongs for invocation of the songs.

(V) **Songs of love and yearning:**

Songs of love and yearning can claim a meaningful place in the domain of the Hajong oral literature. The Hajong traditional love songs are secular and these are mostly sung outside the four walls of the household.

The love-songs of the Hajong community are sweetened with the agony and joy of desire. The most popular and numerous of this class of songs are those of the type known as *Lāwā-tānā git* which bears similarity with the Assamese *Bihu* songs in both form and content.

Another form of love songs is made up of love dialogues a series of addresses and counter addresses between the love and the beloved.

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15. Informant: N.M Hajong (45) Dhamar Dist. Goalpara dt. 10.9.98
The following is an example of love and yearning songs:

gabhur :  
\[ \text{Linglingā gāchhate urau man lāgichhe} \]
\[ \text{dādā muge pārī di khāng} / \]

hapal :  
\[ \text{dharibāko dāl nāi, uthibāku leowā nāi} \]
\[ \text{leowā chhārā pāribā nāpāi \(^{16}\)} \]

i.e., Girl: bees make honey in the thin high tree, O brother, fetch me to drink.

Boy: No branches to catch, no creepers to climb.

without creepers it will not possible to fetch.

(vi) Work songs

Hajong folklore is not so poor in respect of work songs. Most of the work songs are associated with the agricultural affairs. Very often this genre of songs is generally sung by both young boys and girls at the time of agricultural cultivation and clothed in love themes to some extent.

Here is an example

\[ \text{āyanā dile nāmāne} \]
\[ \text{phini dile nāmāne} \]
\[ \text{ki diyā bhulām mai tak \(^{17}\)} \]

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17. Informant: Same as the reference No. 16, dt. 10.8.98
i.e., O beloved, you do not agree giving the looking glass, you do not agree giving the comb, with what way I shall attract you.

(vii) Ballads

A ballad is an animated poem in short stanzas, narrating some popular story. As has been observed by Kittredge, "A song that tells a story, or to take the other point of view a story told in song. More formally, it may be defined as a short narrative poem, adapted for singing simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into stanzas and characterized by complete impersonality as far as the author or singer is concerned." 18 Prof Ker observes, "It is not a narrative poem only; it is a narrative poem lyrical in form, or a lyrical poem with a narrative body in it" 19 Prof Gerauld, a recent authority, notes, "What we have come to call a ballad is always a narrative, is always sung to a rounded melody and is always learned from the lips of others rather than by reading." 20

From what have been said above, it is obvious that the ballad is a popular narrative poem which tells a story and which has no distinguishable mark of authorship. It is often found to be recited rather than sung to a melody. Ballads are objective in general tone and though they go by the name *git* or song, they are easily distinguishable from the various types of songs which express a feelings or mood.

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18. F.J. Child: *English and Scotish Popular Ballads*, P IX
20. E.K. Chambers: *English Literature at the close of the Middle Ages*, Pp. 147-148
For the purposes of the present study, the Hajong ballads would be taken in the light of the conclusions arrived at just now.

The oral literature of the Hajongs is said to be rich in respect of ballads. The ballads extant in the Hajong society may be classified as (i) historical (ii) legendary and (iii) imaginary. These are sung to the tune of simple melodies. It is also a fact that ballads extant among the Hajongs are generally very short and incomplete the events or the stories being more alluded to than forming the bases of the songs.

Some of the historical ballads narrate their original motherland and the fearless defence of their country. These describe how they fight for their existence. Many of them are in this type. Among these, paglā deo git is popular. It describes how Harman came to his present state by overcoming various problems. The narrative in a nutshell is that Harman lived at Dasakāhania area. Once there was drought for long period time. He worshipped Paglā deo, his favoured god, for rain. God being satisfied with his worship and as a result rain comes for several days. The ballad of Paglā deo presents this misfortune.21

The most interesting and significant legendary ballads are those that tell of migration of the various Hajong groups as well as those explaining the original inhabitant places. A legendary ballad which is found among the Hajongs is that of Kāshyāpnagar. It describes that in Kāshyāpnagar during the reign of king Sumesh and his senapati Raghubir, the people lived happily and peacefully. But their kingdom was ruined by Huchong and Duruga Garo. The ballad of Kāshyāpnagar narrates the tragic ends of their life.22

21. Informant: Shri S.N. Hajong (65) Bonda, Guwahati, dt. 11.10.98
22. Informant: Same as the reference No. 21, dt. 11.10.98
Another kind of ballads which current among the Hajongs has romantic themes. Some of them are connected with lamentation, eg, an unhappy event, the loss of a loved one, misfortune and so on.

Baramahi is another class of imaginary ballad type songs that depict the state of the mind from month to month, usually of a young wife, while her husband is away on business, a few (eg. Ram - bārāmāhi) also speak of the sentiment of the separated male. The Bārāmāhi songs are known in various names such as Sānti Bāramāhi, Sitā Bāramāhi, Ram Bāramāhi, Kanyā Bāramāhi, Rādhā Bāramāhi, etc. Each song narrates of a woman who gives vent to sorrows for prolonged separation from her husband. Beulā Bāramāhi song is sung by the Māregan troupe. Most of them could be classed as songs of love - love between the husband and wife - expressed against the background of nature in the different seasons.

A fragment of this ballad is given below:

uloloi bākālay lay

hālbuya jāb tāi

kokara bhāt nib mai/

uloloi bākālay lay

hur hurā māti

kālā chāndalā beti /

kokurā bhāt nib tai
(viii) Children Songs:

Children in all communities are lulled to sleep and young children are comforted with the help of lullabies and nursery rhymes. As the children are universal in character, Hajong children play various games, many of which are connected with the singing of songs or the recitation of rhymes. In Assam, the nursery rhymes are called as dhāi nām, omalā git, nicukani git, nidālo git, etc. Dhāi means a nurse nām or git which means song. Omalā means to play, nicukani means the act of soothing a weeping baby to silence, nidālo means the act of sleeping a weeping child. These songs include lullabies, nursery rhymes and songs of children at play. Generally these songs reflect children's mental make up and lack of reason. On the otherhand, the nursing mother's heart tender for her own child pours forth itself as she hums it to slumber. All the wonders of the new world are depicted through children's eyes, their pleasures, their fears, their unreasonable faiths and no faiths.

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23. Informant: Shri N.M. Hajong (45) Dhamar, Dist. Goalpara, dt. 9.10.98
The nursery rhyme in Hajong language is called ghum parani gāhen. The Hajong nursery rhymes are classified into two main groups, firstly those composed and recited by mothers or nurses for persuading children to sleep or for their appeasement and secondly, those composed and recited by the children themselves when they grew up a little. The cradly songs are short and are meant to pacify the crying baby or to amuse the young child.

