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BALLADS AND TALES OF ASSAM

A STUDY OF THE FOLKLORE OF ASSAM

24821

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FOREWORD

The Department of Tribal Culture and Folklore Research was started under the auspices of the University of Gauhati with the help of funds made available by the University Grants Commission and by the Government of Assam. The Department has already published two small volumes, one being a collection of folk-songs and the other of Islamite Zikirs and Jaris in Assamese. It has now been found possible to take up the publication of Dr. P. Goswami's *Ballads and Tales of Assam*, approved by Gauhati University for the Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.) Degree in 1955. This is a work of a pioneering character, carrying the methods of analysis and indexing of motifs into a study of the old ballads and Märchen of Assam. We shall be happy if this work is received with the approbation it deserves.

University of Gauhati,
31st March, 1960

B. K. BARUA
Dean of the Faculty of Arts

cd. from M/S. Rachna Book Centre, Delhi on 24.8.61 for Rs 10/-

PREFACE

This folkloristic study of the ballads and tales of Assam was submitted in 1952 for the D.Phil. degree of the University of Gauhati under the title: *A Study of the Folklore of Assam: the ballads and the Märchen*. It was the first thesis to be submitted at this University and it is now more than six years since the book was written out. The manuscript had remained unpublished primarily for the reason that the *Motif-Index of Folk-literature* of Stith Thompson—one of the examiners of the thesis—was being revised and Professor Thompson asked me to bring my work in line with the revised model. Professor Thompson's revised Motif-Index has been published, though I was not able to secure the first volume. So the page references to the introductory portion of Val. I of the original edition still remain. Thompson and Balys's one-volume *Oral Tales of India* is also available and it has been of particular value to me. The authors of the volume have been very kind to make an acknowledgement to material incorporated from my unpublished thesis.

A few of the entries in *Oral Tales of India*, however, do not seem to be properly shaped, for example:

1. D 1310.4.2, Magic plant bears fruit to indicate heroine is ready to marry.
2. H 71.11, Gold in stool as sign of royalty.
3. J 2136.5.7, Thieving numskull bears drum he finds in outhouse. Caught.

1. The plant does not seem to be magical; a pomegranate bears fruit in about three years. 2. The tale does not indicate that the lad was chosen king because he had gold in his stool. 3. The lad in question is probably not a numskull; he is the cheater and not cheated even once.

In the present shape, my book has been condensed in certain parts while added to in others. The Motif-Index chapter has gained most of all, though I am fully conscious of its shortcomings. For one thing, it is not comprehensive yet, and there may be mistakes in the figure work which demands considerable patience and close observation. During these years some more material has come up for notice. For

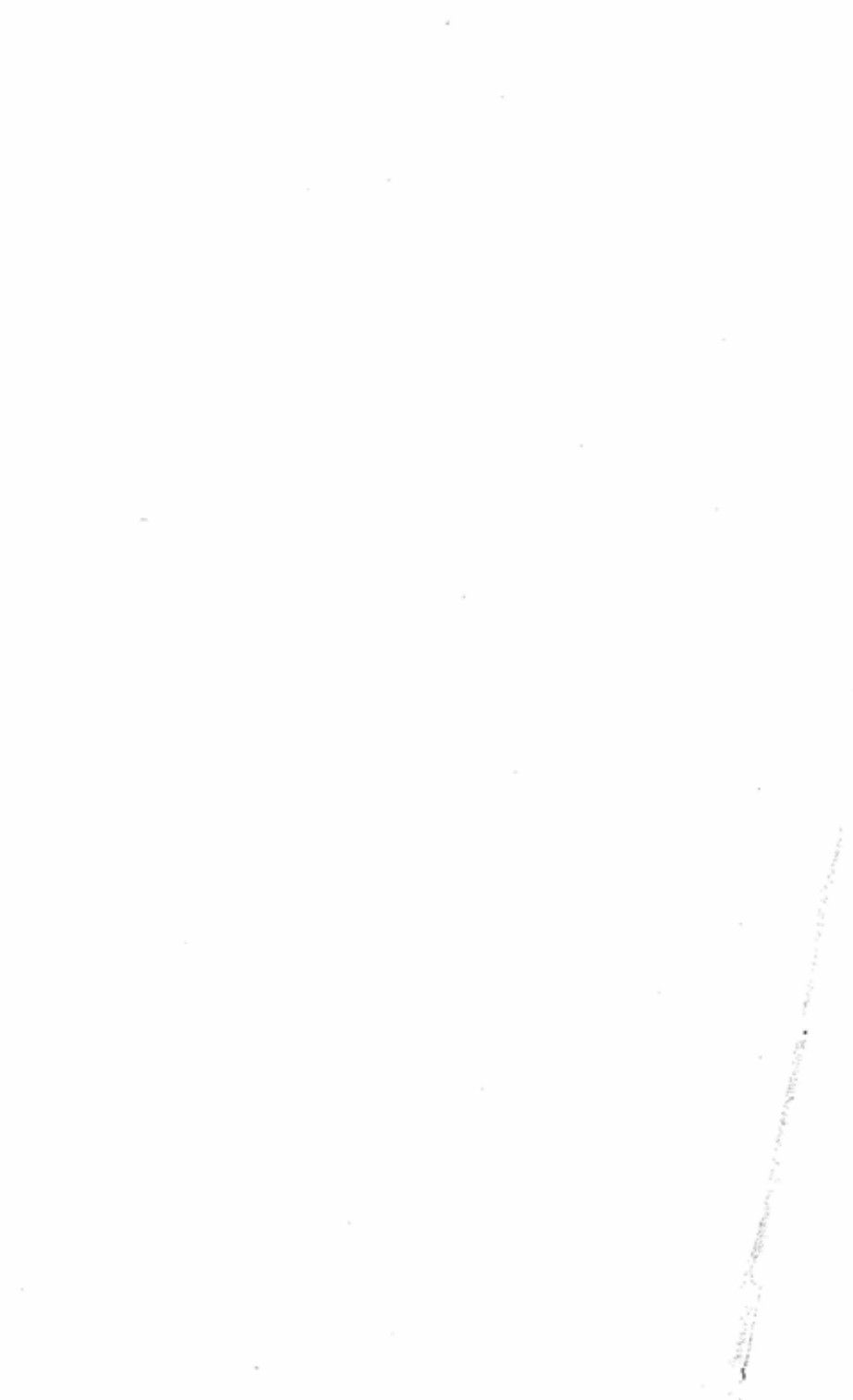
example, a few new ballads or ballad variants have been recorded and the stock of Märchen has also been enriched by new additions. As this work is primarily of a critical and analytical nature, I have not attempted to incorporate into it anything and everything that I have come upon, though the book is expected to give the reader a fair idea of the range and types of Assamese ballads and tales. A number of tribal tales have however been noticed, though there is scope for detailed work in the realm of Assam's tribal folklore. Fresh tribal material has been made available to the investigator in a recent publication: *Myths of the North-west Frontier of Assam*, by Verrier Elwin, another examiner of my thesis.

The thesis was prepared under the guidance of Dr. B. K. Barua, now Professor of Assamese, and at one time my own teacher at Cotton College, Gauhati. Professor Barua helped me considerably by procuring books and papers not easily available in this far corner of India. It is also at Professor Barua's initiative that it has been possible to send the manuscript to the press. I recall in this connection also the stimulus several of us used to have from Professor Banikanta Kakati, the eminent philologist, cut off prematurely towards the end of 1952. One of Professor Kakati's maxims: "Scholarship lies in being able to cut down inessentials"—echo of a Sanskrit saying, has often guided me in the course of my academic ventures.

Last of all, let me offer my gratefulness to all authors from whom I have freely quoted and without the benefit of whose experience my work would not have progressed at all.

15th August, 1959
University of Gauhati

P. GOSWAMI



CONTENTS

FOREWORD by Professor B. K. Barua	...	...	iii
PREFACE	...	...	v
1. INTRODUCTION : (i) Folklore, (ii) Scope of the study			1
2. THE BALLADS: (i) Definition, (ii) Classification, (ii) The minstrel, (iv) Historical, (v) Ballads of magic, (vi) Realistic, (viii) Satirical, (viii) Certain parallels, (ix) Technical features	...	...	7
3. THE MARCHEN: (i) Definition and classification, (ii) Animal tales, (iii) Tales of the supernatural, (iv) Jokes or humorous tales, (v) Trickster tales, (vi) Cumulative tales, (vii) Sources and parallels, (viii) Ultimate literary sources, (ix) Parallels among Central-India tribes, (x) Parallels among Assam tribes, (xi) Affinities to international types, (xii) Certain technical features			74
4. A SHORT MOTIF-INDEX OF ASSAMESE TALES AND BALLADS: (i) Motif, (ii) Mythological motifs, (iii) Animals, (iv) Tabu, (v) Magic, (vi) The dead, (vii) Tests, (viii) The wise and the foolish, (ix) Deceptions (x) Chance and fate, (xi) Society			159
5. THE BALLADS AND THE MÄRCHEN	...	...	241
APPENDIX	...	...	250
INDEX OF ASSAMESE BALLADS AND TALES SUMMARIZED			251

ERRATA

- P 4—Please put section mark (ii) above para 3
P 17—Para 2 line 3: it should be—castanets
P 45—Para 3 line 1: it should be—It will have been seen . . .
P 109—Para 2 line 1: it should be—ultimate
P 114—Please put section mark (viii) above para 3
P 244—Para 1 line 2: it should be —Kamala Kuwarir

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

(I)

A conscious attempt to study all affairs which relate to man in his social bearings has tended to foster the growth of methods loosely grouped under sociology. Sociology ultimately aims at the modification of social life and its objective might be described by that famous dictum of Karl Marx's ; Philosophers have only explained the world, our task is to change it. The modern emphasis on scientific sociology tends to underestimate folklore, for as has been observed, "historically, fictions about nature and in even greater measure folk justification for social ways have delayed scientific exploration of society."¹

Folklore, as inherent in the life of the folk themselves, may be an obstacle to their progress, but in the hand of the trained and critical observer it is "the key to understanding the folk around us," on which so much of social progress depends. One need not go to the extent of characterizing folklore as an exact science, though there have been large claims on its behalf. A. R. Wright defined folklore as "the science which studies the expression, in popular beliefs, institutions, practices, oral literature, and arts and pastimes, of the mental and spiritual life of the folk, the people in general, in every stage of barbarism and culture"². Certain noted authorities on folklore have written books with titles such as *The Science of Fairy Tales*, *Folklore as an Historical Science*. The sociologist might well fight shy of such large claims. To take the case of myths, which form an integral part of folklore: at one time they were supposed to have fixed patterns and explain rituals. But an anthropologist like Franz Boas, after an extensive study of North-American Indian tales, has shown that the origin of all tale is to be explained "as due to the play of imagination with the events of human life," and that the

barrier between the myth and the folktale is not rigid, for the data show a continual flow of material from mythology to folktales and vice versa, and that neither group can claim priority^{*3} This is a pointer to scholars who would discover the nature of old cults on the basis of the Sanskrit *Ruranas*.

So it would seem that one need not make claims for folklore as an exact science. If understanding a friend implies the assumption of sensibility and imagination on the part of the one who would try to understand, then folklore is more an art than a science, for it deals more with understanding than with laying down laws. It has its principles, but much of its value lies in the way in which these are applied.

In defining the scope of folklore the Folk-Lore Society of London has put down that the word 'folk-lore', coined by W. J. Thoms in 1846, has established itself as the generic term under which are included the traditional institutions, beliefs, arts, customs, stories, songs and sayings current among backward peoples or retained by the less cultured classes of more advanced peoples. It comprises popular beliefs about the world of nature, animate and inanimate; about human behaviour and things made by man; about a spirit world and man's reaction with it; about magic and witchcraft; about spirits and fairies; about spells, charms, amulets, luck, omens; about disease, and death. It further includes customs and rites connected with marriage and inheritance, childhood and adult life, death and burial, and with festivals, warfares, hunting, fishing, cattle keeping, agriculture and the like; also myths, legends, songs, dances, proverbs, riddles, nursery rhymes and local traditions.^{*4}

Thus, folklore covers everything which makes part of the traditional and environmental equipment of the people. It is the very expression of life and thought and may explain the motives which influence social and national modes of behaviour. Acceptance of the term 'folklore' in this wide sense sometimes encouraged loose thinking and this has again led to attempts at circumscribing its meaning. Lewis Spence, for example, makes the emphatic statement that "in the strictest technical sense it should be applied only to the surviving superstitions and fragments of older religious belief and

custom to be found among the uncultured classes of modern peoples".*⁵ Spence would include games, dances and folk-rhymes in so far as they preserved the memory of primitive religion and custom. In the U.S.A., on the other hand, the stress is on the songs and tales and sayings: this is brought out in the words of M. S. Herskovits: "When we define folklore as the literary arts of a culture, we depart somewhat from the conventional definition of this term, which, particularly in England, the continent of Europe, and Latin America has tended to hold more closely to the implications of its original statement than in the United States."*⁶ The Folklore Institute of America has tended to lay its principal emphasis on "the manifestation of tradition in tales, songs, and dances." This is in view of the fact that it is impossible to cover adequately the entire field of folklore.*⁷

Prof. Stith Thompson, a leading U.S.A. folklorist, in a course conducted by him, has analysed the types of folklore in the following manner: *⁸

Folklore of the spoken word

- A. Tales and traditions
- B. Songs
 - 1. Narrative ballads
 - 2. Lyric—mostly love songs but not always
 - 3. Work songs
 - 4. Play songs
 - 5. Children's songs, etc.
- C. Riddles
- D. Proverbs
- E. Sayings
- F. Charms

Practices

- A. Seasonal practices
Christmas, Easter, Saints' days, etc.
- B. Agricultural practices
Planting by phase of moon, etc.
- C. Superstitions

In his own work Prof. Thompson has limited himself to "folklore of the spoken word." In fact, it is not possible to do justice to the whole subject by a specialist in one or two fields. Folklore has relationships with literature on the one hand and anthropology on the other; and in the interpretation of data the folklorist has to seek aid from the historian and the psychologist as well. These difficulties have led the Folklore Institute of America to emphasize on the tales, songs, and dances only.

It is because of such difficulties that those who deal with folklore materials limit their scope of work to certain aspect or aspects of a people's traditions. In the monographs on the Assam tribes (by Hutton, Mills, etc.) there are chapters on the tales of the tribe or tribes concerned, while there have been biggish works on songs and tales alone if the publications of William Archer and Verrier Elwin are taken into account—and not mentioning the products of German or Scandinavian scholars. Stupendous works like Frazer's *Golden Bough* or *Folklore of the Old Testament* have large coverages of ground, dealing mainly with myths of widely separated areas.

The folklore of the Assamese-speaking people of Assam with which the present study is chiefly concerned, may be analysed on the lines suggested by Prof. Thompson and the tales, songs, dances, beliefs—all may be examined. Certain collections of tales, ballads, love songs, marriage songs, proverbs, and even superstitions have been published, mostly in the vernacular. Specimens of all the varieties of the oral literature are easily available, but the collections of tales have not been comprehensive, a considerable number of tales with their variants seem to remain unrecorded. The recorded specimens do not seem to have been studied yet in any sensible manner. The folk dances have hardly received serious notice. There remains much work to be done in the entire field of Assamese folklore. As the Assamese-speaking population is touched on all sides by Mongoloid tribes, some Aryanized and some still retaining their tribal affiliations, the folklore of the former raises many interesting problems, of borrowing, of lending, and of synthesis. After the preliminary recording

of sufficient data investigation into these problems would be easier.

The present study limits itself to an examination of the "folklore of the spoken word", more specifically, the ballads and the fictional tales, of the Assamese. The work will be partly descriptive and partly analytical. It is not possible to do without a certain amount of description in a work the data of which are all in the vernacular.

The methods followed in the study have not been wholly literary, though the present writer is a student of literature by training, but folkloristic, being derived from a study of Prof. Stith Thompson's *The Folktale*, *Motif-index of Folk-Literature*, and other works of this nature. The types of the Assamese ballad and the tale have been examined from stand-points which have been established in lands where folklore studies have made much headway. The principles of study followed, it would be seen, lean heavily on Prof. Thompson.

As folklore is a sociological science, the study will throw considerable light on the modes of life and thought of the people—not of always of a past age, to emphasize the point right at the beginning. For though folklore is primarily traditional culture it gets modified along with the progress of society and takes on the colour of the times. The character of a tale at a particular point of time depends no less upon the quality of the narrator and the social changes brought about by extraneous factors than upon its traditional form. As has been observed by Franz Boas, "We find the cultural, formal background of the art of narrative of primitive people almost entirely determined by their present cultural state."²

The Assamese-speaking population cannot be characterized as primitive, as, though dwelling in an agricultural setting, they have been swamped by the Aryan civilization and, what is more, been touched to some extent by the industrialism of modern times. This admission, however, does not imply that the folklore of the land is a mere vestige of the past, that it is not being added to or recreated, for folklore "does not belong to a particular era in history, it is a stage in the elaboration of thought and art,"³ and as such ballads and tales and even myths—perhaps with a flavour of

the steel age—may still be found to a certain extent. In the present century one or two writers have even utilized folklore material in their poems and plays, but this conscious handling of folklore material is outside the scope of the study.

References in Chapter 1

1. R. T. LaPiere, *Sociology*, 1946, p. 3
2. A. R. Wright, *English Folklore*, 1928, p. 7
3. Fraz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, 1948, p. 405
4. Booklet describing the activities of the Folk-Lore Society, pp. 3-4; C. S. Burne, *The Handbook of Folklore*, 1914, p. 1
5. Lewis Spence, *Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game and Rhyme*, 1947, p. 1
6. M. S. Herskovits, *Man and his Works*, 1948, p. 421
7. *Indiana University Bulletin*, Vol. XLVIII, No. II, p. 3
8. At the second session of the Folklore Institute of America at Indiana University, 1946
9. Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, p. 497
10. A. Guerard, *Preface to World Literature*, p. 69

CHAPTER 2

THE BALLADS

(I)

The rediscovery of the ballad was part of the movement known as modern nationalism which grew up as a world phenomenon after the American and French revolutions and it was nationalism which actually brought attention back on the customs, songs, and tales of the people. The romantic reaction against excessive sophistication, a reaction of which Rousseau was the major prophet, and which indirectly was but a channel along which the new political movement flowed, found much interest in the ballad. Of the literary ballad, Bürger's *Lenore* (1774) was epoch-making. Soon Herder was to edit a collection of *Volkslieder* (178-9) which greatly influenced Goethe and Schiller. "It was from Bürger, not directly from Percy, that Walter Scott and Coleridge caught their enthusiasm in medieval minstrelsy."^{*1}

The term ballad is from the Provencal *balad*, a dancing-song, and "ballad and ballade both originated in the poetry which accompanied dancing and implied musical declamation in a collective refrain. But hardly more than the traces of this prototype remain."^{*2} At present a ballad is often defined as "a simple, spirited poem in short stanzas, narrating some popular story." This definition given by the *Oxford Dictionary* is rather narrow and does not bring out the significances of the folk ballad. The word ballad is indeed vague, and it has been explained in different ways by historians of literature and specialists in folk poetry. Kittredge describes it as "a song that tells a story, or to take the other point of view—a story told in song. More formally, it may be defined as a short narrative poem, adapted for singing, simple in plot and metrical structure, divided into stanzas, and characterized by complete impersonality as far as the author or singer is

concerned. This last trait is of the very first importance in determining the quality or qualities which give the ballad its peculiar place in literature.....Unlike other songs, it does not purport to give utterance to the feelings or the mood of the singer."³ Prof. Ker observes, "It is not a narrative poem only ; it is a narrative poem lyrical in form, or a lyrical poem with a narrative body in it." Prof. Gerould, a recent authority, notes, "What we have come to call a ballad is always a narrative, is always sung to a rounded melody, and is always learned from the lips of others rather than by reading."⁴

It is easier to get confused in the midst of so many points of view which, if they do not contradict each other, at least cannot quite be harmonized. What seems to be clear is that the ballad is a popular narrative poem which tells a story and which has no distinguishable mark of authorship: whether it is always sung is open to question. It is often found to be recited rather than sung to a melody. In Assam the ballads are recited or chanted, they are objective in general tone and though they go by the name *git* or song they are easily distinguishable from the various types of songs which express a feeling or mood. Prof. E. K. Chambers also seems to subscribe to the distinction made by William Shenstone between ballad and song ; Shenstone suggested the desirability of using the term ballad only for a poem 'which describes or implies some action', calling the one 'which contains only an expression of sentiment' a song.⁵ This distinction does not prevent a ballad from being lyrical to a certain extent sometimes. What Cecil Sharp, the founder of the English Dance and Song Society (1911), observes of the Appalachian singer seems to be relevant in this connection: "So far as I have been able to comprehend his mental attitude, I gather that, while singing a ballad, for instance, he is merely relating a story in a peculiarly effective way which he has learned from his elders."⁶ E. J. Entwistle admits, "In England a recitative style seems to have been customary."⁷

There is not much controversy as to the subject of the story narrated in a ballad. It is primarily fictional, but a word needs to be said as regards the form of the ballad. It is not necessarily short and spirited and in stanzas as

emphasized sometimes. The longest of the Spanish ballads, Count Dirlos, contains some 700 double octosyllables; the Bengali Badyani contains some 800 rhymed couplets; the Assamese Barphukanar Git has 819 lines. Spanish ballads are rhymed but without the stanzaic division. The plot of the romantic Badyani is not simple. The narration of the doggerel Barphukanar Git is probably not spirited.

For the purposes of the present study the Assamese ballads would be taken in the light of the conclusions arrived at just now. It may be added that the term ballad has no prototype in Assamese, the word *git*, song, signifying most folksongs including ballads. The long ballads in Upper Assam are sometimes called *malita*, probably from Sanskrit *mala*, garland. In Upper Assam certain satirical specimens go under the name *juna* which also covers verses sung at the Springtime Bihu festival by the Huchari singers when they go from house to house collecting presents.

Just as definitions of the ballad given by western scholars have to be modified so as to suit Assamese specimens, so also a classification of ballad types based on European data seems to require some amount of caution before it can be applied to Assamese material. There are persons who attempt to classify the English ballads on the basis of technique. For example, George Sampson: "The ballads fall into two main classes. One, demonstrably the older in structure, tends in form to the couplet with alternating refrain or burden, and in matter to the rendering of a single situation. A dominating feature here, often recorded and always to be assumed, is repetition, in a form peculiar to balladry. When, however, the 'action poem' began to move towards narrative, the ballad was lengthened in plot, scope, details, and was shorn of its now useless refrain. Thus arose a second class, the long ballad, recited or chanted to a monotonous tune by a singer. Instead of the short singing piece, steeped in repetition, we have deliberate narrative, without the old repetitions and refrains, and dealing with progressive situations, sometimes at length."** Technical deductions based on a language which has syllabic division of words and accent do not seem to be fruitful when applied to Assamese ballads. Moreover, whether

a ballad is earlier or later depends not so much on length as on whether it was found recorded in comparatively earlier times. The refrain as a mark of the ballads—Prof. Gummere's assumption—also is not accepted by modern scholars. It is safer, on the whole, to classify ballads on the basis of their subject-matter. But a point to consider is whether the classification based on subject-matter taken from European sources would be suitable to the ballads of Assam.

The subject-matter of ballads differs to a considerable extent along with the differences in the modes of life. There are many ballads of a romantic type in Denmark ; this is because the Danish ballads have been conditioned by the life which gave birth to them, by the dance itself, and by the landscape which was so frequently its setting.*⁹ In Assam the romance has more or less been sucked out of the ballads by a large number of pure songs current in the countryside. Judging from available data there is hardly any Assamese ballad which deals with domestic tragedy or outlawry. An important division of English ballads, that around the figure of Robin Hood, has no analogy in Assam, for no such heroic figure, legendary or historical, has been able to furnish various and exciting incidents of a type which may have stimulated the minstrel. Sometimes certain ballads are grouped under a particular head because of historical exigencies. The Danish "Warrior ballads" are a case in point. "The name 'Warrior ballads' was used towards the close of the medieval period to designate all ballads dating from the Age of Chivalry, and was used in that sense till modern times. It cannot, however, have originally borne that meaning, since many of the ballads in question have nothing to do with warfare ; it must have applied to those dealing with the mighty, sometimes half supernatural, figures of the ancient past."*¹⁰ In all ballad classification two types come out in sharper relief: the historical and that with supernatural incidents, though, it has to be admitted, Spanish ballads do not show the supernatural and the marvellous to any mentionable extent. Ballads with incidents which are either marvellous or supernatural are an authentic part of folk-literature. The fictional character of the best folk-literature is seen in them, and, perhaps, these

give a better idea of the quality of folk-imagination than historical and others of a more realistic type. In connection with the Danish "ballads of magic" Axel Olrik observes, "the ballads of chivalry and historical ballads give the fullest picture of ordinary medieval existence, but much of the deepest thought of the period on human life, together with some of its finest poetry, are to be found amongst the pictures of the supernatural world, the ballads of magic. Their content consists, first and foremost, of such pictures of unearthly beings as were derived from tradition, and of unearthly powers, or magic, as they were reshaped by a newly Christinized people"*¹¹

(II)

So, looking at the situation from various angles, it has been found advisable to classify the Assamese ballads in this manner: (a) historical: built around more or less authentic historical incidents or figures; (b) ballads of magic, where the marvellous predominates and which use ancient and universal folklore themes; (c) realistic, which are more or less transcripts from life; (d) satirical, which satirize or caricature an event or a person.

These are convenient divisions and probably do not overlap. There is no mythical ballad in Assamese, though certain mythical elements are found incorporated in the ballad of magic: Janagabharur Git. The Sonowal Kacharis near Dibrugarh in Upper Assam recite at their Spring-time agricultural ceremony a doggerel known as Haidang Git.*¹² The ballad is in a kind of Assamese patois. The version that has been recorded is incoherent and does not contain any story though it mentions certain persons. No definite conclusions can be ventured as to its nature till it is recorded perfectly. But it seems to describe the creation of the Kachari universe with its various elements and its recitation is supposed to cause the rain which is essential for the planting season. The logic of the narrative is curious. It begins thus:

What have been created?

The earth has been sneezing (just born),

Salt has been put down,
The heavens have been created,
Expression (view of things ?) has been created,
Those which grow have been created,
Those which move have been created,
Those which fly have been created,
The water god has been created,
The god of the divine order has been created,
The god of causation has been created, . . .

It is possible the ballad has absorbed to a certain extent Hindu ideas, such as, those of *dharma*, the divine order, and *karma*, the law of causation.

This ballad, which may as well be an Assamese adaptation of an original Tibeto-Burman product, has been left out of the classification adopted in this study. Of the specimens that should be considered as properly Assamese, the longer and more or less complete ones number less than half a dozen, most of the others being fragments or snatches of songs with references to some incident or person, and not completing a full story. Of the historical type there is only one fairly long and complete specimen: Barphukanar Git. Considering the independent existence Assam had had for continuous centuries, the repeated onslaughts it had to encounter at the hand of Mughal and other enemies, and the political consciousness the people showed as evidenced in the large number of prose chronicles found in Assamese since the seventeenth century, it is to be wondered why the land has not preserved a considerable number of ballads of a historical type, either complete or in fragments. The ballads that are extant all refer to events which did not occur earlier than the seventeenth century, most of them, in fact, being of a later period. Barphukanar Git and another important fragment around the figure of Maniram Dewan belong probably to the second half of the last century.

Thus the paucity of the historical type seems to raise an interesting problem. It can be safely assumed that some of the old ballads have disappeared or decayed owing to various factors, a few of which have been discussed in

chapter 5. Appreciating the large body of historical ballads in Denmark W. P. Ker observed, "A large number are actually founded on real historical events. Many of them, especially in Denmark, are concerned with a world in which serious political and civil business is understood—something like the world of Icelandic sagas, with grand juries, warship and marriage, trespass, the law of landlord and tenant."^{*13} The Assamese specimens deal with political rivalry, ambition, murder, domestic scenes, foreign invasions, popular feeling but these have to be illustrated from limited data.

In comparison with the historical specimens ballads of magic are rather better represented, there being at least three full-bodied specimens. The realistic type also has two or three good illustrations, though they are comparatively short. On the whole, Assamese ballads are not a large body. They do not represent the national literary soul, though their poetry is unmistakable and they do speak for the unlettered masses. In accounting for the rich heritage of Danish ballads Professor Ker was led to observe thus, "There—and this is the peculiar interest of Danish ballads, historically speaking—the common ballad form had not to compete at such a disadvantage as in England and Germany with more elaborate and courtly kinds of literature; so it grew into a national form of poetry—not merely popular, but national, capable of any matter or any idea known to any order of men in the kingdom—not a rustic; but a noble kind of literature. . . . The ballad form in Denmark is used for something nearer true epic than is found in the ballads of France or even in Scotland; for heroic lays on business of greater moment than Otterbourne."^{*14} In Assam, as it seems, the spirit of the folk ballad did not have enough nourishment between the courtly literature of the prose chronicles and the religious romances and songs of the Vaisnavite masters. In a land where the chief spring of culture stemmed from Sanskrit literature, through translation and adaptation, the elite naturally could not pay full attention to the production of the unlettered. Folk-songs of a purely lyrical type are found in larger numbers because the tradition of the pre-Aryan Bihu festival of the Spring could withstand all attempts at civilization and because the call of the Spring

in an agricultural and rural community is stronger than the call of religion and higher culture.

Of the important realistic ballads, only three are complete or fairly complete ; of these one being a beautiful fancy. The element of love or courtship enters three realistic ballads, but only one: *Dubalar Santir Git*, deals with illegitimate passion. In two of the ballads of magic also an element of romance enters: in *Janagabharur Git* the hero wins a bride defeating her in tests, and in *Phulkowarar Git* the hero acquires a princess through magic means. Though courtship, surmounting of hurdles, fight, an element of stealth and such features are found in these ballads, love as such, elopement, or stealing, have not stimulated ballad creation in any mentionable degree. Among the lower castes, especially among tribal converts to the Hindu fold, marriage of an irregular type is not infrequent, but even this feature of social life has failed to stimulate ballad activity. The Bihu songs of the countryside bear testimony to the passionate feelings of young people, but it is intriguing that elopement and bride-stealing have not been remembered in ballads as in Scotland and England.

As pure folklore possibly the ballads of magic are the most interesting, not because they are full-bodied but in that they exhibit motifs which can be paralleled well in the *Märchen*. Ballads of this type seem to have preserved a core of primitive beliefs and superstitions. But in them the presence of fairies, ghosts, or return of dead lovers and such-like features of European ballads of magic are not to be sought. But magic flight, enchantment, tests, and such universal motifs easily prove their kinship with the fictional tales of the people. This has been brought out in section v of this chapter as well as in the motif-index in chapter 4.

The satirical specimens are, as will be explained in chapter 5, of a degenerated type and not of the same poetic quality as the other types. Thus, as would be made clear, the body of Assamese ballads, as compared with the lyrical songs of the Bihu type or those sung at marriage ceremonies, is neither rich nor well developed, to judge from extant specimens. In the sections that follow full summaries of the major

ballads have been furnished. To translate verse literally is not possible because of the difficulty of rendering in a foreign tongue the many homely expressions of the original, some meaningless and sometimes used for the sake of rhyme only. In the summaries the stress is chiefly on the narrative element, but illustrative excerpts have been given in translation in order to lend the summaries a flavour of the original.

(III)

Here a note may be added about the balladist or minstrel. The minstrel in Assam has, or rather had, the same functions as his compatriot in medieval Europe. The European minstrels "continued a distinct order of men for ages after the Norman Conquest, and got their livelihood by singing verses to the harp at the houses of the great . . . And though, as their art declined, many of them only recited the compositions of others, some of them still composed songs themselves, and all of them could probably invent a few stanzas on occasion."^{*15} The Assamese minstrel also adds his own lines when he is in the mood. Rabjan Ali of Kakajan extemporized a few lines directly he was approached by Sri Benudhar Sarma for Chikan Sariyaha Git (in 1930) and these lines describe merely the incident of the scholar's approach to make him recite the ballad.

To minister to the gaiety of the people seems to have been the function of the *baragi*, the Assamese minstrel as he is known, the term implying also something of the wandering characteristic of a mendicant (Sanskrit *vairagya*: renunciation). In a recently recorded philosophical song^{*16} which has certain ballad characteristics, the minstrel begins his recitation thus:

O my lords, this old baragi—
I pay you all my homage,
I close on these matters at that point,
Let me sing of the Kali Age.

As evidenced by this quatrain it would seem that the minstrel had just closed on some earlier matter to begin on a second one. His patrons are such as can patronize him materially, for as he sings:

Give me an anna, O my lord,
Let me go to my home.

The minstrel has his way of attracting his audience. It may be that he closes at the middle of his narrative—at least of the longer ones—and emphasizes that he requires such and such fees. After a preamble of some twenty lines the minstrel in Barphukanar Git sings:

It is my fortune
That you all I have met here
When I sing you the verses of Ghinai Barphukan
Half a rupee I must have,
Let the people get cleansed of their sins—
Let them give me four annas at the least.

Then reciting a few lines he demands again:

Let the lord pay me five four-anna bits,
I sing the ballad of the Barphukan
It is my fortune
That my lord I have met here.

Percy's minstrels also realized their fees in more or less the same manner. The minstrel in the Beggar's Daughter of Beadnall-Green pauses as he sings and puts out a tempting bait:

Then give me leave, nobles and gentles, each one,
One song more to sing and then I have done ;
And if that itt may not win good report,
Then doe not give me a groat for my sport.*17

In all the ballads and ballad fragments that have been recorded no authorship can be proved. One of the longer ones, Janagabharur Git, was discovered in the repertory of one Daunur Sekh of Kakajan. Daunur had learnt it a few years earlier from an old relative at Sibsagar. It was ultimately taken down from another relative of Daunur's and printed without any alteration.*18 Though there are a few Persian words in the ballad, its authorship cannot be attributed to the old relative of Daunur's at Sibsagar. Similarly some thirty years ago was found a centenarian named Alukhunda near the Patiladaha railway station who sang Baramahi songs—descrip-

tive of the twelve months ; but in this case also, no authorship can be attributed to the songster. The Kanya Baramahi summarised in this chapter has in its colophon the name of one Jayadhan Bania, but whether this man was the author of the ballad cannot be determined. It is strange that the ballads do not have many variants ; in most cases the printed versions have been the only ones that could be saved from the womb of time. The second version of Manikowarar Git that has been recently printed (Namati Dal, 1948) is mostly spurious as even a cursory examination of its language shows. The most important of the historical ballads, Barphukanar Git, composed after the Burmese invasions of the land in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and taken down about 1920, has only one complete version. The editor of the ballad records that when he again met the person from whom the ballad had been taken down two or three years earlier, the latter could hardly remember the whole thing. This shows with what rapidity a song may disappear. It has also to be admitted that no serious attempt has been made to record the songs and ballads and their variants : what has been recorded is owing to individual and sporadic efforts unaided by any institution of a public character.

Though the ballad is recited the recitation is usually accompanied by some sort of instrument. Alukhunda, referred to above, had *karatal* made of bamboo—sort of castnets. The minstrel in Upper Assam has a *tokari*, a gourd or wood instrument with one to three strings which are plucked with the finger. In Lower Assam cymbals are sometimes used. No fixed melody seems to stick to a ballad ; the recitation takes on the colour of the tune which generally characterizes most popular songs of the area in which the balladist dwells. In Upper Assam the tune is languorous ; in Lower Assam it is more vigorous and has been influenced by the style of the Ojha-Pali chorus who recite stories of a religious type.

(IV)

Historical: (a) Barphukanar Git, 819 lines long, is the most important historical ballad and narrates events which took place between 1815 A.D. and 1824 A.D. These events

centre round Badanchandra Barphukan, Viceroy of Lower Assam, who was instrumental in inviting Burmese invaders into the kingdom of Assam. For an appreciation of the ballad its historical setting becomes a necessity.*19

Purnananda Burhagohain (Prime Minister) was making an attempt to reorganize the administration of the land which had been devastated by the Mowamariya rebels. As the king Chandrakanta Simha was young and inexperienced the Burhagohain had to take on himself the full responsibility of conducting all state affairs. He resettled the people uprooted in the recent disturbances and made improvements in the military system. The kingdom began to look up under the fostering care of this statesman.

The Burhagohain found Badanchandra Barphukan Viceroy of Lower Assam at Gauhati, incompetent and had also reason to look on him with suspicion. He sent down the Parvatiya Phukan in order to effect the arrest of the Barphukan. But the latter's daughter Pijau was the daughter-in-law of the Burhagohain and she managed to send word to her father of his impending danger. On the night of 18th October, 1815, the Barphukan left Gauhati along with a Hindusthani soldier, named Udaysingh Subedar. Failing to secure aid from the East India Company, Badanchandra finally reached Amarapur in Burma. The Burmese king Bodawpaya (1782-1819) offered to help him with a contingent of 6000 soldiers. An Assamese princess was of considerable help to the Viceroy in the Burmese capital. As Badanchandra neared Sibsagar, the Burhagohain all on a sudden died (March, 1817). Two days later Badanchandra occupied the capital Jorhat. The Burmese allowed Chandrakanta to continue on the throne, Badanchandra acting as Prime Minister. In August next Chandrakanta Simha caused the murder of the traitor. But the people grew suspicious of the king and replaced him with Purandar Simha. When news of these developments reached Burma, the Burmese king sent an army of 30,000 under Ala Mingi. Ala Mingi reinstated Chandrakanta Simha and returned to Burma after leaving a contingent of 2000. The Burmese king now had fuller reports of the resources of Assam and desired to conquer the land.

Mingimaha Tilua entered the land with another army. Patali Barbarua made an attempt to stem the tide of invasion at Jaypur and lost his life. Feeling that the intentions of the Burmese were bad, Chandrakana Simha retreated to Gauhati. Mingimaha Tilua captured Jorhat and set up Jogeswar Simha as a puppet king. The Burmese then advanced in three columns, along the Brahmaputra, and along both banks. They carried terror and destruction as they advanced. Wherever the Burmese turned the people suffered in life and property. There was indiscriminate burning and looting, torture of young and old, and violation of chastity. In his *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* (1855) Major J. Butler writes that "all who were suspected of being inimical to the reign of terror were seized and bound by Burmese executioners, who cut off the lobes of the poor victims' ears and choice portions of the body, such as the points of the shoulders, and actually ate the raw flesh before the living sufferers: They then inhumanly inflicted with a sword, deep but not mortal gashes on the body, that the mutilated might die slowly, and finally closed the tragedy by disembowelling the wretched victims. Other diabolical acts of cruelty practised by the monsters have been detailed to me by persons now living with a minuteness which leaves on doubt of the authenticity of the facts; but they are so shocking that I cannot describe them".^{*29}

In spite of stiff resistance from Chandrakanta Simha and others at Hadirachaki and Mahgar the Burmese occupied the whole of Assam and eventually crossed the frontiers and burnt several villages belonging to the East India Company. The Anglo-Burmese war flared up, and the British cleared Assam of the Burmese in 1825 A.D. Assam finally passed into the hand of the British by the treaty of Yandabo of 1826 A.D. After a prolonged period of misrule and rapine the people of the land could have a breath of comparative peace and tranquillity. The summary of the ballad may now be given:

Lines I-36 contain an invocation to the goddesses Saraswati and Parvati and the minstrel's apologia. Then the story begins rather dramatically: Satya, Dwapar, Treta, and Kali—these four ages wore out when in the land of Assam, where

there had been no ministers, was incarnated the Burhagohain!

The Burhagohain looked all about him and found that there was no enemy except the Barphukan in the west. The people there were being oppressed by the latter. So the Burhagohain called in the Parvatiya Phukan and told him, "Go and arrest the Barphukan. Bring him in an iron cage and if you are successful I shall make you Barphukan. Go by boat and see that my daughter-in-law gets no wind of the matter."

A watchman overheard all this and passed on the news to Pijau, the daughter-in-law of the Burhagohain. She asked the watchman, "Do tell me what to do now. How shall I send word to my father?" "You are to remain in the 'dark room' and your husband would write a letter on your behalf," directed the watchman. She did accordingly and her husband enquired what the matter was. "Your father who had never liked my father has planned his death." "Well, your father would escape but that would mean my death." "No parental feelings do the Ahoms have! Among them a father would eat the flesh of his son. But I importune you to write me a letter, else I cut my throat." Not being able to bear her grief he wrote a letter and gave it to her. As she was not able to send it he called in an officer and said to him, "Take the best horse and reach there before the Parvatiya Phukan."

The Parvatiya Phukan reached Gauhati one evening but made no haste to apprehend the Barphukan. He wanted rest and waited for "the support of the world to appear," that is, for the morning. That very night Pijau's emissary reached Gauhati and hurried to the Barphukan meeting him in the kitchen. The letter startled him, and bemoaning that his sons would now be without a father, he entered the 'dark room' and began to weep. His wife came and asked him:

"I cut areca-nuts for you, eat them, lord of my family,
I bring water for you, drink it,
Under the cloths are you weeping silently
What the matter is do tell me."

He asked her not to leave town and to perform his obsequies if he did not turn up within a year. He then saw Udaysingh

Bangal, an upcountry sepoy, and told him, "Do not forsake me in my evil days. I shall reward you with a piece of land in time." He took with him his three sons and Udaysingh Bangal and left by boat under cover of darkness. His wife wailed:

"I no longer put on my bangles,
 From today are empty my bed and pillows,
 Whose debt had I incurred?
 I shall pull off my gold necklace,
 I rub off my vermilion spot.
 I made them catch some fish,
 Without you I am a widow now."
 She thought to herself—
 "O my lord, the milk of the dark buffalo
 Who would drink now?
 To what a pass the kingdom has come,
 The town of Gauhati is without a master.
 The impossible has happened,
 The watchmen and soldiers, O my lord, are without
 a master."

Sorrow on sorrow, O people,
 Sorrow on sorrow,
 The dogs bite, the children throw stones,
 Nowhere do you find happiness!"

When it was found that the Barphukan had managed to flee the Parvatiya Phukan gave him chase. The fugitive reached Calcutta and "asked battle of the Sahibs of Vilat," that is, asked help of the Governor General. The Governor General replied, "We have made friends with the Burhagobain. How could we send forces against a friend?" Not finding him helpful and afraid to stay longer there the Barphukan planned to go westward by water. With Udaysingh and his sons he set sail and reached the land of the Mughals (the Mags or Aracanese?). The Nawab of the Mughals treated him with affection and rendered help with advice. After three days the Barphukan reached the "Ghoramuwa land"(?). He crossed the sea and going upstream reached the "Ethengiya land"(?). He espied the smoke of the "Man land" (Burma) and moored alongside the ghat of the king of Burma:

The Assamese princess, queen of the Man king,
 Was having her bath,
 She was delaying,
 The Phukan accosted her,
 "What dress are you in ?
 Whose land, madam, is this ?"
 "You have come by the river,
 This my son, the Man land they call."
 "Whom should I call aunt,
 Who would take me to the Man king ?
 The moon above,
 Who are you that ask news of me ?
 I have come by the river,
 Madam, Ghinai Barphukan of Assam
 Me they call."

The lady explained that she had been sent to the Burmese king early in her life by the Burhagohain and as she had belonged to the Duara stock to which Badanchandra also belonged she called the visitor "elder brother". She assured him, "In six months' time I myself will fight for you." She introduced him as her brother and as king of Assam and persuaded her husband to help him. He was given tuskers, horses, daos and javelins, and an army of three lakh soldiers. The suppliant sacrificed two score white buffaloes besides innumerable ducks and goats.

The land of Assam came to be possessed by Kali . . .
 The tree of Assam was uprooted.

The Burmese king was exultant:

"I shall make them pass water,
 I shall feed sons on their fathers' flesh.
 What will you give us in your land ?"
 First I shall give you the two stores of gold
 and silver at Rangpur,
 The fair-looking girls I shall give you,
 Small girls I shall give with them, . . .
 If you would take them I shall give you young lads,
 I shall give deer with ears as large as
 winnowing fans."

The king however sent Kamini Phukan to Assam to get first hand information on the situation there. After surveying the towns of Jorhat and Rangpur in disguise Kamini Phukan went back and reported that the administration was run by the Burhagohain but he was without any support.

The Burmese forces started for Assam. On the frontier they sent a letter to the Burhagohain. The letter could be read only by Chiring Phukan. Chiring Phukan explained that the Burmese were invading the land and would make everybody—Brahman or Kalita—eat from the same cooking pan; "the Barphukan, enemy to his land, was setting fire to his own house." The Burhagohain told his four generals to study the progress of the invaders. He called his seven sons to him and told them, "See to the interest of the land, for my share of rice is running out. My death would mean the pillage of the land. . . ." That very night the "devilish" Burhagohain licked a piece of diamond and breathed his last.

The eighteen companies of upcountry sepoy were disposed at Phulpanichiga near Sibsagar and made to fight the invaders. The battle continued for seven days and nights. The ammunition of the Assamese ran out and there was also disaffection on the part of a general. The battle ended in defeat of the Assamese. A large number of soldiers were slain. The news sent a thrill of terror into the heart of the Jorhat populace and the Burmese started on their career of diabolic activities:

They asked for money and gave hard kicks,
Pulling out the dagger from their waist,
Not finding money, they ripped open the stomachs
of so many.

The tortures ceased only when the Burmese general Kamini Phukan called back his men. Here follows four lines of apologia and the first part of the ballad comes to an end.

The second part opens with a conspiracy to do away with the traitor:

The cloth made by the weaver covers the entire world,
Even then the weaver goes naked,
To do away with Ghinai Barphukan
Dhani Barbarua had to ask the Queen Mother
for advice.

The Queen Mother invited the Barphukan and had a talk with him on his travels and adventures. He told her that he had six mascots on his waist and these made him impervious to danger. He put off the mascots only at the time of going to his lavatory. That was the time when he could be slain. The Queen Mother called in Rupsingh Bangal, told him when the Barphukan was vulnerable, and directed him to murder the latter.

