The study of folklore and its application in modern literary scenario is a very illuminating subject. As Y.M. Sokolov says, "Folklore is an echo of the past, but at the same time, it is also the vigorous voice of the present." Creative literature is regarded as a bountiful printed source of folklore. Dramatists, novelists and poets employ folkstuff for artistic purposes. The elements of folklore is also available in the epics like Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Iliad, Odyssey and the works of Kalidasa etc. Creative writer, very often, introduces and develops characters motivation, scenes and tensions from traditional oral form. "Drama of any sort calls for the creation of a play world by players, generally through the use of conventional symbolic objects — masks, costumes, a special area for playing — and conventional stylised and therefore is closely related to game, dance, and ritual of a play world that is recognizably removed from the real world and yet in many ways similar to it."

In this chapter we will discuss how Assamese legends, folktales and ballads reflected through the story and theme of social drama. Legends, folktales and ballads are the important items of oral or verbal folklore. It is accepted by all that most of the mythological dramas derived its story and theme from myths and legends.

1. Sokolov, Y.M. : Russian Folklore, p. 13
Legends and Assamese Social dramas:

Legends may be regarded as a part of folk narratives. According to the Encyclopaedia Americana, 'legend is a traditional narrative, frequently involving kings, heroes, or other important persons and presented as true. Legends are not historical records, but they may include historical personage and facts. A legend is a kind of traditional tale where there is some kind of mixture of actuality and fantasy. Thus, a legend is create on the basis of Myth or historical events. Legend is exaggerated and distorted history. Legends are orally transmitted from mouth to mouth. This is the storehouse of oral literature. Here inanimate things become animates.

Assam has a rich tradition of legends, but we have found very few social plays based on legends. Among there mention may be made of a very popular and unique play 'Ajān' by Mahendra Barthakur.

Mahendra Barthakur: Ajān:

Mahendra Barthakur, a leading Assamese dramatist has written more than forty plays. However, only a few plays of him have been published. Ajān is a very popular play. The play is yet to be published in a book form, though it was published in a monthly literary journal Adhināyak. The story of the play is partly derived from history and partly from legend. Ajān Phakir was a famous personality of medieval Assamese culture and society. He devoted his whole lifetime for the upliftment of downtrodden. Basically he was a religious

3. Encyclopaedia Americana, Vol. 17, p. 169
A preacher who came from Bagdad to Kamrup (Assam) for preaching of the sermons of Islam. He paid his attention to build a purely ethical society. In order to achieve this purpose he depended on the traditional cultural heritage of old Kāmrupa. While he composed the Jikirs he perhaps might be derived the essence of this devotional songs from the old Kāmrupi tunes. However, his Jikirs are valuable property of Assamese culture. Regarding his life-career etc. We have not found any authentic information. There are so many opinions, ideas regarding his activities.

The story of the play is derived from the history, but the dramatist has depended upon legends to develop it.

The story of Ājān runs as follows:

Ājān Phakir was a religious preacher. He was a dedicated devotional man who loved all, specially the downtrodden. Although he was a religious preacher of Islamism, he was loved and respected by all sections of the people. He also composed many devotional songs, termed as 'Jikirs' to propagate the sermons of Islam. According to him, the ultimate aim of all religion is to serve the man, that is service to man is to service the God (Allāh). To him service for mankind is the highest principle. The dramatist says through the character of Ājān Phakir,

Fakir : mai Allāhar nam loi phura Phakirhe.

4. Malik, S. Abdul : Ājān Phakir Āru Suriā Jikir, p. 4
5. Das, Jogesh (ed) : Adhināyak, 1st Yr. 1st issue, Feb.'89, p. 17
Nabijan was the brother of Ajan phakir. In collaboration with Nabijan Ajan phakir united the people of their society for leading a moral life. People were very much attracted to the teaching of this religious teacher. Gradually Ajan phakir became the moral leader of the people. He recognised as a phakir or pir (religious teacher) and most of them accept him as a perfect Yogi (sufi sadhak). As a sufi sadhak his fame and popularity spread over the different parts of the state. Both Hindu and Muslims were attracted under this secular moral leader, both Hindu and Muslims disciples learned and they have formed a new society. Even people came to meet him from different places to solve their day-to-day problems. While he stayed at Gargamon area the Darangia people came to meet him. Badaruddin, a pupil of Darang one day met him. He informed Ajan phakir that the pupils of Darangia were tortured by the king's man. Because the royal officer namely, Rupai-da-Dharar was very cruel and a money sucker. Rupai-da-Dharar with his assistant Phatulah harassed the common people. Rupai-da-Dharar was a powerful Muslim royal officer. He was dadhar of the Ahom king. Rupai thought that the enhancing popularity of Ajan phakir decreases his status. Hence, by any means he tried to remove Ajan phakir. He appointed a spy to look the activities of Ajan phakir.

Ajan phakir came to Darang at the request of the people. Rupai and phatulah wanted to divide the Hindu-Muslim people. Badaruddin and Sarbananda Koch were friends. One day Sarbananda committed suicide when the king's officer tortured him due to his inability of paying
rents in due time. Sarbānanda was upset and he has done this. But Phatulā declared that Badaruddin killed Sarbānanda. At first people believed this. But Ājān Phakir and Nabijān told the real truth to the people.

Jayā was a daughter of Sarbānanda Koch. She was a good Deodhani dancer. Rupāi and Phatulā tried to kidnap Jayā and to present her to their king. But in the mean time her beloved Gargayā and other people prevented them. The royal man under the leadership of Phatulā attacked them, the people escaped but at that time Ājān Phakir came to the spot and he saved Jayā from Phatulā. Rupāi and Phatulā were offended. One day Rupāi invited Ājān Phakir for a feast. He was sitting on an elephant and he invited Phakir from sitting. Phakir could nicely understand that the aim of invitation was to insult him. So he refused to participate the feast.

