

**“FOLK SONGS AND ORAL NARRATIVES OF HAJO
AREA: COLLECTION NAD A STUDY”**

(With special reference to Muslim community)

**REPORT
OF
MINOR REASEARCH PROJECT PREPARED WITH THE
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OF
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PREFACE

The Muslims come to India sometimes as invaders, sometimes as preachers and sometimes as migrants. Indo-Arabian relation traced back to 7th century A.D. Still Muslim domination started in India with the victory of Muhammad of Ghour in 1192 A.D. Muhammad Bakhtiar Khiliji was the first Muslim general to come to Assam in 1205 A.D. in an expedition to Tibet. Hajo was area in Assam is historically important for the growth and consolidation of Muslim population in Assam. The Muslims merged with the greater Assamese society. They enriched and added varied elements to Assamese language, literature and culture. They have also rich oral tradition of their own. Study of oral literature of Muslims of Assam helps us in mutual understanding and communal harmony. In this work, an Endeavour is made to collect and study the folksongs and oral narratives of Muslims of Hajo area and highlight the ideas and items of oral literature that will remind us of common ancestry and thereby help in understanding and in the socio-cultural co-existence of the greater Assamese nation.

The report has been prepared with the financial assistance of U.G.C. and I take the opportunity to acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude to the commission. I also express my sincere gratitude to the informants, various authors and institutions for their co-operation in my research work.

Place: Hajo

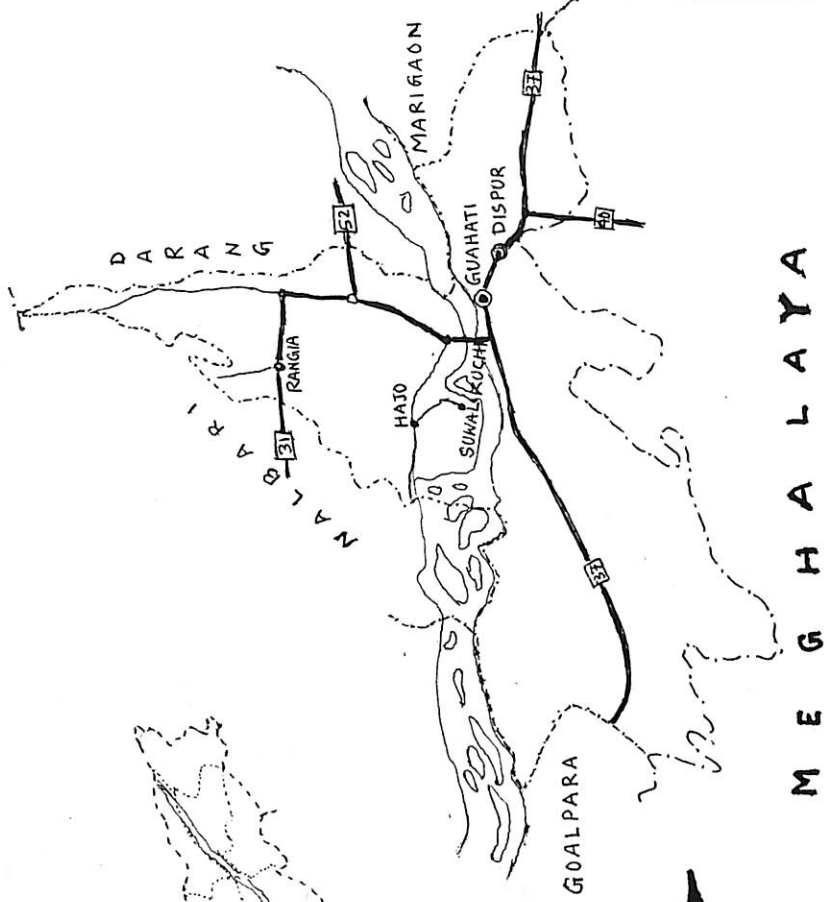
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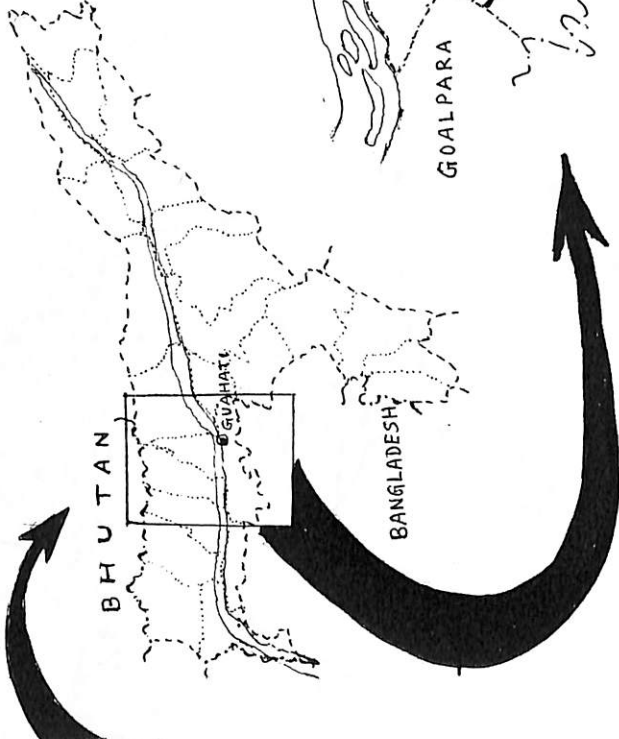
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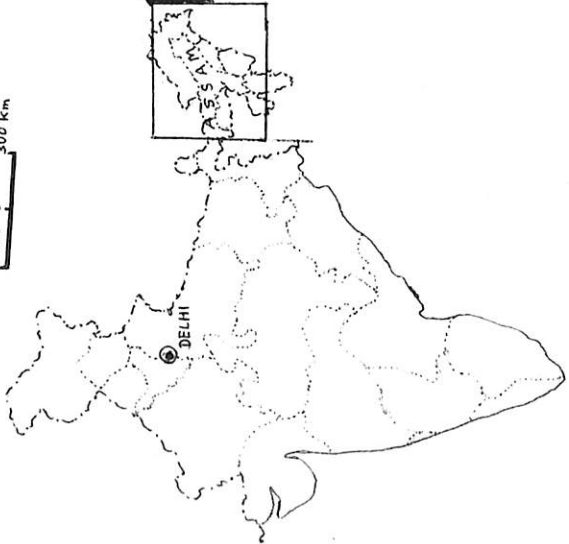
KAMRUP DISTRICT



ASSAM



INDIA



M E G H A L A Y A

MAP OF

Hajo Revenue Circle

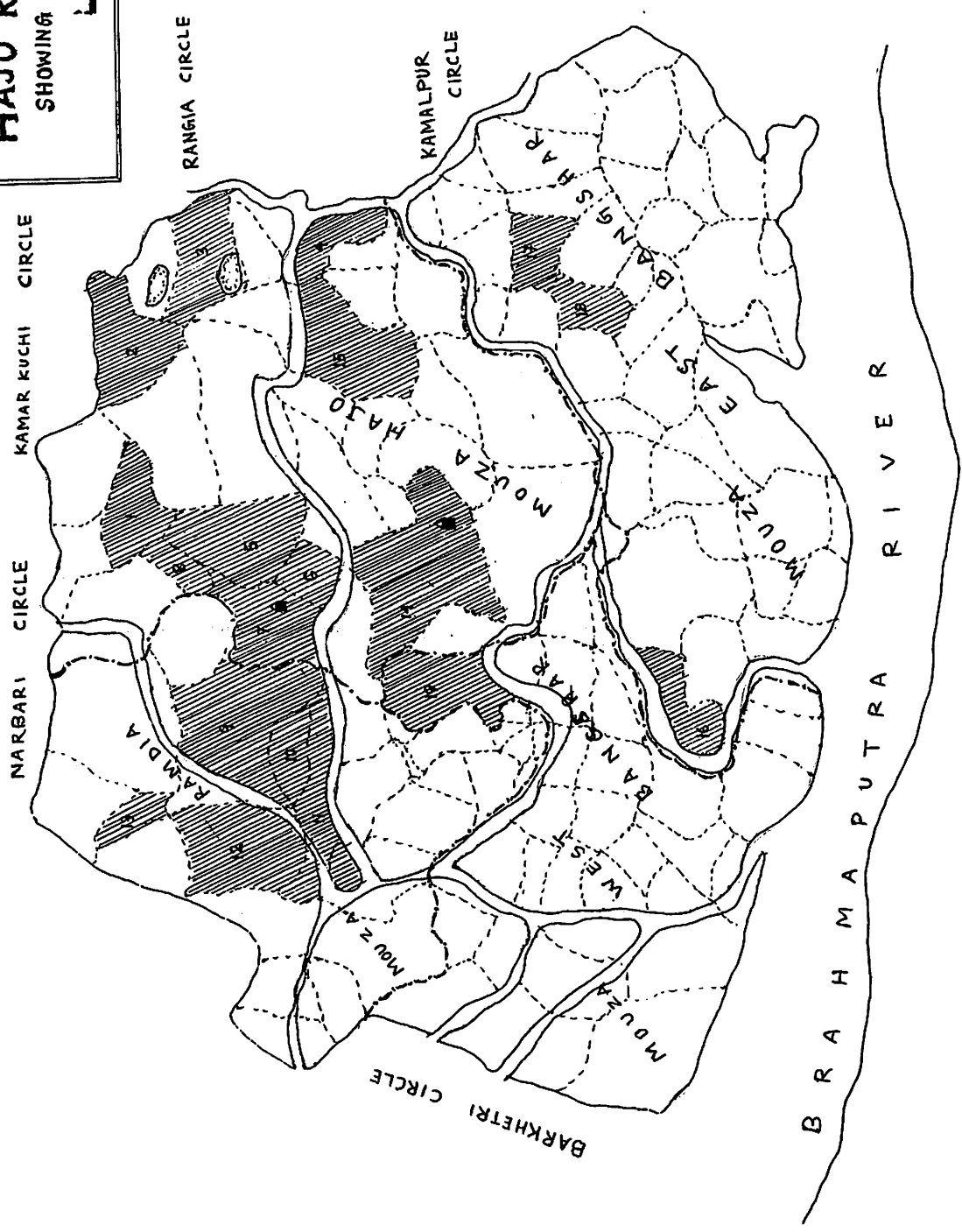
SHOWING MUSLIM DOMINATED VILLAGES



SL. VILLAGES

1. EKADI
2. JAPIA
3. UKHURA
4. KETEKIBARI
5. 3ND, BAGTA
6. RAJA BAJAR
7. KALITAKUCHI
8. HIRAJANI
9. SANIADI
10. BIHDIA
11. BHELKAR
12. BARNI
13. DEHAR KURINA
14. NIZ HAJO
15. MANAH KUCHI
16. DAMPUR
17. GARIA PARA
18. ROUMARI
19. NADIA

POA - MACCA
 ADAM GURU MAJAR



CHAPTER - I

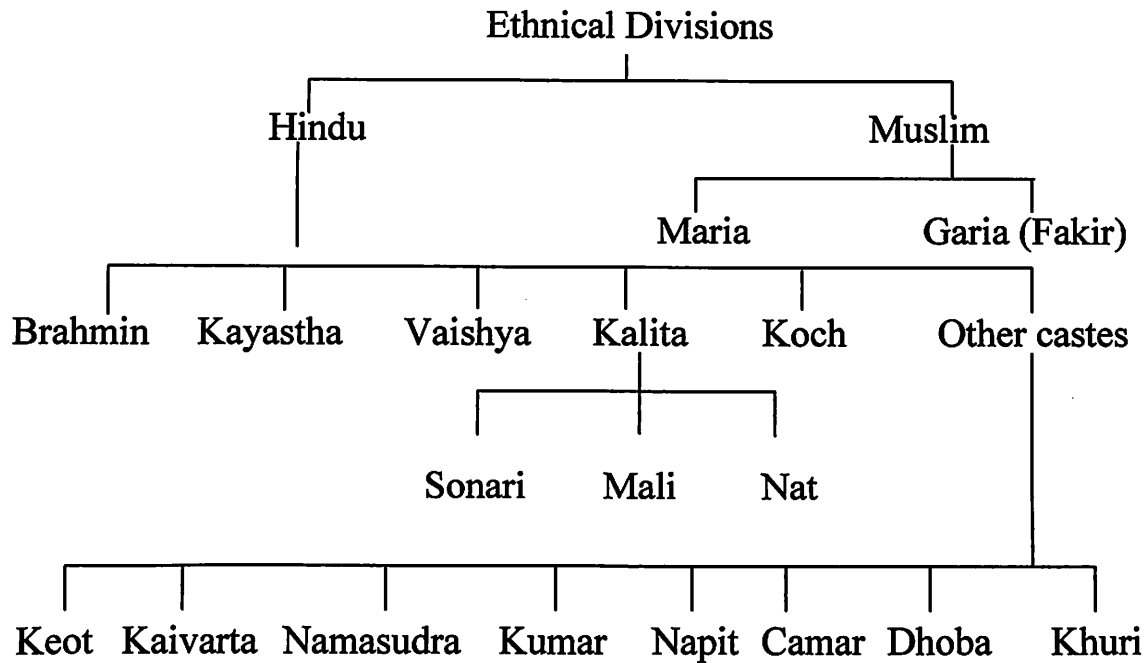
INTRODUCTION

LOCATION AND PEOPLE OF THE AREA

Hajo, a village situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra in the district of Kamrup is an important place of historical significance with its ancient temples and dargahs meant for the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Muslims. It is a unique example of cultural mosaic of integration. Hajo, being the location of Poa-Mecca Dargah of the Muslims at one hand, and the Haigrib-Madhab temple of the Hindus on the other, turns to be a centre of cultural integration and social harmony since remote past. It is a colourful temple city full of diverse communities and ethnic groups.

