



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE FOLK SONGS SUNG IN ASSAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FOLKSONGS EXCLUSIVELY SUNG BY ASSAMESE WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Assamese folksongs have been originated from the Tribal culture of Assam and it collectively expresses the inherent traditional and cultural dimensions of Assam. The folksongs of Assam may be divided into various categories such as Songs of religious and devotional content like *Sādāsivār Nāām*, *Durgāā Gōsāānir Nāām*, *Lākshmi Devir Nāām*, *Āāi Nāām*, *Dēbhichāārār Gēēt*, *Āājān Fākirār Gēēt* etc, Songs of ceremonies and festivals like *Ōjāā-pāāli*, *Mādān-Kāām Pujā*, *Kāti pujā*, *Jorā Nāām*, *Khichāā Gēēt*, *Bihu* songs and the like, Songs of love and yearning like *Bhāwāiyāā* and *Chātkāā*, *Mōishālī* and *Māūt* songs, *Bārāmāhi* songs, Lullaby and nursery songs like *Nisukāni Gēēt* and *Dhāāināām*, Songs of jest and humour song like *Tāāmūl Chōrār Gēēt*, *Chāāh-purāānar Gēēt* etc, Ballad and other narrative songs like *Bārphūkāār Gēēt*, *Mānirām Dēwāār Gēēt*, *Hārādātāā-Birādātār Gēēt*, *Jānāābhārur gēēt*, *Kāmālkūwārir gēēt*, *Tezimolār Gēēt* and the like. These are the different types of folksongs sung in Assam. But the folksongs sung exclusively by women are- *Nisukāni Gēēt*, *Hūdūmpūjār Gēēt*, *Aulāā Pujā*, *Suwāguritolā Gēēt*, *Biyanāām*, *Jengbihi*, *Nisukāni gēēt*, *Dhāāināām*, *Āāināām*, *Apesārāā sābāhār Nāām*, *Goalpariyāā Lokgēēt* etc. Lullaby in Assamese folklore is known as *Nisukāni Gēēt* and the nursery rhymes are known as *Dhāāināām*. Such kinds of songs are usually fanciful composition containing simple, direct statement made with tenderness and delicacy. Mothers, young girls and women sing such kinds of songs to please the children. *Biyanāām* means marriage songs. An Assamese marriage is a musical marriage. At every stage of celebration, from the early negotiation to the end, women sing appropriate songs. The delicacy and refinement of woman's heart come out in caressing tunes when the leader of the chorus has to describe the beauty and the grace of the bride and other ceremonies related with the marriage. Mother small-pox is very much feared by Assamese women and therefore, flattered with all sorts of sweet names. She is called *Sitōlāā*, the cool one, the *Āāi* or mother. Whenever a child catches measles or any other variety of rashes classed under small-pox, it is said to have "flowers" on it as *Āāi* is also said to have appeared on it. *Aināām* or prayer to prohibit *Āāi* is women's affair. The women gather together and sing to the tunes of claps. The *Aināām* reveal the same quality of tenderness and refinement as the *Biyanāām*. The Assamese mothers believe that if their children survive and attack of measles or small pox, it will have extra luck and they sing to please *Aināām* Goddess *Sitōlāā*. Children particularly young girls, sometimes are afflicted by ailment that are believed by simple village women to be caused by certain fairy-like female spirits who have been offended and who need to be propitiated through special rituals towards the affliction. Special songs addressed to the spirits are sung and known as *Apesārā* Nāām or *Apesārī* Nāām. Women also sometimes observe ritualistic fasts which feature the singing special songs. Such songs, which are special preserves of female folk are extremely simple, both in literacy and musical contents and yet have a touching quality. For example, *Sāre-bārat*, *Subāchāni Pujāā*, *Ukāni-būri Pujā* etc. *Sāre-bārat* or *Sōrāāi brātiā* literally means the bird-fast where only the young girls and married women take part. *Subāchāni Pujāā* is held in different parts of Goalpara district. The ceremony is held outside the house in the courtyard in the morning and women observe the *Subāchāni Pujāā* and one *Kāthāti* i.e. a expert singer sings the songs of this worshipping ceremony. *Hūdūmpūjār Gēēt* has also its own significance. The *Hūdūmpūjāā* is prevalent in Goalpara region. *Hūdūm* according to a belief current in Goalpara region is a rain-giver god. The women folk worship *Hūdūm* by singing songs of a erotic nature in paddy field. Nudity is a part of this ceremony. Another important folksongs associated with ritualistic festival is *Aulāā Pujā*. In some parts of Kamrup region, grown up unmarried girls perform this ceremony. It takes place at the time of *Durgāā pujā*. On the particular day of the ceremony, the girls keep awake whole night singing songs in praise of goddess. *Bihu* is the most characteristically typical Assamese festivals and many *Bihu* Geets are associated with this festival, *Bihu* songs are excellent poetry. *Jēng bihū* is exclusively celebrated by women folk. In *Jēng Bihū*, there is no any place for men. Men are totally excluded in this ceremony. Women go out to the field, worship and with *Tōkā*, *Gāgānā* and Claps they sing and thus *bihu* is celebrated. By this occasion, women get a chance to enjoy their womanhood and share their feelings. Thus, these are the most important folksongs sung exclusively by women through different occasion.

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INTRODUCTION

Folklore is an ethnographic concept of the tales, legends, superstitions current among a particular ethnic population, a part of the oral history of particular culture which is transmitted through the mouth from one generation to another

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one. A folksong may be defined as a song belonging to the folk music of people or area, often existing in several versions or with regional variations. Folksongs are the most inclusive category of folklore and extremely rich in both the varieties and invocations and even in rhyme, rhythm and tunes. Since almost all sung, chanted and recited forms of oral poetry are designated as "song" in most communities, the categories include such diverse material as folk epic, ballad, myth,

legend, hymn and invocation and even rhymes and tunes. The Assamese term for all kinds of sung form is known as “*Gēēi*”. Folksongs always express the inherent tradition of a particular ethnic community. Different emotional fluctuations are reflected through folksongs. Specially, Women have always played an important role in formation of the society through their intellectual capability, mental strength, charisma and beauty. Women give birth to children, nurture them, give them primary education and the basic knowledge of the world. Women run the household and also contribute to the economic condition of the family through helping their husbands in paddy fields and other professional works. In a sense, they have to carry all the responsibilities of the family and in broader sense, the society. But in a patriarchal society like Assam, women do not get chance like men to express their emotion and hence, they have utilized the folksongs as a tool of releasing their all emotions. Thus, folksong is not only the tool of expressing different emotions but also a great source of enjoyment and relaxation for the womenfolk.

