CHAPTER - V

ORAL LITERATURE IN BORDOLOI'S LITERARY WORKS.

I

Oral literature is the primary sector of study of folklore material. Richard M. Dorson in his discussion on the fields of folklore and folklife has given an elaborate and threadbare deliberation about this 'large grouping' of his own.

Initially the materials which may be clustered in this sector of study were labelled as 'verbal art'. W.R. Bascom introduced this term for the first time and he still stands on his own logic that the term verbal art distances all the inconveniences of having a clear conception regarding the composition of materials of its nature. Furthermore the term clearly points out the distinctions of relations existing among myths, legends, folk-songs, tales and folk-speech etc. In the words of W.R. Bascom - "The concept of verbal art avoids all these difficulties, and has the further advantage of emphasizing the essential features which distinguished
'Expressive literature' is also a term, sometimes used to designate this brand of oral material. Writes R.M. Dorson - "...... oral literature sometimes called verbal art of expressive literature. Under this rubric fall spoken, sung, and voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns".

Besides these terms, there are other various designations which precisely help in understanding this particular type of folklore material. 'Oral literature' became popular only after Dorson himself used to call it so. 'Folkliterture' is another nomenclature which encompasses every item of oral transmission. Some others use to name it as traditional oral process: perhaps the users of this name lay stress on the traditionality of its survival through ages and decades. Another term which was current for a good deal of time was 'unwritten literature'. Considering the primitivity of its originality someone uses to call it 'primitive literature'. Some other again tries to know it as popular literature.

3. Ibid. p. 2.
Thus, whatever may be the differences about its name and designation, oral literature, as we shall use to call it after R.M. Dorson, opens a new avenue of study, at least groupwise, in the study of folklore material as a whole. There are always differences of opinions in studying folklore — be it either in classifying the genre and category or in analyzing the constituent materials of the same. But despite these problems in connection with the classification of materials, the interest of folklore study is in complete and full flow only because of its involvement with the whole nature of the traditional aspects. Regardless of the diversified angles of interpretation, the main and single aim of study always centre round the folkloric phenomenon of things. When this particular class of expression besieges the academic circle, everybody within the circle, by and large, seem to agree in opinion. Perhaps even Bascom, while coining the form 'verbal art' never disagreed with the view that his term was nothing very much separable with the folkliterature.

"Within these definitions, and outside them in the wider academic circles - both of anthropology and of folklore - there was at least one thing on which by and large all seemed to agree and that was folk
literature or to use Bascom's term 'verbal art.'

Observes J. Handoo.4 Again he comments "verbal art or folkliterature as a whole is folklore and hence a separate area of inquiry, different from cultural anthropology".5

It appears, therefore that, the differences of opinions matter the least in determining the genre because these are all identical in constitution and characteristics.

Oral Literature ; Subgrouping:

Oral literature is being traditionally known as folkliterature. Dorson himself has shown allegiance to this logic by saying that these are "voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns".6 He has also pointed to four major subdivisions of this big group of folklore and folklife studies7 which are as follows:

(1) Folk-narrative
(2) Folksong or folk-poetry
(3) Proverbs and riddles
(4) Folk speech.

5. Ibid. p. 9
7. Ibid. p. 2.
Folk-narrative:

Folk narrative which may also be termed as oral narrative is itself inclusive of many distinctive types viz. myths, legends and tales. Tales or marchans have again its own sub-groupings. Romantic tales are more popularly known as novella. There are religious tales, humorous tales, animal tales, numskull and trickster tales. Jokes and anecdotes which are short in nature also fall under this category. These forms again have their own sub-forms. These sub-forms occur due to the perspective and culture in which they originate.

J. Handoo observes —

"Each of these forms will have many sub forms depending on the culture in which the form or forms are available. Etiological myths are very common in one country and so are religious myths. Many of these ancient myths and the religious tales have been recorded in ancient works such as the Kathasarit Sagara, etc. Similarly we have the world's best tradition of written animal tales as evidenced by famous Panchatantra and Jataka Legends too have many forms, but the historical legends of Western India, particularly of Gujrat and Rajasthan are very famous. Mythical legends and religious tales of South India are also very well known".

Folksong!

Oral poetry or what should be called folkpoetry is another major sub-division of oral-literature. It has its own varieties, which come under it, viz. folk-epics, ballads, folksongs, lullabies. Songs associated with fasts and festivals also some under this sub-division. Social festivals are mostly agricultural — its relationship with the social set-up tends to demonstrate one single commonness. There are innumerable such festivals current in India. Besides these common festivities community feasts are also held in different times. Many traditional songs do come in these feasts which correspond to the very observances of the same. Moreover ceremonial observances are current in our country. These observances are also associated with related songs of its type. Thus oral poetry or folk-poetry, as a major sub-group of oral literature has enough scope of deliberation in the discussion of this section.

Proverbs, riddles, sayings etc.

Thirdly come the case of proverbs and riddles. These are also the important part of folk literature of oral nature. Proverbs and riddles are not as narrative as the oral poetries are. But these have high structural
and contextual value. Rightly does observe J. Handoo -

"Unlike prose narrative forms and oral poetry, proverbs and riddles do not show much multiple existence, but are highly structured set forms of oral literature. While proverbs and proverbial expressions have due to some reasons of their import and function in societies, now formed an inseparable part of the written literatures throughout the world; riddles have stayed in folklife and still function in folk-societies as important device for imparting knowledge about cultural sementics, logic and the behavioural paradigms among the younger members of such societies". 9

Folk speech:

After proverbs and riddles, according to Dorson, comes the folk-speech. Folk-speech, in general idea, corresponds to the speech-community, which is a derived term of present day linguistics. So, a before-hand knowledge of what a speech-community is, would, perhaps serve the purpose needfully. Linguistically a dialect of a particulars language may have different regional forms. These regionalities occur due to some obvious reasons.

The factors, according to the linguists, which are mainly responsible for the emergence of a language are basically responsible for creation of smaller groups of people, used in speaking localised languages. Commonly these groups of people are known as speech communities. Due to the non-mixing of these people with common groups and lack of cultural understanding, such smaller groups of people express themselves in a different language. But they maintain some commonness with the larger groups in respect to the sound, syntax and vocabulary. With same sound, same syntax and same vocabulary, the smaller groups of people appear to have a deviated form of language. These groups are known as speech-communities. R.M. Dorson, bending on this idea, carries on his work on speech community and remarks - "Folk speech embraces the local and regional terms of phrase that deviate from the standard language". So it is clear now that the folk-speech is the localised and regionalised part of a standard language. Due to its variation from the standard variety, folk-speech, primarily depends on the informality, of things. Clearly speaks J. Handoo in this respect —

"It is restricted to oral circulation. Within the total vocabulary of every speaker, there is a large number of words that he never writes and seldom uses in formal situations. These words or expressions may be taboo words or expressions or they may be a kind of passive vocabulary. Moreover these characteristics of folk-speech are not only limited to vocabulary but these exist at the level of grammar, idiom and phonetics. For example, slang in this respect is folk-speech. India abounds in language diversity and therefore the potential of folk-speech research is great on this land.\footnote{Handoo, J.L. : \textit{Folklore; An Introduction}, p. 14-15.}

These are, in brief, all about the major sub-groupings of first field of folklore and folklife. Besides these there are other minor forms. Evading elaborate notes on all of these minor forms only the names of each of the forms are mentioned. These are chants, charms, prayers, curses, cries, laments, yodels and hollers and so on and so forth. These are always verbal folk-expression and they acquire traditional character of won class.\footnote{Dorson, R.M. : \textit{Folklore and Folklife; An Introduction}, p. 2.}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Dorson, R.M. : \textit{Folklore and Folklife; An Introduction}, p. 2.
\item Handoo, J.L. : \textit{Folklore; An Introduction}, p. 15
\end{enumerate}
II

Oral narratives in Bordoloi’s writings:

By and large, the forms of folklore material, mentioned above are clearly and distinctly found in Rajani Kanta Bordoloi’s literary works. As it has been stated earlier, Bordoloi was not a trained folklorist of rare excellence. Yet, he, on being fascinated with the rich abundance of folklore heritage of his motherland, incorporated the elements in his literary works, more specifically in his novels. An analytical approach is made hereunder to determine the elements of oral literature in his creative works.

