

**Project**

**on**

**Folk Literature of Assam: A Study of Nitai-Panidehing Area**

**Topic : Nichukani Geet (Lullaby) of Nitai-Panidehing Area**

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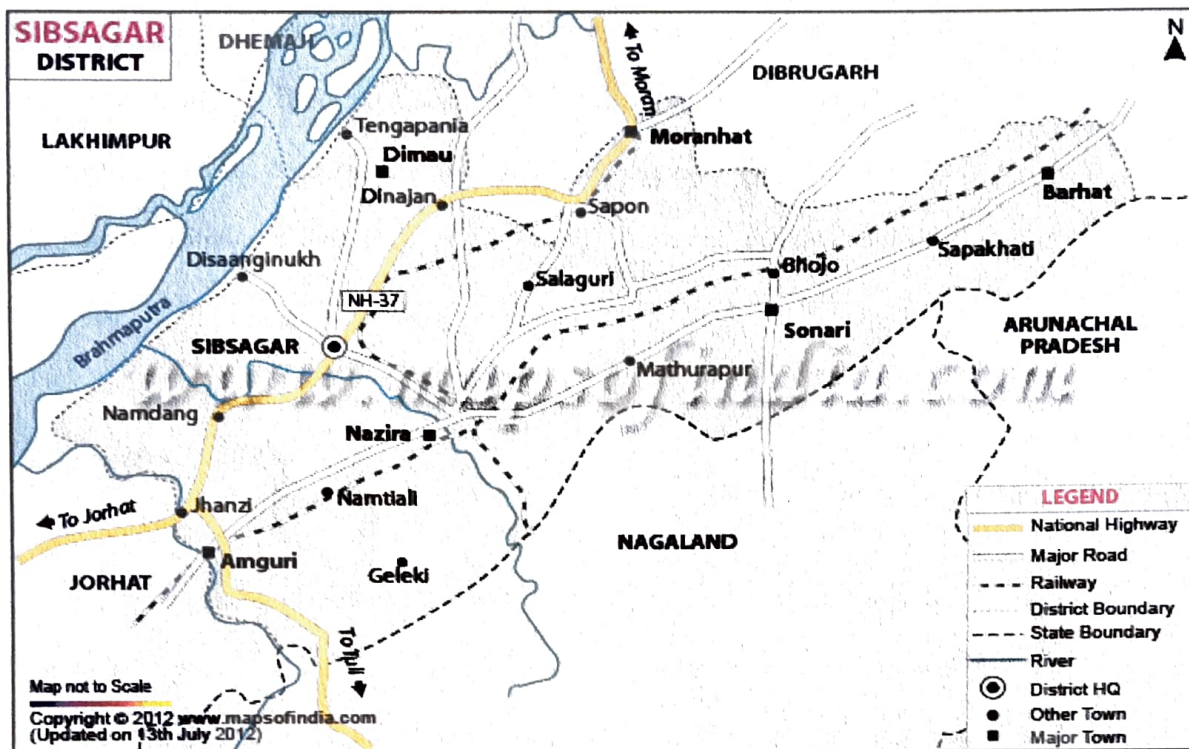


## **1.0 Introduction :**

Nursery rhyme is one of the unique creations of the folk all over the world. In Assam, nursery rhymes were very popular among the young children. These rhymes can be divided into two groups- 1) Lullaby. 2) Children game songs. These anonymous songs were composed by illiterate folk, especially by women who used to nurse their infants and young children. Lullabies were composed by the mother or grand mother or the nurse to lull the infants or young children. These anonymous lullabies are reflective of child psychology. The incongruous imagination and diverse feelings of a young child is well known to its mother. So, the mother tries to depict the world of her little one in these lullabies. In this paper an attempt is made to study the aesthetic value of this folk song. Assamese lullabies are full of rhetorical figures or figurative language that makes them very attractive and appealing. Indeed ,they are very sweet and melodious.

In Nitai-Panidehing area a great number of Nichukani geet or Lullabies are found. They are transmitted from the grandmother/grandfather to the next generations. The following are the report about the project on "Assamese Nichukani Geet (Lullaby) of Nitai-Panidehing Area".

## 2.0 The Area: (Map of Sivasagar District)



## 3.0 The People:

Assamese society comprises different tribes like Deori, Mishing, Kachari, Tiwa, Rabha, Karbi, Bodo, Moran, Matok, Hajong, Nacte, Koch etc. along with all other communities including people coming from different states of India. The area is also no exception. Basically Ahom, Sonowal Kachari, Koch Rajbangshi, Kalita, Keot, Deori, Mishing, Nepali people are living here.

## 4.0 Objectives of the Project: The Project is carried out to study

4.1 the lullabies found in the area.

4.2 the features of the lullabies collected through the project.