Here is a specimen:

ulu ulu champā phul
āmar nunu kat dur
chilābāri tek tekāi kun gachani
āmar nunu kāndi achhe vadi purani // 24

i.e., [ O champaphul, how far distance is our child, where lizard calls on, our child cries in the noon. ]

Generally, Hajong women work in the day outside the home and engage domestic works at the night. So they do not have much time to spare. Women leave the babies in the charge of tender aged girls who are kept particularly for this purpose. They sing most of the lullabies and nursery rhymes. A number of such songs meant for the slightly older child, are rhymes addressed to Jonabāi or sister moon.

Here is a specimen:

āi jun juni āī
uriyā uriyā āī /

24. S.N. Koch: chandardinga, P. 100
There are some play songs of children in the Hajong society. These are associated with birds, beasts and other objects of nature as well as the social surroundings. Such songs are recited and sung simply for fun of it. The children games have different characteristics. There are some numerous types of game songs each depending on the nature of a game played by the children. There are question and answer games in which doggeral verses are recited in the form of dialogues between the two participants. These are somewhat story in character. These are their own creations and sometimes turn into nonsense verses. There is only sound and no meaning in the verses.

Here is an example:

one party sings:  
\textit{āire rākhul gila}

\textit{dudh debāk jāṅg}

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25. Informant: R.K. Rai Hajong, North Lakhimpur (50) dt. 1.9.98
Among the various components of folklore the prose-narrative is the most convenient form and occupies a significant position in the folkloreology. Because of their oral existence, narrative genres float in an unlimited number of variants around a limited number of plots. Apart from the folk poetry, the prose-narrative or the prose-tradition is capable of communication in a regional dialect. It is easier to understand and it can be conveniently reproduced. Rightly does observe W. R. Bascom, "The verbal art, as a segment of culture was conveniently and appropriately suggested to encompass folk tales, myths, legends, proverbs, riddles and other literary terms." Verbal art is composed and transmitted verbally from one generation to the other. Further observes W.R. Bascom, "Strictly verbal 'means' expressed is words, whether spoken or written but commonly in spoken words, hence, by

26. Informant : B.C. Hajong (70) Bonda, Guwahati, dt. 10.7.98
Prose-narratives constitute an important genre of folklore. This genre of verbal tradition or oral literature includes oral genres like the myth, legend and tale. But on the other hand, they are related with the origin of the social systems, social customs and traditions. Rightly does Cassell observe, "Under this (folk literature) rather loose heading to be included those traditional legends, tales, ballads, songs, proverbs, riddles and plays which form the popular entertainments of primitive peoples or of the uncultured elements of more civilized peoples." 29

The prose narratives deal with human situation in which suspense, ghosts, heroes and heroines have their due place.

Prose narratives have been an integral part of the folk literature or verbal art of the Hajong society. These recounting unusual happenings accepted as truth on faith. Story-telling has been found to be an integral ingredient of the Hajong oral tradition. Prose-narratives provide one of the ways of educating the child in the Hajong society. As in the other people of Assam, a number of prose narratives are extant in the Hajong society and telling of prose narratives is a pleasant past time especially for old persons and children. The prose narratives of the Hajongs can be divided into three sub-genres, viz (i) Myth (2) Legend and (3) Tale.

1. Myth

Myths gives explanation of some fact or phenomenon of what happened in the society in which they are told in the remote past. They

28. Ibid : Pp. 67-68

explain origin of the world, of mankind, of death or for characteristic birds, animals, geographical features and the phenomenon of nature. Many of the myths owe their origin to the beliefs and ideals that are associated with leaders, patriots, national heroes, institutions and individuals. For instant, in our own country many myths are current that have originated in connection with Tulsidas, Krishna, Bhishma and many other famous personalities.

Myths deal principally with the doings of the gods, their ritual and relationships with natural phenomena.\textsuperscript{30} Observes M. Leach, "Myth is a story presented as having occurred in a previous age explaining the cosmological and supernatural tradition of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs, etc."\textsuperscript{31} W.R. Bascom has defined myth in the following ways: "Myths are prose narratives which in the society, in which they are told, are considered to be truthful account of what happened in the remote past.\textsuperscript{32}

Myths are integral part of mythology and are accepted traditionally by a particular nation or people. They are generally a fanciful explanation of some natural phenomena or of some physical or mental power, with little factual basis. They are a combination of various motifs and mythical ideas. They tell us about the origin of the world, man and nature, the gods and goddesses and their teaching. There are myths or mythical tales in Hajong recounting the story of creation, and the origin of the world and man. Some myths found in the Hajong oral tradition narrate the origin of natural phenomena. Some

\textsuperscript{30.} The Oxford Classical Dictionary, London 1964, S.V. Myth

\textsuperscript{31.} M. Leach : Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, P. 778

\textsuperscript{32.} W. R. Bascom, Op-cit, P. 98
of mythical stories current among the Hajong society have been cited as examples. One myth current among the Hajongs narrates the tale of creation.

The following is a creation myth which deals with the creation of the universe.

(a) The story of Creation.

Long, long ago, God Mahadev was once disturbed by a mad jackal. Owing to disturb there was no peace in the mind of God Mahadev and he ordered the destruction of the earth. An old woman heard by chance the curse. She told her husband about the curse of Lord Mahadev. The old couple together went to a forest and hurriedly improvisated a house boat. They loaded it with all the essentialities of life to last for twelve years. Besides these they placed their young son and daughter in the boat. Soon after the inundation overtook the earth drowning the whole of mankind as also earth. After long twelve years Mahadev's anger abated and he sent out his attendants to re-create the earth. The young boy and girl were discovered and God Mahadev adopted them as his wards. Some soil were from the teeth of an earth worm and the earth created again. The adopted boy and girl were asked to people it. God Mahadev had to try several contrivances before he could make the boy and the girl engage in copulation. Several children were born out of the union and their mother died soon after due to shame. Lord Mahadev divided these children into various pairs and established them in different parts of the world. Each pair became the ancestor of a caste or tribe. 

33. Informant: Shri B.C. Hajong (65), Bonda, Guwahati 19.5.98
Commentary: Although this myth is not specially concerned the origin of Hajongs but with that of the human race in general, the obvious implication is that the Hajongs explain the origin of their own race by this myth.

There is another myth current among the Hajongs who explain the origin of the Gods. The myth runs as follows:

**b) Story about the origin of Bastu deity puja**

Once upon a time, the king Harijat ruled in the State of Hashparana which capital was Munikuta Parbat. At that time a demon named Haigribasura appeared and started torturing people. His torture was unbearable. For the relief of the demon, the sages prayed to Lord Vishnu. Being satisfied, Lord Vishnu appeared Himself as Hayabriba (e.g. a horse and an elephant) who killed Haigribasura. From that time there was peace prevalent in the State and the king Harijat along with his pupils began to worship the Bastu deity or Hayagriba. The Hajongs worshipped Bastu deity from the unknown time. Thus, it is believed that the Bastu deity puja originated among the Hajongs.

Commentary: According to this myth the Hajongs consider themselves as primitive people and migrated from Hajo Parganah (Kamrup District) of Assam.