Objectives

1. The different kinds of folksongs sung in Assam will be introduced.
2. This paper will be dealing in how the folksongs of different types sung by Assamese women have reflected different concerns of women in the Assamese society which will try to show the feelings of motherhood, expectation from a marriage as well as married life, desire for the wellbeing of husbands, children, in-laws, relatives, friends and etc.
3. If there is any voice of resistance in the folksongs sung by women will be tried to find out and for this reason, *Biyānāām*, *Jēngbihū*, *Nisukāni Gēēt*, *Dhāaināām*, *Āāināām*, *Apesārāā sābāhār Nāām*, *Gōālparyiāā Lokgēēt* and other relevant songs sung by women will be studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this paper work, this investigator has adopted both the primary and secondary sources of data. For collection of data, the emphasis is given on contextual studies, while full advantage of the relevant textual materials has been made. Data are collected mainly in the form of field note and written documents. For the intended study both qualitative and quantitative data have been collected depending on the methods like observation method, interview method, case study method etc. since adequate research materials are not available in printed forms, so the investigator has collected most of the data by applying observation method and interview method. The study has documented the relevant folksongs which are still of oral tradition. For this purpose, field study has been conducted and expert singers and tradition bearers have been interviewed in the natural context. Observation and interview method has also been applied. Visual equipments for recording have been used and help of books, thesis, journals, papers, magazines and internet has also been taken. After that the documents have been systematically indexed, classified, arranged and analyzed in relevant chapters.

Different kinds of folksongs sung in Assam

Extremely rich and variegated as folklore material in Assam is the wealth in Folksongs are almost inexhaustible. Keeping

different considerations in view, the folksongs sung in Assam can be divided into certain categories which may be explained as follows:

1. Songs of prayer and supplication

In the Assamese Hindu societies, Community singing of the hymns by the Assamese people is a distinctive feature of. Both men and women are fond of singing such types of songs. In Assam, mainly Vaisnava songs are sung in prayer halls, sessions and other private houses. These are called ‘*Nāām*’. There are non-Vaishnava associations, also which are sung to praise *Lōrd Shivā*, *Gōddēss Durgā*, *Gōddēss Lāxmi* such as ‘*Lāxmi Devir nāām*’, ‘*Durgā Gōsānir nām*’, ‘*Sādāsivār nām*’ and the like.

The songs of prayer and supplication are characterized by the utter humility and dedication of the devotee. One of the examples may be given as follows :-

With What Shall I Worship You ..Oh Murari !

- I Have Searched In The Three Worlds And Found Nothing Worthy For You
- I Would Have Worshipped You With Flowers, But The Bumble Bees Have Sucked Them.
- I Would Have Worshipped You With Milk, But The Calf Has Drink It Up
- I Would Have Worshipped You With Wealth, But You Have Plenty Of It Yourself
- I Would Have Worshipped You With Water, But The Fishes Have Muddied It !
- (Source: “A handbook of folklore material of north-east india” by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das. page no: 52)
- The above mentioned song has been clearly indicating the wish of the devotees who are seeking blessings of Murari, i.e. the Lord Vishnu or Krishna.

2. Songs of Ritualistic Association

The singing of some particular kinds of hymns has a highly ritualistic significance among which “*Aāi-nāāms*” are the most prominent ones. The *Aāi nāms* are sung chiefly by the womenfolk which are marked by simplicity of expression and the sincerity of feeling as in the following piece.

They Are Coming ...Aai’s Seven Sisters ...Across The Seven Mountains !

All Bow Down Their Heads.....The Grass, The Creepers,
The Trees.....For Ai Is Coming!
The Golden Butterfly, Round Does It Circle, On Its Two Silver
Wings.....The Aais Have Come To Visit The Place,
We Beg Our Lives For Them Unconsciously ...
Bid We Trespass Into Aai’s Garden ...Unaware We Did Pick
The Buds,
Forgive Our Crimes This Once !Oh Bhabani !We Prostrate
Ourselves..... ..At Your Feet.
The Aai’s Have Come To Poor Houses ...Nothing Do We
Have To Offer,
We Shall Rub Their Feet.....With Our Tresses And Lie
Down

To Make Feet With Our Tresses And Lie Down To Make Ford Of Our Bodies.

(Source: "A handbook of folklore material of north-east India" by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das page no:53)

3. Devotional Songs With Philosophical Overtones

There are many songs which are wrote in religious east though not directly connected with any puja or rite. One group of such songs, highlighted by their devotional spirit and the philosophical content is known as "Dēh-bichār", literally meaning "the consideration of the body" and the song related with this is popularly known as "Dēh-bichār or gēēt."

One Of The Examples Of Deh-Bicharor Geet May Be Given As Follows:-

Alas! What Is The Use Of My Being A Lovely Coral?Why I Have Blossomed At All?

Neither To Guru Nor To Bhakatas I Am Of Use,But Just Lie Covering The Ground.

Oh! But I Have Blossomed, The Lovely Coral, I Have Budded Too!

And I Have Served My Guru And Known The Bhakatas...and up in heaven resided.

(SOURCE: "A handbook of folklore material of north-east India" by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das, page no:54)

4. Songs of ceremonies with some Pujas and other rituals

A number of ceremonies are popular in Assam which is a combination of singings, dancing and mimetic acting. Öja-Pāli is a such kind of ceremony which is connected with the serpent Goddess Manasa. The institution of Öja-Pali has a *Vaishnava* variety which also incorporates with a body of songs which are purely of folk genre.

Some of examples of such kind of format may be given as follows.

(a) Sorai Brata: "Āñjihe Sure Phôól, Sikināā-Bikināā, Ötodin Aāsilāā Kot, Ötodin Asilô Sētēli Pôrbôtôt, Bôttililôke Āñnailek Môk."

(Source: Srimati rambha das, Homeguard, Police reserve, nalbari)

5. Songs of ceremonies connected with life-cycle

There are various ceremonies like birth of a child, the ritual relating to removal of pollution after birth, first rice-eating ceremony of child i.e. Annaprasana, attaining of puberty of a girl, the sacred thread ceremony of Brahmin boy, the sunnat ceremony of a Muslim boy, marriage ceremony and death. Among all the ceremonies Assamese marriage holds a special position as Assamese marriage is a very musical affair.

The example of marriage song may be given as follows :

"O My Dear Lady! Carry This Curd, Milk, Ghee And Honey, At At Choudhury's House Is A Maid As Lovely As The Pomegranate, We Wanted A Ripe Pomaganata But ...You Give A Bel,

We Required Scented Oil To Go With The Load Of Presents, This Ari Fish Wiggles So, It Might Hurt Our Fingers....It Will Go In The Load Along With One Ornaments.

(SOURCE: "A HANDBOOK OF FOLKLORE MATERIAL OF NORTH-EAST INDIA" BY: BIRENDRA NATH DUTTA, NABIN CHANDRA SARMA, PRABIN CHANDRA DAS, PAGE NO:59)

6. Songs of seasonal and agricultural festivals

"Atike Môrômôr Mugāāre Māhurāā, Tātôke Senehôr Makô, Tātôke Senehôr Bôhagôr Bihuti Nepāāti Kenekē Thākô"

(Source: Satyendra nath das, Retired teacher, Bongaigaon) These lines indicate how much precious is the Bihu festival for all the Assamese community. There are 3 bihus observed in Assam – Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu (A spring festival), Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu (the winter festival) and Kati Bihu or Kangali Bihu (the autumn festival). From the agricultural point of view Bohag Bihu comes at seed time, just after the first rains. Magh bihu is connected with the winter harvest and the Kati bihu is meant for the welfare of traditional winter crops when the ears have come up. Par excellence in Upper and Central Assam, Bohag bihu occupies the pride as it is the most cherished festival of joy and merry making. In this bihu singing "Husari" is the most important format of celebrating Bohag bihu.