Next morning as the Barphukan was washing his hands after coming from the lavatory Rupsingh approached him but failed to do anything. The sepoy made a second attempt next morning:

My bow to the Moon, my bow to the Sun,
I bow down to the Earth,
Take no offence, O Goddess Kali—
I kill the traitor to the country.

As the Barphukan was pouring water on his head Rupsingh struck him with his sword. His body was severed in two. Here follows a description of the grief of his widowed wife (ll. 699-718). The Queen Mother did not wish that the three sons of Badanchandra should live, but the king took pity on them and signalled to the executioner to spare them. He also begged their apology by saying that he had nothing to do with this incident.

The news of Badanchandra's death was carried to Burma and the Burmese queen wailed:

"Let me go and pay a visit to my brother's cemetery."
The king said, "No,
You need not go, let Cheg Phukan go instead . . .
Slay all people to a distance of seven days' way . . .
Set fire to the houses of innocent people.
Kill and eat cows,
Make all eat from the same cooking pan, . . .
Destroy the castes Brahmans and Kalitas.
Take the swords well in the scabbards.
Dhani Barbarua and the Queen Mother—
Directly put them on the hook."

The Burmese under Cheg Phukan reached Jorhat and

learnt everything about the murder of Badanchandra from his wife. Dhani Barbarua was put on the hook. Further, the "notorious" Queen Mother fled under cover of darkness. To the distance of seven "days' way all the people were cut down. The houses of people who were sleeping were set on fire. Even the big lords left their homesteads. The best girls were carried off. This time the Burmese ruled the land for si xyears. Then came the Company (East India). The Sahibs took rice along with buffalo milk. The Burmese had to flee. The Assam land became now the Bangal land. Because the English came into power the people got relief. The story ends here and the minstrel ends with an apologia of ten lines.

- It will have been seen that the description of events in the ballad follows closely actual events. But because the ballad is not quite a complete version, events towards the end having been rapidly passed over, frequently with loose ends, some amount of telescoping of history may be observed. The Burmese came in three waves; the minstrel says they came twice. He does not explain why Patali Barbarua was slain. He does not mention the battles of Hadirachaki and Mahgarh in which Chandrakanta Simha put up a stiff resistance. His accuracy in details may be questioned. For example, he does not mention even once either Ala Mingi or Mingimaha Tilua. The minstrel's sense of justice has been disturbed by his feelings. He records the efficiency and patriotism with which the Burhagohain ruled the country, but his sympathy goes to the unlucky Barphukan. He describes with elaboration the helplessness of the Barphukan and the grief of his wife when he leaves Gauhati. The grief of his wife and of his sister in Burma is again elaborated when he is murdered. The minstrel rather unexpectedly calls the Burhagohain "devilish" when the latter—rather unhistorically—is made to commit suicide. Similarly the Queen Mother is called "notorious". But the minstrel knows that the Barphukan was a traitor. The ballad is rightly called "the ballad of the Barphukan," for most of the events centre round his career; it might in a way be termed the tragedy

of the Barphukan. It is further seen that an element of political competitiveness enters into the texture of the events: in the hatred felt by the Burhagohain towards the Barphukan and hinted at by Pijau.

As regards the Burmese queen who is said to be an Assamese princess, she was probably Rangili who had been given to a Singpho chieftain on the frontier who again passed her on to Bodawpaya (1797). She belonged to the Duara family, and discovering a common origin, admitted Badan-chandra as her "elder brother."^{*21}

Though the basis of the ballad is historical, the quality of folk imagination is evidenced in situations which are dramatic and in the description of incidents which happened away from the direct knowledge of the minstrel. We are not sure what the Ghoramuwa and Ethengiya lands are. *Ghoramuwa* means horse-faced and *ethengiya* having one foot or leg. These as well as the "dark room"—the "house of dissatisfaction" of the Märchen—seem to be fictive. The putting off of the mascots and thus occasioning vulnerability introduces a magical element into the narrative.

(b) Padmakumarir Git: Badanchandra Barphukan's predecessor at Gauhati had quelled certain disturbances started by Hardatta and Birdatta.^{*22} Hardatta Chowdhury of Jikeri, in the modern district of Kamrup, along with his brother and with aid from, it is said, the kings of Cooch Behar and Bijni, occupied nearly the whole of north Kamrup and made an attempt to drive away the Ahoms from Lower Assam. Kaliya Bhomora managed to bring under control this revolt (1794-1795), also known as Danduwa Droh. Birdatta was slain in battle while Hardatta fled, ultimately to be caught and put to a painful death. Their fall was largely owing to the over-bearing way in which they conducted themselves and their inability to pay their Sikh soldiers. Hardatta had a daughter named Padmakumari and she committed suicide after her father's execution. This much is authentic history. Then there are some local traditions. It is said that Padmakumari was given in marriage to Mahidhar, a young man who belonged to the Chowdhury stock of Dhanara but

had been brought up in her father's family at Jikeri. Mahidhar was persuaded to stay always at Jikeri and his wife was not allowed to visit her father-in-law's place at Dhanara. After the capture of her father who had been hiding in a jungle, the Sikh captain Kumedan Singh, who later had come over to the Barphukan's side, sought to keep the attractive Padmakumari, but she managed to escape and ultimately jump into the Brahmaputra.

The fall of Hardatta and Birdatta and the career of Padmakumari have been commemorated in a few snatches of songs of which these two quatrains seem to make a connected whole: *23

Hardatta's daughter Padmakumari
Did not have meals at Dhanara,
Kamdan Bangal carried her off by the hand
In search of lotuses on her person.
Where have you gone Hardatta, where have you
gone Birdatta ?
Where have you gone—the rapacious bullies !
At the curse of the people Hardatta and Birdatta
Became extinct of stock.

The name Padmakumari means "the lotus girl", hence the appropriateness of searching lotuses on the girl's person. The tone of the ballad is contemptuous; both Padmakumari and the rebel leaders have been pictured without sympathy. This fact as well as the form and language of the ballad seem to support R. Bardaloi's view that songs of this type were circulated by the Barphukan in order to undermine the cause of Hardatta. The adllad is made of quatrains found in the folk-songs of Upper Assam; the language also is the dialect spoken in Upper Assam.

(c) Maniram Dewanar Git: In September of 1857 an uneasy feeling became marked in the first Assam Light Infantry stationed at Dibrugarh. Some of sepoys of this battalion joined in a movement with the Charing Raja, a scion of the old royal family, to overthrow the British domination of Assam. The Raja was young and under the control of his official Maniram, Dewan to the Assam Tea Company

at Jorhat. Maniram Dewan was also under the influence of the movement for freedom which was creating disturbances in northern India, though his early career was not quite one of self-abnegation or patriotism. When the house of the Charing Raja was searched treasonable letters from Maniram were discovered. Maniram, who was at the time at Calcutta, was arrested and brought back for trial. He was convicted by the Deputy Commissioner of the Sibsagar district, C. Holroyd, and executed on the bank of the Tokolai near Jorhat. The fall of Maniram Dewan, a highly influential noble, roused a feeling of dismay in the heart of the people and the popular feeling came to be expressed in some songs and ballads.*²⁴ The most important of these goes thus:

You smoked on a gold hookah, O Maniram,
 You smoked on a silver hookah,
 What treason did you commit to Royalty
 That you got a rope around your neck !
 How could they catch you, O Maniram,
 How could they catch you ?
 Jorhat on this side, Golaghat on that,
 Through a letter did they catch you.
 Secretly did they arrest you, O Maniram
 Secretly did they take you ;
 Holroyd Sahib on the Tokolai bank
 Had you secretly hanged.
 The stubble of bara paddy, O Maniram,
 The stubble of bara paddy,
 Hardly four days passed his death
 When meteors flashed in the sky !

Royalty referred to in the ballad is the British Government. Another fragment refers to Piyali Barua, son of Badanchandra who had also shared in the patriotic movement of the time, in this manner:

You have slain Maniram, well have you done,
 But why have you slain Piyali ?
 Coming to hear of this the officials at Rangpur
 Were extremely scared.

The execution of the patriots frightened those who were

working under the British, for they also had sympathy for or complicity in the move for freedom.

(d) Jaymati Kuwarir Git: One or two fragments, more song than ballad, refer to Jaymati, a princess put to torture by an oppressive king because she did not let out news of her absconding husband of whom the king was afraid. Jaymati died, about 1680, but her husband could later ascend the throne. One of the songs goes thus:

Ciu cried the kite tenderly,
Kau cried the crow and flew up,
 If one considered the tribulations of Jaymati Kuwari
 One felt like passing into the unknown country.
 In the forest cried the naikuli(?) bird
 Looking at the face of the trap,
 Jaymati Kuwari began to cry
 Looking at the face of the torturer.*²⁵

(e) Ajan Phakirar Git: In Upper Assam are found a class of religious songs known as Jikir (Arabic—*ziker*) and attributed to one Ajan Phakir. Ajan (Ajam) Phakir was a Muslim saint and the jikirs evidence a Sufi origin as well as local Vaisnavite influence. The saint's date can be fixed fairly accurately with the help of an unpublished chronicle of the reign of King Gadadhar Simha (1681-1695), husband of Jaymati Kuwari, preserved in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati. The relevant passage from the chronicle runs thus:

"On a charge brought by Rupai Da-dhara the king had the eyes of the saint gouged out: But when he started showing miracles the king settled on him some land and people." This incident is recalled in a ballad of some 102 lines. It is a composition of irregular rhymes and intermixed with Arabic expressions; it seems to have disintegrated to a certain extent, and to get at any coherent meaning is rather difficult. The sense of the ballad can be put thus: *²⁶

The saint was converting people and reciting the name of Allah. Rupai Da-dhara wanted to bring him up before

the king, but the old man said he was unable to walk the distance to the city. At this the officer brought a charge against him declaring he was creating disturbance in the land. The king gave the officer a free hand to deal with the situation. The officer came to the saint in order to punish him by gouging out his eyes. The saint asked for two earthen pans and at his own order the eyes came out and fell into the pans. He then directed the officer thus:

"Do not throw my eyes on the earth,
They will get wild and destroy the people, O Allah,
Do leave my eyes
On the brink of the Dikhou, O Allah."
When the eyes were thrown into the Dikhou,
The Dikhou went wild,
It started flowing against the current.

There was a turmoil in the waters and the houses began to sway. The king sent out Hati Barbarua to find out what had happened. The officer came to know of the affair, appeased the saint and gave him assurance. He then reported to the king:

"Looking into the four corners of the city
I did not find Ram (the name of God) anywhere, O Allah,
The two brothers of Ajan were reading the Koran,
There I found Ram, O Allah."

The king then established the saint on the Huaguri sandbank of the Dikhou, had a shrine constructed for him, and gave him a number of servitors.

(f) Other fragments: A fragment expresses popular disapproval of Bakhar Bara who, along with the camp-followers of King Gaurinath Simha, was alleged to have raised supplies against the will of the people in Nowgong about 1790. The Nowgong rabble killed Bakhar Bara.*²⁷

Another fragment commemorates the wealth and influence of Prithu Barkakati, a well-known person of Charing of the early nineteenth century. Prithu Barkakati's house caught fire and his gold melted to such an extent as to pave his orchard.

(g) Recent specimens In the last decade of the nineteenth century there occurred some peasant revolts in districts like Nowgong, Darrang and Kamrup as the result of re-assessment of land and imposition of heavy taxes. These revolts were crushed with a heavy hand. A popular composition printed as *Patharughatar Ran* makes an attempt to record some of the incidents that occurred in Darrang. The ballad explains that the Sahibs needed coolies for the tea gardens but could not find them and therefore made an attempt to impoverish the people:

The villagers have got rich, it's difficult to obtain
coolies,

So the Sahibs thought out a plan:
To make them poor soon we'll raise the taxes,
Do we fear to secure coolies now?

A fragment current in Rangiya in north Kamrup records that even though the public raised objections and submitted representations, no heed was paid to them.

In this context may be mentioned certain short songs which sprang up in the wake of the nationalist movement inspired by Mahatma Gandhi in the first quarter of the present century.*²⁷ A In Assam the movement was guided by persons like Tarun Ram Phookan, a Barrister, and Nabin-chandra Bardaloi, a lawyer, both now dead. The bonfire of foreign clothes in the yard of Tarun Ram Phookan inspired a song like this:

Pat and muga and such foreign clothes
do not keep them in your boxes,
hand them on to Phookan, hand them on to Nabin,
they're burning them in their yards.

Pat and muga are local silks, but the phrase to the unsophisticated mind implies foreign finery. Here is another song inspired directly by the personal magnetism of Mahatma Gandhi:

This fellow says, that fellow says—
Let's have a look at Gandhi,
Friend, let's have a look at Gandhi,

If I stand on the railway embankment
 I can have a glimpse of Gandhi,
 Let's have our eyeful of Gandhi.

(V)

Ballads of Magic : There are three ballads of this class besides a fragment, all comparatively long. The first two: Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git are closely related, for the hero in the second is the son of the hero in the first. In inferior versions both the the ballads are run into a single one. These two were first printed by Bhadrassen Bara of Dibrugarh in 1903. Some fragments of Manikowarar Git were published in *Nichukani* of J. C. Tamuly in 1914 and later again in the *Jayanti* about 1940. A part of this ballad as well as the complete Phulkowarar Git was published in *Asamiya Sahityar Chaneki* in 1929. The version of Phulkowarar Git printed by Bhadrassen Bara puts the section about Aruna and Jagara at the end while *Asamiya Sahityar Chaneki* at the beginning of the ballad. This section, in fact, does not fit into the narrative of Phulkowar and may be an independent entity. There are slight variations in the printed texts of Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git. Parts of Manikowarar Git are sometimes printed as Kachankuwarir (Kachanmalar) Git, the ballad of Kachankuwari or Kachanmala. For the first the version given by Bhadrassen Bara as well as the fragment published in the *Jayanti* and for the second the version given in *Asamiya Sahityar Chaneki* are being used in this study.

(a) Manikowarar Git: There resided in the city of Barkala a king named Sankhadeo (Sankardev in certain variants). His queen's name was Manyavati. They had no children. One night the queen had a dream that they could have a son if they propitiated the Water god (or goddess). The Water god was propitiated and one Saturday night a son was born to Manyavati. The astrologer was called in and he made the prophecy:

"The shooting-star flies into the sky,
 The ten directions are lighted up,

He has come for twelve years,
 but would stay sixteen years,
 Then the Water goddess would carry him off.
 Bring shoots of the athiya banana,
 Put a pair of betel leaves (there),
 Consult your relatives and the Bhakats,
 Only then do you keep the name Manidhar."²⁸

Manidhar or Manikowar (Prince Mani) grew up into a sport-loving lad. He used to ride about witnessing the sport of hawks. One day he happened to cast his glance at Kachankuwari, the daughter of the minister. He was struck by her beauty, came home, gave his horse to Sopabar Tamuli, an officer, and shut himself up in the *rohghar* or house of dissatisfaction. His mother was startled to see the riderless horse and asked Sopabar what the matter was. She was told:

"What I shouldn't say, what you shouldn't hear,
 No such things have I seen—
 Other days Mani on his horse
 Would take a ride round the city,
 But today as he was riding
 Along the gate of the minister,
 Round he turned his dappled horse
 And entered the house of dissatisfaction."

The queen dashed into the house of dissatisfaction and spoke to Mani thus:

"The star of the heavens, the snake-maid from
 the underworld,
 Tell me, son, what you want ;
 I promise, promise you thrice,
 —That shall I bring you."

Manikowar told his mother that he would take his meal if the minister's daughter was given him as wife. The queen immediately despatched Sopabar to the minister and he spoke to the latter:

"The lotus blooms in the middle of the lake,
 The bumble-bee comes humming,—
 My lord's daughter Kachankuwari
 Our Manidhar wishes to have."

The minister agreed to the proposal and the marriage came off.

Mani had a few other wives besides Kachankuwari. But they had no child. At last a soothsaying woman told Kachankuwari that she would have a child but before that her husband would lose his life in water. Precautions were taken to prevent any such mishap. Manikowar wanted to bathe in the river. Kachankuwari would not let him. But he slipped out one Saturday and went to the river, followed by an officer. As he stepped into the water he took off his ornaments and put them in the hands of the officer. As he took his dip he was carried off by the Water god. He was then only sixteen years.

The officer returned to the palace and broke the news. The old king Sankhadeo and his daughter-in-law Kachankuwari's sorrow knew no bounds. Kachankuwari expressed her grief thus:

She kicked at her spinning-wheel,
 She crushed her silk-winding reel,
 Wailed much the spotless Kachan,
 The hair of her head fell down ;
 "Do come out and let me see you, O my prince,
 Together let us leave our lives.
 The Lohit has left a long channel,
 The Dihing has left its bank,
 My parents gave me away in sacramental marriage,
 Still on me is the stain of turmeric:
 In Chat cries the chatuwa bird,
 In Bahag cries the frog,
 I could not enjoy in my best days,
 Who it was that divined with the legs of the fowl."

The old king requisitioned an expert fisherman, attached a chain to him and asked him to find the prince under the water. The fisherman went down and saw Manikowar sitting on a sofa but the latter would not return. He only sent some presents. The old king had to send away his sorrowing daughter-in-law to her father's place.

In the version of the ballad printed by the Agency Company of Dibrugarh (1946) her mother-in-law makes an

attempt to console Kachankuwari by promising her Baruas and Phukans as husband; Kachankuwari is pointed at as inauspicious by the village women; the motif of sending her away to her father's place is missing.

(b) Phulkowarar Git: One day Phulkowar approached his grandmother and sat by her with a mournful face. The old lady asked him what the matter was. He wanted to know of his father Manikowar of whom he had heard only. This curiosity on her child's part threw Kachankuwari into a bitter state of mind:

"The devil, the cursed—he left me here,
An orphan he made you,
At the embryo stage were you orphaned, Phulkowar,
On what shall I bring you up?
I laid out the full market, only could not sell
anything there,
Fate did me cheat."

Though his mother's grief quelled him for sometimes he again felt restless and told his grandmother that he would go west-wards. Manyavati had no recourse but to give him her blessings. The carpenter made him a winged horse out of wood. As the prince advanced to get on the horse the old king advised him not to look behind as he rode, for that would create evil and prevent him from returning home.

The horse moved like lightening, and the prince reached in a trice the distance of six months' way. But just to see what distance he had covered the prince looked behind and lo, one of the wings of the horse snapped off. He came down and dropped into the garden of a Malini or female wreath-maker. As he stepped on the ground, the trees which had been dry so long, began to sprout. He shot his spear into them any they began to branch out. He threw clods at them and they began to put out buds. He thrust his javelin at them and they burgeoned into blossoms. Passersby noticed the miracle of miracles of a blooming garden which had been dry and barren for twelve years and complimented the wreath-maker on her fortune.

Dijai, the wreath-maker, came rushing and as she was

revelling in the marvel, discovered the prince loitering about. Considering him to be some superior being who had done her a good turn, she poured out her gratefulness on him. He explained that he was a human being, a prince named Phulkowar and had been starving for three days. She treated him with kindness, fed him with care, and started making some wreaths. The prince asked for whom were the wreaths. She replied they were for the princess Dhan Pachtuli (Pachtula). The prince called her grandmother and asked leave to send a wreath to the princess. She replied:

"What would you do, O grandson, O lovely prince,
How would you weave the wreath?
If the king but comes to know
For both of us there would be but one
impaling stake."

He however sent a wreath for the knot of Dhan Pachtuli's hair. The princess was surprised to have such fresh and fragrant flowers. She picked up a wreath and asked who could it be that had woven a wreath without using a thread. Dijai replied that it was that impertinent grandson of hers. As she was putting it on the princess discovered some significant letters engraved on the petals of the flowers:

"Why did you bloom, O lovely madar,
Why did you put out buds?
Being neither for the guru nor for the initiated
You but cover the ground below."

Dhan Pachtuli cross-examined the wreath-maker:

"You are barren, your daughter is barren,
How could you come on this young grandson?"

Dijai told her what was what and the princess directed her to send up the young prince. Dijai countered by reminding her that the entire town was under the watch of Hajari Barua and that not even birds could get into it. The princess then appealed to her thus:

"I tell you, Sister Dijai, my wreath-maker,
Why did you bring this wreath?
You came as a frog, bit as a snake,
Well did you put this agony into my heart!"

Dijai found herself in a difficult situation. She was afraid to cross the path of the Hajari Barua. She was also afraid to displease the princess.

Phulkowar solved the situation by turning himself into a bumble-bee and thus giving the slip to the watchful eye of Hajari Barua. Some days passed and a maidservant noticed that the princess was getting reduced day by day. She informed the king of this. An officer came and started taking the princess's weight every day. He found that she had begun to grow in bulk. The news was passed on to the king who could not raise his head for shame. The Barbarua was appointed to find out the thief. Phulkowar was caught one night and a decree passed for his execution. But Dhan Pachtuli declared: "I would rather be cowife to my father than see Phulkowar slain". The prince had to be released and the lovers' union was regularized at a public ceremony. Thus ends the ballad.

It will have been seen that both the ballads, Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git, are closely connected and are often taken as parts of the same ballad, inferior and shorter versions encouraging this belief. They have been taken as two here as originally printed by Bhadrassen Bara. In either ballad interest centres on a central figure and the narrative is self-contained. Bhadrassen Bara's Phulkowarar Git, after the union of Phulkowar and Dhan Pachtuli, has some verses which do not have any bearing on the central story of the ballad. They are superfluous or, rather, they seem to start another story and break off on the way. Two brothers, Aruna and Jagara, lament the passing away of their good days and record that Dhan Pachtuli was their mother while the "grandson" of the wreath-maker was their father. Their father was carried off by white elephants and they made him king over themselves; their mother was carried off by merchants and did not recognize her sons; they had to grow up in the forest being protected by tigers and bears and fed by she-buffaloes.

This loose end of Phulkowarar Git may be named Aruna and Jagara Git, expressive of the sad lot of waifs. Another

loose end found in Phulkowarar Git is the making of an iron fish which jumps into the water at the moment when the prince receives blessings of his grandmother and what next he most needs is a horse. What is the use of the magic fish here?

In Bhadrassen Bara's Manikowarar Git the person who goes out seeking Kachankuwari for the prince is not an officer, but the prince's mother Manyavati herself. As she makes the proposal Kachankuwari's father replies to her in an extremely artless manner:

"She knows neither cooking nor laying out the food,
She burns fuel by the bundle,
She knows neither weaving nor spinning
But loiters about others' looms; ...
If you won't disdain to take her
Kachanmala certainly I shall give."

(c) Janagabharur Git: This ballad is more "heroic" than either of the two foregoing ballads and is perhaps the longest of Assamese ballads, having some 335 quatrains, even if the minstrel's apologia is not taken into consideration.*²⁹ This ballad is sometimes sought to be explained in a historical setting because of the name of the hero: Gopichan, and the fact of the hero's being brought up by a widow mother, thus relating the ballad to the story of the medieval Bengali prince Gopichand or Govinda Chandra popularised by wandering minstrels in various parts of India and as recorded in certain romances published by Calcutta University and the Dacca Sahitya Parisat. In the same way the names Manyavati and Kachanmala (Kachankuwari) in Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git have suggested some sort of kinship of these ballads with the legend of Gopichand which contains the names Maynamati and Kanchasona.*³⁰ It must be remembered however that all references to Gopichand have been of recent times, not earlier than the fourth decade of the eighteenth century and the oldest recorded version of the legend—Durlabh Mallik's *Manikchandr'er Gan* (Manikchandra being father of Gopichand)—also comes from about the same period. The historicity of Gopichand seems to be proved.*³¹

But the authenticity of the marvellous incidents narrated in the metrical romances written on him is difficult to prove. The incidents mostly relate to the miracles alleged to have been exhibited by the medieval Sivaite mendicants. What is relevant to the present study may be put in a few words: Maynamati was the widow mother of Govindachandra. She was a Tantric Yogi and her companion in her religious activities was Haripa. She persuaded her son to give up the association of his wives for at least a time and go out with Haripa as his disciple.*³²

Apart from the similarity of names (Gopichand and Gopichan) the other similarities in the legend of Gopichand and in the ballad of Janagabharu, i.e., Gopichan's large number of wives and his being brought up by his widow mother, and the elements of the marvellous in general, are possibly fortuitous, as in most folklore. A mere parallel in one or two unconnected motifs does not prove anything. Even if, as recorded by Ratneswar Mahanta,*³³ songs describing the career of Gopichand were once popular among the weavers of Sibsagar who professed the cult to which Gopichand had belonged, it does not prove that the present ballad is an offshoot of those songs; at most, what is proved, is a survival of certain names, one in Janagabharur Git and two in Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git. The narrative of Janagabharur Git may be considered unconnected with the legends of Gopichand. The narrative may be summarized thus:

In the kingdom of Garuchar (or Garubang) ruled Janagabharu, though a woman, and she was very strong, for she had already put nine hundred princes in prison. She had made an announcement that whoever would be successful in three tests set by her would secure her hand, but if he proved unsuccessful he would be kept in prison.

Kalidhan of Kampur heard of Jana and was tempted to marry her. He set out in a hurry and arrived at a river. He requested the old ferryman to put him across. The old man was unwilling to do so, for:

"Nine hundred princes I have put across,
 All have been for the city of Jana,
 Twelve years this day have rolled out—
 Homeward they have not turned.
 Let me give you this log to sit awhile,
 Let me cut areca-nuts for you to chew,
 To the city of Jana do not go Kalidhan,
 Homeward do you turn."

Kalidhan however persuaded the man to ferry him across. Jana's maid saw him and asked wherefrom he had come. He was rather foul-mouthed and told her that by force would he destroy the caste of Jana. He was rude to Jana also and said:

"A man like me has come to take you,
 Accept me as your husband."

Jana flared up and pulling out a knife from her hair she cut off his ears and nose and struck him a ringing slap. He showed a clean pair of heels and, coming after him, she threw him across the river.

In his hour of misery Kalidhan recalled his friend Gopichan of Nagaon. He went to Gopichan and related:

"In the city of Garubang lives Jana
 None else is as handsome as she is,
 She has clapped nine hundred princes in prison,
 Though a woman, she enjoys a throne ...
 This superfluous woman sits on a throne,
 What have you been doing—a prince like you?"

Gopichan would not take the hint: he was perfectly satisfied with the nine pon (a pon—80) wives he had. Then Kalidhan appealed to his sense of merit:

"Is there a meritorious person who would earn merit—
 And plant a peepul by the roadside,
 Is there a meritorious man who would earn merit
 And have the blessing of these princes? ...
 Do not be led into taking any magic potion
 For none else is as strong as you are,
 If you do not save the nine hundred princes
 None else is there to save them.
 Yours would be the strength, mine the cunning,

We shall go to the city of Jana,
A parallel to you—this Janagabharu
Straightway we shall capture."

Gopichan felt impelled to set out on the quest for Jana. He went to his mother and asked for permission to do so:

"Learning of Jana I cannot take my meal,
No sleep can I have,
Unless I can bring Janagabharu
I shall cut my throat and die."

The old lady told him that Jana was ugly to look at and evil by nature; she would rather find out a better one for him than allow him to go out after Jana. He told her he was not going because of a woman, but because of the nine hundred princes that were in prison and the impertinence of Jana who sat on a throne. His mother tried her best to dissuade him from his resolve:

"From a one-leafed one I made you two-leafed,
Was there anyone to help you?
Clasping you to my breast I brought you up,
O dear, even then you won't listen to me."

He did not listen to her. When his wife (apparently his chief wife) spoke to him he told her that he would come within six months, but if he could not come his wives were to perform his obsequies. He was not going because of a woman, it was to let off the nine hundred princes. He further promised:

"If I can bring Janagabharu,
I shall cut off her hair."

His mother went to an astrologer in order to find an auspicious day for her son. The astrologer looked into his mirror and saw in the left arm of Gopichan a drop of "dead" or clotted blood which he advised her to remove. She declared there was no such blood in his arm. He explained that in their childhood Gopichan and the prince Abhiman were playing with the ghila (seed) and there was a scuffle in which, though the latter prince fell below, Gopichan hurt himself a little in his arm and there was now a drop of "dead" blood. A barber removed this drop of blood and one Thursday the prince was allowed to set out on his mission.

Gopichan and Kalidhan arrived at the river bank and the latter requested the old ferryman to put them across. The old man explained to them as before that it was not safe to visit Jana's city. Gopichan was impressed by his objections but Kalidhan said:

"Take heart, do not give in at so little,

To guide you I am here."

He advised his friend to pray to his gods and "then both took a leap which carried them to the other bank. A woman who had come to draw water was given a smart slap and a good kick by Gopichan for her impertinent words. She ran away and reported the matter to her mistress Jana. Janagabharu took a heavy meal and prepared for battle. Her meal consisted of one hundred maunds of flattened rice, one hundred maunds of curd and another hundred maunds of sugar. She challenged the two strangers thus:

"Whence have you come, O you Bangal Kacharis?

Which land would you go?

You have come to die an unnatural death—

Your father's grand-mother I am."

Kalidhan responded with as spicy a tongue as hers:

"Bangal you would call us,

Him you might call your husband,

Your mother's husband I am."

Jana was highly enraged and as she was going back to prepare dire punishment for them, at Kalidhan's inducement Gopichan caught her by the hand and gave her a sudden pull. She lost her balance and fell down. She got up and declared he was an uncultured fellow to touch her thus and make her lose her chastity. She would however test him now. She set her first task: "Give me a piece of areca nut which does not grow on any tree, which is not "cuttable" with any knife, and on which lime is not smeared with the hand."

Gopichan was flabbergasted by the unusual task, but at Kalidhan's encouragement he prayed to his gods and found in his own hand the kind of areca nut Jana wanted. He then spoke to her:

"If you are a woman of chastity—

That test give me.

Cook on your knees and feed us
 With that rice
 Which does not grow on any plant,
 Which is not husked under any dhenki,
 And which is not touched by the hand."

Jana succeeded in the test and set her second task: "I have an iron dhenki of my grandmother's days. Split it into two equal parts with one stroke of an axe made of one seer of wood and of which the handle is of a jute stalk." Gopichan succeeded as before. Jana then set her third task: "There is a block of stone at my doorsill. Make water upon it and make a hole as deep as a cubit." When he succeeded Jana set her fourth and last task: "There is to the east of my dwelling a tal-sal tree covering twelve puras of land; its roofs above ground are three hundred cubits long, I am not sure how deep they have gone underground; no man can go under that tree for tigers; there are twelve score wild elephants tied to the tree; you will have to take a leap, catch the tree by its top and uproot it with one pull." As before Gopichan succeeded in the task, but then:

Janagabharu rolled to the ground
 As if she had no sense of life.

She however spoke to Gopichan in touching language:

"These twelve years have rolled out
 There was none to succeed in the tasks.
 I call you my heart's husband,
 And Kalidhan I call my brother,
 Do forgive me my shortcomings,
 I am indeed guiltless."

She offered the prince a piece of areca nut, thus indicating her surrender. Finding her so tame Kalidhan began to taunt her in various ways:

"To offer a Kachari lad a piece of areca nut
 You speak so sweet,
 You are not able to get up, young lady,
 How could you be so lame?"

Indeed, Janagabharu found it difficult to rise from the ground, Gopichan did not accept the areca nut offered by the princess and went straight to the prison. The condition of the nine

hundred princes was sad to see. They were all released and washed, fed and dressed. Then only did Gopichan take the areca nut. He took Jana by the hand and entered her city. This news was passed on to the "old king," Jana's father.

The old king related the matter to his son Abhiman who explained that it was no Bangal or foreigner that had carried off Jana, but Gopichan, a rightful prince. The old king was not appeased and taunted Abhiman with cowardice and even the desire to have his sister. Abhiman came after Gopichan. Jana advised Gopichan to flee for life. Gopichan did not retreat but spoke to his assailant thus:

"One kick you have given me, dear brother-in-law,
Another kick I shall stand,
But if you give still another kick
I shall fight you waist to waist."

Gopichan stood three kicks; at the fourth kick he started fighting and the two fought for seven days and nights. The goddess Parvati, who happened to pass through the sky, espied her "nephew" Gopichan and let fall on him a hair which increased his strength. He picked up Abhiman and threw him into the sky. Abhiman was shattered like an egg. His eyes flew up into the sky and stayed there. Where his belly fell grew up a bog covered with dal reeds, where his chest fell could be seen a plank of sandalwood. Where his entrails fell grew up dark creepers. Where his teeth fell grew the toes of the elephant. Where his molar teeth fell grew the shells of the sea. His head however fell in the city of his father with a terrific thud.

The old king himself came out to punish Gopichan. He took with him twelve score wild elephants to have the slayer of his son trampled to death. Gopichan prepared a pot of magic wasps and a rope with the pestle of the dhenki tied to it. He spoke to these thus:

"Tie with the rope, beat with the pestle,
Bite with the wasps,
When the old king will admit defeat
Only then do you leave him."

There were three roads which crossed, one leading to Jana's city, another leading to Abhiman's city, and the third leading

to the old king's city. Gopichan put his "soldiers" at the crossroads. The old king was not equal to these and acknowledging defeat, promised to give away Jana at a public ceremony.

Gopichan returned home with Jana. His old mother had been counting the days and his wives sulking because of a fresh co-wife. His old mother wept out of joy at her son's return and went so far as to appreciate Jana's beauty in some detail and even concede that she was more attractive than Gopichan's other wives. Gopichan asked her to tell his wife (chief wife) to bring a knife, for as he had promised, he would cut off the hair of Jana. He cut off four fingers' breadth and apologized to the princes:

"I but kept my word, O my girl,
I but kept my word,
Such long hair why do you want?
Four fingers' breadth only I have cut."

It will have been from the summary that the ballad has neither any religious nor any historical bias. The ballad contains motifs usual in the folk-literature of the world. These are often of a magical type or marvellous and this fact will come out better in the motif-index which follows in chapter 4. The prophecy of a sixteen-year life for Manikowar, the prince's death or disappearance in spite of precaution, going into a land under water, Phulkowar's ride on a winged wooden horse, the horse's loss of power when the rider looks behind, the dry garden flowering at the touch of the prince, entering a house as an insect, Jana's tasks, Gopichan's magic powers, the transformation of Abhiman's body are all universal folklore motifs. But certain features of Janagabharur Git deserve special discussion here.

Janagabharur Git is primarily a Quest tale where a young hero goes out in quest of fortune and who after performing certain tasks secures a princess. The tasks are usually set by the bride's father, much less usual is the imposition of tasks by the bride herself, but this is a notable feature of the Assamese ballad. In a Quest tale the hero is often helped by a friend: Kalidhan guides Gopichan in each critical situa-

tion. The hero is sometimes helped by the bride: When Abhiman comes for Gopichan Jana advises the latter to flee. To come to the tasks, the first two—the first set by Jana and the only one set by Gopichan—are of the nature of riddles. Riddles have been associated with marriage in many parts of the world. "Among Russian peasants in the governments of Yaroslav and Pskov and among the people of Ladakh, riddles are said to have formed a constituent part of the ceremony of betrothal down to last century, the bride or bridegroom's ability to answer riddles being regarded as a measure of the mental equipment and social qualification for the role of husband or wife, i.e. an intelligence test. Tatar oral literature furnishes numerous examples of the same custom."*** As Elwin and Hivale observe, among the aboriginals the custom is found in certain tribes at the beginning of the ceremony. In Gond and Pardhan weddings in Mandla, for example, when the bridegroom's representative goes to fetch the bride, riddles are posed and must be answered before he can take her away.***

In Quest tales the bride sought after is not of a dangerous type. But certain data found in the ballad would suggest that Janagabharu was an unusual type of woman. Gopichan's mother describes her as: "Jana's hair is pointed like the tail of a house-lizard; it is a sign of the Sakhini (inauspicious) type of women. As she walks she waggles her breasts; she is extremely inauspicious. Her feet are shaped like the wooden sandal (the bottom of which is hollow), she is "elephant-headed", that is, one who destroys things. She looks behind as she walks; she is an "eater of heads", that is, an extremely harmful type. She consumes a meal of a *pura* of rice (a *pura* = 15 seers) and that also by throwing it into her mouth in handfuls. Her teeth are large as conch-shells and look ugly when she smiles. She has twelve score lice on her head. She is as black as charcoal. She has puffed cheeks. There is a black mole on her forehead. Her hair is all curly. She has protruding teeth. There is none else as malformed as she is." This description, which might be understandably drawn by a vexed woman, seems to find a little corroboration in the description of Jana's preparation to meet Gopichan

and Kalidhan. She takes a meal of a hundred maunds of flattened rice, a hundred maunds of curd and a hundred maunds of sugar. All this she takes in three morsels. She puts on shoes of a "thousand" gold, she puts on a garment weighing two thousand maunds. She walks like the elephant.

Does the ballad confuse two women; one a handsome but Amazonian princess and the other a demoness? This suspicion of a demoness being involved is further confirmed by the manner in which the uprooting of the tremendous tree causes Jana's fall on the ground and her inability to get up. The tree may be of the nature of the external soul, frequently met with in Märchen. In the present instance the uprooting of the tree does not kill Jana, but it does seem to disenchant her from some earlier state.

Certain incidents towards the end of Janagabharur Git would place it in the class of Creation Myths. When Abhiman's body is shattered, his eyes stay in the sky. It is not explained if they remain there as the sun and the moon. From his hair grow the jhao forest, from his belly a bog of dal reeds, from his chest sandal wood, from his entrails black creepers, from his teeth the toes of the elephant, from his molar teeth conch shells. The student of mythology cannot fail to be impressed with the fertility of imagination with which man has viewed the world around him. In certain western tales "certain mountains, for example, are said to be caused by stones which are dropped by a giant's clothes, or because giants hurled boulders back and forth."³⁶ In an American Indian myth "a long-haired maiden, the corn deity, appears to the hero and asks that she be slain and her body be dragged over the ground. From those places where it was dragged there springs forth the corn plant with its tassels and silks as a reminder of her flowing hair."³⁷ Things are created either by God or by the Culture Hero. The Culture Hero is a sort of legendary hero who establishes human culture in particular areas. In this connection may be noted the divine help that Gopichan receives from the goddess Parvati. Parvati lets fall a hair on her "nephew" and enables the latter to defeat his adversary.

(d) Chikan Sariyahr Git: This is a fragment of some 120 lines describing the career of Chikan Sariyah, son of Maupiya Phukan of the kingdom of Gauhati.^{***} Maupiya sends his seven sons, Chikan Sariyah being the eldest, and their sister Phulcheng to Upper Assam and direct them to found a kingdom at Bakchu-Bakata. Chikan Sariyah is to be the king, the youngest Alan is to be the minister, the other five brothers are to form the Panchayet or assembly, and Phulcheng is to be given in marriage when she grows up. The seven brothers found a kingdom at Bakchu-Bakata after clearing the jungles there. When the girl grows up a husband is looked for, but finding no suitable husband, Chikan Sariyah, chooses the "lame king" from Najira-Gargaon to accept the hand of his sister. Chikan Sariyah's choice is opposed by his brothers. But nevertheless the king comes, the bride and the bridegroom sit under the ceremonial pandal..... Here the fragment ends and it is not known what happens later.

Some of the names in the ballad are historical: for example, Maupiya was an official who in the second half of the seventeenth century joined with the Mughal invaders of the land in western Assam ;^{***} Chikan Sariyah, brother-in-law of the king at Gargaon raised the standard of revolt, about the same time as Maupiya's disaffection, and occasioned some bloodshed and general disorder. He later became a Prime Minister.^{***} One of the kings ruling from 1552 to 1603 was known as Khora Raja because of his having hurt his foot soon after his accession. The names do not seem to prove the historicity of the ballad, and indeed, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Gauhati was under the king in Upper Assam and Bakchu-Bakata itself was too near the capital to allow a stranger king to thrive there. The ballad may be taken as belonging to the general type, that of magic, though, apart from improbability, it contains no magical or marvellous incident as such (for an independent tale about Chikan Sariyah see chapter 5).

In a recently published version of the ballad which materially differs from the one described here, Chikan Sariyah

is seen conspiring with his brothers to capture the throne, apparently after the death of Jayaddhvaja Simha (1648-1663), the conspiracy being nipped in the bud by the new king Chakraddhvaja Simha. The latter ballad does not have any element of improbability, though it is equally incoherent, and may be classed as historical.*40A

(VI)

Realistic: Ballads of this type reflect a more or less realistic attitude to life and may describe ordinary affairs, even love, occasionally. The marvellous hardly enters them. They are usually found in Lower Assam, in the Kamrup district. One of these, a degraded version of Saudar Git, has been said to be sung by boatmen.*41

(a) Dubalar Santir Git:*42 A young merchant is angling and the Santi or the Chaste Lady of Dubala sees him as she comes for her bath. She asks him what fish he is catching. He replies he is but looking at her. She does not appreciate the reply and shuts up. He goes home and enters the house of dissatisfaction. His mother wonders what worries him. Their female wreath-maker comes and asks the merchant what the matter is. He replies:

"I am telling you the truth, do listen,
If you bring me the Santi of Dubala I shall
eat and drink.

Else I do not take any food or drink."

The wreath-maker goes direct to the Santi and tells her how the merchant is suffering. She replies that he can come to her if he brings for her dog a cup of rice, for her elephant a banana tree, for her two sons gold cymbals, for her father-in-law a gold stick, for her mother-in-law a sari of "fire" silk, for her husband a garment of white silk and for herself a gold necklace. The wreath-maker goes back and repeats what the chaste lady has told her.....

The ballad stops here and is apparently incomplete.

(b) Saudar Git: This ballad is also about the wife of a merchant and her name is Lilavati.*43 The merchant prepares to go abroad on one of his trading missions. He builds

his boat. Lilavati raises objections to his leaving her behind. Let her father-in-law go instead. Let the sea dry up. Thus she weeps:

At Lilavati's weeping the merchant's heart is moved,
He puts his gold flute in Lila's hand ;

"You give me your gold flute ; should I eat or
give it away ?"

"No, no, keep the gold flute clasped to your bosom ;"
At Lilavati's weeping the merchant's heart is moved,
He puts his rupee coins in Lila's hand ;

"You give your rupee coins: should I eat them
or give them away ?"

"When you remember me clasp them to your
bosom ;"

Thus the merchant gives her his gold girdle, his red waist-band, his wooden sandals and his gold cap. But she will not be appeased. She prays to the gods to cause the sea to dry up. Then she proposes that he go by water and she follow him by land. He gives her his *chiri* or wishing-ring and when he sails westward she is able to follow him. Both at last arrive at their home. Thus Lila tests the love of her husband.

The ballad is realistic but for the introduction of the wishing-ring which perhaps enables Lila to follow her husband on foot. The journey of Lila and the merchant is not described ; in fact, as soon as they start, they arrive back at home. There seems to be a gap in the narrative here.

(c) Kanya Baramahi: This is not quite a ballad, but a song descriptive of the twelve months with a thin narrative thread.*⁴⁴ There is a whole class of songs in Assam as in other parts of India describing the twelve months of the year, sometimes popular, sometimes literary, in origin.*⁴⁵ In these poets generally present accounts of the months associated with the joys and sorrows of the chief characters delineated in them along with other things. In Bihar there are Chaumasa songs describing the sexual frustration felt in the six months of the rainy season.*⁴⁶ Songs descriptive of the twelve months are called Baramahi or "twelve-monthed". The narration in Hindi Baramahis begin from the month of Ahar, in Assamese it begins from the month of Aghon.

The present song is called Kanya Baramahi because the central character here is a kanya or maiden. It has 110 lines, in rhyming couplets and the narrative element may be summarized thus:

A young merchant sees a girl (apparently on the river-side) and proffers her presents and promises her much happiness. Beginning from the month of Aghon (Nov-Dec.) he goes on urging his suit in the months that follow. The girl refuses him every time declaring that she is married and her husband is alive. When he says that her husband must be dead she asserts:

"No, my true husband cannot be dead
For then my hair would have loosened, my tight fist
would have broken,
The two conch bangles on my hands would have
been in pieces,
The vermilion spot on my forehead would
have faded."

At last in the month of Ahin (Sept.-October) the merchant declares he is none else than her true husband. She asks him to wait awhile, goes to her father, and asks him to see whether the young man is his son-in-law. The old man asks the merchant where he stays, who his parents are. The latter gives his antecedents and assures him that he married the girl a year before in the month of Kati (Oct.-Nov.) and refers to the Brahmans and other distinguished persons who attended the marriage. The girl then approaches the young man with lights in hand, washes his feet and calls him in. The colophon records one Jaydhan Baniya as author of the song.

(d) Pagala-Parvatir Git: In this ballad also the narrative thread is thin; it consists of a dialogue between Pagala the husband and Parvati the wife, a quarrelling couple.*47 The ballad is playful in spirit. The names Pagala and Parvati are suggestive of some sort of relation with the wild god Mahadeva and his wife Parvati, the god being frequently called Pagala or the wild one. Under the name Pagala Mahadeva has acquired a domesticated and rather humorous

personality and he is often described as quarrelling with his wife. As he is indifferent, as a husband, to whether his wife and children have anything to eat, Parvati has grounds to harbour a grouse. Sen and Roy quote two Bengali ballads describing Mahadeva and Parvati quarrelling, the mischievous sage Narada for once making attempts to calm the irate couple—in *Gopichandrer Gan*, Vol. II. But in spite of the suggestiveness of the names Pagala and Parvati the Assamese ballad makes no reference either to the wild god or to his wife: here we find only a plain housewife and her goodman competing in declaring in what manner the one would thwart the other:

Parvati is saying to herself: "I am stretching the warp of my loom but I've forgotten to bring the smoothing brush (with which to smooth the warp). Only for this would Pagala thrash me. Let me go away to my mother's." Pagala overhears her and declares: "You are going to your mother's. Parvati; I would lie in ambush on the way and catch you." "You would lie in ambush and catch me, Pagala; I would run off into the thicket". "You would run into the thicket, Parvati; I would set fire to the thicket and catch you". "You would set fire to the thicket and catch me, Pagala; I would go up with the smoke." "You would go up with the smoke, Parvati; I would catch you with the hooked pole..."

