

FOLKTALES AS MORAL INSTRUCTOR IN DAY TO DAY LIFE OF ASSAMESE SOCIETY

Dr. Deepsikha Gogoi Hazarika,
Research Scholar,
Dibrugarh University

Abstract—*Social life is a result of assimilation of individual and public life. Folktales are being created with the experience of social life. From that perspective it may sure that social life is reciprocate to folktales. Folktales put its influence naturally upon the social life. Folk society never pays their attention towards the logical analysis of the folktales. Genetically, they have been taking away rigid ideas, achieving from the situation and character of these tales, in the flow of their life. Assamese folktales are leading the Assamese tradition, ethics and customs and have been giving path towards the further generation. The fundamental learning of Assamese folktale makes people eligible to handle the problems of life. Though at first, it was somebody's individual; later it becomes as the corn-house of primary learning for the Assamese society. The morality of folktales has always remembered by Assamese people in every critical situation. Even Assamese folk-beliefs and ideas are formed specially based on folk tales. This research paper aims to focus how the prevalent elements of folktales are spreading out to each part of Assamese society and the day to day life of Assamese folk life.*

Keywords: Folktale, Folk society, Folk-mind, Folk belief, Moral

I. INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the word folk is common people, public. The term common people include people of all caste, creed and religion. According to the folk-culturist the term 'Folk' refer to a class of people who follow the same customs and traditions. It may also refer to the common living, sharing language, religion etc. (Sarmah, 1997). On the contrary in literature the term folk encompasses especially somewhat narrow ideas as compared to the folk society. It normally refers to the working class of villages and towns living under the canopy of

traditions and customs (Sarmah, 1999). They are basically not endowed with formal education. From this angle folktale deals with the working class.

Folktales are a major part of folk literature. Folktales have its existence in spoken tradition. It may classify into three sub-categories—a) Myth b) Legend c) Tale

Myth: It was emerged in the ancient time and regarded as truthful story. It describes the divine tradition. Myths are connected to religion. It gets reverence among the folk people.

Legend: Legend describes about national heroes, devotees and martyrs. These are enriched with chronicle of migration, war and result, deeds of the ancient warriors story of dethrone, ghost, beautiful damsel, devotes etc.

Tales: It is considered as imaginative and fictional story. It suggests moral task. Human fantasy and desire get preference here. Tales have totally Disinterestedness of time, space, and age.

There is nothing fix regarding the form of folktales. Folktales are primarily created by the folklore of the society and customarily orally circulated narrative literature. A folktale passes through different shapes as according to the passing of time. It expresses the experience of common people and is nourished by the common attitude of the ordinary firming class. The daily life of common people means different activities performed for their survival. They earn various types of experiences after performing these works. Creative mind always try to share their thoughts and experiences with other members of the society. They always want to give their work experience, their story of bravery and the beliefs (fantasy or illustration) towards the further generation.

Assam is one of the eastern most states of India. The people of Assam inhabit in a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious society. The process of social formation in Assam has been marked simultaneously by Sanskritization and Tribalization at different times. So, the folk-beliefs and ideas are different that grows up different times. Cultivation is the primary occupation of Assamese people. Though, Assamese society is basically patriarchal, matriarchal tribes can also be seen. So generally, female status is not lower than male. Assamese people are very polite, appreciative, talkative and curious in their talking. Simplicity and hospitality are the glory of their character. They have a bad rumor to be

emotional. They keep more belief in religion, social customs and traditions. They exhibit their faith toward folk medical system. They are expert in artistic task, sweet in language and honeyed in singing.

Assamese people used the word “SADHU” in a wider sense. This word represents the meaning of the English words—tales, legend, myth and fable. Assamese folktales are like an evident document of Assamese culture, society and civilization. Folktales work as reflector of socio-cultural scenery of Assamese society. Assamese people always learn to handle the problems of life from folktales. It is like the corn-house of primary learning for Assamese society. When they are fishing, cultivating, firming, looming, rice mixing etc. in every day work the morality of tales or the situation describes in folktales are memorized or referenced by them. This research paper aims to focus how the prevalent elements of folktales are spreading out to day to day life of Assamese society.