Geographically the village of Niz Hajo is situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra about 32 kilometers north-west of Guwahati in the Kamrup district of Assam. It lies between the north latitude $26^{\circ}10'$ - $26^{\circ}29'30''$ and east longitude $91^{\circ}26'50''$ - $90^{\circ}41'$. The village has an area of 2,276.5 acres with 1,553 households and a population of 8,446. In 1971 this figure was estimated at 4015 square kilometers with 1,662 household and a total population of 10,269. As per census of 1991, the total population of Hajo revenue circle is 1,88,100.

The division¹ of the people of the area is shown by Dr. P. C. Das as follows:



The Muslims of this area may broadly be divided into two groups: Gariya and Mariya. They have a common religion and faith but their customs, behaviour, food habits, and dialects differ so much that these prove them to be from two different ethnic groups. No intercourse is allowed between the Gariyas and Mariyas in the village. Gait observes that the Gariya have come from Gaur, the ancient Muslim capital of Bengal.² Hunter held the view that the people who took tailoring as their profession are known as Gariya.³ Benudhar Sarma opines that the people (*Gariya*) used to burry (*gor*) their dead in the graveyard or *Gorasthan*. Hence they were called *gariya*.⁴

We see that the Muslims form the bulk of the total population of Assam (28.43%). The Muslim population is stated to have begun in Kamrupa from the beginning of 13th Century A.D. since the invasion of Bakhtiar Khiliji in 1205 A.D. we can safely fix the early Muslim inhabitation at Hajo from the 13th century A.D. if not earlier. The percentage of Muslim population of Hajo is 36.16 while the Hindu population is 63.71%.

The population structure of Hajo may be divided broadly into two religious groups – Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu population includes many communities, viz, Brahmin, Kalita, Mali, Koch, Keot, Napit, Camar, Nat or Gayan, Dhoba, Kumar, dom or Kaivarta, Caral or Namasudra, Khuri etc. The Muslims have two communities, viz Mariya and Gariya (Fakir).

In Niz Hajo we do not find any tribal people today, but a large number of tribal population of the Bodo group is scattered in the outskirts of the village. These tribal settlers in the border area of Hajo, in all probability, were the indigenous population of the village. It is found that people of different ethnic groups came and settled at Hajo under royal patronage from time to time. When the village was developed into a township and overcrowded by streams of people, the tribal people, who are shy of urban environment, abandoned the place and resettled in the outskirts of the village. Some of them perhaps mixed with the new-comers and underwent religious conversion in course of time. The present population of Hajo is composed mostly of the ritual functionaries and officers attached to the sacred complex.

The earlier census reports of Assam mention the presence of caste system among the Muslims.⁵ In the census report of 1891, it is stated that the Muslim castes were like Hindus, and hierarchially they were placed in the following manner – the Sayeds were placed at the highest position while the Mughals, the Pathans and the Sheikhs were given a descending status order. The Sayeds of Assam trace their descent from Shah Miran or Azan Fakir, the Sufi saint who came to Assam and is regarded as a descendent of Ali.⁶

The Gariyas of Hajo claimed themselves to be Sayed and traced their origin from one Fakir or Pir who in turn was regarded as a descendant of Ali from Arabia. Allen observed that the Sayeds considered ploughing or carrying loads beneath their dignity. These observations of Allen hold good for some Fakir families of Hajo even today. They are regarded as priestly class and occupy a dominant position in the Muslim social structure of the region. They are also known as Khalifa families.

W.W. Hunter observed that the people who took the profession of braziers were known as Mariyas.⁷ They are regarded as section of Muhammadans of a lower social order, brought as captives from Turbak's army in 1532 A.D. The Ahom king Suhungmung settled them in different parts of the country. They were employed as cutters of grass for royal elephants and the cultivators, but having proved inefficient in these duties, they took to working brass. The Mariyas of Hajo are a functional caste following the profession of braziers. According to the tradition and family history, they came and settled in Hajo during the reign of one Acan Raja who engaged them in making brass vessels and utensils of the temples. In all probability, the Mariyas of Hajo settled in the area at the early part of 18th century.

The Mariyas of Hajo are not allowed social intercourse with the Gariyas or Fakirs. Nor are they engaged in any kind of duties in the Shrine of Poamecca. They work in brass. The Mariyas have an argot which they use among themselves.

On the other hand, Dr. A.N.M. Irshad Ali divided the Assamese Muslims into three groups : Sayeds, Sheikhs and Mariyas. The Sayeds claimed to be descendants of prophet Muhammad, Sheikhs are converts of local people and Mariyas are the descendants of the Muslim soldiers captured in 1532 A.D.

The present day Muslim population of Hajo area comprises of (1) Gariyas, (2) Mariyas, (3) Indigenous people (local converts) and (4) Immigrants (Char Chaparir Muslims). I have undertaken the population of Greater Hajo area comprising of the Muslim dominated villages under my study. The villages are Dampur, Fakirtola, Mariapatti, Kalitakuchi, Saikiapara, Rajabazar, Doloitola, Saniadi, Adhiarpara and Barni etc. In course of time more population came to this area and cultural assimilation takes place. According to the census report of Assam, 1991 the Muslim population in Assam was 28.43%. In Kamrup district it was 23.38% and in Hajo the Muslim population was 36.16%. And it shows that the Muslims are an important group of people. They have been contributing towards socio-economic and cultural sphere of the state. Hence lies importance of their indepth study. Hajo, a sacred complex mentioned in the Puranas, Yoginitantra, ancient history and Vaishnava literature, is a paradise for the sociologists, linguists and folklorists. In the histories written in the period of the Mughals, it was known as Sujabad or Sujanagar after the name of Shujauddin, the governor of Bengal and son of the Mughal emperor Shahjahan and who constructed a mosque at the Shrine of Ghiasuddin. Sujauddin stayed here for some time in 1660 A.D. and endowed the mosque with land and people. Hajo is a place of historical, cultural and religious importance with its age-old temples, shrines, mosques and *khanqahs*. Politically, the area was under the royal camps of the Koches the Mughals and the Ahoms at different times mentioned in the Assam History. From the religious view-point it was a confluence of Hinduism Buddhism and Islam under the patronage of different political powers and religious personalities there was an influx of people belonging to different ethnic groups with their cultural traits and folk-elements. Referring to the age-old cultural heritage of tolerance and acceptance of the people of the area, P. Goswami says, "It is perhaps the only place in the state where one may find shrines dedicated to Siva, Parvati,

Madhava or Vishnu, the Buddha and to a Muslim saint, thus bringing together persons belonging to various and even conflicting faiths.⁸ In spite of its diversities in religion, race and language, it is a holy land of tolerance and social integration. While people in the world are fighting among themselves in the name of communalism, Hajo stands as an exemplary place for communal and social harmony where the sound of the drum and the Azan (call for the prayer) can be heard at the same time. A socio-cultural study of Hajo is of paramount importance for a better understanding of the beliefs and practices, customs and traditions, festivals and institutions of the locality. Some noted scholars, British officials and writers have dealt with certain aspects of the socio-religious institutions of the area. Dr. P.C. Das, in his doctoral thesis *Hajo : A Socio-Cultural Study* brought into light the socio-cultural aspects of the people of Hajo. While considering the advent of Muslim in Assam,

Hajo played a significant role since 13th century A.D. Hajo became familiar to the Muslim world, perhaps, from the 13th century A.D. But it was from the beginning of the 17th century A.D. that the area became more popular to them when the Muslim rulers consolidated their position. The Muslims played a decisive part in the socio-political activities of the area. It was by this time that a shrine called Poamecca was marked as an important centre of Islamic religion and culture.⁹ Casual references here and there have been made by few scholars on the folk-culture and religious festivals and institutions of Hajo. No systematic study on the folk-culture of the Muslims of Hajo area has so far been done.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the proposed study an attempt has been made to throw light on the mode of life and thought of the Muslims expressed in their folk-literature. It also aims at highlighting Islamic influence on Assamese culture and language. The present study will be a sincere attempt for understanding the real nature of mutual relations between Hindus and Muslims for establishing social harmony and peaceful existence. Folk literature like other forms of literature or art gets modified along with the progress of the society and passage of time. The study of folk-culture and oral tradition such as manners, customs, traditions, superstitions, folk-songs, folk tales and myth may eventually solve many difficult problems of ethnicity. Oral tradition in particular has many uses for the ethnologists. It may raise many investigating issues like borrowing, lending and synthesis.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study of folk culture and oral tradition may contribute to our understanding of culture and its functioning in human society. It may be of some help in understanding human psychology and the adjustment of the individual to his culturally constituted world. The Muslims in Assam are no longer outsiders and negligible section. They are now part and parcel of the Assamese society and desire to assert their racial, social, political and linguistic identity to the world outside. Their literature and culture enriched and added to the grandeur of Assamese culture. Not only the songs, their traditional narrations, proverbs, riddles and charms also are of outstanding quality. They are still preserved in the memory of the simple village folk. The present study is expected to widen the field of Muslim folklore by providing a more comprehensive recording and systematic analysis of the varied forms of literature prevalent among the Muslims.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The traditional narratives, songs, proverbs, riddles and charms are supposed to have collected through field observation and data collected may be investigated and analysed from the standard points and criteria of folklore studies. In doing the field work the methods of (1) Questionnaire, (2) Interview and (3) Participation have been adopted. Some tools of the field study like camera, tape recorder etc. have been used to record the items of folk literature from the active bearers of the tradition. Assam is a land of assimilated culture. Its folklore is also a mixed one. And the Muslims of Hajo area constitute a very important section of the various races and ethnic groups of Assam with their distinctive cultural and linguistic traits. They have contributed immensely to the growth of the society, language, literature and culture of Assam through the Ages. They have their rich tradition of folk literature like folk songs, folk tales, legends, narratives, proverbs, riddles and charms which have never been fully exploited, preserved and recorded. They can be studied in their popular beliefs, institutions, practices, folklore and art. Some of the folk songs and narratives have ample scope for studying as a means of understanding the real nature of mutual relations between Hindus and Muslims for establishing social harmony

and peaceful existence and these may eventually solve many difficult problems of ethnology. There is the close affinity between Vaishnavism and Islamic Sufism and it can help in establishing integrity, communal harmony and tolerance for opposing creeds. But, no systematic study on the folk culture of the Muslims of Hajo area has so far been done. It is in this perspective that I have taken keen interest to deal with the folk-literature specially folk-songs and oral narratives of the area.

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CHAPTER – II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE AREA AND THE MUSLIMS

Hajo is a place of antiquity and a confluence of three major religions of the world – Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. It is a mini-India. It is both Ajmeer Sharif, Buddha Nagar and Jagannath – a place of pilgrimage for the devotees irrespective of Caste, Creed and Religion. Hajo occupies a unique place in the history of Assam. It symbolizes communal unity and religious tolerance. It is the blessed land sheltering the Mughals, the Koches and the Ahoms. It is a temple city. There are number of shrines and temples meant for the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Muslims. Here one can find shrines dedicated to Siva, Parvati, Madhava or Vishnu, the Buddha and to a Muslim Saint.¹

THE NAME HAJO

Hajo was known by different names in different periods of history. The Kalika Purana (11th century A.D.) uses two names – Apunarbhava and Manikuta for the place. The Yoginitantra (14th Century A.D.) mentioned the area as Vishnupuskara and Apunarbhava. During the reign of the Koch king Raghudevvarayan in the 16th century A.D. Hajo was known as Manikutagram.²

Shah Sujauddin, son of Shahjahan and the governor of Bengal, stayed at Hajo for some time. He built a mosque at Poamecca and renamed

After the death of Mahmud in 1030 A.D. India remains free from Muslim invasion for a period of hundred and sixty years. In 1191 A.D. Muhammad invaded the territory of Pithiraj Chauhan. Though he was beaten back that year, next year he killed Pithiraj and conquered his territory. He left Qutubuddin Aibak in India as his viceroy. After Muhammad's death in 1206 A.D. Qutubuddin became the independent ruler of the conquered territory of India which came to be known as the Sultanate of Delhi.

Under the Delhi Sultanate, language, literature, music, painting, architecture, and statecraft received a new sap of vigour to flourish again in new verdour.



MUSLIM'S SETTLEMENT IN HAJO AREA

The first invasion of the Muslims took place in 1205 A.D. by Bakhtiar Khilizi in the reign of Bartu or Prithu. The first record of the arrival of Muslims in this land is found in the Kanai Barasi Bowa Rock inscription of North Gauhati where it is stated that on the 13th of Chaitra in the year Saka 1127 the Turks coming into Kamrupa were destroyed. The stone bridge which Bakhtiar and his soldiers had crossed is identified with the Silsako, a stone bridge near North Guwahati on the river Barnadi. Giving description of the temple where the Muslims took shelter, Minhaz writes, "They pointed out a temple, in the vicinity of that place, of exceeding high, strength and sublimity and very handsome and in it numerous idols, both of gold and silver were deposited.³ The famous temple was Haygriva-Madhava of Hajo. So it can be said that Hajo became familiar to the Muslim world since 13th century. In the year 1227 Hussamuddin alias Sultan Giasuddin attacked Assam. Irfan Safawi, a noted historian in his book "Kabir Gosai" tries to identify this personality with Ghiasuddin Aulia. He was called 'Waz' from which it is said the name Hajo is derived. It is said that he was allowed to preach Islam in Kamrupa by its king. During this invasion Jalaluddin Tabrizi a famous sufi established a Khanquah at Hajo in 1244.⁴ After a long discussion on Ghiasuddin Aulia, Dr. M.K. Saikia says, "we, therefore believe that Ibn-Batutah actually came to Hajo which lay on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and facing Kamakhya the place of magic, on the south. It is here that he visited Haarat Ghiasuddin Aulia who entered the country in 1256-57 A.D. and lived till the time that Ibn-Batutah visited that place. It is not unlikely that Hazarat Jalaluddin Tabrizi who visited Assam probably during the first quarter of the thirteenth century established the *Khanqah* of Hajo where Ikhtiaruddin Malik Yuzbak later erected a mosque in 1256-57 A.D. When Ghiasuddin Aulia came to stay there.⁵ The reading of the Khutbah, and Friday religious prayer were initiated in Kamrud and signs of the people of Islam appeared there.⁶ In 1498 A.D. Hussain Shah conquered Kamatapur and he reduced the country as far east as the Barnadi and left his son (Daniel) at Hajo as Governor of the territory.⁷ He is said to have established a mosque in Rangamati of Goalpara district. During this period of Hussain Shah's expedition Hajo turned to be a colony of Afgan warriors and a large number of Muslims could find an opportunity to settle in Kamrupa. A Mahammadan commander of Gaur named Turbak invaded Assam in 1532 and

was defeated by the Ahom king Suhungmung. It is said that the Muslim war prisoners brought by the forces of Suhungmung during this campaign were the earliest group of Muslim settlers in the eastern Brahmaputra valley and they subsequently came to be known as the Mariyas.⁸ The Mariya of Hajo, a functional caste in brass-metal industry, came and settled in Hajo during the reign of one Acan Raja in 18th century. And during this time in 1449 A.D. Sankardeva was born and he preached Vaishnavism, of course before Sankardeva, there was a Muslim society in Assam.