Thus they go on. If she falls into the lake he catches her with a fishing contrivance; if he catches her she becomes a shell; if she becomes a shell he burns her and eats her up as lime; if he eats her as lime she stings his cheeks; if she stings he cures the pain by rubbing with oil; if he rubs with oil she takes birth as mustard seeds; if she is born as mustard seeds he presses them in an oil-press; if he presses them she takes birth as oil-cake; if she takes birth as oil cake he throws it away into a corner of the orchard; if she is thrown away she turns into a large tree; if she turns into a large tree he fells it and builds a boat; if he builds a boat she drowns him in the middle of the water.

So ultimately the victory lies with the woman, as in the French ballad quoted in section VIII below. In a variant of

the ballad where the name Parvati is replaced by Pagali, there is an extra quatrain expressing the sentiment of affection:

The tender leaves of the jara, O Pagala,
 The tender leaves of the jara,
 Even though I would I cannot forsake
 Your tender two hands.*47A

(VII)

Satirical: These are usually composed by the village buffoon, known in Kamrup as Bhaura or impersonator, the parallel term being Bahuwa in Upper Assam. Ballads of this facetious type are not a few in number, but they have no large circulation and are not popular in the best tradition. They do not have an essential element of the ballad, the story. They may be composed about the opium-eater, the harmful effects of tea, a circus party which visits the locality, the girl who is not expert in spinning and weaving, and such subjects. One or two collections of rather vulgar songs are attributed to Ningna Bhaura, once well-known in northern Kamrup. It is amusing to note that a collection of ribald songs attributed to Nigani (the standard form of the word *ningna* which means a mouse) has been published from Upper Assam also. Probably in this collection the authorship has been attributed to Nigani because of the glamour of Ningna in the Kamrup district.*48 The drummers of the countryside in Kamrup sometimes stage folk plays and humour the people with all sorts of playful verses. Maluwar Git, or the ballad of Maluwa, is supposed to be the expression of grief of a monkey, though it is recited by a drummer.

(a) *Bhuikapar Git*: Attributed to Ningna Bhaura, it describes certain incidents in the earthquake of 1897 which caused heavy damage to the districts of Kamrup, the Khasi and Jaintiya hills and Goalpara.*49 The ballad draws a satirical picture of the confusion created by the earthquake: The people rush about. The earth opens up in cracks and water and sand come out. Domestic animals float in the water. Even the cooking pans start floating. Things like the spinning wheel and the gin are swallowed up by the earth:

I was putting up for the night in the shrine of
Syamrai—

Unripe jackfruits I was cutting up and swallowing!
The description ends in an anticlimax.

(b) *Bhaurar Ghar*: This is also attributed to Ningna Bhaura.^{*50} Here the buffoon gives a record of his material wealth.

On four sides of the quadrangle are four iron-roofed
houses,

But if it rains I have to seek shelter at someone else's ;

I keep seven servants, I have seven ploughs,

But debtors look me up before I wake from my sleep, . . .

I roam about talking and people pay me respect,

Only they of my own village pay no heed to what I say.

He talks big but has to beg from door to door. The description seems to throw some light on the floating life led by the minstrel.

(c) *Maluwar Git*: Maluwa is the popular name for a monkey and the song is recited by the drummers when they make a puppet monkey dance.^{*51} The song does not have any story element: it is a series of situations showing Maluwa's grief, the grief itself being suggested by the peculiar cry of the monkey:

U-u she cries,

Ah, my Maluwa,

Leaping from tree to tree,

Ah, my Maluwa, . . .

Who has beaten my Maluwa,

Ah, my Maluwa.

In the version of Sri S. C. Das the monkey is made to weep remembering items of a woman's spinning and weaving establishment, such as, the spinning-wheel, the gin, the cotton, etc. The song may be a caricature of the manner of a woman's crying.

Parallel to the songs of the Bhaura in Upper Assam are found certain compositions termed Juna. These are also satirical in intent but more developed in form. These are sometimes recited by the carol singers at the Bihu festival of

the New Year. Several of these ballads are on the futile attempts of the inept girl to spin and weave and thus prove her worth. In Nangalar Juna is a description of the quarrel of the different parts of the plough in order to prove which part is superior to the others, but it has no plot.

(d) *Naharar Juna*: The ballad of Nahar is comparatively short.*⁵² The young and inept Nahar finds that he has nothing to eat at home. He tells his old mother that he will go out on a trading venture. In spite of the gnats and leeches on the way he sets out with a load of six score fowl. The water of the river Dikhou is up to the brink and the ferryman will not take him across. So it is found that while the other traders are at the fair the mother's darling is not there. Instead of a load of salt Nahar brings back a load of clay. That would at least enable one to keep the floor.

The load of salt may refer to the merchandise that Nahar is expected to get in exchange of his fowl. Nahar is a fool, or what is technically called a numskull. In a Kachari Märchen the numskull sets out with the purpose of buying a pair of bullocks and returns with the art of cracking his fingers. This Nahar is sometimes associated with an upstart of the same name belonging to the sixteenth century. In accordance with this tradition, Nahar was caused to be murdered by the king while he was returning from a trading venture.

(e) *Jatarar Git*: The ballad of the spinning-wheel has close relations with such ballads as Kapahar Juna, the ballad of the cotton or Paruwar Juna, the ballad of Paruwa, all having certain lines and the theme itself in common. Jatarar Git is a fairly coherent version,*⁵³ describing the attempts of a girl to spin and weave: The young wife purchases some cotton and after ginning and bleaching it she starts spinning:

A seer of the cotton she spins *reteu-teu*,

A seer she spins into yarn as large as the fibre

of the banana,

A seer she spins in the middle of the night,

With that is tied the tusker elephant,

A seer she spins into yarn the finest of all,

With that is tied the bullock,
 She puts the yarn up on the shelf,
 The ploughman takes it away as rope for the harrow ;
 O father of the children, what are you doing ?
 Take the adze and make the yarn smoother,
 The neighbours do not have to look for fuel—
 For six months they burn the chips of the yarn ; ...

Thus it goes on for some lines more. When at last the cloth is woven a Mikir tribal comes for it but is scared away by a glance at it. The cloth has to be laid aside on the bamboo-shelf from where it is stolen by a rat.

It is a splendid satire, as downright in manner as Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*.

(VIII)

Certain parallels: The Assamese ballads are, on the whole, a national product. They do not seem to show any positive influence from outside the borders of the state which is not the fact in the case of the tales. The legend of Gopichand which has occasioned literary romances and ballads in Bengal, Orissa, and other parts of India*** does not seem to have inspired the Assamese minstrel. The folk-plays of East Bengal dealing with romantic themes and usually dubbed hallads have no parallels in Assam. Only a single motif in one of them—in Kamalaranir Gan—is found in the Märchen Kamala Kuwari which is neither a tale nor a ballad in the usual sense. The matter will come up for discussion in chapter 5. Possibly the only Bengali ballad which shows some relationship with an Assamese ballad is Damini Charitra, found in West Bengal, the Assamese parallel being Kanya Baramahi.

The narrative element in Damini Charitra*** is stronger than in Kanya Baramahi. The ballad may be summarized: Damini in the company of her friends goes to take her bath. She is seen by a young merchant and the latter pays court to the lovely girl. She goes away in a huff, but he follows her and seeks hospitality as a guest. It is the month of Kartik (Oct.-Nov.) and he urges his case referring to the natural

settings of the months. She refuses his advances declaring that she will give her embraces to her husband only. The merchant goes on paying court in the months that follow, sometimes offering her presents, sometimes referring to the suggestiveness of the natural setting of the month. Every time the girl refuses his advances but in the months of Phagun (Feb.-March) and Chaitra (March-April) her heart melts a little, only she does not forget her sense of virtue. Finding her adamant, in the month of Aswin (Sept.-October), the young man blesses her for her sense of virtue, asks her to tender his respects to her parents and tell them that he is the son of Samkhadatta and lives upcountry. Damini informs her mother of the matter and the latter goes and speaks to her husband, also a merchant. The merchant sends a messenger to enquire if the young man is his true son-in-law. The messenger goes in the guise of a mendicant, arrives at the house of the latter and seeks alms from the young man. The messenger learns that he has been back from abroad, was for a year at Santipur (the home of Damini) but feeling that his boat was floating idly in the water had returned home. The messenger returns and the old merchant learns his son-in-law has returned from abroad. He asks his daughter how she was able to send away her husband. She replies she could not recognize him as she was married so young. Her father invites his son-in-law and the latter comes with the permission of his father. His mother-in-law receives him cordially and later there is union of husband and wife. The scene of union is rather elaborate.

The central theme of the ballad—test of a wife's chastity—is the basis also of *Kanya Baramahi*. In the former the husband stays a guest and after testing his wife he sends a message to his father-in-law and goes away. The recognition follows after some delay. In the latter the recognition follows almost at the moment when the young merchant reveals his identity. In both the girls do not know their husbands because they are married too young, at the age of twelve in the Bengali ballad. In both the months are the setting for the one-sided courtship, but in the Assamese ballad the narrative thread covers more or less the twelve months, in the Bengali

desires that he be given alms by the prince's youngest wife. Lilavati gives him alms and as he catches sight of her he cuts his own throat with a knife, Lilavati too commits suicide. As the prince hears of the incident he too takes his own life. "The abduction of a girl by some king forming a part of the above story finds pictorial representation in a cave of the Khandagiri hills at Bhubaneswar and the date of this picture has been assigned to the second century B.C." The young prince's advances, the woman's refusal, the prince's sending a barber to the woman have parallels in the ballad, otherwise in other respects the tale and the ballad differ. In the ballad an attempt is made to persuade the woman to accept her lover, in the tale the attempt made is to abduct the woman. The Manichora Jataka (No. 194) records the tale of king Brahmadatta coveting a merchant's wife and his attempt to remove the merchant from his way.

The conditions laid down by the chaste lady of Dubala seem easy for a merchant to fulfil; the conditions laid down by the love of Captain Wedderburn are more difficult, requiring at least ingenuity to circumvent them, for example :

"You maun get to my supper a cherry but a stane,
And you man get to my supper a capon but a bane,
And you man get a gentle bird that flies wanting
the ga,
Before I lye in your bed, but I'll not lye neist the

WALFORD

The fancied transformation in order to escape and to pursue seen in Pagala-Parvatir Git has a parallel—where the transformation is an accomplished fact—in the Scottish ballad *The Twa Magicians*. In this ballad an unwilling lady is pursued by a "coal-black smith" and:

"Then she became a turtle dow,
To fly up in the air,
And he became another dow,
And they flew pair and pair,
She turned hersell into an eel,
To swim into yon burn
And he became a speckled trout
To gie the eel a turn..."

Thus they go on. The ballad is incomplete, but in a better and more complete ballad current in France, finding him adamant, the lady succumbs to the lover at last.^{*52}

"At the back of father's house
 There's a pond so cool,
 I shall make myself an eel,
 An eel in father's pool.
 If you make yourself an eel,
 An eel in father's water,
 I shall be a fisherman,
 Fishing for his daughter.
 If you become a fisherman,
 Fishing for me there,
 I shall be a little lark
 Flying in the air.
 If you become a little lark,
 Flying in the air,
 I shall be a hunting-man
 To get you in a snare.
 If you become a hunting-man
 To get me with a gun,
 To the convent I shall go
 A little convent nun.
 If you should make yourself a nun,
 A nun for convent-teaching,
 I shall be a preacher too,
 And win you by my preaching.
 If you would be a preacher too,
 To win me by your preaching, O,
 I shall give myself to you
 Because you love me so."

This use of conditional clauses is also seen in the Indonesian pantun, especially when two persons sing to one another in a competition.^{*53A} The girl sings that she will turn into a bird and hide in the clouds if the lad does not stop pursuing her. He answers :

Shingles split atop the roof,
 The mushroom is felled with an axe's stroke.
 If a cloud of smoke disturbs this bird,
 Straight down she'll dive to the ocean's floor.

He fashions a silken net to drag her from the sea ; she hides behind a stone. Finally she can flee no longer : they come together, starting on another series of antiphonal songs, of the type of the Assamese Bihunam. An illustration of magical conflict is seen in the Bengali legend of Maynamati where the queen struggles against Jama, king of death, who has taken away her husband. To avoid her he turns into a carp ; she becomes a waterfowl. He eludes her as a shrimp : she searches for him as a gander. He flies into the air as a dove : she chases him as a hawk....*59

(IX)

Technical features : The technical features of Assamese ballads seem to have much in common with those of English and Scottish ballads. Certain features are found to characterize oral compositions separated by lands and seas. This is because the situations which occasion them are more or less similar at a certain level of cultural development. It would be well to note what are taken as the technical features of English and Scottish ballads. G. L. Kittredge summarizes them in this way: "As we examine the most characteristic of the extant ballads with a view to any peculiarities of technique that may distinguish them from any other poetry, we immediately note certain features which point straight back to the singing, dancing throng and to communal composition.... First comes the refrain, which, though its history is one of the obscurest chapters in literature and art, is manifestly a point of connection between the ballad and the throng. The refrain can never have been the invention of the solitary, brooding author of our modern conditions. It presupposes a crowd of singers and dancers. Accordingly, as ballads go further and further away from the people or from singing, they tend to lose their refrains ; the recited ballad has no need of them.

"Other elements which point in the same direction are commonplaces, or recurrent passages, varying from a line to several stanzas in length. These are to the ballad very much what idiomatic phrases are to language.

"Simple repetition is so familiar a feature of the ballad style that it may be dismissed with a word. A message, for instance, is regularly delivered at full length and in precisely the terms in which it was entrusted to the messenger. A similar trait, to which Mr. Gummere has given the opposite name of incremental repetition, is even more noteworthy. It may be seen, for instance, in the *Two Sisters* (No. 10), the *Cruel Brother* (No. 11), and many other ballads. Thus in stanzas 21-26 of the *Cruel Brother* we have—

'O what will you leave to your brother dear ?'
 'The silver-shod steed that brought me here.'
 'What will you leave to your mother dear ?'
 'My velvet pall and my silken gear.'
 'What will you leave to your sister Anne ?'
 'My silken scarf and my gowden fan.'
 'What will you leave to your sister Grace ?'
 'My bloody cloaths to wash and dress.'
 'What will you leave to your brother John ?'
 'The gallows-tree to hang him on.'
 'What will you leave to your brother John's wife ?'
 'The wilderness to end her life.'

With these stanzas before us, incremental repetition defines itself:—each stanza repeats the substance of the preceding, but with some variation which advances the story. Here again, a composing throng is not necessary to explain the phenomenon, but given the composing throng as an historical fact, we cannot fail to recognise this kind of repetitions as a stylistic feature that suits the conditions admirably, and may probably have arisen in the communal period. Once established, such a feature would become what we find it—a bit of ballad technique."⁶⁰

We may note in this summary that the communal nature of the composition of ballads has been overemphasized by Kittredge, a follower of Child. The determination of the

question whether the "folk" composed or the individual is not relevant in the present context. Apart from the characteristics mentioned by Kittredge—refrain, recurrent passages, simple repetition, and incremental repetition, the nature of the verse form needs to be noted. E. K. Chambers observes that "ballads, with a few exceptions, are written either in fourstress rhyming couplets or in septenars, which were probably felt rather as quatrains, alternately of four-stress and three-stress lines, of which only the three-stress ones rhyme. The rhyme is normally iambic, but there is often a feminine ending to a line, and often an unstressed syllable lacking before the first stressed one, which gives something of a trochaic effect. Often again a stressed syllable carries with it more than one unstressed one. According to Prof. Gerould whatever the metre, heavy and light stresses follow each other in regular succession. This, he says, is more clearly apparent from ballad tunes than from verbal texts."⁴¹ Prof. Chambers refers to the British ballads, and it is obvious all the peculiarities of the English or Scottish ballad stanza will not be found in Assamese in which there is no syllabic division of words and the accent.

In the light of the above the technical features of the Assamese ballads may now be examined.

(a) *Refrain*: Kittredge overemphasizes the song quality of the ballad and takes the refrain as an evidence pointing to the composition of the ballad by the dancing throng. But whether all ballads were sung by the dancing throng is to be questioned. E. J. Entwistle observes that "the English ballads are recitatives; the Scottish ballads have a single or double refrain in many cases, and are closely associated with Scandinavian viser designed to be danced. Whether the Scottish pieces were themselves danced there seems not sufficient evidence to determine."⁴² Moreover, as E. K. Chambers observes, "Ballad refrains are very different in character from those of carols, which are essential to the themes and are logically linked to the stanzas which introduce them. In ballads, on the other hand, the refrains are often nonsense jingles."⁴³ To illustrate Chambers' point—

Down a down a down a down

or,

With a down derry, derrie, derrie, down, downe.

The Assamese ballads do not evidence the refrain in any positive quantity. If at any time they had any relation with the dancing throng it is difficult to prove. At present the ballads are only recited and the refrain is not found necessary. People at a lower level of culture, like the Abors on the Assam-Tibet border, are found to possess Child or Kittredge's primitive ballad with its refrain showing evidence of the relation of the ballad with the throng. When the Abor minstrel or leader of the dance—*miri* or middle-man as he is termed—starts singing his ballad, the ring around him catches up the tune with a refrain.^{*64} The only Assamese ballad which seems to illustrate the typical refrain is Saudar Git, though not all through the ballad :

No need, O merchant, to put out with merchandise
Let my old father-in-law put out.

This refrain is met with twice and twice more in a slightly modified form. The second line of the refrain rhymes with the second line of the preceding two lines (a b a b). Further the refrain is not nonsensical, it is rather a part of the narrative.

One or two of the shorter and inferior ballads seem to possess the carol type of refrain, that is initial refrain.^{*65} This refrain is not simply an outcry, but takes on a metrical form, usually in a couplet which may rhyme together. For example, Bhuikapar Git has the initial refrain :

Syam vadane bole
Vaisa Ram Kanai kadamba tale

(The Dark-faced speaks : Sit Ram Kanai at the foot of the kadamba tree.)

The refrain is rhymed but rather nonsensical and not related to the theme of the ballad. Such an initial refrain is usually seen in the religious songs of Vaisnavite Assam. Saudar Git also has this initial refrain, not rhymed, but slightly related to the theme of the ballad :

No profit in far-away trade, oh,
O young Lila.

The refrain seems to express the sentiment of the chorus in relation to the sad theme of the ballad. This ballad indeed may have been recited by the Ojha-Pali dancers where the leader sings and the chorus takes up the tune in the refrain. The Ojha-Pali usually recite religious romances, but their technique may have influenced ballads like Bhuikapar Git and Saudar Git. But it cannot be concluded from this datum that the ballads in question were communal compositions or that they were connected with the dancing throng in the sense of Kittredge. It may even be suggested that the ballads were absorbed by the Ojha-Pali into their repertory and later reproduced with the modifications which the Ojha-Pali found necessary in reciting them in accordance with their technique. Duvalar Santir Git also has an initial refrain, unrhymed, but slightly related to the theme of the ballad as in Saudar Git.

An initial refrain of this type in Assamese is known as *diha*, from Sans. *disa*, direction.

(b) *Recurrent passages* : These "idiomatic phrases" of ballads are found plentifully in Assamese. Passages frequently recur. To illustrate from the long Barphukanar Git :

It is my fortune
That you all I have met here. II. 23-26

It is my fortune
That my lord I have met here. II. 35-36

Sorrow on sorrow, O people,
Sorrow on sorrow,
The dogs bite, the children throw
stones,

Nowhere do you find happiness! II. 246-249

Sorrow on sorrow, O people
Sorrow on sorrow,
The dogs bite, the children throw
stones,

Nowhere do you find happiness! II. 707-710

To illustrate from Janagabharur Git :

Six months' way in six days did
Kalidhan

Cover and reach Jana's city.

Reaching Jana's city did Kalidhan
Ask repeatedly—

II. 63-65.

In this instance the phrase "reaching Jana's city" has been repeated with the slightest alteration possible. Such devices make it easier for the balladist to get on with his narrative while composing something fresh, for he does not have to waste time over his language every moment; he creates with material which is almost ready to hand, both in language and in theme.

(c) *Simple repetition* : This is more obvious in a ballad like Barphukanar Git where whole passages are repeated sometimes. Repetition of this nature is not rhetorical or casual but almost purposive; such repetition is necessary for the vivification of the incidents of the narrative. For example, when the Barphukan leaves Gauhati under cover of darkness he tells his companion Udaysingh Bangal:

Udaysingh, so I live;
These three sons I put in your charge;
I shall go in disguise;
A part of Assam, my friend, I shall give you;
Do not look at my shortcomings,
In days of adversity do not forsake me. II. 199-205.

The same idea is repeated with slight modification when the Barphukan fails to secure aid in Calcutta and sets out for Burma :

My friend Udaysingh, I shall go in disguise;
A part of Assam I shall give you;
Do not look at my shortcomings,
In days of adversity, my friend,
do not leave me. II. 294-297.

Similarly the wailing of the Barphukan's wife in lines 237-238 is repeated with slight modification in lines 711-718. Again, the Burmese king's words at the news of the Barphukan's death in lines 754-758 are repeated with slight alteration

in lines 793-795 when the minstrel reports of the havoc made by the invaders.

Repetitions of this nature are found in other long ballads like Janagabharur Git. When Gopichan's mother gives him her unwilling permission to set out on his mission she asks him to pray to his god. The form of the prayer indicated by her is repeated four times afterwards, either in similar language or in a slightly compressed form. In Dubalar Santir Git the wreath-maker repeats to the young merchant the rather long reply which the chaste lady gives her when the latter speaks to her of the merchant's passion.

(d) *Incremental repetition* : Line or stanza repeating the substance of the preceding with some variation and advancing the story, is best illustrated in Saudar Git and Pagala-Parvatir Git. Lines 29-52, just one third of the whole ballad of Saudar Git, illustrate incremental repetition. This will be evident from the lines quoted in the summary of the ballad given earlier in the present chapter. Pagala-Parvatir Git is all through an illustration of this type of repetition. For example,

"I stretch the warp of my loom under the teteli (tree)

I forgot to bring the smoothing-brush,

For the smoothing-brush would Pagala beat me,

Let me go away to my mother's."

"You would go to your mother's, Parvati,

I would lie in ambush on the way and catch you."

"You would lie in ambush and catch me, Pagala,

Into the thicket I would run away."

"Into the thicket you would run away, Parvati,

Setting fire to the thicket I would catch you."...

This kind of repetition is also a feature of formula tales which have been discussed in the following chapter. It is further seen in a number of the songs sung at the Bihu festival of the Spring. For example,

My mind settles not at home, dear

nor does it settle in the field,

as the teased cotton floats

so to float do I long.

The repetition is not missed even in the translation.

(e) *The verse form*: A light stanza would seem to go well with a dance rhythm. As has been observed earlier, Assamese ballads are recited excepting one or two which might have been taken from the Ojha-Pali dancers. Though the ballads are recited, most of these found in upper Assam are characterized by the quatrain with the second and fourth lines rhyming, as in the love song cited in the paragraph preceding. There are even one or two quatrains in Janagabharur Git and Barphukanar Git which are found in the corpus of the Bihu songs. Janagabharur Git, Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git have this quatrain form. The first and third lines in the quatrain have four stresses each while the second and the fourth have three stresses each (though quantity rather than stress would be a better term). If we take the first and the second line as originally forming one line then it may be said to possess seven stresses:

Garúchar rājyáte Janā'gābhāruwe
Tirí hai rá'jpāt khā'y,
Nása kowáarak bandíkai thaíche
Tá'ir mán valávān nā'í.

This stanza form seems to have some similarity with the septenar broken up into a stanza of four-stress and three-stress lines. The rhythm is run-on, if not iambic as in English ballads. As suggested by Prof. Gerould the tune—at least in the Bihu songs which have the same stanza form—may modify the stresses if any of them is irregular or short in accordance with its own demands.

Barphukanar Git exhibits an uneven form, though it incorporates a half dozen quatrains of the type just described. It is in couplets of uneven length, the first line often meaningless and used only for the sake of rhyme:

Jarâr komal jim
Pitâlai bâtari kenekai dîm?

(The soft pulp of the jara lime: How to send news to my father?)

or again,

E deu ral

Uthiye phukandeu bhitara lai gal

(O sir, (he) remained: immediately after standing up Phukan went in.)

The phrase "e deu ral" is often repeated. The effect of using this contrivance to produce rhyme is not at all happy and Barphukanar Git indeed does not remind one of the "free and vigorous metre" of the folk ballad. The recitation of the ballad must have been monotonous but for the interest of the narrative. The rhyme-scheme of this ballad may be parodied in English:

A game of football

He came and killed all,

A sour fruit

He kicked with his foot.

The rhymed couplet used in Bhuikapar Git or Kapahar Juna is an echo of the *pada* line popularised by the Vaisnavite writers of medieval Assam. The line consists of fourteen letters with a pause after the eighth letter, two lines always rhyming. In Bengali the term for this metre is *payar* and an attempt to reproduce in English the effect of the metre was made by an Englishman in the following manner:

Thi's is the melódious the délicately chiming

Mé'tre of Bengáli, in its pá'ses and its rhy'ming.

Tripping to the méasure of the dá'nce of litle foét ;

Pé'rilously simple, like the jí'ngle of the sweet

Bé'lls upon the ánkles, of the dá'ncers as they póse ;

Bé'lls upon their ánkles, yes, and rí'ngs upon their toés.

The stresses have been put where the tonic accents seem to fall in Bengali. The stresses here are much further apart than they would be in normal English verse or prose.***

Saudar Git is partly in quatrains, partly in couplets, which do not always rhyme. Why the same comparatively short ballad should be in two metres needs to be looked into. Is it because fragments of two ballads on the same theme have been run in ? The rugged Barphukanar Git may also raise a similar suspicion, for while most of the ballad is in a sort

of rhyming doggerel, some portions of it are in finished quatrains. Noting a similar mixture of two types of metre in *Leesome Brand*, G. L. Kittredge observes thus: "The mixture of four-line with two-line stanzas of course comes from different ballads having been blended, but for all that, these ballads might have had the same theme".**

It might be added that the rhyme, whether in the quatrains or in the couplets, is not always regular, having the freedom characterizing popular literature.

Two more technical features of the ballads: the invocation or apologia as well as the division into fits of the longer ballads deserve notice.

(f) *Invocation*: Short ballads do not have any invocation or apologia. The minstrel jumps right into the middle of the story of action. But when ballads come to be recited by a professional class, much unnecessary material tends to get into their structures. They take on some of the characteristics of the epic or romance. For example, the Bengali romance *Govindachandrer Git* by Durlabh Mallik begins with an invocation to the god Dharma and the seven saints of the Nath cult.*** Similarly the English *Gest of Robin Hood*, "a popular epic, composed from several ballads by a poet of a thoroughly congenial spirit," has a short introduction, though not an invocation:

Lythe and listin,, gentlemen,
That be of frebore blode ;
I shall you tell of'a gode yeman,
His name was Robyn Hode.***

Barphukanar Git has an invocation of five quatrains in which the minstrel pays homage to the goddesses Saraswati, Parvati, and Kamakhya. Then follow some sixteen lines in which he pays respects to his audience, suggests what fee he would claim if he sang the ballad and once again pays homage to the goddess Saraswati. In the invocation proper a quatrain goes thus:

Mother Saraswati, Goddess Parvati,
Let me offer you rice,

The verses that I forget do remind me,
The tangles of the ballad (as I sing) do resolve.

In Janagabharur Git the invocation of the goddesses Saraswati and Parvati which is intermixed with a few apologetic verses has nine quatrains. This invocation—without much modification—is also seen in the fragment of Chikan Saryahar Git. Both the ballads were recorded at Kakajan, but not from the same person. The printed versions of Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git do not have any introductory verses.

(g) *Division into fits* : Longer ballads usually are divided into sections for which Bishop Percy has used the term fit. The *Gest of Robin Hood* has eight fits. Division into fits is made clear by suggestions found in the text of the ballad. For example, at the end of the first fit the minstrel in Barphukanar Git, which has two fits, sings :

The pause of my verses, my lord, falls at this point ;
O Mother Saraswati, let me pray to you—
May to you attached my mind remain ;
Nobles all, do not find fault with me
(for) I close the ballad of the Barphukan.

When he starts the narration again, it is without any invocation or apologia. The final closure is in the manner of the closure of the first fit. The long Janagabharur Git does not have any division into fits. The printed versions of Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git are found to be in sections but this division is probably owing to the publisher and not warranted by the texts of the ballads. So it would seem that among Assamese ballads only Barphukanar Git has true fit division.

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CHAPTER 3

THE MARCHEN

I

The Assamese for an oral tale is *sadhukatha*, usually derived from the Sanskrit *sadhu*, a merchant, meaning thereby that the *sadhukatha* is a tale told by a wandering merchant. It is a generic term signifying anything from a myth to a fable. The tale told only to amuse, the true oral tale, in English is usually called nursery tale or fairy tale. The term folktale is also used. For academic discussions these terms require to be carefully defined so as to facilitate the classification and analysis of the tales found among a people. The men and women who narrate tales neither know of nor care about any nomenclature and classification. Moreover, terms which are current in a certain area may not have validity in another area. This has led Prof. Stith Thompson to observe that it is safe to say that the ordinary involved wonder tale is given as a piece of pure fiction in Europe but is expected to be believed in India. Such tales are nearly always localized in India, so that the distinction between place legends and folktales breaks down entirely.*¹

One of the early systematic attempts to classify tales was that of Edwin Sidney Hartland. In *The Science of Fairy Tales* Hartland defined fairy tales as: "Traditionary narratives not in their present form relating to beings held to be divine, nor to cosmological or national events, but in which the supernatural plays an essential part."² Fairy tales are divided by Hartland into two classes—sagas and Märchen. "Under the first we may place all those stories which relate to definite supernatural beings, held really to exist, and the scenes of which are usually laid in some specified locality. Stories belonging to this class do not necessarily, however, deal with the supernatural. Often they are told of historical

heroes, or persons believed to have once lived. For instance, the legends of Godiva and Whittington and his Cat, which, however improbable, contain nothing of the supernatural. . . . The other class of tales consists of such as are told simply for amusement, like Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, and Puss in Boots. They may embody incidents believed in other countries, or in other stages of civilization, to be true in fact; but in the form in which we have them this belief has long since been dropped. In general, the reins are thrown upon the neck of the imagination; and, marvellous though the story be, it cannot fail to find acceptance, because nobody asserts that its events ever took place, and nobody desires to bring down its flights to the level either of logic or experience. Unlike the saga, it binds the conscience neither of teller nor of listener; its hero or heroine has no historical name or fame, either national or local; and being untrammelled either by history or probability, the one condition the tale is expected to fulfil is to end happily. Stories of this class are technically called *Märchen*: we have no better English name for them than Nursery Tales."²³

Another early writer, von der Leyen²⁴, distinguished two broad types of the oral tale thus: "Generally, we can say the *Sage* is the simple picture, the *Märchen* the complex one; that the *Sage* aims at condensation and simplicity, the *Märchen* at lengthening and expansion; that in the *Sage* is developed instruction at the cost of narration and play, in the *Märchen* narration and play at the cost of instruction." In recent years leading folklorists of Europe have, of course, fought battles royal on the terms used in connection with the oral tale. Some of them have asserted their standpoints only too vehemently and there have sometimes been much controversy as to the implications of a term even when seemingly agreed upon. For example, there is Wesselski who introduces a fresh term *Marlein* in order to delimit the scope of *Märchen*, the latter, according to him, using only realistic and wonder motifs, while the former using realistic and superstition motifs."²⁵

Whatever be the exact terms to be used, the two broad divisions of the oral tale indicated by Hartland seem to have

secured general acceptance. In the one the element of wonder is the significant feature and in the other the elements of explanation and belief are the determining factors. For the first Märchen and for the second Sage have been the terms generally used. A recent writer, Prof. Thompson, describes a Märchen as "a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite characters and is filled with the marvellous. In the never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms, and marry princesses."** To describe the second class of tales indicated by Hartland by the use of *saga*, the modern tendency is to use the German *Sage* (plural *Sagen*). In the words of Prof. Thompson, a *Sage* "purports to be an account of an extraordinary happening believed to have actually occurred. It may recount a legend of something which happened in ancient times at a particular place—a legend which has attached itself to that locality, but which will probably also be told with equal conviction of many other places, even in remote parts of the world. It may tell of an encounter with marvellous creatures which the folk still believe in—in fairies, ghosts, water-spirits, the devil, and the like. And it may give what has been handed down as a memory—often fantastic or even absurd—of some historical character."**

These two are only broad divisions of the oral tale, but there are other varieties of which the myth is a notable one. The term *myth* is rather confusing. Prof. Thompson uses it to mean "a tale laid in a world supposed to have preceded the present order. It tells of sacred beings and of semi-divine heroes and of the origins of all things, usually through the agency of these sacred beings. Myths are intimately connected with religious beliefs and practices of the people."** To separate myths from the general body of oral tales in a class is often difficult, for myths tend to be confused with hero legends and etiological tales and even tales of the Märchen type. Franz Boas, after an extensive study of North-American Indian tales, has shown that the origin of all tales is to be explained as "due to the play of the imagination with events of human life" and that the barrier bet-

ween the myth and the folktale is not rigid, "for the data show a continual flow of material from mythology to folktale and *vice versa*, and that neither group can claim priority."** Boas does not concede to the metaphysical interpretations mythology has enjoyed since the days of the Grimm brothers and Max Müller and stresses that "the attempt to interpret mythology as a direct reflex of the contemplation of nature is not sustained by the facts."¹⁰ The subject of myths is a complicated one and a detailed discussion of it is not relevant in the present study; and indeed among the Assamese there are few myths independent of Sanskrit influence. But considering the fact that it is a popular tale—and so long it is not told in a ritualistic setting—the myth may be taken as any other oral tale, it might as well be put as a subclass of oral tales if its distinctive character has to be maintained at all.

For the purpose of the present study the principles of classification recommended by Prof. Thompson at the Second Session of the Folklore Institute of America held at Indiana University in 1946 have been found advisable. Prof. Thompson takes the term folktale to cover all true oral tales as distinguished from such literary types as the fable, exempla, saints' legends and myth. The classification as recommended by him is as follows:

- I. Legend, tradition, Sage : purposes— to tell the truth
 - A. Place legends, e.g. Lady Godiva at Coventry
 - B. Legends about persons, e.g. King Alfred and the Cakes
 - C. Etiological tales—nature legends—tales of causes, e.g. How the Bear lost his Tail : he fished through the ice and his tail froze off. The importance of this type is exaggerated, for the explanation is not the main reason for a tale, the plot is the chief thing.
 - D. Tales of fairies, giants, dwarfs, trolls, witches, etc. tales that represent *real beliefs*. "So and so saw on a certain occasion..." The person who tells these stories sees them as actual history, not

fiction. One may be just a belief but may crystallize into a tale.

E. Legends of events, e.g. floods.

II. Märchen: purpose—to tell a fictional tale

A. Animal tales—Tar Baby

B. Supernatural—Cinderella

C. Jokes

D. Trickster tales

Prof. Thompson puts stress mainly on Märchen, eliminating myths, Sagen and fables; as he says, "As we use the term folktale we usually mean Märchen and eliminate myths, Sagen, fables. We mean prose fiction preserving its life primarily orally. We mean oral fiction."¹²

In Thompson's classification the stress is on subject-matter, only in the case of the cumulative the element of form enters. But, possibly, a better classification is not easy, for even the form of the cumulative is a primitive way of imagining the interrelationship of things and, thus, might be considered as based on subject-matter.

Thompson's classification, derived from an examination of the oral tales of the world, does no injustice to the Märchen types current among the Assamese. Tales current among the Assamese are traditional, derived from an old-world atmosphere, and have conformed to types which are usual in a more or less comparatively primitive social setting.

The richness of modern literature, as Lowie observes, has to be understood as owing to a complex culture that has powerful aids lacking in similar communities, especially for the dissemination of ideas.¹³ It is not that there is no spread of ideas and motifs and no variety in comparatively primitive literature, but an examination of the fictional tales of the Assamese only tends to confirm the impression that certain broad types, as pointed out by Thompson and other writers, stand out as centres of interest in the Märchen of people who have still stored their traditional lore.

The Assamese story-teller's is a world between fact and fantasy and in this world animals jostle with men, men talk with animals, and both men and animals find pleasure in outdoing others in wit and cleverness. It is a world where

birds and beasts think like men and where things change their form whenever it is necessary. There is humour, horror and pathos, and there is beautiful weaving of fancy. These are common features of Märchen and from these have been derived some of the major types of the fiction of civilized men. For example, the trickster has been transformed into the hero of the detective novel; the talking animal has been reborn as Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck; the weak hero or heroine's ultimate success is still a gripping theme in fiction.

Illustrations of the various types of Assamese Märchen have been furnished in this chapter; an attempt to trace the earliest versions of some of them has also been made. This chapter deals further with the relationship of Assamese Märchen with Märchen current among the tribals of the state and in certain other areas. In a subsequent chapter the Märchen as well as certain other types of oral tales will be analysed on the basis of their motifs—on the model set by Prof. Thompson's six-volume *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*.

II

Animal tales : "Animals play a large role in all popular tales. They appear in myths, especially in those of primitive people where the culture hero often has animal form, though he may be conceived of as acting and thinking like a man or even, on occasion, of having human shape. This tendency toward ascribing human qualities to animals also appears when the tale is clearly not in the mythical cycle. It is such non-mythological stories that we designate by the simple term *animal tales*. They are designed usually to show cleverness of one animal and the stupidity of another, and their interest usually lies in the humour or the absurd predicaments the animal's stupidity leads him into. The American Indian series of the coyote and the popular European cycle of the fox and the wolf, best known in America as the tales of Uncle Remus, are outstanding examples of this form."¹⁴ It has been observed that in the folktales of many of the lower races the majority of the characters are usually animals, who speak and act like human beings to such an extent that it is plain that the narrators, who tell the stories in all serious-

ness, have no distinct idea of the boundary line between man and beast.*¹⁵

Of all Assamese animal tales those centring round the fox and the tiger seem to be the most noteworthy. The fox is the type of cunning and resourcefulness while the tiger appears to be rather dull though sufficiently scaring. Because of its resourcefulness the fox is often required to assist others, whether human or animal like itself. On the other hand the tiger in spite of its strength has to seek the aid of even human beings. The chief tales in which the fox figures as hero are:

(1) *Siyal Tamuli* or *Officer Fox*: A fox steals sugarcane from an old farmer's orchard. The farmer pretends to be dead, and as the fox advances, captures it. The fox promises its captor the merchant's daughter as bride and is let off. The beast takes a rattan, chews areca nut, and visits the merchant and puts across the proposal that the widowed daughter of the merchant's servant be given to its "grandfather". It further tells the merchant that on the wedding day there should be no drum beating for that would offend the groom's friends. The fox then asks the farmer to put a little rice powder and gur in cups made of banana bark and float them down the river. The merchant notices these and thinks the groom must have invited a large number of guests. At evening the fox invites its fellow-beasts, puts a torch in the mouth of each, and starts for the merchant's place. As there is drum beating the foxes run away and the matchmaker takes the merchant to task for his lack of consideration. When the marriage is over the fox rushes home and sets the farmer's rickety cottage on fire, returns directly and announces that an unexpected fire has consumed all the wealth of the farmer. So the merchant causes houses to be built and money given and the farmer lives happily with his wife.*¹⁶ The fox in this tale is a parallel to the cat in Perrault's *Le Chat Botté* or *Puss-in-boots*.

The tale has a few variants. In one of them the fox is caught while stealing from a widow's kitchen. It purchases its freedom with the promise that it will help her in need.

Later it procures for her good for nothing son the princess of the land.*17

(2) The Fox and the Prince: A prince meets a fox lying in his way. He asks it to get off but it does not budge. The prince goes away in a huff and stays the night at an oilpresser's. He ties his horse to the post of the oilpress. Next morning as he goes to take his horse the oilpresser makes claim to it as his own as an offspring of the oilpress. The prince reports the matter to the king but he has no witness to back him. He remembers the fox, goes to it and requests it to help him. The fox rolls in ashes and comes to the court after some considerable delay. The king asks, "Why are you so late?" "There was a fire in the sea. It took me some time to put it out." The king bursts out laughing at his preposterous plea. The fox retorts, "How can an oilpress give birth to a horse?" The king sees his point and restores the horse to its rightful owner.*18

(3) Siyal Pandit or Teacher Fox: A fox makes off with the scripture of a Brahman. As it rests on the sand of a river a crocodile spies it with the book and addresses it: "Is that Teacher Fox?" The fox is busy turning over the leaves of the book. Finding it so great a scholar the crocodile proposes that the three young crocodiles be taught by Teacher Fox. The crocodile gives the fox a fish and the latter promises to teach the young ones. One day the crocodile takes its children and leaves them with their teacher. It goes on feeding the fox on large fish from time to time. After some days the crocodile desires to see its children. The fox says they are out on a journey. Again the crocodile comes, again the fox sends it away on some pretext or other. The crocodile at last sees through the game of Teacher Fox and promising vengeance returns home. One day it catches the fox by the leg as the latter is looking for crabs by the river. The fox laughs, "Oh, you've but caught hold of my rattan! I wanted to see how deep the water was." The crocodile relaxes its grasp and the fox escapes. Another day the crocodile catches the fox by the tongue as the latter is drinking water. The fox just manages to mutter, "Oh, I am only

washing the stool and urine off my children's clothes! You've only grasped at the dirty clothes." So the crocodile loosens its grasp and the fox makes off as fast as it is able.*¹⁹

(4) *The Fox and the Monkey*: A fox and a monkey are friends. They steal some bananas but the monkey takes the store to a tree and starts eating them. The fox claims its share. The monkey swallows the kernel and casts down the peelings. The fox goes away in vexation and waits by a patch of black arum. The monkey comes and asks what the latter is doing. Keeping watch over the king's sugarcane, the fox replies. In spite of the fox's forbidding the monkey chews the sugarcane, and starts crying and jumping with the pain which the wild arum gives. Another day the fox is sitting by a hornet's nest. The monkey comes and the fox says it is the king's drum. In spite of the latter's forbidding the monkey beats upon the drum and is bitten all over by the infuriated hornets. Another day the fox is sitting by a discarded well covered by a spiders' web. The monkey comes and the fox tells it is the royal bed. In spite of the fox's forbidding the monkey wants to sleep on the bed and drops into the well and dies.*²⁰

These are the four important tales where the fox appears as the centre of the action. In the first two the beast is helpful to human beings though basically mischievous. In the third the fox appears as a cheat without a redeeming feature; in the fourth it shows its superiority over the monkey—another rogue as depicted in folktales. The fox appears once or twice in company with the tiger, usually as a helper, though with unhappy results. The following are the chief tiger tales:

(1) *The Tiger and the Crab*: A tiger and a crab are friends. They together raise some vegetables. The crab invites the tiger to a meal. The guest is asked to put its tail into the crab's hole so that the rice and the curries can be pulled up from below. After serving a few courses the crab catches hold of the tail and will not release it. In mortal pain the tiger cries out to a peasant lad (a widow's son) for help. On its promising not to harm him the lad severs the tail

with a stroke of his knife. The grateful tiger promises to supply its benefactor with a deer every day, but this must be kept a secret from others. On one occasion the lad is forced to give away his secret and the tiger carries him off. In the forest the lad's stomach makes a sound because he is hungry. The tiger asks what it is and is told that it is the six-score crabs which have been eaten by him. The tiger leaves its victim directly. The lad arrives at the shelter of some wild buffaloes. He finds on the ground the foam of milk, drinks it and after having cleaned the place hides in a nearby tree. When the buffaloes return they find the place cleaned up and are pleased. They discover the lad and make him their chief. They kill one of their herd, give the horns to the lad and tell him that one is the horn of joy and the other the horn of anger. If he blows on the horn of joy they will consider him safe, if he blows on the horn of anger they will know he is in danger and will come to his rescue. One day a hair from his head floats on a river and is swallowed up by a barali fish. When the fish is caught and cut up at the king's place the hair is seen by the princess and she wants to marry the man with such hair. A pet crow of the princess takes a ripe mango, flies into the forest and cries:

Who blows on the horn of joy and the horn of anger?
Who would eat the ripe mango?