## 5.0 Methodology:

The report is based on primary and secondary data. The data are collected through interview and discussion with the villagers. Books, Souvenirs, records are consulted to prepare the report. Descriptive and analytical method has been used to prepare the report. Moreover the descriptive method has also been used wherever feels necessary. Through field study (in June 2024) primary or first-hand data are collected.

## 6.0 Discussion :

These lullabies are lyrical as well as descriptive. In Assamese, these are known as 'Dhai Nam'. In Goalpara district of Assam, these songs are called 'Sawa Bhuruka'. (Dr.Nirmal Prova Bordoloi) . The familiar things or creatures like frog, fox, birds like crow, heron, objects like stars, the moon and the sun are used by the mother to fulfil the curiosity of her child. The lullabies collected through the field study shows the following features:

The lullabies present some characters of birds and animals. Children like animals. Their mind is full of imagination. The lullabies are full of incongruous versification, which are called 'nonsense rhymes'. But, what is attractive of these rhymes is rhythm. Structure of words and use of rhythm are two important characteristics of these lullabies. For example,

Oh vixen do not come at night,

I shall cut your ears and

Will light a lamp.

Rhyme is used to bring melody to these songs. End rhymes and internal rhymes are generally used

In some of the lullabies found here, the animate and inanimate world are intermingled. 'O phul O phul nuphula kiya?', 'Jonbai e eti tora diya', 'bogoli e sabaholoi nogoli kiya' etc. are composed intermingling the animate and the inanimate word, which is an honest endeavour on the part of the mother to fulfil the ever curious mind of her young child. The theme of love (mother's love for her children) and dream (mother's dream about her child) are two guiding motifs of Assamese lullabies.

These lullabies are sometimes conversational in tone and colloquial in speech. 'Jonbai e beji eti diya / bejino kelei/ Mona siboloi / Monanoo kelei / dhan bharaboloi.

O sister Moon, please give me a needle.

Why do you want a needle?

To sew a bag.

Why will you want a bag?

I shall keep money.

Why will you want money?

To buy an elephant.

Paniram, a boy, will ride on the elephant and will go home. All the people look at him again and again ( Oh! He is riding on an elephant!)

In this conversation between a young child and the Moon, colloquial speech is used.



Most of the lullabies are short, simple poems where the mother expresses her love for the child, depicts her dream or describes the beauty of her children. The young children cannot understand the mystery of the cosmos, and phenomenal change of the world. Therefore, children believe that the moon is their elder sister and she will come at night to play with them. The mother draws their attention by reciting a sweet poem -----

O dove, where has my son gone?

Junbai has called him; he has gone beating 'kanh'

There are innumerable stars in the land of moon

Our son is worrying them.)

(Kanh is a kind of musical instrument.

Again this is a conversation between a dove and the mother. The dove, the stars, the moon all know her son well.

The descriptive lullabies describe the stories about Lord Ram and his wife, Sita, Lord Krishna and Rukmini, Usha and Anirudha etc. These stories are again very entertaining.

There are plenty of figures of speech in these songs. Let us discuss one by one.

Metaphor makes these songs very sweet and pleasing. A metaphor is an expression that "denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing" (M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms). It is a kind of comparison brought between two things without using 'like' or 'as'. For example

After eating rice little Maina gets on the dola,

After drinking he sleeps,

He feels drowsy after eating betel nut

And the dola falls down.

‘Dola’ is a kind of carrier (vehicle) without wheels which is carried by two people. Here the word ‘dola’ is used to mean the child.

Again in another lyric, the mother sings:

How can I look at the face,

It is fullmoon.

Eyes are of a deer.

Another example,

“ Our little daughter is the immature cucumber.”

A lot of similes are there in these lullabies. In simile also, a comparison is brought between two distinctly different things using the words ‘like’ or ‘as’.

Example -----

I cannot look at the face of my son, it is like a full moon.

Personification – Personification denotes humanization of objects of animate or inanimate world, abstract ideas etc. In these lullabies, sometimes an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as human being with human feelings and behavior. Example:



Nawe bole tulung bhutung  
 Bothai bole baun,  
 ( The boat says I am moving  
 The radar says I row.)

In the popular lullaby “Junbai e beji eti diya’, the moon is personified.

Another rhetorical figure is found in Assamese lullaby which is called climax.

In Assamese, it is called ‘Sar Alankar’.

Climax or Sar is “an ascending sequence of importance in its rhetorical order.” (M.H. Abrams)

Examples:

1.

After eating rice, the child comes to my lap  
 After drinking water he sleeps.  
 He becomes drowsy after eating betel-nut  
 And the ‘dola’ has fallen aside.

2.

Our son will sleep  
 His father will plant a banana tree  
 It will bear fruits  
 And our son will eat.

Hyperbole— “ The figure of speech, or trope, called hyperbola is bold overstatement, or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or of possibility”.

Lot of hyperboles are there in these songs.. Examples :

1.