Kalapahar, the commander of Sulaiman-i-Karrani, sultan of Bengal invaded Assam in the middle of the sixteenth century, but failed to achieve any permanent result. Kalapahar is called pora sultan or iconoclast in Assamese chronicles and is associated by tradition with the destruction of numerous images and temples in Kamrupa, including those of Kamakhya and Hajo. During the reign of Pratap Singha (1603-41) approximately in the period 1625-35 Shah Miran (Azan Fakir) with his brother came through Gaura and stayed at Hajo in the shrine of Ghiasuddin Aulia. The Persian chronicles⁹ as well as the Assam Buranjis show that Gauhati and Hajo became important centres of military, civil, commercial and cultural activities of the Muslims in the North-Eastern Indian after the annexation of Koch-Hajo to the Mughal empire. This inflow of the Mussalmans to Koch-Hajo appears to have increased during the Ahom-Mughal conflict from 1614 A.D. to 1682 A.D. Apart from the war captives, the Ahom kings are said to have imported many Muslim-artisans, masons, engravers, spinners and arsenals whenever they needed. The Muslims obtained the possession of Hajo in 1613 A.D. Mukaram Khan who was the governor of Koch-Hajo in 1616 A.D., shifted his Head Quarter to Hajo. In 1617 A.D. Pratap Singha advanced towards Hajo and the Mussalman under Abdussalam, after sustaining a defeat at Agiathuri retreated to Hajo. Raja Ram Singha, Rajput general sent by Aurangzeb and the famous hero of Saraighat war of 1671 A.D. camped at Hajo which was an important centre from strategic point of view.

Baharistani-i-Ghaybi makes mention of the massacre of an Islamic shrine, situated on the top of the Garurachal hill, by the Ahom during the Ahom-Mughal conflict in the early part of the seventeenth century A.D.¹⁰ In 1657 A.D. Abdul Ghazi Shujauddin Mohammad Shah, son of Shah Jahan, and governor of Bengal, reconstructed the shrine in A.H. 1066 i.e. 1655 A.D. The foundation stone of the mosque was laid by Lutfulla Shiraji and completed by his son Niyamatullah in the month of Ramzan A.H. 1067 corresponding to June 1657

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A.D. In 1067 the emperor Aurangzeb made another grant of land to the Halkhyal family for the maintenance and welfare of the shrine.¹¹ The Ahom kings also gave importance to the shrine of Poa Mecca. King Rudra Singha (1696-1714) used to despatch a pious Muslim from the capital to pray in the Poa Mecca shrine king Lakhmi Singha (1769-1780) granted revenue free land in Kamrupa to one Anowar Hazi Faqir of the guild of Parsiparhis who met the king after his return from pilgrimage. The king endowed him with the necessary number of servants and pre-requisites of the following Mokams or Dargahs – Shah Madar Bar Mokam in Bausi Pargana, *Panch Pirar Mokam* in Khetri, Pargana, Poa Mecca Bar Mokam at Hajo.¹² There are three more tombs attributed to the names of Kalu Gazi, Shah Buzurg, and Shah Kamal in the vicinity. Thus Hajo area was over crowded with Muslims people coming from all walks of life – saints to Subadars, crafts to warriors. As a result of this habitation their customs and tradition religion and rituals provided with a new cultural traits to this area.

FOLK LITERATURE OF THE MUSLIMS IN ASSAM : A BRIEF SURVEY

Folk literature is the reflection of the folk-mind. It is the pulse of the people. Folk literature passes through the ages orally. Any literature is based on human experience. So is the case with folk-literature. It is the mirror of folk-belief. Verbal folklore is transmitted from one generation to another. An acquaintance with the verbal folklore i.e. songs, tales, ballads, proverbs, riddles etc. not only gives insight into the folk-mind, but it further influences one's attitude to the folk themselves. Verbal folklore is indeed an important means of understanding the basic social set up, cultural mooring and artistic aspirations of a community particularly of a tradition-bound one.

We have already seen that the Indian Muslim Society is the product of a prolonged interaction between the Islamic Great Tradition and Indo-Islamic little tradition. Which is largely based on folk, unwritten customs, conventions and habits handed from generation to generation. The familial life of the Assamese Muslims also indicates co-existence and interaction of the Islamic tradition and the Assamese folk traditions. This is discernible in their kinship terms, co-active behaviour, patterns, marriage customs, child rearing practices, social organizations and so on.

The culture of the Assamese Muslims is not Arabian culture. The Muslim culture in Assam is an act of give and take, lending and borrowing, a cultural synthesis. Parag Chaliha observes – “the Assamese Muslims have a culture, which is essentially Assamese.”¹³ In this sense the term Assamese culture will be more appropriate than Muslim culture. Religion is an influencing factor in folklife. So a layer of religion is traced on the folksongs. Islamic traits are also visible in the Assamese folksong. Islamic influence is seen in the Mantras. *Satyapir Malita* is a valuable creation of Hindu Muslim Unity. The *zikir* and *jaris*, their theme and treatment are quite similar with the *bhakti gits*. The lore composed by Chand Kha, a disciple of Sankardeva, reminds of the close affinity between the Muslims and Vashnavites. In the *Kushan gits* popular in western Assam, the sayings of *Sonapir Manikpir* are incorporated along with the Hindu mythology, Like the *Kushan gits*, the *Marafati gits* are also popular in ancient western Assam. Influenced by Bhakti philosophy of the Vashnavites they called themselves *Tarika Musalmans*. Written under the influence of Sufism, the *Manaigits* are devotional songs carrying the message of Hindu-Muslim unity. The songs of Gorakshnath popular in Goalpara region are full of stories of Muslim *pirs* and *fakirs*. In Mangaldoi area *cheradhek* and *nabi gits* are such devotional songs

Many Muslim ojas sang Manasa lore in Hajo area as well as in Sipahjar area of Darang. In Hajo area the ballad of Haidor Gazi is equally popular both among the Hindus and the Muslims. *Biyanam* and *Ainam* are equally performed by Muslims and Hindus. At the outbreak of small pox banana, betelnut are offered and devotional songs are recited. One such song ¹⁴ is –

*Allare Allah muminare Muhammad
pan diya pujim Alla
makarai sati jai
narikol diya pujim Alla
base age khai
kol diya pujim Alla
badulie khai
ki diya pujim Allahe.*

Lullabies are valuable creation of folk literature. The Muslim boys and girls participate in *Mohoho* festivals. The songs of boat race are mostly sung by Muslim oarsmen. Even Hassan-Hussain episode is incorporated in the *Padma-Puran*. Sufi influence is traceable in the *baramahi gits* which are also popular

items of folklore. *Azan Fakirar git, Jana gararur git, Manikowarar git, Sikan Saryahar git, Jaydhan banjar git* are popular ballads of Muslim influence. Besides, a large number of riddles, proverbs and charms are prevalent in the Muslim society.

In Islam there is no place for music and theatre. Making images or painting is a taboo. So are all the forms of ostentation. In spite of these, there are innumerable instances how Muslim could create the finest specimens of architecture, melodious songs and music. *Sahide Karbala*, a folk drama, is still popular among the Muslims.

Like a mass of cotton in water absorbing as much water as it can the culturally thirsty Muslim mind accepted and assimilated as much of our local culture as possible. They sang nursery and nuptial song and profess other faiths and beliefs like the Assamese.

The Muslims constitute a very important section of the various races and ethnic groups of Assam with their distinctive cultural and linguistic traits. They have contributed immensely to the growth of the society, language, literature and culture of Assam through the ages. They have rich tradition of folk literature also.

Sufism, related to Islam, is a movement that contributed to the growth of devotional lore like *Zikirs, Zaris, Deh bichar songs, Baul songs, Murshid or Marafati gits* etc. The Muslim *ojas* and their songs are integral part of Manasa lore. The Muslim populations have been found mostly related with boat race songs in Assam. *Ainanams, Mohoho songs* and *Bihu* songs are common to both the communities in Assam. Devotional songs of *Azan Fakir* and *Chand Kha* are valuable treasure of Assamese lore. The message of unity and fraternity is depicted in the following Zikir :

Mor Manat bhin par nai oi Allah

Mar manat bhin par nai

Hindu ki mussalman ekei allar forman

Mar manat eketi bhab.

Meaning : O, Alla, There is no difference in my mind between Both the Hindu and Muslim are the creation of the one Alla.

The love stories (*Prem-gatha*) like Laila-Majnu, Siri-Farhad, Eusuf-Jelekha of the antique Arabs are quite popular among the Muslims of Assam. The tales from the Arabian Nights are of universal significance. Other myths popular among the Muslim of Assam are *Bhumikampa Aru Sar Garur Kahini*, *Murga aru Behestar Kahini*, *Surya Aru Karbalar Tejar Kahini*, *Burhi Aru Akashar Kahini* etc.

The most appealing tales prevalent among the Muslims are Rahim Rupvanar Sadhu, Habil Kabilar Sadhu, Khowaj Kizirar Sadhu, Sadhya Uzirar Sadhu, Beula-Lakhindarar Sadhu, Kalu Gazir Sadhu, Alif Lailar Sadhu, Badi-Uz-Zammanor Sadhu etc.

In summer or other times the Muslim folk gathered in the village and attended some stories from the minstrel or *pathaks* told from *Janganama*, *Hatimtair kessa*, *Amir Hamza*, *Kessa of Ambia* etc, This is known as *puthiparha*. When someone dies in a family such story-telling is held in the family to console, entertain and preach the sermons from the Quran. Besides many ballads and *baramahi* or *bilap gits* are popular among the Muslim of Assam.

We have seen from the accounts and ancient history of Assam that the Muslims have merged with the Greater Assamese Society. The occasion of cultural or social function or at the time of epidemic the Hindus recite *nam-kirtana* and the Muslims recite *zikir* in the same locality. Moreover *jari git*, a genre of folksong commemorating the tragic tales of Karbala, is very popular among the Muslims of Assam. Some of the *zikir* and *jari git* prevalent in Jajari and Patheri area of Nagaon district and Collected by Dr. P. C. Das are furnished bellow :

ZIKIRS

- (i) *Har dame Alla hardame Allah*
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda

Hardame Alla hardame allah
Alla tumi kot asa nedekhu khoda
Hardame allah hardame Allah
Akriti prakriti nai mar khuda

*Hardame Allah hardame Allah
Alla kino di pujim moi iya mor khoda
Alla tamol di pujim mai base howa
Har dame Alla hardame Allah
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda
Alla pan di pujim makarai sota
Har dame Alla hardame Allah
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda
Alla gakhir di pujim moi damurie piya
Har dame Alla hardame Allah
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda
Tomar nam lou moi sobhan-Allah
Har dame Alla hardame Allah
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda
Ratie dine pasbar khoda
Sizdat parim moi tomar khuda
Har dame Alla hardame Allah
Tomar nam lou mai iya mor khoda
Tomar nam lou moi sobhan-allah.*

(ii) *Alla bine keo nai ar allahe
Alla hakkar bine sakkar nai
Pani bine nai nirmal e Allah
Alla kalino sasilo japare oi barkapor
Ei kaloino sasilo dhan ei Alla
Alla japare barkapor japate thakiba
Harate gajib ban ei Alla
Alla bine keo nai ar allahe
Alla dhane dhane kari taino sasili
Barno jatane kari Alla
Lagateno jai duchapara mati
Alla dinak dine hayato kami gaise
Oi jen kasupatar pani oi Alla
Alla bine keo nai ar allahe*

*hakkar bine sakkar nai
Alla masak dharibaloi dighali jan khandise
Jibak dharibale anek jatane
Patise jen Amaya fan
Alla bine keo nai ar allahe*

JARI GIT

- (i) *Haire kino babar kino hal
Champa ful jen dui gal
Lahute mihali hal hai hai re
Hai re matiba najane dul dul
Jaminat marise mur
Kapalate lahur nisan hai hai re
Haire kino babar kino hal
Champa ful jen dui gal
Haire tumije ahila dul dul
Mar syedak erila kot
Mar syed kote heral hai hai re
Hai re kot thakim koloj jam
Kot no gale bisari pam
Edhani sagarar maje hai hai re
Haire kino babar kino hal
Champa ful jen dui gal*

Zari git prevalent among the Muslims of Darang

*Jaote gaicili duldul cakmak hoi
Ahote ahili duldul khali hate oi haire hai.
Jaote goicili duldul mor camik loi
Ahote ahili duldul khali hate oi haire hai
Kola meghe boga meghe dhoeli korila
Najano mor cami rane gel e haire hai.
Mathar mukut bibir khahi parile*

*Najano mor cami ranat gele haire hai
Kapalar fata bibir mosa gel
Najano mor cami ranat gele haire hai
Jaote geicili dul dul more camik loi
Ahote ahili duldul khali hate oihare hai.*

The following *zari* song popular among the Muslims of Darang area relates to the sacrifice of Ismail by Abraham, his father. The tradition of *korbani* (sacrifice) in the *Idd-Uz-Zoha* festival reminds us of this tragic story. The *zari* song runs –

*Hai hai Ismail korbani loi jai
Allah Ismail korbani loi jai
Pratham sapon dekhe nabi
Ismail hoa nai
Ditio sapon dekhe nabi
Ismail gaise korbani haire hai.
Ismail korbani loi jai Allah
Ismail korbani loi jai
Abbajan Allar nabi
Sapon dekhe maj rati haire hai
Ismail korbani loi jai.*

[‘Korbani’ (sacrifice) is a tradition practiced in Idd-Uz-Zoha festival. It reminds the story of Ismail, the dearest son of Abraham. The former was sacrificed by the latter as ordered by Allah to satisfy Him. Abraham saw in dream that Ismail had to be given ‘Korbani’ in the name of Allah.] *Kanak Ch. Saharia : Opcit, p-160*

The folk mind is reflected in the oral literature more intimately than in the elite culture. Hajo has a rich heritage of folk literature both folk and elite culture. People of different ethnic groups from various walks of life settled in the area from time to time. These people carried with them multi coloured popular culture from their original homelands. The heritage of popular culture of the area is stored in the oral literature, performing art, ornaments and sports, magic and beliefs etc.