The lad responds and as the crow drops the mango and as he stoops to pick it, the bird makes off with the horn of anger. When he becomes helpless the king's men take him away. At evening the buffaloes find out his whereabouts from the trail of torn clothes he leaves. The lad declares the buffaloes are his possession. The king tests him by asking him to ride on them. He does so. So he gets the king's daughter and the kingdom as well.*²¹

This tale seems to be a blending of two tales, one of the tiger and the crab and the other of the lad and the buffaloes. In another tale a lad is asked by a tiger and a boar to umpire over a battle the two beasts are having. The boar dies and the tiger in appreciation of the lad's judicial services promises to give him a deer every day, but the matter must be a close

secret. The lad is forced to give away his secret and is carried off by the tiger into a dense forest. The tiger drops him there. The lad climbs up a tree and discovers a lair of wild buffaloes below. The rest of the tale is as in the above.*²²

(2) The Long-Legged One : An old woman one night prays to God thus: "O Lord, let not the Long-legged One get at me" and settles down to sleep. A thief who comes to steal one of her cows wonders who this Long-legged One is ; a tiger which comes to steal a cow also wonders who this Long-legged One is. In the darkness the thief chooses the tiger as the smartest bullock and rides out on it. The tiger considers its captor as the Long-legged One and in fright races for its life. The thief also finds his bullock unusual and considers it to be the Long-legged One. As the tiger rushes into the forest the thief twists its neck and the tiger thinks its captor must be the Neck-twister and not the Long-legged One. Not being able to stop the beast the thief catches hold of its tail. The tiger runs all the more and, leaving the peeling of its tail in the hand of the thief, it manages to escape. It considers its captor to be none other than the Peeling-remover. The thief on the other hand examines the peeling and realizes that his bullock is nothing else but a tiger. In great fear he climbs up a tree. The tiger tells of its discomfiture to other tigers and they all come seeking revenge. At break of dawn the tigers discover the Peeling-remover on the tree. They form a ladder by making one climb on the other, the discomfited tiger remaining below. The thief finding the situation critical cries out, "Is that the tailless one? Now beware!" The tiger below immediately runs away and the others drop to the ground. They also make off in fear. The thief escapes.*²³

In a variant of this tale an old man cautions his wife to be watchful at *rati-biyali*, that is, "about night-time" and goes somewhere. A thief wonders what *biyali* is, for *rati* is simply night and that he knows. A tiger is worried in the same manner. The rest of the tale is as in the above, with minor variations.*²⁴

(3) The Tiger's Marriage: A terrific tiger comes up to an old man and says, "Grandfather, you settle the marriage

of so many persons, why don't you procure a bride for me? I have lost my wife and am feeling lonely." The scared match-maker assures it of a wife. The tiger goes on bribing the man with deer. The match-maker takes time and at last asks the beast to enter a sack. After closing the sack the man starts belabouring the beast and the latter cries out, "Oh, grandfather I won't marry, I won't marry!" The man beats it to his heart's content and at last throws the sack into the river. A tigress which has lost its mate discovers the floating sack in the river and on opening it finds a splendid tiger which is alive. So they both live as husband and wife. The tiger is perfectly happy and pays a visit to the match-maker for procuring it such a wife.*²⁵

(4) The Tiger in the Trap: A tiger is caught in a trap and requests a man to let it out. On the beast's promising not to harm him the man lets it out. The tiger wants to eat him and the man asks, "Can a tiger eat its benefactor?" The tiger replies, "Yes." The man proposes three witnesses. A tree is of the tiger's opinion. A stream is also of the same opinion. Then comes a fox. It wants to know in what state the tiger was found. As the tiger enters the trap the fox tells the man, "Do not let it out, beat it to death!"*²⁶

(5) The Tale of the Cakes: An old man goes into the woods in order to have fuel that his wife may make some cakes. A tiger threatens to eat him. He tempts the beast with cakes and asks it to come on the day of "great smoke" and not on that of "small smoke". The cakes are made but eaten up by the old couple excepting one. Finding a thick column of smoke rising from the hut of the old man the tiger comes. It finds a cake of rice at the gate and eats it with relish. It advances and sees in the yard another cake, eats it and finds it itch its throat as by wild arum. A third cake is seen on the verandah. The tiger eats it and finds its throat burn as with lime and dies ultimately of the pain.

(6) The Tiger and the Billy Goat: A billy goat finding itself face to face with a tiger threatens to eat the latter. The tiger runs off. A fox persuades it to return. They tie their two tails and return to the goat. The goat says, "Oh, you

went off to get another one, didn't you? Well, that is good." The tiger turns and runs with all its strength. The fox gets killed as the tiger pulls it from behind.* ²⁷

Of other animal tales one on the frog is popular. There is another interesting tale sometimes told of a cat and sometimes of a fox. It is a tale of deception and the magnitude of the deception involved comes out better of the cat is taken as the hero of the tale.

(1) The Frog : An old man catches a frog while fishing and brings it home. As the man is about to beat it to death the frog cries out, "Grandfather, do not kill me, I shall be your grandchild and work for you." So it is not killed. It goes out to the field with a pair of bullocks. The king comes with his men and passes over the field. The frog hides under a clod and gives him a thundering. The king's men take away the bullocks. The frog comes home in a huff, takes some fried grains, goes out and sings:

I go along the way and eat fried grains,
If anyone comes him also I give some.

At this a large number of insects, mosquitoes, wasps, and wild animals follow the frog and they all go and challenge the king. The latter is forced to sue for peace and gives the frog his daughter and half of his kingdom.

(2) The Cat : A cat while in search of something to eat finds its head trapped in a khalai, a wickerwork fish-pot. Being unable to extricate itself from the fishpot it wanders into the jungle and terrorizes certain tiger cubs by declaring that their parents owe it a fishpot of coins and eats up their food. When the parent tigers return the male one rushes at the cat and the latter runs up a tree. The tiger's head gets caught in some overhanging creepers and the cat thunders at it. At the entreaty of the tigress the cat advises the former to gnaw at the creepers and the tiger is released. The cowed tigers are forced to allow it to stay as their permanent guest and is well fed. After some days the tigers propose that they hunt some deer. In the way is a river. The cat is almost drowned while crossing it but declares it has had a bath. When

the tigers stir up some deer they flee in the direction of the cat and a kick from a deer bursts its belly. The cat declares that the deer are so lean that it has to laugh and laugh so that its belly bursts. But soon it gasps its life out.*²⁸

The laughing cat reminds one of the Texan folklore-character Little Audrey who "just laughed and laughed" when she jumped from the airplane without having her parachute on.

(III)

Tales of the supernatural : In tales of this sort "the reins are thrown on the neck of the imagination," in the words of Hartland ; and heroes and heroines with marvellous skills and achievements, supernatural adversaries, magical means, often with a complex plot, are their features. They are wholly fictional. Prof. Thompson notes that "the clear-cut distinction made by the Irish between legends supposed to be true and purely fictional tales would be very rare, for example, in India ;"²⁹ and again, "It is safe to say that the ordinary involved wonder tale is given as a piece of pure fiction in Europe but is expected to be believed in India."³⁰ Prof. Thompson would seem to be correct if the *Purana* tales about gods and goddesses current among the people were taken into account ; samples of tales summarized in this section are all fictional, not derived from direct literary sources. In fact, there is a considerable body of fictional tales in Assamese which are not expected to be believed. The following are a few of the more interesting ones :

(1) *Tejimala* : A merchant has two wives and a daughter Tejimala by his first wife. When the elder wife dies her stepmother is put in charge of the girl. The merchant goes abroad. Tejimala desires to attend her friend's marriage. Her stepmother gives her a bundle of clothes to be put on near her friend's house. As she opens the bundle Tejimala finds there a mouse and cinders and the clothes all spoiled. She comes home weeping and is given a severe beating. Then she is made to help her stepmother in husking paddy. She finds her right hand crushed under the tooth of the husking pedal (dhenki). She is forced to use her left hand which is

also crushed. She is forced to use her feet and these also get crushed. She is made to use her head which is as well smashed. The evil stepmother buries the body under the eaves of the hut containing the husking pedal. There grows a loughourd. A beggar woman tries to pick a gourd when the creeper speaks out that she is none else but Tejimala killed by her stepmother for some clothes. The creeper is cut down and cast away. Where it falls a tree with sour fruit grows up. Herdsboys come to have some fruit and the tree speaks out as before. The tree is cut down and thrown into the river. It grows there into a lovely lotus. As the merchant returns he is tempted by the flower and wants to have it for his daughter. He asks a boatman to pick it. The flower speaks as before. The startled merchant takes a little chewing of areca nut from his mouth in his right hand and a sweetball in his left hand and says: "If indeed you are my daughter Tejimala change into a salika (bird) and take this chewing and if not take this sweetball." The flower changes into a salika and eats the chewing. The merchant puts the bird in a cage, comes home and asks his wife about the girl. The woman is forced to tell the truth. The merchant throws a towel on the bird and says: "If indeed you are my daughter change into your own shape." Tejimala appears in her true shape and her stepmother is driven out.^{*31}

In a variant of this tale the merchant picks the flower, puts it in a box and when his wife denies any knowledge of Tejimala he tests her by asking her to walk on an untwined thread spread across a well. The woman falls into the well and the flower takes the shape of Tejimala.^{*32} In another variant the flower of its own accord changes into the bird and when the merchant tests it with two sweetballs—one of hunger and the other of thirst—falls on the former. The bird is brought home and when his wife speaks untruthfully the bird is made to rehearse all that the woman has done. The merchant cuts his wife in two and sprinkles her blood on the bird which then changes into Tejimala.^{*33} In the variants the merchant marries a second time after the death of his first wife and this second wife persecutes the girl.

(2) Teja and Teji: A man has two wives, the junior his

favourite. The elder wife has a son named Teja and a daughter named Teji; the younger one also has a daughter. One day while both the co-wives are bathing the junior one pushes the elder into the water and mutters: "As a tortoise may you stay." She changes into a tortoise and later reveals herself to her children Teja and Teji. She gives them her retching to eat and they grow plump and strong. Their stepmother observes this and sets her daughter to keep watch over them. Teja and Teji give their stepsister also some retching of their mother and the girl improves in health. Though unwilling to report things to her mother, she is forced to do so by the latter. The stepmother then feigns illness and tells her husband that if she is fed on tortoise flesh she will be better. A hunt is set up for the large tortoise in the tank. The tortoise mother tells her children that they only will be able to capture her and that they should not eat of her flesh but bury their share and the entrails and the bones near the gate. Everybody eats of the flesh but Teja and Teji bury their share along with the bones and the entrails as directed by their mother. Next morning two trees—one of gold and the other of silver—are seen at the gate. The news of the wonders spreads and the king sends men to take them away. The trees cannot be uprooted. Teja offers to uproot them if the king marries his sister. The king accepts the proposal and the trees are carried away (from here Teja drops out of the tale). After the marriage Teji is faced with the jealousy of the king's seven wives who do not allow her to land at any of their bathing ghats. The king is forced to make an eighth one. At Teji's happiness her stepmother grows more jealous. When a child is born to her, Teji, as is customary, comes home. Her stepsister pushes a thorn into her head and she turns into a salika bird. Her stepsister then puts on her clothes, takes her child and goes to the king. The salika follows her. At the palace the stepsister tries to seat at the loom of Teji and the salika cries out:

Ah, she is but weaving somebody else's cloth,

What she does is to break the yarn and spoil the pattern.

The bird is driven away. The stepsister then dandles the

baby but fails to quiet it. The bird cries out as before that she is but dandling somebody else's baby. The king overhears and asks the bird to alight on his shoulder if indeed she is his true wife. The bird flies to him and finding a thorn in its head he pulls it out. Teji appears again in her true shape. The king then has the false wife trampled on by an elephant. He extracts the fat from the body, puts the fat in one cask and the flesh in another and sends them to his stepmother-in-law. The king's men give first the fat and with it the evil woman lights her candles and does her cooking. When she finds the second cask she realizes the truth.*³⁴

In a variant of this tale Teja is the heroine's name and her stepsister's name is Tula. Teja is changed into a salika by her stepmother herself and not by her stepsister. Further, the trees which grow up at the burial place of the remains of the tortoise are a fruit tree and a flower tree. Teja's brother refuses to give fruits and flowers to the king unless he promises to marry his sister. The king promises to do so but as the girl is too young her brother gives him a maina and a pomegranate plant. He tells him that when the maina will start talking and the fruits of the pomegranate will be ripe it will be time to marry the girl. Days pass. The king forgets about Teja. The bird then points out that the pomegranates are not only ripe but have dropped to the ground, the maina has started talking, and Sister Teja is already a full grown maid. The king then comes and marries the girl.*³⁵

(3) Panesai: In the cottage of an old woman a girl is born of an egg. The girl hides in the loft but comes down, eats the cold left-over rice and leaves freshly cooked rice. The old woman discovers her and keeps her as her own daughter, naming her Panesai. The woman's son desires to marry her and shuts himself up in the house of "dissatisfaction". His mother promises to give him Panesai but the girl does not know anything of this development. She comes to know from a beggar woman that the bride for her "brother" is none else than herself. As she is frightened the beggar woman asks her to make a boat and an oar of reed and stay in the pond till nightfall when she is to take her shelter in the

stump of a tree. She does accordingly. Her adopted mother calls out to her (in song) and she replies (in song) that she will not come back. Her mother comes and calls her (in song) and she replies (in song) that she is not coming. One day as the lad is angling in the pond Panesai calls out to him from inside the stump. He brings an axe and starts hacking at the stump. A chip flies off and this is taken away by the beggar woman. In the cottage of the beggar woman Panesai comes out of the chip, eats the left-over rice and leaves freshly cooked rice. She is discovered by the beggar and kept as her daughter. Panesai roams during day as a lame duck. One day as her brother is playing with a ghila seed the duck makes off with the seed. The lad enters the house of "dissatisfaction" and tells his mother that he wants the lame duck. The duck is purchased and the lad keeps it as his pet. A beggar woman (a second one?) happens to come and tell him that she is no duck but his Panesai. She tells him that he is to feign sleep at night and as Panesai goes out leaving her duck covering he is to burn it in the fire. When the girl loses consciousness he is to revive her by fanning. The lad does accordingly and marries his beloved.*36

(4) Champavati : A man has two wives, the elder one his favourite. Both the wives have a daughter each. Champavati the daughter of the younger one goes to the field and sings to the birds to scare them away from the paddy:

Away you bata birds,
Do not eat my paddy—
I shall give you fried rice.

As she sings comes a response from the forest nearby:

I shall have paddy, rice too,
Having married Champavati I shall go home.

So this duet goes on. The girl reports the matter to her mother. Learning of it her father comes to the field and promises to give the girl in marriage to whoever comes out of the forest. A large reptile appears and the unkind father gives Champavati to the snake. The snake and the girl are made to live together and next morning Champavati is found

decorated with lovely jewels and ornaments. The snake is not found. The elder wife of the man burns with jealousy at this fortune of her stepdaughter's and forces her husband to procure a snake for her daughter too. At night the snake begins to swallow its bride. The latter cries out that her feet tickle and her mother (who is outside listening) responds that her husband is putting anklets on her feet; she cries out that her waist tickles and her mother responds that the son-in-law is putting a skirt around her; she cries out that her breast tickles and her mother responds that the son-in-law is winding the breast-cloth around her breast; she cries out that her neck tickles and her mother responds that her son-in-law is tying jewels on her neck. Then there is silence. Next morning the truth is known. The snake is killed. The man and his elder wife want to slay Champavati and her husband, but the latter swallows them up, takes Champavati and her mother and goes into the forest.

They live happily in a palace. After her mother's death a beggar woman tells Champavati that her husband is a god in disguise and when he goes out at night leaving his snake covering she is to burn it up. When he smarts with burning pain she is to fan him and apply oil on him. Champavati does as directed and finds her husband in a lovely shape. Another day the beggar woman directs her to have rice in the same dish as her husband for this will increase his love for her. Further, after the meal she is to tell him that she has glimpsed some villages in his mouth and she now wants him to open his mouth wider that she may see all the world. At her words he will be angry and going into the river he will ask her: "What do you want—me or to see the world?" She is to reply: "I want to see the world." At this he will open his mouth and show her the world, but being angry he will declare that he is going away for six years, but she is not to get afraid for he will not leave her. Champavati does as directed and her husband asks her from the middle of the river: "What do you want? ..." She says, "I want you as well as to see the world." Her husband shows her the world and then giving her a ring says, "That beggar woman who advises you is a maid of my mother's, a demoness. My mother

wishes to eat you. But this will protect you and with its aid you will be able to see me after six years at my mother's place." He then disappears. At the end of six years Champavati goes out in search of her husband and finds him in his mother's house. Husband and wife live happily but Champavati's ring leaves her as soon as she contacts her husband. One day her demoness mother-in-law sends her to another demoness with a letter in which is written : "Slay her and send me a share of the flesh." As Champavati goes her husband stops her from behind, snatches away the letter and out of vexation does away with his mother.*³⁷

This tale has a shorter version in which Champavati goes to live with her husband in the forest and with the advice of a beggar woman burns up her husband's snake covering and finds him in his true shape. At her happiness her step-mother persuades her husband to procure a snake also for her daughter ; the snake devours its bride.*³⁸

(5) The Gold-producing King: The family priest of a merchant in order to profit from death ceremonies wishes ill of the merchant. The priest consults an astrologer and learns that the merchant's luck resides in a bamboo. The priest secures the bamboo from the merchant but nothing untoward happens to the latter. With the astrologer's advice the priest then secures a cow which has eaten the leaves of the bamboo. Nothing happens. The astrologer advises him to secure the breast-cloth of the merchant's youngest daughter-in-law who has rubbed off the tears of the cow with the cloth. Even after securing the cloth nothing happens. At the direction of the astrologer the priest affects to have a dream in which he learns that the son born of the merchant's youngest daughter-in-law will destroy the family. The merchant orders his son to do away with his wife. The young man is prevented from slaying his wife by the house which declares that she is chaste and lucky. So husband and wife both leave their home. In a forest the woman gives birth to a son and her husband goes out in search of water. He finds a three-beaked bird which cries out : "I eat with three mouths, even then how to live ?" The young man gets afraid that he will

have to feed three mouths and abandons his wife and baby. His wife wanders about, finds and secures the three-beaked bird and takes to live in the shelter of a female gardener. Her son excretes gold in his stool and having discovered this the gardener claims the boy as her own. The boy is chosen king when the older one is dead. When his mother claims him as her own a test is taken. A seven-fold cloth is wrapped on the breast of the gardener as well as of the mother to see who of them gives milk. The cloth on the breast of the mother gets soaked in the milk. She is accepted as the new king's mother while the gardener is driven away. His mother advises the king to declare that a tank is being dug and payments to labourers are being made in gold. People flock from all parts of the land. The three-beaked bird is kept in sight of all. One of the labourers is seen shedding tears at the sight of the bird. He is produced before the queen-mother and the latter tells the labourer that she is his wife, and the king his son. It is later found that with the departure of his son and daughter-in-law the merchant loses all his fortune and his family ceases to exist. The astrologer and the priest are slain.³³

In a variant of this tale the merchant's luck or welfare is taken away by a mendicant along with the teeth of the daughter-in-law who has eaten it up along with the flesh of a goat which has eaten up the leaves of the bamboo in which it resides. The mendicant keeps the welfare in the middle of a lake and it is stolen back by the merchant's pets—an otter, a rat and a mongoose.³⁴

(6) The Demon Astrologer : An astrologer promises a man two sons if he gives away a steer and assures the astrologer that the elder of the sons will be given to the latter. The man gives away a steer and gets two sons. The boys grow up and acquire learning, the younger learning further the lore of the demons. The astrologer comes and takes away the elder one. The latter gives his brother a tulsi plant and tells him that if the plant wilts he will die. At the astrologer's house the lad discovers some skulls and bones and these tell him to take a sword and slay the demon as soon as he enters. He is further to revive them with a sprinkle of the demon's blood.

The boy does accordingly and escaping from there rides home-wards. On the way a demon lures him in the shape of a deer and he enters a cave and dies of suffocation. He is eaten up by the demon. At home the tulsi plant wilts and the younger brother comes out. He is also lured by the demon deer but he immediately changes into a tiger. The deer changes into a python. The lad turns into a mongoose and tears the python into pieces. He revives his brother with his demon lore and returns home.*41

These are a few purely fictional tales representing types of their classes. The first four have the imaginative atmosphere of true Märchen. The last two seem to be slightly on a lower level, the last especially dealing with gruesome material. Another important tale of the Märchen type is *The Kite's Daughter*. A kite brings up a girl abandoned by her mother, marries her to a merchant and helps her in difficulties caused by the merchant's other seven wives. For example, the girl is set to weave a cloth or cook rice. When she calls up her kite mother the latter appears and performs everything magically. The co-wives of the girl later kill the bird and sell her to a tradesman. She is found wailing on the riverbank and picked up by the merchant. The merchant commands his senior wives to walk on a thread stretched across a pit full of spikes. Six of them fall while one escapes because she is not in the plot to sell the kite's daughter.*42

(IV)

Jokes or humorous tales : As Prof. Thompson observes, "Short anecdotes told for humorous purposes are found everywhere.... Among some they are usually animal tales, but even where this is true the action is essentially that characteristic of men. Important themes producing these popular jests are the absurd acts of foolish persons (the numskull tale), deceptions of all kinds, and obscene situations. There is a tendency for jests to form cycles, since humorous adventures become attached to some character who thereafter attracts into his orbit all kinds of jests, appropriate and inappropriate. The same hero may be celebrated for his clever ruses, and for his utter stupidity, and obscene tales may often be told about

him. But jests frequently detach themselves from cycles and may be universally liked, so that they travel with great ease. Some of the funny stories heard today have lived three or four thousand years and have been carried all over the earth."⁴³ Prof. Thompson further observes that in one way or another a large proportion of the most popular anecdotes and jests are concerned with cleverness.⁴⁴

Some of the Assamese jokes are animal tales. For example, Officer Fox, Teacher Fox, and the Tiger's Marriage in section II are nothing but jokes of the type described by Thompson. In such tales the action is essentially that characterizing men. The Tiger's Marriage deals with the foolish acts of the tiger and may be called a Numskull tale. Among animals the fox seems to be credited with several humorous incidents. Deception and absurd situations characterize all these. Some such tales are associated with Teton the trickster and will be noticed in the section that follows. The jokes passing under the name of Teton tend to detach themselves from the Teton cycle and go about independently as anecdotes or shorter tales. A few humorous tales of an independent nature are summarized below. These are comparatively longer and complex. Usually simple jokes are more confined to literary people than to the preliterate. The recorder of tales often passes them by as insignificant or as too short.

(1) The Seven Numskulls : Seven fools go out in search of fortune. On the way is a ploughed field full of white clods. They consider the field a sheet of water and start swimming. After crossing the field they count themselves and find one short, the counter being left out of the tally. A passing Brahman finds them the missing one and they agree to serve him out of gratefulness. The Brahman directs them to plough "above that tree" and they try to pull the ploughs and the bullocks up the tree with devastating results. When the harvest is over they come and ask the Brahman's wife where to put the shocks of paddy. Out of vexation she replies, "On my head." They put the shocks on her and she dies. They are driven away.

(2) The Brahman's Servant : The servant of a Brah-

man catches large kawai fish but he is given always the small ones. One day as he sees a large fried fish on the plate of his master the lad exclaims: "As I caught it the fish jumped about but now on your plate it lies like a dog with its ears cut off." At the comparison of the fish with a dog the Brahman immediately throws the fish into the other's plate. Another day the servant tells his mistress that their master's morning worship is over and rice should be laid out for him. The Brahman's wife lays out rice in two plates, one for her husband and the other for the servant. The servant asks, "Which is mine?" and in trying to find out which one is his he touches both the plates. The Brahman does not take the polluted plate and the servant gets two plates along with the large fish in the Brahman's share.*44

(3) The Son-in-law: A son-in-law is invited and told to come alone by his father-in-law. The son-in-law finds his shadow following him and to persuade it to leave him starts bribing it with his clothes, so that he becomes naked. As evening closes the shadow leaves him but being purblind he finds it difficult to pick his way. He sees a bullock belonging to his father-in-law, catches hold of it by the tail and follows it. At his father-in-law's place being without any clothes he hides under a banana tree. Late at night when supper is over his mother-in-law throws away the dishwater and it falls on the hidden man. He cries out in surprise and she gives him a cloth and brings him in. In the meal he is given gur and he learns that it is kept on the loft. When everybody is asleep he takes a stick, makes a hole under the pot containing the gur and tries to catch in his mouth the sweet drops which trickle. Most of the gur misses his mouth and he finds his body covered with it. In order to remove it he rolls on some cotton. The cotton sticks to him and he looks hairy and white. He hides among some goats. Thieves come and considering him to be the fattiest goat they carry him off. As they cross a stream the human goat cries out, "Raise me, raise me!" The thieves directly drop him and run away. He rises from the water cleaned of the gur and cotton. His father-in-law coming in pursuit finds him and takes him home.*45

There is another well-known tale about the purblind son-in-law. Both the tales are allied in certain details. For example, the son-in-law comes at evening led by a bullock lent him by his father-in-law. He enters the cattleshed and does not come out. The father-in-law calls out, "Is that son-in-law?" "Yes, I am tying up the bullock." "Why don't you come out?" "Oh, I am counting how many bullocks and cows there are in the shed." His sister-in-law calls out that water for washing hands and feet is ready. He replies playfully, "Is that sister-in-law? Do take me out by the hand, else I won't go." However clever he is it is found out later that he is purblind and there are some absurd situations.³⁴⁷

(4) Pharing the All-knowing : Pharing feigns to have the cramps and rolls on some paddy grain. When he comes away he finds a lot of the grain on his chaddar. With these his wife makes some cakes but she eats up most of them. She tells him that whoever gets up late next morning should have the larger share of the cakes. Pharing has to rise earlier as it gets very late and reconciles himself to the thought of a smaller share. He finds there are only a few cakes but can detect the imprint on the plate of three score cakes. So he makes a rhyme :

Welfare in the plough, the devil in the whip,
Three score cakes she eats, this none knows.

The riddle impresses his wife and she gads about that her husband is all-knowing. A man who has lost his cow comes to Pharing and the latter happening to see the animal earlier easily finds it. His reputation grows. The king sets him to find a lost necklace. He is given a meal by the king before he starts on his work. As he eats he speaks to himself: "Ha! *dai* you have today, no knowing what the king does to you on the morrow." Here *dai* means curd and he is referring to the curd given him. But the king's second wife's name is Hadai and she is the thief. Overhearing Pharing and feeling that she has been found out she confesses to him. He asks her to put back the necklace in the king's box. The king finds it and rewards Pharing. The king one day clasps

a pharing (or cricket) and asks the all-knowing to say what it is. Scared out of his wits he makes and recites a verse :

Once I told by counting,
A second time by seeing,
When I exclaimed Hal *dai* the necklace came out,
But now has come Pharing's moment of death !

The king does not know the all-knowing's name and thinks that he has guessed correctly. So Pharing maintains his reputation. **

(5) The Astrologer : A peasant asks an astrologer how much flood water there will be in the ensuing year. The astrologer answers, "*Nal talang*." The phrase might be translated as: "Reeds bottom." The peasant thinks the water will be so high as to submerge the reeds. But the water only reaches to the bottom of the reeds. He approaches the astrologer for an explanation. The latter retorts, "Didn't I tell you the water would reach to the bottom?" There is a pun on the word *talang*. This anecdote may have a literary origin.

(6) The Fruit of a Tree Planted by Oneself : A man feels sexually towards his grown up daughter. He asks a Brahman, "Does one have the fruit of a tree planted by oneself?" "Why, certainly," the Brahman replies. So the man enjoys his daughter. When he is found out, he gives as excuse the explanation given by the Brahman.

(V)

Trickster tales: Tales of this class usually cluster round a clever rogue who goes about cheating other persons. The interest is in the cleverness of the trickster who goes about his work with comparative impunity. The trickster may on occasion be deceived himself. Further, the trickster is frequently an animal. Among North American Indians trickster stories are very popular. The trickster among these people is frequently the Culture Hero who initiates a custom or gives the people some item of material culture. The role of the Culture Hero is not seen in the make-up of the Assamese trickster, whether man or animal. Of the North American Indian trickster Prof. Thompson observes, "The

adventures of the Trickster, even when considered by themselves, are inconsistent. Part are the result of his stupidity, and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. Such a trickster as Coyote, therefore may appear in any of three roles: the beneficent Culture Hero, the clever deceiver, or the numskull. As we look at these incidents, we find that this mixture of concept is continually present, so that any series of adventures is likely to be a succession of clever tricks and foolish mishaps."⁴⁹

Trickster tales in Assamese centre mainly round Teton, a human being, and the fox. Teton seems to have a cycle to himself. Some of the adventures attributed to Teton are also found among the tribes skirting the Assamese speaking population. A few of the tales of the clever fox, like Teacher Fox and The Fox and the Monkey have already been summarized in the section on animal tales. In the last two tales in that section the fox gets discomfited at first but later it either regains its position or becomes victorious. Here summaries of Teton tales will only be given. The first tale is a fairly consistent whole, the others are more or less independent adventures sometimes narrated independently and sometimes made to conform to patterns of longer tales.

(1) Officer Teton: Young Teton is turned out of his home for his impertinence to his brother-in-law (see under Motif H583 in chapter 4). He joins some thieves and they ask him to enter a house and throw out the valuables to them. He beats on a drum. The householder gets up and apprehends him while the others flee. As he is taken to the court he finds a man cry out at an unruly bullock: "Would that someone had killed it with but one stroke!" Teton deals the animal a blow and despatches it. So the man also follows him to the court. A woman is selling bananas to the following strain:

Give me a pice

Take a bunch

Then go away giving a kick on my breast.

Teton drops a pice, takes a bunch of bananas and gives her a kick. So she also follows him to the court. At the court

Teton exculpates himself in this way—(1) "Does a thief beat on a drum in the house he has entered? I but looked for something to eat." The king's minister observes here: His words are worth a hundred rupees. (2) "I did what that man asked me to do: I slew the bullock with but one stroke." The minister observes: His words are worth a thousand rupees. (3) "I paid exactly what the woman had asked for her bananas." The minister observes: His words are worth a lakh of rupees. The king acquits Teton. After a few days Teton comes to the court and claims a hundred and a thousand and a lakh of rupees from the minister, for, as he declares, "A word is a word." The king forces the minister to make good the claims. With the money the lad persuades the minister's daughter Champa to bathe and feed him. He leaves his money with Champa and asks the king: (1) Who bathes whom? (2) Who places a seat for whom? (3) Who feeds whom with her own hand? The king answers, "Why, the wife does these things for her husband." Then the lad Teton tells the king that Champa has done these for him. In spite of the opposition of the irate minister the king allows the lad to marry Champa and further makes him an officer.*

(2) Tentan (the variant of the word Teton in Lower Assam): Tentan's father owes some money to a religious man. The latter pays a visit when the lad's father is out. Finding his debtor out the man asks Tentan for a piece of areca nut. Tentan takes a nut, peels it with his teeth and offers it to the man, saying, "I cannot find the knife, do crack it with your teeth." The other does so and the lad cries out, "Ah, splendid teeth you've got. This nut could not be cracked by my father, mother, sister, and even me. You now crushed it to pieces!" The orthodox man in great perturbation begs him not to pass on the news that he has eaten an areca nut defiled by the teeth of the uninitiated. Tentan will not promise to do so. The other is forced to let off the sum owing to him. When his father returns home the lad is taken to task for his inability to extort something more from the religious man and turned out of his home.

Tentan finds an old man ploughing under the midday sun. He shows sympathy for the ploughman at his hard task

of ploughing with old bullocks. The man tells him that he has laid by a score of rupees in order to have a new bullock. The lad feigns thirst and tries to scoop up some water from the muddy field. The man sends him to his house near by. Tentan goes and asks the man's wife to hand on to him the score of rupees as her husband has secured a new bullock. The woman is suspicious and he calls out to the ploughman, "She won't give." The ploughman shouts back, "Hei, why don't you give?" He means the water, of course. The woman hands on the money and Tentan makes good his escape. He buys a goat and stays the night at a stranger's. The host offers him cloths for it is winter. He says his goat will eat up the cold and he does not require any cloth. He sleeps on some hay and from time to time calls out, "Goat, eat up the cold." Next morning the host exchanges the goat for a horse. He rides away. He sees at a sweetshop a boy and telling him that his name is Flea starts eating the sweets. The boy shouts to his father who is inside: "Father, Flea is eating the sweets." "Oh, let it," replies the father. So Tentan eats as much as he can. From there he reaches a rich man's house at evening. He stays there. Next morning he stirs up the dung of his horse. His kind host says, "You need not throw it away, my sons will do that." Tentan says he is only looking for coins for his horse excretes rupees. He picks up a few coins. The host buys the horse at a high price. Tentan returns home with all the money and his father takes him back into his favour.*22

The motifs of eating sweets under a misleading name and selling a pseudomagic animal (the horse) are also found in the tale of the Brahman Latkan. This tale further contains the episode of a boar which is supposed to excrete coins. When Latkan leaves the sweetshop he also takes away the money on the counter. At the boy's outcries his father comes out and gives chase to the thief. The latter makes off as fast as he can but is set on by a boar. He manages to catch hold of the tail of the boar and they both go round and round a tree. Latkan's money scatters out of his pocket. The sweet-seller arrives there and asks him what he is doing. Latkan replies he is getting money by worrying the boar in this way.

The sweetseller proposes he also take a turn. Latkan is agreeable and leaving the tail in his hand he picks up the coins and leaves the place on the horse of the latter. The sweetseller escapes from his ordeal only when the boar drops dead.*⁵²

(3) Ajala and Tentan: Tentan divides their paternal inheritance with his foolish elder brother Ajala. He keeps himself the behind of the cow, the night use of the wrapper, and the upper part of the areca-nut tree. On the advice of some neighbours Ajala stops feeding the cow, starts cutting down the tree and soaks the wrapper in water. Tentan is forced to agree to a more equitable share of the property.*⁵³

(4) The Trickster: The trickster goes out with the hide of his dead bullock. At night he takes shelter in a tree and below four thieves divide their spoils. He drops the hide and they run away in fear. Coming home with the money he borrows one of his neighbours' rice-measure, measures his money and returns the measure with a coin sticking at its bottom. The neighbours ask how he comes by so much money. By selling the hide, he replies. So they slay their cattle and try to sell the hides. They come back disgraced and in revenge sets the trickster's house on fire. The trickster takes the ashes in sacks and goes abroad. He finds a man carrying the king's gold. They exchange for a while their burdens and the trickster makes off with the gold. He declares to his neighbours he has sold the ashes at a high price. They set their houses on fire and try to sell the ashes but fail as before. In vexation they tie the trickster in a sack and throw him into the river. A fisherman's net pulls up the sack and the trickster takes the fisherman to task for raising him as he is in the palace of the water god. The fisherman is tempted to visit the underwater palace and the trickster puts him in the sack and drops him. He comes home with the other's fish. His neighbours also are tempted to visit the underwater palace. They are put in sacks and dropped in the river.

The second tale does not always adhere to the pattern seen here because of the independent nature of the adventures

of Tentan. These adventures may be added to or subtracted from according to convenience or in so far as they are in the memory of the narrator. One of such adventures not already mentioned is this: Tentan follows a woman carrying a baby on her shoulder. He takes a little gur on his finger and goes on stealthily feeding the baby from behind. The baby wishes to come to him and he claims the woman as his wife. At the law court the woman's husband is ousted because the baby comes to the triskster directly it sees him. The first tale seems to belong exclusively to upper Assam, the version accepted here being from the district of North Lakhimpur.

(VI)

Cumulative tales: In this type as in all formula tales, the pattern is more important than the plot. Cumulatives are told often in the spirit of pure fun. In the cumulative tale proper "the action, characters, names, speeches, or whatever is the feature of the accumulation, builds up to an impasse or a climax and often, but not always goes through the list again in reverse in order to resolve the plot."⁵⁴ Of formula tales the cumulative usually has a definite narrative core. As Prof. Thompson observes, "Something of a game is also present here, since the accumulating repetitions must be recited exactly, but in the central situation many of these tales maintain their forms unchanged over long periods of history and in very diverse environments...The cumulative tale always gradually works up to a long final routine containing the entire sequence. The person examining cumulative tales, therefore, has only to look at this final formula to learn all that is to be learned about the whole tale."⁵⁵ Martti Haavio considers the cumulations by a cumulative to be developments of one of the most distinctive peculiarities of primitive language, repetition. A typical European cumulative is *The Old Woman and her Pig*. This has the reverse accumulation, but *The Pancake* does not have this feature. The impasse or climax which often characterises a cumulative is best seen in the Assamese nursery rhyme given here:

O Flower, O Flower,
Why don't you bloom?
The Cow nips my shoots,
Why should I bloom?
O Cow, O Cow,
Why do you nip the shoots?
The Cowboy does not give me grass,
Why shouldn't I nip?
O Cowboy, O Cowboy,
Why don't you give grass?
The Cook does not cook rice,
Why should I give?
O Cook, O Cook,
Why don't you cook rice?
The Fueller gathers no fuel,
Why should I cook?
O Fueller, O Fueller,
Why don't you gather fuel?
The Smith does not make me a dao,
Why should I gather?
O Smith, O Smith,
Why don't you make a dao?
The Charcoalman furnishes no charcoal,
Why should I make?
O Charcoalman, O Charcoalman,
Why don't you furnish charcoal?
The Cloud pours,
Why should I furnish?
O cloud, O Cloud,
Why do you pour?
The Frog croaks,
Why should I not pour?
O Frog, O Frog,
Why do you croak?
The custom of my forefathers—why give up? ***

Tales of this type do not seem to be common in Assamese. In fact, only three or four such tales seem to have been recorded. Dr. Elwin, while dealing with the

Mahakoshal tales, notes the paucity of cumulative tales and observes, "On the whole it is rather curious that these tales are not more common than they are."²⁷

(1) The Ant and the Frog: The ant goes in search of food. As it returns with a large rice the frog bars its path. On being asked to make way the frog raises its belly and directs the ant to pass below. The frog suddenly lowers its belly and the ant gives it a good pinch. The frog gives a leap and falls on a mouse's nest in a gourd creeper. The mouse lets drop a gourd. The gourd falls on a boar. The boar runs and strikes against a banana tree and rustles a tipsi bird. The bird flies off and enters into the ear of an elephant. The elephant runs and knocks against a mountain. A boulder gets loose and it crushes the prince. The king tries the case and the boulder, the elephant, the tipsi, the banana, the boar, the gourd, the mouse—all are found innocent but the frog and the ant. The king has the frog struck with a sprig of nettles and a rope is tied around the groin of the ant and tugged bothways. The frog's back becomes rough and the ant's groin becomes waisted.²⁸

The tale has also etiological characteristics.

(2) The Crow and the Tipsi: A crow desires to eat a tiny tipsi. The latter sends it to first have its beak washed in the sea. The crow goes to the sea the sea wants a pot. The crow goes to the potter: the potter wants clay. The crow goes to the clay: it wants to be dug up. The crow goes to the buffalo for its horns: the buffalo must first get killed. The crow goes to the dog: the dog must be fed on milk to get strong. The crow goes to the cow: the cow wants grass. The crow goes to the grass: the grass wants to be cut down. The crow goes to the blacksmith: the blacksmith wants fire. The crow goes in search of fire and while bringing it in its beak gets burned. The tipsi escapes death.²⁹

The tale does not have the summing up of the sequence in the reverse order. This may also have dropped in the telling. The etiological tale Why the Dhekiya Curled Up summarized under Motif A 2730 in chapter 4 is also an example of the cumulative.

(VII)

Sources and parallels: A study of the parallels and sources of tales is probably more repaying than such a study in the case of ballads, for ballads often tend to be inspired by local events and what is more it is difficult for a song to cross linguistic barriers. Similarities in tales have however to be explained as owing to a common ancestry, only rarely as due to migration or diffusion. Of course, there are theories that Indian tales migrated to the west or that western tales came to India and often got disintegrated here. Theodor Benfey, for example, was under the conviction that the origin of European folktales was in India. Benfey depended mainly on written documents studied by him and not on oral sources. Other scholars have gone to the oral traditions and come to have a more open view of things.^{***} But there are extremists again like von Sydow of Sweden who emphasize that "folktales do not migrate." Von Sydow explains that traditions are not easily transferred along with the move of people to new surroundings; according to him it is "unreasonable to draw wide conclusions from isolated extract material."^{***} As he himself admits, von Sydow's theory applies chiefly in the case of the long wonder tales and he also does not discard the experience that tales are sometimes spread in the literary way.

One of the chief methods for the study of tale sources and parallels is the Finnish historic-geographic technique perfected by Kaarle Krohn. "The goal toward which a student using this method strives is nothing less than a complete life history of a particular tale. He hopes by proper analysis of the versions, by a consideration of all historical and geographical factors, and by the application of some well-recognized facts about oral transmission to arrive at something approaching the original form of the tale and to be able to make a plausible explanation of the changes the story has suffered in order to produce all the different versions. This study should also give indication as to the time and place of its origin and the course of its dissemination."^{***} But this method assumes, first of all, an assemblage of all the variants on which one's

study is to be based. Further, "the necessity of conducting at once a study in literary relationships and in the course of oral tradition makes the investigation of an important tale with distribution in Europe and America one of the most complicated pieces of research imaginable."¹⁰³ Not to mention the application of the Finnish method even simple comparisons in a comparatively narrow area are made difficult in the case of Assamese tales which have not been collected well and comprehensively yet. Unless one secures enough variants of a tale it is not possible to construct what is known as the oiko-type or hypothetical original.

These preliminary observations would be of use in the attempt which the present study makes to point out certain parallels of some Assamese Märchen and the modifications which they seem to have undergone from the probable earlier sources or, at least, provable earlier versions. It has to be pointed out that the Märchen in question are such as allow themselves to be

- (1) traced to earlier literary sources;
- (2) borrowed from the tribal people which form the ethnic substratum of the Assamese;
- (3) or be from some source held in common by the Assamese and some other people within Assam or within India.

Striking parallels outside India may be noted in special cases, but the emphasis throughout will be on local tales. It has not been possible to make any systematic comparison of Assamese and Bengali tales though Bengal is contiguous to Assam. This is because of a lack of sufficient Bengali material. Lal Behari Day's *Folk-tales of Bengal* was not considered important for serious study and D. Mitra Majumder's *Thakur Mar Jhuli* or *Thakur Dadar Jhola*—in Bengali—unfortunately did not contain any tale which could be paralleled with an Assamese one. But references to Bengali tales have been made occasionally and one or two Bengali ballads have come for a closer examination in an earlier as well as a later chapter.

For practical convenience the parallels have been studied under the following heads:

- (a) Ultimate literary sources or versions: Chiefly *Jatakas* and *Panchatantra*.
- (b) Parallels among Central India tribes
- (c) Parallels among Assam tribes
- (d) Affinities to international types

(VIII)

Ultimately literary sources: The *Jataka* tales are often traced to pre-Christian times and *Panchatantra* is also placed in the early centuries of the Christian era, though some of its tales must have been older.^{***} The tales of *The Jatakas* and *Panchatantra* have had wide currency in India and abroad during these two thousand years or more. These didactic tales and fables have often formed part of the curriculum of Indian education. Translations from *Panchatantra* are found in text-books of children even at the present time. These tales have further been utilized by religious instructors in emphasizing their particular standpoints. This is exemplified in K. Burhabhakat's *Phakara*, an anthology of religious maxims which are explained often with didactic tales drawn on *Panchatantra*. As a rule, tales borrowed from a literary source and retaining their original didactic flavour are not available to the countryside storyteller. But somehow tales and motifs do sometimes percolate and get absorbed in the repertory of the countryside. It is strange to note that the Angami Nagas tell a close parallel of The Mouse Maid made Mouse and it is to be wondered how the *Panchatantra* tale could get absorbed in Naga folklore (see section X below).^{***} Tales found in the Assamese countryside may not be borrowings from *The Jatakas* or *Panchatantra* unless they show a close remembrance of their literary origin. The resemblance may be fortuitous as among most tales of the world, if it is a question of one or two insignificant motifs.

Of *Jataka* tales, the Simhacharana *Jataka*, about the donkey in a lion's skin who betrayed itself by braying, and the Sisumara *Jataka*, about the porpoise which wanted to possess the monkey's heart for its wife seem to be current in Assam, only

in the case of the latter tale the porpoise has been changed into a crocodile.^{***} Possibly the Dharmaddhwaja Jataka has undergone major modifications in the tale *The Minister and the Barber*. The Buddhist tale is this: Dharmaddhwaja the priest is made a magistrate for his sense or justice. Kalaka, the king's general gets jealous at this and persuades the king to slay him. He advises the king to set the priest impossible tasks. The tasks set one after another are: (1) to plant flowers and trees in a piece of arid ground and make a garden in one day; (2) to make in the garden a "seven-jewelled" tank; (3) to make a house of ivory befitting the garden; (4) to procure a jewel befitting the house; (5) to find a gardener with the "four virtues". The priest performs the tasks with the aid of Sakra, the king of the gods, the gardener appointed being Chhatrapati, maker of the king's headdresses. Chhatrapati explains to the king how he has acquired the four virtues. The king sees through the game played by Kalaka and has him slain.^{***}

The evil genius in the Assamese tale is the barber and the person tested is the lame and neglected son of the king. The prince along with his brothers goes out on a magic horse in quest of a tree of jewels. He secures the daughter of the king of Death, of the king of Doves, of the king of Nagas, of the king of Snakes, of the king of Fans, and of the king of Vultures and also the tree of jewels. On the way back the prince is slain by his six stepbrothers who bring home the six princesses and the magic tree in a box. The box can be opened only by the lame prince and he is revived by the daughter of the king of Death. The hero is made minister and his brothers are slain. A barber grows jealous of his prosperity and persuades the king to set him certain tasks: (1) to broadcast pulse and mustard on a large piece of ground and to collect and separate them during one night; (2) to make two large tanks and "plant" in them "nagas" during one night; (3) to found a kingdom of snakes; (4) to secure for the king the magic ring of his ancestors. The tasks are set one by one; the first is done with the aid of doves, the second with the aid of nagas, the third with the aid of snakes, the fourth with the aid of fans. Blown with one fan the prince dies, goes to

the king's ancestors and secures the ring and blown with another fan he revives. This last act is stealthily observed by the barber. The prince tells the king that his ancestors are in bad need of a barber. The king orders the barber to go to heaven. The latter takes two fans, asks his wife to fan him with one, and when dead, to revive him with the second. Not finding him dead for a long time his wife out of vexation hits him hard on his head and he dies.**8

In the Buddhist tale the tasks are accomplished with divine aid, in the Assamese tale with magical means. The motifs of tank-digging, house-making (house of snakes in the Assamese parallel) and the finding of a magic jewel or ring seem to be of a kind in both the tales. Further common features are poisoning the ear of the king and consequent setting of impossible tasks to victimize an innocent man and the ultimate punishment of the mischief-maker.

It is possibly easier to find single motifs than a series in Assamese tales which may point to a *Jataka* ancestry. For example, the attempt to slay foxes (or fox) by the old man by feigning death in Officer Fox has a parallel in the Srigala *Jataka* in which a roisterer with a view to catch a fox lies in a cemetery with a stick feigning death—though to be found out by the clever fox!**9. Similarly, escape of birds by flying away with the net seen in the Sammodana *Jataka***10 is paralleled in The Old Bird summarized below under Motif B 120. Probably The Shrewd Old Gander in *Panchatantra***11 has also influenced the Assamese tale, for one of the motifs of the latter: that of feigning death and on being released flying away, is seen in the *Panchatantra* tale. The motif of birds flying away with the net is seen also in *Hitopadesa*, a work which derives partly from *Panchatantra*.

