Appendix

1. Sial pandit or Teacher Fox:

A fox makes off with the scripture of a Brahman. As it rests on the sand of a river a crocodile espies it with the book and addresses it: “Is that teacher Fox?” The fox is busy turning over the leaves of the book. Finding it so great a scholar the crocodile proposes that the three young crocodiles be taught by Teacher Fox. The crocodile gives the fox a fish and the latter promises to teach the young ones. One day the crocodile takes its children and leaves them with their teacher. It goes on feeding the fox on large fish from time to time. After some days the crocodile desires to see its children. The fox says they are out on a journey. Again the crocodile comes, again the fox sends it away on some pretext or other. The crocodile at last sees through the game of Teacher Fox and promising vengeance returns home. One day it catches the fox by the leg as the latter is looking for crabs by the river. The fox laughs, “Oh, you’ve but caught hold of my rattan! I wanted to see how deep the water was.” The crocodile relaxes its grasp and the fox escapes. Another day the crocodile catches the fox by the tongue as the latter is drinking water. The fox just manages to mutter, “Oh, I am only washing the stool and urine of my children’s clothes! You’ve only grasped at the dirty clothes.” So the crocodile loosens its grasp and the fox makes off as fast as it is able. (Source: Ballads and Tales of Assam)

2. The Tiger and the Crab:

A tiger and a crab are friends. They together raise some vegetables. The crab invites the tiger to a meal. The guest is asked to put its tail into the crab’s hole so that the rice and the curries can be pulled up from below. After serving a few courses the crab catches of the tail and will not release it. In mortal pain the tiger cries out to a peasant lad (a widow’s son) for help. On its promising not to harm the lad servers the tail with a stroke of his knife. The grateful tiger promises to supply its benefactor with a deer every day,
but this must be kept a secret from others. On one occasion the lad is forced to give away his secret and the tiger carries him off. In the forest the lad’s stomach makes a sound because he is hungry. The tiger asks what it is and is told that it is the six-score crab which have been eaten by him. The tiger leaves its victim directly. The lad arrives at the shelter of some wild buffalos. He finds on the ground the foam of milk, drinks it and after having cleaned the place hides in a nearby tree. When the buffalos return they find the place cleaned and are pleased. They discover the lad and make him their chief. They kill one of their herd, give the horns to the lad and tell him that one is the horn of joy they will consider him safe, if he blows on the horn of anger they will know he is in danger and will come to his rescue. One day a hair from his head floats on a river and is swallowed up by a *barali* fish. When the fish is caught and cut up at the king’s place the hair is seen by the princess and she wants to marry the man with such hair. A pet crow of the princess takes a ripe mango, flies into the forest and cries:

Who it is that blows on the horn of joy and the horn of anger?
Who it is that would eat the ripe mango?

The lad responds and as the crow drops the mango and he stops to pick it, the bird makes off with the horn of anger. When he becomes helpless the king’s men take him away. At evening the buffaloes find out his whereabouts from the trail of torn clothes he leaves. He had declares the buffaloes are his possession. The king tests him by asking him to ride on them. He does so. So he gets the king’s daughter and kingdom as well. In another version found in the Goalpara district, the hair of the lad floats and sparkles in the princess’ friend tried to catch it but fails. Only the princess can catch hold of it. A pet crow then comes to find for her the lad.

This seems to be blending of two tales, one of the tiger and the crab and the other of the lad and the buffaloes. In another tale a lad is asked by a tiger and a boar to umpire over a battle the two beasts are having. The boar dies and the tiger in appreciation of the lad’s judicial services promises to give him a deer every day, but the matter must be a close secret. The lad is forced to give away his secret and is carried off by the tiger into a dense forest. The tiger drops him there. The lad climbs up a tree and discovers a lair of wild buffaloes below. The rest of the tale is as in the above. (*Source: Tales of Assam*)
3. The Tiger in the Trap:

A tiger is caught in a trap and requests a man to let it out. On the beast’s promising not to harm him the man lets it out. The tiger wants to eat him and the man asks, “Can a tiger eat its benefactor?” The tiger replies, “Yes.” The man proposes three witnesses. A tree is of the tiger’s opinion. A stream is also of the same opinion. Then comes a fox. It wants to known in what state the tiger was found. As the tiger enters the trap the fox tells the man, “Do not let it out, beat it to death.” (Source: Ballads and Tales of Assam)