Bakul flower blooms at the gate of the house

Three flowers always fall,

I cannot look at the eyes of my son,

If diamond or gems shine there!

2.

The unopened young banana leaves reach the sky

Hair spread to the underworld,

Ten fingers of my son shine

Nupur, the jingling bell, enhances His beauty.

In this lullaby beauty of Lord Krishna is Told before the child.

One figure of speech shows the cause and effect relationship between first and the second lines. In Assamese this is called Kabya Linga or 'Hetu Alankar' :

1.

The bobbin of my daughter is snatched by the crow

Her uncle is tall

So, he will bring it.

2.

Our son is very little

He does not eat rich on a leave.

His father has gone to get a dish made



He will take six months to reach.

**Alliteration:-** Another attractive figure of speech is found in these lullabies that gives them sweetness and melody. Alliteration is the repetition of the same speech sound, specially the consonant sounds are repeated. This device is used spontaneously by the folk women to make their songs sweet and attractive. It is interesting that this device was used in old English Oral literature or oral literature of more or less all the races.

**Example---**

1. Laopat Kojola bapukon ojota  
Here 'j' sound is repeated twice.
2. Barire bogori butoli khab,  
'b' sound is repeated thrice.
3. Lahori hatore Laruhe birohi  
'l' sound is repeated twice.
4. Natire nati joponar kathi  
'na' sound is repeated thrice.

Pun is a word play, using the same word in a sentence or poetic line to mean different things.

For instance –

Bhaluke khandile mati Oi Matiram,

Bhaluke khandile mati

Amare bopati kandib dhorise

Makok anogoi mati.

(Bear digs soil, Oh Matiram

Bear digs soil,

Our son begins to cry

Please, call his mother.)

Here the word 'mati' (soil) is used in three different aspects –

One is soil, another is the name of a man, third meaning is 'to call'

Antithesis- Antithesis is the use of two opposite ideas in the same line. In lullabies we find antithesis also. For instance –

' Young bride, old bridegroom

is an example of antithesis.

Imagery:

The mothers draw some pictures which bear witness of their varied imagination.

Example:

Rows of banana trees are there in the village,

Bats eat sitting on the tree,

A golden arrow is in my son's hand,

He is shooting the bats.



Symbols are not frequently used in lullabies but sometimes it is felt in some of them.

“In the broadest sense a symbol is anything which signifies something.”(A Glossary of Literary Terms, M. H. Abrams ).In the following lullaby symbol is used.

For example,

“While I was young father kept me as a pet bird. They shed quills in the cage. The peels of bananas are faded, how long you will keep me in your house?”

The song has an underlying meaning. In a patriarchal society a girl is married to another family. The bird is symbolic.

These lullabies are often humorous. The mother uses humour to amuse the child:

“The bridegroom of our daughter is older than her father ; there are hundreds of prawns hanging in the grey beard of the bridegroom.”

## **8.0 Conclusion:**

Nitaipukhuri-Panidehing Area is rich with folk literature. The people of the area carry oral literature and thereby bear the rich culture of Assamese folklore. Finally, we can say that the lullabies are manifestation of simple hearted Assamese people. These should be protected because in the modern time the folk literature are not practiced by educated mothers/fathers. These are as sweet as the love of a mother and as soft as the mind of the little ones. So these should not be left to be forgotten in the busy modern day culture.



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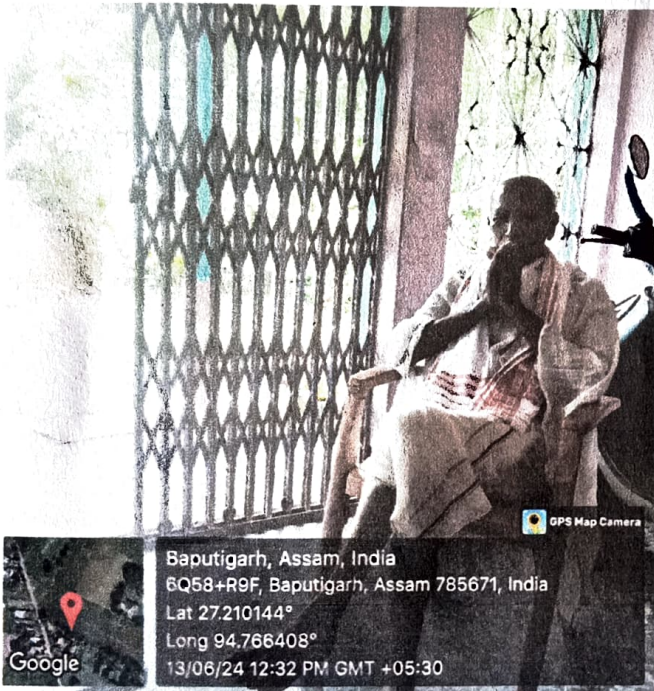
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## PHOTOGRAPHS OF FIELD STUDY