The following myth explains the origin of spirits.

34. P.C. Hajong: *Hajong Itihas*, Pp. 8-9
Once upon a time, a man had many goats and pigs. One day a disease broke out and killed his pigs, whereas his goats were carried away by a couple of leopards. One morning he woke up to notice the silence in his sties and pens. At the same time he heard the grunting and bleating in his neighbour's yard. At that moment his heart turned bad, because jealousy had entered it. A moila deo, an evil spirit, has become king of his ear, so he could hear nothing but the voice of his own grumbling mind. He sat hours together brooding over his neighbour's good fortune and refused the food his wife had prepared for him. He took his gun out to the forest and hunted the leopards until he had shot one. He opened its belly and took out the bile. This he smeared on the edge of a pot, after which he invited his neighbour to share a pot of beer with him. Soon after, the neighbour fell ill and died with terrible pain in his stomach. His wife called in the diviner, who pointed at the jealous neighbour who had lost all his goats and pigs, as the perpetrator of the sudden death. The envious man had to drink the trial poison which kills evil. Innocent people can drink it without after effect. The man drank it and died, for was he not a moila deo, an evil spirit? After his death, he could not be accepted by the manes of the ancestors in their clan village under the earth. Since then, he roams about as a moila deo, an ugly dwarf with ashy coloured skin and long dishevelled hairs, spreading a nauseating smell. He skills people when they walk alone in the forest and eat them like pork.

Commentary: Jealousy is the cause of much evil in this world. Most Hajong people agree on this point. Jealousy is itself often represented as an evil spirit.

35. Informant - N. Hajong (60) Dhanshri (Darrang) dt. 15.9.98
ii) Legend

Legends constitute an important sub-genre of the prose-narratives. They are deeply rooted in tradition. Legends are some kind of religious tales and there is no doubt that most of the legends do have a pronounced religious flavour but much of their importance attaches to their social and psychological aspects rather than the religious implication that they may have. Besides being of a religious nature they are related to historical events and heroes. The legends are also of an imaginary nature and in their transition from one generation to the next generation they are apt to be modified considerably. Defining legend W.R. Bascom says "Legends are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator or his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today. Legends are more often secular than sacred and their characters are human." 36 Legends recount the tell of wars, victories and heroic exploits of the legendary heroes and heroins. These heroes to which legends are attached command great respect and influence in society even if they are only imaginary figures.

Generally legends may be classified into the following sub genres:

1) Etiological legends.

2) Historical legends.

3) Mythical legends and

4) Religious legends.

The prose narratives of the Hajongs are rich in the field of legendary tales. Legends current in the Hajong society may easily fit in the above sub genres of legend. The following are some of the legends current among the Hajongs.

(a) A story of Jannetri Rasmani (a Hajong heroine)

Rasmani was a very courageous and straight forward lady of the Hajong community. The area where Rasmani lived was called Baheratali in the district of Goalpara. In the Hajong community there was an anti-British movement under the leadership of Rasmani. To the glory of the women of the Hajong community like the other women of Assam, it must be said that their contributions to the struggle for freedom was invaluable. The village women Defence parties were formed by Rasmani in the different parts of the Hajong area. Many women volunteers joined those village women Defence parties and their leaders were given regular training to meet any emergency situation against the British administration. During the time of Quit India movement, a group of the British military entered into a village named Baheratali on the bank of river, Someswari. At that time there were no male people in that village. Two military persons ravished two Hajong girls. In that context the Hajong women under the leadership of Rasmani came out in their thousands and took active part in the movement, in processions, demonstrations and picketing. Rasmani fought with dao, clods of earth against the armed might of the British rulers. One military commander asked them to disperse. The women remained firm and refused to budge unless the victimised two girls were released. The crowd pressed forward inspite of volleys of fire aimed at them and drew back only when
scores of people lay dead or injured on the ground. Rasmani lost her life in fighting with the British military. Bullets pierced Rasmani's heart, the crowd that followed her picked up her body yielding Surendra Hajong, a brave young man, to suffer the same fate. She indeed was the local leader and the soldier of freedom who sprang from the among the people and fought for the people. She was regarded as Jannetri amongst the Hajong society. The shooting and bayoneting under the very eyes of the British Govt., Rasmani along with the other Hajong women who had entrenched themselves in their village for fear of being molested by the military due to demonstration, was an act of diabolical cruelty which is too sickening even as a tale of repression.37

b) The story of the origin of the place, Karāibāri:

Kāshyap was a legendary hero of Hajongs. The area between Phulbari and Manakachar was called Karāibāri. In ancient time Karāibāri was full of jungle. The Hajongs disforested and cultivated for the crops in that area. Once a time in a hillock on the bank of the river, Kāl under the area of Karāibāri there appeared a monster. That strange animal was named Phaperāja. He started torturing and ate many people in the Karāibāri area which was dispeopled by leaps and bounds. The people were afraid to kill that animal. A man named Kāshyap who was outsider and came forward to kill that strange animal. He fought with the animal for a long time and killed it. In that context he become popular amongst the Hajongs. The people put Kāshyap on the throne. At present the area is known as Karāibāri. It might be possible that the

name of the area eg. Karaibari originated from his Kashyap/Kashyapnagar/ Kasumnagar/ Karaibari.  

(C) A Story of Lalit Hajong : A Hajong Hero :

Lalit Hajong was a leader of the rebellion in the outskrits of the district Goalpara and the rebellion was the so called Hajong- Riot which was in fact agrarian uprising of the peasantry against exploitation of their means of subsistence by the feudalism. Landless Hajongs entered into the contract of bonded labour with the land lords that they worked in the lands of the landlords without the wages besides giving them certain crops in the year by any means. There was consequently great discontent amongst the Hajong and they found expression through their mel; in the mouza of Lengura against that contract as well as new assessment of land revenue at enhanced rates under the leadership of Lalit Hajong. The people were however, in no mood to follow and bear both the contract of bonded labour system and any enhancement of land revenue. A series of mels were held from place to place and the slogan was "We would pay blood but we would not rice "In this way Lalit along with other Hajongs would fight against the bonded labour system for many years. In the long run he won in the battle. As a result Lalit was regarded as a hero in the Hajong society. 

d) Suriti, the friend of the Gods.

The people of Baruhajari had good crops one year after another. The rice, the groundnuts and the sweet potatoes are plentiful. However,

38. Hajong, P.C. : Hajong Itihas, Pp. 30-31
in their greed they forgot to bring sacrifices to the gods in the forest, to whom they owed all their prosperity. So the gods decided to withhold their boons for the years to come, until the people had learned gratitude.

So in the next season, the people sowed on the hills but nothing sprouted. They planted in the plains but nothing would grow. So the people set out for a hunt in the forest as there was now a famine in the land. At last the people were invisibly attacked by the God, "Whom did you ask for permission to hunt in our forest?" The gods of the ancestors were sovereign in it.

