

# Story-Telling Folk Songs Related to Assamese Folktales: An Introduction

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## ABSTRACT

Assamese folk literature is very rich from the component of folk songs. There are many songs related to Assamese folktales. These story-telling folk songs are part of the scope of Assamese folk songs. Lakshminath Bezbaruah collected Assamese folktales and compiled three volumes. These are: 'Burhi Aair Sadhu' (1911), 'Kokadeuta Aaru Natilora' (1913), and 'Junuka' (1913). The folktale collection 'Burhi Aair Sadhu' is very popular Assamese folktale collection in the world of Assamese literature. In this paper, an analysis is attempted on the story-telling folk songs related to Assamese folktales and the importance of story-telling folk songs. The present study is based on analytical method. The primary data collect from the collection of Assamese folktales 'Burhi Aair Sadhu' by Lakshminath Bezbaruah.

**Keywords:** Assamese Folk Song, Assamese Folktale, Story-telling Folk Song

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Assamese folk literature is very rich from the component of folk songs. Neog divided to Assamese folk songs into fifteen types and one of them is story-telling folk song. (Neog 2010: 19-30)

There are many songs related to Assamese folktales. These songs are part of the scope of Assamese folk songs. Story-telling folk songs are not complete song. The songs related to Assamese folktales are basically the voice/dialogue of the characters. (Ibid: 29) According to Neog the songs related to Assamese folktales are story-telling folk-poems.

Several pathetic folk-stories are interspersed with couplets of poignant lyrics. (Neog 2004: 70) According to Bijoy Sankar Barman these songs may be called lyrics. (Deka and Ahmed 2014: 148)

## II. STORY-TELLING FOLK SONGS AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The story-telling songs create or construct the environment and mood in the folktales. Sadness is the main theme of many folktales' songs. For example: Tejeemola, Paanesoi, etc. Some songs related to sadness theme are given below:

### From the folktale 'Tejeemola':

- Do not stretch your hand, nor pluck a gourd  
O strange beggar woman.  
I am Tejeemola, who stepmother  
Pounded to death in her pedal-mortar  
Along with her gorgeous silken dress  
(Bezbaruah 2010: 28)
- Do not stretch your hand, nor pluck the flower  
O my dear, dear father.  
I am Tejeemola, who stepmother  
Pounded to death in her pedal-mortar  
Along with her gorgeous silken dress (29)

### From the folktale 'Kanchanee':

Kanchanee's Husband: Paddy, o paddy, through the paddy, Do not advance o my Kanchoni.

The blades will slice through your body.

Return home to where you belong  
Let my suffering be mined *alone*.  
(103-104)

Kanchanee:

Let the blades rip my body  
Heed-less shall I be to my agony.  
Together we will embrace death  
For I shall not live alone in distress  
(104)

In the folktale, entitled 'The Tale of the Kite's Daughter', merchant's seven wives sold kite's daughter to a trader. The trader took her home. There he made her a keeper of dried fish. As the kite's daughter sat under the sun guarding the dried fish, she wailed out on this way:

The potter's wife drifted me away.  
Mother kite lifted me.  
The prince of merchants married me.  
His seven other wives sold me to a fish-monger.

And he made me a keeper of dried fish (49)  
 The story-telling folk songs are basically the voice or dialogue of the characters. In the folktale 'The Raven and the Sparrow', raven called out to the sea, potter, land, buffalo, dog, cow, grass, and blacksmith in this way:

- a. Give me clay to give the potter  
 To make a pot to carry water  
 With which I will wash my beak  
 So that I may eat the sparrow (4)
- b. Give me milk to feed the dog  
 To build his strength  
 To kill the buffalo his horn  
 To dig the land for some clay  
 For the potter to make a pot  
 To carry water with which

I will wash my beak  
 So that I may eat the sparrow (5)  
 In the folktale 'The Tale of the Kite's Daughter', the kite's daughter called her mother in this manner:  
 The frontal leaf of the plantain plant  
 Sways to and fro in the breeze  
 For my mother the kite  
 To alight before me (47)

In the folktale 'The Tale of the Frog', the frog called the animals by singing:  
 Eating fried chick-peas  
 I walk on the road  
 Whosoever joins me  
 Is welcome to share my load (87)

This character is also present the following folktales: The Raven and a Sparrow, A Lady Gardener and a Flowering Plant, The Tiger and the Crab, Tejeemola, The Globe Fish, The Tale of the Kite's Daughter, Tula and Teja, Teekhor and Sutibai, Paanesoi, Champawati, The Tale of the Frog, and Kanchanee.