Myth and Legend: Its definitions:

Myth and legends are the most important elements of oral narrative. There are classified definitions of these two forms in the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend. According to one definition a myth is — "A story presented as having occurred in a previous age explaining the cosmological and supernatural tradition of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs etc. The purpose of myth is to explain, and as Sir G.I. Gomme said, myths explain matters in "the science
of a pre-scientific age*. Thus myths tell of the creation of man, of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics (e.g. why the bat is blind or flies only at night) why or how certain natural phenomenon came to be (e.g. why the rainbow appears or how the constellation Orion got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue. Not all original stories are myths, however; the myth must have a religious background in that its principal actor or actors are deities, the stories are thus systematised at least to the extent that they are related to a corpus of other stories in which the given god is a member of a Pantheon. Where such interrelation does not occur and where the gods and demigods do not appear such stories are properly classified as folktales.¹³

"Legend", according to the dictionary, "has since come to be used for a narrative supposedly based on fact, with an intermixture of traditional materials told about a person, place or incident. The line between myth and legend is often vague; the myth has as its principal actors the gods, and as its purpose explanation. Thus

the Hercules stories may be considered to some extent myth (he is semi divine, he made the pillars of Hercules etc.) or as legend (Hercules was a lord living at Tyryus). The legend is told as true; the myth's veracity is based on the belief of its hearers in the gods who are its characters.  

Myth and legend are confusing terms:

From the definitions cited above, it appears that the terms myth and legend are confusing ones. They are very akin and similar in character and class. Hypothetically and definition-wise myth encompasses in it such a tale which tells us of long past time. It depicts the story of such a world which maintains a relationship of the creation of universe and other features. Myth and its characters bring into the mind of its readers an idea of a fancied world - which precedes the present universe. So the very word Myth - in its conception and cognition is itself a myth. P. Goswami, while making mention of two broad divisions of oral tale - the Marchen and the Sage following the line of Hartland - lays special attention to such confusions. To him the very word myth is rather

confusing. He further indicates that — "To separate myths from the general body of oral tales in a class is often difficult, for myths tend to be confused with hero legends and etiological tales and even tales of Marchen type. Franz Boas, after an extensive study of North-American Indian tales, has shown that the origin of all tales is to be explained as 'due to the play of the imagination with events of human life' and that the barrier between the myth and the folktale is not rigid ......

Thus it is seen from Goswami's discussion, that the confusion is not delimited in between myth and legend, but rather extended to another akin form — folktale. Despite its being divine character, myth may be mistaken as legend and whatmore as a simple oral tale — a tale of religious connections. Like all other tales and legends, a myth is also found to have some characters of distant world. They are either divine or semidivine. Their activities are of super human values and divine qualities. Due to its divine characteristics myth becomes an association of the religious beliefs and superstitions. Religious practices are also often mentioned in myths. As such myth and religion go hand in hand together.

15. Goswami, P. : Ballads And Tales of Assam. p. 82
16. Ibid, pp. 82-83.
Different kinds of myth and legend:

Keeping in mind the content-material, aim and structure, myth and legend can be classified into some subdivisions. "Etiological myths are very common in our country, and so are religious myths".17 Legends are also of different type and class - these are etiological legend, historical legend, mythical legend and place legend etc.

Assamese equivalent : A rarity:

There arises a problem to find out an expressive equivalent word to denote and know the word in our native languages, particularly in Assamese. As the line of demarcation of myth and legend is not perfectly clear, therefore some common words are being used to connote these two forms. Sometimes a myth is substituted in Assamese by the term atikatha. Some again call in purabritta, purakatha is another term. Again legends are known as kimbadanti and janasruti. These two latter terms are in common acceptance to connote a legend; but sometimes a myth is also referred as kimbadanti and janasruti by common people. Therefore to avoid any misunderstanding the equivalent word for a legend is accepted as either kimbadanti and janasruti.

The word myth has taken to be granted for our discourse in this study to describe this particular form of oral narrative.

**Myth, legend, folktale and story-telling tradition:**

Myth, as has been mentioned earlier is practically a class of oral tale. Telling of stories and subsequent listening to it by listeners are a spontaneous and in-born tendency of mankind. Even the men, who used to dwell in caves and were devoid of any first hand knowledge of civilization - more precisely speaking - who lived with the animals in the earliest days maintained an unhindrable urge to narrate anything of these experiences in the form of story to their fellow inhabitants. Later, with the advancement of civilization and attainment of culture the process of story-telling underwent change. The natural inquisitions and queries, that are bound to occur in human development tended to react in the story-telling process and perhaps on this plea, people, in ancient times had to set questions for themselves which pertained to their natural experiences and problems. While finding answerable solutions to such problems, people, perhaps found out clues to the mysteries which encircled them all throughout. The creation of myth may perhaps lie in the process. Various references as to the creation of universe
are there in the epics viz. the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bible and the Holy Koran. Therefrom, the myth, thus may have gained this present day form. The transformation and change of form of any oral tale be it a myth or a legend is a must. Even a careful study of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata reveals the fact that the stories of religious epics are nothing but some united stories of oralic nature.18

There is always seen a tremendous amount of impact of myth on the minds of people of common stratum of life. People become fascinated in the stories which have within its perview a sense of divinity and godliness. Because of this attraction of people to myths and legends, its relation with the written variety of literature becomes more close. Novels are the total and wholistic expression of man's life. These are the stories of people's run for life — their struggle. Therefore all the querries of life that once, disturbed primitive men may again cast reflection on the literary canvas which delineats people's struggle for life. As such myths have its own impact on the basic fundamentalities of written literature.

A novelist may incorporate the elements of myth in his novels for different purposes. Firstly he may compose a novel on a mythical environment. Secondly a myth, reconstructed to suit the technicalities of a modern plot-structure, may come into existence in a novel. Thirdly occasional references of myths may come into the general body of a novel with contextual integrity. Asserting an up-date affair in a mythical context and to incorporate religious beliefs and superstitions are ideal example of this kind. Fourthly and lastly, mention of mythical characters and truth etc. are woven into the general texture of the novel for some obvious reasons of the novelist.

Bordoloi's novels and some other writings show some elements of oral narrative, but the elements of myth, in the actual sense of the term are very rare to find. Bordoloi, out and out, is a historical novelist and to maintain the historicity intact he had to overlook the elements which were sure to cast a shadow of supernaturalism. But, inspite of it some mythical elements have crept into his novels. In view of his tendency to write novels on the basic hopes and aspirations of people's life he had to incorporate some elements that suited his art.
In his only social novel *Miri Jiyari*, Bordoloi has given mention of some gods, whom the Mishing obediently pray. The Mishing people are very superstitious and hence reference of some divine deities with their beliefs and customs have been ably described. The Mishing people fear the hands of god for some of their misfortunes. *Mugling Mirema* is such one god. The mention of this god has been made in the introductory chapter of the novel — *Miri Jiyari*. The Mishings celebrate *Carag puja* — a ritualistic worshipping. Any well-to-do Mishing people can offer this *puja*. Generally it is observed annually. But it can be performed in every two or four years. He who once performs this worshipping, is bound to repeat it regularly. The Worshipping is meant for the well-being of the family. Here all the gods pertaining to the cloud, the lightning, the sun, the moon, the earth and the water etc. are worshipped with the offering of wine, pig and hen.

In this *carag* worshipping the gods *Mugling Mirema* have been offered prayer thus —

*Tanga lechinak cinek tanga ekirak becinke besi tam kanek bidak banke, cinke takkane, tukuiya akiye, kimayaka, aicare bibi mataika.*

Meaning -

Oh! the lighting and the cloud! we have offered to you a five years\textsuperscript{20} old white-hooved, horned and tusked pig. You please keep us safe. Please keep us cool and allow us not to be attacked by head-ache and stomach-grip.

The \textit{Mugling Miremas} are the gods of lightning and cloud. Thunder bolt befalls on the villages of the bank of Subansiri river. Therefore the Mishing people when see lightning in the cloud get feared. They think these two elements to be creation of gods of extreme power. They kill a pig after some ritualistic accomplishments and crash the head of the animal with a rod. They then offer the blood of the animal with the chanting the foregoing prayer in their own language.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[20.] The novelist gives an account thus - Though the pig is said to be five years of age, in reality, all the pigs offered are of not that age. According to the Mishing people, five years means the time of a pig's maturity. So, if they offer a pig of two years of age call it to be of five years. The pig does not possess a horn. It possesses the tusk only. The Mishing people, it is supposed, earlier offered animals having horns. So the word remains in their prayer.
\item[21.] In Hindu mythology lightning and thunder bolt are treated as the weapon of Indra.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Besides these gods, there are mention of several other such names which are - Karsing kartan, Mattabe, Cinek, Dahmukh Dongkong, Loonji-leitang. These gods are referred in connection with the Jarar puja, observed during the naraciga bihu of the Mishings.22

A number of examples can be given of this type of reference.

In some cases, woman characters are compared with some mythical characters. In Nirmal Bhakat, mahi, a women character has been compared thus —

eijani sadharan manabi nahai - eijana matri sadrisi debi-sakhyat ma Bhagawati.23

(This woman is not an ordinary one - she is a mother goddess - she is mother Bhagawati alike)

Goddess Bhagawati is Durga - the symbol of power and supremacy. Other gods and goddesses also have found entries in different conversations and dialogues of this novel —

Prabhu Jagannath! mor ei dehto gal nisai
Iswar Krishnar caranat mane mane ucarqi dico. 24

(Oh God Jagannath! I have sacrificed my body
last night on the feet of Krishna).