After that Rupāi informed his king that Phakir was a spy of Mughal. Therefore, he should be punished. The king ordered Rupāi to bring off the eyes of Phakir. Accordingly, Rupāi arrested him with his brother. Phatulā and his assistants told to Phakir regarding the king's order. Then Phakir said to Phatulā to bring two earthen pots. Accordingly the helpers of Phatulā gave the two earthen pot. Phakir ultimately bring off his eyes himself. He sacrificed his valuable eyes for the conspiracy of Rupāi-dā-Dharā.

After few days of this tragic incidents Badaruddin killed Rupāi-dā-Dharā at Jerengā field. Phakir remarked that the path of Badaruddin was emotional.
Phakir: *tumi abegere bēt bulilā*\(^6\)

*(Phakir: You have taken the path of emotion).*

Although the play is not entirely based on legends there are some elements of legends. The dramatist depicts the character of Ājān Phakir through some legendary activities. These are

(1) When for the first time Kāder tried to arrest Ājān Phakir he utter the name of Allāh and then he immediately went to another place. At that time nobody could have seen where he was. The dramatist depicts this moment in the following:

Kāder: ... *Phakirak janāboloī pāi dukhei lāgiche sargādewr ādesh, dudojanake bondi karā haī. Sadhayate sunporā duwāraloī duiko niboloī āhiche.*

Phakir: *kintu nāmāj naparhākēi mai ekhojor lorcār nakoro, etīā nāmājor samaya*

Kāder: *tene acesh nāi kintu -*

Phakir: *āllā har sei āceshi āche.*

*(Nāmājor bhāgīt Phakir āru nabijān thiya hai manca āndhar).*

Kāder: *keni gol!*

Pratham Sainya: *tatake dhārība nowarilo.*\(^7\)

| Kāder: I am sorry to inform you Phakir that I am carrying king's order to arrest both of you. |\(^7\) |
|---|

Phakir: But I never proceed a single step without reading *Nāmāj.*

It is the time of *Nāmāj.*

Kāder: But king's order is not like that -

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6. Ibid, p. 25
7. Ibid, p. 23
Phakir: God has given that order.

(Phakir and Nabijan stand-up for Namaj, then the stage will dark).

Kāder: Where he goes?

Ist Army: I do not know.

(2) According to the order of king Rupāi send Phatulā to bring off the eyes of Ājan Phakir. When Phatulā come to bring off the eyes of Phakir, then he says that they may bring off his eyes but before bringing off his eyes he begs to bring two earthen pot. Accordingly, Phatulā gives a signal to Kāder, then Kāder gives the two pots to Phakir. Ājan Cāheb takes two pot in his hands and then he prays to Allāha. When he prays to Allāha, his eyes come out.

duhāte dutilo ājan cāhebe
khodaloi phariād kare
jetiā khodaloi phariād karile
najor jor sulaki pare. 8

The way which they have taken to bring off the eyes of Phakir is itself a legend.

(3) The following snap shot will also support our views —

Phakir: rajāi mor najor niche niyak.
mor najare kijāi teolokar caku
mukali karei 1
(hathāt meghar gāgand. bijulee camake)

Jayā: bābā dhumuhā akiba. batar ondalāi āniche.

Phakir: tuphān āhiba āi joni. Āhak, tuphāne bargachhe vānge, dubari navānge.

8. Ibid, p. 25
Badar: *tuphān āhiba bābā.*

Phakir: *moio jāno tuphān āhiba.*

**Badar:** ājī kintu moi khun kari āhico. Phakirbābā. Phakirbābā, mok maf karabā. ājī sasāsaiko khun kari āhico. jerengāt rupāik kāti thoī āhico.

**Phakir:** Badar!

Badar: jibanat hoito bahut gunāh karilo.ājī seiyhe punya karilo.

**Phakir:** tumi abegere bāt bullā badar! hāi khodā—(Uparaloi hāt dāngi sthir hai. napathyar parā vāhi āhe)\(^9\) ............

□**Phakir:** The king has bring off my eyes.
perhaps my eyes will awake them!
(In the mean time the cloud sounds and light sparks).

Jayā: Bābā, storm will come. Weather is cloudy.

Phakir: Storm must come, my daughter. come!
Storm can break only the big tree,
Can not break bush.
..........................

Badar: Storm will come, (bābā) father.

Phakir: I know that storm will come.
..........................

Badar: Today I come and killed.
Phakir bābā, excuse me. Today I really killed.
I killed Rupāi-dā-Dharā at jerenga field.

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\(^9\) Ibid, p. 25
Phakir: Badar!

Badar: Perhaps I have done so many sin works in my life. Hence, today I have been done this virtuous act.

Phakir: You have taken the path of emotion. Oh! Khoda — (He hands-up and frizes. A jikir is heard from the background).

Karunā Dekā: Luit Kanyā (1985):

Karunā Dekā is a young dramatist and a director. He has produced some significant plays. His Luit Kanyā is a serious production. The story element of this play is derived from the popular episode of Manasā Kābya by Manakara and Durgabara and from Padmā-purāṇa by Sukabī Narāyandeva. Manakara and Durgabara composed some songs on the worship of the goddess Manasā. The songs of Manakara describe in detail the creation myth, a popular legend on the marriage of Hara and Gauri and the birth of their daughter Padmā or Manasā.10 The songs of Durgabara describe the following episodes connected with the worship of Manasā on this earth.11 Padmā-purāṇa is a large book which is also known as Sukanani. This book is very popular in Kāmrup, Darrang and Goalpara area. In Luit Kanyā, although the dramatist has depended upon these popular legendary works, at the same time he has also shown credibility of imagination and innovation of the story.