7. The Tiger and the Cat:

The cat and tiger were once friends. One day they killed a deer. The tiger asks the cat to get fire to cook the venison. The cat enters a house and finding some roasted fish there does not return. The tiger loses its temper and roars. The cat is now so afraid that even when it passes stool, it immediately covers it up so that the tiger cannot detect it. (Source: Ballads and Tales of Assam)

8. The Foolish Crab and the Crane:

Once upon a time, a crane and crab, who were very good friends, lived on the banks of a river. The crane was worried by a terrible problem though. There was a vicious and greedy snake in the area, who was always eating his wife’s eggs. The crane and the crab put their heads and tried to work out a way to solve this problem. Then the crab had a brilliant idea, “The snake is able to terrorize us because we are not equipped to kill such a powerful enemy. In order to kill him, we must invite an enemy of the snake to our neighbourhood.”

The crane was thrilled with this idea. But his wife, a sensible creature, was not too sure about the wisdom of this plan. “Dear husband, “she said cautiously. “I think you should go over all the implications of this idea very carefully before committing yourself to it. We don’t want it to backfire on us!”

“Nonsense!” said the crane airily. “How can plan made on such sound reasoning backfire? I’m up a basket of fish and set out towards the home of a mongoose. As he
walked along the road to the mongoose’s house, he dropped fish at regular intervals along way.
When the mongoose came out of his house, and spotted the first fish, he was delighted.
“What a lucky day, this is for me,” he exclaimed joyfully, “to find a juicy fish lying close to my doorstep.” He gobbled the fish quickly and as he wandered along, he found, to his great joy, another fish a little farther away. He ate this too with relish. Then, to his great joy, he soon spotted the whole line of fish strewn on his way, just waiting to be devoured. The happy mongoose soon finished eating all the fish strewn along by the crane. Finally, he arrived at the where the crane lived.

Almost immediately, he spied the snake who lived there, and a fierce battle ensued between the two bitter enemies. After a long struggle, the mongoose was victorious. The cranes were delighted to see that the wicked snake had been killed. The next day, they off to look for food very happily, convinced that their eggs would now be safe.

In the meanwhile, the mongoose came out of his house, and looked around to see if anyone had left a fish at his doorstep once again. When he couldn’t find one, he walked along the long road leading to his home, hoping that he would find some fish there at least. But there was not a single fish to be found, and the mongoose began to feel irritable and hungry too. He soon reached the tree where the crane lived. He climbed the tree and was delighted to find the crane’s eggs nesting snugly in a nest. He quickly ate them.

When the cranes flew back home, to their despair, they found that the mongoose had gobbled up their eggs. The crane hung his head in shame as his heartbroken wife chided him between tears, “You got rid of one enemy, but unwittingly invited another because you did not think before you acted. And now we have paid a heavy price for your foolishness. (Source - The Panchantra )

4. Why the Frog’s Back is Warted:
One day a bat was having a quiet feed on some fruit. It was moon. All on a sudden a frog began to croak at the foot of the tree. This frightened the bat and as he tried to fly away,
the noise of his wings started a squirrel which was eating takou berries. The squirrel ran away and a berry fell down. It fell on a barking deer ran away and finding a bamboo in the way he knocked it down. The broken bamboo hit the leg of a crab. Not being able to bear the pain the crab bit the tail of snake. The snake lost a part of his tail and in great pain ate up the eggs of a tailor-bird.

The weeping tailor-bird appealed to the public for justice. So all the birds and beasts gathered in an assembly and took up the complaint. The snake was asked why he had eaten up the bird’s eggs. The snake said, “I am not to blame; it is because the crab bit off my tail that in great pain I ate the eggs.” So the crab was questioned. He said, “The bamboo broke my leg and in pain I bit the snake’s tail.” So the bamboo was called in. The bamboo said, “The crab’s leg got broken because I was knocked down by the barking deer.” When the barking deer was called in he said, “Please do not hold me responsible. The takou berry suddenly fell on me and when in fear I ran off the bamboo broke.” When the takou berry was asked he said, “I fell because the squirrel bit me off my tree. The deer was just below me. What could I do?” When the squirrel was questioned he said, “The berry dropped because I was frightened by the bat.” They now questioned the bat. He said, “Do not blame me, please. I was quietly feeding on fruit when all on a sudden the frog started to croak and frightened me. So I had to fly away.”