One day the women of the village went to collect firewood in the dry bushes. One woman found a tree with a green hole in the stem, out of which a golden liquid flowed: honey! She put her hand in the hole to scoop up some of it. But the hole contracted and cut off her hand. Each of the women who arrived did the same. Every woman had lost a hand in the hold, except Suriti, a young girl, who refused to come near the tree. When the other women asked her, she answered, "Do you think I did not know you were with the Evil one, Chokhdhapa deo?"

When they arrived at the village, the women disappeared in their huts and stayed there. But of course they could not hide their condition from their husbands. Immediately it turned out that all the women had lost a hand and it was this calamity at last which induced the elders to throw the oracle bones. These are the bones of certain animals. The bones indicated that a sacrifice must be made to the gods in the forest and only one person was allowed to enter the sacred forest: the young girl Suriti. She persuaded her mother to let her go into the forest of Gods. She set out and arrived finally in the forest. The gods had
forgotten what human hymns of worship sounded like. Then the gods made appear before her a basketful of rice cobs and told her to give these to the women. The basket was large and heavy but the gods helped her to put it on her head. She returned to the village with it. She handed a rice cob to each of the women in the village. They saw new hands begin to sprout out from their maimed wrists. So the people put Suriti on the throne as their queen.40

(iii) Tales

Tales are terms used to describe and classify fictional compositions which are handed down orally from unknown times. All tales are the product of human imagination. Tales, whether realistic and humorous, or religious and full of supernatural and magical incidents, have been produced by men and women. Tales have no other aim than entertainment. As has been observed by W. R. Bascom, "They are fiction pure and simple, devised not to instruct and edify the listener but only to amuse him. They belong to the region of pure romance."41 Generally speaking, tales are taken to be fanciful but it could be seen that in many cases, a custom or a rite or an actual event lies at the root of tales. Though tales travel and are adopted, some of the tales and motifs are rather fairly old and are closely linked with the modes of life and belief of particular communities. Regarding to the inter-relation among myths, legends and tales, it is that Bascom observes, "Myths, legends and tolk tales differ in their setting in time

40. Informant : S.N. Hajong (60) Bonda, Guwahati, dt. 8.11.98
41. Bascom, W.R. : op-cit, P. 119
and place, in their principal characters and more importantly, in the beliefs and attitudes associated with them. The myth contains narrative about the Gods and heavenly beings which are regarded as sacred. The legend deals with heroes and heroines believed to be real character. Of course tales contain a well proportioned structure and finished form.  

The Hajong term for tale is *Kirdchhau* said to derive from *Kāhini* or story, suggesting that the act of telling an account of what has happened. Tales do travel, for one can often notice a close relationship among many tales that may be found in various communities of Assam. The oral literature of the Hajong community is not so poor in respect of tales. The tales current among the Hajong may be classified into the following sub-genres:

1. Animal tales
2. Supernatural or wonderous tales,
3. Jokes or humorous tales,
4. Trickster tales,
5. Cumulative tales,
6. Tales of folk history.
7. Dilemma tales and
8. Incestuous tales.

42. Ibid, P. 119
43. Informant. N.M. Hajong (45) Dhamar, Goalpara, dt. 20.12.99
(1) Animal tales:

Animals play a large role in all popular tales. They appear in myths, especially in those of primitive people where the culture hero often has animal form, though he may be conceived of as acting and thinking like a man or even, on occasion, of having human shape. This tendency toward ascribing human qualities to animals also appears when the tale is clearly not in the mythical cycle. It is such non-mythological stories that we designate by the simple term animal tales. Tales dealing with animals are considerable in number but those told for amusement often reveal something of the intimate family life.

The oral literature of the Hajongs is not so poor in the tradition of animal tales. As instance of animal tales the following tale may be cited:

The Pig and the Dog

Once upon a time, one man whose name was Mambu, a chief of Damara village, had a pig and a dog. Both the pig and the dog were well fed at the chief's house and very friendly towards each other. Seeing them so fat and lazy the chief, Mambu ordered them to go to the field and plough the soil. Therefore the pig and the dog started leaving for the field early in the morning. The dog was cunning. He used to spend his time sleeping in the watch house. On the other hand, the pig used to cultivate the soil the whole day and return home tired. The dog would return a little earlier and lie down on the portico lolling his tongue. The pig would lie down to sleep as soon as he turned. So days passed and the time for planting came.

One day, the Chief, Mambu paid a visit the field and saw that only a part of the field had been cultivated. He got angry and in the evening asked the pig why so little cultivating had been done. The pig explained, "My friend remains in sleeping in the watch-house. It is I only who have to cultivate the soil." The chief, Mambu became very angry with the dog. Next day when the dog returned, the chief beat him and asked why he remained sleeping in lieu of cultivating. The dog said, "My friend, pig has told a lie. It is I who cultivate the soil. In fact constant cultivating has blunted my nails. You have seen how I lie down on the portico worn out and lolling my tongue. Have you seen him even gasping for his breath?" The chief, Mambu thought that the dog must have spoken the truth. He was annoyed with the pig and just to stop him from entering his house. He constructed a sty for the pig at the door.

Since then from the sty, the pig would address the dog and say, "Well, friend, you must be enjoying yourself inside the house. I don't get anything to eat out here." The dog would say sadly, "Well, I have indeed enough to eat but I have to stand a lot of beating too." Since then the pig remains outside and though the dog is allowed in, he is often given a kick or a blow.  

(2) Supernatural tales

Supernatural tales indicate those tales which show predominance of romantic, imaginative, magical devices of the heroes and heroines and their supernatural incidents. The supernatural tales narrate, "an
ordinary human beings encounter with superhuman world and his being endowed with qualities that enable him to perform supernatural acts. A supernatural tale is found to be a derivative or an echo of a tale having a classical source. Some of the tales are of the parable type and seen to carry a moral. The heroes and heroines of such tales belong to the mundane world of day to day life. Supernatural tales are not so few in Hajong society. The following is one of the popular supernatural tales current among them.

**Story of a Prince:**

In ancient time, there were a king and a Queen. They were happy. But they were childless. So every day they prayed in the temple of Lord Vishnu. One day Lord Vishnu answered their prayers. A son was born to them. When the son was 12 years old, the king fell ill. He sent for his son and advised him to look after the kingdom. Further he told his son to visit everyday the temple of Lord Vishnu and offer prayers to him.

The king did not recover and died. The prince grew up and got married. His bride stayed back in her parent's house. After a month the prince and his prime minister's son went to bring her. On the way they visited to the Vishnu temple. Near it there was a lake with beautiful lotus flowers. The prince plucked some flowers and offered them at the temple. He promised that on his return he would offer more lotus flowers to Lord Vishnu.