Guruye dekhal nidlle ba salai nidlile,
ki Krishna Bisnu, ki siba-durga, ki
suryya Ganesh kako powa najai. 25

(If the path is not shown by the Master, then
none can be attained whether he is krishna Bisnu,
Siva-Durga or Sun and Ganesh).

All these gods and godlings, referred to in the
dialogues are Hindu mythological gods.

Even in simple comparisons the materialistic
world is denoted either as Vaikuntha, the abode of mytho-
logy or as Swarga the heaven.

In Manomati again Lord Krishna has been shown as
Kaliya thakur in the holi description. The mention of
Kalia thakur in Manomati, in the context of holi festival
is clearly a manifestation of supreme Krishna in folk
level. Here we can draw an idea of folk-Krishnanism which

25. Ibid. p. 48.
moves from the concept of Omnipotent Lordship to folk-cultural level. Lord Krishna's stories as an all-enveloping god do not describe his juvenile life and his numerous adventures as has been found in the context in question where it is described of him to leave the place of Lakshmi and stay at Ghunusa's residence for three days. His ghunusa jatra is associated with the journey of Lord Krishna to mother Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Saraswati, the goddess of learning has been quoted in such occasions in Rahdai Ligi -

tor kanthat dusta saraswati bahice 26

(Goddess Saraswati has enveloped you).

The goddess of learning has been compared in this piece of dialogue with a woman talkative by nature. Such gods and goddesses have taken places in many promises of different characters -

(a) moi chandra-suryya debata sakalak sakkhi karico

Meaning -
I have promised in the name of the Sun and the Moon.

27. Bordoloi, R. : Rangili, p. 71
(b) sei dekhi praneswar, aji suruj, jal, bayuk
sakkhi kari kolo - moi aponar. 28

Meaning -
So my beloved - to-day I have uttered it in the
name of the Sun, the water and the wind - that
I do belong to you.

That the Sun itself is a god and the water and
the wind have its own divine power is a Pan-Indian belief
based on traditional Hindu mythology.

Besides these references, Bordoloi's novels are
well conceived with mention of various temples and shrines.
These temples and shrines are all having mythological
stories as to its originality and divinity. These holy
shrines are still being regarded as the gods and deities
of different pantheons of mythological world. Some names
of these temples and shrines as found in his novels are as
follows -

The temple of Pandunath, the temple of Kamakhya
and the temple of Madan Kamdev in Dandua Droh. The goddess
Kamakhya has been mentioned as - anyatra birala debi
kamarupe grihe grihe. 29 The Kedar Madhab is the name of

29. The original sloka is found in Yoqini Tantra, an
old Sanskrit scripture composed in Kamrup in the
14-16 century A.D.
another famous and renowned shrine (Dandua Droh).
Tamreswarir Mandir the famous temple of copper deity
and the Parasuram and the Bhismak Kunda are three two
holy places which have been referred to in Tamreswarir
Mandir. These three places are discerningly associated
with ancient Hindu myth and legend.

Khamba Thoibir Sadhu : A folktale:

Bordoloi's Khamba-Thoibir Sadhukatha, though des-
signated as a folktale (sadhukatha) in the name itself,
is a novel in reality. In some places it has been named
as a novel also. Though the theme of this story is based
on supernatural elements, the features of a good novel in
it, cannot be oversighted at all. The novel is composed
on the theme of a current folktale of Manipur. The story
is attractive for its heroic elements. The story centres
round the influence of god and heaven on common people.
As such there is a mythical environment in the entire
net-work of the story. Moreover the popular belief of
the Manipuri people is that both Khamba and Thoibi are
gods and goddesses. Even the source, on which Rajanikanta
Bordoloi depended to write this novel is a book on Manipuri
Language. The name of this book is (in Manipuri)
Khamba Thoibigiri. This book begins with this belief that Khamba is the god Mahadeva and Thoibi is his consort Parvati.  

The story of Khamba-Thoibi current in Manipur has also a similar note in it. This bears the testimony of mythical elements of the story. In the language of the novel itself the episode runs that in a certain midnight khamba, with a view to proving the chastity of Thoibi who was asleep then, pierced the wall of the room with a spear. Thoibi thought to be other people and being irritated she took a sharpened sword and put its point forcefully in the hole, caused by the spear. But as ill luck would had it the sword went through khamba's stomach and he fell at once unconscious. Hearing the death-cry of Khamba, Thoibi at once came out. She saw Khamba, lying in the ground and started shouting and crying. People arrived on the spot and took the dead body to the burial ground for cremation. As the funeral pyre was lighted Thoibi jumped into the pile. Soon their bodies were consigned to flame. The gods and goddesses of heaven set forth to the heaven. They were issueless.

30. "Khamba haiba adu Mahadebagi langon
Thoibi haiba adu Parvatiqi langonni
Meaning: Khamba is Mahadeva's incarnation and Thoibi is Parvati's (Rajani Bordoloi Rakanamala, p. 34).

This is the myth on which the novel ends. But there are other variants too. Observes N.N. Singh -

"The story of Khamba and Thoibi has a historical core and is inseparably associated with the place called Moirang. The people of Manipur have a firm belief that Khamba and Thoibi are the incarnations of the god and goddess who had performed their lilas in Moirang in guise of human forms in different births". 32

There are various versions regarding the origin of the story. According to one version Khamba and Thoibi were sent by Guru Sidaba to teach birth and death. In another version, it has been said that Guru Sidaba created two pigeons and sent them to earth. They were later on killed by the arrow of a hunter. For their sheer devotion to the Guru Sidaba, he entrusted Lord Thangjing to make them united in their subsequent births by incarnating as ideal human beings. Later on after conversion to Hinduism they are identified as Siva and Parvati. 33

Traditional religion, Vaisnavism, games and sports dance and drama all sorts of elements of folklife are associated with this story.


33. Ibid. pp. 29-32.
Thus it is seen that the popular beliefs that are current in the Manipuri folklife have its own association with the construction of plot of the novel.

**Legends and Bordoloi's novels:**

Elements of legends are in abundance in Bordoloi's novels and some other essays. Like the myths, legends too run with tradition. These are the results of people's eternal longing for stories to be told and heard. From time immemorial the stories were entertaining the common folk. The stories of this time, even the stories of the great epics were said to be run from mouth to mouth through out the ages. Later on it undertook written form. Of course, these stories had no ramification in its oralic form. These were being designated as mere stories. Later on scientific studies on these elements made the classification a bit easier and systematic, but primarily in former days these stories were labelled only as tales. As stories are told in these - so these are tales. Occurrence of transformation in the written variety has been cleanly noticed - but the existence of unwritten oralic trend has still a go with the social life. In this perspective too, the tradition of legend, as an additional element has its own share distinctively.
It has been mentioned earlier that both myth and legend are confusing terms. Both are alike and akin. But there are some vital points of differences between these two. The legend is an attractive story, the truth of which cannot be ascertained due to its currency from the age of primitivity. But these are deemed to be true. One more point to be noted is this that the legends are associated with the place names and the society. These are far from religiosity and other practical ritualistic elements are also not associated with it — these are pure tales only.

The credit of a well-told story-plan in a novel also lies with the novelist. In most cases novel is the creative write-up of the novelist - his original work. But legend is the material that survives on orality. On general principle, the application of elements of legend in a novel cannot be accepted because the question of reality come into mind in this context. But as an art-form the novel has attained its own position in the literary scene of world because of its leaning on various folk-material particularly the legend. Even from the technical point of view, some novels written on legend-based themes have been assessed as landmarks in the world-literature. Such novels are designated as legendary novels.
Our novelist Rajanikanta Bordoloi has ably mixed the historical elements and the legends in his literary works particularly in his novels. His novels are best known as historical ones: but critically it can be further remarked that in actuality his novels, barring a few, are devoid of historicity. Rather these can be called the rare combinations of folklore and history. With an able hand he mixed the elements. Therefore in almost all his novels the place of legend has been given primary importance. He collected the source of all legends relentlessly from every corner of the state by touring throughout for governmental and private engagement. Afterwards, while planning the stories for his novels these elements helped him doubly. So, perhaps these legend-events get yoked with the historical matters. On most cases, it is seen, the novelist had to give more importance on the former. This can be noticed in novels like Manomati and Dandua Droh. In such cases the novels either become the travesty of historical truth or transformation of some elementary structures. Again in story-planning, when historical elements provided him the outlines only - the legend and other folklore material gave these stories the required completeness. In some cases the stories half told by the history were completed with the admixture of
legends with it. The result was simply great - because the truth of history, its reality and semi-reality, the currency of legend and the potential creativity of the novelist all these were a factor in creating within Rajanikanta the meteoir of a true novelist, from whose mighty pen came out a series of novel, for which the entire world of Assamese literature can actually be proud of.