A verse like the following has a Vaishnava flavor

"Being Soaked In The Dew, On The Head Of Krishna, The Bakul Unfolded Its Petals!(O Govinda ! O Rama!)

(SOURCE: "A handbook of folklore material of north-east India" by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das, page no:60)

7. Bihu Songs

As the spring time, Bohag bihu is the most characteristically typical Assamese festival, so are the bihu songs i.e. the bihu geet and bihu nam are the most distinctive type of folksongs of Assa, both for their literary contents and for their musical mode. The charm and popularity of bihu is reflected in the songs and dances. The songs and dances are the expression of youth, love and union of young hearts. In the occasion of bihu, the marriageable young men and women take an opportunity to choose their life partners. The joyfulness of the festival is echoed on songs like the following.

"Bihu This Year Is So Glorious, The Nahar Is In Bloom;

"The Nahor is in bloom, Its Perfume So Rouses My Sweetie She Crushes Her Spinning Wheel Under Her Steps. Again And Again, Do We Sport, O Friends, We Sport As Long As We Live, Do We Do So After We Die?"

(Source: "A handbook of folklore material of north-east India" by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das, Page NO.61)

Bihu songs describe the beauty of nature, the beloved, it glorifies the youth and also represent frustration and sorrow. Some bihu songs also take the pride of representing contemporary issues, as well as history like freedom movement, attainment of independence and the like. The physical feature of the land, hills and rivers, specially Brahmaputra is also reflected in bihu songs.

8. Love Songs – In Camouflage And Purely Lyrical Composition Like Bhawaiya And Chatka

In the lower Assam region, there is another class of love songs which are compositions of lyrical nature characterized by a kind of controlled turbulence of passion and set to a musical structure that is particularly suited for the slow outpouring of frustrated love and unfulfilled desire. These are basically camouflage. But the greatest store of songs of this class is to be found in the westernmost Goalpara region which shares the heritage with the contiguous areas of North Benga. Popularly known as “Bhawaiya” and “Chatka”, these songs have no religious or ritualistic association and are sung and listened to with great relish by one peasantry both Hindu and Muslim throughout the year.

9. Moishali and Maut songs

Structurally falling within one Bhawaiya and Chatka forms are two group of songs linked with two professions, viz. buffalo grazing and elephant catching. The first group is known as Moishali songs because of their association herd (Moishali) the songs because of the maut (elephant driver), actually centres round the elephant catching operation and people involved in it. Among the Moishali songs, the majority are built upon the theme of attachment of one wife for her moishal husband who is busy in the bather i.e. in the dairy farm grazing the buffaloes, the imagery being generally drawn from one object surrounding him.

“Ghultung Ghultung Goes The Bell, On The Buffalo’s Neck, My Womanly Heart Weeps,
It Does Not Rest At Home, Along With The Bell On Buffalo’s Neck, Goes The Playing Of Friends Dotara
My Womanly Heart Bursts, I Lose All Interest In My Household Chores”

(Source: “A handbook of folklore material of north-east india” by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das, Page no:69)

Moishali song

*Oh Chēngrāā !Môisher Bāfādār Bhāāi, Dāātāā Sāājāāo,
Dāātāā Sāājāāo, Chól Môishāān Bāāthāānôt Jāāi,
Āāmāār Bāārīt Jāāish Môishāālre, Bôishte Dibôre
Pēērāā, Khāāite Dibô Chikôn-Chēērāā, Gôālpariya Chēērāā
Dôī, Gôūripūrer Māālbhōg Kôlāare !Môishāāl Rē ...*

(Source: Dilip chakraborty, advocate and publisher of local news paper “Gana-chabuk” Dhubri.)

10. Baramahi Songs

Baramahi is a class of songs that depict one state of the mind from mouth to mouth. Usually of a young wife when her husband is away on business. These songs indicate the love between a husband and a wife. These songs always have a special kind of musical mode.

One of the examples of Baramahi songs is

*Kāānu Rāhala Pardesh, Jatada Samaya Porbesh. Dāmini Das-
Dish Dhāi, Nikarun Klānto Na Aāo. Sājni Kāhe Kōrabō Din
Banchāā, Jibēite Bhēl Ashēnchō. Gagane Garaje Ghan Ghōr,
Suni Unamattō Chittō Mōr. Jaba Nishi Bāhire Payan, Sikore
Nikole Porān. Dinkar Dibor Upekhi, Alikul Kamalā*

Nāpekhi. Chātaka Piu Piu Nāād, Ghanadas Kaha Paramād.
(Source: Dr. maheswar neog edited “Brajabuli gita-guchhi” (1974), page no. 56)

11. Songs of jest and Humour :

While jest and humour occasionally run through some of the songs of different types treated in other sections, humorous entertainment happens to be the primary concern of many songs that can be treated as a class by themselves. For example, *Tamul-Chorar Geet, Chah-Puraner Geet, Pachalar Juna, Kapahar Juna, Nanglar Juna* etc. One of the examples of such songs is :

The leaves of the Aathiya Banana, and the Sapling of Bhim
Banana, I Roam about the Streets
Hoping To Be Kept In As A Son-In-Law, I Uprooted The
Keturi Bulls, Mistaking Them For Turmeric
I Got An Old Man For A Husband, While I Was Expecting
The Young One.
(Source: “A handbook of folklore material of north-east India”
by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra
das, page No:75)

12. Lullaby and the nursery Rhymes

A lullaby is a soothing song, usually sung to young children before they go to sleep, with the intention of speeding that process. As a result they are often simple and repetitive. Lullabies can be found in every culture and since the ancient period. In Assamese literature, the lullabies are known as “*Nisukani Geet*” and the nursery rhymes are known as “*Dhainam*.” These songs are constructed with very liberal words. *Nisukani geet* comes out directly from the heart of the mothers. So these songs are wrapped with the love of mothers. These songs represents a imaginary world which takes the children in a different world of moon, stars, trees, leaf, flowers, helpful and talkative animals. The children establish friendship with all these objects. Each and every mother of this world creates a world of fantasy to make her child happy and represent that world in front of the child coupled with some music, words and rhymes. As these songs are sung in homely atmosphere in pure tunes to please the children, so, the lullabies have taken an important position in the society. These songs are sung to please the children by mothers or nurses and thus *Nisukani Geets* are also known as *Dhainam*. The main purposes of these songs are to give children happiness, to give them security and to create fear in their minds if necessary. The mothers have emphasized more on “moon”.

One of the examples of Lullaby can be given as follows:
Jonbai dear, let me have a needle,

Why A Needle?-----To Sew My Wallet, Why A Wallet?-----
--To Fill With Coins, Why Coins?-----To Buy An
Elephant, Why An Elephant?—To Ride About, What Happens
When One Rides About?-----

One Becomes An Big Man, What Does An Big Man Do? He
Beats Upon The Drum At Evening, Dum Dum Dum!!!!

(SOURCE: “A handbook of folklore material of north-east
India” by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin
chandra das, page no: 72)

13. Ballads

Ballads or songs with a story element seem to have once formed an important genre of Assamese oral folklore. Some of

the example of ballads which have been collected so far is Barphukanar Geet, Haradatta geet, Manikonwar Phulkonwaror geet, Dubala saner geet, Kamala-kunwarir geet, Tezimalar geet, Maniram Deuanor geet, etc. One of the examples of ballad may be taken from Maniram Dewanar geet associated with the trial and hanging of the patriot in 1857.