The gathering now knew that it was the frog who was the guilty one. So the frog was pulled in tied with strings. The assembly decided to punish him pouring hot ash on his back. When the hot ash fell his back began to smart in pain and he ran off into the water. But since then his back has remained warted. (Source: Tales of Assam)

5. Man’s Life-Span:

Bidhata at the beginning called his creatures to him in order to give them their span of life. The monkey, the vulture and the snake reached him first. He gave each of them a span of sixty years. When man went he was given forty years. Man returned happy but he was met by the monkey, which asked him how many years he was given. Man said,
“Forty years”. The monkey said, “Ah, that’s bad. Why, I was given sixty years. You have been cheated.” The vulture and the snake also commented in a similar manner. Man became discontented and went back to Bidhata. Bidhata got annoyed with the monkey, the vulture and the snake and also man. He said, “Very well, I deduct twenty years from each of them and give that to you.” Since then from the age of forty to sixty man becomes greedy like the monkey, from the age of sixty to eighty he remains sitting with head bent like the vulture, and from the age of eighty to a hundred he keeps to his bed lying like the snake. (Source: Tales of Assam)

6. A Battle of Wits:

One day a crow happened to notice a crab at the mouth of its burrow. Wondering how to get hold of it, the crow said in wheedling manner:

Crawling, creeping,
Come out, my lady,
Let me my respects pay.

The crow’s flattering address, however, threw the crab into a panic, for it knew that the bird was planning its dinner. It knew that as soon it came out of its burrow it would be carried off. So it said:

This afternoon I’ve got a fever,
If respects you’d pay, pay from there.

The crow realized that if it was smart the other fellow was smarter. The crab had to be eaten. So the bird thought that sterner measures were needed. t now said in a threatening manner:

Come out, I say,
Else I’ll peck you out,
Then you’ll pay.
The crab knew that the situation was getting worse. If it came out it would be eaten, if it did not come out then also it would be eaten. So it decided to would be better to come out in a graceful manner. As soon as it came out crow picked it up and flew up to a tree.

Now there was an oyster by the brink of the pond. The oyster is headless, as you know. It had been watching what the rogue of a crow was doing. It was very much annoyed at the high-handedness of the bird, but what could it do? Not being able to hold back it feeling, it cried out:

The two-legged carried off the many-legged,
Me the headless one was just watching,
I’d have killed the bird with one stroke,
Alas, in my hand I had nothing.

7. The Good has its Good all the Time:

A certain merchant had a son and a daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law followed the principles of virtue. It so happened that one day a Sannyasi came and made his camp in front of the merchant’s house. The Sannyasi made a fire, sat by it and frequently cried out *Beam Bum* (Hail Siva! hail Siva!). Every morning the merchant respectfully offered him a *powa* of milk. Now his daughter-in-law used to come out every afternoon for a bit of airing and the Sannyasi took to her as soon as he saw her.

One day the merchant asked the Sannyasi, “Father, what do you know?”
“I can read the palm and tell a person’s fortunes,” said the Sannyasi.

So the Sannyasi read the palm of the merchant’s son and daughter-in-law. After reading the palm of the daughter-in-law he said, “She is going to give birth to a demon and he would destroy the entire family.”

The merchant was very much perturbed to here this and instructed his son to send his wife away. The young man did so and the poor woman had nowhere to go but take shelter under a clump of bamboo in the merchant’s backyard. The Sannyasi went to her in the evening but before he could start any mischief, a tiger carried him off.
The merchant decided that it was the demon in the daughter-in-law’s womb who had eaten up the Sannyasi. He told her to leave the place. His son too beat her with a stick.

The girl now recited a verse:

- The good has it good all the time,
- The evil loses his good every day;
- The merchant’s daughter-in-law was driven out,
- The Sannyasi by the tiger was carried away.

She, however, had to leave, and in her misery and sorrow found shelter in the cottage of a couple of Mali and Malini (wreath-makers). There she gave birth to a boy child. As the wreath-makers were childless they gave all their love to the child. The child used to excrete good. His mother kept the gold hidden and when necessary sold it at the shops. One day she left the child with the Malini saying, “Please do not take him up even if he cries,” and went out to dispose of some of the gold. But the Malini took up the child out of love and found that he excreted gold. The woman told her husband of the matter and they both took the child and field the place. They had of course been worried over what to feed the child but decided they would keep him on milk.