The legends that have found to come into existence in Rajanikanta Bordoloi's writings mostly belong to historical category. It is admittable that Bordoloi incorporated these legends in the form and content he could collect from his field observation. We had no any idea of scientific classification of legends etc.

Bordoloi in his novels used the term prabad to mean a legend or a myth or any superstition and belief. Sometimes he used the term itibritte to connote such source-material. According to the novelist —

34. Bordoloi, R. : Dandua Droh, p. 7
&
Bordoloi, R. : Manomati, p. 'c' in the note.
While doing governmental duty at my stay in Barpeta, I roamed throughout the places in the sub-division and collected the history of places. At the request of Sir Gait I made intensive study of Bamaqar jhar, Barbari jhar and the forest of Hala Pakari. On the experiences of Barpeta I later composed my novel Manomati.  

Again the preface of the novel Dandua Droh itself is an important document to know how the novelist was influenced by the legends current at his time. While he was discharging the duty of a Sub-deputy collector at Rangia he came across with the legend. The materials he had collected there were translated to a novel later on. It may be mentioned that earlier Lakshminath Bezbaroa, wrote a novel on the same theme. But Bordoloi realised that Bezbaroa had failed to provide in his novel the real reflection of the legend, which Bordoloi could collect. Therefore he made the venture to write a novel on his own experience.  

36. Bordoloi, R. : Dandua Droh, p. 0.3(preface)
In **Dandua-Droh** Bordoloi has given us the privilege to watch his skill of mixing the local legend with historical material in constructing a novel. Critically speaking he reconstructed and enlarged the legends,\(^\text{37}\) that he came across while travelling through the places of association of that famous rebellion of Dandua. The legend, as he collected was like this.

Hardatta and Birdatta the two kalita brothers of Jikeri of Kamrupa were very powerful. Being unable to endure the torture, let loose by the Barphukan, they rebelled and abolished Barphukan’s rule in north Kamrupa to rule there independently for almost seven years. Later on, he was defeated in a war against Barphukan in 1795 A.D. That could happen only for the betrayal of their own people. Birdatta, was slain in the same war in a place called Sesamukh. Hardatta was made a captive and was killed at Sagunthuti sand. Padmakumari, the beautiful daughter of Hardatta thus became an orphan and had to commit suicide.\(^\text{38}\)

The main theme of the novel has been constructed on this particular legend. But the novelists has mixed the historical elements with it and thus reconstructed the main plot on these two primary source materials.

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There are many songs current in this area which tell the tragic story of Hardatta's valour and love for his own people. Bordoloi himself has admitted that he heard some songs associating Hardatta, Birdatta, and Padmakumari the daughter of Hardatta.³⁹

In one references the anonymous folk-poet has narrated the pathetic story as follows:

Hardatta jiyari Padum Kuwari
Dhanarat nakhale bhat
kumedan bangale hatat dhari nile
Padma bicari gat
kat gali Hardatta Kat gali Birdatta
kat gali khaon khaon sara,
raijar sapate Hardatta Birdatta
bangale marile jat

Meaning:

Padum Kuwari, the daughter of Hardatta did not take her meal at Dhanara. Kumedan (the commandant) dragged her away and searched the lotus on her body. It may be mentioned that Padma Kuwari was an exquisitely beautiful lady. She possessed the sign of lotus on her body.

³⁹ Bordoloi, R. : Dandua-Droh. (Preface p. 0.1)
Where had you gone Hardatta and Birdatta? Where had you gone - the rapacious bullies! At the curse of the people Hardatta and Birdatta-you had become extinct of stock.

There is another version of the first quatrain which runs like this -

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Hardatta jiyari} & \quad \text{Padum Kuwari} \\
\text{Nanarat nakhale bhat} & \\
\text{kumedan bangale} & \quad \text{hatat dhari nile} \\
\text{bangale marile jat} & 
\end{align*}
\]

The place Nanara mentioned in second version of the song perhaps may be a local influence of the narrator as the village falls in the nearby area of Jikeri. But the real place of association was Dhanara - even the historical background also proves this to be true. It is notable that Dhanara and Nanara, the two village names have almost identical tone that might have influenced the narrator.

The song that narrates this pathetic story is a fragmented one and a complete version of it is yet to be found. According to the classification of folksong it is a historical ballad. In Assamese the equivalent word for a ballad is malita and this particular song is current in
the name of Padma-Kumarir malita. The novelist has mentioned the song in the concluding chapter of the novel-

(1)

Hardattar barite bar bar bah
thanarai pari ral Hardattar hah
baca ' kiyaloi barua hali ' 

(2)

Hardattar barite bar bar iri
thanarai pari ral Hardattar tiri
baca ' kiyaloi barua hali ' 

(3)

Hardattar jiyari Padmakumari
dhanarat nakhale bhat
hatat dhari ni umodat bangale
Padma bicare gat. 41

The novelist has given a note on the song and remarked that the word umadat in the last quatrain of the song is the mispronounced version of the world Kumedan of kamrupi dhuliyas, who used to narrate this pathetic

story. But according to the novelist himself this song was not composed in lower Assam. He asserts the view that Barphukan, while he was admired for his ability to quell the disturbance by the Ahom King, became over enthusiastic and made these songs to be sung by the enemies of Hardatta to undermine him. Rightly does opine P. Goswami - "The tone of the ballad is contemptuous; both Padma Kumari and the rebel leaders have been pictured without sympathy. This fact as well as the form and language of the ballad seem to support R. Bardoloi's view that songs of this type were circulated by the Barphukan in order to undermine the cause of Hardatta. The ballad is made of quatrains found in the folksongs of Upper Assam, the language also is the dialect spoken in Upper Assam". 42

Now it is seen that there are different versions of the story. According to the legend version Padmakumari had to commit suicide in face of inevitable calamity, but according to the ballad, Hardatta's daughter was forcibly taken away by a mercenary named kumedan bangal. Bordoloi composed his novel on the background of this legend and other historical events, which he could find.

42. Goswami, P.: Ballads and Tales of Assam, p. 27.
To some others, this song was circulated by the people of Dhanara. These people became overhurt with Hardatta and Padmakumari and the people of Jikeri as a whole and tried to undermine them in the eyes of general people. Another version of legend which is locally current will prove the view. The local tradition runs like this -

... Padmakumari was given in marriage to Mahidhar, a young man who belonged to the Chowdhury stock of Dhanara but had been brought up in her father's family at Jikeri. Mahidhar was persuaded to stay always at Jikeri and his wife was not allowed to visit her father-in-law's place at Dhanara. After the capture of her father who had been hiding at jungle, the sikh captain Kumedan Singh, who later had come over to the Barphukan's side, sought to keep the attractive Padmakumari, but she managed to escape and ultimately jump into the Brahmaputra.

Thus it is seen that the entire plot structure of this novel was constructed on the materials of different versions of the legend and other source materials like folksongs etc.

43. Goswami, P. (ed): Para Mahar Tera Git, p. 179
44. Goswami, P.: Ballads and Tales of Assam, p. 27
This is how element of folk narrative intruded into the plot construction of Dandua Droh. Besides this main theme, in other places too, we can find the reference of legend. In the fourth chapter of this novel, which runs under the name of Parur bahar (in the camp of Paru) a semblance of legend can be found. In giving the description of the temple of Pandunath the author has mentioned -

The Pandavas, it seems, made their journey to heaven through this beautiful place of Assam. The holy shrine Pandunath Mahadeva is located in the western foothill of Kamakhya, the mother goddess. Local tradition is current that the Pandavas during their journey to heaven rested here in Pandunath and then crossed the Brahmaputra and started for the Himalayas through north Kamrup and hills of Bhutan.45

In the same novel again there is a description of the temple of Madan Kamdev. The novelist has given a reference of the legend with one line note thus -

it is believed that in this place Kamadeva regained his life after being reduced to ashes by angered Hara.46

45. Bordoloi, R.: Dandua Droh, p. 8
46. Ibid. p. 31.
Precisely speaking it is the simplification of many versions of local traditions, that are current as to the origin of this shrine. One of the local tradition goes like this which is almost similar to the author's remark. The legend is recorded like this -

After Sati deserted her body Mahadeva became moribund with grief and carried her body on his shoulder. On doing this the parts of Sati's body became decomposed and fell scattered here and there. Mahadeva then resorted to devotion. At this the devatas in the heaven got feared and requested Lord Krishna to dissuade Mahadeva from the penance he undertook. At length, having no alternative Krishna sent his own son Kamadeva for the purpose, who became successful in his venture. But, as an aftermath of the incident he became a victim of Mahadeva's anger who reduced him to ashes with the fire of his eyes. Having heard this, Rati, the wife of Kamadeva went to Mahadeva, who became satisfied with the devotion of Rati to him. At her request Mahadeva gave Kamadeva a re-birth in this place and since those days this place had been knowing as Madan Kamadeva. According to Siva-Puran Madan is another name of Mahadeva. Madan gave rebirth to Kamadeva here in this place and therefore the place as a whole was known as Kamarupa.