Padmā, the daughter of the Siva expects honour and worship from all sections of the people of the earth. While Pārvati, the wife of Siva, suspects that the rising popularity of Padmā will

10. Baruā, B.K.(ed.): Manasā Kābya, Preface S.N. Sarma
11. Ibid.
damage her status and fame. Chandra (Sadāgar), the most wealthy member of the merchant community of the city of Champak, was a devotee of Pārvatī but a great opponent of Padmā. He was not prepared to worship Padmā at any cost. His wife Sonekā worshiped Padmā. When Chandra came to know of it he warned his wife not to worship. He ordered in his kingdom that no man can worship Manasā and violation of this order will lead serious punishment. At this treatment Padmā was furious and she determined to take revenge on Chandra and his family. After few days she by tricks brought the Sanjivani Mahā-jñān from Chandra and she caused the death of his six sons. After that Padma got sunk the boats of Chandra which carried merchandise from abroad,

In spite of these misfortunes Chandra never thought to worship Manasā. Then Padmā made another plan -

Padmā: bahu parikalpanā bāideu hal bertha /

eneki āche āru jihaba abyartha //

Netā: Indrak bujani di kathā kabā gārha kari /

Ushā-Aniruddhak ānā cal kari //

Padmā: So many planes failure, elder sister. Is there any way, which will not failure.

Netā: You try to convince Indra,

Bring Ushā-Aniruddha by tricks from the heaven.

When Chandra's seven sons Lakhindāra grew up, he was married to Beulā. Padmā threatened to Chandra that Lakhindāra would be

12. Luit Kanyā, Act- 1, Scene- vii
bitten to death by a snake on their bed of roses. Hence, Chandra ordered Kesha to construct a house (Meraqhara) without a hole in it. Then Padmā threatened Kesha to keep a hole in the Meraqhara. Ultimately, Lakhindāra was bitten to death by a snake on the bridal night. In the next morning Beulā got a raft made and set it afloat on the river with the body of her husband. The raft went on and on the river for many days and nights. One day she met Netā. With her help Beulā arrived in front of Siva. Siva advised her to satisfy the Devatā's of Sarga. Then she begins to dance and sung. The Devatās of Sarga were pleased. They requested to Padmā to return the life of her husband. Padmā agreed to return the life of her husband on condition that if she can do agree Chandra to worship Manasā. Beulā promised to propitiate the goddess Manasā. At last, Beulā found the life of her husband, his six brothers and lost properties. After that Beulā, with her husband and brothers-in-law return happily to Champakanagara. On her return Beulā entreated Chandra to pay offerings to Padmā. Chandra agreed to do so only with his left hand.

In the last moment Padmā appears and says Beulā and Lakhindāra that their function in the earth has completed. They may return to the Heaven. But Beulā and Lakhindāra decides not to return Heaven, they have decided to stay in the bank of the river Luit.

They said,

Beulā, Lakhindāra: āmi duio, eāte, ei luitar pārate thākim.
Saishya shyāmalā ei deshāt, sahaj sarāl jānātār mājāt.
Beulā, Lakhindār: We will stay here, in the bank of the river Luit – this is the green valley – people are ordinary and simple – we are happy – we find here extreme pleasure. You please inform our respect to Indra Devatā. The gods of heaven use us as the tool of enjoyment. They have no sympathy to our life. But in this word so many people has been suffering for our happiness and pleasure. We never return to the Heaven. We will live on the earth.

This is the story of the play. The playwright successfully portrays the character of Chandra, Sonekā, Beulā, Padmā, etc. These are the representative characters of Assamese society. In this play we find legendary atmosphere and elements. The dramatist uses these elements appropriately which enables to reveal the essence of the theme in the play. He has also adopted the ojāpāli form in the production of the play.13

Assamese social drama based on Folktales:

Folk narratives are very popular all over the world. Story telling or hearing is a general tendency of men. Indians may be
proud of their rich heritage of fables. They are based on adventures, sea-voyages and other occurrences and also on the imagination of those who could invent stories. They are generally connected with supernatural happenings like the movements of beings in the sky and the mountain regions. The didactic fable formed a special feature of the Indian literature from very early times. It is possible to find a reference to the existence of this literature in the pre-Christian era. One of the special features of these tales is attribution of human tendencies to the animals and birds. The tales concerning their activities are narrated to illustrate the dark and bright sides of life. These fables deal with the activities in the political sphere and in everyday life.

The traditional stories or folktales are generally told and retold in gossip situations or in baithakas (informal gatherings) by village elders. This stories include a bulk of material handed down to the society from one generation to another. The Assamese term Sādhukathā has a broad suggestiveness. We have already said that in the foregoing part of this chapter the Assamese word Sādhukathā includes the English terms tales, legends, myths, fables etc. P. Goswāmi pointed out 'The Assamese term for a tale or folk-tale is Sādhukathā (Sādhu for short), said to derive from sādhu or merchant, suggesting that the travelling merchant carried tales from place to place.' Assam has a long and rich tradition

15. Parmar, Shyam : Traditional Folk Media, p. 69
17. Goswāmi, P. : Tales of Assam, Introduction, XV.
of folktale (Sādhukathā). Some tales may be found in Assamese language, and the remainings are to be found in tribal communities. Some of the tales of Assam can be traced back to the Jātakas, panchatantra or the Mahābhārata. This folktales are treasure house of wisdom. The Sādhukathā (tales) of Assam may be divided into some sub-classes i.e., Animal tale (Sīyāl Tāmuli, Sīyāl Pandit, the fox and the Monkey etc.), Magic tale or wonder tale, Trickster tale (tetonor sādhu), Tales of the supernatural (Tejimalā, Tejā and Teji, Panesād, Champāvati, the Gold producing king, the Demon Astrologer etc.), Humorous or Jokes tale (the son-in-law, The seven Numskulla, The Brahman's servant, etc.), Cumulative tales (The Crow and the Tansi) etc.

We cannot refute the influence of folktales on the different branches of Assamese literature. Modern Assamese social drama has also influenced by this genre of folkliterature. Of course it is true that comparatively the writers of farces or light commediens have borrowed theme and story much from folktales.

Lakshmināth Bejbaruā :

Lakshmināth Bejbaruā was a pioneer among the Assamese dramaticists to use folktales in his plays. Litikāi (1890) was his first play of this sort. Bezbaruā has to his credit four farces, Litikāi, Nomal (1913), Pācani (1913) and Cikarpati Nikarpati (1913). The stories and themes of these dramas are derived from folktales.