II. METHOD

Analytical method is specially applied here. In analytical research, the researcher has to use facts or information already available and analyze these to make critical evaluation of the material. Here the researcher tried to elaborate the folktales introduced in Assamese society and their impacts on the people of Assam. The paper is mainly written on the basis of orally transformed folktales but if necessary printed materials like relevant books, journals etc. are also used. Sahityrathi Lakshminath Bezbaruah compiled the folktales introduced in Assamese society and left a rich property to Assamese folk literature. Besides these tales are in printed form but they are still transformed orally in the society. In this paper the printed primary material of Bezbaruah and other unprinted oral tales have been used for analysis.

III. DISCUSSION

Human lives are absorbed into deeds, duties and responsibilities. At first, these all are for self-fulfillment and then for the family and society. Human society moves, taking away the duties and responsibilities, toward individual, family and society. Ethics are very much present beyond the folktales which can be beneficial to find the right way for the individual & total life in critical situation. Thus the whole social order is being remain unbroken. Such kinds of folktales are available in Assamese folk life. Folk mind always try to follow the

moral values of folktales. Even if someone behaves in wrong way they give example from the tales and try to motivate him. The moral of tales become an ever true narration for them. There are some folktales where contradiction can be noticed among the animals. This contradiction basically takes place between foolishness and intelligence. A clever animal tries to cheat another one, but at last, he himself falls in trap. Assamese society receives this idea to escape from the cheaters or swindler. An intimate friend may become foe and betray the other, only for his self realization of selfish aim. But it is not right. The folk society believes that 'Don't cheat friends'. They use the example of the tale of *Monkey and Fox* where the monkey cheats the fox out of his fair share of food taking advantage while he knows that the fox can't climb trees. So the fox wants to take revenge and makes the monkey attack a bee hive by telling him it is a royal drum. The greedy foolish monkey however ends up paying with his life (Deka Hazarika, 2001). Assamese folk society believe that 'intelligence can win over physical power'. Where the physical strength is unable to do something then intelligence does its work. Somebody may try to harm someone with his physique, wealth or power. But the other can easily handle his foe through his intelligence. Folk society gives example from the *Tale of Crow and a little bird* where the intelligent little bird (Tiposi) escapes from the clutches of the crow using his cunning, by making the crow fly around to fetch something that ultimately lead to the crow's death (Bezborua, 2005).

Before the entry of science and technology, the human society depended upon nature and so, in the folktales, a mutual understanding can be seen between men and animal. Folk society says very positively about the members of nature. Animal or birds have no feelings, but they are not ungrateful. They shared love with man and try to help them as far as possible in exchange of love. In the *Tale of frog*, an aged childless couple is adopting a frog according to frog's application. One day while the frog is ploughing the field with a pair of bullocks, the king's men pass through the field on elephants. The frog gives them a thundering from under a cloud. The bewildered men report the matter to the king who comes to verify and arrested the old man. The frog takes quantities of fried grains and distributes them among the insects. Thus, with a big army of insects, he challenges the king who is compelled not only to sue for peace but also to give away the princess with half of his kingdom (Datta, 1995). On the other hand, there are some folktales where the contradiction between men and animal can be

noticed. Folk society has received an idea from those tales supporting the contradiction. The contradiction between men and animal takes place only because of food urgency. So, they ought not to keep faith with some animals. They are very clever and tricky. They regard the weakness of men as their opportunity. The story of *Aged couple and fox* may be cited as an example where the childless aged couple is cheated by fox (Bezborua, 2005).

The central idea of the Assamese folk society, on the relation between men and animal, is that 'Nature is much better than cruelty or ugliness of men'. They have received this idea from the folktales. Human society injured itself. Men are the cause of their own devastation. But nature never ignores men. It is always there for the human society. In the tale of *Tejimola*, Tejimola takes different forms and stays alive in spirit despite her stepmother's efforts to make her disappear forever. The story has a happy ending where Tejimola ends up a lotus flower in the hands of her father on his way home (Deka Hazarika, 2001). In her journey from Tejimola to lotus, nature helps her in every step; her different forms are always related with nature.