47. Informant - Nandadhar Barua, North Guwahati, age 48.
According to A.C. Agarwalla, the Kalika Purana refers river and the hill of Madan Kamadeva shrine as Swaswati and Matsyadhwaja respectively. Lord Vishnu in his fish incarnation once positioned here. There is a lake here called Kamsarobar. People once believed that a bath in the holy water here could free a man from sensuality. The lake is known as Madankut. The river Madankur has originated from the lake.

This mythical legend has given the description a grave centaxtual environment where Hardatta performed tantric rituals of arduous nature.

In the 18th chapter of the novel there are mentions of some places which are associated with legends of different version. Aswaklanta is a place mentioned in Page 54 where according to traditions the horses of Lord Krishna got tired and refused to move further after their return journey from Kundila. Umananda is a place where Lord Siva got his final satisfaction in the company of his spouse Parvati. It is said that Siva created this rocky island in the middle of the river Brahmaputra with the ashes (bhasma). A symbol of Siva still lies on the

top of it. In umananda again a rock-representation of Urvasi (p.54) is found. Urvasi the courtesan of Indra was made captive in a stone by the curse of Mahadeva. Mention of Puspabhadra has also been made in this context. It is a stone of huge size. Numerous beliefs are current regarding this Puspabhadra. On of these traditions say that this stone is in fact a barricade of an extinct river of same name. According to Kalika Purana the mighty river Brahmaputra once flew through Dirgheswari and Changsari area. The river, though changed it course would once again open up and flow through the original course which can still be seen in extinct form of river. This course, known as Puspabhadra, would cause immense problems to thousands of inhabitants if it would flow through it. Therefore this heavenly piece of stone had been waiting and acting like a barricade.

The author had also mentioned some beliefs and superstitions of Kamrupi people, who think that a fierce battle will take place at Sangsapta near Hajo. During this battle the river Puspabhadra will get her mukti.

49. Informant - Sashi Lahkar, Village- D hobatari  
4.10.99 (Age 85 yr).
The entire area of Hajo will come into the south bank of the Brahmaputra along with Kamakhya and Bhubaneswar. The author assumed that the belief has some sorts of genuine basis also.  

One or two legends are found in Manomati. Literally the novel is historical, but elements of local tradition can be noticed cleanly in the plot construction of novel. Rightly does remark S.N. Sarma— that the background of the novel Manomati is historical, but the plot is partially based on legends. Bordoloi himself has admitted that he has portrayed the story of Burmese attack on Chandi Barua's premises on the material of legend. But the novelist has not twisted the historical element in depicting the character of Chandi Barua. According to a legend current there Chandi Barua could not be overpowered even by hurting him with swords. At last he was burnt to death after crucifying him in a tree. His body was thrown in a well and it was sealed with soil.

53. Ibid. p. 49.
Sir Edward Gait has narrated the incident as follows:

"After the overthrow of the Koch King an Ahom Official called Barnagaria Barua lived there. He was killed by Barmese after, it is said, throwing his treasure into a small tank which is now silted up." 54

Place legends, concerning the places of Nagarjhar, Ghilajhar, Hala pakari etc. are found in Manomati. For example legend regarding Nagarjhar runs as follows:

The thick jungle which is being known as Nagarjhar was once the royal city of Namarayan, the king of Koch Bihar. He established this township. It was said that the king Namarayana was got over by Sani for long twelve years. The astrologers of the king advised him to go away from his kingdom for twelve years to get away with the wrath of Sani and do welfare activities during the period of sojourn. As advised by the astrologer the king came to this place in Kamarupa from Koch Bihar and established the city to stay there for twelve years. During this period he constructed the Kirtanghar of Barpeta and other temples and shrines and thus earned reputation for himself. 55

Towards the end of the novel Bordoloi has added a note to clarify some points. While giving details of some references, the novelist had to make mention of some traditions, current in his time. A few of these having affinity with legends are given below –

A legend is still current in Barnagar area that two men, who had come to rescue Chandi Barua from captivity dug a hole from a long distance. After entering the house where captives had been kept, they mistakingly took away another person. This story is widely current in Barpeta.

Another tradition goes that Caitanya Singh, himself once beheaded one thousand Burmese soldiers. On hearing the news of his death, his wife became furious and, after staying two thousand Burmese soldiers she followed the path of her husband. The valour of Caitanya Singh is still praised by Assamese people. 56

The first one is mentioned to clarify the event which led to the tragedy of errors committed to free Chandi Barua, the second one is mentioned in the context of the battle of Hadiracaki.

56. Bordoloi, R. : Manomati, (conclusion page'd')
In Tamreswarir Mandir the novelist has referred to the legend which tells the story of mother copper deity. Tradition is current among the chutias that they were the stock of Kshatria clan of Bhismaka's race. The copper deity was worshipped by Bhismaka. His successors became weak and for their weakness the Mishimis who came down from nearby hills destroyed the deities and attempted to take away the idol of copper goddess to establish in their own territory. But it disappeared in the river Dibang. Tradition is also current that the Mishimis were the generation of the warriors who came with Parasuram.57

The theme of this novel centres round this copper deity and as such legends of this kind have great contextual importance in the construction of plot of the novel.

Another etyological legend concerning the origin of Morans is given in Radha Rukminir Ran.58 In the same novel again the legend is mentioned which accounts for the conversion of Rudra Singha to Hinduism.59

59. Ibid. p. 4.
Khamba Thoibir Sadhu Katha itself is a legend. We have already mentioned about this legend. In the same novel the novelist has brought all the traditions current in respect of the origin of the term Manipur.

Babrubahana, the prince of Manipur once defeated Arjun in a battle when he was scolded as a bastard. Babrubahana was the son of third Pandava Arjun, but both the father and son could not know their relationship. After Arjun's death in the battle, his wife Citrangada, who also happened to be Babru's mother rebuked him for killing his own father and urged the latter to fetch the Sanjibani mani from Basuki for the rebirth of Arjun. The name of this country was thus originated (mani means the pearl and pur means the town).  

Besides these a number of references of legend can be traced in the literary works of Bordoloi. For example the legend relating to the establishment of Kal-Samhati cult by Aniruddha atai at the behest of Sankardeva for scripture of incantation dhatu tamrakshanri by name, the legend relating to the origin of a place

60. Sarma, H.K. (ed): Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 32
Bordoloi had mentioned this in 'Mayamara bisaye' (see Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 32)

name called caulkhowa. In *Radha Rukminir Ran*, the legend associating the origin of the Mishings in *Miri-Jiyari*, the Narohari Sensowa legend in *Rangili* etc. can be mentioned.

Besides the novels, Bordoloi has mentioned legends in his essays and articles also. His *Sadiya Rajyar Purani tatta*, though an archaeological essay, provides with the legend-belief of the origin of the Chutias and their copper deity. Another is seen in *Chutia Sakalar buranji* which gives us an account of the tribe. The famous episode of elopement of Rukmini with Lord Krishna has found place in *amar mantabya*. The legends related to the Parasuram Kunda, and Manas-Sarobar have been discussed in the same essay. The essay named *Dibrugarar Aithan darsan* narrates a legend in respect to this holy place. In another identical travelogue-essay - *Dibrugar ancular Jaipur moujar Sitakunda darsan* the essayist had explored some facts regarding the origin of the place.

64. Bordoloi, R.: *Rangili*, p. 65
66. Ibid, p. 203
67. Ibid, p. 200
68. Ibid, p. 201
69. Ibid, p. 154
70. Ibid, p. 160
Folk Songs:

Besides myths and legends Bordoloi has incorporated in his literary works, particularly in his novels, specimens of different folk songs current in Assam. Assam is rich for its variety of songs, which form an inevitable part of its folklore. Bordoloi was a novelist of rare calibre and he undertook meticulous care to represent all forms of ingredients of folk-culture in his creative works. It is needless to mention once again that the novels of Rajanikanta Bordoloi are historical, but inspite of its being so, he has blended history and folk song in a discernible manner in these works. He realised it well that songs and other recreational amusements could provide the readers a rare feat of taste in the description of historical stories. The love of people for songs and other such items are common to all readers. Keeping in mind the taste of readers and to free them for taxation of eventful historical episodes, the novelist has mentioned some songs, harvested from folk life of Assam.