A few fables from *Panchatantra* are found in more or less modified forms in Assamese. For example, the tale The Lion and the Ram**12 in which a lion encounters a fleecy ram, gets frightened, but seeing it nibble grass kills it, seems to be transformed into The Tiger and the Billy Goat summarized in section II of this chapter. The Assamese tale is more complex, the chief additions being the return of the tiger in company with the fox and fleeing again with destruction for

the fox. The Assamese tale seems to have a closer parallel in *Sukasaptati*. In this work a tiger wishes to eat two bullocks of a ploughman. The man proposes the substitution of a milch cow but his wife comes out on horseback and declares she is looking for tiger's flesh. The tiger runs away. A jackal persuades it to come back. The beasts tie their tails together and return. The woman calls out to the jackal: "It is very kind of you to bring me such a fat tiger...." The tiger immediately runs away dragging the jackal after it and the latter gets killed.*73

Tales like *The Ass in the Tiger's Skin*, *The Loyal Mongoose* and *The Brahman's Dream* seem to be told in Assamese in versions close to the originals.*74 Extremely interesting is the affinity of *The Credulous Fiend* to the Assamese *The Long-legged One* summarized in section II of this chapter. The *Panchatantra* tale goes thus: A fiend reveals himself to a princess and she says to her girl-friend, "Look, my dear! This is the fiend who comes every evening at twilight's hour and torments me." The fiend thinks, "Aha! I am not the only one. There is someone else—and his name is Twilight who comes every day to carry her off. Suppose I take the form of a horse, go to the stable, and find out what he looks like." As he enters the stable a horse-thief comes and chooses him as the best horse. Thinking he has been caught by the fellow Twilight he starts to run and the thief is also frightened at the unusual spirit of the horse. The thief at last clings to the branch of a tree and escapes. But a monkey, a friend of the fiend, cries out to his friend, "Why do you run from an imaginary foe? This is your natural foe, a man". As the fiend turns the thief takes the tail of the monkey in his mouth and chews hard. In dreadful pain the monkey shuts its eyes and the fiend observing the situation, cries, "He lives who wins the race," and makes off.*75

In the Assamese tale the place of the fiend is taken by the tiger; the thief is a cow-thief. As they come to steal a cow they overhear the owner saying: "Let not the Long-legged One get at me" or "Be watchful at *rati-biyali* (about night-time)." The thief wonders what the Long-legged One is or else he does not know what *Biyali* is. The tiger is mistak-

only chosen as the most covetable cow and the race is comfortable neither to the tiger nor to the thief. The thief escapes but faces danger again. In *Panchatantra* the thief chews the tail of the monkey and this is instrumental in scaring away the fiend; in the Assamese tale the chief cries out: "Is that the Tailless One?" and frightens the tiger once more. The series of misunderstanding in the latter tale makes it more diverting.

Echo words like *biyali* (in the word *rati-biyali*) have led to some interesting observations by M. B. Emeneau. In his paper: An Echo-word Motif in Dravidian Folktales Emeneau observes, "A man says aloud to himself or to his flock that precautions must be taken against any tiger or demon that may come to do mischief. In each case the tiger or the demon is represented by an echo-word. A tiger or demon overhears and, in accordance with the general stupid nature of the creatures in the folklore, misunderstands. It knows that it is itself the tiger or the demon, but does not know what the meaningless second member of the compound denotes and fears that it is something even more terrible than itself. Some unexpected event then happens to it, and it is outwitted, thinking that the agency of this event is the fearsome creature denoted by the word."⁴⁷

In the Long-legged One the thing referred to euphemistically is rain, and in the variant of this tale, as has already been observed, the echo-word *biyali* denotes rather time. In no case is the tiger denoted, though there are tales in which the beast is sometimes euphemistically called Banraja or King of the Forest. Dr. Elwin refers to a Kuruk story in which the tiger is called Bikal and this sets a tiger wondering.⁴⁸ The misunderstanding which the respective terms cause has to be traced to the *Panchatantra* tale.

The Jaina work *Kathakosa* has a tale: Aramasobha and the Grateful Snake which agrees in two or three particulars with the Assamese Champavati. Aramasobha is a Brahman girl, illtreated by her stepmother and set to tend cattle. She shelters a snake from the pursuit of some snake-charmers and the snake which is a god in disguise asks her to choose a

boon. She asks for shade so that she can tend her cattle in comfort. The snake god makes her a splendid garden and it follows her wherever she goes. The girl is afterwards married by the king and the snake-god helps her out of several tight situations caused her by her stepmother who is ultimately punished by the king.*⁷³ The tales have these features in common:

- (a) A girl is illtreated by her stepmother and set to work in the field.
- (b) The girl is good: the fact is implied in the Assamese tale.
- (c) The girl is either married or helped by a snake-god.
- (d) The girl ultimately lives happily with her husband.
- (e) The stepmother is punished—directly or indirectly.

For lack of more evidence it cannot be concluded that the Assamese tale is related to the Jaina tale: but these tales which treat of beneficent snakes rewarding human virtue may have some common source.

In section II of this chapter has been summarised the tale of the cat which is so clever as to terrorize tiger cubs with the fishpot which entraps its head. Rev. H. Heras*⁷⁴ points out that "the hypocritical cat" is pretty well known in the *Mahabharata*, the *Jatakas*, and other Indian literature. In one of the early Gujarati tales, as he points out, there is a cat which cannot extract its head from the rim of a pot of ghee. The cat goes to some mice and declares that it has come back from a pilgrimage and taken "the necklace of the ascetics, the vow of Brahmacharya and the practice of ahimsa, as my mode of life." ... Rev. Heras conjectures that all these stories of the cat's hypocrisy have to be traced to the *Mahabharata*. The Assamese tale, as regards the plot, agrees partly with the Gujarati tale only.

Parallels among Central-India tribes: A fair number of Assamese tales show striking parallels to Central-India tales as recorded by Verrier Elwin in his *Folktales of Mahakoshal*. It is not a question of isolated resemblances as among so many tales all over the world, but of features held in common which

seem to point to some common source from which the Assamese and the Central-India tribes have derived. Sometimes the resemblances seem even to suggest bolder conclusions. The Central-India tales are told by tribes, chiefly Gond, dwelling in the Mandla, Seoni, Balaghat, Bilaspur, and Raipur districts of the Central Provinces and the Rewa, Kawardhan, Sarangarh and Bastar states. These tribes do not seem to have any direct contact with the Assamese people and their speeches are Dravidian. Ethnically also the Mongoloid strain is dominant among the Assamese while probably the Negroid element dominates the Gond.

The Kuruk tale in which the tiger is referred to as Bikal has already been mentioned in the section preceding. The earlier part of the tale shows a close resemblance to The Long-legged One. In the Kuruk tale a merchant cautions his son one night not to go out because there is Bikal. The tiger hears this and wonders. Three thieves steal from the house of the merchant and finding the money too heavy seek a bullock to carry it. They choose the tiger and put the money on its back. The tiger thinks it has been caught by Bikal. When the dawn breaks the thieves discover their mistake and run away. The tiger gets stuck in a narrow gully. A cowherd releases the beast and is given the money but asked not to mention Bikal, for "on that day I will eat you". One day the cowherd cautions his wife not to go out at night for there is Bikal. The tiger appears and wants to eat him. He secures a respite declaring that he wants to get warmed in the sun so that he may become tender and fit to be eaten. His wife comes out with a lamp and anklets on her feet and the tiger asks "Who is it?" "Bikal," answers the cowherd. The frightened tiger wants to hide and when the cowherd's wife asks, "What is that on the ground near you?" her husband replies, "A pile of old clothes." She asks him to hit it with a stone and the tiger advises the cowherd to hit it gently on the head. The woman directs her husband to hit harder and the tiger dies.

The misunderstanding of the tiger, the thieves, wrong choice and ultimate discovery are also found in the Assamese tale. The sequel after the tiger's escape takes a different

course in the Kuruk tale and the latter portion is closer to the tale of The Tiger and the Billy Goat. The chief difference in the Kuruk and the Assamese parallels—in the earlier parts—is this that whereas in the Assamese tale both the tiger and the thief (or thieves) misunderstand a certain term, in the Kuruk tale only the tiger does so, and the cattle thief in the Kuruk tale is also the tiger and not the men, though the latter are forced to seek a bullock afterwards.

The Demon Astrologer has a close parallel in the Baiga story The Faithful Brother.^{***} The common features in these complex tales are:

- (a) A false Sadhu's prophecy: two sons
- (b) The elder claimed by the Sadhu
- (c) The elder leaves a life-index with the younger brother
- (d) The Sadhu's villainy pointed out by skulls
- (e) Slaying of the Sadhu as directed by the skulls
- (f) Temptation by a demon deer and death by suffocation in a cave (or well)
- (g) At the indication of the life-index the younger brother goes out in quest of his brother.
- (h) Visit to the Sadhu's place
- (i) Discovery and pursuit of the demon deer
- (j) The revival of the brother

The chief differences are:

(1) In the Baiga tale the Sadhu gives a king a stick with which to strike a mango tree. Two fruits fall and these are eaten by his two queens. In the Assamese tale the astrologer advises a man having only one wife to give away a steer as gift.

(2) In the Baiga tale the king at first gives the Sadhu a Chamar substitute but is detected. This cheating motif is missing in the Assamese tale.

(3) In the Baiga tale the skulls direct the prince to ask the Sadhu to show what is to be done: as the Sadhu goes round and round a boiling cauldron his head is cut off. In the Assamese tale the skulls advise the lad to cut off the head of

the astrologer as soon as he enters. Further, in the latter tale the demon's blood is sprinkled on the skulls and these revive.

(4) In the Baiga tale the elder prince after his escape renders certain services to a vulture and a tiger and arrives at a kingdom where he marries the princess. His wife forbids him to go to the north; he disobeys her and is lured away by the demon deer and gets killed. His younger brother traces him to his father-in-law's kingdom, is mistaken as her husband by his sister-in-law, finds the deer, and as it jumps into a well he stops short and escapes death. These incidents are missing in the Assamese parallel.

(5) In the Baiga tale the younger brother revives his brother with the help of magic which he has in his little finger. In the Assamese the younger brother knows demon lore.

(6) In the Baiga tale the revived elder brother suspects his younger brother to have slept with his wife and slays him. When he realizes his mistake his wife revives his younger brother with magic which she possesses. These incidents are not found in the Assamese tale.

(7) In the Assamese tale the younger brother as well as the deer have certain magic transformations before the latter is slain. In the Baiga tale the deer disappears into the well and nothing further is heard of it.

These two tales on the whole seem to be fruits of the same tree. Other parallels are such trickster tales as (1) the Muria Two Clever Cheats and the Assamese The Gingerseller and the Blackpepperseller; (2) the Khuntia Chokh The Stupid Bania and the Assamese The Fox and the Prince; (3) the Agaria A Clever Cheat and the Assamese The Trickster; and such tales with supernatural elements as (1) the Muria Business with Vidata and the Assamese The Messenger of Titkuji; (2) the Jhoria-Muria Balosundri and the Assamese Panesai; such cumulatives as (1) the Baiga The Crow and the Sparrow and the Assamese The Crow and the Tipsi. The tales The Trickster, The Fox and the Prince, The Crow and the Tipsi, and Panesai have already been summarized in earlier sections of this chapter.

A few of these pairs of parallels resemble closely, so closely indeed that each pair may be termed variants of the same tale. In the case of the other pairs the basic patterns are identical but they may vary in details. For example, *The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller*^{*81} has the following features:

(a) Two cheats exchange certain articles as genuine and both find themselves cheated.

(b) They become friends and go out in search of fortune.

(c) They enter service: one has to tend a wild cow and the other to water a tulsi plant.

(d) They find wealth in a well and while pushing it up the one who is below gets into one of the sacks of money.

(e) Meaning to cheat his friend the one on top makes off with the sacks.

(f) While he stops on the way the one who is inside one of the sacks secures the money and runs away. Thus he—the blackpepperseller—proves himself superior to the other—the gingerseller.

All these motifs are found in the *Muria The Two Clever Cheats*: only one or two major motifs are handled in a different way. (1) Instead of tending a cow and pouring water on a tulsi, the *Muria* cheats plough with a pair of unruly bullocks and bring water in a pot full of holes. (2) Instead of discovering wealth in a pit under the tulsi they persuade their mistress to put her wealth in their custody and this they place in a well, meant to be taken away later. (3) The wealth which they are given is not wealth but a heap of stones: this discovery is made by the one below the well, but instead of passing on the fact he sits himself in the basket and his friend above makes off with it meaning to cheat the one below. The greater rogue comes out of the basket only at the house of the lesser rogue. As there is no actual money, they divide what they have earned in certain shady ways not mentioned in this analysis. One of the friends in each tale proves himself superior to the other, but unlike as in the *Baiga* tale the

greater rogue in the Assamese tale appropriates all the gains himself.

The first part of the Bengali tale *Adventures of Two Thieves* as narrated by Lal Behari Day^{**2} is closely related to the Assamese and the Muria tale, though with local variations, but the second part—dealing with the adventures of the sons of the old veterans—has neither any Assamese nor Muria parallel. This second part has to be traced to the tale of Ghata and Karpura as told by Somadeva in his *Kathasaritasagara* and which probably has an Egyptian origin in the tale of Rham-sinitus as narrated by Herodotus.^{**3}

More interesting are the relations in the case of the two cumulatives: *The Crow and the Sparrow* and *The Crow and the Tipsi*, and the two romantic tales: *Balosundri* and *Panesai*. In the Assamese cumulative the crow is asked to have its beak washed and the bird visits one by one the sea, the potter, the clay, the buffalo, the dog, the cow, the grass, and the blacksmith. In the Baiga tale the crow approaches one by one the well, the potter, the deer (for horn to dig with), the dog, the buffalo, the grass, the blacksmith. In the Assamese tale the blacksmith wants fire and the bird while procuring it gets burned; in the Baiga tale the blacksmith gives a sickle and the red-hot sickle kills the bird. The Assamese tale ends with the death of the bird; the other has an epilogue: "It never was able to cut the grass and give it to the buffalo, so the buffalo gave no milk for the dog to drink, and the dog did not kill the deer and the deer did not give its horn to the potter to dig the earth and the potter did not make an earthen pot for the crow to draw water from the well and eat the sparrow's eggs."

The resemblances are so close that the differences are insignificant. The chief differences are: (1) In the Baiga tale the thing to be eaten is eggs; (2) the crow does not have to go to the clay and the buffalo is represented by the deer; (3) the tale has the summing up typical of a cumulative.

This cumulative has Bengali and Oriya parallels. In the Oriya tale the thing the crow desires to eat is a kerela or bitter gourd, in the Bengali tale it is a wren (tipsi). The buffalo of

the Assamese tale is replaced in the Oriya and Bengali variants by the deer.^{***A} It has also a Burmese parallel.

The Jhoria-Muria tale Balosundri is not as complex as its Assamese counterpart but the pattern in both is the same. In the Mahakoshal tale seven brothers marry; the eldest one desires to be husband to their unmarried sister Balosundri. The girl makes a boat and takes refuge in the ocean. Her parents come and request her to return; she refuses to do so. Then six of her brothers with their six wives come and standing pair by pair request her to come back; she refuses to come. Last comes her eldest brother with his wife. But she refuses to return and with her boat sinks in the ocean.

In Panesai the real brother is replaced by an adopted one and the girl after spurning the marriage possibility makes a boat and takes shelter in the pond. The parties who request her to come back are only two: her adopted mother and her adopted brother. The basic pattern of the tale has further been adumbrated with certain details of a supernatural character. The girl is born of an egg, she makes her boat out of a reed, takes shelter at night in the stump of a tree, is removed in a chip of wood, remains as a duck with a removable covering (like the Swan Maiden), and so on. What is more, she is secured by her "brother" later and married. Besides the common basic pattern which seems to hinge on an incest motif other interesting resemblances are: (1) requests made in song form, (2) responses of a type in which the girl mentions the relationship into which she has to enter with the party who requests her to return if she agrees to marry her brother.

A romantic tale travels easier than a cumulative or formula tale, but for songs with identical sentiments to travel seem surprising. Two more tales already noted: Business with Vidata and The Messenger of Titkuji^{***} may be compared because these are rather complex and further—in spite of great differences in some details—have the same basic pattern. They are of an interesting type, named by Sarat Chandra Mitra as Hero and the Deity Type.^{***} Mitra gives the following features as characterizing such tales:

(a) The hero goes to a deity to beg a boon.

(b) On the way he meets with several suffering persons and a tree, all of whom importune him to inquire of the deity the causes and the remedies of their respective troubles.

(c) The hero learns from the deity the causes and the remedies and communicates them to the sufferers.

(d) They adopt the remedies, most of which result in rich rewards to the hero himself.

(e) In the Muria tale Business with Vidata a man goes out in search of Vidata (Fate) in order to learn why he is always poor and is given the following problems on the way:

(1) A ploughman and his son tell him: "Ask Vidata why, when we put our blankets on that ant-hill, the white ants don't eat them, and why tigers don't come here to devour us."

(2) A corpse tells him: "Tell him that I died twelve years ago and was buried. I am rotten, but life remains in my head. Ask him why my head does not decay."

(3) A second corpse tells him: "Ask him why my whole body is not rotten like my legs and arms."

(4) The Diwan of a kingdom tells him: "Ask him whether our king and queen will ever regain eyesight and whether the wall that we try to make will ever stand against the sea."

Vidata tells the hero that he has lost everything through folly, gets beaten for this home-truth, and answers the problems one by one:

(1) A tiger has already eaten the ploughman and his son and white ants have destroyed their blankets.

(2) The corpse has deprived his son of his riches and he must tell where his money is.

(3) The second corpse has not passed on his magic lore to anybody and this must be done.

(4) The king and the queen will regain eyesight and the sea go down if they give away their daughter in marriage.

The hero comes to the Diwan and is given the princess and wealth for his services. The magician corpse passes on to him his magic lore. The second corpse tells him where his wealth is hidden and his son recovering it gives the hero a share of it.

In the Assamese tale a lad learns from his mother that certain demons have slain his father and uncles. He goes out to have vengeance on his enemy. He comes on an aunt in the land of the demons and learns that he must secure a golden fowl kept in the custody of Jama, the god of death, to be able to slay the demons. On the way to Jama's land he finds the following problems :

(1) Some people tell him : "Ask Jama why no water oozes in this tank we are digging."

(2) Some people tell him : "Ask Jama why mangoes of this tree are bitter and cannot be tasted."

(3) A kind old man tells him : "Ask Jama what kind of merit causes a man to be reborn again as man at a good place."

(4) A very old man tells him : "Ask Jama why I do not die."

After giving him the magic fowl Jama solves the problems one by one :

(1) The people are impious and an old man promises his daughter to several young men but will not give her to anyone. These irregularities must be corrected in order to have water from the tank.

(2) The elder son of a rich man has cheated his brother and left the riches at the spot where the mango tree is. The riches must be given away in gifts.

(3) On a certain day will be born a girl and she will tell you "What kind of merit . . ."

(4) The old man is a great physician and must pass on his lore to someone.

The lad on his return kills the fowl, thus destroying all the demons, and then he goes to the tank-diggers who in return for his services give him the old man's daughter in

marriage. The wealth under the mango tree is given him as a gift. He does not find the kind old man and his wife. The second old man teaches him his lore. Then he visits the new-born girl and she tells him that she is the wife of the kind old man and at another place a boy has been born and the latter is but the old man himself. He returns home and revives from their bones his father and uncles with the lore he has recently acquired.

Both the tales adhere to the pattern defined by *Mitra* but with certain differences. The suffering entities in both the tales are mostly people; there is not a single animal, and where there is a tree in the Assamese tale, the question is asked not by the tree but by people. In a variant of *The Messenger of Titkuji*, of course, there are instances of two buffaloes and a mango tree putting questions to a poor Brahman who seeks *Jama* in order to know why he is so poor.^{***} The poor Brahman in this variant is a close parallel to the poor man in the *Muria* tale. One of the motifs of the *Muria* tale: the ploughman and his son asking why they are not eaten by tigers and why their blankets are not destroyed by white ants, seems to hang loose in the plot; it does not further the interest of the tale and is not taken up towards the end where the various problems have to be solved. On the whole, the Assamese parallel would seem to be of a better texture. A point of difference in the two tales may further be noted: the purpose which causes the hero to set out in the *Muria* tale is to learn of his fate; in the Assamese the hero goes out to wreak vengeance on his enemy which leads him on to find the golden fowl. In the variant of the Assamese tale referred to above the hero is more like the one in the *Muria* parallel.

On the whole, a fair number of Assamese tales seem to have parallels—some very close and such as to warrant an organic relationship—among tales found in the *Māhakoshal* area. The resemblances are found in various types of Märchen.—(1) animal, (2) dealing with the supernatural or magic, (3) trickster, (4) cumulative, but most resemblances seem to be found among trickster tales and those dealing with the supernatural.

At the time of writing out this book I had not come across Bompas's *Folklore of the Santal Parganas*, 1909. It is possible to find more or less close parallels to some Assamese Märchen in this collection of Santali tales. For example:

1. Bompas III: Ledha and the Leopard
 „ Appendix 6: The Wild Buffaloes
 Assamese: The Tiger and the Crab
 In Ledha and the Leopard, the crab's place is taken by a lizard.
2. Bompas XXV: How Sabai Grass Grew
 Assamese: Kamala Kuari
 The Santali tale extends beyond the drowning of the sacrificed girl.
3. Bompas XLIII: The Railbar and the Leopard
 Assamese: The Old Man and the Tiger
 These are close parallels.
4. Bompas LII: Tipi and Tapa
 Assamese: Sister Chatimati, not noticed in this book.
 In the Assamese tale a tiger is outwitted by a brother and a sister. When they hide in a large basket, the tiger carries off the basket and when they let out wind the beast flees in fright. In the Santali tale it is a bear which is outwitted.
5. Bompas CXVII: The Jackal and the Crocodiles
 Assamese: Teacher Fox
 In the Santali tale the jackal is killed before it can eat the fifth child of the crocodile.
6. Bompas CXXIII: The Jackal and the Leopards
 Assamese: The Cat
 The jackal browbeats the leopards in the manner of the cat. In the second part of the Santali tale the jackal outwits the crocodile in the manner of the fox in Teacher Fox.

(X)

Parallels among Assam tribes: The population of Assam is basically Mongoloid. Dr. B. S. Guha characterizes the more primitive Mongoloids in India as Palae-Mongoloid and as he

observes, "This Palae-Mongoloid strain is found in the sub-Himalayan region as the more ancient stratum of the population and forms a dominant element in the tribes living in Assam and the Indo-Burmese frontiers. It extends far into Yunnan and south-eastern China."⁸⁷ The earlier inhabitants of the land have intermixed with later immigrants and all more or less Aryanized, the more Aryanized of them being known as Assamese, speaking a Sanskritic tongue, the others retaining to some extent their tribal languages and customs.⁸⁸ Mongoloid customs and festivals seem to have made themselves felt in the socio-religious set-up of the more advanced Assamese. The most important Assamese festival—the Bohag Bihu—held at Springtime with songs and dances, feasting and general merriment, seems to have parallels among Mongoloid tribes in Assam and in Burma and China.⁸⁹ The democratic character of the Assamese village system has also owed a great deal to such a system obtaining among the tribal population.⁹⁰ The lower culture of the people seems to bear traces also of Austronesian influences, but this is less evident among the more Aryanized section. The Mongoloid influence has been felt further in the phonology, syntax, and vocabulary of Assamese.⁹¹

All this suggests that some tales which form part of the culture of the tribal people would pass into the repertory of the Assamese story-teller. This is a plausible hypothesis. On the other hand, tales from the more advanced Assamese may also pass into the hands of Kachari, Mikir and such tribes dwelling close to the Assamese and often speaking Assamese besides their own languages. Investigation into phenomena of this nature will not be fruitful at this stage, for very little field work has been done yet and tales with their variants have hardly been combed. What is attempted here is to show certain interesting parallels to Assamese Märchen that may be found in a few of the tribes. The type of tales which admits of such comparison seems to be chiefly humorous or dealing with roguery, perhaps indicative of a trait of the Mongoloid temperament.

The cumulative about the frog and the ant summarized

earlier in this chapter has a parallel among the Mikirs.^{***} The series of events in the Mikir tale goes thus :

- (a) A frog sits on an ant while the latter passes under.
- (b) The ant stings the frog.
- (c) The frog jumps up to a squirrel's ladder.
- (d) The squirrel cuts in twain a gourd-creeper.
- (e) A gourd falls on a wild boar.
- (f) The boar uproots a banana tree.
- (g) The tree falls on a sparrow's nest.
- (h) The sparrow shoots into an elephant's ear.
- (i) The elephant digs up a rock.
- (j) The rock falls on a king's son.

The king starts an investigation. All the earlier stages—right from the rock—are gone upon and it is found that the ant and the frog are to blame. The king ties the ant's waist round with a hair and the waist becomes thin. The frog is beaten with nettles and its back becomes spotted all over.

The major difference between the two versions is this that the Assamese substitutes a mouse for the squirrel and the ant is tied with a rope instead of a hair. The Mikir version further seems to be more complete than the Assamese one. It is not certain if the tale The Crow and the Tipsi has any parallel in the tribal languages of Assam, but it has a close parallel in Burmese where the final summing up gives an idea of the various stages of the tale :

Fire, Fire, come with me,
To burn the forest,
To clear the land,
To grow the grass,
To feed the buffalo,
To wallow the mud,
To mend the pot,
To fetch the water,
To wash the beak,
To eat the little wren.^{***}

More parallels are found among the Kacharis and these tales treat either of animals or the trickster. The Monkey and the Hare and the Assamese The Fox and the Monkey seem to be coined in the same mint, the hare being the Kachari prototype of the Assamese fox.^{***} The Kachari tale however is longer and seems to contain two parts. It may be analysed as follows :

(a) With the co-operation of the hare the monkey steals some bananas.

(b) The hare receives only the peelings of the bananas.

(c) The hare sits by a patch of wild arum—"the king's sugercane"—the monkey eats the arum and has itching and pain in the throat.

(d) The hare sits by a wasp's nest—"the king's cymbals"—the monkey plays on them and gets stung.

(e) The hare sits by a marsh—"the king's bed"—the monkey sits on it and gets stuck in the mud. The hare drops out of the story from here.

(f) The monkey requests a rhinoceros to pull it out but the latter goes away.

(g) The monkey requests a buffalo, with the same result.

(h) The monkey requests a hungry tiger and the latter is unwilling. The monkey proposes that the tiger may clean and eat it. The proposal is accepted with a show of disinterestedness. The monkey is rescued.

(i) The monkey wishes to get dried in the sun and while the tiger looks away it runs up a tree.

(j) The tiger feigns death, opens its mouth and lies inert. Fleas buzz around.

(k) The monkey comes down, inserts its tail into the mouth of the tiger. The tiger does not move. Considering it dead the monkey dances about gaily and puts its head into the mouth of the tiger. The tiger's jaws close with a crunch.

The chief differences with the Assamese version are :

(a) The fox is replaced by the hare.

(b) The wasp's nest (or hornet's) is called the king's cymbals, and not a drum.

(c) The well covered by spiders' webs is replaced by a marsh with the result that the monkey does not die but gets stuck in the mire.

(d) The later stages are not found in the Assamese tale. The later stages in the Kachari tale might almost make a fresh story starting with the monkey's slipping into the mire.

In both the tales the aggrieved party follows the same technique of punishing the trickster and when the latter smarts with the pain the aggrieved party consoles it in this strain : "You had the kernel and I the peelings : I am but returning your services." The monkey does not learn the lesson and being impelled by its supposed curiosity gets into more risky situations. The motif of wasps is also found in a Kachari tale of a clever old man. Knowing that seven thieves will come to rob him of his wealth, he coaches his wife against the emergency and asks her, "Wife, where have you put our pot of money ? I've forgotten where it is." She replies, "Why, it's there in the corner of the verandah." The thieves overhear and as they one by one put their hands into the large nest of wasps kept there purposely, they get stung (see also Motif K 113 in chapter 4). This tale has a variant in Lewison : *J.R.A.S. of Bengal, Vol. V.*

The Kachari tiger seems to be a pretty clever one. But this conclusion is contradicted by the tale Old Man and the Tiger.⁹⁹ Some of the motifs of this tale have parallels in Assamese. The tale may be analysed thus :

(a) An old man hears a tiger growling and cries out to a bird, "Ah, if you had only stopped I would have taught you the secret of the *ghughu-ban*."

(b) The tiger approaches the man and wishes to learn the secret.

(c) The man asks it to come on the morrow.

(d) When the tiger comes the man asks it to bring more tigers.

(e) When the tigers come the man ties them—his earliest

acquaintance first—around a post and bids them go round and round. As they do so the man's paddy spread on the yard gets threshed.

(f) The tigers are exhausted and want to get released.

(g) That's the secret, the man declares, and starts untying them. But they break loose and run away.

(h) The man's rope goes with them. In fear of the old man it is brought back by one of the tigers.

(i) The man asks it to put the rope in at the window.

(j) As the tiger does so with its tail the man cuts off the tail. The tiger flees.

(k) The man shouts, "My brother is following you and will catch you."

(l) The tiger dips its wounded stump in a pool and a crab catches hold of it. "The man's brother has caught me!" the tiger cries and flees. The crab is thrown off.

The misunderstanding the term *ghughu-ban* (actually a bird trap) creates has an analogy in *The Long-legged One*. The beast is like the one in *The Strong Man* summarised under Motif K 1951 in chapter 4 which desires to learn music with the result that it allows itself to be bound and thus meets death being beaten by its captor. The tiger in *The Tiger's Marriage* which allows itself to be tied in a sack that it may have a wife is also relevant. On the whole, the Kachari tiger is a close relation of the Assamese ones. The scaring away of the tiger in the Kachari tale has an analogy again in *The Long-legged One* where the tailless tiger's fear is the cause of sending the others flying. The crab's nipping the tail has a parallel in *The Tiger and the Crab*. The Kachari tale as a whole does not have a parallel in Assamese but its spirit is akin to such tales as *The Tiger's Marriage* or *The Long-legged One*.

Certain humorous tales among the Assamese and the Kacharis have a closer kinship. Such tales are: (1) *The Brahman's Servant* and *The Brahman and his Servant*; (2) *The Seven Numskulls* and *The Seven Simpletons*; (3) *The Blind and the Humpbacked* and *The Blind and the Hunchback*; (4) *Ajala and Tentan* and *The Two Brothers*; (5) *The*

Frog and The Toad. The Assamese parallels excepting The Blind and the Humpbacked have been summarized earlier in this chapter.

The Kachari tale The Brahman and his Servant** may be analysed thus :

(a) The Brahman is going to his mother-in-law's. He tells his servant who is following him with some bananas, "Do not eat them, for I can see behind as well as I can in front."

(b) The servant eats up the bananas. On being questioned he replies, "You told me you could see behind as well as in front. So I showed you each banana before I ate it. You never said anything."

(c) On the way the Brahman cooks their meal and gives only one kawai fish to his servant, himself keeping most.

(d) The servant asks, "Do kawai fish swim singly or in shoals?" "In shoals, of course," the Brahman replies. The servant says, "Then my fish had better go with yours," and throws his fish into the Brahman's dish which thus gets defiled. The Brahman leaves everything to the servant.

(e) They come across some silk-cotton trees. "What are they?" asks the servant. The Brahman being an educated man says, "simalu", but the servant declares it is "himulu" and offers to bet five blows if it is so.

(f) Some sowherd boys say it is "himulu" and so the Brahman receives the blows.

(g) The Brahman gets five blows twice more because he cannot give the right names for some goats and for some paddy-birds.

(h) The servant is sent ahead to the mother-in-law to have the meal ready because the Brahman is hungry. The servant tells her to cook a duck with plenty of banana ash (alkali). The Brahman has an unsavoury meal.

(i) The Brahman gives a letter to his servant and sends him to his brother.

(j) The servant discovers that the Brahman has asked his brother to kill him. He requests a man to rewrite the letter asking the brother to give his daughter to the servant.

(k) The marriage takes place. The Brahman coming to know of it plans the servant's destruction.

(l) The Brahman's niece getting wind of the matter tells her husband and the latter places a calf by his bed.

(m) The Brahman kills the calf and discovering the great sin he has committed asks his servant to bury the animal immediately.

(n) The servant buries the animal, but with the tail sticking out.

(o) The Brahman in order to purge himself of the sin invites the villagers to a feast, but without telling them of the reason.

(p) When the people arrive the servant pulls out the tail of the calf and cries, "The Brahman did not kill the calf, oh no! he did not kill the calf." So the feast breaks up and the Brahman is not absolved.

It would be seen that the Kachari tale is much longer and the incidents in which the Brahman is discomfited by his servant, apparently a Kachari lad, are quite a number. The Assamese parallel contains only one incident—that of the kawai fish—in a slightly different manner: but the motive behind it is the same as behind that in the other tale: defilement of the Brahman's meal. In the Assamese tale the meal is defiled twice, in both instances to the advantage of the servant. The Kachari tale seems to record an aspect of tribal humour, that of turning the table on the Brahman who always enjoys a covetable status in society and is further so orthodox; and most probably the tale has been taken over by the Assamese and in the process the more unpleasant incidents got whittled off in the mouth of the Hindu story-teller.

The Kachari The Seven Simpletons²³¹ again is a comparatively long tale. It may be analysed thus:

(a) Seven simpletons try to swim across a puddle. They find one missing.

(b) On their promising to serve him a Brahman with the help of seven pieces of areca-nuts finds them the missing brother.

(c) They are asked to weed the Brahman's garden. They

are also asked to take along the Brahman's son and make him work with them.

(d) When the son lags behind they hit him hard and he dies.

(e) The Brahman asks them to plough "above the great simalu tree." They try to haul the bullocks and the ploughs up the tree. The ropes break and the bullocks die and the ploughs get smashed.

(f) When the paddy is reaped they ask the Brahman's wife where to put the shocks. She replies in vexation, "Put on my head!" They do so and she dies.

(g) The Brahman asks them to bury the woman. They tie the body on to a bamboo sledge and on the way it gets knocked off against some clumps.

(h) After digging the grave they find the body missing. They see an old woman grazing cattle near by and considering her to be the missing body secure and bury her.

(i) The Brahman wants to get rid of them and sends them to cut down the great simalu tree. When the tree is tottering to its fall he says to them, "If the tree falls down it will be broken. Run under it and catch it!" They do so and get crushed.

The Assamese parallel seems to contain the earlier stages of this tale till the killing of the Brahman's wife—with only two differences : (1) The Assamese tale does not tell us of the process by which the Brahman finds the missing brother. (2) It does not have the weeding of the garden motif. The Assamese version seems to give the impression of incompleteness while in the Kachari version the scales between the Brahman and the simpletons are held more or less evenly.

In the Assamese tale *The Blind and the Humpbacked*^{***} the two friends find on the way a piece of rope, a turtle and a pot of lime. At the direction of the blind one the other picks them up. They find a demon dwelling in a house. They bluster and the demon wants to see their strength. The demon passes out a hair, a louse and some milk and the strangers pass in the rope, the turtle and the lime as their hair, louse and milk. The demon leaves the place in fear for-

saking his wealth. The humpbacked divides the wealth, keeping a larger share but his friend chooses the larger share. A fresh division is made, again the blind one picking up the larger share. In vexation the humpbacked rubs the blind's eyes with sand and the latter retaliates by a kick on his hump. Both get cured of their physical defects and they share the wealth on a fifty-fifty basis.

In the Kachari tale the Blind and the Hunchback^{*99} the same incidents take place with the following variations :

- (a) The place of the lime is taken by a drum.
- (b) The friends occupy a vacant house and scare away the demons when they come to take possession of it.
- (c) Instead of asking the demons to show the milk they drink they are asked to beat on their chest, the two friends in their turn beating on the drum.

So the parallels are versions of the same tale. The Kachari parallel has one extra incident, that of frightening away some cowherds from their drum by roaring like a tiger.

The tale of Ajala and Tentan has an exact parallel among the Meches of the district of Goalpara. This tale of two brothers dividing their inheritance has also a Meithei parallel.^{*100} The things to be divided among the Manipuris are a buffalo, a pomegranate tree, and a mosquito-curtain. As in the Assamese and Mech versions here also the elder brother evokes the pity of his neighbours who help him with their advice. The same motif occurs also in a Chinese tale. Two brothers buy a pair of shoes and the elder, by reason of his seniority, is to have the use of them by day and the younger by night. When the shoes are worn out the elder one proposes a new pair, but the younger is no longer in the compact.^{*101} In the Chinese tale the elder brother is the cunning one : in the Assam tales the younger brother is the clever one. This inequitable sharing of property or crops is ultimately an international type of folktales (Aarne Thompson's Type 9).

The Mikir tale of Tentan, the homeless wanderer,^{*102} has the motif of cheating the ploughman of his score of hard-

earned rupees found in the Assamese parallel. The Mikir tale may be analysed thus :

(a) Tentan along with his Brahman master goes to the field to plough on a sultry day.

(b) He smears the bullocks with cool mud and gives out to be dying of thirst.

(c) The Brahman asks him to go home and have some water. "Supposing the old lady refused me water?" Tentan suggests. "Oh, call out to me," replies the Brahman.

(d) He goes and tells the mistress that her husband has asked her to give him the bamboo-tube with the hundred rupees as the Brahman has purchased a new pair of bullocks. As the lady is suspicious he explains, "See that white pair, the old pair was red."

(e) As she won't part with the money Tentan calls out, "She won't give the bamboo-joint." (Here a pun is intended, for a bamboo-joint is frequently a drinking cup). The Brahman shouts back and his wife gives Tentan the money.

(f) Tentan disappears with the money and meeting the king's sons gives out his name to be Ong which in Mikir means maternal uncle) and plays with them.

(g) The Brahman follows him but finding him called Ong by the king's sons is afraid to apprehend him. Being tired he falls asleep under a tree.

(h) Tentan declares to his playmates that the sleeping man is his servant and exchanges him for a hundred rupees.

(i) When the mistake is detected people with iron fetters in hand pursue the rogue.

(j) Discovering one of his pursuants Tentan asks him how to put on the fetters if the rogue is caught by him.

(k) The man puts the fetters on his own hands and Tentan cries out, "Here is Tentan, here is Tentan!" The people rush in and start thrashing the hapless man. Tentan makes a clean escape.

In the Assamese tale Tentan comes upon a ploughman in a paddy field : in the Mikir parallel he is the servant of a Brahman and goes to the field along with his master. In the Assamese tale the motif of smearing the bullocks (or bullock)

with mud so that the animals look a different colour is absent. The ruse with which the money is secured—that of drinking water—is common to both the tales. The second part of the Mikir tale is not found in the Assamese parallel. But the incidents which are found in one or the other are of a kind that go well with the trickster. As in the Kachari tale The Brahman and his Servant in the Mikir tale also the Brahman master is treated in a way which is not at all complimentary to the latter's social status. The Brahman is made to plough and this is unusual in Assamese society. The tale may record some of the sentiments of the Mikir towards persons of a higher social status and the orthodoxy found in Hindu society.

Cheating of this type is found in a Mongoloid tale from Burma.*¹⁰³ In the Burmese tale Master Z desires to give gratis a piece of roasted pig to a miser who is in his garden. Master Z declares he will bring a pot from the miser's house to do so and going in tells the housewife, "Aunt, here is my roast pig which your husband has agreed to exchange with his bundle of gold pieces." As she won't bring out the gold he cries out, "Uncle, she won't give it to me." The man shouts back and his wife misunderstanding him gives the money to the lad.

A character of the Tentan type is seen in Apfuho in some Lhota Naga tales. The incidents in these Naga tales do not seem to be found in either Mech, Kachari, Mikir, Meithei or Assamese trickster tales but there is no doubt that Tentan and Apfuho are near kins. To illustrate, Apfuho once places a dead dog near some oil seed and persuades their owner, an old woman, to believe that it has died at her beating. He then frightens her saying that the dog's owner is coming with a large number of men, and she purchases his aid in this difficult situation by parting with her pig with which he makes off.*¹⁰⁴ Among the Angami Nagas the trickster is known as Matsuo and he is of the same type as Tentan. The Angami trickster secures a lot of hides, hangs them on a tree and makes a fire underneath to dry them. Some thieves come and divided their spoil by the fire. The hides fall and scare them away. So Matsuo secures their money. His fellow-villagers are told that he has secured the money by selling the hides of his cattle. So they slay their

cattle and try to sell the hides, but with no profit. They burn his house. He puts the ash under his saddle, and when he is requested to lend his horse to a man and his mother, he says, "If your mother rides on this horse all my rupees will turn to ash." On their promising that ample recompense will be made if that happens he lends his horse. When the old woman gets on the horse the ash flies out and Matsuo has to be recompensed with a large sum. The villagers are told that he has sold the ash of his burnt house. They are deceived as before and tie him up in order to throw him into the river. But being left alone for a while he sings attractively and persuades a cowherd to set him free so that he can sing better. He then ties up the unfortunate cowherd and makes his escape. The villagers throw the cowherd into the water.*¹⁰⁵

The tale seems to be a close parallel to the Assamese *The Trickster*. Hutton suspects the Angamis may have got some of their tales either from the plainsmen or the Kacharis. As he observes, "References to horses or gold or kings probably suggest that these stories may have been borrowed from Manipur or the Kacharis.*¹⁰⁶ *The Monkey and the Jackal*—paralleled in Assamese by *The Monkey and the Fox* and in Kachari by *The Monkey and the Hare*—may be "a garbled version" of the Kachari tale. The tale is also known to the Aos and the Lhotas, the Aos telling it of a jackal and a bear. It does not seem to be known to the Semas, who are in touch with the plains. In the Ao version the bee's nest is described as a drum which the bear is invited to beat, on this point following the Kachari version more closely than the Angami story does.*¹⁰⁷ In the Angami story, when the jackal punishes its friend for the first time the latter does not take the lesson lying down. It goes off to a bee's nest and asks the jackal not to bite it. The jackal bites it and gets stung all over. It, of course, has its final revenge on the monkey by having it drowned. In the Assamese and Kachari versions the monkey after its first act of deceitfulness is all through a victim of the fox or the hare's cleverness, and the motif of the jackal's being stung by the bees may be an Angami modification.

That the Angamis have borrowed tales from Indian

sources is obvious if the tale The Rat Princess and the Greedy Man is taken into account.*¹⁰⁸ This tale has to be traced to the *Panchatantra* tale Mouse-maid Made Mouse.*¹⁰⁹ It is to be wondered how a *Panchatantra* tale could penetrate the mountain fastnesses of the Naga hills. This close relation of the two tales has not been pointed out by Hutton who commented on certain of the Naga tales. It has to be noted that a tale of this type has not been recorded yet among the Assamese. The tale of the snake which marries a girl (Hutton, p. 268) has a parallel in the Assamese Champavati. In both, the first snake marries the first girl and makes her happy while the second snake eats up the second girl. It is probable the Angami version is a borrowed one.

The trickster, whether he is called Tentan or something else, would seem to be a popular figure in the Märchen of Assam. It sort of symbolizes the pleasure which is felt when a clever person inflicts discomfitures on fools and dupes and thus causes laughter. The monkey and the fox come only second to Tentan in wile and roguery. The trickster tales found among the Assam tribes, as has been suggested earlier, may be indicative of an aspect of the Mongoloid temperament—good-humoured and loving to play a trick on superior class status and a type of orthodoxy which claims superiority because it is of that particular type.

Apart from trickster tales there are one or two other tales which have parallels among the Assamese and one or other of the tribes. For example, the tale The Frog has a close parallel in the Kachari The Toad. The features which differentiate the Kachari from the Assamese version may be pointed out:

(a) When the king carries off the bullocks the toad follows and hiding in a shed abuses the king.

(b) The king not seeing it gets afraid. On his promising to give his daughter in marriage to the latter the toad makes its appearance.

(c) After the marriage the toad returns home with its bride.

(d) The princess boils a cauldron of water and persuading

her husband to take a bath makes it jump into the cauldron. The toad dies.

The tale closes rather in a droll manner but unlike the Assamese parallel. In the latter the frog collects all the insects and animals and gives battle to the king and, later, marrying the princess lives happily. There is the Bengali tale of Master One-finger-and-a-half who, riding on a tom-cat and leading an army of insects, gained a kingdom.*¹¹⁰

(XI)

Affinities to international types: It is not the purpose of this study to cross the limits of material found within Assam or, at most, India, but there are a few Assamese tales which call for special discussion as they evince affinities to certain important international Märchen types. It is possible to show many parallels of an isolated nature between Assamese and international types. For example, the Assam tales of the division of paternal inheritance between two brothers are of the international tale-type enumerated by Aarne-Thompson as No. 9: "Division of crops between fox and wolf (human beings): dupe gets lower half of corn, upper half of potato-crop."¹¹¹ Parallels among tales belonging to contiguous people may suggest culture contact or ethnological conclusions, but such a phenomenon among people set widely apart on the globe does not admit of any convincing deduction unless the investigation is of a kind which is as comprehensive and thorough-going as that in Mrs. Anna Birgitta Rooth's *The Cinderella Cycle* (1951) or Martti Haavio's *Kettenmärchenstudien* (1929, 1932). In the latter work the Finish scholar*¹¹² has been able to show versions of the cumulative Cock and Hen in many parts of Europe, Asia and even Africa, has traced some of the paths of transmission, and suggested that the ultimate source of this Kettenmärchen is India. Assamese has its parallel to the tale in *The Crow and the Tipsi* summarized in section IV of this chapter. The attempts of scholars like Martti Haavio are not accepted unquestioningly in all quarters, but that they are deep and comprehensive in results admits of no doubt.