But the prince overstayed in his father-in-laws house. On his return he found that the lake was dry. There were no lotus flowers in

46. Linda Degh: *Legend Genres* in Dorson (ed) Folklore and Folklore, P. 62
the lake. He was ashamed and upset. He told that if he could not offer lotus flowers to Lord Vishnu, he would offer his head to him. He took out his sword and cut off his head. After sometime his friend came looking for him. Finding the prince lying dead he was overcome with grief. He took out his sword and cut off his own head. After some time the princess came to the temple looking for the prince and his friend. She was horrified to see two dead bodies. She said if her husband was dead, she would also kill herself and picked up the sword. Just then, Lord Vishnu appeared before her. Lord Vishnu said to her that she should not kill herself and whatever she wanted. He would give her. The princess begged kindly to bring these two people back to life. Lord Vishnu agreed and advised her to take the two heads and put them near the bodies. Then covered them up with that sheet. The princess did as she was told. Thus the prince and the prime minister's son came back to life. 

(3) Jokes or humorous tales:

Tales which tell about the humorous purposes and which usually refer to short anecdotes are known as jokes or humorous tales. Such tales and animal tales are often related. Rightly does observe Thompson, "Short anecdotes told for humorous purposes are found everywhere. Among some they are usually animal tales but even where this is true the action is essentially that characteristic of men. Important themes producing these popular jests are the absurd acts of foolish persons (numskill tale), deceptions of all kinds and obscence situations. There

47. Informant: Shri N.M. Hajong (45) Dhamar Dist. Goalpara, dt. 10.6.98
is a tendency for jests to form cycles. Since humorous adventures become attached to some character who thereafter attracts into his orbit all kinds of jests, appropriate and inappropriate. A large proportion of the most popular anecdotes and jests are concerned with cleverness.

The jokes or humorous tales are not scanty in Hajong verbal art. The following is the example of the jokes or humorous tales extant among the Hajongs.

**The old couple and the monkeys:**

Once upon time, there lived an old man and an old woman who had no children. One day while the old man was planting sweet potatoes, some monkeys came there. One of the monkeys said to the oldman that his method of planting was wrong.

The oldman asked the monkeys that what would be the correct method of planting. One of the monkeys told him that he (oldman) should boil it and planted it with sign of bamboo stick. If he does this, he can find it fully grown up as soon as early. Thus they went away.

The oldman believed in what the monkeys said. He went to the home and advised his wife to boil the sweet potatoes and did the work accordingly. In the mid-night the monkeys came there to see whether the sweet potatoes are planted according to their instructions or not. When they found it in the same manner as they had desired, they took the boiled sweet potatoes and ate all sweet potatoes.


49. Ibid: Pp. 188-189
The next morning the old couple woke up early and did not see the sweet potatoes in the field. They came to understand the trick of the monkeys. They were very much angry with the monkeys and planned to kill them. The oldman advised to his wife that he should pretend to be dead and she would cry near him. Thus the oldman pretended to be dead lying on the floor and he kept a stick near him. The oldwoman was sitting near her husband and started weeping.

On hearing the weeping of the old woman the monkeys came there and enquired what had happened. When the monkeys approached near the oldman, he sprang up holding the stick in his hand and started beating up the monkeys. Some of the monkeys are died. The oldman carried the meats of the dead monkeys to sell in the village. Whenever the oldman was going, there was a kite flying on the sky and saying about the meats of the monkeys which were killed by him. On the whole day the poor oldman could not sell even a single piece of meats. He tired and went to home in the evening. Next morning the oldman went to the field in search of the kite to kill. When he was waiting in search of the kite in the field a crab was biting on the right leg. After this incident the old couple gave up the idea of killing the kite and lived happily.\textsuperscript{50}

(4) Trickster tale

Tales of this class are those which cluster round a clever rogue who goes about cheating others. The peculiarity of such tales lies in the cleverness of the trickster. The trickster may on occasion be deceived himself. Besides the trickster plays important role in the name of an

\textsuperscript{50} Shri B.C. Hajong (69) Guwahati, dt. 19.5.98
animal. As has been observed by Stith Thompson, "The adventures of the Trickster, even when considered by themselves are inconsistent. Part are the result of his stupidity and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. Such a trickster as Coyote, therefore, may appear in any of three roles, the beneficent culture Hero, the clever deceiver or the numskull". Trickster tales are replete with clever tricks and foolish mishaps of the tricksters.

There are a few trickster tales extant among the Hajong society. The following is the example of these tales.

**The tiger and the jackal.**

There were a tiger and a jackal in a forest. The tiger was the maternal uncle of the jackal. One day the tiger said, "Nephew, you are sitting idly and wasting your time, why not cultivate a piece of land?" The jackal said, "Uncle, I have neither land nor oxen, how can I cultivate?" The tiger said, "Very well, you will have land and cattle, only the job of cultivation is yours." So the jackal started cultivation and raised some paddy. It was fine paddy the jackal raised. When the time of harvesting arrived the tiger came and said, "Nephew, it is time to gather in the crop." The jackal said, "But uncle, what share would you take? One fifth of the crop or -----?" The tiger said, "No dividing that way. I will take the top and you take the bottom." The jackal said, "That would be unfair. What would I do with the stalks?" "Oh, you will chew them up," said the tiger. What could the jackal do? The tiger carried off the grain, leaving the stalks.

Next year the tiger again suggested that the jackal cultivate a piece of land. The jackal said, "No, uncle, I won't unless you agree to a fresh division of the crop." The tiger said, "All right, this time it is your turn to make division." The jackal said, "Very well, this year too you take the top and I take the bottom." The tiger agreed. The jackal this year raised sugarcane. When it was time to harvest, the jackal invited the tiger to carry his share. The tiger came and took away the tops of the sugarcanes. The jackal filled himself with the sweet sap of the canes while the tiger chewed the tops and did not find anything there.

Again the season of cultivation arrived. The tiger said angrily, "Nephew, you are not to cheat me again. This time the tops and the bottoms are mine, you will have only the root." The jackal said, "All right, uncle, it will be as you say." This time the jackal planted sweet potato. The tiger came, carried off the top and bottom of the crop, leaving the jackal the root. The jackal had a good feed while the tiger had only the haum. He was furious and came roaring. He said, "You rogue of a nephew, I am going to eat you up." The jackal fled, crying, "Pheu, Pheu, Pheu!" It is said that whenever there is a tiger in the neighbourhood the jackal gives an indication by crying in that manner.  

(5) Cumulative tales.

The cumulative tales are narrated in the spirit of pure fun and are in the nature of formula tales. In this type, the pattern is more important than the plot. In the cumulative tale proper, the action, characters, names, speeches, or whatever is the feature of the accumulation, builds up to an impasse or a climax and often, but not

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52. Shri N.M. Hajong (45) Vill. Dliamar Dist. Goalpara dt. 12.11.98
always goes through the list again in reverse in order to resolve the plot."\textsuperscript{53} Stith Thompson observes, "The cumulative tale always works up to a long final routine containing the entire sequence. The person examining cumulative tales, therefore, has only to look at this final formula to learn at that is to be learned about the whole tale."\textsuperscript{54} The cumulative tale uses repetition in its narrative which is the most distinctive peculiarity of the primitive language. The impasses or climax is seen in the following nursery rhyme which is extant among the Hajongs.