19. : Ballads And Tales of Assam, pp. 79-106
Litikai:

Litikai may be regarded as the first Assamese farce which is based on folktale. It was first published in the Jonaki in its first issue and was completed in the twelfth. The story of Litikai is as follows:

Nitai, Satai, Bholai, Monai, Titai, Phuhaai and Rasai were seven archfools.

After the death of their father the seven brothers were helpless. One day, in a moon-lit-night they went away and they swim on a tilled rice field because they thought that it was an ocean. In this way the night has finished and they count each other. Every time they count but excludes himself and as a result they found only six. At that time a Brahmmin (Deuram) has presented. He observed about the activities of these fools. The Brahmmin propose them to solve their problems but on condition that they must give something. The fools agreed to be the slaves of the Brahmmin. Accordingly, the Brahmmin has solved their problem and the fools resided with him. One day the fools kept the bundles of rice on the head of the mother (Subhadrā) of Brahmmin. As a matter of fact the Brahmmin's mother died. Then Brahmmin feel that they were mere burdens to him. Hence, he decided to get rid of them. One day the Brahmmin cut a big branch of a tree and he suggested them to catch this big branch. Except Titai, remaining six fools died. Titai was slight cunning. The Brahmmin also tried to kill him by eating poison, but he failed. The cunning man managed to marry the Brahmmin's sister-in-law by a fraud.
This is the story of the play. This play lacks the rising and falling of plot, peculiarity of characterisation, conflict and climax and other elements of well-made drama. The dramatist portrays here a simple and unpompus folktale through acting and dialogue. Physical jestering dominates the dialogues. B.K. Baruā points out that the farce is based upon the humour of a situation created by foolery, deceitfulness, and pretentiousness, and has brilliance in its drollery.

Bezbaruā has created this drama to fulfill the needs of the time and age. This drama is the real picture of Assamese society. This play distinctly reflects the likes and dislikes, beliefs and superstitions, strife and clash between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law of our society. Bezbaruā could be able to maintain properly the characteristics of folktale in this play.

Nomal:

Nāharphutukā was a simple foolish village man. Nicali was his wife. Nāharphutukā went to his guru in Āthiyābāri Sattra in order to ask him to give a name for his newborn son. One of the weak point of Nāharphutukā was that he forgot everything immediately. Nāharphutukā has present at home of his guru. His guru chooses a name 'Nomal' for his son. But when he returns back his home, Nāharphutukā forgets the name Nomal, then he was shouting as 'namely', 'namel' (do not sail). At that time some boatmen were about to sail their boat considers it to be an insult and imper-sistence. As a result they tortured him. He then was shouting

again and again as 'nohabar hol ou' (something unusual has happened). In the mean time a group of Gāyan Bāyan came. They thought that the cry really means an adverse comment upon their status. He again victimises a second beating. He has completely forgotten the name of Nomal and he said to his wife the name as Nemel.

The story of this play is a very weak as well as the treatment is also not impressive.

Pācani:

In this play Dharmāi Pācani was a childless man who like guests and he seeks to receive one guest each night. But his wife was opposed to such a practice. One day his wife drives out guests pointing the grinding arm of a pounding machine (dhēki-thora). On another occasion his wife makes a pretence of killing the domestic cat with the ostensible purpose of serving the guest with its meat. The guest runs away.

This is a farce and is full of hillary as well as fun. The farce is divided into five scenes. There is a contrast of ideas. Pacani believes that by serving guest one can acquire the highest virtue, but his wife does not consider it to be a virtue. B.K. Bhattachāryya points out that these two contrasting outlooks, one heavenly and the other earthly, gives rise in juxtaposition to law comedy.²¹ It is never treated and developed seriously, so that the spirit of the play is predominantly farcical. Pāsani's hospitality

²¹ Bhattachāryya, B.K.: Humour and Satire in Assamese Literature, p. 196
expanded to ridiculous proportions clashes with his wife's parsimony, giving rise to a humorous situation.22

Cikarpati Nikarpati:

Cikarpati was a notorious thief in the kingdom of Cikanpur. The king judges several cases in the king's court. But Cikarpati never arrests by the king's security.

In order to test the capacity of the renowned thief the king declared that if the thief could be able to steal a ring from his hand, then he will be confer him the title of 'Barchor' Cikarpati has successfully completed this by the declaration of the king. Then the king engages him as 'ghatak' (the attendant on a bridegroom) for his daughter. In order to obey the king's request he went to the city of Dingā and he kept his boat with valuable goods on the bank of a river. There was also a notorious very clever thief. The name of this thief was Nikarpati. All valuable goods of Cikarpati has stolen by Nikarpati and he keeps this at his home. Cikarpati knews that this was done by Nikarpati. Cikarpati disguises just like Nikarpati and he then went to Nikarpati's house in the last night and said to Nikarpati's wife to give this valuable goods. The wife of Nikarpati thought that the man was her husband, so that she easily gave the goods. In the next morning Nikarpati knew the mystery. He then proceeded and he meets with Cikarpati. At last the two renowned thieves became friend. However, Cikarpati managed the groom for his king's daughter by the suggestion of his friend Nikarpati. In this way he has successful.

The structure of the drama is very loose. The characters in this play has not been developed. The two thieves display the tricks and methods employed by them in larceny. Their activities creates situations which force laughter. The air of the play is farcical.

Exaggerated situations, irony of thought and words, malapropisms and humorous dialogues are the characteristics of these farces. S.N. Sarma points out that these dramas are deficient in dramatic action and based mostly on laughter of situation and incongruity of words. Bezbarua is a pioneer in the domain of Assamese farces. Although the story and theme of these plays are based on folktales, the writer proves his credibility and originality.

