Chapter VI

BALLADS AND PROSE NARRATIVES OF THE MUSLIMS

ORAL NARRATIVES

Narration is ageless. Man since the dawn of civilization have been singing songs, telling stories to entertain as well as to transmit knowledge in different context of human life. Specially at evening time or leisure time when there was no T.V. or Radio or other media, grandmothers told stories by fireside or in the yard with their children. The village people gathered in the ‘village chowk’ and attended the ‘puthi parha’ programmes, folk dramas etc. “The impulse to tell a story and the need to listen to it have made narrative the natural companion of man through out the history of civilization.” It is seen that story telling has been an integral part of the cultures of all societies through human history. “......... narratives mirror the ethnography of the culture.”


Myths, legends and folktales have been accepted as the three basic form of narratives of universal distribution. These three have generally been taken as prose narratives forms in western folklore scholarship. It is however to be noted that this three fold classification of narratives does not apply to folklore material in all societies and secondly
such narrative genres are not necessarily in prose forms in all societies. Thus in various north eastern societies, both tribal and non-tribal, the lines between three categories – myth, legend and tale – are not very clearly drawn. While folktales normally do have the prose character other narrative items which have the contents generally associated with myths and legends are more often than not in the verse form and they are chanted or sung. This is particularly true of items connected with ritualistic beliefs and practices.

Ballads are also narratives – stories told in song; and there are cante fables which are tales told in prose but interspersed with sung portions. Though ballad is a kind of folk poetry, still it has been dealt with narratives, while tales myths and legends are prose narrations, ballad is a verse narrative. Sometimes a tale is also transformed into a ballad which can be called a prose ballad.

BALLAD AND ITS CLASSIFICATIONS

Ballad is a compound of folklore, legend and history. It is a form of narrative folk song, developed in the Middle Ages in Europe to which has been applied very ambiguously the name ballad (Danish vise, Spanish romance, Russian belina etc.). The modern nationalism grew up as a world phenomenon after the American and French revolution. People brought attention back on the customs, songs and tales of their locality. The interest in ballad also lies in the rise of nationalism.
The term ‘ballad’ is from Provencal ‘balad’, a dancing song. The Oxford Dictionary defines ballad as ‘a simple, spirited poem in short stanzas, narrating some popular story.’ This definition is narrow and does not bring out the significance of folk ballad. Kittredge describes ballad as “a song that tells a story, to take the other point of view – a story told in song.”

*Encyclopedia Britannica* defines ballad as “a comparatively long narrative song which depicts a single incident or incidents through the content, style and designation of the folk. It is easily understood by almost all members of a folk group, and is learnt and transmitted through oral tradition from generation to generation.”

So the fundamental characteristic of ballad can be summed up as – (i) A ballad is narrative, (ii) A ballad is sung, (iii) A ballad belongs to the folk in content, style and designation, (iv) A ballad focuses one single incident, (v) A ballad is impersonal. A ballad is a story of the four elements common to all narratives – action, character, setting and theme – the ballad emphasises the first. Setting is casual; theme is often implied; characters are usually types.

While studying Assamese ballad it may be added that the term ballad has no prototype in Assamese. The word git or song signifies mostly folksong including ballad. The long ballads in Upper Assam are some times called malita probably from Sanskrit word *mala*, garland. In Upper Assam some satirical specimen go under the name ‘Juna’ Which also covers verses sung at the spring time Bihu festival by the Husari.
singers. Taking into consideration of the subject matter and treatment of the genre, Dr. P. Goswami classified the Assamese ballad in this manner:

(a) **Historical ballads** are built around more or less antithetic historical incidents or figures. The historical ballads in Assamese are (i) *Barphukanar git*, (ii) *Padma Kumarir git*, (iii) *Maniram Dewanar git*, (iv) *Jaymati Kuwarir git* and (v) *Azan Fakirar git*, (vi) Other fragments related Bakhar Bara & Prithu Barkakati and (vii) Recent specimens comprising of some peasants revolt & uprisings in Nagaon, Darang and Kamrup including Patharughatar Ran.

(b) **Ballads of magic** deal with ancient and universal folklore themes and marvellous stories. In this category is included (i) *Manikowarar git*, (ii) *Phulkowar git*, (iii) *Janagabharur git*.

(c) **Romantic Ballads** reflect a more or less realistic attitude to life and may describe ordinary affairs even love, occasionally. The marvellous hardly enters them. They are usually found in Lower Assam, in Kamrup District Ballads of this class are (i) *Dubala Santir git*, (ii) *Saudar git*, (iii) *Kanya Baramahi Git*, (iv) *Pagla Parvatir git*.

(d) **Satirical ballads** are usually composed by the village bafoon, known in Kamrup as *bahuwa* or impersonator the parallel term being bahuwa in Uppar Assam. They do not have an essential element of the ballad, the story. Ordinary events of daily life opium eater, circus party etc. are subject of this ballad. This type of ballads are (i) *Bhuikapar git*, (ii) *Maluar git*, (iii) *Bharuarghar*, (iv) *Naharar juna*, (v) *Jataran git* etc.
BALLADS AND PROSE NARRATIVES OF HAJO AREA

Hajo area is the store house of a vast body of folk narratives in both prose and verse forms. Folk narratives of the area comprises of ballads, tales, legends and myths. The folk tales proper, the legends, as well as some ritualistic myth-like stories are almost narrated in the prose forms but there are cases where the same narrative contents may be given expression either in prose or in the verse song form. Aside from ballads the purely sung form is represented by cult songs with myth like narrative contents. Over and above stories are also narrated through dramatic and semi-dramatic devices.

"Beula's songs and some of the boat racing songs current in Hajo have the narrative features of ballads." They have story element in them and are sung to simple melodies. But what makes them different form a pure ballad is that the ritualistic and cult character is more obvious than the narrative. Some ballads chanted by wandering minstrels and other singers can be heard occasionally in the area. These ballads, such as song of Mainamati, song of Jana, song of Padmakumari and Maniram Dewan are akin to a similar class of songs popular in the rest of the Assam Valley.
MUSLIM INFLUENCE ON FEW POPULAR ANCIENT BALLADS

Scholars and historians hold that Kamrupa became familiar to the Muslims from the beginning of the 13th century A.D. with the invasion of Bakhtiar Khilji in 1205 A.D. In course of time Hajo became a seat of administration for the Muslim rulers. The place was over crowded with Muslim people coming from all walks of life saints to subadars, craftsman to warriors. As a result of the process some new elements were added to Assamese life and literature. “Some of the Assamese ballads containing fascinating and secular tale of romance and adventure betray a tinge of Muslim influence.” Romantic stories from Shahnama and tales from the Arabian Nights became popular and enter into Assam. The prem-gatha like Siri-Farhad, Laila-Majnu, Eusuf-Zeleka, Sonabhanur git and Saka-gatha Hassan-Hussainar git and Sohrab-Rustam had tremendous influence on the Assamese life and literature.

Dr. M. K. Saikia, in his illuminating book ‘Assam Muslim Relations and Its Cultural Significance’ enumerated a few ancient and popular ballads written under the influence of Muslims. They are Jana Gahbarur git, Phulkowar and Manikowarar git and Jaidhan Baniyar Baramahi Git etc. The Jana gabharur git is a popular ballad among the Muslim braziers of the eastern Brahmaputra valley. The story goes that Jana gabharu was reigning over the kingdom of her old father, Garucharraja. She proclaimed that any man desirous of marrying her
might do so, provided he would be able to solve three puzzles set by herself, but that one coming up to take up the challenge and fail to succeed in his attempt would have to suffer life imprisonment in her dungeon.

Nine hundred young men responded to this proclamation. It was Gopichand, a prince from Nagaon who passed successfully through the ordeals and married her. This story of the Assamese ballad shows its affinity with that of Gul-wa-sonowar. Similarly we find that the name of the heroine of the Assamese ballad ‘Phulkowar and Manikowar’ is identical with that of Kalu Ghazi Champawati pachali which was composed by Abdul Gaffar of Bengal in 18th century. The Assamese ballad refers to king Sankaladev of Barkala which is in Sibsagar. Feristah also refers to one king Sankal of Assam, who founded the city of Gaur in Bengal and who was defeated and taken prisoner by the Persian hero Rustam.