\textit{O stone, O stone,}

\textit{Why did you fall on my son ?}

\textit{For the black elephant threw away me.}

\textit{O elephant, why did you throw away the stone ?}

\textit{For sparrow fell on my ear.}

\textit{O sparrow, why did you fall on the black elephant ?}

\textit{For the banana tree fell on my nest.}

\textit{O the banana tree, why did you fall on the nest of sparrow ?}

\textit{For the pig destroyed me.}

\textit{O pig, why did you destroy the banana ?}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{53} Funk and Wagnalls: Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend, Vol. I, P. 269
\textsuperscript{54} Stith Thompson: Op-cit, P. 230
\end{flushleft}
For the gourd fell on my back.

O gourd, why did you fall on the back of pig?

For the squirrel destroyed my tree.

O squirrel, why did you ruin the gourd tree?

For the frog ruined my ladder jumping.

O frog, why did you ruin his ladder?

For the ant bit me.

O the ant, why did you bite the frog?

"Go under my belly," the frog said to me without giving the road.

While going he sat upon me, then I bite.  

(6) Tales of Folk History

Tales of this class indicate those tales which have historical basis about the person or place. P.Goswami observes, "The legend or folk history refers to tales which may have a historical basis about some person or place." Tales of this genre tell of migration, wars, victories and heroic exploits of past heroes. Such tales are regarded as true by the narrator as well as by the audience. In the Hajong society there are a few tales which contain elements of folk history. Following is an example of this type of tales current in the Hajong language.

55. Informant: N. Hajong (65) Dhanshri Dist Darrang dt. 13.12.98
56 P. Goswami: Tales of Assam, Introduction, P. XIII
The Legend of King Padangsku

Once upon a time, there was a king of lunar dynasty named Kartyabirjun. He was one of the greatest Kshatriya kings of the Mahabharata era. One day the king, along with his retainers, went on a hunting trip. While pursuing game he lost track of time and before long night came on. He, therefore, went to the hermitage of the sage Jamadagni. The sage had a cow known as Kāmadhenu (wish-fulfilling cow). The cow could give whatever was asked for. The sage, with the co-operation of Kāmadhenu, managed to feed the king as well as his large retinue. The king felt tempted to possess this wonderful cow. The sage was not willing to part with her, but the king used force and carried away the animal.

When Jamadagni's son Parasurama came to learn of the matter, he grew furious and, after slaying Kartyabirjuna, brought the cow back. But as soon as Parasurama left home on a pilgrimage, the king's sons came to the hermitage and after killing Jamadagni, carried away the cow. When Parasurama returned after some days and learnt of the atrocious conduct of the princes, he grew indignant and promising to his mother that he would destroy all the Kshatriyas, he went round the world twenty-one times and slew every Kshatriya that he could find. At the time of death of king Kartyabirjuna, his queen Swarupa Devi was pregnant. The queen fled away from the capital and took refuge in the hermitage of the sage Kamdatta in ancient Kamrup. When she lay asleep God Mahadeva came to her in a dream and said, "For you are going to have a son who will be famous and rule the world." The queen gave birth to a son who came to be known as Padangsku who occupied the ancient Hajo township including the temple there. He is a
historical figure of the ancient Assam. He started what is known as the Kshatriya dynasty. His descendants were the Hajongs including Kumar Bhaskar Barman.  

(7) Dilemma tales

The term dilemma refers to tales which may have a confusion of mind and classifies fictional compositions which are handed down orally from unknown times. They may be taken very seriously by the people in primitive communities. Tales of this class constitute an important sub-genre of folk-fales or prose-narratives. In all countries some persons in the community usually old men or old women heard these tales in their childhood and they themselves told them to their grandchildren or other children. In this way such tales have survived. Dilemma tales may be defined as "narratives that tear the listeners with a choice among alternatives, such as which of the characters has done the best, deserves a reward or should with an agreement or a care in the court."  

The dilemma tales are a few in the Hajong verbal tradition. As instance of dilemma tale in Hajong, the tale of "The Egg Which won't Get cooked" may be cited.

Tale of the Egg which won't get cooked

One morning a man bought an egg and asked his wife to get it cooked by putting it in boiling rice. His wife smiled and put the egg in the pan of rice. After some time she took it out but found that it was

57. D. N. Hajong (70) Bonda, Guwahati, dt. 14.12.98
58. W.R. Bascom : Op-cit, P. 1
still hard. She kept it away and again put it in boiling rice in the evening. The egg did not soften yet. Next morning she again put the egg in boiling rice. When she found that the egg was still hard, she said to her husband, "you are getting on in years, but you have not learned how to find a good egg. "Why, what's the matter?" asked her husband."I have boiled the egg several times but it does not get cooked. It is not good." Her husband took the egg, threw away the shell and ate it up with a pinch of salt. His wife was surprised at this and said, "We too used to eat eggs at my home, but this type of eggs must be different."  

(8) Incestuous tales

Incestuous tale indicates those tales which show an incestuous relation between man and woman. They centre round an incest tabu. Incest may be brother sister incest, son-in-law mother-in-law incest and the like. The oral literature of the Hajongs is not so rich in respect of incestuous tales.

Following is an example of such tales.

Tale of Sukharam and Sushama

In ancient times a certain old couple lived in the village Dhamerghat. They had one grand son and a grand daughter. Their names were Sukharam and Sushama respectively. They were brother and sister. The old couple had no son or daughter living with them. When they came of age and it was time for their marriage Sukharama developed love for his sister. The old couple desired and planned

59. D.N. Hajong (70), Bonda, Guwahati, dt. 14.12.98
secretly to get the brother and sister married. Once the old man went out and after returning told their grand son and grand daughter that a bride for Sukharam had been selected and the preparation for the marriage was going on.

One day the old woman spread the paddy in the sun to dry for rice that would be necessary for the marriage. When the birds sat on the paddy and started eating them the old woman drove the birds saying, "Go away, do not eat the paddy. My grandson and grand daughter are going to marry and this paddy is meant for the marriage."

Sushama heard what her grand mother was saying. She thought about the meaning of the words of her grandmother. She knew that brother and sister could not be married. If they got married they would be the laughing stock of the society. In order to save herself from his wicked brother she straightway flew into the sky. Sukharam saw her and he also followed her. Sushama showed him her back and abused him bitterly in the name of their mother. She flew above the clouds and the pursuing Sukharam began to roar just like a tiger with anger. Suskama showed him her back again and again and that become the sparkle of lightning in the clouds. The voice of Sukharam became the roar of thunder.60

3. Proverbs.

A proverb is generally a sentence that perceptibly broken in the middle expressing a moral lesson. They are among the shortest forms of traditional expression. Through the proverb there are given some suggestions of agriculture and dealt with the behaviour of the people.