You Smoked Upon A Gold Hookah, O Maniram ! You Smoked Upon A Silver Hookah, What Treasure Did You Commit To Royalty. That You Got A Rope Around Your Neck...

(Source: "A handbook of folklore material of north-east India" by: Birendra nath dutta, Nabin chandra sarma, Prabin chandra das, Page NO:76.)

Folksons sung by Assamese women

India has a very rich and varied tradition of folk music. The extreme diversity in rural culture spawns endless varieties of folk-styles. Each region of India has its own particular approach and repertoire. Folk-music is a rustic reflection of Indian society at large. Folk music generally passes from one generation to another generation verbally and it is a kind of socialization process which transmits from one generation to the another one. From the very childhood this music is heard and imbibed as a simple matter of life. Folk music is an indispensable part of functions such as weddings, births and engagements. Along with the celebrations the folk music plays a very important role when the question of observance of ritualistic functions and worships. Women are often unnoticed by popular media and academic literature. Sometimes their hopes and expectations are dominated by the respective societies. Through folksongs, women try to show how the gender discrimination has tried to make them marginalized and how they encounter their identity in the society. The systematic study of the folksongs sung by woman will bring to light how gender identities are constructed interpreted and negotiated by woman from different walks of life and also bring forth the reflection of ordinary woman on the state of their societies and their future. Though folksongs are thriving as oral tradition in various part of Assam, systematic study concerning the voices of woman is often lacking. Therefore, the paper is an effort to find out the voices of resistance and how they encounter their identity in the society. This paper will generate new knowledge about the marginalized section of the society, who are often straitjacketed or in worse cases go unnoticed by the popular media and academic literature.

Nisukani geet and Dhainam (Lullaby and Nursery rhymes)

Motherhood is the greatest possession of women. It is said that life of a woman is incomplete without becoming a mother. A woman gives birth to a child, nurtures the child with love and care and performs all the duties to raise the child. The mother is the first teacher of children because she is the first who gives the child the basic knowledge of the world and primary education. Raising a child needs devotion because the children are so soft that they need the help of others to manage their lives. They have to depend upon their mothers for milk and other necessities because they cannot express their feelings through words. Mothers have taken a chance to express their love for their children through lullabies and nursery rhymes. A lullaby is a soothing song, usually sung to young children before they go to sleep, with the intention of speeding that process. As a result they are often simple and repetitive. Lullabies can be found in every culture and since the

Ancient Period. The Oldest Children's Songs Of Which We Have Records Are Lullabies, Intended To Help A Child Sleep. Lullabies Can Be Found In Every Human Culture. In Assamese Literature, The Lullabies Are Known As "Nisukāni Gēēt" And The Nursery Rhymes Are Known As "Dhāāināām." These Songs Are Constructed With Very Liberal Words. Nisukani Geet Comes Out Directly From The Heart Of The Mothers. So These Songs Are Wrapped With The Love Of Mothers. These Songs Represents A Imaginary World Which Takes The Children In A Different World Of Moon, Stars, Trees, Leaf, Flowers, Helpful And Talkative Animals. The Children Establish Friendship With All These Objects. Each And Every Mother Of This World Creates A World Of Fantasy To Make Her Child Happy And Represent That World In Front Of The Child Coupled With Some Music, Words And Rhymes. As These Songs Are Sung In Homely Atmosphere In Pure Tunes To Please The Children, So, The Lullabies Have Taken An Important Position In The Society. These Songs Are Sung To Please The Children by mothers or nurses and thus *Nisukani geets* are also known as *Dhainam*. The main purposes of these songs are to give children happiness, to give them security and to create fear in their minds if necessary. The mothers have emphasized more on "Moon". Moon is a common character of every community living in Assam while the question of singing of lullaby arises. Sometimes, moon is the adorable maternal uncle, brother, elder sister respectively. Like moon, other objects like sun, stars, birds and animals also play important role in the psychology of children. Through these songs the mothers have tried to take their children in a fantasy world where the children can get happiness. A mother cannot understand what will make her child happy and through the *Nisukani geet* she has taken a chance to express her love for her beloved child. The lullabies are the example of the pure love of mother for her children. These are the examples of a mother's silent pride of motherhood.

One examples of Nisukāni gēēt may be given as follows

Môre Pônākān Xubô Xubô Ā, Pāthārôte Tōngi Rōkhi, Dhōri Xōru Xōru Pōkhi, Umōlibô Sōne Mūr, Dhenū Kār Lōi, Ujāgōri Nixā Jāgi, Ōre Nixā Pāji Kāti, Dīm Sonāk Mur, Kōbōch Āti Bōi.....Bôr Hōi Sōne Mūr Dōhōke Tōribô, Dekhōre Rākhibô Māan, Rōnōke Kōribô, Bōnij Behāi Āāhi Kōbô—Āāi Tōloike Ānisū Mōi, Dingā Bhōrāi Bīt, Āibelī Tōr Kākhot Bohi, Xūnim Dekhōr Geet..Sōn Mōr Kesā Sōn, Tōrāre Sōkhiyā Jōn, Jōnbiri, Sātsōri, Tōloike Āānime Mōi, Rājāre Kūnwāri.....Sōn Mūr Xubô Ā.

(Source: "Nisukani geet" composed by alimunnisa peer, collected by Manju majumdar barman. page no.12-13)

This song may be translated as follows

My Little One Will Sleep Now, My Baby Will Guard The Paddy Field, He Will Catch Small Small Birds And He Will Play With Them All Holding Bow And Arrows In His Hands! I Will Keep On Waking Up Whole Night, Will Cut Threads In My Spinning Wheel And I Will Make A Protective Shield For My Dear Child; When My Gold Will Grow Up, He Will Save Another Ten, He Will Protect The Reputation Of The Nation, Will Initiate War Against The Enemies, My Gold Will Go Out For Trading, After Coming Back He Will Inform Me That,

He Has Brought Me Property In Full Of Boats, He Will Tell Me,
I Will Sit By You In The Afternoon And Listen To The Patriotic Songs.
Oh My Gold, My Raw Gold.....You Are The Moon....Friends With The Stars....
I Will Make For You Necklaces And Pendants,
I Will Bring A Princess For My Son.....My Little One Will Sleep Now!

Biyanam (Marriage songs)

Biyānām means marriage songs. An Assamese marriage is a musical marriage. At every stage of celebration, from early negotiation to the end, women sing appropriate songs. The delicacy and refinement of woman's heart come out in caressing tunes when and *Namati* or leader of the chorus has to describe the beauty and grace of the bride, when the later is bathed in the sacred water, when she sits among her companions, when the bridegroom is to be greeted, when the "Sāmpradanā" is consummated. The *Nāmāti* genius is revealed most when she has to give expression expression to the atmosphere of sadness that prevail when the dear girl is to be taken away. *Aideo* is a term of endearment for a young girl. Marriage is a very touching ceremony where the dear daughter of the family is taken away by the family of the bridegroom and thus, the *Biyānāms* automatically flows out of the mouth of the women folk who are by nature sensitive. They can feel the pain of the bride who will be departed of her own family who on the contrary felt the same pain when their marriage was solemnized. In the *Biyānāms*, pain of the women heart is reflected, various instructions are given to the bride to lead a problem free life as lives are not at all satisfactory at the houses of the in-laws.