Kalu Ghazi of the pachali of Abdul Gaffar reminds us of the Muslim invader Kalu Ghazi of Kamrupar Buranji. A tomb in the vicinity of the Dargah of Ghiasuddin Awliya of Hajo is still believed to have been the one of Kalu Dewan or Kalu Ghazi. There is another similar ballad known as Chikan Sariyahar git which narrates a story of how a Muslim damsel was espoused by one of the Assam kings. Sat Nawabar git is also one of the Assamese ballad of an Islamic origin. It relates the advent of some Nawabs into Assam. The name of Chikan Sariyah appears to be very popular in ancient Assam. Because even now some folk tales have been oven around his name.
'Jaydhan Baniyar Baramahi git’ is one of the Assamese romances of immense popularity. ‘Damini Charita’ is another romance written by one Muslim author Saruf of West Bengal and it is similar with this Baramahi git of Jaydhan Baniyah. In this ballad a popular love story has been dealt with. The story goes thus: After marriage Manik Sadagar went abroad for his business. He left his newly married wife at her father’s home. When returned, Manik Sadagar asked for her love in disguise. But the wife was devoted to her husband Manik Sadagar. She rejected his love time and again. In the long run Manik Sadagar expressed his real identity and they were united happily. The central theme of the ballad is the wife’s chastity.

Besides, I have collected some stories related to Hassan and Hussain prevalent among the people of Hajo area which are as follows:

(a) **Ballad relating to Hussain’s head**

Assam is a land of rivers. People of this land is closely associated with boat-culture. Both Hindus and Muslims are connected with boat-race song and Manasa lore, songs sung in honour of the goddess of snake. Somehow Hassan-Hussain episode has been incorporated in Padmapuran. The tragic story of Karbala that constitutes the Jari gits of the Muslims has been included in the boat race song like Manasa geets.

Such a story related to Hussain’s death in Karbala has been told by Alimuddin Ahmed, a teacher by profession, of Saikiapara (Loharkatha)
aged about 70 years old. ‘Sahide Karbala’ was a popular book in those days. People of both communities – Hindus and Muslims had due respects for Hussain, grand child of prophet Muhammad.

The story is of a Brahmin who had deep faith and respect for Hussain – who was beheaded in Karbala. Simar and Jiad, the two assassins, brought Hussain’s head and started their journey through the desert to give it to Ezid. It would bring them enough reward from Ezid, the tyrannical Khalifa of Damask. On their way they had to halt at the Brahmin’s house for the night. Already the Brahmin could hear the heroism and justice of Hussain and brotherhood of Islam. The Brahmin felt much pain to hear the beheading of Hussain. That night he sheltered the assassins of Hussain with his head. He wanted to see Hussain’s head. After much request, he got the head for the night. He lamented for Hussain. To see deep faith of the Brahmin words came from Heaven, from Allah and the ‘head’ gained the power to speak. The Brahmin and his family members accepted Islam and showed respect for the Imam (Hussain). At dawn Simar and Jiad asked for Hussain’s head. Then the Brahmin gave them the head of his eldest son instead of Hussain’s head as they planned at night. Simar and Jiad were angry and asked for Hussain’s head. Thus one after another the Brahmin offered them his son’s head. But they refused. They were not satisfied. In the long run, the Brahmin refused to give them Hussain’s head and fought to the last drop of his blood with them for Hussain’s head. Thus both the Brahmin and his wife fought to death. In boat race a song related to
this story is sung by the Muslim oarsmen —

        Alas! O’ Allah
        The Brahmin is anxious about Syed (Hussain)
        The Brahmin fought to death for (Hussain’s) head
        Alas! O’ Allah.

(b) **Haidor Gazir Git**

It is a popular ballad in Hajo area. The ballad is related to a Muslim warrior popularly known as Hajor Gazir Git. This song which is current in the area is not found in other parts of Assam except in certain localities of North Kamrup district. This story of Haidor Gazi runs as follows:

Haidor Gazi, a newly married young man received orders from the king to join the cavalry in the war against the enemy. Gazi was not willing to go to war, may be, he did not want to leave his young wife alone. He approached every able member of his family requesting them to go to war in his place. But nobody came forward to oblige him. Finally Gazi himself went to the war front and lost his life. The tragic theme is reflected in these songs. It should be noted that some few songs of this type are found to be identical with Jari songs related to Kasim and Sakina. Kasim was married to Sakina just before war. He had to depart for Karbala leaving his newly married wife Sakina and died in Karbala.
Dr. P. C. Das collected and published fragment of the ballad from Giribala Devi, a Brahmin widow of Hajo. Free translation of the song is as follows:

In the garden of Haidor Gazi there is a castor oil plant with two leaves,

Haidor Gazi has taken bath at right noon,

O friend of Allah,

The responsibility falls on you,

O my Haidor Gazi.

After his bath HaMor Gazi stands in the courtyard (And says)

I am going to the battle, O dear wife, give me My Loin-cloth;

Haidor Gazi bows his head to the family deity,

Crows and kites fly over his head.

After his prayer Haidor Gazi enters the room (And says)

I am going to the battle, O dear wife,

serve me rice

After his meal Haidor Gazi chews the pan,

The orders have come to Haidor Gazi and they are written in strong language.

* * *
Oh I call you my father,
I bow down at your feet,
This orders have been served on me
But I request you to go in my place.
Oh I call you my son,
I bow down at your feet,
The orders have been sent to you,
How can I go?
Oh I call you my elder brother,
I bow down at your feet ......
Oh I call you my younger brother,
I bow down at your feet ......

Having married at a young age

I have got immense satisfaction,

Unveil your face O my dear wife

I am eager to look at your moonlike face.

Please don’t weep, O Kanchanmati,

Don’t be worried, O girl,

If I win the battle this time

I shall decorate you with gold.

Please don’t cry, O Kanchanmati,

Don’t break down in sorrow, O girl,

If I win the battle this time

I shall dress you in gold.
In the garden of Haidor Gazi,
there is a mango tree,
Haidor Gazi has gone to the battle
who will work in the garden?

In the garden of Haidor Gazi,
there is an areca palm,
Haidor Gazi has gone to the battle
who will enjoy earthly pleasure?

* * *

O brown horse, you have returned
with a torn piece of cloth,
Where did you leave my accomplished husband?

O friend of Allah,
The responsibility falls on you,

O my Haidor Gazi.

It is a historical ballad. In the history of Assam we find names of several Ghazis of whom Ismail Ghazi is one. Shah Ismail Ghazi, a descendant of the family of the prophet, invaded Kamrupa in about 1460 A.D. In the Padshah Buranji, one Masland Gazi is mentioned as an invader of Assam. Whoever be this Gazi, this ballad is a popular story in Hajo, Nalbari and Barpeta area. It reflects a clear picture of the then Assamese society and of the harmonious relation between the Hindus and the Muslims of Assam.
Azan Fakirar git

It is a historical ballad. During the reign of Pratap Singha (1603 - 41) approximately in the period 1625 - 35 A.D. Shah Miran (Azan Fakir) with his brother Nabi came through Gaura and stayed at Hajo in the shrine of Ghiyasuddin Aowliya. Some of his Zikirs related to his life and teachings are popular stories all over Assam. Dr. P. Gosowami elaborately deals with this historical ballad in his illuminating book Ballads and Tales of Assam. According to Dr. S. K. Bhuyan who found an information in an old Assamese chronicle, Azan Fakir flourished in the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681 - 1696) A.D. The Sufi-saint was converting people and reciting the name of Allah. Rupai Da Dhara, an officer lodged a complain against him that he was creating disturbance in the land. He wanted to bring Azan Fakir before the king, but the old man said that he was unable to walk the distance to the city. Rupai was given supreme power to deal with the situation. The officer came to the saint in order to punish him by gorging out his eyes. The sense of the ballad is as follows –

O' Rupai, do as you please, O' Allah,

Having heard this the enemy of the saint

Proceeded to gorge out the eye balls

O' Rupai, you are taking out my eyes

Bring two earthen cups, O' Allah.
The saint asked for two earthen pans and at his own order the eyes came out and fell into the pans. He then directed the officer thus –

"Don't throw my eyes on the earth
They will get wild and destroy the people, O' Allah
Do leave my eyes
On the brink of the Dikhou O' Allah.