Sl. No.	Name of the Folktales	Name of the Owner of the Voice	Number of Songs (with repetition)
1	The Tale of Cat's Daughter	-	-
2	The Monkey and the Fox	-	-
3	Elephant-Fruit Princess	-	-
4	The Raven and a Sparrow	Raven	8
5	A Lady Gardener and a Flowering Plant	Lady Gardener, Plant, Cow, Cowherd, Cook, Woodcutter, Blacksmith, Coal-dealer, Cloud, and Frog	1
6	The Sly Fox	-	-
7	The Tiger and the Crab	Raven, Farmer	2
8	Tejeemola	Gourd, Fruit, Flower	4
9	The Old Couple and the Jackals	-	-
10	The Long-legged Visitor	-	-
11	The Globe Fish	Fish	3
12	The Son Born Late	-	-
13	The Fortune-teller	-	-
14	The Tale of a Catfish	-	-
15	A Strong Man	-	-
16	The Tale of the Kite's Daughter	Kite's Daughter	5
17	Tula and Teja	Teja, Teja's Father, Birds, King, Queen, and Men	18
18	Tit for Tat	-	-
19	Teekhor and Sutibai	Teekhor	2
20	Champawati	Champawati, Python, Laagee, and her daughter	3
21	The Tale of the Foolish King	-	-
22	Paanesoi	Paanesoi	1
23	The Tale of the Son-in-law	-	-
24	The Man with Night-blindness	-	-
25	The Tale of the Frog	Frog	1
26	The Tale of Tawoi	-	-
27	Lotkon	-	-
28	The Blessed Woman	-	-
29	The Two Clever Men	-	-
30	Kanchanee	Kanchanee, her husband, and King	3
<b>Total Number of Songs</b>			<b>51</b>

**Table 1: Number of Folk Songs Related to Assamese Folktales**

Recurrences are seen in the many folk songs related to Assamese folktales. This recurrences and repetition performed the role of catalyst to describe the story of the folktale. Example from the 'Tejeemola' folktale:

- A. Don't extend your hand, don't pluck a gourd... (28)
- B. Don't extend your hand, don't pluck a fruit... (28)
- C. Don't extend your hand, don't pluck a flower, dear father... (29)

## Assamese Folktales with and without Songs (Burhi Air Sadhu)

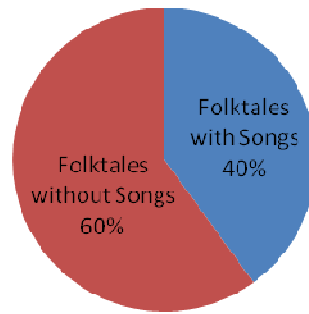


Figure 1: Assamese Folktales with and without Songs

The tale named 'A Lady Gardener and a Flowering Plant' is totally lyrical. The text of this tale is here:

There was a lady who loved gardening. One day with utmost care she planted a certain flowering plant. Many months passed but the plant refused to flower. She was baffled, therefore, one day she decided to speak to the plant.

Gardener: O plant, O plant why don't you flower?  
 Plant: The cow eats my buds, why should I flower?  
 Gardener: O cow, O cow why do you eat the buds?  
 Cow: The cowherd does not tend to me, why shouldn't I eat?  
 Gardener: O cowherd, O cowherd why don't you tend to the cow?  
 Cowherd: The cook does not give me food, why should I tend?  
 Gardener: O cook, O cook why don't you give food?  
 Cook: The woodcutter does not give me wood, why should I cook?  
 Gardener: O woodcutter, O woodcutter why don't you supply fire-wood?  
 Woodcutter: The blacksmith doesn't give me an axe, why should I supply?  
 Gardener: O blacksmith, O blacksmith why don't you give an axe?  
 Blacksmith: The coal-dealer doesn't provide me with coal, why should I give?  
 Gardener: O coal-dealer, O coal-dealer why don't you provide the coal?  
 Coal-dealer: If I should supply coal, why does the cloud rain?  
 Gardener: O cloud, O cloud why do you rain?  
 Cloud: The frog croaks, why shouldn't I rain?  
 Gardener: O frog, O frog why do you croak?  
 Frog: Why should I leave the way of my ancestors? (20-21)

### III. CONCLUSION

An analysis of these story-telling folk songs related to Assamese folktales has led us to put forth the following conclusions:

- Story-telling songs help the story-teller to tell a folktale nicely.
- The story-telling folk songs helped to increase the interaction between the story-teller and the audience.
- The story-telling songs create or construct the environment and mood in the folktales.
- The story-telling folk songs are basically the voice or dialogue of the characters.

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