Of the Assamese tales so far recorded probably those of the Cinderella type are the most interesting, though not considerable in number. Cinderella tales from the Orient have not been recorded comprehensively and it has been observed by Mrs. Rooth that "the Oriental material is slight when one considers the vast geographical area it represents."^{*113} Mrs. Rooth, of course, could secure a little material from Assam and this helped her considerably in determining what she calls Types A and AB of the Cinderella class of tales.^{*114}

It is the purpose of the present section to bring together the Cinderella material from Assamese sources and to point out the features which mark them off as distinctively Assamese and further to show in what respects they approximate to the international types.

The Cinderella tale proper (Aarne-Thompson Type No. 510 A) is closely related to such other tales as Cap o' Rushes, One Eye Two Eyes Three Eyes, and Mother Holle—all about a persecuted girl; and taking into consideration all the tales falling in the Cinderella cycle Mrs. Rooth has come to conclude that this cycle comprises five types, not one type as in the Aarne-Thompson *Types of the Folktale*.^{*115} Type B—"the Cinderella tale proper"—Mrs Rooth summarizes thus:

"A widower called Lucas marries a woman with two daughters. Lucas' own daughter has to do the heaviest household tasks and as she is mostly by the ashes in the oven the stepsisters call her Hearth Cat. When Lucas goes to town his stepdaughters ask to buy clothes and gems, pearls and diamonds for them and Hearth Cat asks for a rose tree. This she plants on her mother's grave and waters it with tears until a huge tree has grown up.—The sisters go to a big feast at the palace and Hearth Cat has to assist them; she herself has no clothes or shoes. Her stepmother spills peas in the ashes and tells the girl to sort them within two hours; in this case she too may go to the ball. The rose tree helps her, but now the stepmother pours out two bowls of flour again; and tells the girl to sort this from the ashes within two hours. This done the stepmother asks how Hearth Cat can go to the ball looking as she does and without proper clothes.

The stepmother and her daughters drive away and the girl goes to the rose tree. It asks her what she wants. She replies that she wishes to go to the feast; then she gets a rich garment and golden shoes from the tree and drives in a fine carriage to the ball. There she is the most beautiful of all and none recognizes her. She dances with the prince but flies from him; she returns home before the others and leaves the gown at the tree. The gown disappears. Once again the girl is *Hearth Cat* sitting by the ashes. The next time there is a ball at the palace the prince has eyes only for the girl. The third time she loses one of her shoes. The prince finds it and wants to marry the girl whom the shoe fits. The prince goes from house to house trying the shoe. The step-sisters in vain try the shoe. When the prince asks whether they have not got one more sister he is told that this girl is not fit to be shown to people outside her family. However, the prince insists and the girl appears dressed in her rich garment and with the other golden shoe on. The prince immediately recognizes her and brings her to the palace where the wedding is held. The rose tree follows the girl to the palace.^{*116}

This version is materially the same as given by Grimm. Mrs. Rooth gives Type A "as an independent Oriental tale" found from the Near East to Celebes and divides it again into Types AI and AII, both being Oriental, but Type AII corresponding to the European tradition of Type A. Both the types are given below in the words of Mrs. Rooth:^{*117}

Type AI

"A wicked stepmother has two children of her own, a boy and a girl; and two stepchildren, also a boy and a girl. She feeds her own children well, and stepchildren badly. The stepchildren feed their cow on the bread they receive, saying, 'O cow, be kind to us, as our mother was kind to us.' The cow gives them food. Their stepbrother spies on them. He does not tell his mother that the stepchildren receive cream cakes, as he is given some to eat himself. Their stepsister also spies on the children. She, too, is given cakes to eat, but she allows the cakes to stain her dress, and shows the

stains to her mother. The stepmother feigns illness. Her lover, disguised as a doctor, prescribes the liver of the stepchildren's cow. The stepchildren cry when the cow, which has been in their mother's place, is taken from them. The family eats the cow. The stepchildren receive the bones. They burn them, and bury the ashes in a clay pot. A tree grows which bears also fruit. The stepchildren eat the fruit and drink its juice. Thus they live happily, thanks to the mercy of God."

Type AII

"An old man and his wife have each one daughter who can neither spin nor weave. The stepdaughter is told to tend the bull, spin wool, weave it and sew a coat before the evening. The bull asks her why she cries and tells her to creep in through his right ear and out through his left ear and the whole work is done. The stepmother gives the coat to her own daughter and the stepdaughter is told to spin, weave, bleach, sew and embroider a shirt of flax. This work is carried out in the same way as before. The stepmother wants meat and tells her husband to kill the bull, but before being killed the bull instructs the girl to take the guts and in them she will find one grain of silver and one grain of gold and these she shall plant by the gate. The next morning there is an apple-tree. The aldermen of the village arrive and the girl hides, but they tell the stepsister that she will be married if she can pick an apple. She climbs and climbs but cannot get at the apples. They enquire whether there is not another daughter. The stepmother admits they have another but she is so ugly that they cannot eat bread after having seen her. However she is told to fetch the girl, who comes and at once picks an apple for them. They give her an able peasant boy for husband and the apple-tree follows her. So she becomes happy and rich but the other girl has to live as an old spinster."

Mrs. Rooth considers Type AI as more primitive than Type AII. As she observes, "The geographical distribution, the primitive content (the food as an essential motif), and the absence of a single stressed character serve alike to prove that

Teja and Teji

Senior co-wife pushes junior co-wife into water,
turns her into tortoise
Tortoise feeds her children, a boy and a girl
Stepmother sends daughter to spy on stepchildren
Tortoise caught and killed
Stepchildren bury entrails of tortoise
Tree (or trees) grows on grave
King wants tree which can be uprooted by stepson only:
stepson's condition: king must marry his sister
On securing tree king marries stepdaughter
Stepmother's daughter turns stepsister into bird and
impersonates her
King disenchant's his wife and punishes imposter

Tejimala

Stepmother persecutes stepdaughter
Stepdaughter wants to attend marriage
Stepmother gives clothes which get spoiled
Stepdaughter murdered and body buried
Plants grow on grave and speak of crime

* Another version has been recorded recently in the Lushai Hills district: There was once a couple who went to fetch some bamboos. Each agreed that the one who could not carry one's load should be drowned in the river. The wife, who could not carry her load, was thrown into the river by her husband. She got transformed into a fish known as Thaichhawngna. Her daughter Mauruangi was deeply grieved at this and used to go to see the fish who used to feed her with good food. Though her stepmother never gave her proper food the girl grew stronger every day. Of this the stepmother came to learn and persuaded the people to go fishing. Mauruangi told her mother of this and called out to her when the people were casting their nets. The fish could be caught only when the girl was removed. When the fish was eaten the girl collected the bones and buried them. A big silk-cotton tree grew up at the spot. The girl fed on the nectar of the flowers until she was married by a rich man who made her happy. (B. K. Barua, Fish-lore in Assam, in *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 67). This tale has no marriage test.

variants which contain motifs common to those of Near Eastern or European variants."¹²¹ The distinctively Assamese features of the Teja and Teji type are not those which are found in the Oriental type in general but probably the following:—

- (1) The additions to the marriage test in the variant referred to in section III of this chapter.
- (2) The elaboration of the jealousy of the co-wives of Teji.
- (3) The attempt of her stepsister to undermine Teji's happiness after her marriage with the king specially in the variant just referred to. This includes the enchantment of the heroine also.
- (4) Incorporation of certain local customs.

These may be discussed in some detail: (1) The marriage does not occur directly; the king is given by Teja a pomegranate plant and a bird and these later remind him of his betrothed. (2) The jealousy of Teji's co-wives is found in both the important variants. In the second this has been worked out in fuller detail. The bride is not allowed to get on land by the bathing ghats of the king's seven wives. Further, the jealous co-wives arrange matters in such a way that the bride stumbles on or knocks against several things and this is construed as inauspicious. (3) When after her marriage a baby is born Teji comes on a visit to her "mother's place" and her stepsister changes her into a bird and herself makes an attempt to impersonate her. The fake queen fails to weave well and to quiet Teji's child. The bird points this out to the king and its disenchantment follows. The punishment of both the evil stepsister and her mother is elaborately worked out. (4) As regards local customs, that the entry of a bride who is supposed not to break the supports of the wooden seat where she sits or knock down a banana tree which is ceremonially planted at the gate of her new home, is looked at with a critical eye, is evidenced well in the second variant. The wife's visiting her mother's place after the first baby is born is also customary. A further instance of

local custom is that the bride when she leaves her mother's place for the first time is to look behind as she goes away: if she does not do so the prosperity of her paternal home is supposed to follow her. When the girl (in the second variant) leaves her home she is given no share of her dead mother's things and as she weeps and goes away without looking behind all her father's property follows her. At this her father requests her to look behind and as she does so half of the property remains.

Simplicity in the structure and a fairly well-knit plot are considered as of the essence in determining the genuineness or primitive form of a tale. Probably the earlier form of the Teja and Teji tale ended with the marriage of the girl after the fruit-picking or plant-uprooting test. The third variant of the tale in which a few princes feed on a tree of cakes which grows on their mother's grave seems to evince an impression of completeness, but this tale has a sequel which, as has already been observed, is not of a pattern with the rest. The elaborations of the jealousy of the co-wives and the spitefulness of the step-sister may be later additions in keeping with other tales which illustrate a co-wife's or a stepmother's jealousy.^{*122} The tale of Champavati summarized earlier deals with the jealousy of a stepmother; The Kite's Daughter illustrates the jealousy of co-wives.

The jealousy of a stepmother is the central theme of the extremely popular tale Tejimala. Tejimala seems to be an independent and self-contained Märchen having no parallels in the European area. Instances of a girl changing into a flower and later being disenchanted are found both in India and in Europe but a tale of the Tejimala pattern seems to be unrecorded. Grimm's A Riddling Tale is just a riddle where a man breaks a stalk of flower and disenchant a girl. The nearest Indian parallels seem to be the Malto tale The Cruel Sisters-in-law,^{*123} and the Oriya The Shoemaker's Daughter.¹²⁴ In the Cruel Sisters-in-law when her brothers are away her seven sisters-in-law annoy Basumata in all possible ways. They set her to husk paddy and crush her head. They bury her and a chilli plant grows over the grave. One of the sisters-in-law goes to pick chillies and the plant sings out:

Do not pluck, do not pluck the chillies, sister,
Basumata was killed for an *amaralata* sari.

It may be added that when her brothers go away she asks them to bring her an *amaralata* sari and this particularly angers her sisters-in-law. The chilli plant is uprooted and thrown away. Where it falls a kadam tree grows up. When the seven brothers return they take rest under the kadam and as one of them plucks a leaf the tree cries out as before. They cut down the tree, split it and discover their unfortunate sister. They come home and kill their wives.

The Oriya parallel is not as close to the Assamese tale as the Malto one. A prince marries a princess and while returning home the princess' maid, a hidemaker's daughter, pushes her into a well and impersonates as the bride. The princess turns into a lotus. The false bride throws away the flower. A gourd creeper grows up. When she cooks a gourd from it, it cries out:

I am a gourd ;
From the hideworker's daughter
O King, what do you eat?

The impostor then throws away the gourds. At the spot where they are thrown a tree with sour fruits grows up. When the prince splits a fruit the true princess comes out and reveals everything. The mischievous maid is buried in a pit filled with thorns. *123A

The tale of Tejimāla (summarized earlier in section II of this chapter) has certain features which have parallels in Mrs. Rooth's Types A and B:

(1) Tejimāla's desire to attend a marriage may be compared to Hearth Cat's desire to attend the ball at the palace in Type B; the desire leads to a tragic ending in the Assamese tale.

(2) The stepmother's destructive acts—killing of Tejimāla and cutting down her plant transformations—have some similarity to incidents in Teja and Teji and in Types AI and AII.

Apart from the motif of a stepmother's persecution of the girl the tale does not seem to have any organic relation to

the Teja and Teji and the Cinderella types—both European and Oriental. Tejimala however has certain tests which are also found in Teja and Teji. For example, the flower-picking test, in one the father only being able to pluck the flower and in the other the flower changing into a bird and falling on the father's palm and thus proving its authenticity. Even the flower-picking test here is not a marriage test but a sort of recognition test.

So to call Tejimala a Cinderella type by itself seems to raise certain questions, the best solutions to which might be found by terming the tale an independent Assamese tale-type, having one or two parallels elsewhere. But without further investigation on this line no definite conclusions need to be proffered. Transformation of person into object and object into person, however, is a well known folklore feature in Assam. In the Angami tale Hunchbili a wife thrown into the water turns into a bamboo plant, out of which a shoot springs up. When the shoot is cut and cooked it cries out from the pot. In a Lhota myth some men turn into mynas and when their wives smear their foreheads with rice flour they change into gibbons with white foreheads. Medieval Vaisnavite romances, like Chandrabharati's *Kumar-haran*, make mention of magical transformation of person into bumble-bee or bird.

(XII)

Certain technical features: Like other literary types the popular tale is also a special form of composition. It is an organic whole made up of different parts. The term motif often used in this study usually refers to a certain idea or feature in a tale—such as, a cruel stepmother or an old man's feigning death in order to catch a thieving fox—and such motifs may be found in various forms of literary expression, such as, ballads and tales in different parts of the world. Some of these motifs, especially if they are found to form a distinct section in a narrative, may point to close relationship among ballads and tales found even in widely separated areas. But the term motif in this sense does not denote any technical feature; it signifies content and not form. The term type

rather refers to form, for, as has been observed by Prof. Thompson, "A type is a traditional tale that has an independent existence. It may be told as a complete narrative and does not depend for its meaning on any other tale. It may indeed happen to be told with another tale, but the fact that it may appear alone attests its independence. It may consist of only one motif or many. Most animal tales and jokes and anecdotes are types of one motif. The ordinary Märchen (tales like Cinderella or Snow White) are types consisting of many of them."*¹²⁴

So the term type suggests a self-contained whole. In determining the self-contained character of a tale various factors have to be brought into consideration. Geographical distribution, primitive content, a sense of completeness, utilization of all the motifs in the narrative, etc., may be such factors. Even if folk imagination is unbridled the thing imagined follows a certain pattern. Certain of the features which characterize a good self-contained tale may be mentioned: *¹²⁵

(1) A tale does not begin with the most important part of the action and it does not end abruptly. There is a leisurely introduction; and the story proceeds beyond the climax to a point of rest or stability.

(2) Repetition is everywhere present, not only to give a story suspense but also to fill it out and afford it body.

(3) The characterization is simple. Only such qualities as directly affect the story are mentioned: no hint is given that the persons in the tale have any life outside.

(4) The plot is simple, never complex. One story is told at a time. The carrying along of two or more complex subplots is a sure sign of sophisticated literature.

(5) Everything is handled as simply as possible. Things of the same kind are described as nearly alike as possible, and no attempt is made to secure variety.

The validity of investigation into these features depends above all on the faithfulness with which a tale is recorded. No two versions of the same tale are exactly alike and the recording is often vitiated by the personal preferences of the

recorder. The first three features just noted need not be emphasized for they are obvious qualities of almost all the tales referred to in this study. One of the best tales, *Tejimala*, for example, begins like this: "A merchant had two wives. The elder of the wives had only one daughter. Her name was *Tejimala*. . . ." When *Tejimala* is recovered by her father the latter does not come all on a sudden and punish his wife. He puts her questions, tests his daughter, sometimes tests his wife, only then does he drive out or punish in some other way the guilty woman. The details vary in different versions but the manner of the telling is the same. There is plenty of repetition in the tale, specially when *Tejimala*'s plant transformations have to speak. This repetition sort of gives harmony to the pattern of the tale. The characterization is also simple. The tale centres on two characters: *Tejimala* and her stepmother. One is sweet and silently suffering, the other is jealous and cruel. The father when he appears at all is just kind like a true father. At every stage of the narrative only two characters take part in the action. Compared to this tale the plot of *Teja* and *Teji* appears to be complex with a distinct subplot—that of the stepsister attempting to enchant the heroine and impersonate her. Further, the latter tale has certain elaborations which seem to indicate that it has put on flesh at the grace of its narrators. The story seems to end logically with the marrying of the heroine by the king, but the postponement of the marriage in the second variant, the episodes of the king's wives' maliciousness, the father's request to the heroine to look behind as she leaves her home, the stepsister's attempt to mar her happiness, the king's revenge on the stepsister's mother by sending her daughter's fat and flesh in two casks, and the handing on of these on by one, are later accretions which seem to have clung to the original nucleus in the process of the narration.

This complexity of the plot suggesting later accretions and sometimes sophisticated influence is seen in *The Minister* and the *Barber* analysed in section VII of this chapter. The tale seems to have its ancestry in *The Jatakas*. That simplicity in the narration and likeness in the things described are essential qualities in determining the pattern of a tale may also be

illustrated from The Clever Prince—the third variant of the Teja and Teji type and referred to in section XI of this chapter. This version has a part which is an independent tale in which a demoness kidnaps a prince and the latter turns the tables on her by securing her external souls. Even the second part is not quite simple. The demoness attempts twice to kidnap the prince. At the first attempt the prince gives her the slip on the way as she goes to ease herself. The demoness secures him again and puts him in the custody of her granddaughter. The prince insinuates himself into the good graces of the girl, secures her clothes and slays her. The demoness takes him to be her granddaughter. The fake granddaughter persuades her to reveal where her life is hidden. As she goes abroad the prince secures her external souls and destroys them. The demoness is slain. So this second part must be an independent tale tagged on to the core of the Teja and Teji story. Contamination of this nature is seen in several tales recorded in Assamese. T. Devi's collection *Sadhukatha* (1934) is extremely unreliable on this score. For example, T. Devi's Teton is an indiscriminate blending of motifs from The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller, The Trickster, and the second part of the Bengali (as recorded by Lal Behari Day) The Adventures of Two Thieves and of their Sons. It is not that the other collections are wholly reliable, but they have at least versions which seem to be self-contained and most of which can further be tested from oral sources.

Modifications: Pattern in a tale is often difficult to define. A literary critic has observed, "Pattern is the quality in a book which gives it wholeness and meaning, makes the reading of it a complete and satisfying experience. This is a matter partly, but only partly, discussable in terms used by devotees of form."¹³⁶ The pattern of a tale may get broken by modifications which it may undergo in the telling. Tales get modified chiefly because the narrator forgets a part and substitutes another. This modified version often thrives and in many cases appears as a fairly self-contained tale giving an impression of totality and wholeness. So far the version is a good tale. The factors which lead to the modification of tales have been

worked out by Antti Aarne, the Finnish folklorist, and a few more important of them are:

(1) Forgetting a detail, especially an unimportant one. This is perhaps the most important cause of modifications in stories.

(2) Adding a detail not originally present. Most often this may be a motif from another tale, though sometimes it is pure invention. The beginning and end of a story are especially subject to such accretions.

(3) Stringing two or more tales together. Short tales of animals or ogres and tricks of rascals are particularly liable to this experience.

(4) As a tale wanders it adapts itself to its new environment: unfamiliar customs or objects may be replaced by familiar. Princes or princesses become chiefs' sons or daughters in American Indian versions.

As has been observed by Prof. Thompson they are in no sense "laws" of oral transmission, since in the cases of perfect transmission not one of them would be effective.*¹²⁷ Some of these modifications in Assamese tales have been referred to in the course of the study. How even an important detail can be dropped is best evidenced in the cumulative *The Crow* and the *Tipsi* which does not have at its end the summing up usual in a cumulative. Sometimes towards the end accretions from other tale or tales have been noticed, as in *The Clever Prince*. Probably the ballad *Janagabharur Git* also points to such stringing together of several tales. The ballad seems to confuse two women: one a handsome and spirited princess and the other a demoness and, as a result, the narrative suffers in the harmony of the pattern. Further, there are certain things towards the end which seem to introduce a creation myth in a romantic tale. These anomalies have been noticed in section V of chapter 2. The tale of *Champavati* summarized in section III of this chapter also shows this stringing together of two tales. The tale should normally end with the marriage of the heroine and the punishment of her stepmother. At most there may be the further episode of relieving her

husband of his snake covering—which indeed is there. But the tale is dragged on by the introduction of a demoness who makes an attempt to mar the happiness of Champavati. This includes the persuasion of her husband to open his mouth and show her the world, the husband's disappearance, the discovery of him and finally the foiling of the demoness mother-in-law's attempt to do away with the girl. A stringing together of this nature is also seen in the Bengali Swet-Basanta which seems to contain two tales in one: the first about an egg-girl secured by a merchant's son for his wife; the second about the adventures of two brothers whose lives are made miserable by their stepmother.*128

As regards tales which wander, it has been shown that the Angami Nagas have borrowed tales from the plainsmen but in accepting the borrowed tales have preserved features not found in their environment. This factor has led Hutton to suspect that they must have borrowed the stories. In adopting the *Panchatantra* tale The Mouse-Maid Made Mouse the Nagas have eliminated the sage of the original and substituted him by an ordinary person. The mouse (rat) transforms itself of its own accord—both into the lovely maiden and into its former shape. The sage's magic instrumentality is totally absent in the Naga version.

Along with the modification of forms the modification of purpose is also seen. As Prof. Thompson has observed, "Fairy tales become myths, or animal tales, or local legends. As stories transcend differences of age or of place and move from the ancient world to ours, or from ours to a primitive society, they often undergo protean transformations in style and narrative purpose. For the plot structure of the tale is much more stable than its form."*129 The fables from *Panchatantra* or the moral tales from *The Jatakas* have in later times been told only for the purpose of giving pleasure, their original motive having been lost.

Are Assamese tales formless? Prof. Thompson considers the structure of the complicated Indian tale very loose, so that the plot is often very difficult to fit into the patterns determined by European analogues.*130 He seems to feel that the Indian tales are less unified in plot and less definitely fixed in form.

than those in western Europe. He, of course, admits that "A thorough study might show this to be a mistake."^{*131}

Prof. Thompson's observation seems to claim some consideration. It has been already observed that the incidents attributed to the trickster Tentan usually do not adhere to any fixed pattern (section V of this chapter). The incident of cheating the ploughman of a score of rupees, for example, may be related in isolation or tagged on to some such other cheating incident or incidents. But Officer Teton has a fixed pattern and the tale seems to be a self-contained whole. On the other hand, the incidents in the Angami parallel to the Assamese *The Trickster* are not fixed as in the latter. The Brahman's Servant also does not seem to have a fixed pattern. Humorous and trickster tales, on the whole, apart from exceptions like Officer Teton, Officer Fox, and Pharing the All-knowing, are a little formless and it is difficult to ascertain what their true patterns are. But in tales in which the personal interest in the hero predominates certain interesting adventures tend to get strung together around the hero and though the introductory portions in various tales may not agree the incidents often have a close parallelism.^{*132}

Some of the Märchen which deal with supernatural or magical incidents have good plots. The excellences of *Tejimala* have been noticed; on the other hand, *Teja* and *Teji* and *The Clever Prince* have been shown to be defective in form. *Teja* and *Teji* contains a good deal of extraneous matter and *The Clever Prince* is a stringing together of two dissimilar tales. Self-contained tales like *Tejimala* are *The Gold-producing King* and *The Demon Astrologer*. The tale of *Champavati*, like *Teja* and *Teji*, seems to be a contaminated version. To give one more illustration, *The Speechless Maid*, summarized under Motif H343 in chapter 4, embraces several tales which also have an independent existence....

This is not a detailed analysis and the deductions made on its strength may not be unassailable. But it seems to be allowable that tales like *Tejimala* and *The Gold-producing King* are not many in Assamese. Most of the tales, even if the best variants are chosen, are a little formless and unfixed

in character. This may mean that the tales are still growing, or perhaps, they do grow in this manner till they are recorded and reimposed on the people in printed versions. It may be added that Assamese story-tellers are not specialists; nor are they a sort of priestly class dealing only with myths. It may be that the older of the story-tellers, and specially women, are a little more careful in handing down tales in a fairly consistent form.

Disintegration: The question of disintegration does not seem to be important here, as most of the tales belong to the lore of the people. The few which can be traced to *Panchatantra* are too short to admit of any disintegration; no close parallel to any *Jataka* tale has been found. The Dharmadhwaja *Jataka* only seems to have an Assamese analogue in The Minister and the Barber. In the *Jataka* tale an evil person poisons the ear of the king against a virtuous man. The king tests the latter and afterwards the evil person is punished. In the Assamese tale a prince goes in search of a jewel, is thwarted by his stepbrothers, vindicates himself with the aid of the wives he secures. This seems to be the basis of the tale, but there is a sequel in which a barber grows jealous of the hero's success and poisons the ear of the king against him. The king sets him tasks which he accomplishes and the barber later falls in his own trap. This second part certainly spoils the pattern of the tale and if it is admitted that The Minister and the Barber has to be traced to The Dharmadhwaja *Jataka*, the point of disintegration may be raised. In its Assamese adaptation or modification the tasks set in the original tale got left out to be introduced in the second part which hangs rather loose and where the jealousy of the barber is not adequately motivated. Though characterization in folktales is simple and the stress is always on the action, still events are suited to character and the psychology though simple is not unnatural.

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CHAPTER 4

A SHORT MOTIF-INDEX OF ASSAMESE TALES AND BALLADS

(1)

A reference to the term 'motif' has been made in section XII of the preceding chapter. Motif refers to content and thus implies a certain idea or feature in a tale. Motifs are simple and therefore "easier to make simple explanations of them than if one has to explain a whole tale which consists of a complex of motifs"*¹ In the *Motif-Index of Folk-literature* Prof. Thompson has grouped together motifs from all over the world under suitable heads and sub-heads, thus bringing out a logical relationship among them. This relationship does not postulate any connection of an organic nature, though such a possibility is not totally excluded. But resemblances of motifs are to be taken seriously only if they are found among peoples which indicate a distinct cultural relationship. To come to conclusions by ignoring intermediate peoples and without adequate consideration of the probability or improbability of the motifs being actually connected in human tradition would be in the manner of Frazer and Rendel Harris, and therefore, not quite repaying.*²

Sometimes full tales do not migrate, but their motifs do. Motifs are more independent than tales. On the other hand, men may hit upon the same motifs in telling tales, that is, the same simple motif may be born independently in different places. A classification by single motifs—the germs of fuller tales—must be the beginning of an examination of tales in general. Such a classification makes an attempt to reduce to order the traditional narrative material of the world as the scientists have done with physical phenomena.

A classification by motifs further points out the variety of the features of tales based on their subject-matter, such as, the animal as hero, romance, humour, deceitfulness, social relations.

Prof. Thompson classifies his material under twentythree heads which he calls chapters:*

- A: Mythological motifs
- B: Animals
- C: Tabu
- D: Magic
- E: The dead
- F: Marvels
- G: Ogres
- H: Tests
- J: The wise and the foolish
- K: Deceptions
- L: Reversal of fortune
- M: Ordaining the future
- N: Chance and fate
- P: Society
- Q: Rewards and punishments
- R: Captives and fugitives
- S: Unnatural cruelty
- T: Sex
- U: The nature of life
- V: Religion
- W: Traits of character
- X: Humour
- Z: Miscellaneous groups: Formulas, Symbolism, Heroes,
Unique exceptions, Unclassified motifs.

Of these twentythree the last thirteen (from L onwards) are minor and less important; of the first ten again E, F and G are rather related.

An attempt will be made here to make a short motif-index of Assamese tales and ballads on the model set by Prof. Thompson; the motifs chosen will be the more significant ones, as to include all would swell the chapter into a fair-sized book. Further, when the tales with their various versions have not been recorded comprehensively, any attempt to make a definitive index would end in much ado about nothing. The basis of the present chapter is the Märchen and ballads summarised in the earlier chapters as well as

some fables, myths, and tales not already noticed. The range of material covered is thus wider than in previous chapters. It is expected that this condensed motif-index would be of help to future workers on the folklore of Assam in identifying their material without much difficulty.

To explain two practical aspects of the preparation of this motif-index: (1) Certain tales which have not been summarised earlier have been summarised along with the important motifs in connection with which they occur. In some cases a little cross-referencing will give the full story. An index of tales and ballads have also been appended. (2) Where it has not been possible to find a motif in Thompson paralleling an Assamese motif the latter has been placed under the sub-head which most covers it. No attempt has been made to give a new number to such a motif, though Thompson leaves room for such numbering. This has been found advisable in view of the fact that such numbering may have to be modified at a future date when the tales are recorded fully and examined by more competent hands.

Thompson's chapter heads have been explained after him in the sections that follow. Only it has to be remembered that all the chapters have not been worked out, the more important and those covering most Assamese material having been done. No motif which is not part of a full tale, simple or complex, has been allowed to enter. Some gaps might have been filled up from popular beliefs, but beliefs are outside the scope of the present study.

(II)

Part A: Mythological motifs: "In chapter A are handled motifs having to do with creation and with the nature of the world: creators, gods and demigods; the creation and nature of the universe, and especially of the earth; the beginning of life; the creation and establishment of the animal and vegetable world."⁴ Prof. Thompson is explicit that a myth is a tale which is laid in a world supposed to have preceded the present order.

The Assamese-speaking people have long been dominated by a Sanskritic tongue and Hindu ideas. The mythological

lore that may be found is primarily the same as in the Sanskrit Puranas. Very few tales are there which have survived the Hindu onslaught and give us an independent explanation of either the gods or the creation.

Motif A 100—499: Gods

Under Motif A 112.1.1.1, "Goddess of music and dance born of incestuous union," may be mentioned the Kachari goddess of music and dance born of Brahma and with whom the latter had incestuous union (see under Motif A 1460).

Motif A 113, "Totemistic gods", may be illustrated from the tale of the snake goddess Manasa. A merchant, Chando, refused to pay reverence to Manasa and the irate goddess took the life of all his sons. Beula, the bride of the youngest son, revived her husband by propitiating the god Siva, and later Chando bent so far as to pay due respect to the snake goddess. This tale is recited at the worship of Manasa in the rainy season.**

Motif A 114.1.1.1, "Child born of Krishna's sweat," is seen in the myth which describes the birth of the ancestor of the neo-Vaisnavite saint Sankardev. The sage Narada was playing to Krishna and Saraswati in heaven. The superb music made Krishna sweat. Of that sweat was born the child Purnananda. Purnananda passed from hand to hand and ultimately Siva took charge of him. Siva put him down on the bank of the Bhagirathi where he began to live as a human being.**

Motif A 143, "Carpenter of the gods," is illustrated in the tale of Viswakarma. Viswakarma, an expert carpenter from Assam, served the divine king Indra. But he was poor and therefore saved the chips and scrapings of the wood on which he was asked to work. His son Sutakarma did not appreciate this meanness of his father's and left home. He went to a distant land and lived with an old woman. He showed himself to be a novice in carpentry but setting up independently began to turn out wonderful things like a pair of sandals with magic speed and a magic boat which was rowed by two wooden figures as soon as it was put on water. The king rewarded him and his fame spread in all directions. Viswakarma

sensed his identity and coming to the king desired that he would compete with the latter's famous carpenter. He had a wooden horse whom he would race, he said. Sutakarma put out another wooden horse. The race began and Sutakarma defeated his father seven times. But in the seventh race Sutakarma sped into the west, his father following hot upon him. They did not return. It is for this people say that the carpenters of the west are superior to those of our own country.*7

There is one fact to be noted here : Viswakarma has been taken as a human being, not as the god of the *Puranas*. So the advisability of introducing the tale in connection with Motif A 143 may be debated. See also under Motif C 32 below.

Motif A 136.1.5, "God rides flying elephant;" see Motif B 45 below.

Motif A 200, "God of the upper world:" Among gods of the upper world may be mentioned Jama, the king of death. A greedy astrologer once snatched away a fish caught by a kuruwa bird. The bird died of grief and took birth as the son of the astrologer. When the son grew into a handsome youth the father arranged for his marriage. But the lad died all of a sudden. In crushing grief the astrologer began to make noise at noon with the rice-husking pedal and the sound hit Jama in his chest. Jama took the astrologer to his kingdom and asked him to pick out his son. When the man approached his son the latter barked out that he was nobody's son. Jama then explained to the astrologer that his son was none else but the kuruwa which had taken birth as his son in order to deprive him of his own happiness.** Jama also finds mention in The Messenger of Titkuji. He is a well-known figure in Assamese tales. Motif A 310, "God of the world of the dead," relevant in this connection.

Motif A 282.1, "God of whirlwind," may be paralleled with the tale of Bardaichila. When the west wind blows at the time of the Bihu festival (April) Bardaichila comes home riding on the wind to her mother's place in order to participate in the Bihu festivities. Bardaichila is symbolic of the west wind (whirlwind).

Motif A 400, "God of earth," might be illustrated with the tale of the jakh, a land spirit. There are twelve score jakhs in a certain swamp in Nowgong. A notable bhakat (initiate of a certain sect), for an offence against piety, became a spirit on his death and came to live in the swamp. But the other spirits dubbed him the blackest devil as having committed an offence against piety and refused him room. His fellow bhakats seeing his pitiable condition reported the matter to the head of their sect. The head came in person and learning that the spirit had to live there for a year reduced the period by half and ordered the resident jakhs to allow him room.*⁹ A jakh usually presides over buried treasure.

Motif A 411, "Household gods," could be illustrated with a reference to the tale of the ghar-jeuti, a spirit which dwells in the house. A man was once sleeping across his doorway. A ghar-jeuti came near him in the shape of a baby of about two years and tried to pass over him but suddenly paused at his sight. It tried to pass several times but stopped every time. Then the man awoke and removed his bedstead from the doorway.*¹⁰

Motif A 420 refers to "God of water". Mention has already been made of the water god in the ballad Phulkowarar Git. A water god is found in the tale of Kamala Kuwari summarised in chapter 5.

Motif A 433.1, "Corn-god (goddess):" see Motif a 1423.2 below.

Motif A 465.2.1, "Goddess of music" and Motif A 465.4.1, "Goddess of the dance:" see Motif A 1462.1 below.

Motif A 496, "God of the seasons:" In the Kachari tale of The Lazy Boy the lad starts ploughing when everybody else has planted out his paddy. The Old Man of the season says, "The season has gone; what are you ploughing for now?" The lad starts out looking for the season. An old man advises him, "Go you back, and plant your paddy as best you can."*¹¹

Motifs A 500—599 : Demigods and culture heroes

It has been suggested in connection with Janagabharur

Git that Gopichan might be put in the category of culture heroes as he is aided by a goddess in overcoming his foe and further creates certain trees and creepers, shells, toes of the elephant, and perhaps the sun and the moon. But he does not make any conscious effort to teach culture as such.

Motif 541, "Culture hero teaches arts and crafts:" see Motif A1423.2 below.

Motifs A 600—899: Cosmogony and cosmology

Motif A 625.2.3, "Raising the sky: striking with broom," might be illustrated with the tale Why the Sky is so High. In ancient times a humpbacked woman was sweeping her yard. As she swept her hump struck against the clouds. Out of vexation she hit the sky with her broom so that it went very high.*12

Motif A 670, "Nature of the lower world:" The ballad Manikowarar Git gives a glimpse of the world under water where the hero is found seated on a bed.

Motifs A 710 and 740, creation of the sun and the moon, may probably be illustrated with reference to Janagabharur Git in which the eyes of Abhiman remain stuck in the sky. It is not explained if they change into the sun and the moon (c.f. Motifs A 500-599). Motif A 763 refers to "Stars from objects thrown into sky."

Motif A 736.1.3, "Sun and moon as lovers," in the Khasi tale Why there are Spots on the Moon. The moon U Bynai falls in love with his elder sister Ka Sngi, the sun. Out of disgust she throws ashes on his face. Since then he gives out a white light. What we see like a cloud on the moon when it is full are the ashes.*12A Motif A 750, "Nature and condition of the moon," relevant here.

Motifs A1100—1199: Establishment of natural order

Motif A 1101.1.2, "Even trees could speak in golden age," is seen in Why do Trees have Leaves. In the era of Truth only the banana had leaves and people used to take their meals off them. The other trees out of jealousy put a curse on the banana tree to keep it from talking. At this all the trees lost their power of speech. They bowed down in sorrow. So out of pity God said, "Let the trees have leaves"*12B

Motifs A 1300—1399: Ordering of human life

Motif A 1330, "Beginnings of trouble for men:" Being tired of the beggar's life Mahadev took a piece of land from Indra and seeds from Kuvera and started raising a crop. He got so fond of his field that he forgot to return to Parvati. Parvati created gadflies and a tiger in order to force him to come back. Failing in this, she herself went to the field and seeing the crop cried out in surprise "Ah!" and "Th!" Two flames came out of her mouth and began to consume the crops. Mahadev in anger rushed upon the flames which turned into two demons and fell prostrate at his feet. He named them Khoba and Khubi and ordered them to lie quiet till they met Ramachandra. Ramachandra ordered them to dwell at the junction of three roads and whenever a marriage took place they were to take possession of the persons of the married couple. On the third day after marriage, if they did not get an offering of rice flour and gur, they were to make the marriage unhappy.*12C

Motif A 1335.11, "God of the world of the dead demands that men die:" Jama's kingdom is empty because men created by Brahma do not die. He rushes on Brahma and beats him and wants to take him away. Brahma promises to create men with weakness so that they die. Those who were created with eternal life became gods*12D

Motifs A 1400—1499: Acquisition of culture

Motif A 1423.2, "Acquisition of rice," may be illustrated with the tale How Rice was Brought to the Earth. Indra told Lakshmi (the goddess of rice) to take some paddy seedlings for the earth. Lakshmi planted the seedlings in her garden. But her jealous sister stole them and planted them beyond the Luit. Lakshmi got a clue from the excreta of a bird which was flying overhead and set out for her lost property. On the bank of a river she met an alligator which asked her why it could not dip into the water. She told it to swallow a stone and it ferried her across. After some days she reached the Luit. A tortoise complained that its body was soft and people could easily kill it. She told it that its back would be as hard as iron and it ferried her across the

river. On the other bank was the paddy field of her sister. There was so much of paddy that her sister used to give it away to birds. It is because of this that birds have a pouch under their throat. Lakshmi once more took some seedlings and started on her return journey. On the way the tortoise, while ferrying her across, went under the water. At this Lakshmi cursed it that people would be able to kill it with spears made of iron.*13 In this tale it is not clear if Lakshmi is a goddess or a sort of demi-goddess who lives and works like a human being. She might be considered also as a Culture "heroine." This tale is current especially among the Kacharis of Upper Assam.

Motif A 1462.1, "Origin of dancing: by goddess," associated with the Spring festival, is explained by the Kacharis of Upper Assam thus: Brahma had incestuous relations with his daughter and the girl was banished to the earth by King Dharma. When Spring came there was universal rejoicing, but this goddess was pining in loneliness and misery. The gods remembered her and spoke to Visnu on her behalf. Visnu sent them to Siva. Siva gave them lessons in dance and music. They then went to each divine household, danced and sang and collected cloths and eatables. With these they rehabilitated the Cinderella goddess. The girl out of joy began to dance and sing, while the gods accompanied her on drums and pipes. King Dharma's heart melted at this and he recalled her to heaven. But since then the dance and the music remained on earth, to be celebrated in the Spring season.*14

Motifs A 1500—1599: Origin of customs

The tale of Teja and Teji in the variant recorded by Bezbaruwa explains that when a girl leaves her home after marriage she has to look behind, else all the property of her parental home goes with her.

Motif A 1530, "Origin of social ceremonials," may be illustrated with the tale narrated under Motif A 1462.1.

Motif A 1540, "Origin of religious ceremonials:" see Motif A 1330, for the worship of Khoba and Khubi at marriage.

Motifs A 1600-1699: Distribution and differentiation of peoples

Motif A 1611, "Origin of particular tribes:" The ancestor of the Nagas had three sons. The old man asked them, "What will you do for your livelihood?" The first answered, "I shall till the soil." The second answered, "I shall be a writer." The third's reply was, "I shall be a hunter." From the tiller of the soil were born Nagas; the hunter disappeared into the forest; the writer or the one who knew reading and writing became the ancestor of Assamese.^{*14A}

Motif A 1650, "Origin of different classes: social and professional:" see Motif A 1611.

Motifs A 1700-2199: Creation of animal life

Motif A 1701, "Creation of animals by god:" see Motif A 1330 for the creation of the tiger. Motif A 1815, "Creation of tiger," relevant here.

Motif A 2034.1, "Deity's wife creates mosquitoes to drive her husband out of jungle," is paralleled in Parvati's creation of gadflies in order to bring Mahadev back from the paddy field. See Motif A 1330.

Motifs A 2200-2599: Animal characteristics

Motif A 2221, "Animal characteristics reward for pious act," may be illustrated with the tale How the Squirrel came by its Two Stripes. When Rama was making a causeway across the sea the squirrel had nothing to offer but two bamboo leaves. But this pleased Rama and he caressed the squirrel so that the print of his fingers remained on its back. Motif A 2221.8, "Squirrel's marking and immunity from falling as reward by deity," is relevant in this context.

For the reason of the woolliness of the fox's coat and arch-backedness of the buffalo see Motif A 2730 below.

Motif A 2223.6, "Tortoise given hard shell when it ferries rice-goddess across stream:" see How Rice was brought to the Earth (A 1423.2).

Motif A 2230, "Animal characteristics as punishment:" in the cumulative The Ant and the Frog where the ant's groin becomes thinner and the frog's back spotted and rough.

Motif A 2231.7.3, "Tortoise cursed for going under water

while ferrying rice-goddess:" in How Rice was brought to the Earth.

Motif A 2239, "Animal characteristics from miscellaneous punishments:" In the age of Truth the birds and the fish did not know how to build their houses. So in a conference it was decided to send the tokora bird and the chital fish in a deputation to Bidhata or God. After learning how to make houses, they decided not to tell about it to their fellows. It was seen that the tokora and the chital began to live in comfortable nests. Their fellows feeling cheated kicked the bird on its head so that it became bald and also kicked the fish so that its head became small and it became flat.*14

Motif A 2275.1, "Animal cries a lament for person when animal was transformed:" in The Keteki Bird. There was once a widow's son who married a merchant's daughter. At the unkind words of his wife he went abroad to make his fortune. In the meantime the wife was abducted by a rich merchant and kept as his wife. When her husband returned she came out and appeared before him with a baby. When he learned that his wife was his no more he cried out in grief: "At what price were you sold?" and jumped into the river. The wife also followed suit. Both were transformed into keteki birds, and the male bird cried out: "At what price?" So ketekis cry out in the same manner even now.*15

Motif A 2300, "Origin of animal characteristics: body:" see Motif A 2230. Compare also Motif A 2355.1.2, "Why ant has small waist."

Motif A 2311.8, "Why frog has rough skin:" see The Ant and the Frog.

Motif A 2320, "Origin of animal characteristics: head:" for the pouch of birds see Motif A 1423.2.

Motif A 2320.1.2, "Why weaver bird's head is bald," is seen in The Tokora and the Chital summarized under Motif A 2239.

Motif A 2356, "Origin and nature of animal's back:" why the buffalo's back became arched is explained in Why the Dhekiya Curled Up summarized under Motif A 2730 below.

Motif A 2370, "Animal characteristics: extremities:" see Motif A 500 above for the origin of the toes of the elephant.

Motif A 2426, "Nature and meaning of animal cries:" see Motif A 2275.1.

Motif A 2433.3.21, "Why tiger lives in jungle:" seen in a Sema Naga tale. An old woman had three sons, the eldest a tiger in spirit, the second a devil in spirit, and the youngest a real man. They worked in their field, but one of them used to stay behind to look after their mother. When the eldest brother stayed he sucked the blood of his mother. The others were surprised at her thinness. At last when the old woman died the tiger ran into the forest to live there.*16

Motif A 2493, "Friendship between animals:" seen in *The Fox and the Monkey*.

Motif A 2493.14.4, "Friendship between monkey and rabbit," is illustrated in the Kachari tale *The Monkey and the Hare*.

Motif A 2494.1.6, "Enmity between cat and tiger," is illustrated in the tale *The Cat and the Tiger*. The cat, aunt of the tiger, taught its nephew all its arts but that of climbing a tree. Hence the tiger and the cat are enemies.

Motif A 2494.5.4, "Enmity between jackal and alligator:" paralleled in the enmity between the fox and the crocodile in *Teacher For* summarised in section II, chapter 3.

Motif A 2581, "Why tiger lacks some qualities of cats:" see Motif A 2494.1.6.

Motifs A 2600—2699: Origin of trees and plants

Motif A 2610, "Creation of plants by transformation," is seen in *Janagabharur Git*. Parts of Abhimanyu's body get transformed into a swamp with *dal* reeds and black creepers. Motif A 2611, "Plants from body of slain person," is relevant here.

Motifs A 2700—2799: Origin of plant characteristics

Motif A 2730, "Miscellaneous reasons for plant characteristics," may be seen in *How Rice Became Covered With Husk*. In the Satya age rice did not have any husk. A hungry Brahman ate a few sheaves of rice from a field and for this stealthy act of his rice became covered with husk and the difficulties of men increased.*17 *Why the Dhekiya Curled Up* is also relevant.*17 Louse-cap, a woman with her head covered with lice, beat her daughter frequently. At this the girl left

home with a stork. One day she fell in the oil in which she was frying fish at the home of the stork and died. In grief the stork went to the seashore and turned a vegetarian. The sea asked why it did not catch fish. It replied

Louse-cap's daughter died falling in the oil
So the stork has turned a vegetarian.

Out of fellow-feeling the sea became foamy. A buffalo went there and could not drink because of the foam. On being asked why it was foamy the sea replied:

Louse-cap's daughter died falling in the oil
The stork has turned a vegetarian
So I become foamy.

So the buffalo became arch-backed and went back to the tree under which it used to take rest. Then the tree became bent; the pair of doves on the tree became blind of one eye, and began to turn their heads as they picked the mustard; the mustard became thinner in their pods; a Brahman that came that way became "much-easer," that is, eased himself at any and every place; the road on which he eased became tortuous; a fox that used to come that way became woolly; the dheckiya (fern) near which the fox lived became curled up.