60. Informant : Shri R.K.Rai Hajong (47) Guwahati, dt. 25.12.98
Roger D. Abrahams has rightly observed, "Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse as well as in the more highly structured situations of education and judicial proceedings. Each proverb is a full statement of an approach to a recurrent problem."

The proverb has been defined traditionally as sayings consisting of quadripatiate structure. It is the observations and expressions in a concise but pregnant form of common people. It consists of truth, found on long experiences in different spheres of life around.

The proverb may be termed as the objective correlative and hence it is an expression of specific social situation or it is a chain of events. As such it has a definite purpose. The purpose is to evoke a definite emotion or attitude.

Proverbs, generally, handed down from the time immemorial generation to generation, not only enliven the speech of the ordinary villager but also sets before him standards of value and codes of conduct. Proverbs are common among the Hajong society. In the Hajong society there is a mass of sayings frequently mouthed by the ordinary cultivator and the unlettered old woman. It covers a wide range of things, from the light hearted commentary to the sarcastic mockery.

The verbal art of the Hajongs is rich in proverbs and proverbial sayings. Many of the Hajong proverbs are similar to that of the non-tribal Assamese people.

The proverb is known as *thātki* in the Hajong dialect. A few proverbs are furnished below as specimen of different types.

*ghan ghan dib āli /

tehe pāb pāthārate pāni // ⁶²

The above proverb is based on cultivation and domestic affairs. According to this proverb, during time of sali cultivation in the field the people should make a small road for storage of water. Otherwise there will not grow good crops. Likewise, as people sow, so people reap. The proverb suggests that without the labour man cannot prosperous.

The following proverb contains the similar idea.

*hawk nahawk ruwani

pāthare mato chuwani // ⁶³

i.e., Some women or girls donot know how to plant the crops in the field and they are thought of symbol of beauty. Such people cannot be active in life. As a result they shall not be developed.

A few proverbs of the Hajong community are involving in the over ambitious, the luxury thought, the immoderate and the hypocrisy. A selection of the Hajong proverbs may substantiate our hypothesis, i.e.,

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⁶² Informant : K.R. Hajong (50), Dhamar, Dist. Goalpara, dt. 28.12.98

⁶³ Informant : N. M. Hajong (45), Dhamar, Dist. Goalpara, dt. 28.12.98
Chukidār chukidār ghugu māshāṅg kāṅi
rānā tīmāi dikhile lāthi thuīau jāi //

i.e., the meat of a dove and the beautiful girl both are seductive for the people.

Some proverbs of the Hajongs are involved with centering around the women folk and also come in contact with hard view towards the women folk. The following proverb maintains similar hard view towards the womenfolk eg.,

tīrī laiau girī /

tīrī laiau jāi hatchirī //

ie, The literal meaning of the proverb is that some women after the marriage can able to keep their husbands' houses much the better and some women after marriage their husbands' houses have to be ruined.

In the Hajong society, there are a few proverbs which are advising the acceptance of man's social and economic position. Proverbs associated with weather forcast among the Hajongs, most of such proverbs similar to the Dāk- pravacans, i.e., maxims associated with Dāk.

Here is an example:

64. Informant: Same as the reference No. 63, dt. 28.12.98
65. Informant: Same as the reference No. 63, dt. 28.12.98
puhe Ḩā[ch pashime bās

uttare bāhā dakshine dhāoiā //66

i.e.,: Newly construction of a house in the homestead there should dig a tank in the east, there can pet duck and economic condition of the family can be improved, (2) in the west there should plant bamboo, then the wind cannot destroy the houses, (3) in the north there should construct the house and (4) in the south there should open and then from the south the wind which blows fit for health.

A few proverbs which are current among the Hajong society associated with laziness and negligence of duty. The following proverb contains the similar idea.

garu ālchīā pani khāi

manuh ālchia bela chāi // 67

i.e.,: The literal meaning of the proverb is that the ox which drinks water frequently during the time of ploughing, can be regarded as lazy. Likewise the man during the time of ploughing or work, sees toward the sun frequently, can be regarded as lazyperson.

The proverbs are generally current in the Hajong society have no major differences with that used by the non tribal Assamese people. This is due to the Hajong people have become so intimate and well acquainted with the non Hajong Assamese people that they have assimilated many points of each other's culture into their own and have made them integral part of their own social conduct.

66. Informant : Same as the reference No. 63, dt. 28.12.98
67. Informant : Same as the reference No. 63, dt. 28.12.98
4. Riddles

Riddle is a puzzling question and almost constitutes an amusement. Children and old people often have what may be called riddle sessions in which the perplexing and answering of the riddles are gone through great recreation. Roger D. Abrahams has rightly observed, "Riddles are questions that are framed with the purpose of confusing or testing the wits of those who do not know the answer. They are commonly called forth during "riddle session" - special occasions during which such witty devices may be used in a properly playful contest situation." 68

Riddles are a part and parcel of oral literature. They appear to the intelligence and wisdom of the folk rather than to their sentiments. Every riddle carries a piece of wisdom and coats in humorous and intelligent language.

The riddle asks for the use of some kind of special knowledge in the logical process by which the answer is arrived at. There are a number of joking questions involving with riddles. These joking questions may be called reverse riddles. The riddles are the most attractive and historically interesting in the language. Some of them are very old and some are newly composed or adopted. The objects of the riddles are the most common ones in our daily life. This is due to fact that the riddles are found every nook and corner of the country. It contains both recreational and educational elements to an unusual degree. The young people get amusement as well as the old people get instructive value from the riddles.

68. Roger D. Abrahams: Op-cit. P. 185
From the point of view of riddles, the Hajongs are not so poor. Among them perplexing of riddles is not restricted to any definite time and place. But the leisure time is generally considered as suitable for telling riddles. The Hajongs discuss the riddles in the village festivals or social and religious gatherings and marriage ceremonies, etc. They are generally asked riddles by recital terms while others have to answer.

Riddle is called as *selak* in the Hajong dialect. The word *selak* obviously corruptions from the sankrit *sloka* whatever the name given to them, riddles are very popular among the Hajong community. Some of riddles are common among the Hajongs of the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, a few of them are furnished below:

*tipuchh pakhi mukh dhalā*

*udauni nāi ak phālā* / 70

i.e., [the mouth of a lark is white, there is no one side] Answer: Fired rice.

*Karebārit gurguria*

*dasakanit dhuwa olāi* / 71

i.e., [There is sound in Karebari and it appears smoke in Daskani] Answer: Hubble bubble.

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70. Informant: Same as the reference No. 69, dt. 29.12.98

71. Informant: Same as the reference No. 69, dt. 29.12.98
In the Hajong society there are current a very few riddles which are the poetic and metaphoric in character that are the most attractive in the language. The following riddle contains the similar idea:

\[
tanger \text{ uphur } \text{ tong} \\
ai \text{ tong bhāngle ghare gusti rang } 72
\]

i.e., [There is a bed stead besides bedstead, if this bed stead is destroyed the house turns into colour] Answer: Boiled rice.

\[
āli āli jāi \\
mātha tuli chāi 73
\]

i.e., [It goes on the road and sometimes it sees to bring its head] Answer: Needle.