One of the examples of *Biyānām* may be given as follows

Māār Ghōrōt Jetiyāā Uliśāārèè Tètiyāā, Sāāhur Ghōrōt Jetiyāā Xūtār Kāāpor Ātiyāā.
Uli Sāārèè Xāādhibāā Gāāli Khāābō Pāāribāā, Sōmōniyāā Bāāideūr Kōthāāo Xunibāā
Bāāideūr Tumi Jāānibāā Bāāideūr Bujibāā, Sōmōniyāā Bāāideūr Lōgōt Xāābōdhāāne Solibāā
Sāāhu Hole Nōsūwai Kōsū Khāāle Khōjuwāāi, Sōmōniyāā Nānād Hōle Kōthaipōti Kōnduwāāi.
(Source: "Biyargeet" By: Anjali Devi, Page No:34)

This song may be translated as follows

When You Were At Your Father's Place, You Had Woolen Cloths To Wear, You Have Cotton Cloths Now At Your In-Laws Place, If You Will Ask For Woolen Cloths You Will Be Awarded With Scoldings, Listen To Your Contemporary Elder Sister....Accept Her As Your Own Elder Sister And Understand The Fact, Be Careful While Dealing With Contemporary Elder Sister, Mother-In-Law Will Make You Dance At Your Own Tune Just Like....Arum Will Make Your Throat Scratch....If Your Sister-In -Law Will Be Of Your Age.....She Will Make You Cry At Every Conversation!!! This is another example of *Biyānām* where *Namatis* are describing the would be situations at the household of the in-laws. In the house of the bride's father's house, the bride could wear woolen cloths but at her in-laws place she will have to wear cotton cloths only, and if she demands woolen cloths there, the in-laws will scold her. The *namatis* have instructed

her to listen to the orders of same aged sister -in -law and to deal with her carefully. She has been instructed that the way eating of arum plant and its roots makes the throat scratching, the same way, the mother-in -law makes the daughter in law dance on her own tunes and if she will have a sister-in-law of her age, she will make her cry in every step of her lif Goalpariya Lokgeet:

Goalpariya *lokgeet* refers to the lyrical songs of Goalpara that are not associated with religious or rituals. Love is the primary theme of these compositions, but not exclusively. There are various sub-genres of this music that differ in the musical mood and themes, of which the *bhāwāiyā* and the *chātkā* are principal forms, beside *mōishāli* and *māūt* songs. These songs are often sung in chorus, but they are suited as solos songs to the sole accompaniment of the *dōtōrā*. *Bhāwāiyā* and the *chātkā* are two main genres in Goalpara Lokgeets. *Bhāwāiyā* songs are basically of love and longing, with the name rooted in the Sanskrit word *bhāvā*. They are steeped in seriousness, and the tunes have a plaintive air to them. Love in *bhawaiya* songs is not tender and romantic; instead the songs express a longing for a husband or a lover. The *chātkā* songs, in contrast to , *bhāwāiyā* are themed not solely on love, and do not have the plaintive seriousness. Instead, they are direct and often flippantly casual. They often depict a special *dēwār-bhāūji* relationship, extra-marital relationships and situations. In Goalpariya lokogeets, the heart of the women have beautifully come out. Perhaps, these are the only songs, where pictures of the pain and agony of women heart have reflected in crystal clear way. Some of the examples of *Goalpariya Lokogeet* may be mentioned as follow:-

Mon mor kandere

Mōn Mōr Kāāndere, Rāāti Nishāā Ore Kāāle, Ninder Aālishē Pati Mōr Māāō Buliyāā Dāāke.....Mōn Mōr Kāāndere!. Aāji Bāāpo Kāānāā, Māā O Kāānāā, Ō Dāārun Bidhi Kāānāā Pāārāār Lōk, Tāākāār Lobhe Becheyāā Khāāise Pati Nāābāālok, Mōn Mōr Kāāndere, Aāji Kōiyāā Den Mōr Doyāār Bāābāāk ,O Kāāgāā Dudho Pāātheore Dibe.....Shei Dudh Khāāyāā Pāti Mōr..Māānusho Hōibe.....Mōn Mōr Kāāndere! O Bāāpok Khāāūk Mōr Bōner Bāāghre...O Dāārun Bidhi Māāōk Khāāūk Mōr Shrigāāle Ghotok Morāā Poriyāā Moruk Nidhuwāā Pāāthāāree.. Mōn Mōr Kāāndere...
(Source: "Goalpariya lokgeet aru mor kisu rochona gaan" by Asgar ali sheikh, page no:10)

This song may translated as follows:

My Heart Cries....Whole Day And Night.....At The Coziness Of Dreamy Slumber,
My Husband Calls Me The Mother! Today My Father Is Blind...And My Mother Too,
All The People Of My Community Are Blind....I Have Been Sold.....
In The Greed Of Money, I have been sold.....To A Husband Juvenile.
Go And Ask My Father To Send Milk Here, My Husband Will Drink That Milk And Will Grow Up.....Oh Forest Tiger....Consume My Father,
Oh Dear Foxes.....Consume My Mother, Oh The Matrimonial Agent.....
Let Him Die In Broom.....My Heart Cries.
In this *Goalpariya lokgeet*, the pain of a young girl is reflected. An over brim youthful girl is married with a child. Sometime

and often, he calls his wife as 'mao' (mother) in his drowsiness. He wants to drink milk rather than to fondle her breast in passion. So she weeps. She has complained that her greedy parents and neighbours have given her marriage with a boy who is yet to be grown up. She sends message by a bird to her father to send milk for her husband for drinking. She curses her parents and matchmaker in agony.

Jeng-Bihu

Bihu is an agricultural ceremony and the most cherished festival of Assam. There are three Bihus. "Rongali", "Kongali" and "Bhogali" Bihu. Rongali bihu is known by several names. The original name of Jengbihi is "Poinangjeng". This is a Tai-Ahom word. In Tai language, the meaning of the word "Poi" is Bihu. The meaning of "Nang" is young girl. The meaning of "Jeng" is pure and ideological. Thus the meaning of "poinangjeng" is "the bihu of pure young women". The reason behind terming it pure young girls' bihu is that the entry or participation of men folk in this bihu is strictly prohibited. In this bihu, women use to build a compound made of bamboo or branches of other trees and cover the area so that no one can see what is going on inside the compound. This is the symbol of no entry. This bihu is organized far from the village, generally in a forest area, under a big tree. The musical instruments used in this bihu is *Toka* and *gagana*. Through Jengbihi, women try to celebrate their womanhood, they try to respect themselves as human beings. Through the songs of "Jengbihi" women have tried to express their pain, anger, fear, strength and other feelings. Some of the examples of Jengbihi may be given as follows:-

Jeng Bihu(1)