To discuss the folksongs in Bordoloi's novels we can sort out these beforehand in the following category.
A. Quatrains of ainitam and mibu abang in Miri Jiyari
B. Bihu songs in Rangili
C. Fragments of ballad in Dandua-Droh
D. Holy songs in Manomati
E. Marriage songs in Manomati, Rangili, Nirmal-Bhakat
F. Dehbicarar git in Manomati & Nirmal Bhakat and Cia git in Miri Jiyari.
G. Others.

1. Jatiya Kirtan in Miri Jiyari,
2. Git in Rangili
3. Songs associated with madal drumming performance in Dandua-Droh
4. Songs sung in dhuliya performance in Dandua-Droh.

Besides these, the novelist has mentioned some nams, prasanga etc. in one or two novels. These songs, so far as its textual representations are concerned, are found to be associated with religious adherence and as such are not brought into the perview of our study. It may be mentioned that as in the case of myth and legend where Bordoloi has brought these two elements in one nomenclature of his own, he has confused readers by using different names viz. git, nam, gan etc. to connote the same of kind of songs, also.
Ainitam:

Rajanikanta Bordoloi has quoted in *Miri Jiyari* six quatrains of ainitam in the first chapter and subsequently four numbers in the 3rd chapter, seven in the fifth, one quatrain in the sixth chapter, again two in the seventh. These twenty quatrains are the representatives of the traditional songs of Mishing folk-culture. The novelist incorporated these songs into the theme of the novel with a view to exposing the folk culture of the people whom he wanted to project with the help of a love-story. The songs were woven into the story with great contextual importances to express the love and yearning of Janki and Panei and to demonstrate the bihu observance of the Mishing people.

Literally these songs may be designated as ainitam of the Mishing culture. Mishings have their own language and culture. The people sing their traditional songs in their own language. At least the present day ainitam holds good our view. But the songs in question were

72. Ibid. pp. 17-18
73. Ibid. pp. 29-30
74. Ibid. p. 33
75. Ibid. p. 39
demonstrated in broken Assamese and as such confusion is sure to arise as regards its nomenclature. But the perspective of the novel and the performers of the songs—as they belong to that community—can at least set aside the doubt about its genuineness. Asserts G. Pegu—

Whatever description Rajanikanta Bordoloi has provided in his 'Miri-Jiyari' it lacks mention of ainitam. It is possible that these ainitams were, at that time, sung in the same tune with mibu abang. Perhaps, for this some termed these as ainitams. 76

The factor of the language diversion is a point to be discussed here. The Mishings dialects have their own sub-dialects too and the language of present day ainitam is based on spoken languages of different sub-dialectical groups. But before the emerging of these sub-dialectical groups, there, perhaps, existed one common lingua-franca among these people. Furthermore, as the community was an indispensable part of complete Assamese folk-culture, the Mishing people of yester years might have reproduced their songs etc. in their parent language. Bordoloi, it is deemed, could witness this and as such has mentioned these in its original form and content.

76. Datta, B. (ed): Siphung-Gungang, p. 88
Ainitam - the very word means love song. In Mishing language ai is an address for a loved one. Anyone, younger in age can be addressed with ai. On the other hand, the lovers can also use this word as a mark of love and affection to each other. In this context the word ai connotes a lover. In the word nitam there lies an idea of endearing somebody with words of love.

Ainitams are of anonymous authorship, neither these are confined to a particular group of performers. These are the songs of sorrow, love and deep yearning - as such its central theme is love. It has its wide similarity with bihu song and bangit of Assam. Songs are sometimes two-lined and unrhymed, but three and four lined ai-nitams are also found in abundance now-a-days.

A few specimen from the novel is mentioned here.

cate jai jai bayage palehi
pulile bebeli lata
kaino take mane orake napare
saruti ledengar katha

Meaning:

The month of chait has elapsed and the bahag has arrived. The bhebeli creepers have blossomed. I am telling on about my young beloved; but it never ends.

78. Ibid. p. 157; Also in Siphung-Gungang, p. 89
79. Goswami, P. : Folk Literature of Assam, p. 45.
This song sung by Janki is a clear expression of his yearning to beloved Panei.

Again,

\begin{verbatim}
carai manomati suyuri marile
kotayi benganar talat
kino daye jagar logalo ceneng ai
namate gaduli puwa
\end{verbatim}

Meaning:

The charming bird has begun whistling beneath the thorny brinjal tree. I do not know what offensive I have done to my beloved that he does not respond me in the morning and evening.

This song sung by Panei is meant for Janki in her ecstatic desire to court him. The yearning is accomplished by the lover with the help of a simile drawn from the nature. Utilization of bird motif is a common device in folk songs.\(^\text{80}\)

Example may be multiplied. However any number of songs added to this select specimen will doubly make things more clear. But for fear of uniformity and immensity it is now avoided.

\(^{80}\) Goswami, P.: \textit{Folk Literature of Assam}, p. 46.
Mibu abang:

In *Miri Jiyari* Bordoloi has demonstrated a few specimens of folksong sung by mibu and subsequently repeated by commoners. Noticeable is that, the novelist has called these as *jatiya Kirtan*. Leaning on the discussions of Mishing writers however, the references of songs found in the novel can be designated as the folksong of this kind.

*Mibu abang* is a folksong sung as ode to gods by the mibus. The creation of mibu, commonly known as deodhai meaning the priest it itself a mystery. Likewise the songs, associated with this mysterious person, also have the unfathomed text. All non-mibus cannot sing this song. It is believed that the mibus are given this song by the gods. Therefore its language also carries the farfetched meaning which is not understood by commoners.

Observes B. Datta -

"The bulk of the material of this category consists of invocatory chants of the class known as mibu abang which literally means a priest's chant. The priests or

81. These are the songs of *Jatiya Kirtan* of the Mishings. The meaning of these songs are not known to us, even a common Mishing people cannot explain. The meaning is only known to their priest - deodhai.
shamans do chant while working themselves up into a frenzy during rituals, but the mibu abangs are not necessarily spontaneous poetic outbursts of priests in a trance. Most mibu abangs in currency today are pieces of inspired utterances of earlier priests which have been handed down through oral transmission.\textsuperscript{82}

A mibu sings this song to pray his god from whom he inherits it. The names of gods are taken in mibu abangs. The mibu at first sing the first line of the abang and then the youngmen in congregation repeat the second line in choral form.\textsuperscript{83}

The mibus do not have any specific abang. As the mibus are thought to be originated from different gods, therefore they sing mibus in their suitable ways. The mibu practices divination with the singing of abang. Mibu abang contains variety of elements in its contents.\textsuperscript{84}

The novelist has referred to the type of this folksong in the context of naraciga bihu description. Description of practising the divination has also been demonstrated in the same context.

\begin{flushright}
82. Datta, B.\textit{(ed)}: Folk Songs of the Mishings, Introduction, p. III.
83. Datta, B.\textit{(ed)}: Siphung-Gungang, p. 79
84. Kagyung, B.\textit{(ed)}: Mishing Sanskritir Alekhyā, p. 373
\end{flushright}
A specimen of such songs, referred by the novelist is given below:

darmisi tulai ai tirmeke tirmangai
akabe kambang apune reyepe reyabay.

Bihu Songs:

There are many specimens of bihu songs of Assam in his historical novel Rangili. It has been said earlier in the discussion of this novel that the entire episode of the same has revolved round the description of bihu. Therefore the novelist has extracted all elements of the festival in the novel.

All the principal characters of the novel were depicted in the context of performing bihu dance and bihu song. The principal theme of the novel centres round the love-affair of four sets of lovers. To express the yearnings and desires of these lovers and their emotional involvement, Bordoloil had to take resort in this device which ultimately has provided his work a far-reaching dimension. A few specimens are given below to know about the novelist's attempt in the original text of the songs. Joyram, a sub-character sings in yearning his beloved Keteki thus -
Meaning:
You have absorbed me in your sea of beauty and made me mentally wounded. I am lost within myself yearning for your charm and virtue.

Again, Santiram yearns his beloved thus -

Dikhow nai eriba paro mai lahari
jaji nai eriba paro
tomar ai bhabana eriba nowaro
nekhaye mariba paro

A free English translation of the piece will be something like this -

I can part with the river Dikhow and Jhaji but I cannot resist longing for you, rather I can die of starvation.

There are multiple of examples of such kind.