Some important genre of oral literature of the Muslims of Hajo area are the songs of boat race, songs of *Haidor Gazi*, *Manasa lore*, *Zikir and Jari*,

Bianam, Ainam, legends of Adam Guru and Giasuddin Aulia etc. Romantic tales of Hassan-Hussain and Sohrab Rustam are also equally popular among Hindus and Muslims. Besides there are large number of riddles and proverbs popular among the Muslims of Hajo. Some of them are as follows :

RIDDLES, PROVERBS AND CHARMS PREVALENT AMONG THE MUSLIM

Riddles are known as *distan* in the area. According to P. Goswami, the term *distan* is derived from Sanskrit *dristanta*, meaning an illustration, a parallel. It is noticeable that many of the Muslim people call them *solokh* (Skt. sloka). Riddles are extremely popular in the area and they play a considerable role in the social life and even constitute a game. When a bridegrooms comes to his father-in-law's house for the first time after his marriage, it was customary to pose riddles and bridegrooms ability to answer these, was regarded as a measure of mental equipment and social qualification for the role of a husband. Children and old man particularly in the summer evening, sit together where posing and answering of riddles are gone through with great gusto.¹⁵

Many riddles have common patterns and begin with expression like the king's son or something similar. Some of the riddles in Hajo area are furnished below :

- (i) *Rajar puteke bhat khai*
Kandhedhi sap jai

The King's son takes rice,
The snake crawls on his shoulder.
= A towel.

(It is customary to keep a towel on one's shoulder while sitting for a meal)

- (ii) *Rajacir puteke bhat khai*
tini kukure ache cai

The King's son takes rice
Three dogs are watching him.

= *Udhan* (the earthen supports used for cooking)

- (iii) *Rajacir kali gai*
ghate ghate pani khai

The King's black cow
Drinks water at every ghat
= a plaintain tree.

There is another class or riddles known as *phakara*. These are current mainly in Vaishnava circle and concerned with religious thought.

- (iv) *Chor kari haram khai*
Cei banda behestak jai

The surface meaning of the *phakara* is the *banda* who eat *haram* obtained by stealing finds place in *behesta*.

But the deeper meaning is a person who prays at night and controls senses like anger, lust greed etc. finds place in *behest*.

- (v) *bamum hai namare gai*
bhakat hai namare bhai
Sadhu hai nakhai mad
Ei tini napai parampad.

The surface meaning of the *phakara* is – If a Brahmin does not kill the cow. If a bhakat does not kill his brother. If a saint does not take wine. No one of them can attain salvation.

The actual meaning of this *phakara* is that, if a Brahmin is not well-used in the veda, if a bhakat can not restrain himself from earthly pleasure. If a saint does not understand the real meaning of the doctrine of devotion, none of them can attain salvation.

Some Other *distans* are –

- (i) *Ekdal khere*
gotai gharta bere

A single thatch covers the whole house – A lamp.

- (ii) *Enu enu enu*
dharbar nai themu
Enu enu enu.

There is no handle to catch it – An egg.

- (iii) *Bacharat ahe mahat jay*
dinat pake rati khai

(It comes in the year, goes in a month and it ripens during the day and is eaten at night) – the *roja* or fasting in the Ramzan month.

- (iv) *Petedi khai nukhedi hage*
tar gu khini tarkarit lage. – the chepa, the fishing trap.

- (v) *Ghar ache duwar nai*
manuh ache mat nai – the grave.

- (vi) *Des ache manuh nai*
nadi ache pani nai – the map

- (vii) *Agat phale pachat phule*
Take dekhi pandite bhule – the flower of 'ou' fruit.

- (viii) *Carute kapur pindhe, dangar hale*
langta hai – the bamboo tree.

PROVERBS & APHORISM

Proverbs are the shortest expression of the experience acquired in along life a mass of sayings, frequently mouthed by the people, that comes a wide range of things. There are some proverbs advising the acceptance of one's social and economic position :

- (a) *Gat nai sal bakli*
Mad khai sat tekeli.

One has nothing to cover his body
But wishes to drink seven jars full of wine

- (b) *Rajai bhal pai jak*
Dheki pakhli nalage tak
Ghora hati nalage tak.
 If the king likes one, he has no need of horses and elephants
- (c) *Nasiba najane buri sotalkhan beka.*
 one does not know how to dance,
 But says the courtyard is sloping.
- (d) *China bamunak lagun nalage*
 A known Brahmin need not have sacred thread.
- (e) *Khaba janli chaule chira bahiba janli matie pira.*

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Chapter III
FOLK SONGS

ORAL LITERATURE

Oral literature i.e. folk literature encompasses the varied songs and narratives transmitted orally from generation to generation. These are 'spontaneous overflow' of prolonged wisdom of the unlettered folk through the ages.

Prime concern in this chapter is to deal with folk song a popular genre of oral literature. Folksong is an integral part of the folk. Folksongs are the emotional out let of prolonged experience of the unlettered folk. It has been well-defined as a "lyric poem with melody originating anonymously in times past among the unlettered folk and remaining in currency for a considerable time usually centuries."¹ On the other hand, Leach defines it as "songs which are current in the repertory of a folk group."²

Any kind of singing is universal in human society; it is a manifestation of finer aspects of human life. Often poems and songs give us a clearer insight into a people's soul than the most lengthy discussion. And, in the poetry of those unlettered and unsophisticated lie certain important clues to their philosophy of life. Even though the folksongs are used simply for the pleasure of singing or listening, they also act as "the medium for the expression of ideas or emotions held in common by a group."³ A community whether agricultural or other wise, expresses itself passionately and imaginatively through its folksongs. These folksongs are live human documents reflecting actual historical processes and phenomena of different ages. Though the relationship between the members of a community or a group, in some cases, must have been based purely on their basic necessities, the superstructures of religion, philosophy and literature also penetrated deep into the reality of their social situation as is seen in much of the world every where. Therefore the cultural traits of their rich folk-heritage can be discerned mostly in their folksongs and rhymes.

As a matter of fact, in many places these songs are of great importance and sung at the functionally important junctures of various rituals ranging from harvest festivals to marriages, births and deaths; while in certain regions, the songs are used to infatuate and enrapture the hearts of lovers or to serve as a

part of religious ceremonies and secular rites, or to depict past exploits of the heroes. Through them, the group also lighten the burden of communal labour in some preliterate groups, the songs are used as recital of incantations to invoke blessings from the supernatural powers or for magical efforts to cure illness, or to thwart enemies.

The Muslims of Hajo area constitute a very important section of the various races and ethnic groups of Assam with their distinctive Cultural and linguistic traits. They have also their rich tradition of folksongs. Specially songs of marriage, boat-race, *zikirs*, *dehbichar* songs, *baul* songs, *murshid gits* and *baramahi gits* have ample scope for studying as a means of understanding the real nature of mutual relations between Hindus and Muslims for establishing social harmony and peaceful existence and these may eventually solve many difficult problems of ethnology. A few of the songs are exclusively practised by the Muslims only and others are songs of assimilation with common traits.

The themes of the folk songs are many and varied. Love, courtship and marriage are the topic of innumerable songs; teasing songs to pair off courting couples and songs of elaborate marriage rituals are common. Burying the dead is an important social occasion in the life of the village. While the wailing and the dirges furnish socially patterned outlet for grief. Another large group of songs may be called calendric. Such songs are recited on special days or during special periods of the year. Songs connected with agricultural activities include various types of work songs such as harvesting and threshing, songs connected with the culmination of different plants.

For the convenience of study the folksongs prevalent among the Muslims are discussed under following heads.

- (a) Songs related to life cycle,
- (b) Songs associated with children's sports and past times,
- (c) Work songs,
- (d) Songs of Seasonal Festivals,
- (e) Songs associated with religious context or devotional songs.

(a) Songs related to life-cycle

Songs and ceremonies are universal. These express their beliefs and superstitions, customs and traditions, rites and rituals. The songs of life-cycle differ from community to community. In Muslims society, the life cycle songs

comprise of songs connected with birth ceremony, aququa, circumnsion, puberty, marriage and death. Let us discuss the songs practised by the Muslims of Hajo area.

Muslalmeni git : (Songs of Circumnsion)

Circumnsion is an important ritual for the Muslims. It is known as *khatna* or *musalmani*. The *musalmani* geet or the songs of circumnsion ceremony are closely related with the circumnsion rite. These songs are exclusively current among the Muslims in different parts of Lower Assam. Although most of them are particularly the marriage songs sung at different stages of the ceremony, a few have their own speciality which are connected with the circumnsion rite only. Circumnsion means cutting the fore-skin of a male organ at an early age. Usually on the day of circumnsion the boy is given ceremonial bath in the morning. The boy is institutionally made to read *kalima 'la ilaha illallah Muhammadur rasulullah'* meaning 'there is no master except Allah, Muhammad is his *rasul* (messenger). A man called *baidar* performs this operation. Today doctors also perform this function. After three or four days, when the cut got dry, the neighbours and relatives specially the women come and bathe the boy, throw popped rice (*akhoi*) etc. on him. Some songs commonly known as *sunnatar git* or *musalmani git* are sung in connection with the ceremony. The songs are quite similar with the songs of *telar git* or *teldiya git* during marriage ceremony. Some specimen of such song collected from Doloitola of Hajo are as follows :

Mother smears *narayani* oil
Grandmother is looking at the beauty
No need of smearing *narayani* oil
My grandson is like the petal of *champa* flower.
The boy is sitting on the low stool.
Elder sister-in-law smears *narayani* oil
Elder brother is looking at the beauty.
No need of smearing *narayani* oil
My brother is like the petal of marigold flower
The boy is sitting under *chaya mara*
Elder sister smears *narayani* oil
Elder sister's husband is looking at the beauty
No need of spearing *narayani* oil
My brother-in-law is like the petal of Lotus flower.

Marriage Song

Marriage is the most important occasion in human life. In its legal aspect, it is a contract and not a sacrament. There can be no marriage without consent.⁴ In its religious aspect, marriage is considered to be essential (*Farz*) in Islam. It is not only a contract, but also a sacred covenant. However, marriage is an institution for the continuance of human race.

Marriage songs have several versions and one particular version being popular in a particular area never the less. Some of the marriage songs current among the Muslims in different parts of great Hajo Area of ancient Kamrup district are given as specimen. The Muslims generally start a work in the name of Allah. While arranging marriage, chira, sandah, gur are prepared, milk man is contacted. And some of the songs current among the Muslims occasionally contain Islamic flavour as in the following songs –

(i) In the name of Allah rice is pitted in dheki
In the name of Allah advance given for milk
O my goddess of snake

(ii) According to the custom of Joran, when clothes, ornaments, oil, soap etc. are sent to the bride from the groom's house, the bride maids sing –

I've cut the tree and made it fall at once,
Home fashioned a chaitan's dheki
Dear son, (you) don't go far,
Play the golden dhunjari at home

I've prepared sandah in that dheki,
For Bhadruman sahib.
Bhadruman sahib sent oil
The hair-knot is tied looking the mirror
Don't touch the bride's knotted hair,
Coins will fall at once.

(iii) In order to avert the groom from the effect of evil eye or black magic the woman sing –
The pulses and turmeric of public of mine
The Narayani tel of Ramdia people
Elder brother throw, Elder-sister-in-law (bou) throws

(we) don't know whose Evil Eye fall on the Dola, omy beloved son
Dried fruits of six months, and seed of cotton
With these the effect of the evil eye on the Dola will be defused.
Ghatar Duburi batar duburi
With these the effect will be defused.

The following song is sung at the time of ceremonial bath of the bride.

(iv) Don't smear with the paste of raw pulses,
The body will smell as pulse,
On hearing this, the mother of Jalali,
Will wash the body with red sandal
(And) the body will smell as red sandal
Bless me oh mother

Will be a mother of five daughters
And five sons,
The cattle shed will be full of cows,
Life will pass in happiness and over joy
Don't smear with the paste of raw pulses.

Traditionally, the bride groom is welcomed while reaching the bride's house and it is called *bari niya*. In the function ring, cloth are offered to the bridegroom from the bride's side and he is taken to the *chayamara*. The womenfolk sing song all the way *chayamara*.

