Bhaṭimā :

Bhaṭimā is a kind of prayer or eulogy. The word bhaṭimā is derived from the Sanskrit word bhaṭṭa: bhaṭṭa > bhaṭṭimā > bhaṭṭimā > bhaṭimā. The songs sung by the bhāṭas are known as bhaṭimā. Bhāṭas are generally a kind of professional singers or minstrels. In due course the songs sung in praise or condemnation came to be called bhaṭimā after the term bhāṭa.¹ Bhāṭa’s songs may be compared with the English ‘Ode’.

In India, during the time of the Rajputs, cāraṇas used to sing in the praise of kings and the high officers. The bharata-singers of Gujarat are of this type. Śaṅkaraadeva creates two characters of bhāṭa in his Rukmiṇiharaṇa-nāṭa, viz, Surabhi and Haridāsa, the former is from the city of Kuṇḍina and the latter from Dvārakā. Śaṅkaraadeva, during his pilgrimage, perhaps, used to meet such bhāṭas in different places while he was travelling from place to place. He seems to have been impressed by these wandering minstrels/singers which might have prompted him to introduce/create such characters in his plays.

Be that as it may, we come across four classes of bhaṭimās in Assamese literature. Śaṅkaraadeva is the mastermind behind introducing bhaṭimā-composition in Assamese literature. He composed three types of bhaṭimās, viz, Deva-bhaṭimā, Rāja-bhaṭimā and Nāṭakiya-bhaṭimā. His chief disciple

¹. H. K. Sharma, Assamiya Sāhityat Dṛṣṭipat, p. 79
Madhavadeva adds *Gurubhātīma* to this list.

(a) *Deva-bhātīmās* were composed in praise of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa or Rāma. These were independent compositions and not included in the dramas. The best specimen of *Deva-bhātīma* composed by Śaṅkaradeva is the one which is in Sanskrit. The song is in *Totaka* metre and the first few lines are as follows:

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madhu dānava dāraṇa deva varāṁ /
vara-vārijalocana cakra-dharaṁ //
dharaṇidhara dharaṇa dhyeya param //
paramārthavidyāśubhanāśakaram // etc.
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(b) *Rāja-bhātīmās* were composed in praise of kings or royal officers. Śaṅkaradeva composed two *Rāja-bhātīmās* in praise of the Koch king Naranārāyaṇa. The *bhātīma* beginning with the words —

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jaya jaya malla-nṛpati rasawāna /

yākeri guṇa-gaṇa sama nāhi āna // —
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was said to have composed when Śaṅkaradeva came to the king's court for the first time.

(c) *Guru-bhātīma* is a penegyric composed in the praise of and to pay homage to the Preceptor by Madhavadeva which remains a symbol of *Guru-bhakti* at the hearts of his followers.

(d) The *Nāṭakiya-bhātīmās* were meant only for the *nāṭakas* : There are three types of *bhātīmās* in Śaṅkarite plays. Two of them are compulsory in a *nāṭaka*, — one at the beginning and other at the end, which is called
Muktimaṅgala-bhaṭīmā. The third kind of bhaṭīmās are given in the middle of a nāṭaka sung by the dramatic characters like Bhāṭas, and they contain description of the beauty or quality of the hero or the heroine. In the first two kinds of bhaṭīmās, the eulogy of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma or any other incarnation of Viṣṇu is sung by the Sūtradhāra.

The Muktimangala-bhaṭīmā may be compared with the Bharata-vākyya of Sanskrit dramas. At the end of a play the hero or a religious person prays God seeking welfare of all, — the audience as well as all those participating in the performance. An example of Muktimangala-bhaṭīmā of Śaṅkaradeva’s nāṭakas is given below :

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{mīna-rūpe} : & \text{ pralaya-payasi : satyabrata jo tārile } / \\
\text{kūrūma-rūpe} : & \text{ khīra-sāgara : mathane mandara dharile } / \\
\text{sūkara-rūpe} : & \text{ hiraṇya-vidāri : deva-bhaya kaya trāṇa } / \\
\text{sohi-hari-teri} : & \text{ karatu nitya : mukuti-maṅgala vidhāna } / \\
\end{align*} \]

The purpose of this bhaṭīmā is to wish the welfare of the audience.\(^2\)

The general characteristics of a bhaṭīmā is its word formations. “Abundant use of puns and alliterations form almost a common characteristic of the bhaṭīmās, while metaphors and similies also occur here and there.”\(^3\)

Unlike the Ankīyā-nāṭas, the KH contains the bhaṭīmā in praise of

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2. Vide, M. Neog, Ankīyā nāṭar technique, in the Śāṅkarī Śāhīyar Samikṣā, p. 152
3. Vide, H.C. Bhattacharya, Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and the Stage (from the earliest times upto 1940), pp. 12-14
Śiva and Pārvatī. It is given as a prayer sung by the Māgadhasūta-vandhinas which are described as Vairāginas (travelling singer). The bhaṭīma runs as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
  jaya & jaya \text{ śaṅkara} & bhakta \text{ dayākara} \\
  \text{satata} & \text{ pramathagaṇacārī} & \\
  \text{ripukula} & \text{nāśaka} & bhuvana \text{ vikāśaka} \\
  \text{viṣama-garala-galadhārī} & \\
  \text{bhujakṛtaśaṅgama} & \text{vipulabhujaṅgama} \\
  \text{maṇḍalamaṇḍanakārī} & \\
  \text{sakalasurasura} & \text{sevitasuravara} \\
  \text{himagiri-vipina-vihārī} & \\
  \text{paramakṛpaṇidhi} & \text{vihitasuratavidhi} \\
  \text{sundaranatavaraveśa} & \\
  \text{nijapadasevaka} & \text{devakāpālaka} \\
  \text{jaṭilasupiṅgalakeśa} & \\
  \text{māritaśambhara} & \text{vairidigambara} \\
  \text{devanikhilakhalakāla} & \\
  \text{saha parivāraka} & \text{nṛpāsvasimhaka} \\
  \text{śaṅkara kara pratipāla} & 
\end{align*}
\]