Alan Dundes suggests three basis for the analysis of folklore materials. These are text, texture and context. The text of an item of folklore is a version of

85. Bordoloi, R. : Rangili, p. 22
86. Ibid. p. 46
the same whether it is a tale or a legend or a folk-poetry. The texture is the linguistic feature of the text mentioned above and the context is the specific social situation of a particular type of folklore. Among these three the context is the most important one as it places the item in the right spot. It has been rightly said that a text is always important but without context it appears to be meaningless. 88

In determining any item of folklore in a particular writer's works we are to keep the words in mind. Bordoloi, while incorporating the folksongs in his novels, has invariably succeeded in the contextual approach-phenomenon. In our present discussion on the elements of folksong we can assert this view by citing a few examples. In the thirteenth chapter of the novel, Rangili, the novelist had referred the bihu songs in its original organic text-form. The situation of the novel also demands it as the chapter itself is on the nisa-bihu performance and others.

P. Goswami writes about the bihu songs thus - "The Bihu songs are interesting for several reasons. They are exquisite love poems; they give a glimpse of folk psychology; they prove that even the unlettered

88. "The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless". Bronislaw Malinowski; Magic, Science and Religion (1954) p. 104.
people can create superb imagery; they are not crudely erotic, but have refined touches; they throw light on social and domestic relations and occupations; they further reveal how lovers ‘talk’ in them rather than in ordinary speech". 99

All these revealing factors are abundantly found in the refrains, Bordoloi collected for his novel. A few specimens from Rangili are quoted here to substantiate it.

> tomak kenekari pam praneswari
> hain kenekari katha
> pani ana calere ghataloi ahiba
> tate kam pranare katha

A free English rendering of the piece is attempted below:

> How can I meet you my beloved and how can I talk to you. Come to the river side in the pretext of fetching water where I would express the emotion of my heart.

Such specimens are expression of exquisiteness of love and longing of juvenile lovers. Again the creation of superb imagery can be noticed well in such songs -

89. Goswami, P. : Folk-literature of Assam, pp. 17-18
90. Bordoloi, R. : Rangili, p. 45
It means -

Neither I can stay at home nor I can pay attention in paddy field work. Rather I mind to fly like scutched cotton.

Even the bird-motifs are also noticed in some extracts.

\[
\begin{align*}
carai \text{ hai parimgai} & \quad carai \text{ bilat} \\
mac \text{ hai parimgai jalat} & \\
gham \text{ hai parimgai} & \quad \text{tomare sarirat} \\
makhi \text{ hai parimgai galat} &
\end{align*}
\]

Meaning:

I would be a bird and wing to your lake. I would be a fish and caught in your net. I would be perspiration and well up in your body. I would be a fly and fall on your cheeks.

A few songs are there in the fifteenth chapter which say the patronisation of Ahom kings of Bihu festival. With the advent of royal patronage the texture and vocabulary of songs underwent changes and all these are well

\[91. \text{ Bordoloi, R. : Rangili, pp. 46-47}\]
\[92. \text{ Ibid. p. 47}\]
noticed in such songs. Bordoloi was a skilled author and he observed such transformations of folk-culture in its perspective. That is why he had commissioned such songs to be sung in its contexts -

\[
\text{swargadev olale} \quad \text{batcarar muralai} \\
\text{duliyai patile dola} \\
\text{kanate jilikil} \quad \text{makare kundal} \\
\text{gate gomesengar cola}. \quad 93
\]

It means -

The king comes out to the frontyard the bearers bring the palanquin the makar kundal bedecks the ear of him and the shirt of gomeseng his body.

Marriage Song:

"An Assamese marriage is a musical marriage. At every stage of the celebration - from the early negotiations to the end, women sing appropriate songs. The delicacy and refinement of a woman's heart come out in caressing tunes when the Namati or the musical leader of the gathering has to describe the beauty and grace of the bride, when the latter is bathed in sanctified water, when she sits among her companions, when the

bridegroom is to be greeted, when the girl is ritually offered. The Namati's talents are revealed most when she has to give expression to the atmosphere of sadness that prevails when the dear girl is to be parted with and taken away" observes P. Goswami. 94

A few specimens of marriage song are found in Bordoloi's novels, where marriage scenes are accommodated. In Rangili we find a marriage song, sung in the joron of Padumi's marriage. 95 "The joron is a sort of betrothal and the term means coupling". 96 The ceremony takes place a day or two days ahead of the actual marriage day. On this day the bride is ornamented and bedecked with jewellaries offered to her from the groom's family. Womenfolk use to sing ceremonial songs to match the occasion. The marriage songs of Assam are of multiple range and it very in texture and language from area to area. Localised versions are found to be sung. Bordoloi has mentioned some songs of Barpeta area. He heard these songs there, which has bear mentioned in the conclusion of the novel Manomati. 97 Again in Nirmal Bhakat 98 we find the marriage song sung by the village maids in the marriage of Nirmal and Rupahi.

94. Goswami, P.: Folk-literature of Assam, p. 57
95. Bordoloi, R.: Rangili, p. 103
96. Goswami, P.: Essays on the Folklore and Culture of North Eastern India, p. 110
97. Bordoloi, R.: Manomati (page-e)
All these songs provide the glimpse of several aspects of the folklore and folklife of Assamese people.

**Deh bicarar git:**

*Deh bicarar* songs form an indespensible part of Assamese folklife associated with tantric rituals. Assam has had some secret sects with some overt practices, accomplished in some sittings known as *bar-sewa* etc. The sittings are held at night only. As such it is also called *rati-sewa* in some areas. The devotees have some cryptic songs in which they hide their ideas and tenets from the laymen's curiosity. 99

Generally these songs are sung with the accompaniment of a local instruments called *tokari*. The songs of this type are called *tokari git* which is a popularized form of *deh bicarar git*, current among the common people. The specimen of a song of this type is found in Bordoloi's two novels *Manomati* 100 and *Nirmal Bhakat*. 101 In the first case Santiram sung this at the request of Lakshmikanta and in *Nirmal Bhakat* Nirmal rendered this at his disguise. In both cases the songs are sung with the accompaniment of *khanjari*, another local instrument of importance.

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99. Goswami, P.: *Folk-literature of Assam*, p. 62
100. Bordoloi, R.: *Manomati*, p. 46
A genuine specimen of song which may be clustered in this grouping stands in *Miri Jiyari*. On the day of observance of *naraciga bihu*, the converts popularly known as *paka bhakat* and *keca bhakats* observed the rituals and then drank *apang*. After this the turn of the song came. The song has been named by our novelist as *cia*. The stock resembles the *dehbicarar git* both in text and inner meaning. The text is worth-mentioning:

"*mara nadir par prabhu jibai ace rai ai*

*jibai ace rai*

dekha dekha bandhu sab mor bhelar bilai ai

*bhelar bilai*

*kauri-saguni-srigal mahadani ai*

*srigal mahadani*

*saguniye dokan diye mangsa khai tani ai*

*mangsa khai tani"*

The songs are so cryptic that its translation would seem to be difficult. We have however endeavoured here to make free translation of the piece -

Oh my god! life is waiting, the life is waiting on the bank of extinct river

behold! my friend the state of my body

The crow, the vultures and the jackals are great givers the jackals are great givers. The vultures keep a shop and eat meat pulling.

---

Miscellaneous songs:

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter that Bordoloi could collect a specimen of ballad relating the pathetic story of Hardatta and Padmakumari. Discussion of a holi song as found in Manomati is also made in some place here in this study. Holi or phakuwa songs are associated with the festival of the namesake and carry a Vaishnavite fervour in it. Another variety of folksong, what may be called a bhaoriar git or dhuliyar git is there at Dandua-Droh. The song was sung by the mimics in the dhuliya performance held in the premises of Hardatta. The text of the song is a part only -

```
U U kare mor
haire maluwa
gage gace japiai
haire maluwa
.... ....

mor maluwak kone marile
haire maluwa re
```

Here in this song the word maluwa stands for a monkey. Maluwa, the word is found in common boat songs.

103. Bordoloi, R : Dondua-Droh, p. 43
Such songs (boat song) are sung in Barpeta region during the boat race games. The maluwa songs are sung by the dhuliyas too.104

Another piece of song was mentioned by the novelist in the same context of the novel. The song occurred during the madal drumming performance. The drummers were male, whereas the womenfolk were the principal singing personnel. Such type of song are almost non-sensical but have its own asset-value as the folklore material. The songs, presented in specific purposes, vary in contents and form to suit the required situation. In the song in question the singress praised the mightly chowdharies for their ability to hold such an austere observance.105 The madal drumming is done by the kacharis of Assam. Though they have their own language to express their oral activities, yet, as a mark of cultural syncretism. They are still maintaining a common heritage. This song is the manifestation of the type.

104. Goswami, P.(ed): Bara Mahar Tera Git, p. 75
105. Bordoloi, R : Dandua Droh, p. 40
proverbs, folk-speech, aphorism etc.;

Rajanikanta Bordoloi is an unquestionably superb artist and he excels in incorporating to his prose style the much needed elements of proverbs and its likes. The Assamese prose of Bordoloi's time is of rich and high standard. The insipidity of prose that was found with the prose-writers of pre-Jonaki period was a monotony for readers and therefore fluidity and lucidity in the language of later times was a dire necessity. Bordoloi was one of the pioneers who resorted to a new prose structure of homely, elegant and sonorous kind.