When the eyes were thrown into the Dikhou, the Dikhou went wild. It started flowing against the current.

There was a turmoil in the water and the houses began to sway. The king sent out Hatibarua to find out what had happened. The officer came to know of the affair that appeased the saint. He then reported to the king –

Looking into the four corner of the city
I did not find Ram (the name of God) anywhere O' Allah
The two brothers of Azan were reading the Quran
There I found Ram, O' Allah.

On seeing the manifestation of supernatural powers, the king established the saint on the Huaguri sand bank of the Dikhou, had a shrine constructed for him.
PROSE NARRATIVES

Myths, Legends and Tales

Prose narratives are traditional tales composed and carried on orally by different groups of people from generation to generation. Prose narratives, according to Bascom, "is an appropriate term for the widespread and important category of verbal art which includes myths, legends and folktales." The German equivalent for the term is Marchen. Prose narratives are distinguished from proverbs, riddles, ballads, poems, tongue twisters on the basis of strictly formal characteristics. The formers are narratives in prose while the latters are not.

Myth, according to M. Leach, is "a story presented as having actually observed in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religions beliefs etc. Myths constitute an important branch of prose narratives which are accepted to be true and cited as authority in situations involving ignorance, doubt and disbelief. Bascom says: "Myths are prose narratives, which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in remote past." "Myths are always associated with dogma and ritual. The characters of myths are gods and goddesses, animals or culture heroes whose actions are set in an earlier world when the earth was different from what it is today. Myths try to explain the origin of things, the earth, rivers, the sun, the moon and man himself. But myth remains a myth in real sense of the term "only as long as the divinity of its actor or actors is recognized."
Legends constitute another branch of prose narrative which are believed to have happened in recent past. These are considered to be true by the narrator and the audience and set in a historical period which is far from being remote. They are secular more often than not. Legends account for migrations, wars and deeds of past heroes, chiefs and things and local tales of buried treasure, saints etc. Linda Degh says, “The legend is related to the Marchen; it is localized down to earth and has historic validity.”15 Kohler calls it the “archeive of the pre-history of a people.”16 Degh says, “The legend does not have a polished style; its frame and form do not co-ordinate narrative elements into a logical chain.”17 The driving impulse behind telling a legend is to educate the people rather than to entertain them. There are three subtypes of legends eg. (a) Etiological legends,

(b) Historical legends,

(c) Religious legends. Etiological legends tells the origin of things or the creation of the world. Historical legends include narratives trying to explain the pre-history of some locality or region and the hidden body of folk history. Religious legends are legends on gods and heroes related to our religious ritual.

In the myths materials both from the Hindus and the Muslims communities are found. Some popular myths mentioned in Assamese Encyclopaedia are –

(a) Birth account of Padma (Manasa git),
(b) Bhumikampa aru sar garur kahini,
The myths popular among the Muslims of Hajo area have been discussed below:

**Birth account of Padma**

Oja pali was also popular among the Muslim ojas. The story of Beula-Lakhindar was so popular among the Muslims that an episode of Hassan-Hussain has been incorporated in the Padma-Purana myth.

The myth of Padma-Purana runs thus: Padma, Manasa or Bishahari with one eye is the serpent deity whose wrath destroyed all the sailing boats of the river sailor and merchant Chando, killed all his six sons and also, at last, kills the most handsome youngest son Lakshindar. Chando builds a well protected house for Lakshindar who marries Behula, the paragon of beauty. But the Manasa bribes the builder of the house with a threat of fear and makes an unnoticeable hole in the well-fortified house for Lakshindar and sends a venomous serpent to this house where the newly wedded couple are lying asleep in bridal bed. The serpent enters into the house at the order of 'Padma' who was born of Lord Siva's sperm scattered on a lotus-leaf. It is said that a female bird swallowed the sperm and gave birth to one eyed Padma who was abused by Chando as 'Kani-Bishahari'. The serpent was first enchanted by the beauty of the couple and as such refuses to bite Lakshindar. Unfortunately,
Behula unknowingly hits the innocent serpent with one of her legs while she was asleep. Being hurt, the serpent 'Kal Nag' bites Lakshindar as a measure of wild justice of revenge. Lakshindar died of pain. Behula raises a cry of protest against injustice and does not perform funeral rites of her dead husband. And she sets a sail on a raft to meet the creator to make a complaint against Padma’s injustice. The corpse gradually gets rotten into pieces. Still she carries the bones to wake him alive. Behula, as advised by Padma, pleased Siva with her dance. Siva asks Padma to suck the venom and give back life to Lakshindar. But Padma puts a condition that Chando has to worship her. At last Chando agrees to worship Padma and Lakshindar gets life back by Behula’s chastity.

(d)  

**Surjya aru Tejar kahini**

A fair number of stories related to Hassan and Hussain, the grandchild of prophet Muhammad are popular among the Muslims. One such story goes thus One day Hassan and Hussain were playing ‘top’. Suddenly the ‘top’ fell in the *ghosal khana* where Fatima, their mother, was having bath. All of a sudden they entered it and saw the beauty of their mother and Hassan and Hussain were appreciating the beauty of their mother Fatima. They could hardly see their mother’s beauty as she was always in ‘purdah’. That day some how they could see her beauty. They wondered that their mother was so fair. While they were conversing thing Fatima could hear their talk. But she did not think that they were her sons Hasan and Hussain. She cursed them. She rebuked them and used as the curse *Johare kohare jaba*. Later on, understanding that they were
her own sons Hassan and Hussain, she repented. But once said, it was likely to happen. Hassan died by eating poson (Johar). He was made to drink johar by his own Jjaynab, his own wife as advised by Maimuna. And Hussain died tragically at Karbala by fighting with the armies of Ezid. In this war of ‘Karbala’ many died turning the river Euphrates to a sea of blood. And people believed that at the time of sunset western sky turns red like blood. This supposed to be the blood of Hussain and his family members. Many folk poet wrote great elegies or marshias or zari gits dealing with the tragic tale of Karbala in which the two grandsons of prophet Muhammad with their kindred’s became the victim of the cruel conspiracy plotted by Ezid in the sandy bank of historic Euphrates.

Myth related to Karbala

Some miracles happened in the life of prophet Mahammad. One of them is the prophet’s visit to meraj or his visit to Heaven where he witnessed ‘Allah’. His didar i.e. meeting with Allah. All the Muslims believed this visit of Muhammad to the space. During this Meraj he witnessed two colourful houses – one is blue coloured and the other is red. Gabreil, the greatest of all angels of Allah, explained to Mahammad the symbolic meaning of these two houses. Imam Hassan, the great grandson of the prophet was made to drink poison by his wife Jaida as advised Maimuna, the old lady engaged by Ezid who was the opponent of Imam Hassan. When he died, his facial appearance turned blue for poison.
The blue house signified it Imam Hussein was beheaded by one Simar and the water of Euphrates turned red with the blood of Imam Hussan, his kith and kins and other martyrs at Karbala. The red house signified this story of massacre.

The other myth runs thus, when Imam Hassan and Hussain were child, Mahammad warned them of evil days that is to happen in their life at an ill-fated place named ‘Karbala’. Muhammad told them that some day their horse by would be buried at the sandy Karbala and ‘That day’ would be their doomsdays. This came true in their life. When Imam Hussain invited to Kufa by Ezid conspiringly arrived at ‘Karbala’ with only 72 relatives. Here they foughts to death with the every of Ezid.