Songs associated with children's sports and Past times

Play is form of expressive behavior common among all human beings and manifested overtly in all cultures. Games are moments of recreations and enjoyment, means to have temporal and spatial detachment from reality. Games, though non-productive, contribute to the physical, social and psychological growth and development of the individual. Since time immemorial people used to play and sing; they express themselves through their popular culture.

The folk mind is reflected in the popular culture more intimately than in the elite culture. Therefore, the study of popular culture or folklore has a significant value from this point of view. Hajo has rich heritage of popular culture. We have seen that people of different ethenic groups from various

walks of life assembled in the area from time to time. These people carried with them the multi coloured popular culture from their original homeland. Besides *nao-khel*, *hao-khel*, Horse race, Bulbul fight are popular among the people. *lathikhel*, *jathikhel*, *larukhel*, *dhopkhel*, etc are some other games of children's past times.

Moreover, children are fickle and unstable by temperament, they play, they sing and they jump and they love to do something. They get used to playing, racing, rowing and hunting. They express their emotion in short rhymes and songs. In agricultural life the people have enough scope to let loose their emotion in fishing, grazing, rowing, playing and swimming. Some popular songs of children's sports and past time mentioned by my guide Dr. P. C. Das in his book 'The Blessed Land' are :

- (i) O' little weaver bird
Don't eat our paddy
Go to maternal Uncle's house
Eat their paddy
You will be offered one *pura* of paddy
Sit on a branch and cat
When the branch breaks
Go to oil man's house
The oil man will give you tel-pateni
The gardener will give you flours
When our baby will get married
Who will beat the drum?

(ii) **Cradle songs and other rhymes**

The cradle songs and rhymes connected with the children's world constitute an important part of the oral literature. The noticeable feature of this type of literature is that these songs and rhymes move in a world of fantasy where logic and coherence are conventionally dispensed with. Yet as Goswami says, "they reveal a delicacy of sentiment which is beyond the reach of literary poetry" In the lullabies the moon occupies an important place. In Kamrup and Goalpara the moon is Brother Moon (*Jan Kaka*). In Hajo it is addressed god moon (San Gohain)

In the lullabies (Cali ghumewa git), the children are taught to address the moon in different names (Doloitola)

(a) God moon, come
We will give you rice and fish
And also a shelter under the bed
In the morning, fall night on the head of our baby.

(b) O weasel don't come
Stay under the banana tree
The tiger is roaming ground
Sleep my baby.
.....
O bapu gosai come quick
Taking the stick
We will give you rice & fish
And also shelter under the bed
In the morning fall right
On the head of my baby.

haukhela

In haukhela the boys sing some which are broken in thoughts and ideas and sometimes nonsensical –

- (i) *hau kut kut makara jali, ghorai*
nakhai bilar pani
ghora gel uttare, sal mash (fish) gujare
salar vitare sakuri beng, garyiai nakhai kasar theng.
- (ii) *hawre hamala, parbat kati damala*
parbatar maje, Bar dhonia gaje
bar dhaniar pate, tok marim ek sate.

Lullabies

Lullabies and other rhymes are also popular in the area –

- (i) *dhule dhule*
dhulai lagi pare
hathi melli pakhi

*gohain gharar kathi
amar bapu saru
baipake sasi de sal gassar laru.*

- (ii) *hur hur bata sarai
ahu dhan nakhabi bata sarai
dhano kham pano kham
champwatik biya karai
ghare lai jam.*

SONGS ASSOCIATED WITH SEASONAL FESTIVALS

Most, if not all, of the societies of the world periodically set aside portions of time for celebration. These are moments of special significance to the group or community. They may be moments of transition, from one season to another or from one stage of life to another; they may be anniversaries of historical events, of the legendary day of the birth or death of a hero or a god; or symbolic re-enactments of events in the life of a religious leader or the founder of society. They may be moments set aside to honour some living person or some group, or occasions for commercial work with feasting and play added. These periodical significant celebration are called seasonal festivals.

People need periodic times of escape from work, times in which they can be joyous together. Some festivals are participated by the whole community others are of limited participation. At the best, the festivals seems to be some occasion for men to rejoice together – to interact in an ambience of acceptance and convivality.

The festival is a prime device for promotion of social cohesion, for integrating individuals into a society or group and maintain them as members through shared, recurrent, positively reinforcing performance. It is indeed, “the most concrete expression of collective and loyalties.”

Hajo has maintained a tradition of its own in the matter of colourful festivals and fairs. The fairs and festivals celebrated in the place can be surveyed under two heads – religious and seasonal or agricultural.

A festival celebrated by the Muslims of Hajo and now became defunct was known as khodai. The festival was celebrated in the month of Romzan. The

Muslim people of Fakirtola came in procession carrying the Tazia and a palanquin, singing songs and demonstrating mock-fighting with swords and spears. They started the procession from the Poa-mecca shrine and assembled in a place at a short distance from Poa mecca to the west. They performed certain functions and rituals there and then returned again to Poa-mecca. Throughout the journey the participants recited *Jari git* or songs related to Hassan-Hussain episode of Islamic history. They also recited the ballad of one Hajor Gazi of Haidar Gazi.

Song of Haidar Gazi

After having meal Haidar Gazi
Gives hookah at the month
The summon of King's house has come
Gets shock in mind
Oh! What happened clever Haidar Gazi,
I salute you lakh times.
The summon of king's house has come
Tell elder brother to go
And in the name of Allah (I) touch
Both feet of mother.

BIHU GIT

Bihu is a national festival in Assam. Bihu songs are popular in Assam among both Hindus and Muslims. Having both seasonal and agricultural significance, the three bihu festivals are known as Bohag bihu or Rongali bihu, held in mid-April on the advent of spring, Magh bihu or Bhogali bihu held in mid-January, the coldest time of the year and Kati bihu or Kongali bihu coming off in mid-October in the autumn season.

Hajo has maintained a tradition of its own in the matter of colourful fairs and festivals. During Magh bihu a Samannay Jatra is held from Poa-mecca to Madhab-temple every year participated by all sections of people. Some bihu like song prevalent in the area among the Muslims are –

- (i) Mahammad Ali and Sankat Ali
both are brothers
government imprisoned them
under what provision of law.

- (ii) Bihu song prevalent in Dampur area –
 Oh grand mother, oh grand father don't name banana as banana
 Flying bat will eat it
 Don't give place to foreigner and
 They will take (everything) from us.
 Oh grand mother flower blooms
 If there is none who will pick the lotus
 If there is none to love when one is adult grown up.
 Who will take at old age
 Oh grand mother front side is beautiful if there is betel nut garden
 Back side is beautiful if there is pan
 Oh Barghar is beautiful with matured girl

Dr. M. K. Saikia also comments that the Bihu song exerted remarkable influence on the life of Assamese Muslims specially in composing Assamese zikirs and jaris. The Bihu festival comprises of two distinct parts called 'Husari' and 'Bihu'. In Husari the revellers make a circular movement, singing and dancing around the leader of the group. It seems that this part of the performance greatly influenced the zikir and jari dances of the Assamese Muslims.

MOHOHO

From the evening till mid-night young men and boys in groups roam about the village from door to door. They carry bamboo sticks and sing songs to drive mosquitos away from the compound and also from the village. 'Both Hindus and Muslims, tribal and non-tribal, high and low celebrate mohoho festival'.

*o Raja Mahoho
 mah khedba token lo
 mahe bule maillure
 tepal pura khailure
 tepalat nai nun
 saul kare eko dun
 saul nidi dila kari
 aiser ghar lari sari
 lari sari jaute*

sonar kari paute

*sonar kari rupa mala
aiser ghar dekhiba vala
endhe khai sake
mah jai jake
endhe khai kumrar suthi
mah jai mudhfuti
endhar gharat tuhar dhoha
chali kande toha toha
bahar pat pakka
amak lage taka*

MUHRAMAR GIT OR JARI GIT

Jari git is a kind of elegiac verse in character and content and may also call a form of *marshiya*. These Jari songs are closely related to the famous and tragic history of Karbala and very much popular among the Assamese Muslims. Song's connecting with the tragic history of Karbala are found not only in Assam or India, but in many Muslim countries all over the world. "The *jari gits* or *marshias* cannot be conclusively attributed to Azan pir."⁵ They are not necessarily part of Islamic tenets; but the story of Karbala behind them, as Prof. Abdul Malik says, sung in the saddest possible tone characters, drawn from the distant Arab world, have adored the Assamese garb in *jari*'s. Sometimes Jaris are classed with devotional songs along with *zikirs* but it is known that Jari songs were sung in Assam even before the advent of the re-knowned Saint-poet Azan Fakir. The fact is corroborated by the following stanza composed by this Saint-poet –

*marshiya gitak suni banda
jage chaupar rati*

(On hearing the *marshiya* song the man woke up the whole night.)

These songs are full of pathos, sung specially during the Muharam Festival. The performance of these Jari songs is like a lamentation, not closely related to the rituals and doctrines. The songs are performed by a group of persons with a dance which is simply a rhythmic motion. In the Jari dance the theme of lamentation and mourning is reflected. The dance is performed

circulating the area with a slow motion of the step with clapping and beating of the chest with hand. However the main objective of these Jari songs is to express grief, commemorating the tragic demise of Hassan and Hussain. Reference to Hazarat Ali, Bibi Fatima, Hassan, Hussian, Quasim, Saharabanu and Sakina are common. A fairly good number of *jari* songs are current in different parts of Assam. The following is a song current in Hajo Area –

- (i) Don't lament mother, I am imprisoned incurse (preordained)
(you) can't see the face of your beloved son Hassan again.
Oh my mother don't grief.
Cruel Ejid cheated us calling to (*Kufa*)
Surrounded us at Karbala
Oh my mother, surrounded us at Karbala.
(We) can not return to Madina again
We don't know why
Our hearts severed time and again!
Alas! Our hearts trembled in fear

At one time prophet Muhammed told his grandson about there (musibat) danger in Karbala. It is preordained as sung in the song –

ghorar khura bahi jai
kalamati ranga hai
hai hai hai eikhane Karbala hai.

(This is Karbala wher earth becomes red and horse roof goes down the earth.)

Kasim is newly married to Sakina. But he is going to the battle at the night when he was married. The following song deals with his preparation for the war :

Give me my shirt (armour) I'll go to battle
Ho, how much it fare, Kaolenis mother
Oh Alas! Qasim is going to battle
Weeps falling on the dust, oh Alas!
Give me the dhuti, Oh! Mother I'll go to battle.
Oh, how much it fare Kaolenis mother Alas!
Oh! Alas Quasim is going to battle
Weep rolling on the dust Kaoleni's mother.
Quasim has gone to the stable
Fetch strong and stout Duldul selecting from the stable
Quasim has come home

And where grandmother has gone?
O mother clean the road and yard
Also bring 25 pitchers of water.

(ii) Jari git collected from Dampur –

(a) *Ali Ali mortoja*
dul dulle sowar
o balar upare Ali
mare julfikkar
hak! La Ilaha Illalah.

(b) *aghate julfikkar*
bau hate Fatema tir
o jun hate aisa balai
sun hate fir
hak! La Ilaha Illalah.

(D) WORK SONGS

The folk usually sing various songs while doing different activities in their day to day life. Since the early hours of dawn they become busy in their agricultural activities like harvesting, threshing, grinding and pounding. Sometimes the ancient folk event on hunting and fishing endowing sometimes on merchandise by boat to distant land. So they indulge themselves in singing to lessen their burden of works, or to have force or refreshment. Some of the work songs prevalent among the Muslims of Hajo area are as follows –

In agricultural life cow is a main source of power. The cowherds while grazing in the field or in the river island, they sing in joy or to lessen their suffering in the job. The cowherds while bathing the cows during bihu sings :

dighlati dighal pat
garu kubai jat jat
maire saru baipere saru
toi hobi bar garu
lao kha bengena kha
basare basare bari ja.

SONG OF BOAT-RACE

Boat-race is one of the main components of the folk-culture. It is an ancient sport that was in vogue in the river like the Tamas, the Nile, the Volga etc. In our country, too, it has been practised since the hoary past. Lord Krishna has been described as boatman in many Vaishnava songs. The existence of boat was also mentioned in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In Assam, the tradition and heritage of the sport of boat race have been found mentioned in the Haribangsa and the copper plates of Bhaskarbarma and of Banna (Tezpur). In the annals of the Ahom kings and in the hagiographies of the Vaishnava saints of Assam, references have been made to this sport. During the famous battle of Saraighat, boats were extensively used on the river Brahmaputra. The Ahom king Rudra Singha was very fond of the boat-race.

Boat race is an indigenous sport of Assam and is popular among the masses. The sport is prevalent in many places of the lower Assam such as Barpeta, Nalbari, Ulabari, Hajo, Sualkuchi, Palasbari, Kukurmara, Samaria, Damdama, Dharapur etc. In the district of Goalpara and Darang also, boat-race is a popular sport. The aim of this sport is to foster unity and harmony among the people. "Boat-racing is a favourite sport of the riverside folk, who constitute a large portion of the Muslim inhabitants. In the rainy season long boats, manned by numerous oarsman, dart swiftly along the river Lokhaitora, their crew singing songs about Manasa, the snake goddess and Beula lore."⁶ Not only songs of Manasa sung but also songs about the gods and goddesses of Hindu mythology and other sportive songs are sung in chorus in great enthusiasm by both Hindu and Muslim oarsmen. According to Dr. Lila Gogoi, sometimes, the saud (merchant) who went abroad to distant land for business by boat leaving their wives and dear ones at home, they sang in lamentation Love song of Radha-Krishna sometimes becomes the Subject matter of boat-race song. Songs of boat-race are popular lore sung both by Hindus and Muslims oarsmen. It is seen that most of the people associated with boat songs are Muslims. In verses of boat songs references are made to Beula, Lakhindar, Padma-purana, Hassan-Hussain episode and songs related to Islamic theme. These songs reveal the deep religious faith of the people while under taking a great task. The very important point to be noticed in the song is that Muslim oarsmen sang verses related to Vashnavite themes, Radha-Krishna, Arjuna and Manasha lore. It reminds us that forefathers of these Muslims were some Hindus. The songs were transmitted orally from generation to generation. They could not give up

their old faiths totally. Boat-race is a common sport participated by all and the songs spread the lesson of unity and harmony. While starting or preparing the boat for race the following song of Islamic tune is song –

- (i) *Allah Allah balo bhai jato momin ganare*
Nabir kalima parhi haya jaba parare

While the boat is turned for race the oarsmen sang song mentioning Hindu religious figures like, Arjuna, Krishna, Sankardeva.