Proverbs and popular maxims, which are regarded as acquintesence of social wisdom enliven the narration and communicate to the readers of creative literature the logicality of contexts. As an item of folklore it has its own implication when embodied in a particular form of writing, based on conversation. A, Dundes rightly maintains it in evaluating the functions of proverbs - "Like all other forms of folklore, proverbs may serve as impersonal vehicle for personal communication".  

106. Dundes, A. : Analytical Essays in Folklore, p. 35
Proverbs evidence the power of observation that is required to possess in a description. Observes Roger D. Abraham — "They are among the shortest forms of traditional expressions that call attention to themselves as formal artistic entities".  

Excellent use of proverbs and maxims etc. is the salient feature of Bordoloi's writings. He adeptly incorporates into his prose some very good proverbs current in Assam which not only have enriched his prose-style but have provided his writings a contextual leverage also.

Attempt is made here to glean some proverbs from Bordoloi's works.

Nirmal Bhakat-

(a) **prakrit pranayar batat heno bhaleman kait (p.4)**
   - the path of love is not at all rosy.

(b) **sakhsat ma bhagawati (p.8)**
   - a clean conscience.

(c) **man bar cancal bastu (p.43)**
   - mind is unrestrained.

(d) **papar paracit (p.4:)**
   - punishment is to crime.

(e) *ulta core girik bandhe aru cari pon girite sodhe* (p. 32)
- throwing the blame upon other's shoulders.

**Rahdai Ligiri**

(a) *ghar duar eri baliya batiya hai phura* (p. 84)
- to roam like a vagabond.

(b) *datai deleo bidhatai nidiye* (p. 19)
- man proposes god disposes.

(c) *mahantar cin mahanit, burha garur cin qhanit* (p. 133)
- an honest is known in the field of temptation.

(d) *rajai kate samudre burai* (p. 42)
- no man can thether time and tide.

**Rangili**

(a) *jalakiyar jalaie sowad* (p. 32)
- accept everything for what is worth.

(b) *rajai bhal pai jak dola ghorai nalage tak* (p. 61)
- if the sun shines on him, what matters the moon.

(c) *senar ek jat* (p. 62)
- once a knave always a knave.
(d) **samane samane kariba kaj harile jikile nai laj** (p. 90)
- meet people on equal footing.

(e) **baona hai candralai hat mela** (p. 89)
- casting beyond the moon.

(f) **tilardhaw bhai kara** (p. 118)
- not worth a straw.

**Manomati-**

(a) **ek kai dekhi ek kai lekhi** (p. 27)
- to hit the target by chance.

(b) **akasat chandra nathakile tarao nijilike** (p. 27)
- what is the worth of stars unless brightened by the moon.

(c) **kiman panir mac ?** (p. 35)
- not worth a straw

(d) **sale single** (p. 131)
- a triton among minnows.

(e) **ulta bujili Ram** (p. 169)
- giving a stone when asked for a bread.

(f) **jagi suba baci khaba** (p. 85)
- perpetual vigilance is the price of freedom.
(g) gai gota pete bharal (p. 12)
- to be utter selfish.

(h) sat karamar nimitti bilamba bhal nahai (p. 32)
- the sooner the better.

Dandua Droh-

(a) jar phale brihaspati pon
tar patharat nabai kon (p. 27)
- fortune favours the fortunate.

(b) durgai balio khai calio mare (p. 23)
- god proposes and disposes at the same instance.

(c) ekadasat Brihaspati (p. 27)
- one's star is in the ascendent.

Tamreswarir Mandir-

(a) sape napahare kakalar kob
malinie napahare phular sok (p. 63)
- real grief is always unforgettable.

Khamba Thoibir Sadhu-

(a) phata kaok cita haok patar tangali
kana haok kuja haok rajar powali
(Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 41)
- The very ruins of greatness are great.
Radha Rukminir Ran-

(a) darar batari darake pathalcll
(Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 24)
- make hay while the sun shines.

Bholai Sarma-

(a) mahar mar dekhi tile bet mela
(Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 96)
- a crow in peacock's feathers.

Besides these, the writings of Bordoloi are flou­
rished with some excellent idiomatic expressions. A few
of such expressions are furnished below:

abhal bhal (Manomati, p. 10)
ed_gal ek nal (Manomati, p. 27)
 dalah dapah (Rangili, p. 2)
gandap mar (Rangili, p. 49)
ni nacani si nacaniyei (Rangili, p. 73)
son rupal mukhe kowa (Rangili, p. 73)
 datat bhat eta lagileo gom powa (Rangili, p. 98)
manuhar mukh ekhan ne dukhan ? (Rangili, p. 111)
khuri saliki (Rangili, p. 44)
heita swami (Rangili, p. 142)
khejalat kara (Tamreswarir Mandir, p. 7)
jak utha (Rajani Bordoloi Racanamala, p. 8).
khesalat kara (Manomati, p. 94)
jukuti kara (Dandua-Droh, p. 8).
Bordoloi's prose style is not entirely pinpointed to any particular class of a folk-speech of a particular speech group. But nevertheless, his novels being the pen-picture of some historical episodes have turned to be the representations of medieval Assam. But as dexterous he was, Bordoloi never monotonises his readers with stereotyped prosaic deliberation, but rather commingles his description with variety of elements. Even in case of vocabulary we find in Bordoloi's writings an unorthodox incorporation from varied sources. His style is akin to the satriya type of prose writing - further more he professed the ethico-religious philosophy of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva in almost all his writings. For this a semblance or trace of the language pattern cultured in the satra institutions is clearly evident in his writings. The Assamese language has its unique diversity for various dialects and sub-dialects and Bordoloi keeps space in his writings for incorporation of elements from these. His deep association with Kamrupi dialect has resulted in the use of some words and phrasal expressions of it. All these have made Bordoloi's prose a novel and unique one. Given below are some such words:
Kathi, na saj khai, ghar-girasthi, caitha dina, khaca pani, kheo khaice, jal kura, jekera mari, thagua, tirimati, loc, lepthepkai, kholokekiya, cali, khewa mela, maicana, piti, docora, akhar, girasthe, gora-gusti, susthi, tarituri, bandha bhuta, khuh dhuhi, gora-qopti, demha khari, tini puliya, mukhal, carut jal mare.

Folk similies and folk metaphors are also evidently found in his writings. A few examples can be cited as follows:

- **Pharing ophoradi ophara** (*Manomati*, p. 39 to disperse like grass hopers),
- **bamuniya-nakar dare** (*Rangili*, p. 3 the nose as beautiful as that of the Brahmins),
- **pagha cingga garur dare** (*Rangili*, p. 5 as free as an unfastened cow),
- **dola mukali ghorar dare** (*Rangili*, p. 6 as free as reinless horse),
- **matat kuli naconat pakhila** (*Rangili*, p. 4, singing like a cuckoo and dancing like a butterfly),
- **simalu tula uradi ura** (*Manomati*, p. 114 to be extremely rejoiced, bears a restless mind and move like *simalu* cotton),
- **Marinir cakur dare kala caku** (*Rahdai Ligiri*, p. 3 eyes are as black as those of a deer).
caku duta ouphul jen ranga (Niri Jiyari, p. 49
eyes are reddened with anger and have become red
like the flower of ou fruit)

Phakaras:

A few aphorisms popularly known as phakaras are
also found in Bordoloi's writings. A phakara according
to P. Goswami is "a saying, a sentence, used by persons
belonging to certain sects and enshrining religious or
ethical principles. Only the initiates in the sects are
able to explain a phakara". Phakaras always carry two
meanings - an apparent one which explains the surface
explanation and secondly the compressed one which bears
the actual meaning.

In Nirmal Bhakat one such phakara runs as
follows:

bhakati bhomai mai
guru asadhari, sis katai
jibaro tarani nai

Apart from the apparent meaning, this can be explained in
this way: True devotion cannot be attained unless there
is extreme dedication of body and soul. Without a firm
mind none can solicit salvation, if it is done also nothing
can be achieved.

108. Goswami, P.: Folk-Literature of Assam, p. 85
The *phakara* has some close parallels also which convey same explanations. The following piece is mentioned -

```
bhakati bhomai jai
keca kalpatat bhakat bahice
picali picali jai."110
```

This may have such an explanation: Real devotion cannot be achieved as mind has become restless and the search of god has not been done with earnestness.

Another semblance of a *phakara* is found thus -

```
sadhote sadhote sadhanik pale
sadhanik dibalai dara napale. 111
```

This piece may be explained thus: the unfortunates always meet with misfortunes. He is sure to always suffer in between the haves and haves-not.