In this tale we find two motifs relevant under Motif head A 2730, "Miscellaneous reasons for plant characteristics,"—why trees are not straight and why the dheckiya fern looks curled up.

The reasons why rice became husked, why the mustard pods became thin, why the dheckiya curled up may also be placed under Motifs A 2750—2799: "Origin of various plant characteristics."

Motif A 2760.1, "Why all trees have leaves;" see Motif A 1101.1.2 above.

Motif A 2771.9, "Why big trees have small fruit:" A man was walking from Kamalabari to Lakhimpur. He saw on the way more pumpkins than any other fruits. He said, "I do not understand God's wisdom of having the big fruit on small trees and the little fruit on big trees." About noon being tired he sat down by the roadside, got sleepy and began to dream. He dreamt that one big pumpkin broke its stem

and fell on his eye. He jumped up shouting that his eyes had been put out. But he found out his mistake and realized, "God is an all-wise God. He knows that if the big fruits were growing up high like that one I saw in my dream and fell, my head would have been smashed. God never makes mistakes."*17A

(III)

B: Animals: "Chapter B is concerned with animals. Not all tales in which animals figure are placed here, for most frequently it is the action and not the particular actor that is significant in such stories. In Chapter B, on the contrary, appear animals that are in some way remarkable as such: mythical animals like the dragon, magic animals like the truth-telling bird, animals with human traits, animal kingdoms, weddings, and the like. Then there are the many helpful or grateful beasts, marriages of animals to human beings, and other fanciful ideas and animals"*18

Motifs B 0—99: Mythical animals

Motif B 30, "Mythical birds," is illustrated in the tale of Garura and the Tipsi. The tipsi, a tiny wren, requested its friend Garura, king of birds, to take it to Kailasa. Garura took the bird to Kailasa, and God asked the king of birds to taste nectar. The tipsi which was hidden under the wings of Garura caught the drops which fell from the latter's beak. When Garura recalled the presence of the bird and asked it to drink, it declared it was already satisfied.*19 The bird Garura finds mention also in The Seed Prince summarized under Motif D5.

Motif B 43, "Winged bull," is paralleled in the black cow incarnating God. A foolish man used to give God offerings of grass and this used to be eaten by a cow which came out of the forest. After some days the cow said that it was God Himself and wanted to take him to heaven. The man was accompanied by his wife, daughter and son-in-law. As they were going up the man's wife remembered the fish that was left at home and in describing it loosened her hold. All, excepting the devoted peasant, fell and died.*20

Motif B 45, "Air-going elephant:" in Airavata. Indra's elephant Airavata used to steal radishes from the garden of an old man. When caught the elephant purchased its release by offering to take the man to heaven. The man was accompanied by his wife. Both clasped the tail of Airavata in their hands, the woman preceding her husband. On the way out the woman wanted to describe the size of the radishes that used to be stolen, and as she let go her hands from the tail, both she and her husband dropped and lost their lives.

Motifs B 100—199 : Magic animals

Motif B 103.2.1, "Treasure-laying bird," is illustrated in The Merchant's Tiya. A merchant left his affairs in the charge of a tiya (bird like the parrot). The tiya directed the merchant's servants to set fire to the paddy field. When all the paddy got fried the tiya's fellow birds ate them up and left their excreta in the barn of the merchant. When the merchant returned his servants reported the matter to him and he immediately did away with the tiya. But when he entered the barn he found it full of gold.*²¹ In a variant of this tale a parrot directs the merchant's burnt paddy to be tied up in bundles of hay. After killing the bird the merchant discovers his barn is full of gold.*²² Motif B 103.7.1, "When destructive bird is killed, barn is found full of gold," is relevant in the connection.

Motif B 120, "Wise animals," is paralleled in The Old Bird which advises its fellow birds of danger. A bird-catcher was planting a creeper under a tree in order to climb up and catch the birds above. The old bird directed the others to flee away in time. They did not take the warning and got caught in the birdlime of the bird-catcher. The old bird advised them to feign death and fly away when they would be put on the ground. They got saved but did not leave the tree. The bird-catcher caught them a second time with a net. At the advice of the old bird they flew away with the net, fell on a tree and came out.*²³

There is also the tale of the hawk which warned a king when the latter was about to drink from a pool where there was a dead poisonous snake. The king learnt of the truth only after he had killed the pet bird.*²⁴

Motif B 131, "Bird of truth," is illustrated in *The Seven-horned King*. When the Seven-horned King came to marry a princess the latter's maid lent her clothes to her mistress that she might have a view of her groom. When the princess returned the maid would not give the princess the clothes and ornaments, with the result that, in the general confusion, the maid got married to the king. The princess disguised as maid followed the false queen. At the king's home the princess's pet salika, during the stages of the night, expressed sympathy for the princess and cast aspersions at the false queen. The king overheard the bird, had the truth from it, slew the false queen, and reinstated his true wife. See under Motif C 312.2.1 below.

Motif B 143.1, "Bird gives warning," is illustrated by the tales under Motif B 120.

Motif B 150, "Oracular animals," is illustrated in the tale *The Royal Elephant*. In a certain kingdom the king died. The royal elephant went out to look for a fit successor. Finding a widow's son it picked him up and put him on the throne.*²⁵

Probably the three-beaked bird in *The Gold-producing King* may also be termed oracular.

Motif B 172, "Magic bird," is probably illustrated by the kite in *The Kite's Daughter*. The bird teaches its adopted child to recite:

The banyan's leaves sway and shake,
My Kite Mother before me drops.

and whenever the formula is recited it appears and helps the girl. It directs the girl to fill a bamboo tube with cotton and keep it away. At the required moment when the tube is opened her husband finds there beautiful cloths.....The story has been referred to in chapter 3.

Motif B 184.1, "Magic horse:" In *Phulkowarar Git* there is a wooden horse which carries the hero of the ballad. The tale of *Viswakarma* also mentions a magic wooden horse. In *The Minister and the Barber* is the instance of a run down horse which attains magic properties when a gold peg is pulled out of its hoof.

Motifs B 200—299: Animals with human traits

Motif B 210, "Speaking animals:" Animals in folklore usually have at least one human trait, that of speaking a language which is understood by human beings. There is hardly any specification that the language spoken is limited to only animals. The speech of Teja's salika, of Airavata, of the black cow, of the frog, or of Siyal Tamuli causes no inconvenience to persons with whom all these converse. The frog tills the soil like a human being, quarrels, and marries like a human being. A parallel to the frog is a singara fish, which like the frog, aids its human captor by securing a magical ring from a demon.^{*26} But the animal which has the most human characteristics is the fox (or jackal). The fox in the tale Siyal Tamuli chews areca nuts, takes a rattan, and manages everything like an experience and resourceful man. See also Motif E 761.4.9 below for a speaking cat. Motif B 211.3, "Speaking bird," in Teja and Teji and The Seven-horned King.

Motif B 223, "Kingdom of fishes," could be illustrated with the tale of The Globe Fish. There was a conference of the fishes in order to find out some means of tackling their enemy, man. The globe fish suggested that its aunt alone could give a solution to the problem. When it went to invite its aunt the latter greeted it as, "My boy, Gangadhar," the term Gangadhar being an euphemism for the Assamese for globe fish. At this the fish became so inflated that by the time it arrived back at the conference its belly burst with a loud report, so that all the fishes scattered in terror.^{*27}

Motif B 233, "Parliament of fishes:" see Motif B 223 and Motif A 2239 above.

Motif B 268, "Animal soldiers:" army of insects, wasps, animals, etc. in The Frog.

Motif B 270, "Animals in legal relation," is illustrated in The Fox and the Prince where a fox saves a prince in the king's court.

Motif B 291, "Animal as messenger," is seen in the fox in Officer Fox. The fox negotiates a marriage.

Motif B 291.1, "Bird as messenger:" see Motif A 2239 above.

Motif B 292.9.1, "Frog works in field for benefactor:" in *The Frog*.

Motifs B 300—599: Friendly animals

Helpful animals have been mentioned under Motif B 210 above. *The Merchant's Tiya*, *The Frog*, *Siyal Tamuli*, *The Kite's Daughter*, and such tales illustrate Motif B 300, "Helpful animal."

Motif B 313.1, "Helpful animal reincarnation of parent:" see *Teja* and *Teji*.

Motif B 331, "Helpful animal killed through misunderstanding," is illustrated in *The Merchant's Tiya*, and in *The Helpful Dog*. A dog being unable to prevent thieves from stealing from its master's house stops them from making off with the goods. When it barks at its master and runs frequently into a thicket the latter out of vexation kills the dog, to discover his mistake afterwards.²²⁴ There is the tale of the mongoose too, which at the death by snake-bite of a baby, secures some magic herb and before this can be applied is killed by its master.²²⁵ Friendly domestic pets like the rat, the mongoose, and the otter will be found in *The Merchant's Welfare*, summarized under Motif D 882.1 below (also referred to in section III of chapter 3).

Motif B 331.1, "Faithful falcon killed through misunderstanding:" see the tale of the hawk under Motif B 120.

Motif B 331.2.1, "Woman slays faithful mongoose which has saved her child:" see Motif B 331.

Motif B 331.2.2, "Faithful dog killed by overhasty master:" see Motif B 331.

Motif B 370, "Animal grateful to captor for release," is illustrated in *The Frog* and in *Officer Fox* or *Siyal Tamuli*.

Motif B 380, "Animal grateful for relief from pain," is illustrated in *The Tiger* and the *Crab*, where the tiger is grateful to the lad for releasing it from the pincers of the crab.

Motif B 395.1, "Buffaloes grateful for being cleaned and combed," is paralleled in *The Tiger* and the *Crab* where the hero cleans the shelter of wild buffaloes.

Motif B 411.4, "Helpful buffalo:" see *The Tiger* and the *Crab*.

Motif B 421, "Helpful dog:" see Motif B 331 above.

Motif B 435.1, "Helpful fox:" see Officer Fox, also The Fox and the Prince.

Motif B 450, "Helpful birds:" The crow in The Tiger and the Crab and the birds in Teja and Teji and in The Seven-horned King.

Motif B 455.5, "Helpful kite:" in The Kite's Daughter.

Motif B 470, "Helpful fish:" see Motif B 210 above.

Motif B 500, "Magic power from animals:" see Motif D 1821.11 below.

Motif B 501.1.1, "Merry horn and angry horn for summoning buffaloes:" in The Tiger and the Crab.

Motif 501.2, "Kite teaches rhyme by which she may be summoned for help:" in The Kite's Daughter.

Motif B 511.5.1, "Vulture cures blindness:" In The Prince and his Low-born Friend the prince declares that a certain day is auspicious, but his friend proves that it is inauspicious and thus wins the prince's clothes as wager; even then the prince insists that the day is auspicious, only to lose his eyes; the prince again declares that the day is auspicious, thus losing his bride. The prince after being abandoned by his friend regains his eyesight at the intervention of a vulture which gives him some of its dung having magic properties. With this medicine the prince also cures the king of the land of his blindness and secures the latter's aid in tackling his evil friend.³³⁰ In a variant of this tale the vulture cures the prince with some herbs.

Motif B 521.1, "Animal warns against poison," has an analogy in the tale of the pet hawk which warned a king of poisoned water (see under Motif B 120 above).

Motif B 524.2.1, "Helpful bees (hornets) sting opposing army," is illustrated in Janagabharur Git and in The Frog. But in the ballad the helping wasps are said to be magic wasps.

Motif B 531, "Animals provide food for men:" see The Tiger's Marriage.

Motif B 548, "Animal retrieves lost object," is illustrated in The Merchant's Welfare, where the merchant's pet mon-

goose, otter, and rat recover the welfare which was stolen (see under Motif D 882.1 below).

Motif B 551, "Animal carries man across water," has a parallel in How Rice was Brought to the Earth, where Lakshmi is ferried across by a tortoise.

Motif B 552, "Man carried by bird," has an example in Betu Kowar or The Seed Prince (see under Motif D 5 below).

Motif B 557, "Unusual animal as riding horse," has an analogy in The Long-legged One, where the thief mistakes the tiger for a cow.

Motif B 571, "Animals perform tasks for man;" see Officer Fox, The Frog, The Singara Fish, The Minister and the Barber (section VIII of chapter 3).

Motif B582.1.1, "Animal wins wife for his master:" in Officer Fox.

Motifs B 600—699: Marriage of person to animal

Prof. Thompson considers marriage of person to animal extremely common. Not many Assamese tales illustrating this motif group are available.

Motif B 603, "Marriage to fish," is seen in The Singara Fish; The Frog illustrates marriage to a frog (Motif B 604.5 properly).

Motif B 613, "Reptile paramour," is illustrated in the tale Champavati where a snake desires to marry the heroine. In a Lushai version of the tale the paramour is a real snake.

Motif B 646.1. "Marriage to person in snake form," is also illustrated in Champavati.

(IV)

C: Tabu: "Just as the motifs in Chapter B suggest some possible relation to the savage institution of totemism, those in Chapter C are based upon the primitive idea of tabu. Forbidden things of all kinds are here listed, as well as the opposite of that concept, the unique compulsion."³¹ The Polynesian term tabu is difficult to explain, but it "expresses itself essentially in prohibitions and restrictions. The tabu restrictions are different from religious or moral prohibitions. They are not traced to a commandment of a god but really they themselves impose their own prohibitions; they are differentiated

from moral prohibitions by failing to be included in a system which declares abstinences in general to be necessary and gives reasons for this necessity."³² The Naga term *kenna* (*genna* in Assamese) also implies restrictions of various kinds without suggesting any reason for their acceptance. These restrictions may be magico-religious, legal, and even utilitarian.³³ Prof. Thompson does not take the term *tabu* in the stricter implications laid down by Freud, but includes in it all kinds of prohibitions and restrictions, rather in the loose *kenna* sense. As the purpose of the present study is not to go into social life as it is lived the instances of *tabu* presented here will not be many.

Motifs C 0—99 : Tabu connected with supernatural beings

Motif C 32, "Tabu: offending supernatural husband," is seen in *Champavati* where *Champavati* asks her husband to show her what lies inside his mouth and he gets vexed. Motif C 32-2, "Questioning supernatural husband," is relevant in this connection.

Motifs C 100—199 : Sex tabu

Motif C 114, "Tabu: incest:" In *Janagabharur Git Jana's* father taunts *Abhiman* as having the desire to marry his sister. The *Kachari* myth of the origin of dance and music tells of *Brahma* having incest with his daughter. See also joke no. 6 in section IV of chapter 3.

Motif 191, "Mortal lusting after goddess," is found in a legend connected with *Narakasur*, king of ancient Assam. *Narakasur* made overtures of love to the goddess *Kamakhya* and desired to marry her. She set him a task, that of building a temple, a tank, and a masonry road from the foot of the *Kamakhya* hill to its top—all during one night. *Narakasur* nearly completed the task when under secret inspiration from the goddess a cock crowed before daybreak and *Narakasur's* love remained a dream.³⁴

Motifs C 300—399 : Looking tabu

Motif C 311, "Seeing the supernatural," is illustrated in a legend related of *King Viswasimha*. It had been given out that the goddess *Kamakhya* danced at the time of evening

prayer within the closed doors of her temple. The chief priest Kendukalai advised the king to peep through a hole in the wall and see the goddess. The king was found out and the irate goddess tore off the head of the priest and cursed the king that harm would befall them if he or his descendants even looked in the direction of her temple."*** Motif C 330, "Looking in certain direction," is illustrated by this curse of the goddess.

Motif C 312.2.1, "Looking at princess on public appearance," is illustrated in Tit for Tat. A queen desired to move about unseen because she was extremely ugly, but she was seen by a pair of owls. At her inducement the king sent men to catch the male owl that it might be punished. The bird purchased its freedom by suggesting that the king was henpecked and did unreasonable things at the instigation of his queen. Getting wiser the king released the bird and meted out punishment to the queen.***

Motif C 331, "Looking back," is seen in Phulkowarar Git where the hero looks behind to see how far he has gone and his horse becomes powerless, dropping him in a garden.

Motifs C 400—499 : Speaking tabu

Motif C 420, "Uttering secrets," is illustrated in The Tiger and the Crab where the tiger forbids the lad to tell anybody of the secret of his food supply. See also under H 1558 below for an instance where a minister's son refuses to explain his strange conduct.

Motif 427, "Revealing help of grateful animal:" see Motif C 420 above.

Motif C 610, "The one forbidden place:" in Ajan Phakirar Git in which the saint forbids the officer to throw his eyes on the ground.

Motifs C 700—899 : Miscellaneous tabus

Motif C 700, "Miscellaneous tabus," seems to be illustrated in The Crow and the Tipsi and The Fox and the Monkey. The tipsi tells the crow that it cannot be eaten unless the latter has its bath in the sea. The fox tells the monkey

that the latter must not beat on the drum, eat the sugarcane and sleep on the bed belonging to the king.

Motif C 757, "Doing thing too soon," is seen in the cumulative O Flower, O Flower given in section VI of chapter 3.

Motif C 773.1, "Making unreasonable requests:" in Champavati.

Motif C 837, "Losing bridle in selling man transformed to horse," is illustrated in The Demon Pandit where a boy sells himself in different animal shapes but advises his mother to retain the rope with which he is tied (see the summary under Motif D 130 below).

Motifs C 900—999 : Punishment for breaking tabu

Motif C 900, "Punishment for breaking tabu," is illustrated in The Tiger and the Crab and in Tit for Tat. The tiger carries off the lad for telling the secret of the beast helping him, and the male owl is captured for looking at the queen.

Motif C 930, "Loss of fortune for breaking tabu," may be illustrated with the instance of Champavati asking her husband to show her what lies inside his mouth, with the result that he disappears for some years.

Motif C 937, "God's favour lost for breaking tabu:" see Motif C 311 above.

Motif C 942.2, "Magic horse becomes powerless because of broken tabu:" in the ballad Phulkowarar Git.

Motif C 961.2, "Transformation to stone for breaking tabu," is seen in The Prince and the Minister's Son (see under Motif H 1558) where the minister's son is transformed to stone for explaining the reason of his strange conduct towards his friend.

Motif C 986, "Abduction by animal for breaking tabu:" see The Tiger and the Crab.

(V)

D: Magic: "The most extensive group is that devoted to magic. The divisions are quite simple: transformation and disenchantment, magic objects and their employment, magic powers and other manifestations."*** Magic plays a most con-

siderable part in wonder tales. In many tales the possession of magic powers and objects serves as the crucial point in the narrative. Transformation of person to natural object or natural object to person is a feature found frequently in Assamese as well as tribal tales. The term magic is understood here in a wide sense.

Motifs D 6—699 : Transformation

Motif D 5, "Enchanted person," is found in The Seed Prince.^{***} A king dreams that when he recites a certain mantra as he bathes he will get a fruit and if the fruit is eaten by his seven wives they will have children. Six of the queens eat up the fruit secured by the king and the seventh only gets the stone seed. They all have a son each. A mendicant tells the king that he should possess the tree of gold and silver. The princes set out to find the tree. At the foot of a mango tree is a hole and the prince born of the seed goes into it for exploration while his brothers remain outside. He descends with the help of a rope and finds below a palace in which is a girl lying dead on a bed. There is a black flywhisk at her head and a white one at her feet. The prince waves the black whisk and the girl's nose oozes blood; he waves the white whisk and the girl sits up. She tells him that it is the land of the demons. He hides and tutors her to ask the demons where their life is hidden. They tell her that it is in the bumblebee which is in a casket in the tank. The prince finds the bee, kills it, and the demons die. The prince puts the girl and the tree of gold and silver which is found there in a case and starts climbing up. But remembering he has forgotten to bring the case he climbs down, and in the meantime his brothers go away. He finds the bird Garura eating the bodies of the demons. With the aid of the bird he comes home and hands over to his father the wonder tree. He is made the "standing king" while the king himself remains the "sitting king." The other princes are driven out.

Enchantment is also seen in Teja and Teji where both Teji's mother and she herself are put under enchantment.

Motif D 40, "Transformation to likeness of another person," is seen in the tale of the spirit which takes the shape of

a woman's husband and lives with her when the true husband is away. When the husband returns he finds himself ousted. A herdsboy asks the contestants for the woman to enter a bamboo tube which only the spirit can do, with the result that the impostor is found out. The tube is immediately corked and burnt up.

Motif D 42.2, "Spirit takes shape of man:" See Motif D 40 above; also D 130 below.

Motif D 130, "Transformation: man to domestic beast," is illustrated in *The Demon Pandit*. A demon in the guise of a pandit sets up a school but won't teach any widow's son. A widow's son secures admission by pretending to be the minister's son. When the pandit goes out the widow's son discovers a skull and some magic books. He studies the books. The pandit proposes that his pupils visit his home. On the way is a river. The pandit asks them to shut their eyes and pulling out a tube sucks up the water. When the river is crossed the water is put back with the help of a second tube. This is observed by the widow's son. After crossing a second river in the same manner the pandit hides the tubes in the sand. He asks the boys to await him on the river bank awhile while he goes ahead to prepare for their reception. The widow's son follows him and finds his dwelling where he is advised by two skulls to flee as soon as possible. He returns, takes the two tubes and leads back his fellow pupils. As he crosses the river the pandit returns and thunders at him.

Coming home the boy proposes to his mother that he change into a goat and she sell it in the market, but he forbids her to give away the rope with which it is tied. The goat is sold but returns directly. The boy is then sold as a goose and as a horse, but the third time the purchaser who is none other than the demon teacher manages to secure the rope with which the horse is tied. The boy is now under the power of the demon but he escapes and changes into a fish in a river. The demon transforms himself into a seal. The fish turns into a jewel and hides among the ornaments of the princess who is bathing in the river. The demon changes into a man and complains to the king that the princess has stolen his jewel. The princess casts off the jewel which

changes into a mustard. The demon changes into a dove, but the mustard immediately changes into a hawk and tears the dove to pieces. The demon assumes his original shape. The lad receives the princess in marriage.^{*33}

This tale contains instances of transformation to goat, goose, horse, fish, dove, mustard, jewel, and thus represents several motifs. Fancied transformation to smoke, fish, shell, lime, mustard, oil-cake, tree, and boat are found in the ballad *Pagala-Parvati*.

Motif D 150, "Transformation: man to bird:" see under Motif D 130.

Also found in Teja and Teji, Tejimala, and in Panesai. In a Lhota myth some men turn into mynas and when their wives smear rice-flour on their foreheads they change into gibbons with white foreheads.

Motif D 170, "Transformation: man to fish:" see Motif D 130 above.

Motif 180, "Transformation: man to insect:" in Phulkowarar Git the hero changes into a bumblebee and visits Dhan Pachtula.

Motif D 193, "Transformation: man to tortoise," is seen in Teja and Teji.

Motif D 210, "Transformation: man to vegetable form:" in The Demon Pandit and Tejimala.

Motif D 212.3, "Transformation: woman to lotus:" in Tejimala.

Motif D 231, "Transformation: man to stone:" see Motif H 1358 below.

Motif D 365, "Transformation: duck to person:" is seen in Panesai where a duck transforms herself into a girl so long she is with a beggar woman and transforms herself into a girl after she comes to live with her prospective husband. In the second instance her duck covering is burnt up. Prof. Thompson observes that it is difficult in most Swan Maiden tales to determine whether the primary form is swan or maiden. In Panesai the girl originally came out of an egg. In most of the Assamese tales transformation seems to be voluntary, and not under compulsion.

Motif D 391, "Transformation: serpent to person," is seen

in Champavati where the girl's husband changes into a man after his snake covering is burnt up.

Motif D 431.4, "Transformation: fruit to person," is seen in the Ow Princess. The younger wife of a king gives birth to an ow (a sour fruit). The fruit is thrown away but it returns to its mother. A prince happens to see a beautiful maiden come out of the ow fruit and take her bath in the river. He marries the fruit but does not know how to get the girl inside. At the advice of a beggar woman he pretends to lie asleep at night and as the girl comes out of her shelter to have her meal, he burns up the fruit. The girl faints and is revived with the application of curd, oil, etc.*32A

Motif D 500—599: Means of transformation

Motif D 522, "Transformation by pronouncing magic spell," is seen in Teja and Teji, where Teji's mother is turned into a tortoise with the formula: Remain there a tortoise.

Motif D 531, "Transformation by putting on skin, clothing, etc." is seen in The Son of Vikramaditya. The son of Vikramaditya falling into evil days dresses himself in a jackal's skin and lays himself down on the path along which a princess and a noble's daughter come from school. He moves away only when the princess promises to marry him. The other girl passes over him. After the princess' marriage with him she destroys the skin and finds him in his former glory. The noble's daughter is punished.*33

Motif D 560, "Transformation by various means:" see Motif D 150 above.

Motif D 582.1.1, "Transformation by pushing thorn into head:" in Teja and Teji. In The Minister and the Barber a run-down horse attains magic properties when a gold peg is pulled out of its hoofs (see D 765.1.2 below).

Motifs D 600—699: Miscellaneous transformation incidents

Motif D 610, "Repeated transformation," is seen in Teji-mala and in The Demon Pandit.

Motif D 612, "Protean sale," is seen in The Demon Pandit where the lad is sold by his mother in several shapes. Motif D 612.1, "Illusory transformation of animals to sell and cheat," is relevant in this connection.

Motif D 615, "Transformation combat," is illustrated in Pagala-Parvati and in The Demon Pandit.

Motif D 621.1, "Animal by day, man by night," is illustrated in Panesai where the girl remains a duck during day-time and changes into girl shape at night. In Champavati the heroine's husband turns into a man at night by casting off his snake covering.

Motif D 630, "Transformation and disenchantment at will," is evidenced in Panesai, Tejimala, and The Demon Pandit, and also in Phulkowarar Git.

Motif D 641, "Transformation to reach difficult places," is seen in Phulkowarar Git where the hero changes into a bumble-bee in order to enter the well-guarded palace of Dhan Pachtula. Motif D 658, "Transformation to seduce," is relevant in this connection.

Motif D 665, "Transformation of enemy to be rid of him," is illustrated in Teja and Teji where Teji and her mother are transformed because of jealousy.

Motif D 671, "Transformation flight," in order to escape the pursuer, is seen in The Demon Pandit and The Demon Astrologer.

Motif D 672, "Obstacle flight," is illustrated in a loose way in The Demon Pandit where the demon cannot pursue the fugitives because the tube with which he controls rivers is taken away.

Motifs D 700—799: Disenchantment

Motif D 712.11, "Disenchantment by throwing objects at transformed person:" seen in Tejimala.

Motif D 721.3, "Disenchantment by destroying skin covering," is seen in Champavati in Panesai, in The Singara Fish and The Ow Princess.

Motif D 722, "Disenchantment by taking off bridle," seen in The Demon Pandit (see D 130).

Motif D 750, "Disenchantment by faithfulness of others," is seen in The Prince and the Minister's Son where the prince sacrifices his first-born's blood in order to revive his friend (see under Motif H 1558 for summary).

Motif D 755, "Disenchantment of long absent spouse by faithfulness of partner:" in Champavati.

Motif D 765.1.2, "Disenchantment by removal of enchanting pin (thorn)," is seen both in Teja and Teji and The Minister and the Barber.

Motif D 766.2, "Disenchantment by application of blood," is seen in The Prince and the Minister's Son (see under Motif H 1558 below). The Demon Astrologer and a variant of Tejimala also illustrate this Motif.

Motif D 711, "Disenchantment by use of magic object," may be illustrated by a reference to the white flywhisk in The Seed Prince. The use of the fans to send the hero (his soul ?) to heaven and to bring him back in The Minister and the Barber is also relevant in this connection.

Motif 777.1, "Disenchantment by covering with cloth: see Tejimala.

Motifs D 800—899: Ownership of magic object

Motif D 810, "Magic object a gift," is seen in The Tiger and the Crab, The Minister and the Barber and in Champavati.

Motif D 826.1, "Magic object vomited by conquered monster:" see Singara Fish, where the fish stings the hand of a demon and forces him to give it a magic ring which he vomits out.

Motif D 838, "Magic object acquired by stealing," may be seen in The Demon Pandit where the widow's son obtains magic books and tubes by stealing. Also The Merchant's Welfare.

Motif D 845, "Magic object found in underground room," is illustrated in The Seed Prince where magic flywhisks as well as a tree of gold and silver are found in an underground palace.

Motif D 853.1, "Magic (wooden) horse made by carpenter:" see Phulkowarar Git.

Motif D 859, "Magic object obtained—miscellaneous means," may be illustrated by a reference to the golden fowl obtained from Jama in The Messenger of Titkuji.

Motif D 860, "Loss of magic object," is seen in *The Merchant's Tiya* where the merchant kills his treasure bird, and in *The Merchant's Welfare* where the welfare is stolen through stratagem.

Motif D 861.7.1, "Magic horn carried off by bird:" see *The Tiger and the Crab*.

Motif D 876, "Magic treasure animal killed," is illustrated in *The Merchant's Tiya*.

Motif D 882.1, "Magic object stolen back by helpful animals", is paralleled in *The Merchant's Welfare*. The Welfare of the merchant resided in a bamboo. A mendicant desires the bamboo, but as it is given its leaves are eaten by a goat. The mendicant desires to eat the goat: While the goat is being cooked the merchant's daughter-in-law tastes the curry and the welfare takes shelter in her teeth. The mendicant then desires the teeth and when they are given the mendicant keeps them hidden in a lake. But the merchant's pet otter, rat and mongoose discover and steal back the magic object.*40

Motifs 900—1299: Kinds of magic objects

Many of the magic objects have already found mention.

Motif D 950.15, "Magic bamboo tree:" see D 882.1 above and *The Gold-producing King*.

Motif D 960, "Magic gardens and plants:" Under this motiff head may be mentioned the trees which grow on the graves of Teji's mother and Tejimala. The Demon Pandit mention magic mustard. The Seed Prince mentions magic mango. The Minister and the Barber has a magic garden.

Motif D 990, "Magic bodily members—human:" The skulls in *The Demon Astrologer* and in *The Demon Pandit* are relevant.

Motif D 1002, "Magic excrements," finds mention in *The Prince and his Low-born Friend*, and in *The Gold-producing King*.

Motif D 1003, "Magic blood—human," finds mention in *The Prince and the Minister's Son* (H 1558) and *The Demon Astrologer*.

Motif D 1011.1, "Magic animal horn," finds mention in The Tiger and the Crab.

Motif D 1015.1, "Magic internal organs of man," is illustrated in Teja and Teji where Teji's mother's entrails are buried and tree or trees grow on them.

Motif D 1026.1, "Magic bird dung," in The Merchant's Tiya and The Prince and his Low-born Friend.

Motif D 1065.5, "Magic sandals," is seen in Viswakarma.

Motif D 1077, "Magic fan : " in The Minister and the Barber.

Motif 1080, "Magic weapons," is illustrated in Janagabharur Git, and Phulkowarar Git, where magic rope, stick, and spear are found.

Motif D 1121, "Magic boat," is seen in Viswakarma.

Motif D 1132.1, "Castle produced by magic:" in The Minister and the Barber.

Motif D 1171, "Magic vessel" is found in The Kite's Daughter where there is a self-cooking and inexhaustible pot.

Motif D 1203, "Magic rope," is seen in Janagabharur Git and The Seed Prince.

Motif D 1255, "Magic tube:" The tube which gives cloth after being filled with cotton in The Kite's Daughter may be mentioned. The Demon Pandit has two tubes which can control a river.

Motif 1273, "Magic formula," is seen in The Kite's Daughter (see Motif B 172 above). The Seed Prince mentions a mantra which is not given in the tale.

Motif D 1287, "Magic flywhisks:" Flywhisks find mention in The Seed Prince and magic fans in The Minister and the Barber.

Motif D 1300—1599: Function of magic objects

Motif D 1310.4.2, "Magic plant bears fruit to indicate that heroine is ready to marry:" seen in Teja and Teji. Though characterized as magic plant by Thomson and Balys (p. 123) the pomegranate plant in question is not magical, as it bears fruit in its own time.

Motif D 1317, "Magic object warns of danger:" Probably the skulls in The Demon Pandit and The Demon Astro-

loger may be put under this motif. In The Gold-producing King the house warns a husband not to kill his wife.

Motif D 1347, "Magic object produces fecundity:" in The Seed Prince, where the object is a mango.

Motif D 1355.5, "Magic hair produces love:" in The Tiger and the Crab.

Motif D 1385.22, "Bedstead at doorway prevents spirits from entering:" see Motif A 411 above.

Motif D 1393.1, "Tree opens and conceals fugitive," is paralleled in Panesai where the girl hides in the stump of a tree.

Motif D 1401.1, "Magic club (stick) beats person," is seen in Janagabharur Git where there is also a rope which binds a man so that he can be beaten. Motif D 1411.1, "Magic rope binds person," is relevant in this connection.

Motif D 1441.1, "Musical instrument calls animals together," is paralleled in The Tiger and the Crab where the lad is given a horn which has the power of calling the animals to him. Motif D 1421, "Magic object summons helper," relevant in this connection.

Motif D 1454.5, "Treasure from excrements," is seen in The Gold-producing King.

Motif D 1470.1.15, "Magic wishing-ring," is seen in The Singara Fish; also in the ballads Saudar Git and in The Minister and the Barber. The wishing-ring is known as *chiri-angathi*, that is, the ring of luck and success.

Motif D 1470.2.1, "Provision received from magic tree:" in a variant of Teja and Teji a tree of cakes grows on the tortoise mother's grave.

Motif D 1473, "Magic object furnishes clothes," is seen in The Kite's Daughter where the object is a tube of bamboo.

Motif D 1505, "Magic object cures blindness," is seen in The Prince and his Low-born Friend where the object is dung of a vulture.

Motif D 1505.1, "Herbs restore sight:" see B 511.5.1, above.

Motif D 1524, "Magic object enables person to cross water," is seen in The Demon Pandit where the object is a tube which sucks up the water in the way.

Motif D 1581, "Tasks performed by use of magic objects" is seen in *The Minister and the Barber* where magic fans enable the hero to obtain a wishing-ring belonging to the king's ancestors.

Motifs D 1600—1699 : Characteristics of magic objects

Some of the magic objects are automatic.

Motif D 1601.10, "Self-cooking vessel," is found in *The Kite's Daughter*. The tale also contains a tube which weaves when cotton is put in it (see D 1473 above).

Motif D 1610.2, "Speaking tree," is found in *Tejimala* and in *The Messenger of Titkuji* (in a variant). See also A 1101.1.2 above.

Motif D 1610.5, "Speaking head:" Skulls speak in *The Demon Astrologer* and *The Demon Pandit*.

Motif D 1610.32, "Transformed bird reveals its identity by speaking out:" see *Teja and Teji* and its variant *Tula and Teja*; also a variant of *Tejimala*.

Motif D 1620.0.1, "Automatic doll," is found in *Viswakarma* where a boat moves of itself.

Motif D 1626.1, "Artificial flying horse," is found in *Phulkowarar Git* and in *Viswakarma*.

Motif D 1651.12, "Box can be opened only by right person:" in *The Minister and the Barber*.

Motif D 1652, "Inexhaustible fuel:" in *The Kite's Daughter*.

Motif D 1663.1, "Wands of life and death." may be paralleled with the flywhisks in *The Seed Prince*.

Motif D 1667.4, "Garden that has not bloomed for twelve years does so when girl steps into it:" in *Phulkowarar Git* when the prince drops into a garden which has not bloomed for twelve years it does so.

Motifs D 1700—2199 : Magic powers and manifestations

Motif D 1711, "Magician," is illustrated in *The Demon Pandit* where the teacher has magic books which are stolen by the widow's son and who consequently learns magic.

Motif D 1714.1, "Magic power of chaste woman," is illustrated in the legend *Radhika Santi*. At Bardowa a canal had

to be blocked. When the people could not block the canal the saint Sankardev wanted a chaste woman to put some clods of earth in it. No woman but the fisher woman Radhika could succeed in the test of chastity which was to raise water in a sieve. Radhika put some clods in the canal and it was blocked.*41

Motif D 1719.1.4, "Contest between carpenter and his son to race wooden horses they had both made:" in Viswakarma.

Motif D 1721, "Magic power from magician:" see Motif D 1711.

Motif D 1821.1.1, "Magic sight gift of grateful animals," is found in a tale in which vultures reward a man with the power of seeing the soul for certain services rendered them. The man laughs at seeing the soul of an evil man eager to leave the body and cries when the soul of a virtuous man is unwilling to leave the body. His strange conduct has to be explained to his neighbours.*42 Motif D 1825.3.3, "Magic sight: ability to see the soul," is relevant in this connection.

Motif D 1846, "Attainment of invulnerability," is seen in Janagabharur Git where after the extraction of a drop of clotted blood Gopichan is said to become invulnerable.

Motif D 2006.1.7, "Forgotten fiancée remembered by means of bird:" in Teja and Teji.

Motif D 2100, "Magic wealth:" in The Merchant's Tiya and The Gold-producing King.

Motif D 2105, "Provisions magically furnished:" in The Kite's Daughter.

Motif D 2126, "Magic underwater journey," may be paralleled with the journey of the fisherman in Manikowarar Git.

Motif D 2151, "Magic control of waters:" see Motif D 1524 above.

Motif D 2177.1, "Demon enclosed in bottle," has a parallel in the tale of the spirit which impersonates a husband (see under Motif D 40 above).

(VI)

E: The dead: "The motifs listed in Chapter E concern ideas about the dead—resuscitation, ghosts, and reincarnation—as well as ideas concerning the nature of the soul."*43

Motifs E 0—199: Resuscitation

Motif E 50, "Resuscitation by magic," is seen in *The Demon Astrologer* and in *The Messenger of Titkuji*. In the second tale the magic may be interpreted as medicine as well, as it is learnt from a physician.

Motif E 64.1.1.3, "Fly-whisk of life and death:" in *The Seed Prince*. The fans in *The Minister* and the Barber serve a similar purpose.

Motif E 90, "Tree of life:" A boar used to do damage to the rice crop of a man. Even though the man speared the boar it used to get well by rubbing against a particular tree. When the man dug up the tree and threw it away, the boar died of its wounds*^{43A}

Motif E 100, "Resuscitation by medicines," is best illustrated in *The Bride and her Three Claimants*. The father of the bride promised her to one man, her brother to another man, and her mother to a third man. The three claimants arrived, and in the struggle to carry off the girl, the girl died. At this one of the grooms set out to find medicine to resuscitate her, the second set out to throw a piece of her bones into the Ganges, and the third remained to perform the death ceremonies. The first returned and brought the girl back to life. Once again the three claimed her. The girl saved the situation thus: "The man who resuscitated me is like my father; the one who set out to the Ganges is like my son; and the one who performed the death ceremonies is like my husband, and therefore I shall be his bride."⁴⁴ The tale does not explain where the medicine is applied. See also Motif E, 50 above.

Motif E 105, "Resuscitation by herbs," is seen in the tale of the mongoose killed through misunderstanding (see under Motif B 331 above).

Motif 113, "Resuscitation by blood," is seen in *The Prince and the Minister's Son*, *The Demon Astrologer*.

Motif E 121.1, "Resuscitation by a god," is seen in the myth of the snake goddess Manasa where Beula's husband is revived by the god Siva (Mahadeva).

Motif E 121.1.3.1, "Hero resuscitated by his bride,

daughter of King of Death:" see The Minister and the Barber.

Motifs E 200—599: Ghosts and other revenants

Ghosts and spirits are not well defined in popular conception; whether some of them are revenants or spirits of the dead is not clear. But most of them are malevolent, except perhaps the gharjeuti referred to under Motif A 411. Tales about ghosts and spirits are often associated with certain localities; tales about demons or rakshasas have a wider and more floating circulation.*45

Motif E 230, "Return from dead to inflict punishment," may be paralleled with the birth of the kuruwa as son to punish the greedy astrologer (see Motif A 200 above).

Motif E 323.1.1., "Dead mother returns to suckle child:" in Teja and Teji.

Motif E 410, "The unquiet grave," is seen in Tejimala where the plants on the girl's grave speak out of her step-mother's crime.

Motif E 422, "The living corpse," is not found in the recorded tales, but The Messenger of Titkuji refers to two corpses which cannot die. These are probably revenants in the term's stricter implication. As Prof. Thompson notes, "Revenant is not a spectre but has the attributes of a living person. He wanders about till his 'second death,' complete disintegration in the grave." The corpses in The Messenger of Titkuji, however, do not move about, though they have some of the attributes of the living person.

Motif E 474, "Cohabitation of living person and ghost," is seen in a tale in which a woman takes to live with a dot or spirit (see Motif D 40 above).

Motif E 481, "Land of the dead," that is, the kingdom of Jama, is seen in The Greedy Astrologer as well as in The Messenger of Titkuji. See also Motif A1335.11.

Motifs E 600—699: Reincarnation

Reincarnation implies return from the dead in another form. The *Jataka* tales illustrate reincarnation best.

Motif E 605.2, "Reincarnation: god reborn as man,"

may be paralleled by the birth of Purnananda who later comes to live as a man (see Motif A 114.1.1.1 above).

Motif E 613, "Reincarnation as bird," is seen in The Keteki summarised Motif A 2275.1 above.

Motif E 631, "Reincarnation in plant (tree) growing from grave," is seen Teja and Teji and Tejimala.

Motif E 631.0.5, "Tree from innocent man's blood:" see Tejimala.

Motif E 631.1, "Flower from grave," may be paralleled in the lotus shape of Tejimala when the tree with sour fruits is cut down and thrown into the river.

Motif E 656, "Animal to man:" see Motif A 200.

Motif E 670, "Repeated reincarnation:" see Panesai.

Motifs E 700—799: The soul

Motif E 700, "The soul," is seen in Magic Sight where a man acquires the power of seeing souls (see Motif D 1821.11 above).

Motif E 710, "External soul," is seen in tales dealing with demons, as in the third variant of Teja and Teji, The Messenger of Titkuji, and The Seed Prince. The demoness in the third variant of Teja and Teji has six external souls kept in gourds. The external soul is frequently a bumblebee, as in The Seed Prince. The tal-sal tree in Janaghbharur Git probably implies some sort of external soul, or it may be taken as a life token.

Motif E 713, "Soul hidden in a series of coverings," is illustrated in The Seed Prince where the soul of the demons, a bumblebee, is kept in a case in a lake.

Motif 720, "Soul leaves or enters body," is seen in The Minister and the Barber.

Motif E 722, "Soul leaves body at death," is illustrated in Magic Sight.

Motif E 727.1.1., "Soul curses body:" in a variant of the tale Magic Sight (D 1821.11) in which a Brahman's daughter-in-law saw the spirit of the dead Brahman slap and kick the body because of his meanness and stinginess⁴⁴⁴.

Motif E 732, "Soul in form of birds," is seen in The Messenger of Titkuji where the external soul of the demons is kept in the custody of Jama.

Motif E 734, "Soul in form of insect," is seen in *The Seed Prince* where the soul is a bumblebee.

Motif E 761.3, "Life token: tree (flower) fades," has an analogy in the tulsi plant in *The Demon Astrologer* and *The Cat's Daughters*. The tal-sal tree in Janagabharur Git may also be a life-token for when it is uprooted Jana falls down lamed. In *The Demon Astrologer* when the prince is dead the tulsi plant at home withers.

Motif E 761.4.9, "Life token: milk turns dark:" in *The Cat's Daughters*. A cat is not fed. Therefore she curses the mistress of the house that she will have the cat's children while the cat will have the mistress' children. The cat gives birth to two human daughters and as it goes out tells them that if any danger befalls them the tulsi plant will wither and the milk get dark. The elder daughter is carried off by the water god and married and the younger is married by a merchant. The merchant's two former wives are jealous of the new one. When the latter gives birth to two children, they keep her eyes covered and report to the merchant that she has given birth to a pestle and a gourd. The merchant drives her out. Her two boys are allowed to drift in the river. The water god brings them up and with his aid they later are able to vindicate their mother. The jealous co-wives are punished.^{*45}

(VII)

Prof. Thompson's Chapters F: Marvels and G: Ogres have not been worked out as they are closely related to Chapter E. In fact, most of the incidents in F and G are to be found in E.

H: Tests: "Tales of recognition are really tests of identity; riddles and the like, tests of cleverness; and tasks and quests, tests of prowess. In addition are to be found sundry tests of character and other qualities."^{*46} The purely supernatural assumes a minor importance in this section. But there are a few tales with decided characteristics of a supernatural type included in the analysis that follows.

Motifs H 0—199: Identity tests: recognition

Prof. Thompson observes that elaborate means are em-

played in folk-literature for the recognition of persons even though they have been separated a very short time.

Motif H 11.1, "Recognition by telling life history:" see Motif N 311. The two sons of the merchant's wife in *The Cat's Daughters* later recount their life history before their father and the public and reinstatement of their mother follows (see Motif E 761.4.9).

Motif H 13, "Recognition by overheard conversation with animals or objects," is illustrated in *Teja and Teji* and *The Seven-horned king*. In *Teja and Teji* the salika makes comments on the manner in which the imposter weaves at the loom and dandles the baby and this the king overhears and knows the bird to be his true wife. In *The Seven-horned King* the salika talks to her mistress and this the king overhears.

Motif H 14.1, "Recognition by seeing husband shed tears on sight of bird:" in *The Gold producing King*.

Motif H 31, "Recognition by unique ability," is seen in *Viswakarma* where the father suspects the identity of his son because of the excellent craftsmanship of the latter.

Motif H 35.3.1, "Recognition of false bride by inability to finish true bride's weaving:" in *Teja and Teji*.

Motif H 41.1, "Princess on the pea:" an analogy in *The Four Friends*. See Motif J 1661.1 below.

Motif H 75, "Identification by a hair," is seen in a way in *The Kite's Daughter* where a merchant finds a hair and in surprise looks up to discover a lovely maiden on a tree. In *The Tiger and the Crab* a hair is found in a fish and the princess desires to marry the person with such hair. The actual identification of the person with the hair is not shown in the tale.

Motif H 94, "Identification by ring," is closely paralleled in *Champavati* where the girl's husband gives her a ring for later identification which is not seen in the tale.