Padmanāth Gohain Baruā : Teton Tāmuli :

Padmanāth Gohain Baruā may be considered as a very successful social playwright. Gohain Baruā wrote three farces (Gaokura (The village headman), Teton Tāmuli and Bhut Ne Bhram (Is it spirit or hallucination). Of these three farces of Gohain Baruā, the story of Teton Tāmuli is derived from the famous folktale of Teton. Teton Tāmuli is the second Assamese social drama which is based on folktale. The folktale is divided into three parts. Gohain Baruā has taken the first part of the story in his play which is very popular in the North Lakhimpur area. According to P. Goswāmi, Teton is a picaro or picoroon of Assamese oral literature. The story is still popular among Assamese villages.

Teton is a youngman, who is very clever, and a witty plebeian. One day he is driven out of his home for his impudence to his brother-in-law (Dhanfi). He goes out into the wide world. He sits on the road side and he becomes hungry. After few minutes he meets two thieves. Then he joins them. The thieves advises him to enter a house. He agrees. He beats on a drum. The owner of the house is awaken from sleep and immediately apprehends him while the others flee. After that as he has taken to the court he is involved indeed of another two crimes. Such as cow-killing and Cheating of woman fruit-seller. They also follow him to the court. The householder, the ploughman and the woman charges him for three offences in the king's court. Teton argues his case well but cunningly and proves that he did not commit those offences. The king acquits him. Later on he comes to the court and claims a hundred and a thousand and a lakh of rupees from the minister (Phukan). Teton compels the minister to give money for him. He declares a word is a word.

At last Teton could be able to marry the daughter (Champā) of the minister (Phukan) by a clever device and this helps him in becoming an officer (called Teton Tāmulī) of the king's court.

Teton Tāmulī is a full-fledged farce having five acts and each acts divided into different scenes. The playwright portrays the real rural picture through the characters and situations. The success of the farce and its popular appeal depends largely upon brilliant wit. Gohain Baruā has done this well. Although the story of the play is derived from a folktale, the playwright could be
able to prove the skillfulness of his own. The character of Champā is obvious in his play, but in the original tale Champā is not distinct. He depicts the other characters as it is in the original tale. This drama is a good analogy for modern Assamese social drama that it could be able to maintain our own identity although modern Assamese drama growth and develops by the impact of western drama.

Benudhar Rajkhovā: 'Corar ārstri' (1931) : (The Creation of Thieves)

Corar ārstri (1931) may be considered as a light comedy. The story is borrowed from the Arabian folktales of 'Ālibābā and the forty thieves'. Though this play is having seven acts, here the acts and the scenes are very short. The main character of the drama is an expert thief whose name is Dhurandhar. He steals only in rich man and he distributes the stolen goods among the poors, which are not necessary for the management of his family. After all the thief is a happy man. He knows well about the 'Nidrāban' and through this way he can do some extraordinary acts and accordingly he helps to others.

The two husbands, Dhumuha and Mauram lead unhappy lives, with their respective wives, Cenidai and Batāhi. One night the thief Dhurandhar enters their house and he then comes to know that of their unhappiness. After that Dhurandhar exchanges the two wives with the help of his 'Nidraban', which he knows well. The two pairs now enjoy their new conjugal lives.

25. It is a kind of mantra (charm), through this mantra one must sleep.
Corar ārsti is an elegant farce which develops through the unnatural situation and supernatural elements. Although the dramatist himself considers it as a farce, this play is really a play of wonder sentiments. The play has a strong moral appeal. Dhurandhar says, 'Cor ye mahat lok, thāt epherio sandeh nāi, keval sei mahatva abyakta hoi āche.'

(There is least doubt that the thief is a great man, only his greatness has not been revealed). His morality can be measure from his dialogues --

Dhurandhar: Čahakir atirikta dhan āni dukhiyār nātani purāo.

(I steal the surplus wealth of the rich and use them to remove the wants of the poor).

Dhurandhar: Yi čahakie dhan sāce, kiya sāce kōbā novāre, tār dhan he niu.

(I steal the wealth of those rich men, who save money, but do not know why they are saving it).

S. N. Sarmā points out Rājkhowā does not wield a witty style like Lakshmināth Bezbaruā. Here he playwright could be able to maintain the properties of folktale and he depicts the characters in the light of folklife.

27. Ibid, p. 19
28. Ibid, Scene I, Act IV, p. 34
29. Sarmā, S. N.: Asamiya Nātya Sāhitya, p. 366
Topanir Parinām (1932):

The story of this play is based on a folktale having seven acts and the scenes are extremely small. B.K. Bhattachāryya points out that the only element of laughter in it centres round the verbal misunderstanding created by the accidental use of the idiomatic Assamese expression 'topaniye jokāiche'.

Topani is an educated young man who seeks to marry Ajali, the daughter of Jāibar. But due to his rival, Topani could not be able to marry Ajali. One day Topani goes to Ajali's house and becomes their guest. Cilani, the wife of Jāibar, receives their guests very well. She manages their guest to sleep. At bedtime, the innocent girl, Ajali shouting and she complains to her mother:

'āi, topaniye jokāiche'
(mother Topani is teasing me).

Her mother then replies:

'Topaniye jokāice yadi sui thāk'.
(if she feeling sleepy, she should go to bed).

Accordingly, the naive girl sleeps with Topani. At last they happily enjoys their lives as husband and wife.

Topanir parinam is a light farce. Here there is no novelty at all.

30. Bhattachāryya, B.K.: Humour and Satire In Assamese Literature, p. 214
31. Topanir Parinām, Scene I, Act IV, p. 18
32. Ibid.
Chandradhar Baruā : Bhāgya-Parikṣā (1916)

*Bhāgya-Parikṣā* (Fate Decided) is a notable farce in Assamese literature. The story of the play borrows from an Arabian folktale (Arabian Nights). The name of the Arabian folktale is *The Story of the merchant who lost his luck*. Here the playwright depicts the tragic story of a merchant through the character of Pānirām. The central character Pānirām is a poor man. In this play Pānirām is moving by reversal of fortune. Dhanakanyā and Bhāgyakanyā plays on the character of Pānirām. Dhanakanyā offers some money to Pānirām for doing business and he becomes prosperous. But as he has no luck Pānirām losses the money. But when he becomes lucky then he becomes a prosperous trader and the lost money is also recovers. This is the story of the play. The dramatist here supports the role of fortune. He writes,

*Bhāgya jār uday hoba*

māti fāti dhan olāba

(*Who will be lucky enough
He will be prosperous*).