*Jāākōi Bhāālkōi Bāābi Ō' lōgōri, Jāākōi Bhāālkōi
Bāābi, Kūnūbāā Hōturōi Sāābo Dīngī Mēli,
Ōi Rihāākhon Bhāālkōi Lōbi, Thēkēsī Thēkēsī Ō' Lōgōri,
Dōlōnite Jōkāāi Bāāō
Thēkēsī Thēkēsī Ō' Lōgōri, Dōlōnite Jōkāāi Bāāō, Māās
Khāālōi Hāāsōti,
Sāāhuwēkē Xudhī Sāō, Dīye Jodi, Dīye Jodi, Bihūloi
jāāo..... Māāse Māāri Māāri Ō' Lōgōri
Dōlōnitē Jōkāāi Bāāō, Mekhelāā Fāālilo Ō' Lōgōri, Dōlōnitē
Jōkāāi Bāāō,
Bōbōlōi Nāāikiāā Xutāā Hei, Dōlōnitē Jōkāāi Bāāō, Māās
Khāālōi Hāāsōti,
Sāāhuwēkē Xudhī Sāō, Dīye Jodi, Dīye Jodi, Bihūloi
jāāo.....
(Source: Usha gogoi and rekha bargohain, jengbihi dancers,
jayanagar, sixmile, guwahati)*

This song may be translated as follows.....

Oh My Friend! Use Your Bamboo Scoop Carefully, Some Notorious Youngmen Can Eye On You, Tie Up Your Breast-Cloths Carefully..... Let Us Catch Fishes In Muddy Fields..... Dash Your Bamboo Scoops..... Let Us Ask For Permission From Our Mother-In -Laws.... If They Permit... Let Us Go To The Bihu Fields..... Let Us Catch Fish By Dashing Our Scoops Forcefully, I Have Torn Up My Wrapper, But I Don't Have Thread To Make One In My Spinning Wheel..... So Let Us Catch Fish In Muddy Fields..... Let Us Ask For Permission From Our Mother-In -Laws.... If They Permit..... Let Us Go To The Bihu Fields.....

This bihusong symbolizes the role of women in a society. Women have always played an important role in the formation of the society through her intellectual capability, mental strength, charisma and beauty. Women give birth to child, nurture them, give them primary education and the basic knowledge of the world. Women run the household and also contribute to the economic condition of the family through working in the paddy fields and other professional works. She is an expert in fishing and through fishing she wants to feed her family with fish. Thus a woman has to play multifarious role in her life. In this song the women want to say that, they should do fishing quickly and wear her *riha* (a piece of cloth to cover the breast area of women which is worn with girdle) carefully otherwise the enemies will look at her body. They are fishing with "*jako*" (a kind of bamboo scoop used in catching fish). But they want to go to celebrate *bihu*. But they are scared of their mother-in-laws. So they are saying that they are catching fish and have catch enough fish and they think that after catching so many fishes their mother-in-laws will be satisfied. They have planned to ask for the permission of their mother -in -laws and if they permit the daughter-in-laws will be able to go to celebrate *bihu*. Even they have torn their girdles and they do not have threads to make a new girdle, still they want their mother-in-laws to give them permission to go to the *bihu* fields. The song reveals how the lives of women are in control of their in-laws. For the whole year they are busy in conducting their social and domestic responsibilities, still they do not get a single day where they can enjoy their freedom as a human being.

Sare-Barat

This is one of the few real vrata-type ceremonies found in Kamrup region of Assam. Actually it is called and "*Sorai-Vrata*" or "*Katyayani-Vrata*" which is associated with Goddess *Katyayani*. *Katyayani* is another name of Goddess *Durga*. She is known as *Katyayani* because she was first worshipped by *Sage Katyayan*. Every year, in the Chaturdashi of month of Aghona (November) this vrata is solemnized. Literally *Sare-Barat* means the bird-fast and young girls and married women take part in this festival. This festival is conducted by women through some non-shastric rituals without the assistance of the Brahmin priests. The rituals centre round tiny clay birds fashioned by women themselves. The toy birds are planted on a small clay platform. The purpose is to ensure the welfare of the household, particularly the menfolk. Singing of special songs meant for the occasion constitutes an important part of the performance of the ceremony. Some of the songs associated with Sare-barat are:

*1. Tūmi Jōwāā Pāāтели Ōi, Āāmāāk Dī Ōi Bōr, Āāmāār
Swāāmik Jibōn Thōi, Chāandrā Dibākōr.*

(Source: Kamakyar lokgatha" by: Ashtami tamuli, page NO:25)

This song says:- You Go Under Ground, After Blessing Us All, Please Enhance The Life-Span Of Our Husbands... Like The Sun And The Moon.

Kati Pujar Geet

In Goalpara district, Katipuja is one of the most cherished festival. Katipuja is only organized by the woman folk. For this reason, all the songs and dances associated with it are only conducted by women. In the sanskranti of Kati-Aghona month,

this puja is organized. The main purpose of this puja is to prosper the development of paddy-fields and maintenance of family. Generally, this puja is conducted at night and in a lonely place. Sometimes, in the courtyard of a particular family is also chosen for this puja. But the entry of the menfolk is strictly prohibited in the area of worship. The women make a stage for the God which is known as Mandapa. They start dancing and singing revolving around the Mandapa. The women who wish to have babyboy, put some burning lights known as “saki” on a kula or dola (utensils for domestic kitchen use made of bamboo), carry that on their head and sing and dance around the Mandapa. After that the description of idol of “Kati-Thakur” is given. The songs which centre round Lord Kati or Kartik are known as “Kartik-sajjan”. These songs are erotic in nature.

Hèmèl Rããjãã Bôshiyãã Aãse Hèmèl Pôrbôte, Hèmèl Rããjãã Bããp Chôndîr, Mènèkãã Mããô.

Mènèkããr Udôre Chôndî Mããôr Jônômô, Dûdhè-Bhããte Chôndîk Kôrilô Mããnush.

Dããt Bhããngil Chôndîr Sûliô Aãshilô, Ek-Dûi Kôriyãã Chôndî Hôilô Kãnyããkããl.

(Source: “Rabha jibonor sinta-bisitra” by: malina rabha, Page No:60)

This song may be analysed as follows:-

King Hemel Is Sitting On Hemel Mountain, Hemel Is The Father Of Chondi And Maneka Mother!
In The Womb Of Maneka Chandi Took Birth, Chondi Was Grew Up In Milk And Rice....
Her Milk Tooth broke And Hair Grew... Thus She Reached To Youth!

In this song, it is said that, King Hemel is sitting in Hemel mountain. Hemel king is the father of Goddess Chondi and the name of her mother is Meneka. Meneka carried Chondi in her womb, gave birth to Her and always fed her rice-milk with unconditional love. Goddess Chondi started growing, her teeth were broken, new hair grew up and slowly n gradually she became young.