There are some folktales which are introduced with the sorrow and unfortunate conditions of heroes and heroines. The heroes and heroines, living with the power, have to face the evil power. But however, joy ultimately comes to the hero by the grace of god power. The god power makes their lives prosperous and powerful (Bezborua, 2005). The examples of *Tejimola*, *Tula and Teja* and *The Kite's Daughter* may be given, where Tejimola, Teja and the kite's daughter faces many problems from their enemies. Tejimola was killed by her stepmother, Teja was cheated by her step sister and turned into a little bird, Maina by her step mother (Bezborua, 2005), the kite's daughter was sold to a tradesman by her husband's seven co-wives (Bezborua, 2005). All situations were created out of jealousy. Taking inspiration from those tales, folk people sometimes face their challenging moment of life. Injustice is transient before justice. 'Truth must come clearly before us; nobody can hide', folk society regard it as key idea while spending their life. They take inspiration from the heroes or heroines of folktales to spend their life gracefully. The believers face the successors taking support from the tales. When the successors logically show their doubt to the customs and

tradition then the believers try to establish their own view, giving quotation from the tales. Assamese society has also lots of tales with these beliefs.

Folk society never pays their attention towards the logical analysis of the folktales. Genetically, they have been taking away rigid ideas, achieving from the situation and character of these tales, in the flow of their life. In course of time these kinds of ideas are being established as the absolute truth. For example, clear existence of materialistic things like body, wealth, money, property etc. Folk people believe that sounds like 'oh', 'aah', 'aio' should not be uttered whenever they are in front of paddy field, river or fire etc. A folk tale says that God Shiva was very much lazy and so his wife Parvati was always upset to him. One day he went for cultivation to satisfy his wife. But he also warned his wife that she should not go there until the cultivation would have not been finished. But Parvati was unable to control herself and visited the farm. She then uttered the words 'ah' 'oh'. The whole field was covered by fire as soon as she uttered the words. Another belief relating with folktales is that in mid night, the door should not be opened if it is knocked once or name of God Rama should be uttered at the time of passing through a field or a boundary of a village or an orchard or forest or large trees. Same thing should be done passing through an 'ou-tenga' tree (a kind of acid fruit), bamboo or 'Jori' (a kind of fig tree). They believe that God Rama will save them from the evil power existing in the trees. Nothing should be done badly under a large tree because the God power existing in the tree may become angry and he may be harmful for men. In many tales of the spirit like *Burha-Dangarya* and *Dot*, folk minds believe that they always stay in trees. The tales of *Dot* describe that they live in a bamboo clump and try to frighten the passer-by, they shake the tree as a strong blast would (Rajkhowa, 1973). The *Burha-Dangariya* concept and tales are related with religious faith.

Moral values are those values through which a society can be mobilized morally, in a right way. These values make society eligible for going forward. So the present generation always tries to make educate their successor through the learning of moral values. In this process folktales stand as a teacher of them. Some examples of moral values accepted from the tales are given below:

- a) Greed brings sin and sin death.

- b) Patience is a plaster of all sources.
- c) Sad hours seem long but among thorns grew roses.
- d) The patience is the real friend in need.
- e) Weak men wait for opportunities; while strong men create them.
- f) Better an open enemy than a false friend.
- g) Beauty is the truth and truth is beauty.
- h) Truth would have overcome untruth.

Some characters of the tales have been remaining as real source of attraction. Their flaws or virtues always influence over the folk society. They try to compare these characters with themselves in different situations of practical life, such as:

Lotkon: An intelligent but poor man tired of being nagged by his wife sets off on a journey to prove his worth, and with his cunning manages to fool a lot of people on his way. Starting from eating sweets in a sweet shop by fooling the shop owner's son into believing his name to be 'Makhi' (meaning housefly) to making a man run around a tree holding on to the tail of a pig, the intelligent man goes back home with riches much to satisfaction of his wife (Bezborua, 2005). Folk people compare Lotkon with the clever person. Folk mind also remembers the verse 'Makhiye mithoi khale' in a joyful moment.