*Bhāgya Parikṣā* is a play having five acts. S.N. Sarma points out that *Bhāgya Parikṣā* is a pure farce. Improbable accident and coincidence makes it amusing and as such is a mixture of both real and unreal matters. As a folk story based drama, here we find the supernatural elements in the magical powers of the two goddesses which bring luck to Pānirām. We can point out the supernatural elements in this way : (a) Dhanakanyā and Bhāgyakanyā comes for singing from heaven to the world and they experiments their magical powers

33. Sarma, S.N. : *Asamiya Nātya Sāhitya*, p. 367
through Pānirām; (b) Kite takes away money from the head-dress of Pānirām and leaves it deposited in her nest; (c) a valuable piece of diamond accidentally out from the belly of a fish; (d) the money bag lost hidden inside a basket of husk which is sold to a man; (e) but after one year the lost money recovered from the same basket; etc.

The writer displays skill in depicting varied pictures of rural life. Pānirām, Māniki, men, women, kewaliyā bhakat, fisherman, money-lenders etc. are realistic and representative of their classes. Moreover, the writer also exposes one of the important characteristics of Indian philosophy i.e., the central character of this play, Pānirām has depicted as the doll of Bhāgyakānyā (Luck).

Mitra Deva Mahanta (1894-1983):
Kukuri Kanār Āathamangalā (1918):

Mitra Deva Mahanta's Kukuri Kanār Āathamangalā (The reception of the Pureblind son-in-law) is based on the popular folkstory of Kukurikana. The play was successfully staged in the different parts of Assam and this was first staged in 1917 under the banner of Jorhat Theatre Party and the play has first published in 1918.34

Here the playwright portrays the amusing story of a night blind youngman going to his father-in-laws abode to attend the Āth-mangalā feast. In the first act of the two scene when the

night-blind young man started his journey to the house of his father-in-law people came to knew that he was a night-blind man, but he tried to secrete this from his best. Cengali reached his destination by holding the tail of a cow (belonging to his father-in-law). Since he was a night-blind he has to go with the cow to the cow-shed of his father-in-law. His brother-in-law, Lhanāi thought that the man was a thief. Because he was quite ignorant about the presence of Cengeli. However, the real truth has discovered. In the dining room Cengeli slaps his mother-in-law in her face mistaking her for a cat, then his mother-in-law falls. Cengeli thought that how could he spent the whole night. Then Cengeli decided to spent the whole night under bush. He hides himself in the place meant for throwing leavings from dinner plates (Cuvā-pātani). When the leavings are thrown on his head, he thought that it was raining. So he prayed to the rain god, then his mother-in-law suspected that was a thief and she called her husband. At last they have seen that was not a thief, he was their son-in-law.

In the Kukurikanār Āthmangalā, the dramatist portrays an exaggerated picture, incoherent behaviour of Cengeli. Cengeli's functions and behaviour creates humorous situation. Here social satire is less. However, with rendering it into a drama, the dramatist has very successfully brought the village life and cultural picture. Though the story is traditional, there is much originality in its presentation. H. Bhattachāryya comments, it starts from the very first scene and continues to the last, and that in every remark is amusing and enjoyable both to the educated
and to the uneducated masses. 

Prafulla Borā : Tejimalā (1976) 

The Tejimalā of Prafulla Bora is based on the popular folk-tale of 'Tejimalā'. This is a very significant Assamese social drama. The playwright has forward this play in this way --

Once upon a time a merchant named Saytambar whose first wife Sabitree died by snake biting when their only daughter Tejimalā was in the stage of childhood. The merchant tried to save the life of his wife by calling a well-known bej, but he failed. However, the bej suggested him to drown the body over a river on Kalar vel for the save of his wife's life by an unknown famous bej. But the merchant could not received any information about his wife. After the death of her mother, Tejimalā became lonely. Her only accompany was Jone. At last, the merchant only for practical necessity married again a middle-aged woman named Durga. From the beginning the step mother considered Tejimalā as enemy. The simple-hearted beautiful girl falls in love with Jone who was also a simple-hearted child. Both Tejimalā and Jone were very intimate, they plays and games from their childhood.

On the other hand the evil woman (Durga) has been keeping a secret relation with a wicked man whose name was Manohar. After her marriage, she kept the secret illegal relation with this wicked man. The stepmother did not took Tejimala and their servant Nathurā as her own family member.

35. Bhattachārīya, H.: Origin and Development of the Assamese Drama and the Stage, p. 96
36. Manuscript
37. Kalarvel - a boat made by banana plant.
Gradually Tejimalā became youth and marriageable and Durgā tried to give marriage Tejimalā with Manohar. But Tejimalā refused the proposal of her stepmother. The wicked woman tortured Tejimalā. The merchant finally decided to give marriage Tejimalā with her childhood company Jone and he had decided to celebrate their marriage ceremony after their return of his trading trip.

The merchant gave the responsibility to his wife and his servant Mathurā to take care his affectionate daughter Tejimalā and then he with Mathurā took plenty of goods in few boats and sent out on a trading trip. The stepmother tried to find out the clue of guilt of the lovely and good-natured girl. The evil woman got the opportunity after the merchant's departure. Tejimalā wanted to go the marriage ceremony of her friend (dakhiyek) Maināmati. The stepmother allowed her and she gave a valuable silk cloth and she packet this silk cloth in a bundle with a mouse and a anghatā of fire and adviced Tejimalā to put on this valuable dress at the marriage place. Accordingly, the simple-hearted girl went her friend's marriage by putting on a very simple dress. But when she open the package at marriage spot, then she noticed a mouse run away and a anghatā of fire was there and the clothes were damaged. Pamili, Pengā, Thengā, Rangili and other accompanions thought that they would make Tejimalā as bride like her friend Maināmati. But their pleasures stopped. In the mean time, the groom came in the marriage place. All were become busy. But the simple-hearted Tejimalā alone cried on the bosom of Mathurā. Then she return her home, she spent two days at her nephew's home, at last she finally arrived her home.
The stepmother and Manohar ordered her to make rice at the dhenki-shed. The cruel woman crushed Tejimalā's hands, legs and head and ultimately Tejimalā died. After that the stepmother and Manohar dug a pit in the corner of her backyard and buried the dead body of Tejimalā. After some days there grew a pumpkin creeper where Tejimalā had been buried. The creeper was full of fruits. One day a beggar (old woman, Māgani) reached out to pick a pumpkin, the creeper cried out —

'pātare talate kee lāu dekhili
kareao māgani burīhi
bukure kutumak bānghe gilile
sāudor numali jee.'