In one zikir referred to this happenings as follows –

\[
\begin{align*}
  kala mati ronga hoi \\
  ghorar khura bahi jai \\
  hai hai eikhane \\
  Karbala hoi \\
  o nanajane koa thai cikhane hoil
\end{align*}
\]

LEGENDS

Hajo is a place of historical importance with its age-old shrines and temples, pirs and fakirs. Some legends are popular in the area related to the place names or personalities. Some popular legend of this area are as follows –
(a) The Fakir and the people of Bamunbari

The Village Bamunbari located in the Kamrup region, specially in the Hajo area was originally a Hindu village and most of the inhabitants were Brahmin by caste. Hence it signifies that the term Bamnbari is derived from Brahman (Bamun) + Bari (Highland), the place of Brahmin. But at present Bamunbari is a Muslim village where a fair member of Syed families are descended from a Fakir (religious mendicant) who hailed from a far distant country, many years ago. However the following legend is associated with the fakir and the advent of Islam to the aforesaid village.

There was Jungle in the vicinity of the village Bamunbari. The cowherds were looking after their grazing cattle in this jungle. One day a strange incident took place. All the cows stopped grazing and assembled in a central place. While the cowherds arrived that place in search of their cows they noticed that there was a fakir and the cows were standing around him giving up grazing. Although they tried to bring back them, they could not. As soon as the villagers heard this unusual event, they were surprised and rushed to the particular place. They met the fakir and some of them were deeply impressed. They invited the fakir with respect. The fakir told them to assist him carrying the baghar chal (the skin of tiger) which was his special seat. But nobody could lift it to carry, though they tried their level best. Then the fakir smiled and lifting the baghar chal easily
by one hand and putting it in his armpit he proceeded towards the village with them. In the village also he showed many unnatural and miraculous activities by which the villagers were profoundly influenced by him. They realized the greatness and devine power of te fakir. Afterwards all the inhabitants of the village Bamunbari were converted into Islam.

Other legends related to this Adumguru are as follows: Kalitakuchi is also a village adjacent to Bamunbari 3 kms away in the north from Hajo. The people of this village as the name suggests were Kalitas and accepted Islam under the influence of this 'pir' Adam guru. Here is the majar of Adam guru where the Muslims celebrate Urs and perform Jiarat and the Hindus also visit the majar and show respect for the guru.

In the early part of 17the century pir sultan Nadir Shah came to Kalitakuchi from distant Bagdad and converted a family to Islam and lived with them for some days, Then he departed. After a few years he returned to that family of Kalitakuchi again. Already other members of that family except a six year old child died of cholera. The name of this boy was Adam who was given shelter by the gaonburha of Kalita community of the locality. As the popular legends shows, one day the pir come to that family all of a sudden and blessed the child who achieved spiritual miraculous power from that day. Then the pir went away to an unknown place. Adam generally went for grazing with his boy companions of the village. But his cows were looked after by tigers of the jungle.
When there was hot and sunshine the snakes facilitates shade to this boy with their hoods. More miraculous stories related to Adam can be heard in the month of the people who were impressed by these miracles and many Hindus accepted Islam. In course of time ‘Adam’ became ‘Guru’ for these people. Some people also tried to identify pir sultan Nadir Shah with Adamguru. But history is silent about these stories. Surprisingly enough all the members of the Brahmin family fell in cholera and saw in dream that the family would face more danger. Then the Brahmin agreed to give her daughter in marriage to him. Another story related to Adam’s death is thus : Adam guru, in his old age, sits in ten day (etekaf) prayer in the month of Ramzan in a verandah of masjid in Kalitakuchi. He called upon his family members, relatives and disciples and forbade not to lift the mosquito net for those ten-days. It might lead to his dead. One disciple out of curiosity lifted this mosquito net in order to see Adam Guru. He could not see Adam but his paguri (head dress) and other clothes, so the people cremated this clothes ritually on the day of domahi of Bohag and Jestha from that time every year on the certain day Urs is celebrated there on his majar.

The Ahom king wanted to bring Adam Guru to the royal palace and sent courtiers to fetch him. The courtiers placed boat at Lokhaitora river to carry Adamguru. It was surprising that the big boat sinks into water when Adamguri get on to it. They tried again and again but failed. Then the king sent elephant to carry Adam. No sooner had he rode on
the elephant than it sat down failing to bear the weight of Adam. The Ahom king then could understand the spiritual and miraculous power of this Adam Guru and established him at Kalitakuchi sanctioning land there Adam Guru began to preach the lessons of Islam and humanity among the people. When he attained age of marriage, he expressed to marry a Brahmin girl as ordained by Allah in his dream. But the Brahmin family refused to do it.

(b) The Legend of Poa-Mecca

Poa-Mecca, the holy shrine of the Muslims, stands on the top of the Garurchall hill. In the shrine there exists a tomb and a mosque. There are more tombs scattered around the hill. The history of Poa-Mecca, an Islamic shrine, is connected with one saint known as sultan Ghiyasuddin Aulia. The main tombs in the center is attributed to the name of the saint. It is visited by thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the country and outside the country as well.

A number of legends are connected with the origin of the name of Poa-Mecca. First, it is said that at the time of its foundation, Ghiyasuddin Aulia discovered ninety images in the area, this number comes to one-fourth of the total number of the three hundred and sixty images of Mecca. Therefore the shrine is called Poa-Mecca i.e. one fourth of Mecca. According to the second explanation, Pir Ghiyasuddin Aulia carried one Poa of soil from Mecca with him and added it here at
the time of the foundation of the mosque. So the shrine is known as Poa-
Mecca. Thirdly it is said that a visit to this shrine confers one fourth of
the merit obtained from a pilgrimage to Haj in Mecca itself. It is also said
that the word Hajo is related to Haj.

So, the above discussion shows that the myths and the legends
prevalent among the people of the area reminds us of the antiquity of
Hajo as well as peaceful co-existence of diverse communities in the area
that is rare in the world today.

Two stores are current in regard to the saint Ghiasuddin Aulia,
the founder of the shrine and his tomb. According to one story Sultan
Ghiasuddin Aulia was born in Tabriz city in 1193 A.D. The original name
of the Sulttan was Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi who was a king of this country.
After reigning for about 35 years, the king became a saint and started
preaching Islam in various parts of the world. He came to Assam and
encamped at Hajo to preach his faith. Jalaluddin stayed here for more
than 20 years until his death and founded a number of mosques and
mazars all over Assam. The tomb existing on the top of the Garurachal
hill is said to be erected on the grave of this Ghiasuddin Aulia.

Another version of the story goes that Ghiasuddin Aulia came to
India from Arabia sometimes about at 642 or 1222 A.D. When a famine
ravaged the Arab country. Having spent many years in various parts of
the country he came to the Brahmaputra valley with three of his companions
Hazarat Shah Zamal, Hazarat Shah Gudur and Hazarat Shah Buzurg. The saint passed the rest of his life on the top of the Garurachal hill.\textsuperscript{21} There is still a third story regarding advent of Hazarat Ghiasuddin Aulia. The story related that the saint came to Assam with the conquering army of Sultan Ghiasuddin, who invaded the country in at 721 or 1301 A.D. It recounts that the saint first stayed in the Garigaon area (Gauhati), but later he shifted to Hajo and stayed there on the top of the Garurachal hill.\textsuperscript{22}

In Kamrupar Buranji it is stated that Sultan Ghiasuddin ruled over the Kamrup region for sometime and the seat of his government was Garuachal hill. The chronicle records that Balwant Ghiasuddin came to Kamrup with an infantry of twelve thousand tank and thirteen thousand cavalry. He demolished many temples and breathed his last on the Garurachal hill.\textsuperscript{23} Ghiasuddin was successor of Daniel, the son of Hussain Shah in the Fauzdarship of Hajo and his period comes in the early 16\textsuperscript{th} century.

Ibn Batuta, the Moorish traveller of 13\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. states in his “Safarnama” (Richalai Ibn Batutah) that he came to visit Kamrup to meet a saint named Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriz who was actually Ghiasuddin Aulia. He showed many miracles (Keramat or majeja). The inhabitants of these mountains embraced Islam at his hands both Hindus and Muslims visited the tomb.
The Assamese for an oral tale is *sadhu katha*, usually derived from the Sanskrit sadhu a merchant, meaning thereby that the Sadhukatha is a tale told by a wandering merchant.\textsuperscript{24} The meaning of Assamese *sadhukatha* is broad and it sometimes comprises English tales, legends, myths and fable. It is a generic term signifying anything from a myth to a fable. The tale only to amuse, the true oral tale, in English tale or fairly tale. The term folktales is also used one of the early systematic attempts to classify tales was that of Edwin Sidney Hartland who divided this fairy tale in to two classes – sagas and Marchen. Sagas are stories which relate to definite supernatural beings. Often they are told of historical heroes or persons believed to have once lived.