Tejimola: It is a popular ironical character, who suffers much difficulties from her stepmother but in the end truth comes and she got justice. The character used in Assamese folk society is compared to her who is a victim of oppression by stepmother.

Champavati: Champavati was the daughter of younger wife of a peasant, had to work harder than her step sister and had to drive away the birds to save the ripening grains. Strangely her shouts to shoo away the birds was replied by a mysterious voice from within the nearby forests that declared "the paddy I will eat, the rice too, I will leave only after marrying Champavati". But the owner of this voice was a serpent. Champavati's father agreed to give away her in marriage to the serpent. After many incidents Champavati lived happily with her husband who is actually a deity (Deka Hazarika, 2001). Assamese folk minds always remember the verse of the serpent to Champavati.

There are lots of popular characters in Assamese society from folktales. Saravjan, Tikhar, Chutibai, Dighalthengia, Panechoi, Ow-Kunwari, etc. are also popular characters among the Assamese folk society.

The folktales, created on martyrs, patriot or warriors, have been uniting the Assamese folk society with a regional sentiment. Folk society adds many things to these characters. This kind of adding sometimes makes the character like god or like a character of nothingness. There always remains a doubt regarding the truthfulness of those characters, because the regional sentiment keeps away these characters from the reality. Some examples of some tales may be cited about Sankaradeva's super natural power. Those were even included in 'Charit Puthi'. Another example is the 'tale of Joymoti Kunwari' regarding her punishment given by Sulikfa'. Joymoti was a historical character. She was a victim of tyranny. But the Assamese folk society describes her sufferings not from the historical perspective but from the description of folktales.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study provide that folktales and its characters, situations, background and ethics spread all over the day to day life of Assamese folk society. Assamese folk-beliefs and ideas are formed specially based on folktales. Folktales have been bearing the Assamese folk culture. Taking elements from folktales, Assamese folk mind tries to shape their life. Assamese folktales are also universal. It shares universal human feelings. All human beings are connected to each other. On the other hand, the whole human society is connected to whole nature. Man itself is a part of nature. Assamese folktales have been bearing this notion. There are some tales which are regarded as fundamental lessons of life, through which the different situations of life can be handled. Folktales can be applied as a medium of expanding human value removing from the chaotic situations of society. The impact of folktales upon the Assamese folk life can be noticed clearly. There is nothing else in the folk life where there is no element of folktales.

REFERENCES

- Bezborua, L. (2005). *Burhi air sadhu*. Guwahati: Kitap Samalaya.
- Bhattacharya, B. K. (1996). *Janajatiya sadhu*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
- Burhagohain, H. (2000). *Buranjir binidra parash*. Sivasagar: Purbachal Tai Sahitya Sabha.
- Chaliha, S. (Ed.) (1996). *Adhunik asamiya sabdakosh*. Guwahati: Banimandir.
- Datta, B. (1995). *A study of the folk culture of the Goalpara region of Assam*. Guwahati: Gauhati University.
- Deka Hazarika, K. (Ed.) (2001). *Bezbaruar sadhukotha*. Dibrugarh: Banalata.
- Gogoi, L. (2008). *Asomiya lokasahityar ruprekha*. Dibrugarh: Banalata.
- Gogoi, L. (2011). *Asomor loka-sanskriti, Vol-2*. Nagaon: Krantikil Prakashan.
- Mahanta Bezborua, N. (2004). *Lokatattva jigyasha*. Dibrugarh: Banalata.
- Rajkhowa, B. (1973). *Assamese popular superstitions and Assamese demonology*. Guwahati: Gauhati University.
- Sarma, G. (Ed.) (1996). *Asomiya jatir itibritta*. Dibrugarh: Banalata.
- Sarmah, N. C. (1997). *Lokosanskriti*. Guwahati: Chandra Prakash.
- Sarmah, S. (1993). *Asomor lokasahitya*. Guwahati: Student Stores.
- Sarmah, S. (1999). *Asomor sadhukatha*, Guwahati: Book Hive.