"Have you seen any pumpkin under the leaves
Wherever you come from, O beggar
It is poor daughter of the merchant,
Crushed to death by my relatives."

The beggar thought it as the act of ghost. Hence, she afraid and runs away. Then the step-mother and Manohar cut it down and threw it away into her backyard. There grew-up an orange tree (Jara Tenga). The tree was full of fruits. One day the village boys and cowherds Thengā, pengā and others noticed the tree. The boys with due permission from the woman, as soon as they reached out to pick the fruit, the tree cried out —

38. Tejimalā, Scene X, Manuscript
"Gàor garakhîà sună kāne pātī
jarāloî nidiïba hât
avagi dukhini akale ācohī
samaya câi dibāhi màt." 39

O my own cowherd listen to
Do not reach the hand to orange
It is poor I am here alone
Sometimes you will come /

When the woman and Manohar came to the matter they cut down
the tree and threw it into the river Brahmaputra. The tree now grew
a lotus plant and it blossoms an attractive flower. At that time the
merchant turned homewards. He noticed the beautiful flower and he
wanted to get the flower for his daughter. But as he reached out to
pick the flower, the lotus cried out —

"hâto nemelībi phulo nicingībi
kākho nācāpībi mor
padumār janamloî jibantao kataîco
cenehar jiyari tor." 40

Do not reachout, do not pick the flower
Do not come to my side
I am living as a lotus
I am your affectionate daughter."

39. Ibid, Scene XI
40. Ibid, Introduction
The merchant astonished and afraid, when he return his home and came to knew the whole mystery of the killing of his beloved daughter. After that the merchant removed his second wife and he ordered this wicked woman to go with Manohar, but Manohar refused to accept such a wicket woman who was a murderer.

Now-a-days on the river Brahmaputra Tejimalā is blooming of a lotus flower as a daughter of nature. While anybody reach out to pick the flower the plant today cry out —

'হাতো নেমেল্লি প্হুলো নিংগিবি
কারে নাওরিয়া তাই
পাকাপোড়া লাগাত মাহিইল কুন্দিলে
তেজিমালা হে মাই ।'।

(Do not reach out, do not pick the flower,
Where are you boatman
It is poor Tejimalā I am,
Crushed to death by my stepmother.)

This is the dramatic story of the play. Although the story of the play is based on a popular folktale, the dramatist has to his credit for the unique presentation of the play. This play has written for the purpose of peace. It is a bold step in the history of Assamese social drama. Borā successfully prove his efficiency regarding characterisation. Some of the characters are successfully created from his own talent. Among the remarkable characters of his creation, Mathūra (servant of Saytambar) is very attractive. This

41. Ibid, Scene XIII, .
character has project Assamese beliefs, customs, rituals etc. Through this character we can know the traditional Assamese society.

Like that the character of Manohar, who was a villain, is the fundamental creation of the dramatist. Manohar was closely connected with the succession of events in the play. Lurgā has done the tragic consequence of Tejimalā by the active co-operation of Manohar. Comparatively the character of Jone who was a lover of Tejimalā is passive. He became lunatic for the tragic consequence of Tejimalā. The dramatist has created this character for giving a new dimension to the character of Tejimalā. Tejimalā is a very attractive character in the play. The playwright allowed the character of Tejimalā on the cruel hand of her stepmother. Tejimalā is a symbol of real traditional Assamese girl who is simple hearted and good natured. Her suffering was indescribable like the character of a folktale.

Man is heartless, selfish. Man is the enemy of man. So that Tejimalā thought that (when she blooms as lotus on the bosom of the river Brahmaputra) — only nature is pure where there is light.

The playwright shows the cruelty and jealousy of man. Hence, the playwright keeps Tejimalā as lotus, as the daughter of nature and he portrays the cruelty of human society.

Among the woman characters, the dramatist is successful for the skillful portrayal of Durgā. Durgā (stepmother) is the symbol of cruelty and evil force. She can do everything for self-interest. Though it is very difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the original character and the dramatic character, the playwright successfully depict her character. Other dramatis characters which are created by the dramatist from his own imagination are Mahipati,
Dhanbar, Mathurā, Digambar, Bej, Lenga, Penga, Ājāli (stepmother's daughter), Vuikali, Bhadrakali, Ḥangili, Pamili etc. are remarkable. The play consists of fourteen scenes with an introduction. The subject matter of the play is presented through the Flash Back technique. The dramatic events proceed through Cinematic techniques. Style of presentation, creation of dialogues helps the play for the perfect dramatization of an old folktale, and, as such, the play may be considered as an important Assamese social drama. Although the story element is based on a popular folk-tale, yet the play does not removes from the imaginative realm of folktale. There are supernatural elements in the structure of the play. The application of the supernatural elements helps the realization of dramatic sentiments and rasas.

Assamese Social Drama based on Ballads:

Ballad is a very important item of folklore. It is typically folk in character and technique. As a style of narrating mythological, legendary and socio-historical events, it is associated with dramatic presentation and plays an effective role as communication.