Subasani Pujar Geet

Another puja organized by the women of Goalpara region is *Subasani puja* which is organized for the prosperity of the family and for the wellbeing of the children. Subasani Goddess is known as “*patita-paboni*”, “*Sanatani*”, “*Mangalmayee*”, “*Bhaktimukti*” and “*Siddhidayee*”. In Goalpariya folk custom, it is prescribed that after the conduction of *Subasani puja*, listening to the “*Bratakotha*” is compulsory. The married women solemnize the puja praying Goddess Subasani to bless their unmarried daughters so that their marriage happen at a very short period of time. For this reason, the women offer prasadam and betel-nut and betel-leaf to Goddess Subasani. This ritual is known as “*Guwa-kota*” ritual. The songs in this puja are:

Mããi Sûbôsãni Jãgãt Mããtãã, Sokolu Kamônãre Phôlãtã, Pritthimir Modhyotete Îndrarãni, Tushtu Hobãã Mããi Subasãni. (Source: Jonmoni bodo kalita, Mukalmuwa, Nalbari)

This song says

Oh Mother Subasini! You Are The Mother Of This World..... You Are The Result-Giver Of Every

Wish.... You Are The Queen Of This World..... Please Get Satisfied Oh Mother!

In this song, the women folk is telling to goddess Subasini that She is the mother of this world and she is the queen. People do wish of so many things but She is the only one who fulfils the wishes and expectations of the devotees. The women folk do not know, what can make the Holy Mother to get satisfied and so they have a verbal request to the mother to get satisfied with their worship, and get satisfied with whatever they have been able to manage for her.

Hudumpujar geet

Another puja which is conducted by the women of Goalpara region is “*Hudum Puja*”. Usually this puja is conducted to bring rain at the time of dry weather at the night-time of “*Fagun-Sot*” month. There is no any particular date of this puja but some people conduct this puja at the time of “*Madan Chaturdashi*”. Some people solemnize this puja on Tuesday or Saturday nights. This is a puja of women, there is no any task of Brahmin or priest in this puja. This puja is consisted with dances and songs, though no musical instrument other than “*song-dhakka*” is used in this worship. Entry of men folk is strictly prohibited in this puja except the man who bits the “*dhol*”. This man is known as *dhakua*. When he bits the drum, his eyes are either tied with black cloth or he is kept in a little cottage, the walls of which are of black colour. *Hudum-deo* is the rain-god who is worshipped by women at the time of drough with highly secret and exclusive rituals which include not only the singing of obscene songs but even erotic dances in the nude in a bid to invoke the god. Nudity is the part of this worship. In this puja, women devide themselves in two groups and step into river water and play with water. This is an old tradition where two groups scatter water on each-other and thus enjoy their night. The main purpose of this puja is to abolish dry weather and bring rain in this earth. Women worship the “*Rain-god*” by scattering water upwards. These songs are erotic in nature. Young women sing and dance in order for the prosper the crops and end drough. This puja, generally starts in the afternoon and ends at night. *Hudum-deo* is compared with Lord Indra or Lord Baruna. The songs associated with this puja are:

Hûdûm Hûdûmir Biyãã Genû, Kããner Shônãã Dããne Pããnu, Hûdûm Nããmer Ke

Dhõbõl Ghõray Choriyãã Hûdûm, Khentõ Nããme De, Aãy Re Hããriya Megh,

Aãy Põrbõt Dhããyãã, Hããriya Meghok Bããndhiyãã Thuisung Gõwããr Bããl Diyãã,

Dhoûwla Megh -Kããlãã Megh, Mëgh Sodõr Bhããi, Ek Chilãã Jõl Dãõ, Gãõ Dhuiyãã Jããi.

Dëõyãã Jhõri Aãyre, Hõlo Daãngo Diyãã, Mõynãã Burhi Pujãã Kore, Aãthiyãã Kolãã Diyãã.

(Source: “Sanskriti krishti janakrishti aru anyanya” by: Dr. bhrigumohan goswami, page no: 125)

This song may be translated as follows

I Went To Attend The Marriage Ceremony Of Hudum And Hudumi,
Got Ear-Rings As Gift, Some One Called Hudum, Rushes Riding The White-Horse,
Please Step Down For A While! Oh Please Come Rigid Cloud,

Come Crossing The Mountains, I Have Tied Up The Arrogant
Cloud By The Hair Of Hips,
White-Cloud, Black-Clouds, You Are Siblings, Give A Little
Water To Take A Bath.
Shower With Thunder Which Makes The Courtyard Flow,
An Old Lady Called Mayna Is Worshipping You With Sticky
Banana!!

In this song, women are requesting clouds to cross the mountains and to come in their village. They are singing if the clouds come, they will tie the clouds with their hair and necklace. These songs are erotic in nature and for this reason they cannot be presented openly in a civilized society. Now-a-days, these sounds have been modified to a great extent so that they can be presented in stages and cultural functions. Thus the simplicity of the women folk have come out in this songs. They have considered that the rain, clouds and other natural phenomena take place due to the influence of God. They have tried a lot to convince Him, to compel HIM to bestow the country with shower. They have tried to seduce the God with the help of their sexuality. They have not hesitated to make themselves naked and sing erotic songs. When the world is about to die due to lack of water, and when her dear and near one's suffer in the scarcity of water, she can go to any length to invite Rain. These songs and the ritualistic functions observed in Hudum Puja, not only reflects their concern for the country, but also a strong dedication on whatever they do.

Apeswari Puja

The word "Apsara" is a Sanskrit word, which is used as "Apesari", "Apesara" or "Apeswari". This is also a ceremony of women, a worship conducted by women. If the children lose weight unnecessarily, or if a girl child does not attain puberty at the appropriate time, then only this puja is conducted. It is believed that, the Apeswaris or some fairy like elements stay in heaven but at mid-afternoon they come out to the world and gossip. Generally, the children come out of their house and start playing. If, anyhow, the children touch the shadows of the Apeswaris unknowingly, they become angry and as a result they fall sick. For this reason, when the mothers see that their children are suffering, they use to organize this puja to ask for forgiveness of the Apeswari to bring back the health of their children.

There are many songs associated with this puja, which may be mentioned as follows:-

Āi Āpēsāri Tēlmāār Nōbōini, Akāāshe Aāsīlāā Sāāi, Bīmāāne Sōhit Nāāmiyāā Aāhilāā, Nōr Mōnisēr Thāāi.

(Source: Sarala das, Udaypur, Nalbari, Assam)

This song says: Oh Mother Apesari.....You Sisters Were Looking Up The Sky....

You Have Come To Earth In Your Vehicle, It Is The Place Of Human Beings!

Thus the women use to satisfy the Apeswaris with these flattering songs for the wellbeing of their children. The simplicity of women heart comes out in these songs. They do not know how to protect their children from Pox and hence how to make them get rid of sufferings. So they think that, if they sing flattering songs for the Goddess Apeswari, the Goddesses will get satisfied and will not harm their children.

So the mothers prefer to flatter the goddesses. The Goddesses have been said that, they are so famous that their fame is much higher than that of Sun and Moon. They belong to the heaven. Still they visit the world, where the sinful human beings do stay. What a generosity the Goddesses have. The road through which they travel is made of vermilion which keeps their feet pink, they take bath in the pond filled with purified milk, still they draw up water by themselves.

Aaila Puja or Aula Puja

Weaving is the art of women's hand which has been regarded by women folk as "Bihkarmi Bidya". For every Assamese, the art of weaving is a high standard art. When there was no book-education for women, weaving was considered as the most cherished qualification for womenfolk. The women who were not perfect at the art of weaving had to tolerate many social humiliations and insults. Perhaps, for this reason, women started worshipping an unseen power who was believed to bless women to make them perfect in weaving. This unknown power was known as "Aila" or "Aula". In the undivided districts of Kamrup, this puja was known as "Devi" puja. Whatever may be the name. Aila, Aula Devi puja etc. But this puja is organized for Devi Durga. At the time of Durga puja, either on Navami tithi or there are many songs Dashami tithi, this puja is organized by women and young girls to be perfect in the art of weaving. There are many songs associated with Aila puja, such as:-

Xūtāā Kāāto Xūtāā Kāātō, Rōngēē Jōtōrōt. Devi Aāi Sōhūrik Jāāy Jōōr Bōtāāhōt.