The other class of tales i.e. Marchen consists of such as are told simply for amusement unlike the saga, it binds the conscience neither of the teller nor of listener; its hero or heroine has no historical name or fame, either national or local. The only condition the tale expected to fulfill is to end happily. After Hartland, a recent writer, Prof. Thompson describes a Marchen as, “a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite characters and is filled with the marvelous. In the never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princess.”\textsuperscript{25} For the second class, i.e. saga indicated by Hartland, the modern tendency is to use the German Sage. Prof. Thompson says that
sage "Purports to be an account of an extraordinary happenings believed
to have actually occurred. It may recount a legend of something which
happened in ancient times at a particular place."

Besides these two broad divisions Prof. Thompson mentions of
myth which for him means "a tale laid in a world supposed to have
preceded the present order. It tells of sacred beings and of semi-divine
heroes and of the origins of things, usually through the agency of these
sacred beings. Myths are intimately connected with religious beliefs and
practices of the people.

While discussing the common features Assamese tales we find
that it is a world between fact and fantasy. In this world of tales animals
jostle with men, men talk with animals and both men and animals find
pleasure in out doing others in wit and cleverness. It is a world where
birds and beasts think like men and where things change their forms
whenever it is necessary. There is humour, horror and pathos and there
is beautiful weaving of fancy.

Folktales, Bascom says, "Are prose narratives which are regarded
as fiction." These tales are told mainly for entertainment, but they are
also told to serve some other purposes. These can not be traced back to
any real history or dogma. They are timeless and placeless. Some
folklorists have called them fairy tales or sages. Folktales and again be
classified into the following sub-types e.g. human tales, animal tales,
trickster tales, dilemma tales, formulistic tales or fables etc.
TALES CURRENT IN HAJO AREA

A fair number of tales are also current in the area. In their form and content many of the tales are akin to similar tales popular all over Assam. Some of them have parallels in other parts of the country also. It was once a familiar sight in the area where at nightfall children assembled round an old lady in their courtyard requesting her to recount a tale. The village elders also were very much interested with the recital of such tales at the foot of the temple of Haigriba-Madhaba. Ritualistic tales were recited in certain rites.

The tales found in the area are of various types, such as animal tales, of the tricksters, wonder tale and etiological tale. A fair number of tales have appeared in such collections as Lakhinath Bezbarua’s Burhi Air Sadhu (1911), Kakadeuta Aru Natilora (1912), Arjun Chandra Das’s Asamyia Sadhu (1941), Sriram Chandra Das’s Chandan (1949), Prasanna Kumar Deka’s Sadhukathar Puthi (1949), Dr. P. C. Goswami’s Doctorial thesis Ballads and Tales of Assam published in 1960 and Tales of Assam (1980) contain a number of such tales.

While the Jatakas, panchatantra, Hitopadesh, Katha Sarit Sagar are the valuable source of Indian as well as the Tales of N. E. India including Assamese, the Arabian Nights, Shahnama, Kessachal Ambia, Dastane-E-Amir Hamaza, Badiurzammani Kahini, Khairul Hasar, Janganama, Eusuf Zelekhar kahini are the source book for the narration prevalent among the Muslims of Assam.
The tale of Hassan-Hussain and Sohrab and Rustam are very much popular among the Hindus. Dr. P. C. Das also mentioned the popularity of the stories from ‘Shahnama’. He referred to a romantic tale collected from a Muslim farmer namely “Who would not be beaten” [type : 888a; 978]. Ismail Hussain also referred to the following tales in the Assamese Encyclopaedia.

(a) Rahim Rupvanar sadhu
(b) Habil Kabilar sadhu
(c) Khowaj Khijirar sadhu
(d) Kalu Gazir sadhu
(e) Nalparir sadhu
(f) Sadhya Uzirar sadhu
(g) Badiur Zamalar sadhu
(h) Beula Lakhindarar sadhu
(i) Usuf-Zelekhar sadhu
(j) Alif Lilar sadhu
(k) Sona-Bhanur sadhu.

I have also collected some tales from aged people of Doloitola and Saniadi area of Hajo.

Some of the tales are given below as specimen.
Hatem Tair Sadhu

A woman was a great magician. Most of the time she was in quarrel with her husband. One day her husband slapped her badly. She was angry with him and hammered a nail by applying magic on his head. He turned into a dog. Other dogs chased him. Some times the dog took shelter under the handloom of a village woman. She also chased him. For long days he roamed here and there. In search of food he went into the jungle. He met Hatim Tai there. The dog used to sleep beside Hatim Tai, the great magician. Hatim Tai deared him and touched the head of the dog. Unexpectedly Hatim Tai found the nail hammered on its head. With magic the nail was taken out Surprisingly, the dog turned into a man who told everything infront of Hatim Tai. “Do you want to have revenge on her” said Hatim to the man.

The man replied “Yes”. Then Hatim Tai offered him the nail. “Take it and hammer into the woman’s head in her sleep” said Hatim Tai. The man was insearch of opportunity. One night when she was in her sound sleep, he hit the nail on her head. She turned into a mare. The man used to keep it in starvation. In the long run, she died from hunger and the man got rid of her torture.
Rahim Rupbanar Sadhu

Once there was a Patshah in Mymenshingh district named Akkabar Patshah. He had ample wealth and properties. But he had no peace in mind because he had no child. The people called him childless Patshah. In those days people believed that the day would be ominous or unpropitious to see the face a childless king in the morning. So none came forward to see the king in the morning first. Akkbar patshah was very sorry to know these things somehow. So he called upon all the astrologers of the kingdom to the royal court. He ordered them to foretell if he had any chance to have a child in future. After long prognostication, the head astrologer said - “You have a chance to give birth to a male child, but he has enough misfortunes.” Then Patshah Akkabar wanted to know more things about it. The astrologer said, “The boy is to cross lot of misfortunes. He can get rid of these if he is married with a 12 years girl on the 12th day of his birth and both of them to be sent to banishment otherwise the boy will die after completion of 12 days. If you want to keep the boy alive, do accordingly and attached this amulet in the left arm of the queen from this day. All misfortunes would disappear.

In due time the queen gave birth to a male child who was named Rahim. Everybody was happy in the royal palace. But the next moment all were in grief to hear the saying of the astrologer. Akkbar Patshah ordered “Take as much wealth & money you need – but provide the king with a 12 years old girl.” But what a misfortune. It was very difficult
to find out a 12 years old girl. Already Eleven days crossed only one day is left. Patshah was aggrieved to be senseless. At this moment one courtier informed the king that patshah’s principal Uzir had a 12 year old girl namely Rupban. Patshah Akkabar called him to the court and proposed that the child Rahim, his son must be married to Rupban. The Uzir abruptly rejected the proposal. The Uzir was imprisoned and tortured as ordered by Patshah. Rupban consented to this marriage for the release of her father.

The marriage is performed with pomp and ceremony, but Rupban went in exile crying and crying with her child husband Rahim. She outreach the kingdom and entered into a jungle. A tiger attacked them and was ready to catch Rahim, Rupban with folded hands prayed to the tiger benignly and told the sad story of her life. The tiger found it difficult to let loose. The prey in hand while the tiger was ready with its claw, Rupban prayed crying to save her life. Lion, the king of jungle came to her rescue and helped them to come out of the jungle.

Rupan was in search of her fortune. She found a river to cross. She had no money with her to pay. She gave to the boatman her diamond chain to cross the river.