The English term 'Ballad' has originated from the Latin word Ballar whose ethemological meaning is to dance. But in the modern age its meaning is quite opposite. The Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend (Vol. I) has defines ballads as "A form of folk song developed in the Middle Ages in Europe to which has been applied very ambiguously the name ballad (Danish Vise, Spanish

42. Ṭeji'mālā, scene 14
43. Pārmār, Shyām: Traditional Folk Media, p. 71
romance, Russian bylina, Ukrainian dumy, Serbian Junacka Pesme, etc.). This type of folk song varies considerably with time and place, but certain characteristics remain fairly constant and seemingly fundamental:

1. A ballad is narrative, 2. A ballad is sung, 3. A ballad belongs to the folk in content, style, and designation, 4. A ballad focusses on a single incident, 5. A ballad is impersonal, the action moving of itself by dialogue and incident quickly to the end.\(^4\)

According to Kittredge a ballad is 'a song that tells a story, or to take the other point of view — a story told in song.'\(^4\) Prof. Ker describes, '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.'\(^4\)

P. Goswami observes, 'ballad is a popular narrative poem which tells a story and which has distinguishable mark of authorship : Whether it is always sung is open to question. It is often found to be recited rather than sung to a melody.'\(^4\)

Assam is very rich for her ballads. The ballad has influenced the Assamese creative writers. The theme of Danduadroha of Rajani-kanta Bardoloi and Padum Konwari of Lakshminath Bezbaruah is based on the songs of Padma Kumari. Like that, the theme of Kakadeutar har of Navakanta Barua is also based on the ballad of Bakhir Borah. But unfortunately in the realm of social drama we have only a few plays

\(^4\) Quoted from 'Ballads and Tales of Assam' by P. Goswami, p. 7
\(^4\) Ibid, p. 8
\(^4\) Ibid.
which are based on ballads.

Navakanta Baruā : Kakādeutār Hār :

Navakanta Baruā is a distinguished poet and a novelist of Assam. His Kakādeutār Hār is a remarkable novel in Assamese literature. The theme of the novel is based on the ballad of Bakhar Borā. Although the novelist is inspired by the history to write the novel, we notice his imaginative mind overcome the boundary of historical events and he highlights on human emotions and sentiments.

Amarjyoti Choudhury has adopted the said novel to give a dramatised form.

Hemanta, a young boy chose Nomita to marry. It is heard that the matter is already out. Their friends and well-wishers also found the news. Basanta came from Gauhati to give an advice from Aītā (Grand-mother) regarding their marriage. Then Aītā remembers some old events. Aītā tells about the two hundred years old history which is connected with them. Aītā tells,

Nadāi Kharangi was the assistant of Lachit Barphukan. He lived in the bank of the river Kalang. After the period of two generation Bhogāi Baruā came Mikir Hāt from Kaliabar. At that time, the king was Gaurināth Simha; Bhogāi Baruā was a powerful man. His earlier generation was recognised by the king. Bhogāi was proudy. He established his supremacy and fame.

Bākhar Borā who lived in Na-Nai area also equally established his supremacy and fame. He was overbearing like Bhogāi. Their was
an old enimity between the two family. Bhogāi's father wanted to established their relationship. As a result Bhogāi married Māhindri (Bākhar's sister) according to his father efforts. But their eni­mity was not removed. Bhogāi and Bākhar always tried to overcome each other. One day Bhogāi was humiliated when he enjoyed Bhāvanā arranged by Bākhar Borā. Then he made a plane to spoil the hughtiness of Bākhar Borā.

The dwellers of Kamārgāong were very poor. They kept their gold in Bākhar Borā's home for a little amount of money. In this way Bākhar became a rich man. Bhogāi instigated to the poor people and he also helped money to save their gold from Bākhar. Accordingly some people approached Bākhar to return their gold. Bākhar became very angry. He thought that if everybody take return their gold from his hand, then his status will be detoriated. One day a diseased man, Mukunda came to return his gold. Bākhar ordered Tholokā to shoot Mukunda. Tholokā shoot him, Mukunda then died. After that Bākhar destroyed the whole residents of Kamārgāong by fire. At that time a man eating tiger creates a terrible situa­tion in the village. Bhogāi mobilised the dwellers of Kamārgāong to kill the tiger. They killed the man-eating tiger. Then he instigate the people against his rival and enemy Bākhar Borā. According to him, tiger is also enemy and Bākhar is also enemy (Bāgho dusmanī, Bākharo dusman). So he conceived the killing of tiger by the villagers was the rehearsal for the killing of Bākhar Borā. The excited people then burn the house of Bākhar Borā and also killed him. Only his small son and daugther (Luhit-Lapang) and his wife saved by an ordinary village old woman.
This is the story of the play. Aita is the narrator. Basanta is the listener. Basanta actively takes part with Aita. He does not simply listen the story. Sometimes he ask on Aita's speech where necessary.

The drama reflects pride, prejudice, customs, religious faith, superstitions, and the gradually decaying social system of Bakhar Borah's time. We find a feudal attitudes in the character of Bhogai and Bakhar. The novelist very successfully portrays the character of Bhogai in comparison with Bakhar. Baham Chari, Puspa, Tholoka, Bahu, Mukunda, Natikantha, Bangman, Kalamani, Padmakanta, Pratham manuh, Litiya Manuh etc. are the representative of village folk. As a dramatise form from a successful novel, the play Kakadeutar Harg has been able to maintain its standard. Kakadeutar Harg is an as it is dramatise form from the original novel. Hence, we find nothing new in its dramatise form. Moreover, the story of the novel itself is narrated by story telling method which is a dramatic style.

Although Assam is not poor for her ballad, it is a matter of regret that only a few of these has been collected. From the objective analysis of Assamese drama it may be said that he playwrights are not inspired by this category of folk-life. We have only two plays based on ballad. These are Kakadeutar Harg (already discussed) and the other is Kamalâ Kunwarir Jâhu by Paramananda Rajbangshi. This play is not cover our survey because this was composed after 1990 (the year upto which our survey covers). Poet Navakanta Barua has written a dance drama, namely, Kamalâ Kunwari based on the ballad of Kamalâ Kunwarir Jit in 1962. Similarly, some dance-dramas has performed on the stage of Kohinur Theatre.