Itū Jōkhāāri Lūitōre Bāāli, Kēēekē Pāār Hobāā Aāi. Sōnāār Nāāwkhōni, Rūpōr Bōithakhōni

Bāāi Sāāi Aānilāā Bāāi. Kōilāāshot Aāsīlāā Aāi Bhāāgōbōti, Nitē Mūihō Bōli Khāāi.

Kāām rūp Dekhōte Aāsīāā Bhāāgōbōti, Kūmūrāā Pāābāāre Nāāi.

(Source: premada das, Alokpur, Nalbari)

This song may be translated as follows

Let us cut thread in our coloured spinning wheels.....The Goddess is going for a tour, In The Cold Breeze The Sand Of River Luit Is So Dirty.....Oh Mother! How Will You Cross It Over, The Boat Made Of Gold And The Bow Made Of Silver....You Have Sailed It Through.....Oh Goddess Bhagaboti..... You Were Sitting On Koilash....Daily Had Sacrificed Buffaloes.....

Now You Have Arrived At Kamrup Where.....Even Melons Are Not Available.

This song is dedicated to the Mother Aula, where the women folk has expressed their thankfulness to the Goddess with certain amount of worries. They are happy that mother has arrived and they are ready to make new cloths for the Mother in their spinning wheels. Mother wants to go for a tour but, the women are worried about the Mother as the sands of Luit River will make her Clumsy. But she is the Mother, the protector, she sailed her gold boat with her silver bows. The women folk wonders why the mother has chosen their place to visit. She was in Kailas, where she stayed comfortably and she could consume the buffalo meat which was sacrificed in her name. But she decided to come to Kamrup. But in Kamrup, it is difficult to find a melon for the Mother, other good food should be considered as a different story.

Aai Naam or Sitala Naam

In “Skandha-purana” the meditation of devi Sitala has been mentioned like this: “*Namami Shitalang Devi Rasbhstang Digombaram, Marjoni Kalsapetang Shukpalang Kritamastakang*”. 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, the Ai or mother. Whenever a child catches measles or any other variety of rashes classed under small-pox, it is said to have “flowers” on it as Ai is also said to have appeared on it. Ainam or prayer to prohibit Ai is women’s affair. The women gather together and sing to the tunes of claps. The Ainam reveal the same quality of tenderness and refinement as the Biyanam. The Assamese mothers believe that if their children survive and attack of measles or small pox, it will have extra luck and they sing Ainam to please goddess Sitala.

There are many Aainams sung in different parts of Assam. The examples of which may be cited below

Āi Mūr Ujāāye Aāhile, Aāi Mōr Aāire Sāātebhōni, Aāi Mōr Bōsōnte Bāā Bōlōy.
(Source: Nilima Das, Nalbari)

The translation is: My Mother Has Come With Her Seven Sisters, I Can Feel The Breeze Of Autumn.....

In this song, women are trying to flatter the mother with praising words. The Women folk is singing that, they are fortunate enough that the Aais or the Mothers have arrived in this earth. The arrival of the seven sisters has made them feel as if the cold wind is breezing all over. The women are so worried for their children that they donot know, how to worship the Mothers. They think that, if they commit any mistake in the ritual, the Mothers may get angry and that can affect the health of their children. The helpless mothers do not want to take any risk and they donot even afford to take the chance of making the Goddess angry. So they are indecisive. They think that they could have worshipped Her with their minds, but the minds do not have any stability. The Mothers may get angry if They will be worshipped by a unstable mind. Similarly they are afraid of worshipping Them through body, as the body is sinful, they are not even comfortable to use spotted betel-nut and betel-leafs as well. They cannot even afford to worship Them through flower as the flowers are not pure. So they have decided to Worship Mothers only by Their names as the name of Mothers itself is the only purest thing. Thus the poor mothers use to satisfy the Aai Sitala and ask for her blessings for their children.

Ukuni Burhi Puja

Another puja conducted by the women folk of Assam is known as *Ukuni Burhi Puja*. It is mainly a puja to satisfy Devi Durga and through this worship women try to take blessings for her beloved family. One of the examples of the songs associated with this puja is given below:

Sūbhōkhōnē Aāilāā Aāi, Kī Diyāā Pūjim Aāi, Nāmoh Dūrgāā Chōrōn Tumāāre.
(Sources: Kamala kalita, Kalpana kalita, Biju deka kalita, nalbari)

The translation is: Oh Holy Mother! You have come in an auspicious moment... Oh Holy Mother!

How Will I Worship You..... Oh Durga! Accept My Prayer On Your Feet.

Conclusion

Though Indian women have made rapid strides in every aspect of modern life but on the negative note it can be said that, Indian women suffer from disabilities and social injustice. Assamese women have flourished in different field of excellence in present era. Now the women of Assam are present in every sector of workplace. They are the authors, journalists, teachers, doctors, nurses, corporates, entrepreneurs’, fashion designers, singers, models, actresses, receptionists, railways, air-hostesses and police officers. There is no any sector of workplace where Assamese women have not excelled. They are self-dependent, self-sufficing and in a position to take the charge of their happiness by themselves. There was a time, when women used to express the pain of their heart through folksongs and hence tried to seek some relaxation in the company of her female mates. The pain, anxiety and the voices of resistance is mainly visible in Lullaby, Marriage songs, Goalpariya Lokgeet and songs of Jeng-bihu. In all these categories of songs, women were taught to digest all the pain and sufferings but pretend in front of her in-laws and society that she is happy. She is prohibited to complain, even though she has been compelled to get married with a child. She has to obey her in-laws anyway without any complaint. But, the modern Assam has drastically changed. Now women are self-dependent. Women now do not sing heart-breaking songs in form of lullabies. She is self sufficing to provide whatever her child demands without depending upon the father of the child. No girl is taught to remain in the household of her husband if her in-laws makes her life suffocating. She is self-dependent now. The way she has the right to chose her life-partner, similarly, she has right to file for divorce if she is mentally or physically tortured by her husband or his family. If she will be tortured or murdered by her husband or his family, the modern laws are strong enough to push the culprits behind the prison. Now no women are forcefully made the wife of a infant which is reflected in the Goalpariya songs. Child-marriage is a crime now and specific laws have been made to fight against the menace. Now the lives of widows are better. Women have learnt to move on. Women do participate in Jeng-bihu competition held during the Rangali bihu all over Assam. Thus the mentality of people has changed drastically. The reason behind such change is the expansion of education. The education system has imparted ignorance and superstitions and women have understood that they are as capable as men and hence gender-equality has been established in the society which made the women flourish in different sectors of workplace. Worshipping or participating in ritualistic association is a matter of spirituality, the way women prayed to God for the wellbeing of her family, husband and children earlier, the process is still continuing and very much popular in Assam.

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