- (a) *Arjunar rather sarathi narayan harie;*

- (b) *Jagat guru amare sankar guru amare*
Lukai asa dekha neda manikutar bhitare.

(ii) A song related to Manasa sung by Alimuddin of Loharkatha is as follows –

O Lakhindar, beloved son of (Chando) merchant
One-month sanekar becomes one-month old
Two month sanekar becomes two-month old.
Ten months sanekar becomes ten months old.
One son namely Lakhindar was born
Day by day he grows up
(He) was taken to a Brahmin for study
Lokhai becomes a learned man under his care
He goes to school on elephant.
Padma noticed Lakhindar on the way
West wind blows on him
Lakhindar's books fell on the land
(He) looks to and fro, none was there
Brahmin's goes to throw cowdung
Lokhai told her to give betelnut
And ask her to give the book on his hand from land
In another song the oarsman sing –
Neither sister is at home
Husband died of snake bite
Where shall I go
O bride Phuleswari eh
Around the mer ghar sowed the seeds of coriander
My cordial husband died
(He) was of so sweet voice.

(E) DEVOTIONAL SONGS

Devotional song or *bhakti gits* are popular among the Muslims. They express their deep faith in God or Allah through various devotional songs like *zikirs*, *zaris*, *deh bichar gits*, *baul songs*, *manasa gits*, *marfati gits*, *murshid gits*, *satyapirar git*, song of small pox, *ghazal*, *cheradhek* etc.

The Zikirs

One of the most outstanding and sustaining contribution of the Assamese Muslims to the verbal art or the popular literature of Assam is the *zikir* and Jari. The *zikirs* are devotional songs which embody the tenets of Islam written in the type of Assamese Vaishnava poetry. The term 'Zikir' derives from *dhikir* or *ziker*, an Arabic word which means to recollect and chant the name of the Almighty Allah in the liturgical form. It means singing or remembering the name of Allah.

The *zikirs* are attributed to several composers but Azan Fakir is the foremost among them. He hailed from Baghdad to Assam approximate in 1630 A.D. and was a disciple of Khawja Nizamuddin Aulyia. He alone composed eight score Zikirs. He married a local Ahom woman and settled at Gargaou near modern Sibasagar town and had a math built there.

The *zikirs* aims at the glorification of the Almighty Allah and the inculcation of those human attributes and graces which bring peace of the soul and establish harmony among the people.

It also aims at the reorganisation of the Muslim society of Assam, to bring religious awareness by regenerating their faith and love for Islam. Besides this sufi poet, a good number of Assamese Zikirs said to have been composed by many other saint poets in different times. Among them the name of Chand Khan or Chandsai, Maznudil Fakir, Sheikh Farid, Syed Martoza, Bandar Fakir, Ghulam Hussain, Muniya Dewan, Bethai Suwal, Hari Das Kumar etc. can be mentioned. The last two poets might have converted into Islam and assimilated with the Islamic faith. These saint poets might have been influenced by the contemporary Vaishnava poets. The Zikirs which Azan Fakir composed during 1635 – 42 show that in language and style they conform to the Vaishnava verses composed by Sankardeva (1449 – 1568) and Mddhabdeva (1498 – 1569) which are popularly known as Bargeets.

The *zikir* is performed usually at night, sometimes at wedding or community feasts, by a group of male singers. They sing the Zikir with a form of dance circulating the area by clapping their hands without the accompaniment of musical instrument. There is an oja or leader of the singing group who leads them in performing the *zikir* right from the beginning. Women also sing but do not dance.

Some *zikirs* notably those of Azan Saheb are direct teachings of Islam told in simple language : ‘Kalima Zikirar mul’ – Kalima is the source of *zikir*. Others show Sufistic influence and poses deeper meanings. The Second type is in line with *deh bicharar gits*, speaking of the relation between the body and the soul, of the uncertainty of this mundane life and thus trying to lead people to the path of righteousness. Some *zikirs* contain stories, devine characters and allusions to the contemporary tantric, Sakta or Vaishnava beliefs.⁷ For example A number of *zikirs* composed by Azan Pir rose above narrow communal feelings.

karane purane choke kaish
bujaba mahanta lok,
ei duniya ache dui bese
murside bujaba tok.

[The Quran and the Puran tells the samething; understand O Mahanta; in this world they exist in two garbs, Murshid will teach you so.]

Azan Fakir and other Zikir composers absorbed the tone and spirit of other Assamese folksongs like Ojapali and Deh bicharar geets. The following *zikir* compares well with the *deh bicharar git* and sometimes sung by Hindu Boragis or wandering minstrels –

This world is for one or two days
It is a flower garden;
Why do you cheat others?
This world will have you caught in its net
Why have I come to this world,
I should have died a child;
When I hear of punishment in grave
I can't put another step forward.

JARI

The *jari gits* or *marshiyas* cannot be conclusively attributed to Azan pir like any other Muslim community of any other place. The Assamese Muslims also have given expression to their sad reactions to the tragedy of Karbala in these songs. They are not necessarily part of Islamic tenets; but the tragic story of Karbala behind them, as Prof. Syed Abdul Malik says, sung in the saddest possible tone, attracts the pious to them. The Jari is a kind of elegiac verse in character and content. It is known that the *marshiya* or Jari songs were sung in Assam even before the advent of the renowned saint-poet Azan Fakir. These songs are full of pathos, sung specially during the Muharram festival. The performance of these songs is like a lamentation, not closely related to the rituals and doctrines. These songs are performed by a group of persons with a dance which is simply rhythmic in motion. This dance is performed circulating the arena with a slow motion of the step, with clapping and beating on the chest with hand. However, the main objective of these Jari songs is to express grief commemorating the tragic demise of Immam Hassan & Hussain. They depict the life of Hazarat Ali, Bibi Fatima, Aassan, Hussain, Qusim, Saharabanu and Sakina etc. All the characters drawn from the distant Arab world have adorned the Assamese grab in the Jaris. Of course, no musical instrument is used while performing the Jari songs. A fairly good number of *jari* songs are current in different parts of Assam. They are equally favoured by all the indigeneous Muslims of Assam. As specimen, some of them current among the Muslim of Hajo are given below-

- (i) *hasane khujila pani bibi dila johar ani*
mae dila danda pakhi bao
hassan Hussain dui bhai cikare calia jai
johar khailo Madinar bhitare meri Allah
hai meri Allah Sahib Allah ato
dukh dili niranjan meri Allah

While Kasim, being separated from newly married Sakina, started for Karbala, the following Jari is sung :

jai jai pala Kasim Karbala Maidan
karbalar maidan dinat andhar
tate Kasime dera tambu tane
bismillah buli Kasim hate lala curi

*bismillah buli Kasim ghorate uthilare hai
sat din sat rati judha karila
tetia Kasimar piaso lagila*

(The essence of the Jari is : Kasim, after many days of journey reached the sandy Karbala which is dark and dusty even at day time. He encamped there. In the name of Allah Kasim took the sword, in the name of Allah he rode on the horse. He fought for seven days and nights. Then he felt thirsty

*Makkai ki hol madinai ki hol najano
kot ki hol o Allah
Hasan-Hussain gaisil ran karibar
Hasanar khabar pai Hussain douria jai
o Hussain shahid hol karbalai maidane
ghorai ahi aji sehni morila o Allah
O diya ghorak dana pani o Allah
Makkai ki hol madinai ki hol najano
kot ki hol o allah
ghorake diya dana pani
kande Hussainar bari (wife)
kande mor bilap kario Allah
makkai ki hol madinai ki hol najano
kot ki hol o Allah
ghorar gavari goise tir kar pani
ghorar ga hoise tejare rangali o Allah
daur mari jai Hasenar bari (wife)
Fatemar age kai bibari o Allah
makkai ki hol madinai ki hol najano
kot ki hol o allah
sowar ji nai toi kot erili
mor Hasan basak oi Allah
Fatemai kande jar jar dekhiya khali asan
nabire bole Fatemai dayar bab dekhe an mok
Hussain betar mukh oi Allah
jadi nedekhua Hussain betar mukh narakho ei duniya
Fatemar kandon suni gos-gasani taru patar
lagsi hahakar o Allah
prithibi mor kare tolobol
makkai ki hol madinai ki hol najano*

MANASA GITS

Manasa or Padmavati goddess of snake is the popular character of Manasa Kabya or Padma Puran written by Narayan Dev. This was popular among both Hindus and Muslims equally. At one time Muslims Ojas were there in Assam and they sung the Manasa gits. In the boat race songs also the Bheulla-Lakhinder episode is included. As most of the oars men were Muslim, they somehow incorporated Hassan-Hussain episode in the Manasa git. According to Dr. Maheswar Neog Padma Puran is full of myriads of characters and 'Hassan-Hussain' episode included in such prose. Dr. Satyandranath Sarma also comments that at one time most of the ojas were Muslims who sung Manasa geet. Because of their popularity this episode has been incorporated. According to Dr. P. C. Das that not only are the songs of Manasa, the snake goddess but also songs about the gods and goddess of Hindu mythology are popular among the Muslim of Hajo. Many Muslim groups perform the Manasa Ojapali. Bap Chandra Mahanta mentions that in the Muslim reign some yogis of East Bengal accepted Islam but their previous beliefs and rites still continue in their life. Thus they used to sing Manasa lore.

BEULA-LAKHINDARAR GIT

*kande Kalir Nag
lakhar rapa chai
ki sate dakuwala
prem phati jai
kande Kalir nag
bharir pata dekhu bala
kharam ghurania*

*bharir anguli dekhu bala
galdhire gathi
kande Kalir nag
mukkhan dekhu bala
purnimar Jon*

dat pari dekhu bala dalimar guti
kande Kalir nage
uth duti dekhe bala
padum phular pahi
tare majat ache bala
misikia hahi
kande Kalir nage
chaku juri dekhubala
chal chalia tara
kapalkhan dekhubala
tilakhare phata oi
kande Kalir nag

SONGS OF SMALL POX (AI-NAM)

Mother small-pox is very much feared by Assamese women and therefore flattered with all sorts of sweet names. She is called Sitala, the cool one and Ai or Mother. When a child catches measles or any other variety of the rashes classed under small-pox it is said to have 'flowers' on it. Ainam or prayer to propitiate 'Ai' is women's affair. Muslim women also showed reverence to Sitala, goddess of small-pox and offered gram, flowers, arai chaul, milk, sesame, dhup-dhuna etc. in her reverence. The women also sing some songs like

-
- (i) Nine sisters discuss under the tree
 Who will go to the city of man?
 'Kahuuri' Ai comes forward and become ready to go
 To see the customs & traditions of man
 Nine sister discuss under the tree
- (ii) We will worship with flowers
 Bhomorai cats it
 We will worship you with milk
 But the calf eats it
 All things are mutilated by which we
 Worship you

We worship you by your name every
Evening & morning.

– collected from Dampur

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Chapter IV

BALLADS AND PROSE NARRATIVES OF THE MUSLIMS

ORAL NARRATIVES

Narration is ageless. Man since the dawn of civilization have been singing songs, telling stories to entertain as well as to transmit knowledge in different context of human life. Specially at evening time or leisure time when there was no T.V. or Radio or other media, grandmothers told stories by fireside or in the yard with their children. The village people gathered in the 'village chowk' and attended the 'puthi parha' programmes, folk dramas etc. 'The impulse to tell a story and the need to listen to it have made narrative the natural companion of man through out the history of civilization.'¹ It is seen that story telling has been an integral part of the cultures of all societies through human history. "..... narratives mirror the ethnography of the culture." R. M. Dorson : *'Introduction in Folklore and Folklife, An Introduction'* (ed.) R.M. Dorson, Chicago, 1972, p-21 (Dorson : 1972 : 21)

Myths, legends and folktales have been accepted as the three basic form of narratives of universal distribution.² These three have generally been taken as prose narratives forms in western folklore scholarship. It is however to be noted that this three fold classification of narratives does not apply to folklore material in all societies and secondly such narrative genres are not necessarily in prose forms in all societies. Thus in various north eastern societies, both tribal and non-tribal, the lines between three categories – myth , legend and tale – are not very clearly drawn. While folktales normally do have the prose character other narrative items which have the contents generally associated with myths and legends are more often than not in the verse form and they are chanted or sung. This is particularly true of items connected with ritualistic beliefs and practices.

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

BALLADS AND PROSE NARRATIVES OF HAJO AREA

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

'Beula's songs and some of the boat racing songs current in Hajo have the narrative features of ballads.³ They have story element in them and are sung to simple melodies. But what makes them different from a pure ballad is that the ritualistic and cult character is more obvious than the narrative. Some ballads chanted by wandering minstrels and other singers can be heard occasionally in the area. These ballads, such as song of Mainamati, song of Jana, song of Padmakumari and Maniram Dewan are akin to a similar class of songs popular in the rest of the Assam Valley.