The kingdom on the other ride of the river was of Syed Badshah. Rupban saw the beautiful palace. She made a relation with the wife of gardener. She resided at her house. They were kept with love and affection.
Rahim grows up day by day. He was admitted in the king's school under guardianship of the gardener. Days rolled on Rahim was promoted to upper classes. Crossing childhood he attains adolescent stage. In course of time he fell in love with his classmate Tajel, the princess of that kingdom. Rupban could know all the things still she provided him with all necessary articles. On the other hand, Tajet became mad in love with Rahim and asked her father to give her marriage to Rahim. Badshah Syed could not tolerate this and imprisoned Rahim. In the long run Rupban went to the court of the king and bowed to him saying all the things. She also said that Rahim was not the son of the gardener, he was the son of Akkabar Badshah. Syed Badshah was happy to know this. He praised Rupban on hearing her sacrifice in life. Syed Badshah gave Tajel in marriage to Rahim. He also accepted Rupban. With ample wealth and money, all there – Rahim, Tajel and Rupban were sent to the kingdom of Akkabar Badshah. The courtiers, Uzir and the Badshah were happy to meet them. Rahim became badshah and began to rule peacefully and happily.

Habil Kabilar Sadhu

O man's first disobedience and the fruit of that
For bidden tree whose mortal trust brought dead
Into the world – Milton

There is a saying that Adamand Eve, the first parent of Man disobeyed Allah and ate the fruit of that forbidden tree. They were expelled
from heaven and came to this Earth. Eve (Ma-Hawa) began to give birth to son & daughter in pairs. It is said that they gave birth to 720 children. There was clash among them for matrimonial problem of the children and the first murder took place in the history of man. Kabil murdered his brother Habil. The first pair of children of Adam & Eve were Kabil and Aklima and the second pairs were Habil and Halima.

Aklima was beautiful, virtuous and clever. Habil was more virtuous, intelligent and industrious than Kabil. While they attained maturity, Adam as per direction of Allah, arranged marriage of Habil with Aklima and of Kabil with Halima. Kabil was angry with father Adam whom he thought to be partial with Habil in this regard. Kabil was jealous of Habil and wanted to take revenge upon him.

One day Habil took Kabil to a distant jungle. He made a blow on the head of Kabil suddenly. Kabil died of that blow. Habil saw how his brother Kabil died. At time he became emotional and repented for this killing. He wanted to keep this act of sin in secret. He planned to hide the dead body. At that time Habil saw that two crow were fighting. One died after fighting. The other crow digged a hole covered the dead with earth. Then the crow flew away.

Habil also digged a ditch with his finger and cremated Kabil’s body there. That was the first grave of Man.

This is how the Muslims started burying the dead in kabar (grave).
Khowaj Khijirar Sadhu

Khowaj Khijir was the water-god who controls the movement of the river. In Muslims society people believe that they can have the blessing of Khowaj Khijir by praying to him by Pir or Aowliya. Ayez Fakir called himself to be the disciple of Khowaj Khijir. He lived in Damdama near Barpeta on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. And Ayez Fakir prayed to stop river erosion for long years. He gave amulet, chanted things and prayed for controlling erosion. He could convince his disciple to stop underground erosion of rivers. Sometimes he arranged community prayer, completed Ambia Khatam or Jalali Khatam and offered candle, dhup etc. He performed Zikirs and prayers. In some places erosion is stopped may be it normally. In some places erosion increases. Then Ayez Fakir says that people commit sins. Khowaj Khijir is dissatisfied with them and orders for more erosion until more offering in his name. At one time the village of Ayez Fakir also falls under erosion. Almost nine hundred family live in the village. Erosion strikes Ayez Fakir’s house. He began to pray to Khowaj Khijir to get rid of this erosion. He performed dowa (prayer) for change of the movement of the river to wards south. On the other hand some people were there in the prayer form southern ‘char’. They pray that the river should move towards north.
Kessa of Moses

One day Moses was going through a cremation ground (graveyard). He could see a strange thing. The dead with new dress came out of grave and good dishes were ready in front of them. That day one dish was exceed. The dead could see Moses going at a distance. They understood that the exceed dish was for god’s friend Moses. Moses was not ready to eat. The dead said that one exceed dish was sent for him. Then he could see a dead chained in hand and mouth. The dish in front of was full of gold & silver coins instead of food and the glass of water was full of blood. He was weeping and praying to God. When Moses asked him why he was in such condition? The man replied that he never performed namaz, never gave charity to the poor not offered zakat, he was a heavy drunker, for which he had to suffer this severe punishment. Moses was kind to him he prayed to Allah to be merciful to this man and forgave him Allah accepted his prayer. From that day he was served with good dishes like others.

A poor wood-cutter and a water god

A poor wood-cutter lived by cutting wood. One day exe, his only property, fell in the river while cutting wood. He was weeping to lose his axe. Water god came out and asked him why he was weeping. He told that his axe fell in the river. Now he was jobless and unable to maintain his family. His children were staving. Water-god assured him to
return the axe. He went into water and came out with a 'golden axe' and asked him. He began to weep and pray. In the long run, water god came out of water. He told his sad tale in front of him, whether it is his or not. The wood-cutter replied in the negative. Then the water-god returned with a silver axe. This time also he refused. Then water god came with his axe. The wood-cutter was very happy and accept his own axe. The water-god was very satisfied with his honesty and he was offered all the three axes and he returned home delighted. He told everything to his wife. A man heard everything and he also pretended to lose his axe by throwing in it. Then water-god came and offered a golden axe. Readily he agreed to accept it. But water-god could understand his greed. He offered none. The greedy man lost his own axe also.

**A miser Farmer**

There was a very miser farmer in a village. Never he gave anybody anything in charity. He offered nothing in the name of Allah. One day he was eating bread. All of a sudden a crow came and had taken a bread. The farmer grew angry. He chased the crow and ran after it. By then the crow found a river and flew across it. But the farmer could not cross it because there was no bridge. Being helpless he offered the bread in the name of Allah. This was the first thing he offered in the name of Allah. In the afternoon he went to market and saw a crowd. He came to know that a person who could stay in a grave for seven day and night would be given a half portion of the kingdom as declared by the king. He told that
he could stay for seven days in a grave. In his grave he saw some terrible things happened. Snakes, insects, fire troubled him. He was saved from all these by the bread given to the crow. After seven days he came out from grave and told everything in the palace. He was unwilling to accept the portion of kingdom to be given by the king. Then he began to give alms to the poor and lead a pious life.

**Hassan-Hussain and Nizam Badshah**

One day Fatima (Allah be pleased on them) was busy at home. Hassan and Hussain, her two children were sent to Muhammad, their grand father. They stayed at Muhammad’s home for the day and returned home in the afternoon by the river. They saw a ship where they boarded to see. Other boys of the village also went there. They were amazed to see the ship others came out of the ship while they alone were left. Nizam Badshah, the owner of the ship was surprised to see the two handsome boys on the ship and plotted a conspiracy to take them. The ship was unanchored, while Hassan and Hussain came to know that they were alone in the ship, it was away from the shore. They requested the king to ashore them but of no avail. The doors of the ship were closed.

On the otherhand, Fatima (Allah be pleased up on her) was in trouble as it was darkening. She sent to Abbubakkar Siddique, a faithful *Sahaba*, of prophet Muhammad to break the news that his grandsons did not return home. Hazarat Muhammad (pbuh) sent his companion to find out their grandsons in Madina. They searched the nook and corner
and could not find the two children. Hazarat Ali was informed. He returned home from the battle to find out his children. He rode on ‘Duldul’ and started for the search. He vowed not to return without Hassan-Hussain. After much venture, Ali was also disappointed. He ordered ‘Duldul’ to go where he liked. The horse was going towards far East. At one time it stopped and told that Hassan-Hussain were taken by one Nizam Badshah. He took them to a distant land through water. It took six months to reach the place ‘Duldul’ started for the place. After three months it stopped and took rest. Hazarat performed Namaz of ‘Aesrak’. Then they resumed their journey and reached the kingdom of Nizam Badshah. The king sent solders to fight the strangers. Then solders were sent to fight with them, but all were killed by Hazarat. In the long run the king surrendered, Hazarat was taken to his royal palace where he could see Hassan & Hussain. The king accepted Islam and they were sent back with many gifts.