72. Informant: Same as the reference No. 69, dt. 29.12.98
73. Informant: Sri N. M. Hajong (45) Dhamar dt. 30.12.98
74. Informant: Same as the reference No. 73, dt. 30.12.98
i.e., [A bird which has no egg, a fish which has eyes its head, a tree which dies with its origin leaves] Answer: bat, cray fish and wild knol-khol

A few riddles which are current among the Hajong society are similar with that used of the non-Hajong Assamese people. The following riddles have been taken here as specimen:

*ekdāl khere*

*gotai gharta bere l* 

i.e., [A single thatch covers the whole house] Answer: A lamp.

*enu enu enu*

*dhorbār nāi thenu l* 

i.e., [there is no handle to catch it] Answer: An egg.

The above example of riddles are masterly blending of mythological lore and general experience. Another specimen of this kind is as follows:

*Saragar pe poril lātim*

*lātim bale moi kiya phātim l* 

i.e., [A top fell from heaven, it says, why should I burst?] Answer: the mustard seed.

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75. Informant: N. Hajong (50), Matia (Goalpara) dt. 13.8.98
76. Informant: Same as the reference No. 75, dt. 13.8.98
77. Informant: Same as the reference No. 75, dt. 13.8.98
It is interesting to note that a few riddles which do not contain the similar idea but the elements of humour have prevalent. The following is an example in point.

\[māmā thēt gelu\]

\[kāṭhākhaṇ bhijālau\]

\[sukhābā norlu \] 78

i.e., [I went to my maternal uncle’s house, I wetted a blanket but could not dry it ] Answer - The tongue.

The riddles are not only popular among the aged persons but these are equally popular among the children in the Hajong community. Generally the children tell the riddles at the time of cattle grazing in the field.

Here is an example:

\[chit pakhilā\]

\[tini mur dah thong\]

\[kot dekhilau \] 79

i.e., [ The fleeting butterly, where have you seen three heads and ten legs?] Answer - A cultivator and two bullocks.

A few riddles express the suggestion or advice or jokes. The following one is supposed to be replied by the old woman to the students regarding the name of her husband in joking way and replying that her husband’s name ;

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78. Informant : Sri B.C. Hajong (65) Guwahati, dt. 23.8.98

79. Informant : Same as the reference No. 78
i.e., [ Fourteen is multiplied by four and add four, the students come on line, my husband's name in that ] Answer - sixty.

"The sixty" here is name of the husband of an old woman. The students asked an old woman regarding the name of her husband. In ancient time generally a woman could not express the name of the husband. So one or two also involve the solution of some problem of arithmetic.

In this way we have found among the riddles of the Hajongs their attitude and ideas of the soil. The composition of the riddles are the themes of both living as well as non-living things which form a part of their day-to-day life.

(B) Written Literature

A written literature records the cultural history of a nation. It is permanent. So written literature is based on written scripts of a language. It is a part and parcel of culture. Without a written literature a nation cannot keep its own cultural history. R.N. Sharma has rightly observed, "Literature is based on language which plays, by no means, a mean part in man's socialization. The credit for the complex order of human

80. Informant : Same as the reference No. 78, dt. 13.8.98
society must go to man’s linguistic superiority over other animals and the language one picks up in the family. 

From what has been said above, it is clear that in every society the culture, conduct and values are very strongly related to the written literature.

The Hajongs speak a language belonging to the Indo - Aryan linguistic family. The Hajongs of all section now use the Jharua dialect, a mixture of Assamese and Bengali languages. Majority of them living in the plains of Assam, particularly the younger section, cannot speak their language and for education as well as for day to day exchange of thoughts the people use the Assamese language. The Hajongs residing in the hilly areas, however, are maintaining their language in tact. Of late, an effort has been made to acquaint the younger sections with their traditional language.

As regards the Hajong language it is true that this language is rich in vocabulary and is noted for its phonological feature. But though this language is still current among the Hajongs, in Assam and some areas of North East India, yet we do not find any inscription in this language.

Although the Hajong language cannot proud of a written literature in their own inscription, yet it is rich in various branches of oral literature.

With a view to propagate the Hajong language and culture the youths are coming forward. The written literature of the Hajong community are inscribed mostly in the Assamese language other than a very few books in Bengali.

81. Sharma, R.N.: *Op-cit*, P. 251
The following books are written in the Assamese language. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of books</th>
<th>Name of authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hajong Itihas</td>
<td>Mr. Prafulla Ranjan Hajong Sarkar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hajong Gahen</td>
<td>Mr. Dwijendra Nath Hajong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hajong Loko Sanskriti</td>
<td>Mr. Bhabesh Das.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tandrala Phul</td>
<td>Mr. Ratan Kr. Raj Hajong.</td>
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</table>

Besides, the following a very few books are written in Bengali and published from Calcutta. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of books</th>
<th>Name of authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Je Sangramer Sech Nai</td>
<td>Mr Pramath Gupta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mukti Juddhe Adibashi</td>
<td>Mr. Pramath Gupta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now there is a good sign of Hajong dialect. Besides the books, there are the magazines written in the Hajong dialect but the inscriptions are in the Assamese language. The following are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Magazines</th>
<th>Name of editors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dohar</td>
<td>Mr. Kanu Ram Hajong, Dhamar, Lakhipur (Goalpara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Holak</td>
<td>edited by Tura Cultural Association, W. Garo Hills, Tura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sengnili</td>
<td>Mr. Kanu Ram Hajong, Lakhipur (Goalpara)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spokesman</td>
<td>(ed) by North East Dev Committee, Tura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chetona</td>
<td>(ed) by Meghalaya Hajong Dev. Committee, Tura.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Souvenir</td>
<td>(ed) by North-East India Hajong Dev. Committee on occasion of its Golden Silver Jubilic, Tura.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now the Hajong young generation comes forward for the development of its language and culture not only through their written books and magazines but through the newspapers also. There are two newspapers which are edited quarterly. The following are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Newspapers</th>
<th>Name of Editors</th>
<th>Name of Publishers with address.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rao (Voice in English)</td>
<td>Mr. Hajong Arnab</td>
<td>Mr. Anil Kr. Hajong, Tura, West Garo Hills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jinguwa</td>
<td>Mr. Samiran Hajong</td>
<td>Mr. Paresh Hajong, Tikrikilla (Goalpara)²²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact, it is seen that there are writers among the Hajongs. They are also lesser known due to the lack of written literature and studies on them. Of late, the young people give interest about the literature and write their language through the medium of Assamese.

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⁸² Informant: Mr. R.K. Rai Hajong (47) Guwahati dt. 24.8.98.