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

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

Assam is a land of rivers. People of this land is closely associated with boat-culture. Both Hindus and Muslims are connected with boat-race song and Manasa lore, songs sung in honour of the goddess of snake. Somehow Hassan-Hussain episode has been incorporated in Padmapuran. The tragic story of Karbala that constitutes the Jari gits of the Muslims has been included in the boat race song like Manasa geets. Such a story related to Hussain's death in Karbala has been told by Alimuddin Ahmed, a teacher by profession, of Saikiapara (Loharkatha) aged about 70 years old. 'Sahide Karbala' was a popular book in those days. People of both communities – Hindus and Muslims had due respects for Hussain, grand child of prophet Muhammad. The story is of a Brahmin who had deep faith and respect for Hussain – who was beheaded in Karbala Simar and Jiad, the two assassins, brought Hussain's head and started their journey through the desert to give it to Ezid. It would bring them enough reward from Ezid, the tyranic Khalifa of Damask. On their way they had

to halt at the Brahmin's house for the night. Already the Brahmin could hear the heroism and justice of Hussain and brotherhood of Islam. The Brahmin felt much pain to hear the beheading of Hussain. That night he sheltered the assassins of Hussain with his head. He wanted to see Hussain's head. After much request, he got the head for the night. He lamented for Hussain. To see deep faith of the Brahmin words came from Heaven, from Allah and the 'head' gained the power to speak. The Brahmin and his family members accepted Islam and showed respect for the Immam (Hussain). At dawn Simar and Jiad asked for Hussain's head. Then the Brahmin gave them the head of his eldest son instead of Hussain's head as they planned at night. Simar and Jiad were angry and asked for Hussain's head. Thus one after another the Brahmin offered them his son's head. But they refused. They were not satisfied. In the long run, the Brahmin refused to give them Hussain's head and fought to the last drop of his of blood with them for Hussain's head. Thus both the Brahmin and his wife fought to death. In boat race a song related to this story is sung by the Muslim oarsmen –

Alas ! O' Allah

The Brahmin is anxious about Syed (Hussain)

The Brahmin fought to death for (Hussain's) head

Alas! O' Allah.

(b) Haidor Gazir Git

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

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

Dr. P. C. Das collected and published fragment of the ballad from Giribala Devi, a Brahmin widow of Hajo.⁴ Free translation of the song is as follows :

*In the garden of Haidor Gazi there is a
castor oil plant with two leaves,
Haidor Gazi has taken bath at right noon,
O friend of Allah,
The responsibility falls on you,
O my Haidor Gazi.
After his bath HaMor Gazi stands in the courtyard
(And says)
I am going to the battle, O dear wife, give me
My Loin-cloth;
Haidor Gazi bows his head to the family deity,
Crows and kites fly over his head.
After his prayer Haidor Gazi enters the room
(And says)
I am going to the battle, O dear wife,
serve me rice
After his meal Haidor Gazi chews the pan,
The orders have come to Haidor Gazi and
they are written in strong language.*

* * *

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

Unveil your face O my dear wife
I am eager to look at your moonlike face.
Please don't weep, O Kanchanmati,
Don't be worried, O girl,
If I win the battle this time
I shall decorate you with gold.
Please don't cry, O Kanchanmati,
Don't break down in sorrow, O girl,
If I win the battle this time
I shall dress you in gold.
In the garden of Haidor Gazi,
there is a mango tree,
Haidor Gazi has gone to the battle
who will work in the garden?
In the garden of Haidor Gazi,
there is an areca palm,
Haidor Gazi has gone to the battle
who will enjoy earthly pleasure?

* * *

O brown horse, you have returned
with a torn piece of cloth,
Where did you leave my accomplished husband?
O friend of Allah,
The responsibility falls on you,
O my Haidor Gazi.

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

PROSE NARRATIVES

Myths, Legends and Tales

Prose narratives are traditional tales composed and carried on orally by different groups of people from generation to generation. Prose narratives, according to Bascom, "is an appropriate term for the widespread and important category of verbal art which includes myths, legends and folktales."⁵ The German equivalent for the term is *Marchen*. Prose narratives are distinguished from proverbs, riddles, ballads, poems, tongue twisters on the basis of strictly formal characteristics. The former are narratives in prose while the latter are not.

Myth, according to M. Leach, is "a story presented as having actually observed in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs⁶ etc. Myths constitute an important branch of prose narratives which are accepted to be true and cited as authority in situations involving ignorance, doubt and disbeliefs. Bascom says : "Myths are prose narratives, which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened in remote past."⁷ "Myths are always associated with dogma and ritual. The characters of myths are gods and goddesses, animals or culture heroes whose actions are set in an earlier world when the earth was different from what it is today. Myths try to explain the origin of things, the earth, rivers, the sun, the moon and man himself. But myth remains a myth in real sense of the term "only as long as the divinity of its actor or actors is recognized."⁸

Legends constitute another branch of prose narrative which are believed to have happened in recent past. These are considered to be true by the narrator and the audience and set in a historical period which is far from being remote. They are secular more often than not. Legends account for migrations, wars and deeds of past heroes, chiefs and things and local tales of buried treasure, saints etc. Linda Degh says, "The legend is related to the *Marchen*; it is localized down to earth and has historic validity."⁹ Kohler calls it the "archive of the pre-history of a people."¹⁰ Degh says, "The legend does not have a polished style; its frame and form do not co-ordinate narrative elements into a logical chain."¹¹ The driving impulse behind telling a legend is to educate the people rather than to entertain them. There are three subtypes of legends eg.

- (a) Etiological legends,
- (b) Historical legends,
- (c) Religious legends.

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

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

- (a) *Birth account of Padma* (Manasa git),
- (b) *Bhumikampa aru sar garur kahini*,
- (c) *Murga aru bebestar kahini*,
- (d) *Surjya aru Karbalar tejar kahini*,
- (e) *Burhi aru Akashar kahini*.

The myths popular among the Muslims of Hajo area have been discussed below :

(a) Birth account of Padma

Oja pali was also popular among the Muslim ojas. The story of Beula-Lakhindar was so popular among the Muslims that an episode of Hassan-Hussain has been incorporated in the Padma-Purana myth. The myth of Padma-Purana runs thus : Padma, Manasa or Bishahari with one eye is the serpent deity whose wrath destroyed all the sailing boats of the river sailor and merchant Chando, killed all his six sons and also, at last, kills the most handsome youngest son Lakshindar. Chando builds a well protected house for Lakshindar

does not perform funeral rites of her dead husband. And she sets a sail on a raft to meet the creator to make a complaint against Padma's injustice. The corpse gradually gets rotten into pieces. Still she carries the bones to wake him alive. Behula, as advised by Padma, pleased Siva with her dance. Siva asks Padma to suck the venom and give back life to Lakshindar. But Padma puts a condition that Chando has to worship her. At last Chando agrees to worship Padma and Lakshindar gets life back by Behula's chastity.

(d) Surjya aru Tejar kahini

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

Myth related to Karbala

Some miracles happened in the life of prophet Mahammad. One of them is the prophet's visit to *meraj* or his visit to Heaven where he witnessed 'Allah'. His *didar* i.e. meeting with Allah. All the Muslims believed this visit of Muhammad to the space. During this *Meraj* he witnessed two colourful houses

– one is blue coloured and the other is red. Gabreil, the greatest of all angels of Allah, explained to Mahammad the symbolic meaning of these two houses. Imam Hassan, the great grand son of the prophet was made to drink poison by his wife Jaida as advised Maimuna, the old lady engaged by Ezid who was the opponent of Imam Hassan. When he died, his facial appearance turned blue for poison. The blue house signified it Imam Hussain was beheaded by one Simar and the water of Euphrates turned red with the blood of Imam Hussain, his kith and kins and other martyrs at Karbala. The red house signified this story of massacre.

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

In one zikir referred to this happenings as follows –

kala mati rongga hoi
ghorar khura bahi jai
hai hai eikhane
Karbala hoi
o nanajane koa thai cikhane hoil

LEGENDS

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

(a) The Fakir and the people of Bamunbari

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

fakir and the advent of Islam to the aforesaid village. There was Jungle in the vicinity of the village Bamunbari. The cowherds were looking after their grazing cattle in this jungle. One day a strange incident took place. All the cows stopped grazing and assembled in a central place. While the cowherds arrived that place in search of their cows they noticed that there was a fakir and the cows were standing around him giving up grazing. Although they tried to bring back them, they could not. As soon as the villagers heard this unusual event, they were surprised and rushed to the particular place. They met the fakir and some of them were deeply impressed. They invited the fakir with respect. The fakir told them to assist him carrying the *baghar chal* (the skin of tiger) which was his special seat. But nobody could lift it to carry, though they tried their level best. Then the fakir smiled and lifting the *baghar chal* easily by one hand and putting it in his armpit he proceeded towards the village with them. In the village also he showed many unnatural and miraculous activities by which the villagers were profoundly influenced by him. They realized the greatness and devine power of te fakir. Afterwards all the inhabitants of the village Bamunbari were converted into Islam. Other legends related to this Adumguru are as follows : Kalitakuchi is also a village adjacent to Bamunbari 3 kms away in the north from Hajo. The people of this village as the name suggests were Kalitas and accepted Islam under the influence of this 'pir' Adam guru' Here is the majar of Adam guru where the Muslims celebrate Urs and perform *Jiarat* and the Hindus also visit the *majar* and show respect for the *guru*. In the early part of 17th century pir sultan Nadir Shah came to Kalitakuchi from distant Bagdad and converted a family to Islam and lived with them for some days, Then he departed. After a few years he returned to that family of Kalitakuchi again. Already other members of that family except a six year old child died of cholera. The name of this boy was Adam who was given shelter by the gaonburha of Kalita community of the locality. As the popular legends shows, one day the pir come to that family all of a sudden and blessed the child who achieved spiritual miraculous power from that day. Then the pir went away to an unknown place. Adam generally went for grazing with his boy companions of the village. But his cows were looked after by tigers of the jungle. When there was hot and sunshine the snakes facilitates shade to this boy with their hoods. More miraculous stories related to Adam can be heard in the month of the people who were impressed by these miracles and many Hindus accepted Islam. In course of time 'Adam' became 'Guru' for these people. Some people also tried to identify pir sultan Nadir Shah with Adamguru. But history is silent about these stories. Surprisingly enough all the members of the Brahmin family fell in cholera and saw in dream that the family would face more danger. Then

the Brahmin agreed to give her daughter in marriage to him. Another story related to Adam's death is thus : Adam guru, in his old age, sits in ten day (*etekaf*) prayer in the month of Ramzan in a verandah of masjid in Kalitakuchi. He called upon his family members, relatives and disciples and forbade not to lift the mosquito net for those ten-days. It might lead to his dead. One disciple out of curiosity lifted this mosquito net in order to see Adam Guru. He could not see Adam but his *paguri* (head dress) and other clothes, so the people cremated this clothes ritually on the day of domahi of Bohag and Jestha from that time every year on the certain day Urs is celebrated there on his *majar*. The Ahom king wanted to bring Adam Guru to the royal palace and sent courtiers to fetch him. The courtiers placed boat at Lokhaitora river to carry Adamguru. It was surprising that the big boat sinks into water when Adamguri get on to it. They tried again and again but failed. Then the king sent elephant to carry Adam. No sooner had he rode on the elephant than it sat down failing to bear the weight of Adam. The Ahom king then could understand the spiritual and miraculous power of this Adam Guru and established him at Kalitakuchi sanctioning land there Adam Guru began to preach the lessons of Islam and humanity among the people. When he attained age of marriage, he expressed to marry a Brahmin girl as ordained by Allah in his dream. But the Brahmin family refused to do it.

(b) The Legend of Poa-Mecca

Poa-Mecca, the holy shrine of the Muslims, stands on the top of the Garurchall hill. In the shrine there exists a tomb and a mosque. There are more tombs scattered around the hill. The history of Poa-Mecca, an Islamic shrine, is connected with one saint known as sultan Ghiyasuddin Aulia. The main tombs in the center is attributed to the name of the saint. It is visited by thousands of pilgrims from different parts of the country and outside the country as well. A number of legends are connected with the origin of the name of Poa-Mecca. First, it is said that at the time of its foundation, Ghiyasuddin Aulia discovered ninety images in the area, this number comes to one-fourth of the total number of the three hundred and sixty images of Mecca. Therefore the shrine is called Poa-Mecca i.e. one fourth of Mecca.¹² According to the second explanation, Pir Ghiyasuddin Aulia carried one Poa of soil from Mecca with him and added it here at the time of the foundation of the mosque. So the shrine is known as Poa-Mecca.¹³ Thirdly it is said that a visit to this shrine confers one fourth of the merit obtained from a pilgrimage to Haj in Mecca itself. It is also said that the word Hajo is related to Haj.

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

Two stores are current in regard to the saint Ghiasuddin Aulia, the founder of the shrine and his tomb. According to one story Sultan Ghiasuddin Aulia was born in Tabriz city in 1193 A.D. The original name of the Sulltan was Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi who was a king of this country. After reigning for about 35 years, the king became a saint and started preaching Islam in various parts of the world. He came to Assam and encamped at Hajo to preach his faith. Jalaluddin stayed here for more than 20 years until his death and founded a number of mosques and mazars all over Assam.¹⁴ The tomb existing on the top of the Garurachal hill is said to be erected on the grave of this Ghiasuddin Aulia. Another version of the story goes that Ghiasuddin Aulia came to India from Arabia sometimes about at 642 or 1222 A.D. When a famine ravaged the Arab country. Having spent many years in various parts of the country he came to the Brahmaputra valley with three of his companions Hazarat Shah Zamal, Hazarat Shah Gudur and Hazarat Shah Buzurg. The saint passed the rest of his life on the top of the Garurachal hill.¹⁵ There is still a third story regarding advent of Hazarat Ghiasuddin Aulia. The story related that the saint came to Assam with the conquering army of Sultan Ghiasuddin, who invaded the country in at 721 or 1301 A.D. It recounts that the saint first stayed in the Garigaon area (Gauhati), but later he shifted to Hajo and stayed there on the top of the Garurachal hill.¹⁶

In Kamrupar Buranji it is stated that Sultan Ghiasuddin ruled over the Kamrup region for somtime and the seat of his government was Garuachal hill. The chronicle records that Balwant Ghiasuddin came to Kamrup with an infantry of twelve thousand tank and thirteen thousand cavalry. He demolished many temples and breathed his last on the Garurachal hill.¹⁷ Ghiasuddin was successor of Daniel, the son of Hussain Shah in the Fauzdarship of Hajo and his period comes in the early 16th century.