When the mother returned home she found the child missing and became demented with grief. She began to move about like a lunatic. The years rolled out, the child grew and with the gold that the excreted a golden city was built up. The child ruled as king over that city. After roaming about for eighteen years the grief-stricken mother reached that city and discovered her son. The lunatic looking woman, with matted hair on her head, went up to the king and declared, “You are my son.” The surprised king asked his minister, “what does this woman say?” The latter said to her, “If you say the king is your son, can you give any proof?”

She said, “I’ll cover my breasts with seven folds of cloth, but if I am indeed a virtuous lady, milk will sprout out from my breasts.”

So her breasts were covered with seven folds of cloth, but milk spurted out and the proof convinced everyone. The king had the Mali and Malini called to him. He said to them, “Tell me if you are my parents. Speak the truth, or else you will be put to torture.”
The impostors had to admit that they were not his real parents, that they had stolen him from his mother. The king said, “I am happy that I have got back my mother, but I am not going to do you any harm, for you have conducted yourselves like my parents.”

He welcomed his mother and she came to live with him. One day she said to him, “My son, start digging a tank. Place my image on one side of the tank you are going to dig. Have it declared with beats of the drum that you are going to pay one rupee for each load of earth removed. And keep sentries watching by the image.” So the king had it declared that he was going to have a tank dug and the wages would be one rupee for each load of earth removed.

During these years the old merchant had not only lost his sree or family luck but his life as well. His son, poor now, came to work in the tank, but as soon as he caught sight of the image of his wife he began to weep. The sentries straightway arrested him and took him to the king. The merchant’s son was afraid that he would be slain and cried out, “O king, I won’t keep any more, please do not slay me.” The king received him civilly and asked his mother to have a look at him through a window. She found that the beggarly man was indeed her long-lost husband. She said to her son, “Yes, he is your father. But do not call him father yet. First get him washed and clothed. In the meantime let me get the meal ready.”

The king said to the merchant’s son, “Please get up and have bath.” The latter thought that he was going to be slain, for he must have given offence by weeping, and said, “I don’t know what you are going to do to me. If I gave you offence, please forgive me.” He had to be taken to his bath by force. After getting him washed and dressed and given him a pair of sandals the king took him to the meal. The man sat at his meal but could not put anything into his mouth. He was afraid that he was going to be slain after the meal was over. Then out came the king’s mother and said to him, “Why don’t you eat? Please eat.” The man was taken aback, stood up and said, “Strange, do they know me?” The king’s mother then told him everything from the beginning, giving out that she was his wife and the king was his son. She said, “Do you recall how you beat me with a stick and I recited the vers:

The good has its good all the time,
The evil loses his good every day;
The merchant’s daughter-in-law was driven out,
The Sannyasi by the tiger was carried away.
So husband and wife met again and the king also became happy.(Source: Tales of Assam)

8. Why the Ow Drops in Phagun:

On a day in Phagun (Feb-March) a deer was resting in the shade of an Ow tree (*Dillenia indica* Linn) when an ow fell on its back. The startled deer ran off and broke the nest of a weaver bird. The weaver bird flew off and set on the head of an adjutant bird, with the result that the latter’s head lost its hairs. The startled adjutant flew off and sat on the back of a tiger. The tiger ran away and sat on the hole of a crab. The crab bit its tail and it ran off again. On the way the jackal asked him, “Why are you running thus?” The tiger explained that something had bitten it. The jackal persuaded it to go back and the tiger sat in the hole again. The crab bit and the tiger ran off dragging the jackal which lost its life. The blood that the jackal shed reddened certain parts of its body and the tiger’s body. Those parts have remained red till this day.

Then all the birds and beasts gathered in an assembly and asked the tiger how the jackal died. The tiger explained how they had gone back to the crab hole and how the crab bit. So the crab was asked. The crab referred to the tiger. The tiger referred to the adjutant bird. The weaver bird referred to the deer, which referred to the ow. So the ow was held guilty and the verdict was given: “You will drop in the month of Phagun at the slightest stir of the breeze”.(source : Tales of Assam)

9. Why Snakes eat Frogs:

In ancient times there lived in a village an old couple. During the rains the old man used to set traps in the paddy field and catch fish. One day it so happened that the old man found no fish in his trap but a large frog. The old fellow was annoyed not to get any fish
that day and decided that he would eat that frog. He took the frog home, told his wife to
cook him and then left for the field with his plough.