Rupsan Kanya

Once there was a merchant in a country. For long years he had no child. It was a matter of sorrow for them. A beggar came one day. The merchant told the beggar everything. The beggar chanted a banana and asked the lady to eat it. He said, A boy will be born but the boy will have to marry after six months of its birth. Otherwise the boy may die. Time goes on the merchant was in search of a bride to and fro. At last he met a king who agreed to marry her daughter Rupsan Kanya to this child.
The wedding was held with pomp and ceremony. The six-month boy was housed with the 12 year Rupsan Kanya. The girl escaped with the boy to jungle at night. She met an old lady with whom she stayed in a hut.

(II) The girl had magical power by which she turned the hut into a palace. The old lady was surprised to see these overnight. The boy was sent to school. Year rolls on. One day the teacher could find a long hair falling on him. He guessed that some beautiful lady might be living there. The girl was staying alone in upper story. The teacher planned that every student had to invite him for meal. The boy was in trouble and told the oldman about their teacher's announcement. Meal was arranged accordingly. The teacher came and had meal, but could not see the girl.

(III) Then the teacher arranged a horse race. The boy was in trouble. He returned home weeping. Because he thought that he would not be able to buy horse. He told everything to the old lady. The other boys bought the strong and powerful horses. Only a lame horse was left. The lame horse said that he would go first in race. So the old woman bought the lame horse. Surprisingly it became first in the race. The teacher could find no way to defeat the boy for wooing the girl. Then Elephant race was held. In this also he failed. She could understand that the teacher was their enemy. One night she escaped with her husband.
A Pious wife of a Merchant

There was a pious wife of a rich merchant. She always was devoted to him. At one time the merchant became prepared to go for merchandise to a distant land for many days. He asked her to remain in the upper story with her children until he came. All the necessary food and items were arranged for them. He vowed to return with enormous gold for her.

Man proposes god disposes. All his ships were drowned with goods and the people died. The merchant’s family did not get any message. Days passed. Hard days came to merchant’s wife. Food or other item finished in time. Still she remained at upper story. The workers left her. Even her children went for begging. She remained in starvation. There was none to help her. One day they could know from a smith that their father was drowned. She began to weep. Still she was not willing to come down. Someday her son fell ill. She was helpless. In the long run she came down to the smith who helped her with some money. But there was one condition that he must have a blessing to get power to touch the warm iron in fire with bare hands. Allah accepted her prayer. The smith was given this power. The news broke up like fire. Other smiths came for blessing she only said that Allah accepts our prayer in certain circumstance not all the time.
A Helpless Beggar

A poor beggar lives in a village with his two sons, one daughter and his wife. He fell ill one day. Though he was poor, he was pious. They prayed to Allah in weal & woe. He was in utter distress for his family. His family was going to die out of hunger. In the long run he approached the village merchant for alms which was refused by the merchant’s wife. The beggar was very annoyed and cursed him. He returned home with bare-hands. He lost patience. He wanted to meet Allah and ask why so much trouble is on him? Still they continued to pray. On his journey, he could see a crowd in front of the merchant’s house. He came and asked what happened. He came to know that the merchant’s only son died suddenly. He wondered at the miracle of God. He thought that Allah gave them what they did not seek, but did not give what they sought. The beggar will enquire it of Allah and bound a knot in his cloth to remember. He went on and reached another village where a house was burning. The beggar again supposed to ask the matter to Allah as he did not understand it. Another day the beggar saw a terrible thing. A crow was eating the brain of the man. The beggar bound another knot to remember.

Then beggar reached a great forest. In the forest he saw a tree loaded with ripe fruits. But the fruits are never fallen. He bound the 4th knot to ask these questions to Allah. After some time he met a Fakir and offered Salam. Then he wanted to get the answer of the questions from the Fakir.
The Fakir told the beggar to tell the questions. The beggar untied the knot and asked the answer of the first question – why did the only son of the merchant die?

The Fakir said that the merchant was a great sinner. Allah has taken the child young so that father’s sin does touch him.

Then the beggar opened the second knot of his sadar. Why the houses of the family burn just after it has been made? The answer of the Fakir was that the family has a matured 40-45 years old girl. They have not thought of her marriage. Which is a essential as early as possible.

Regarding the third question, the reply was that the lady whose brain was eaten by the crows was a shameless women. She was without forehead dress when alive. The punishment will last till the day of Judgment.

The forth question was explained in the way that these were common property belonging to seven states. So these were not eaten even by birds.

All of a sudden the fakir disappeared. A horse drawn vehicle loaded fully with goods brought to the beggar. None knew where from this came. The horse man only said that it was sent by the Fakir. The beggar was surprised to see such wealth. He distributed these among the poor. The merchant came & asked for merry. A boy came to him seeking one girl for marriage. He was married with the girl. The begger expresses gratitude to Allah.
The beggar and the fox

A beggar was on a journey through the forest. He could see that a
tiger was crying caught in net. He was helpless. The asked the beggar to free
him. Some day if chance comes, he will help the beggar. The beggar agreed
to release the tiger if he does no harm to him (the beggar). The tiger promised
not do any harm to him. The tiger was released. But he was not grateful at all.
The tiger wanted to eat the beggar. Who saved it from the trap. The beggar
was then helpless. Still he put forward a condition if someone should do
harm to its Saviour. They went on and met none. The beggar asked the road
whether it is proper to eat its saviour. The road itself then said that the
footman or passers by hurt the road. Then they walked for a distance and
found a big tree. The beggar asked the same question to the big tree. The
tree replied that all took shelter under its shade and nobody bother to cut it
down also or its boughs and leaves. On hearing it the tiger’s happiness knew
no hounds. Just then they met a fox. The beggar asked the same question to
the fox. The fox at first could not understand the situation. So the beggar
explained that the tiger was caught in net. He was saved by the beggar. Now
the tiger wanted to eat the beggar. Would it be proper? The fox was in a
dilema. After a moment’s thought the fox replied that the question was a
complex one. So it would be proper to go to the place where the tiger was
captured in a net. They reached there. The fox asked the tiger to enter into the
net from where he was saved. He did it. The fox tightened the knot. Then he
called the tiger to eat the beggar. He was again caught in a net. The tiger
understood the conspiracy of the fox. The begger was saved.
The cake-tree and the witch

In a village a farmer had a son. He went for ploughing to the paddy field every day and took cake for him. One day the farmer left a cake and through it in the field. It grew to a cake tree. The boy began to stay on the tree. One day a witch came and asked the boy for cakes. The witch said that it fell on mud, that fell on stool. Then the boy gave the witch a cake hand in hand. The witch caught up the boy and took it in a bag. It was carrying the boy when the witch felt urine tendency. She left the bag and went to the bathroom. The boy escaped filling the bag with some thorns and earth. She felt the pricks of thorns. She called her grandson and said that she bought a good thing for him. The grandson came and opened the bag and found no boy only thorns and earth.

After a few minutes the lady again went there, kidnapped the boy from the cake tree. The witch told the grandson to cook the boy well. She would go for a bath to the river side. The boy was in trouble. He was thinking how to escape. He noticed three bottle gourds. He asked the grandson about these. There were some secrets about the bottle gourds. It the first bottle gourds broken, then flood will occur. If the second bottle gourds is broken, the thorns will fill the place. If the third bottle gourds is broken, fire will fill the place. The boy learnt the secrets.

Then the boy said that as he would be cut and cooked, he wanted to eat something. The grand son was kind to the boy. He was going to prepare food. Then suddenly the boy cut off the head and wore his
dress. He cooked the meat of the grandson. The witch returned and ate the flesh of her grandson unknowingly. Then the boy broke down the three bottle guards one by one. In the long run, the witch died and the boy again returned to the cake tree.