Ibn Batuta, the Moorish travellelr of 13th century A.D. states in his "Safarnama" (Richalai Ibn Batutah) that he came to visit Kamrup to meet a saint named Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriz who was actually Ghiasuddin Aulia. He showed many miracles (Keramat or majeja). The inhabitants of these mountains embraced Islam at his hands both Hindus and Muslims visited the tomb.

TALES

The Assamese for an oral tale is *sadhu katha*, usually derived from the Sanskrit *sadhu* a merchant, meaning thereby that the *Sadhukatha* is a tale told by a wandering merchant.¹⁸ The meaning of Assamese *sadhukatha* is broad and it sometimes comprises English tales, legends, myths and fable. It is a generic term signifying anything from a myth to a fable. The tale only to amuse, the true oral tale, in English tale or fairy tale. The term folktale is also used one of the early systematic attempts to classify tales was that of Edwin Sidney Hartland who divided this fairy tale in to two classes – sagas and Marchen. Sagas are stories which relate to definite supernatural beings. Often they are told of historical heroes or persons believed to have once lived. The other class of tales i.e. Marchen consists of such as are told simply for amusement unlike the saga, it binds the conscience neither of the teller nor of listener; its hero or heroine has no historical name or fame, either national or local. The only condition the tale expected to fulfill is to end happily. After Hartland, a recent writer, Prof. Thompson describes a Marchen as, “a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite characters and is filled with the marvelous. In the never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms and marry princess.”¹⁹ For the second class, i.e. saga indicated by Hartland, the modern tendency is to use the German Sage. Prof. Thompson says that sage “Purports to be an account of an extraordinary happenings believed to have actually occurred. It may recount a legend of something which happened in ancient times at a particular place.”

Besides these two broad divisions Prof. Thompson mentions of myth which for him means “a tale laid in a world supposed to have preceded the present order. It tells of sacred beings and of semi-divine heroes and of the origins of things, usually through the agency of these sacred beings. Myths are intimately connected with religious beliefs and practices of the people. While discussing the common features Assamese tales we find that it is a world between fact and fantasy. In this world of tales animals jostle with men, men talk with animals and both men and animals find pleasure in out doing others in wit and cleverness. It is a world where birds and beasts think like men and where things change their forms whenever it is necessary. There is humour, horror and pathos and there is beautiful weaving of fancy.

Folktales, Bascom says, "Are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction."²⁰ These tales are told mainly for entertainment, but they are also told to serve some other purposes. These can not be traced back to any real history or dogma. They are timeless and placeless. Some folklorists have called them fairy tales or sages. Folktales and again be classified into the following sub-types e.g. human tales, animal tales, trickster tales, dilemma tales, formulistic tales or fables etc.

TALES CURRENT IN HAJO AREA

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

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

While the Jatakas, panchatantra, Hitopadesh, *Katha Sarit Sagar* are the valuable source of Indian as well as the *Tales of N. E. India* including Assamese, the *Arabian Nights*, *Shahnama*, *Kessachal Ambia*, *Dastane-E-Amir Hamaza*, *Badiurzammani Kahini*, *Khairul Hasar*, *Janganama*, *Eusuf Zelekhar kahini* are the source book for the narration prevalent among the Muslims of Assam.

The tale of Hassan-Hussain and Sohrab and Rustam are very much popular among the Hindus.²¹ Dr. P. C. Das also mentioned the popularity of the stories from 'Shahnama'. He referred to a romantic tale collected from a Muslim farmer namely "Who would not be beaten" [type : 888a; 978]. Ismail Hussain also refered to the following tales in the *Assamese Enclycopaedia*.²²

I have also collected some tales from aged people of Doloitola and Saniadi area of Hajo. Some of the tales are given below as specimen.

Hatem Tair Sadhu

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

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

Rahim Rupbanar Sadhu

Once there was a Patshah in Mymenshingh district named Akkabar Patshah. He had ample wealth and properties. But he had no peace in mind because he had no child. The people called him childless Patshah. In those days people believed that the day would be ominous or unpropitious to see the face a childless king in the morning. So none came forward to see the king in the morning first. Akkabar patshah was very sorry to know these things somehow. So he called upon all the astrologers of the kingdom to the royal court. He ordered them to foretell if he had any chance to have a child in future. After long prognostication, the head astrologer said - "You have a chance to give birth to a male child, but he has enough misfortunes." Then Patshah Akkabar wanted to know more things about it. The astrologer said, "The boy is to cross lot of misfortunes. He can get rid of these if he is married with a 12 years girl on the

12th day of his birth and both of them to be sent to banishment otherwise the boy will die after completion of 12 days. If you want to keep the boy alive, do accordingly and attached this amulet in the left arm of the queen from this day. All misfortunes would disappear. In due time the queen gave birth to a male child who was named Rahim. Everybody was happy in the royal palace. But the next moment all were in grief to hear the saying of the astrologer. Akkbar Patshah ordered "Take as much wealth & money you need – but provide the king with a 12 years old girl." But what a misfortune. It was very difficult to find out a 12 years old girl. Already Eleven days crossed only one day is left. Patshah was aggrieved to be senseless. At this moment one courtier informed the king that patshah's principal Uzir had a 12 year old girl namely Rupban. Patshah Akkabar called him to the court and proposed that the child Rahim, his son must be married to Rupban. The Uzir abruptly rejected the proposal. The Uzir was imprisoned and tortured as ordered by Patshah. Rupban consented to this marriage for the release of her father.

The marriage is performed with pompand ceremony, but Rupban went in exile crying and crying with her child husband Rahim. She outreached the kingdom and entered into a jungle. A tiger attacked them and was ready to catch Rahim, Rupban with folded hands prayed to the tiger benignly and told the sad story of her life. The tiger found it difficult to let loose. The prey in hand while the tiger was ready with its claw, Rupban prayed crying to save her life. Lion, the king of jungle came to her rescue and helped them to come out of the jungle. Rupban was in search of her fortune. She found a river to cross. She had no money with her to pay. She gave to the boatman her diamond chain to cross the river.

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

of Akkabar Badshah. Syed Badshah was happy to know this. He praised Rupban on hearing her sacrifice in life. Syed Badshah gave Tajel in marriage to Rahim. He also accepted Rupban. With ample wealth and money, all there – Rahim, Tajel and Rupban were sent to the kingdom of Akkabar Badshah. The courtiers, Uzir and the Badshah were happy to meet them. Rahim became badshah and began to rule peacefully and happily.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study we see that the themes of the folksongs are many and varied, Love, Courtship and marriage are the topic of innumerable songs, teasing songs to pair off courting couples and songs of elaborate marriage rituals are common. Burying the dead is an important social occasion in the life of the village. While the wailing and the dirges furnish socially patterned outlet for grief. Another large group of songs may be called calendric. Such songs are recited on special days or during special periods of the year. Songs connected with the agricultural activities include various types of work songs as harvesting and threshing, songs connected with the culmination of different plants.

The folksongs are often localized and the characters drawn from distant Arab world have adorned the Assamese garb.

In the Preceding Chapters we have tried to shed some light on the different aspects of the folk-culture of the Muslims of Assam in general and Hajo area in particular. It has also been our endeavour to describe and analyse the materials making up the culture of the rural folk of the region.

On the basis of the discussion in the preceding pages we have found that the Muslims are the single largest minority religious group in the multifaceted Assamese society. Most of them are Kith and Kindreds of the indigenous people as 90% of the Muslims are converted from local people. It is seen from the census of 2001 that the percentage of Muslim population in India is 13.4; in Assam it is 30.9 and in Kamrup district it is 24.77. In Hajo revenue circle the percentage of Muslim population is 36.26 as per census of 1991. So they turned to be an important section in the socio-cultural sphere of this area.

The advent and growth of Muslim population of Assam dates back to the first decade of the 13th century. This community who came to Assam as invaders and also for preaching the message of Islam and for trade and commerce has evolved gradually over a long period of time. They have been assimilated with the larger Assamese society and enriched the Assamese cultural stream as one of the major current their contribution to the Assamese culture is really significant and appreciable. The liberal attitude of Sankardeva and his Vashnavite philosophy, the then socio-religious atmosphere and the

patronage of the Ahom kings favoured the easy growth of Muslim population in Assam.

It could be said that the culture of the region is like a confluence where several streams have met and their water have flowed along one channel and yet they have retained their own colour. The process of cultural borrowing of the Hindus and the Muslims, particularly in the field of popular religion, oral literature, material culture, beliefs and superstition gives the society of Hajo area a significant character. Again the Hindu Muslim co-existence and unity is a singular feature of the social life of Hajo. Under the Muslim rule specially during the period 1639 A.D. to 1658 A.D. Hajo became politically important and maintained a close link with Bengal as well as whole of mother India. The place was overcrowded with Muslim population coming from all walks of life – saints to suborders, crafts man to warriors. As a result of the process, the Muslim population and colonization were consolidated in the villages and its neighbouring areas. Moreover, Poa-Mecca came up as an Islamic religions center in the mediavel period. In course of them it turned to be an exemplary place of social integration and cultural harmony sheltering various communities in the area. It is a place where the Muslim sing in honour of the Hindu goddess Manasa and songs of Beula and Hindu Brahmin widow sings the Ballad of a Muslim war hero. Here in Muslim marriage many features of Hindu marriage can be seen and their songs incorporate Hindu religions elements. Again Hindu marriage songs follow a Muslim style of music. It is perhaps, one of the very few, though may not be the only place where regular Muslim paiks have been attached functionally to the Hindu temple complex.

Besides, folklore that flourished in the first half of 19th century as a branch of learning and new discipline, its concept, definition and different genres specially verbal Folklore have also been highlighted concisely.

It is seen that in the Muslim folk custom which comprises of various aspects like – folk beliefs and customs, superstitions folk-medicine etc. there is significant blend of Islam and local folk cultural tradition, of course, in many aspects some of them are found to be identical with the local Hindus. There is ample scope of comparative analysis and cultural affinity of the Hindus and the Muslims as a means of understanding between the two communities and also finding ways to solve many ethnic issues.

It has also been noted that the Muslims of Hajo area has a rich tradition of oral folklore which is expressed through different types of songs, nursery rhymes, proverbs, riddles, ballads, myths, legends and tales etc.

However, according to the structure, subject matter and nature of the verbal art forms current among the Muslims of this region, three special characteristic are distinctively noticeable. These are :

- (a) Materials which are exclusively to the Muslims – Zikirs, Jaris, Gazals, Cheradhek, Songs of circumcision, majeja, nate rasul, hamdiya etc.
- (b) Common materials with Muslim specialty for example – marriage songs, songs associated with the outbreak of small-pox, songs related to boat-race, some tales and legends etc.
- (c) Materials fully shared in common by both the communities such as Mohoho songs, rhymes, proverbs, riddles, trickster Tales, animal tales etc.

It is quite apparent that hundreds of Arabic and Persian words as well as Islamic themes enriched the storehouse of Assamese literature. A host of Muslim arthors contributed to Assamese literature. There is enough room for studying the Assamese Islamic studies. It can be mentioned that Sufism is a uniting force among the people of the region and it preaches the message of brotherhood and bhakti. The Zikirs are akin to the Bargeets in theme and treatment. It is true that Islam had its easy access and growth in Assam for the liberal attitude of the Ahom kings and the message of equality and fraternity of Islam. And some of the songs and narratives specially Zikirs, boat race songs, marriage songs and also the folk customs and practices that are still in our blood convince us that we are from the same roots devided into different sects and creeds in course of time. Hajo is a peaceful abode of different cults and sects. Live and let live is their motto. The most forceful thread that bridges or links the people of this area is the Bhakti cult and the activities of the Sufis in Assam. Some festivals like. Urus, Manikut Utsav, social institutions like boat race, Bihu, Mohoho

LIST OF INFORMANTS

<u>Sl. No</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Place</u>
1.	Mozammil Ali	M	Business	70 Yrs	Doloitola
2.	Subur Ali	M	Cultivator	50 Yrs	Barni
3.	Nurmohammad Ali	M	Daily Labour	50 Yrs	Barni
4.	Kalsum Bibi	F	Housewife	60 Yrs	Doloitola
5.	Jainab Bibi	F	Housewife	60 Yrs	Ramdia (Uzankuri Muslimpara)
6.	Gulzar Bibi	F	Housewife	50 Yrs	Kowarghat
7.	Khatun Bibi	F	Housewife	45 Yrs	Napara
8.	Sakina Begum	F	Housewife	50 Yrs	Uzankuri Muslimpara)
9.	Fatema Bibi	F	Housewife	40 Yrs	Kowarghat
10.	Arabjan Bibi	F	Housewife	41 Yrs	Doloitola
11.	Afjan Bibi	F	Housewife	40 Yrs	Doloitola
12.	Late Piar Ali	M	Teacher	62 Yrs	Mukalmua
13.	Alimuddin Ahmed	M	Teacher	60 Yrs	Loharkatha
14.	Hazarat Ali	M	Business	55 Yrs	Loharkatha
15.	Rafik Ali	M	Cultivator	50 Yrs	Doloitola

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