When the old woman was about to kill the frog he cried out, “Grandmother, please don’t
kill me. If you spare me, I’ll serve you, I’ll take grandfather’s plough and till your soil.”

The old woman softened by his entreat and spared him. She killed a fowl and cooked it
instead. When the old man returned from the field he had a good meal and said, ‘Why,
the frog tastes well.’ The old woman said, “Do you know, I have not killed the frog. He
began to entreat me for his life and promised to till our soil with ploughs.”

The old man said, “Alright, Let’s see what he can do for us.”

Next morning, the frog went to the field for ploughing. He sat on the handle and started
ploughing. Then he saw the king’s men taking a boat over the old man’s paddy. The frog
 teased the king’s men by saying that the men of king eat not the paddy but the stool. The
men in the boat looked around but saw nobody. So they went on. The frog was repeatedly
crying out. The boatmen thought that the oxen in the plough had teased them. Out of
annoyance they took the oxen to the king. The frog remained hidden.

The angry frog decided to fight a battle against the king and asked the old woman to give
him some fried rice (Karai). The old lady gave him the karai and the next morning the
frog started for the kingdom singing,

I’m eating karai crunch
Round is the japi,
King’s men have taken away the bullocks,
I’m going this very night.

On the way, he met a bear, a snake and a swarm of bees and offered them the karai rice
to go to the king. All of them reached the king’s court. The frog requested the king to
return the pair of oxen. The latter refused to do so. There was an argument between the
frog and the king over the matter. The argument led on to a battle. The frog set the bees
on the king’s soldiers. When the bees began to sting, the soldiers fled, and the king had to
come to terms. He gave the frog a lot of eatables and returned the oxen.
The frog now turned homewards. On the way the bear, the snake and the bees asked for a share of the eatables. The frog gave something to everyone, but what fell to the snake’s share was so little that he lost his temper and ate up the frog. Even after eating up the frog the snake’s anger didn’t cool, and since then snakes have not spared frogs if they can be had anywhere. *(source : Tales of Assam)*

**10. Sati Mati Bai :**

There was a very poor family in a certain village. The members of the family were two, Satimati Bai and her brother. One day the boy said, “Satimati Bai, I feel a longing for cake.” His sister sadly said, “My dear, how can we afford to have cake? We are so poor. To make cake you need rice, gur, and firewood. Where can we have these?”

The boy said, “Let me see if I can get the things.” He wrapped himself up in an *endi chadar* and paid a call on a neighbor. The neighbor had spread some Bara paddy to dry in the sun. While they were exchanging friendly chit-chat, the boy suddenly cried out, “Ah, I’ve such cramp in my tummy!” and began to roll on the spreads-out paddy. Before long he got up and pressing his tummy walked home.

Reaching home he shook his wrapper and there was quite a bit of paddy that dropped from his cloth.

He then went to look for gur He went to a shop and told the shop keeper that his son had died and the mother was crying in front of the dead body. At this shocking news the man directly went home and the boy got an opportunity to steal a lump of gur.

Then he went to gather fire woods from the jungle. There a tiger approached him and said, “Who are you that are taking firewood from my abode?” The boy said, “My sister is making pitha today, it is for this that I am cutting some firewood.” Are you going to give some pitha to me?” “Certainly”, the boy said. “When should I visit your house?” “Not on the day of the little smoke, but on the day of big smoke.”
The tiger allowed the boy to leave and the latter brought the fuel home. Satimati Bai husked the paddy, ground the rice into powder, mixed it with gur and then baked the pithas. Brother and sister had a pleasant time eating the pithas.

Meanwhile they made some pithas of lime, chilly and arum and put them on the way of the tiger at the gate, on the verandah and on the dhekished. They also lighted a big fire so that it smoked a lot. Then they shut their door and hid themselves in a large rice bin. When the tiger noticed the big smoke he knew it was time he should come for his share of the pithas. When he came, he noticed a pitha at the gate and ate it up. He didn’t like it. Then he ate the pithas of chilli and arum and felt his throat burning. He got furious and looked for the boy and his sister. As he broke into their house, the boy felt to relieve himself. The sister asked the boy to keep quiet; otherwise the tiger would eat them. The boy couldn’t hold himself any longer and let out with a loud noise. This took the tiger by surprise and not knowing what it was, he ran off into the jungle. (source: Tales of Assam)