**The Fox and the Crocodile**

There lived a fox in a jungle. He often visited the river near by to drink water and met a crocodile. The fox be friended the crocodile and asked about his children. The crocodile told the fox that he had three children. 'What is about their education? Do they go to school?' – asked the fox. The crocodile told him that he was teaching them at home as be could not find good teacher. The fox then told the crocodile that he could admit his children in his (fox’s) school. The crocodile then asked the fox at how much distance the school is situated? The fox told him that he need not bother about his children. The fox said that be would keep them with him. The crocodile was very happy to hand over his children under the fox’s care. The tongue of the fox watered out of greed. He ate all the children of the crocodile. Off and on the crocodile asked the fox about his children’s education. The fox said that they were all right. When he told him about his visit to the house the fox, said that they went for walking. But after a few days the crocodile could realize that his children were no longer alive. The crocodile tried to teach the fox a lesson. One day when the fox went to drink water in the river, the crocodile pulled his legs and asked about his children. Friend you only
caught my stick you are yet to touch my leg. The crocodile then left it thinking to be stick. The crocodile left it and the fox escaped as soon as possible.

A Fox and a tiger

One day a fox noticed a fat he-goat approaching him. Water fell down from his tongue. He suddenly caught up the goat in the neck and carried it into the jungle. He thought that it was a day of feast for him. In the mean time there appeared another fox. They quarreled each other for the goat. While quarrelling the goat escaped into the nearby jungle. They were tired of fighting and repented for their mistake. In the jungle the goat had enough grass to eat. It grew fat and stout. Its body smell had gone faraway. The fox could smell it and saw the large goat. But the fox was afraid of the goat. So he approached a tiger to come with him. He told the tiger that it would be a great feast for them to eat the fat animal. At first the tiger was not willing to come. But after much persuasion he came and saw the large goat. They fastened each other so that none could escape and went near the goat. The goat fell in trouble and found out a plan. He said to the fox, "Hello fox, I told you to bring two, but you have brought only one." He addressed the tiger, saying –

lamba, Lamba dari, dighal dighal pah

pakhara sikkrak bisari fursu baromah.

(The description indicates the tiger which has long beard and long stripes and which is variegated in colour.)

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On hearing it the tiger was afraid of. He thought that the goat was searching him. It may be that the fox conspires with the goat. So the tiger tried to escape forcefully. The tiger dragged and dragged to lose the knot. At last the head of the fox was torn. The fox died; the tiger escaped into jungle. And the goat was saved.

(A tale told by Hisab Ali and collected by Dr. P. C. Das)

**The wife who would not be Beaten**

A prince does not want to marry. At last he gives consent on condition that he will marry only a girl who will submit to a beating with a shoe each day (M. 134)

The prince marries a girl but she refuses to allow him to beat. She says it is bought not by the prince himself but by his father’s wealth. He was ashamed of. The prince sets out to earn money. He wants to gain the princess and employed at menial task.

The wife in disguise of a man sets out to free her husband. She comes to a land where cheats flourished [F. 709.3] (a). An one eyed man states that the youth’s (princes wife in disguise) has taken his other eye and demands compensation.

The youth demands the man to give up his remaining eye so that he can take back to match it with the other. [S 1512.2] (b) A woman states that the youth’s father has married her but deserted in the land and
then demands a huge sum of money. The youth says the woman that he has come to take his mother (the cheat) as she is needed to be buried with his dead father. Thus the prince’s wife gets rid of the cheats.

The wife defeats the princess in arguments and press husband [J 1545.6]. The prince wants to marry her and she takes the princes with her. She also secures a token from her husband.

At home when the freed husband falsely boasts of his exploits The wife displays the token (H & O) The husband gets ashamed and swears never to beat her. The wife gives him the princes she gained in marriage. The husband and wife live in happiness thereafter.

**The Old Man and His Three Sons**

An old man had three sons. Before his death he invited his three sons and told them that one of them would be deprived of the share of fixed property. Because he is not his own child. After few months the old man died. The three sons went to the court for their due property. On their way they met a zamindar. The zamindar lost a camel. He said to the eldest son “Do you see a camel on the way?” He said, “Yes, is n’t it with load?” Where do you see? Said he, “I don’t know.” Replied the eldest son. He then met the second son and said “Do you see a camel?” He also said, “Yes, Is n’t it blind of one eye?” “Where do you see it?” asked zamindar. “I don’t know” came the reply. The zamindar thought that these people captured the camel. He then came across the third son
and asked if he met any camel. The man replied, “Yes, is it not half-tailed?” Then the zamindar said, “Where do you see?”

The third man also replied in the same way. They reached the court. The three sons approached the judge for dividing their property among them. In the meantime the zamindar lodged a complain that he lost a camel. And he also mentioned that these persons confessed to see the camel on the way but they refused to locate the camel. The judge summoned them in front of him. He asked the first son if he saw the camel. He confessed that it was true he said that he had seen the camel with load. He said it by applying conscience. The hoof of the camel marked deeply on the road. The mark of the hoof could not be seen if the camel were without load. When asked the second son also expressed his presence of mind. He said that both sides of the road were full of ample grass. The camel ate only the grass of left side. The grass on the right side remained untouched. So he said that the camel must be blind of the right eye. [He went to rice seller, asked him about his rice. He said that he agricultured in a cremation ground which was very fertile and where he got more crops. The he understood the saying of the first man. Then he met the meat-seller who said that the she goat died just after giving birth to the kids. On the other hand the bitch lost its kids. So the goats kid milked the bitch. Therefore the meat might smell of dog. Then the judge guessed himself to be bastard. He went to his mother and asked his father’s identity. Then mother clarified that his father was a washer man. The judge considered the three sons to be very wise and
clever. He thought how he could settle their problem. Then he asked his mother about the solution. Then the mother recommended a tale to be told in front of them. The judge began to tell the tale. He told all of them to remain silent while telling the story. Then the judge questioned the third son if he saw the camel. He said that he crossed the camel and thought it to be half-tailed. Because the camel slept on the road and witnessed some marks. So he guessed it to be half-tailed. Otherwise the backside would be clear. The judge appreciated their intellect. He proposed that they should be his guests for the night. He bought fragrant rice and mutton and fed them. They were given bed at rest house for the night. While going to bed the three of them were in conversation about food. The first man said that he could not feed well because he found a smell of dead body while eating rice. The second man said that he also found the smell of a dog while eating meat. The third son said that the man who prepared the food must be bastard. Then the judge thought of all these things deeply.

The tale is as follows: There was a king who had a beautiful princess. She went to school with the son of his Uzir (Minister). They fell in love. After few days the princess got married with a prince. She could not express her feelings to her lover she one day came to tell all these things to him. On the way she met a tiger that was hungry for several days. The tiger smiled to see the prey. While she requested that she would return just after telling her feelings and gave word to return to the tiger. The tiger allowed her to go. The second son then abruptly said,
"Why she should go to open her heart?" The other two bit him for his interference in the conversation. The judge deprived him of the share of the property.

**Changing role of folklore in modern context**

The concept of folklore and tradition implied an idea of change and continuity. According to Gray Alanefine, “Folklorists should treasure the proverb that the more things change, the more things remain the same.” Tradition is being always created a new. The modernization of the society led many scholars to believe that folklore was dying very soon and infact some genres disappeared from oral tradition due to impact of modernization, but they continued to live in other forms of modern media. For example the television superheroes in many countries have taken the roles of traditional folk heroes. Similarly in many countries the magic folktale is no longer transmitted orally but through books, videos and television and now internet and e-mail. Television has apparently changed the temporal boundaries of entertainment. The factors behind these changes are (i) Urbanisation and social changes that created new family pattern. The growing privatisation weakened the solidarity and amenity of the neighbourhood. The informal gathering in the evening came to an end, (ii) Urbanisation and industrialisation made old tradition connected with rural life of agriculture based communities and (iii) Modernisation new technology and innovation gave rise to new folklore and new traditions. Mass media, for example was first seen as destroying
the purity of folklore and oral tradition, but it soon turned out that mass media in fact was becoming a new carrier of folklore.

Amusement or entertainment was the most obvious function of folklore for the people in the remote villages where other avenues of entertainment were not available. But nowadays even urban literate sections of the society cherish the flavours of folktales and other kinds of folk materials. Besides the tales, the myths, legends and stories from the epics work as a media of entertainment for both the villagers and city elites. Folk narrative performance is nowadays done with the following objectives:

(i) To entertain,
(ii) To educate and
(iii) To create environmental awareness.

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