Motif H 151, "Attention drawn and recognition follows," is seen in *Teja and Teji*, *Tejimala*, *The Seven-horned King* and *The Cat's Daughters* (see E 761.4.9 above).

Motif H 171.1, "King selected by elephant bowing to him," is seen in *The Royal Elephant*.

Motif H 175.1, "Recognition of son by gushing up of milk," is seen in The Gold-producing King.

Motifs H 200—299: Tests of truth

Motif H 215, "Magic manifestation at execution proves innocence," is seen in The Gold-producing King where the house declares to the young man that his wife is chaste and innocent and stays him from slaying her.

Motif H 229, "Ordeal, by rope-walking," is paralleled in The Kite's Daughter where the merchant tests his wives by asking them to walk on a thread stretched across a pit. In Assamese folktales such a thread is called the thread of dharma or divine order. This motif may be tagged on to the tale of Tejimala where the stepmother, instead of being simply driven out, may be tested by being asked to walk across the thread of dharma.

Motif H 242, "Credential tests: proof that messenger comes from certain person:" When Tejimala in her lotus shape speaks to her father the latter wants credential proofs. He holds in his right palm a little chewing of areca nut, in his left palm a sweetball and asks the flower to change into a salika and choose either the chewing or the sweetball. When the salika chooses the chewing he knows it is his daughter. Sometimes the objects with which the test is made are only two sweetballs. In Teja and Teji the king asks the salika to alight on his shoulder if it is his true wife.

Motifs H 300—499: Marriage tests

Suitors are often put to severe tests by the bride's father. Sometimes the suitor's friend helps him in the tests. The bride sets the tests.

Motif H 331, "Suitor contest: bride offered as prize:" In Janagabharur Git Gopichan has to fight with Abhiman and his father, but no offer is made of a prize, though Jana's father is forced to give her when he is defeated.

Motif H 331.1, "Suitor contest: difficult riding:" When the hero is asked to ride on the wild buffaloes by the princess's father in The Tiger and the Crab he is tested rather than put in a contest.

Motif H 332.1, "Suitor in contest with bride," is seen in Janagabharur Git where Gopichan has to fight with Jana.

Motif H 332.2, "Suitor contest with brother-in-law," may be paralleled with Gopichan's fight with Abhiman, Jana's brother.

Motif H 335.0.2, "Girl assigns tasks to her suitors," is seen in Janagabharur Git.

Motif H 335.0.5, "Goddess assigns tasks to her mortal suitor:" the legend of Narakasur (C 191).

Motif H 343, "Suitor test: bringing dumb princess to speak," is seen in The Speechless Maid. A prince slays a demon and gains the latter's sister as friend. The demoness takes the princess to a land where the princess sits speechless. Whoever makes her speak gets her. At the direction of the demoness who turns into a flea and settles on a light the prince starts telling stories. When the first story is told (that of the faithful mongoose killed through misunderstanding) the flea settles on the cloths of the princess. When the second story is told (that of the faithful dog killed through misunderstanding) the princess yawns and the flea enters through her mouth. When the third tale (that of the merchant's tiya killed through misunderstanding) is told the flea makes a buzzing noise from inside the princess and five musical instruments which are there start playing because the princess has made a noise. So the prince gets her.* This tale mentions a friend who helps the hero.

Motif H 373, "Bride test: performance of tasks:" Gopichan tests Jana by setting a chastity test, by wanting her to cook on her knees rice which does not grow on any plant.

Motif H 410, "Chastity test by magic objects or ordeals:" See H 373 above.

Motif H 413.3, "Special powers of chaste woman carrying water in a sieve:" is seen in Radhika Santi's power to block a canal (see Motif D 1714.1 above).

Motif H 500—899: Tests of cleverness

Motif H 502, "Test of learning," is seen in the tale summarised under Motif K 331 below where a father tests his son's ability to steal.

Motif H 507.1.0.2, "King defeated in repartee by, who thus wins girl:" see Motif H 583.

Motif H 512, "Guessing with life as wager," is seen in Pharing the All-knowing, a sort of doctor in spite of himself. Pharing is asked to guess twice by the king, with life as forfeit if he guesses wrong. Pharing does not give direct solutions: the solutions come out as he soliloquises in each difficulty.

Motif H 540, "Propounding of riddles," is seen in Pharing the All-knowing where Pharing after discovering that his wife has eaten up most of the cakes makes a riddling statement which impresses his wife.

Motif H 561.4, "King and clever youth:" see Motif H 583 below.

Motif H 580, "Enigmatic statements," may be seen in The Astrologer who when asked about the flood replies in a statement which has two interpretations.

Motif H 583, "Clever youth (maiden) answers king's enquiry in riddles," has a parallel in Officer Teton. His brother-in-law comes and asks Teton: Where is your father? Teton replies: Father has gone to turn up the soil of the nether region, meaning that the latter has gone to till the soil. His brother-in-law asks: Where is your mother? Teton replies: Feeding on rice soaked for seven days she has gone to give life to the dead, meaning that the latter has gone to plant paddy seedlings. His brother-in-law asks again: Where is your sister? Teton replies: She has gone to sieve the sea in order to pick pearls, meaning that she has gone to fish in the flood water. His brother-in-law goes away in a huff. This is the introduction to the tale of Officer Teton summarised in chapter 3.

Motif H 588, "Enigmatic counsels of a father," is seen in The Merchant's Advice to his Son. A merchant leaves home with the advice to his son that he make good use of money and repair their house with "white chowries." The son misunderstands him and instead of using thatch uses costly material in repairing the house and thus exhausts their funds.⁴⁴ In a second tale a father at death gives his son these advices: 1) You will find all my wealth about a knee below the garden,

2) take always heads of fish, and 3) in difficulties always take counsel from the three-headed. The son buys large fish and loses both money and health. He digs and digs but finds no wealth. He then approaches an old man who is so bent that he looks three-headed and he explains to the young man that if he takes small fish he will always eat heads and at the same time save money and points out that real wealth is found in a well-tilled soil. The man learns the lesson and makes up his fortune.

Motif H 588.7, "Father's counsel: find treasure within a foot of the ground," is illustrated in the second tale under Motif H 588 above.

Motif H 592, "Enigmatic statement made clear by experience:" see Motif H 588 above.

Motifs H 900—1199: Tests of prowess: tasks

Motif H 901, "Tasks imposed at pain of death," has a parallel in Pharing the All-knowing. The king asks Pharing to find a stolen necklace and to guess what is in his clasp, the failure in the tasks involving death. In Janagabharur Git the failure to defeat Jana leads to imprisonment.

Motif H 911, "Assignment of tasks at suggestion of jealous rivals," has a parallel in The Minister and the Barber where the jealous person is the barber.

Motif H 916.1, "Tasks imposed because of wife's foolish boast:" has a loose parallel in Pharing the All-knowing where an admiring wife gads about that her husband is all-knowing.

Motif H 941, "Cumulative tasks:" The assignment of a second task so that the first can be done may be paralleled with the tipsi's request to the crow to have a bath before eating it.

Motif H 962, "Tasks performed by close observation:" see Motif J 1661.1 below.

Motif H 910, "Help in performing tasks:" Gopichan performs his tasks with divine aid, but he is kept up all through by Kalidhan's encouragement and advice. In The Speechless Maid the hero performs the task with the aid of a demoness.

Motif H 974, "Task performed with help of supernatural

wife," is paralleled in *The Minister and the Barber* where the hero performs the tasks with wives who belong in the realm of the supernatural.

Motif H 1023, "Task contrary to the nature of objects:" Two of the tasks in *Janagabharur Git* belong to this class. In one Jana asks Gopichan to give her a piece of areca nut which does not grow on any tree, which is not "cuttable" with any knife, and on which lime is not smeared with the hand. In the other Gopichan asks Jana to cook on her knees rice which does not grow on any plant, which is not husked under any dhenki, and which is not touched by hand. The second task set by Jana: to split an iron dhenki into two equal parts with one stroke from an axe made of one seer of wood and the handle of which is a jute stalk, may also be put here, for it is against the nature of iron to be split by wood much less in one stroke.

Motif H 1023.2, "Task: carrying water in a sieve:" See under Motif D 1714.1 above.

Motif H 1024.4, "Task: teaching an ass to read," is paralleled in the tale of the woman who wanted a teacher to beat her goat into a man. (see Motif J 1882.2 below).

Motif H 1090, "Tasks requiring miraculous speed:" Two of the tasks in *The Minister and the Barber* come under this head: 1) to broadcast pulse and mustard on a large piece of ground and to collect and separate them during one night; 2) to dig two large tanks and plant in them "nagas" during one night.

Motif H 1091.2, "Task: sorting grains; performed by helpful birds:" The doves of one of the wives of the minister in *The Minister and the Barber* help him to sort the pulse and the mustard.

Motif H 1104, "Task: building castle in one night:" One of the tasks of the minister in *The Minister and the Barber* is to make a house of snakes in one night.

Motif H 1105, "Digging a pond quickly:" The second task under Motif H 1090 above.

Motif H 1130, "Superhuman tasks:" Probably the step-mother's asking Tejimala to push in the paddy into the hole of the husking pedal with her head and feet may be put

under this motif head. Several of the tasks in *The Minister and the Barber* and in *Janagabharur Git* are superhuman tasks (see under Motifs H 1090 and H 1023 above).

Motif H 1151, "Theft as a task," is seen in *The Test of a Son* under Motif K 331 below.

Motif H 1155.5, "task: riding buffaloes:" in *The Tiger and the Crab*.

Motifs H 1200—1399 : Tests of prowess : quests

Performance of difficult tasks and quests is a noted feature of a large number of tales. Frequently the tasks form a subordinate part of the tale, the principal interest being the plot. This is perhaps more true of western tales. In certain tales the performance of tasks or the accomplishment of quests is the leading feature of the entire action.

Motif H 1210.1, "Quest assigned by father," is seen in *The Seed Prince*.

Motif H 1211, "Quests assigned in order to get rid of hero," is seen in *The Minister and the Barber* where the hero is asked to bring back the wishing-ring which belongs to the king's forefathers in heaven. The minister saying that the king's forefathers are in need of a barber—in order to get rid of the barber—may also be put under this head.

Motif H 1213.1.1, "Quest for man caused by sight of one of his hairs dropped by a bird (or floating on river):" in *The Tiger and the Crab*. The princess discovers a hair in the belly of a fish and sends her crow to find the person with such hair.

Motif H 1221, "Quest for adventure," is seen in *Phulkowarar Git* in which the hero starts with the avowed purpose of knowing more of his father, but he soon forgets the latter and gets involved in a series of romantic incidents. The hero in *The Messenger of Titkuji* also undertakes a voluntary quest, but the underlying purpose is to slay the demons who have destroyed the hero's father and uncle. Compare H 1228, "Quest undertaken by hero for vengeance."

Motif H 1233, "Helpers on quest:" see *The Minister and the Barber*.

Motif H 1234, "Old woman helps on quest," may be

seen in *The Messenger of Titkuji* where the aunt of the hero helps him by discovering where the soul of the demons is hidden.

Motif H 1238, "Quest accomplished with aid of wife," is seen in *The Minister and the Barber* where the daughter of the king of Fans helps the hero to contact the king's ancestors and bring their wishing-ring.

Motif H 1242, "Youngest brother alone succeeds on quest," is seen in *The Seed Prince* where a king sends his sons to secure a tree of gold and silver (see Motif H 1210.1 above).

Motif H 1252, "Quest to other world for ancestor," has an analogy in *The Minister and the Barber* where the hero is asked to procure the wishing-ring of the king's ancestors.

Motif H 1263, "Quest to God for fortune," has a parallel in the variant (see chapter 3) of *The Messenger of Titkuji* where a poor Brahman goes to Jama, the king of the dead.

Motif H 1270, "Quest to lower world:" It may be seen in *Manikowarar Git* where a fisherman is sent down into the water to fish for the missing prince.

Motif H 1289.6, "Quest for the world of rakshasas:" in *The Messenger of Titkuji*.

Motif H 1291, "Questions asked on way to other world," is illustrated in *The Messenger of Titkuji*.

Motif H 1292, "Answers found in other world to questions propounded on the way," is seen in *The Messenger of Titkuji*.

Motif H 1292.1, "Question propounded on quest: Why has spring gone dry?" is paralleled in the question: Why no water wells up in this tank?—in *The Messenger of Titkuji*.

Motif H 1292.2.1, "Question propounded on quest: Why does no one desire to eat fruits of a certain tree?" is seen in *The Messenger of Titkuji* where it is asked why fruits of a mango are not eaten by bird or man. The answer: There is hidden riches under the tree—is paralleled in Aarne-Thompson's types 460 and 461.

Motif H 1300, "Quests for the unique," is seen in *Jana-gabharur Git* where the hero sets out to secure a very strong woman.

Motif H 1333.1, "Quest for marvellous tree," is seen in The Seed Prince and The Minister and the Barber.

Motif H 1385.4, "Quest for vanished husband," is seen in Champavati.

Motifs H 1400—1599: Other tests

These are mainly tests of character.

Motif H 1510, "Tests of power to survive:" see The Gold-producing King.

Motif H 1550, "Tests of character:" This is seen in an inverted manner in the tale summarised under Motif K 873 where a husband not relying on his wife's discretion gives her a misleading report of how he came by wealth.

Motif H 1558, "Tests of friendship:" It is illustrated in The Prince and the Minister's Son. On the prince's day of marriage, as he goes to get on his elephant, the minister's son bypasses him and rides on the elephant first. At the bride's place the prince's friend similarly occupies the seat meant for the prince. When the marriage is over the minister's son again tastes the food meant for the prince. When the prince returns home the minister's son comes before him and destroys the marriage decorations. The prince can hardly repress his anger and is about to slay his friend. The minister's son explains that all this has been done for the welfare of the prince but he may not explain in what way the welfare comes about. Forced to explain this the friend tells the prince that if he does so he will turn into stone and will regain his former shape only if the prince sprinkles his first-born's blood on the stone. The prince agreeing to sacrifice his first-born the minister's son explains that the prince would have fallen from the elephant, would have fallen face down from his seat, would have been choked by his food, and the marriage pandal would have fallen on him unless his friend did in the way he had done. The friend turns into stone, and later the prince sacrifices his baby and revives his friend.* This tale illustrates a friend's desire to risk his life in order to protect his friend, and secondly, a friend's sacrifice of the first-born for the sake of his friend.

Motif H 1558.2, "Test of friendship: substitute as

murderer." This is seen in a loose manner in Petbhatu where the minister's son serves a merchant in place of the king's son in order to take revenge on the merchant for his treatment of the king's son (see under Motif K 172 below).

Motif H 1562.1, "Test of strength: pulling up tree by roots," may be compared with the tree-pulling incident in Janagabharur Git.

Motif H 1571, "Test of sensitiveness," is seen in The Four Friends summarised under Motif J 1661.1. The first friend is sensitive to an uncomfortable bed, the second to ugliness in a girl, the third to bad rice, the fourth to bad areca nut. The tale also illustrates Motif F 647, "Marvellous sensitiveness."

(VIII)

J: The wise and the foolish: "Wisdom, Cleverness, Foolishness. Their fundamental unity is apparent: the motivation is always mental. The first part (wisdom) consists in large part of fable material. The tales of cleverness and of stupidity come in large measure from jest books."⁵⁶ In Assamese there are no such jest books as in medieval Europe; in Bengal considerable jest material goes in the name of Gopal Bhar who is supposed to have the better of every other man.

Motifs J 0—199: Acquisition and possession of wisdom

Motif J 21, "Councils proved wise by experience," is seen in The Old Bird summarized under Motif B 120 above (see also Motif H 588 above).

Motif J 21.34, "Move stool before sitting on it:" see Motif J 163.4 below.

Motif J 21.41.2, "Be cautious before allowing yourself to fall asleep in a strange place:" see Motif J 163.4 below.

Motif J 21.52.8, "Nothing happens that does not work for one's good:" in the tale What God does He does for the Best. A king and his minister wander in the forest. The king cuts his finger and the minister consoles him thus: "What God does He does for the best." The king out of vexation throws the minister into a well. Some dacoits capture and wish to sacrifice him to their goddess. But finding him with a wound they set him at large. The king recalls his

minister's words and rescues his well-wisher. The minister explains that if he was not in the well the dacoits would have sacrificed him.

Motif J 80, "Wisdom taught by parable," is seen in the old father's advice to his sons: The father takes a bundle of reeds and asks his sons to break the bundle. They fail. They are asked to break the reeds singly. It is easily done. The father teaches the sons the value of unity.

Motif J 151, "Wisdom from old man," is seen in the second tale under Motif H 588 in which a son is advised to seek counsel from the three-headed.

Motif J 154, "Wise words of dying father," is seen in the second tale under Motif H 588.

Motif J 163.4, "Good counsels bought," is seen in The Young Merchant. A young merchant purchases at a high cost from an older one the three counsels: 1) Keep alert when you sleep with a woman; 2) Do not walk in company of woman; 3) Do not take your seat in haste. The young merchant finds a man and a woman walking fast on the way but he keeps himself aloof from them. All on a sudden a man comes up and slays the first one as the latter is found with the former's wife. The merchant arrives at a meeting and examines carefully the seat he is asked to take. He finds one of its legs broken and he takes a second seat, saving himself from discomfiture. Then the merchant finds himself chosen king in a kingdom where the king is dead. As he sleeps with his queen at night he keeps alert and finds a black snake coming out of the nose of the woman. He immediately cuts it into two and saves himself.*⁵¹

Motifs J 200—1099: Wise and unwise conduct

Motif J 242.8, "In dividing property clever younger brother takes hind part of buffalo, upper part of trees, and use of curtain at night:" The Manipuri tale of two brothers summarized in chapter 3, section X.

Motif J 713.1, "Lazy boy vainly asks god of the Seasons to delay the ploughing season:" see Motif A 496 above.

Motif J 758, "Beware of following an interested adviser:" see Champavati.

Motif J 816, "Tact in reproving the great," is seen in Tit for Tat where the owl tells the king that the gods discuss that people on earth are getting henpecked (see under Motif C. 312.2, 1 above).

Motif J 860, "Consolation by a trifle," is seen in Garura and the Tipsi where the Tipsi is contented with but a drop or two of nectar.

Motif J 950, "Presumption of the lowly," is illustrated in the tale of the scholar who will not hear big things from the mouth of the lowly. The king persuaded the scholar to take service under him. The king one day picked up a waif, brought him up, and ultimately made minister. One day this minister came late and on being asked replied thus: "Last night the seam of the mattress was just under my back and I had such pain that it took me some time to have my back massaged." The scholar gave the young chap a hard slap. Another day the king chose a country wench as queen. After some days the queen wanted to visit her home. On the way to her home she saw a patch of mustard and asked what it was. The scholar who had accompanied her gave her a hard slap and forthwith left service.*51

Motif J 955.1.1, "Fish swells with pride until it bursts:" see Motif B 223.

Motif J 1021, "The quarrelling sons and the bundle of twigs", is seen in the parable under Motif J 80.

Motif J 1024, "Quails caught in net rise up in a body with net and escape," is paralleled in the tale of the old bird under Motif B 120 above.

Motifs J 1100—1699: Cleverness

Motif J 1141, "Confession obtained by a ruse," is seen in the tale summarised under Motif D 40 above where the herdsboy magistrate declares that the one who would enter the tube would get the woman, thus catching the culprit. Motif J 1141.1.7, is "Which is man and which demon in man's shape?"

Motif 1142.1, "Test of mother by weighing milk," has an analogy in The Gold-producing King. When the young prince is claimed by two mothers the prince asks them to wrap on

their breasts seven-fold cloths to see which one of them spurts milk and soaks the cloth (see also Motif J 1171.1 below).

Motif J 1160, "Clever pleading," is seen in *The Fox and the Prince*.

Motif J 1161.11, "Thief makes it fall out that he has but taken what has been given him (he has followed literal instructions):" see *Officer Teton*.

Motif J 1171.1, "Solomon's judgement: the divided child:" This motif has an analogy in *The Gold-producing King* (see also Motif J 1142.1 above).

Motif J 1172.3, "Ungrateful animal returned to captivity," is found in *The Tiger in the Trap*. A fox wants to see in what condition the tiger was found and thus puts the latter back in the trap.

Motif J 1191.1, "Reductio ad absurdum: the decision about the colt:" This is paralleled in *The Fox and the Prince* where the fox proves the absurdity of the oil-presser's claim by claiming to do something more absurd.

Motif J 1215, "Rule made to work bothways," is seen in *The Astrologer*. Also joke no. 6 in chapter 3, section IV.

Motif J 1241, "Clever dividing which favours the divider," is seen in *Ajala and Tentan*, the younger brother being the divider.

Motif J 1511.9, "Master says that he has eyes in back of head: servant cheats him:" in the *Kachari tale The Brahman and his Servant* analyzed in chapter 3, section X.

Motif J 1517.3, "Overheard conversation: my money is hanging in the tree:" analogy in *The Clever Old Man* mentioned in chapter 3, section X.

Motif J 1531.1.1, "Mill has given birth to horse—jackal as judge comes late:" has an analogy in *The Fox and the Prince* where the oilpresser claims that his oilpress has given birth to a horse.

Motif J 1661.1, "Clever deductions from observation," is illustrated in *The Four Friends*—the king's son, the noble's son, the merchant's son, and the widow's son. The four friends find the track of a buffalo in a jungle and follow it. The prince observes, "The buffalo has broken a leg, for the mud on the way has been pressed deeper on one side." The noble's

son says, "The buffalo has lost its tail, for the gnats and fleas are on the grass and have not been whisked off." The merchant's son says, "The animal is without a horn, for the grass and shrubs have been disturbed on one side only." The widow's son says, "The buffalo must be blind of one eye, for I have found catarrh dropped from one eye only." So they discover the buffalo and as they are talking the matter over a policeman comes and takes them away as thieves. They are put in prison and overheard observing that the king is nothing but a hornless cow, that is, a naughty cow. They are directly produced before the king, and as they explain matters, the king finding them so clever wants to test them. A noble asks them what they want. The prince says, "I wish to sleep on the best bed." The noble's son says, "I wish to sleep with a lovely girl." The merchant's son says, "Give me the best rice." The widow's son says, "Give me some good areca nut." The things are given. The prince observes, "I cannot sleep on this bed, there must be a hair under the seventh mattress." The noble's son observes, "This girl's mouth is smelly, she must have been fed on goat's milk in her childhood." The merchant's son observes, "When this rice was prepared it came in contact with the smoke of a burning pyre." The widow's son observes, "This areca is bitter, there must be a snake's hole under the areca tree." On investigation all this is found correct. The king gives the friends due presents.*⁵³ See also Motif H 1571 above.

Motifs J 1700—2799 : Fools and other unwise persons

As Prof. Thompson observes, a large number of simple tales told by unlettered men everywhere concern fools and their absurdities. Fools or numskulls are imagined even among animals.

Motif J 1713.1, "How he knew she was taking cakes: husband knows from observation:" Seen in Pharing the All-knowing where the husband knows the number of cakes baked from their impress.

Motif J 1752, "Wolf thought to be colt," has a parallel in The Long-legged One where the thief steals a bullock finding it later to be a tiger.

Motif J 1760, "Animal or person mistaken for something else," is also illustrated in *The Long-legged One*. The thief for a time considers the tiger to be the Long-legged One and the tiger also thinks that the thief is none else than the Long-legged One. The tiger further takes the man to be the Peeling-remover.

Motif J 1762.3, "Crab caught on tiger's tail thought to be pursuing man:" in the Kachari tale *The Old Man and the Tiger* analyzed in chapter 3, section X.

Motif J 1765, "Person thought to be animal:" in *The Son-in-law* summarized in chapter 3, section IV.

Motif J 1790.1, "Numskull thinks his shadow is a man pursuing him:" see *The Son-in-law*.

Motif J 1821, "Swimming in the flax field," is paralleled in *The Seven Numskulls* where the seven fools swim in a dry field.

Motif J 1834, "Numskulls lose corpse and bury live person instead:" The seven simpletons analyzed in section X, chapter 3.

Motif J 1882, "Foolish attempt to educate animal," is seen in *Beating a Donkey into a Man*. A foolish woman hears a teacher admired in this way: He is a man who can beat a donkey into a man. She places her goat in the hands of the teacher that it might be turned into a man. After some days she is reported that her goat has become a magistrate with a beard. She goes to the court and tries to catch the eye of the bearded magistrate there. Failing in her attempt to attract his attention she goes back to the teacher who advises her to show the magistrate the rope with which the goat was tied. She does so, and the magistrate calls her to him and asks what the matter is. Learning everything he punishes the teacher.^{*34} In *Teacher Fox* a crocodile puts its children in the hands of the fox that they may be educated.

Motif J 1900, "Absurd disregard or ignorance of animal's nature or habits," is seen in *Beating a Donkey into a Man*.

Motif J 1932.1, "Numskull sow cooked grain," is paralleled in *Officer Fox*, in one of the variants of which the foxes direct an old man to plant arum cooked and wrapped in

thatch with the result that the man does not find the arum afterwards.

Motif J 2031, "Counting wrongly by not counting oneself:" in seen in The Seven Numskulls. Each of the numskulls counts wrong by not counting himself. Also in The Seven Simpletons, the Kachari variant.

Motif J 2061.4, "Toad having found money daydreams and is run over:" in The Proud Toad. A toad comes on a two-anna bit and is very much pleased. It starts dreaming of his future right in the middle of the road and ignores other toads' advice to stand aside from the road. An elephant tramples it flat.*54A

Motif J 2080, "Foolish bargains:" see Tentan and Latkan (variant of the former); also Ajala and Tentan.

Motif J 2115, "Fools take overdose of medicine:" see Motif K 873 below.

Motif J 2132.5, "Animal allows himself to be tied to another's tail and is dragged to death:" in The Tiger and the Billy Goat.

Motif J 2133.5.2, "Numskull going to heaven holding on tail of divine elephant, loses his hold to make gesture:" in Airavata and in The Black Cow.

Motif J 2133.6, "Wolves climb on top of one another to tree: lowest runs away and all fall:" This has a parallel in The Long-legged One where at the threatening of the thief the lowest tiger runs away and the ladder consequently breaks. See also Motif K 12 below.

Motif J 2136.5.7, "Thieving numskull beats drum he finds in out house, caught:" see Officer Teton.

Motif J 2188, "The man who wanted to be dead one day," has a loose parallel in The Minister and the Barber where the barber asks his wife to fan him that he may go to heaven on a short visit: the wife tired of fanning him hits hard and he dies.

Motif J 2214.5, "Man is servant of the animals (for he supplies feed for them):" in The Globe Fish. See B 223 above.

Motif J 2300, "Gullible fools:" Under this motif may be put the old man in the version of Officer Fox referred to under Motif J 1932.1 above, and the merchant in The Gold-

producing King who believed that a demon would be born of his youngest daughter-in-law.

Motif J 2413, "Foolish imitation by an animal:" The attempt to go beyond its power is seen in *The Cat* summarized in chapter 3. The cat tried to bluff the tigers as being strong and courageous: the result was fatal. Motif J 2401, "Fatal imitation," is relevant.

Motif J 2415.7, "Stepdaughter, married to a snake, appears decorated with jewels. Stepmother desires a snake be procured for her daughter," see *Champavati*.

Motif J 2465.12, "Ploughing above the tree:" is seen in *The Seven Numskulls* where the fools are asked to plough in the field 'above that tree' and put the shocks of paddy 'on the head' of the mistress of the house. They follow the instructions literally.

Motif J 2496, "I don't know' thought to be person's name," is paralleled in *Tentan* where the sweetmeat-seller's son is told that the trickster's name is Flea, with the result that when the boy shouts that Flea is eating the sweets his father from inside does not come out.

Motif J 2500, "Foolish extreme:" whoever gets up late is to eat the greater number of cakes, in *Pharing the All-knowing*.

(IX)

K: Deceptions: "In the motifs in Chapter J the attention was directed primarily to the mental quality of the character. In K, on the contrary, primary importance is given to action. A very large part of narrative literature deals with deceptions. The work of thieves and rascals, deceptive captures and escapes, seductions, adultery, disguises, and illusions constitute one of the most extensive chapters in the classification."⁵⁵ Some of the incidents which found place in the previous section will have to be repeated here.

Motif K O— 99: Contests won by deception

Motif K I, "Contest won by magic," is seen in *The Demon Pandit*. A series of imagined magic contests in which the wife wins is seen also in *Pagala-Parvati*.

Motif K 12, "Wrestling match won by deception," has an analogy in The Trial of Strength, a contest between a peasant and a tiger. The peasant goes into the forest in order to make a plough. A tiger comes up and declares it will eat him up. He proposes a trial of strength and asks the tiger to hold a piece of wood while he cuts out the plough. At every stroke of the adze the wood shakes and sends a tremor through the body of the tiger. The man says he will remove the eye (meaning a knot in the wood) and the tiger, already tired beyond endurance, runs away thinking the man is going to remove its eye. Another day the man goes into the forest with a friend. The tiger discusses its discomfiture with its fellow tigers in a conference, and all the tigers come after the man. The latter along with his friend climb up a tree. The friend out of fear loosens his hold and drops on the tigers below and the peasant shakes a branch and raises a hullabaloo and the tigers flee in terror.*56

Motifs K 100—299: Deceptive bargains

Motif K 111.1, "Alleged gold-dropping animal sold," is seen in Tentan where the trickster sells a pseudo-magic goat and a pseudo-magic horse. The variant of this tale contains a boar which is supposed to drop coins.

Motif K 116.2, "Alleged rejuvenating stick sold:" In The Clever Old Man, the Kachari tale referred to in chapter 3, section X, the old man on one occasion turns the seven dacoits from their objective by tempting them with a bamboo stick which is supposed to kill a person and then rejuvenate him. The dacoits take away the stick in order to make their wives younger. The wives after being beaten to death cannot be revived. The motif is also found in Lewison, J. R. A. S. of Bengal, Vol. V, pp. 360-362.

Motif K 131.11, "Alleged speaking hare sold as messenger:" On the first occasion when the dacoits arrive (see Motif K 116.2 above), the clever old man cheats them with an alleged speaking heron. In Lewison's version the heron is replaced by a hare.

Motif K 171, "Deceptive divisions of profits," is seen in

Ajala and Tentan where the objects to be divided are a cow, a warm cloth, and an areca-nut tree.

Motif K 171.9, "Monkey cheats fox of his share of bananas. Climbs on tree and tosses peeling down upon fox:" see The Fox and the Monkey in chapter 3.

Motif K 172, "Anger bargain," is illustrated in Petbhatu. The king's son and Petbhatu, the minister's son, go out to see the world. One night they stay guests at a king's. The king's son sings out of joy and is heard by the host's daughter. Early next morning enquiry is made as to who sang. Petbhatu, who gets up earlier, thinks that the truth may injure his friend and gives out that he himself is the songster. The princess immediately marries him. The king's son not finding Petbhatu by him wanders out, and ultimately, enters service under a merchant on the condition that whoever annoys the other will be put in prison. The king's son is unused to work and consequently gives notice and is put in prison by the merchant. The king's son bursts out singing one night and is overheard by the princess. She questions her husband about the songster and he has to admit that it is the king's son who sings. He has the prisoner released and the princess is passed on to the latter as his due. Petbhatu then enters service under the merchant on the same old condition. He puts the merchant in such difficulties that the latter has to dismiss him. Consequently the merchant is put in prison and tortured.*57

Motif K 212.1, "Man whispers in devil's ear that his wife is approaching with her broom again:" is seen in The Devil and the Broomstick. A virago scares away her husband and the devil which resides near her house. The devil out of fellow-feeling wants to help the man. He possesses the minister's daughter and departs as soon as the man approaches her. So the man is rewarded. The devil next possesses the king's daughter but forbids the man to approach her. At the king's pressure the man goes near her and when threatened by the devil whispers into the latter's ear that his wife is approaching with her broom. The devil immediately departs.*58

Motif K 231.2, "Rewards for accomplishment of task deceptively withheld:" see Motif C 191 above.

Motif K 231.3, "Refusal to make sacrifice after need is past:" is illustrated in the tale of the man who, being unable to climb down a tree, promises to offer a buffalo to his goddess, but as he gradually gets down reduces the sacrifice to a goat, a duck, a pigeon, and lastly, picks a louse from his hair and kills it declaring it is his sacrifice.

Motif K 252, "Selling oneself and escaping," has an analogy in The Demon Pandit.

Motifs K 300-499: Thefts and cheats

Motif K 301, "Master thief," is illustrated in The Master Thief. The master thief declares he will steal in a certain kingdom. The minister moves about making preparations to apprehend him. The minister meets a dingily dressed astrologer at evening. The latter directs him to wait towards midnight under a peepul on the boundary of the kingdom, then approach his house by the backdoor, and he will be able to catch the thief. The astrologer advises the minister to leave his usual clothes and go out in the dress of an ordinary person. So the minister puts on the clothes of the astrologer and leaves his own clothes with the latter. The latter in the minister's clothes enters the minister's house and asks the guards to keep an eye on the backdoor. As soon as the minister enters the people surround and beat him, only his wife can save him from an untimely end. The thief is not found. Another day a poor Brahman advises the king to worship the god Siva at a lonely temple at night that the thief may be caught. As the king is worshipping he can hear at a distance the sound of the damaru drum of Siva and after some time he sees Siva himself coming to him on his bull. The king falls prostrate and desires to see Kailas, the abode of Siva. Siva declares the way to Kailas is long and painful, but binds the king's eyes, ties his hands to the tail of the bull, and starts for Kailas. Next morning in a village a few miles away a man, tied to the tail of a bull, is found rotating round an oil-press. The householder takes the man to be a thief and starts beating him. The mistake is cleared only after some time. The master thief then leaves the kingdom and gives no further trouble.*⁵⁹ (See also under K 512 below)

Motif K 306, "Thieves steal from each other," is seen in *The Gingerseller* and the *Black-pepperseller* where the gingerseller makes away with the sacks of money but the black-pepperseller comes out of one of the sacks and runs off with the money. See chapter 3, section IX.

Motif K 307.1, "One thief hides in money bag; other carries it off:" in *The Gingerseller* and the *Blackpepperseller*.

Motif K 311.8.4, "Thief in clothes of owner:" in *The Master Thief*.

Motif K 311.15, "Thief in disguise as god," may be paralleled with the master thief appearing in the guise of Siva.

Motif K 330.1, "Man gulled into giving up his clothes," is seen in *The Master Thief*.

Motif K 331, "Goods stolen while owner sleeps," is seen in a tale in which a master thief desires to test his son in the art of stealing. He asks his son to steal their utensils at night. He keeps the utensils filled with water and on his breast, and then goes to sleep. The son gets on the roof, sucks up the water with a long tube and steals the things.

Motif K 334. 1.1, "Servant places his one fish with Brahman's entire catch. Receives all since Brahman considers all polluted:" in *The Brahman's Servant* and in *The Brahman and his Servant*.

Motif K 335.0.10, "Trickster lights torches and bluffs old woman into giving him money:" in a *Lhota Naga* tale associated with *Apfuho*, summarized in chapter 3 section X.

Motif K 335.1, "Robbers frightened from goods:" in *The Trickster* where the triskster drops a hide and scares off the thieves. Also in an *Angami* tale referred to in chapter 3, section X.

Motif K 343, "Thief advises owner to go away:" may be paralleled with the pseudo-astrologer's advice to the minister in *The Master Thief*.

Motif K 359.2.1, "Thief of sweetmeats says his name is Fly, etc.:" in *Tentan*.

Motif K 362.10, "Give him what he wants, etc.:" in *Tentan*. When the trickster calls out, "She won't give," her

husband shouts back, "Why don't you give?", he meaning water.

Motif K 443.13, "Rascal extorts money for silence about breach of tabu:" an analogy in The Brahman's Servant and in its Kachari variant.

Motif K 491, "Triskster paid to educate ass:" see Beating a Donkey into a Man (J 1882 above).

Motif K 496, "Foxes persuade man to plant cooked plants. They eat them at night:" in Officer Fox.

Motifs K 500—699 : Escape by deception

Motif K 511, "Uriah letter exchanged. Order of execution falsified:" in the Kachari tale The Brahman and his Servant.

Motif K 512, "Compassionate executioner," is seen in The Master Thief. The master thief is in fact a minister of a certain kingdom but is ordered to be executed by his king. The executioner does not execute him but the king is given to understand that the minister is no longer alive. A rival king sends certain problems and these the king cannot solve without the aid of the supposedly dead minister. The king's new minister—the former one's son—is aided in solving the problems by his father. The king knows of the truth and after reinstating the minister rewards the executioner.^{*20} This clever minister it is who appears as the master thief in the tale summarised under Motif K 301 above.

Motif K 525.1, "Substituted object left in bed while intended victim escapes:" in The Brahman and his Servant.

Motif K 526, "Captor's bag filled with animals or objects while captives escape," has a parallel in The Clever Prince where the prince puts some thorns and clods inside the sack of the demoness and escapes.

Motif K 543, "Biting the foot:" The fox escapes by declaring that the crocodile has grabbed only its walking stick, not its foot (in Teacher Fox). When next time the crocodile catches the fox by its tongue the latter declares it is but washing its children's stool and urine and the captor lets go of its hold (Motif K 543.1). This tale has also a Bengali parallel and a Santali variant.

Motif K 547.5, "Ferocious animal (ogre) misunderstands victim's remark: flees in fright:" in *The Trial of Strength* (see Motif K 12).

Motif 547.9, "Threatening tiger challenged to strength contest: beguiled into holding wood for plough and is injured:" see Motif K 12.

Motif K 551.4, "Respite from death until toilet is made permits escapes:" is seen in *The Crow and the Tipsi* where the tipsi asks the crow to have a bath before eating it.

Motif K 551.12, "Respite from death until muddy victim may dry self in sun:" in the *Kachari The Monkey and the Hare*.

Motif K 606, "Escape by singing song," is seen in the tale of the phesu bird which when about to be cooked for the king by his queens sings and while the queens listen escapes.**1

Motif K 650, "Other means of escape," may be illustrated with the trickster being raised from water in the net of the fisherman in *The Triskster*.

Motif K 687, "Birds escape death by flying away with net:" see Motif B 120 above.

Motifs K 700—799: Capture by deception

Motif K 710, "Victim enticed into voluntary captivity or helplessness," is seen in the tale summarized under Motif D 40 above and in *The Tiger in the Trap*.

Motif K 711, "Deception into entering bag," is seen in *The Tiger's Marriage* where the old man asks the tiger to enter a sack that the beast may be married. This tale has also a Santali parallel.

Motif K 713.1, "Deception into allowing oneself to be tied," seen in *The Strong Man*. A tiger is persuaded to be tied that it may learn songs (see under Motif K 1951 for the summary of the tale). Also in the Mikir tale of Tentan, analyzed in chapter 3, section X.

Motif K 713.1.2., "Animal allows himself to be tied to another for safety," is seen in *The Tiger and the Billy Goat* where the tail of a tiger is tied to that of a fox with the result that the latter dies.

Motif K 713.1.4, "Animal persuaded to be tied through curiosity to learn secret:" in *The Old Man and the Tiger*, analyzed in section X, chapter 3.

Motif K 714, "Deception into entering box or prison," is seen in *The Tiger in the Trap*.

Motif K 114.7, "Victim lured into following deer sent by demon to cave. Dies of suffocation:" in *The Demon Astrologer*.

Motif K 742, "Capture between branches of tree. Small animal lures large one, who cannot get loose." in *The Cat*.

Motif 751, "Capture by feigning death," is seen in *Officer Fox*.

Motifs K 800—999: Fatal deception

Motif K 842, "Dupe persuaded to take prisoner's place in sack," may be paralleled with the fisherman entering the sack in place of the trickster in *The Trickster*. A second incident in which the neighbours are put in sacks and thrown into the water so that they may get rich is also relevant. Also in the Angami tale summarized in section X, chapter 3.

Motif K 846, "Trickster being attacked by ferocious animal persuades dupe to take his place:" in *Latkan*, a variant of *Tentan*.

Motif K 873, "Fatal deception by giving narcotic," is seen in a tale in which a man's wife is questioned by her neighbours as to how her husband came by his wealth. She is told by her husband that he had taken some opium and was about to commit suicide when a mendicant came and gave him some vermilion and asked him to go to sleep after putting a little of it on his forehead. She is also told there is a little of the magic vermilion. The woman passes on the story along with the vermilion, her neighbours persuade their husbands to take opium and go to sleep after putting vermilion on their foreheads. All the men are found dead.⁴⁴²

Motif K 890, "Dupe tricked into killing himself," is illustrated in the above tale and in *The Minister and the Barber*.

Motif K 931.1, "Trickster employed to educate baby crocodiles: he eats them instead:" is seen in *Teacher Fox*.

where the fox takes charge of the crocodile's children and eats them up.

Motif K 941.1, "Cows killed for their hides when large price is reported by trickster," is seen in The Trickster and in its Angami parallel.

Motif K 941.2, "Dupe burns house because trickster reports high price paid for ashes," is seen in The Trickster and in its Angami parallel.

Motif K 961, "Flesh of certain animal alleged to be only cure for disease:" in Teja and Teji.

Motif K 964, "Barber killed when hero reports king's ancestors need his services in heaven:" in The Minister and the Barber.

Motif K 975.2, "Secret of external soul learned by deception," may be seen in The Clever Prince where the prince disguises himself in the demoness's granddaughter's clothes and worms out where the demoness's soul is hidden. It is also seen in The Messenger of Titkuji where the aunt of the hero persuades the demons to tell her where their soul is hidden.

Motifs K 1000—1199: Deception into self-injury

Motif K 1022, "Dupe persuaded to steal food: cannot escape," has an analogy in The Cat where the cat steals fish and finds itself unable to extricate itself from the fish basket (khalai).

Motif K 1023.1, "Dupe allowed to guard king's drum," has an analogy in The Fox and the Monkey in which the monkey beats on the "drum" and gets stung by hornets.

Motif K 1040, "Dupe otherwise persuaded to voluntary self-injury," has an analogy in The Cat where the cat goes out to hunt deer along with tigers and gets hit by the leg of a running deer.

Motif K 1043, "Dupe induced to eat sharp fruit:" an analogy in The Tale of the Cakes.

Motif K 1056, "Dupe allowed to guard king's litter: sticks in mud:" in The Monkey and the Hare.

Motif K 1078, "Dupe sleeps on king's bed: falls into well and dies:" in The Monkey and the Fox.

Motifs K 1200—1299: Deception into humiliating position

Motif K 1241, "Trickster rides dupe horseback," has an analogy in *The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller* where the gingerseller is made to carry the black-pepperseller.

Motif K 1252.1, "Dupe persuaded to fight with gold dropping boar: trickster meantime steals his clothes:" in a variant of *Tentan*, where the trickster steals a horse.

Motif K 1268, "Man carried and dropped in midstream," is seen in *The Son-in-Law* where the numskull is carried away by thieves as a goat and dropped in a stream when he cries out: Raise me, raise me!

Motif K 1300—1399: Seduction or deceptive marriage

Motif K 1311, "Seduction by masking as woman's husband," is seen in the tale in which a spirit impersonates a woman's husband (see Motif D 40 above).

Motif K 1317, "Lover's place in bed usurped by another," may be seen in a loose manner in *Petbhatu* where the minister's son declares that he is the songster and the princess accepts him as husband. The princess finds out the mistake later on.

Motif K 1330, "Girl tricked into man's room or power," may be seen in *Teton Tamuli* (Officer Teton) where the trickster gives Champa his wealth in exchange for a meal, bath, and a seat. The king admits that Champa has acted like his wife.

Motif 1332, "Seduction by taking aboard ship to inspect wares," may be seen in *The Kite's Daughter* where the jealous co-wives of the kite's daughter persuade her to inspect wares on a trader's boat and she is carried away.

Motif K 1346, "Hero flies to maiden's room:" in *Phulkowarar Git* where the hero takes the shape of a bumble-bee.

Motifs K 1400—1499: Dupe's property destroyed

Motif K 1400, "Dupe's property destroyed," is seen in *The Trickster*, *The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller*, and in *Petbhatu*. In *The Trickster* the neighbours' cattle and houses are destroyed, in *The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller* the gingerseller's garden is destroyed when he feigns death that his friend may carry him and the latter in feigned

sorrow destroys his friend's garden ; in Petbhatu the minister's son is asked to clear the orchard by the merchant and he cuts down all the plants and trees (see K 172 above).

Motif K 1416, "Tearing up the orchard," is seen in The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller as well as in Petbhatu.

Motif K 1440, "Dupe's animals destroyed or maimed," is seen in The Seven Numskulls, Officer Teton and in The Trickster.

Motif K 1466, "Master's mother killed: wood heaved on her head:" an analogy in The Seven Numskulls where the fools put the shocks of paddy on the head of their mistress.

Motifs K 1600—1699: Deceiver falls into own trap

Motif K 1600, "Deceiver falls into own trap," may be seen in The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller where the gingerseller in trying to cheat his friend of his share has to carry him on his shoulder, and again, in feigning death that he (the gingerseller) may be carried by his friend, he finds the latter in mock sorrow destroy his plants and trees.

Motif K 1676.1, "Woman who pretends to faint comes to life when beaten by magician in order to drive out alleged evil spirit:" in The Greedy Bride. A young daughter-in-law while washing rice in the river is tempted to throw some into her mouth. Just then her father-in-law arrives and asks her about his son. Fearing to be caught eating rice, she feigns a faint. The father-in-law thinking she is possessed by a spirit calls in a magician. The magician agrees to exorcise her if he is released from a debt owing to the girl's father-in-law. The old man agrees to do so. The magician realizes the situation and while beating the girl with some leaves, murmurs:

You silly girl, chew, chew,
Then swallow what you chew,
Disgraced you shall not be,
If from my debt I'm free.

The girl takes the hint, does accordingly and recovers after some time. The magician's debt is written off.^{*12A}

Motifs K 1700—2099: Deception through shams

Motif K 1710, "Ogre (large animal) overawed," is seen in *The Blind and the Humpbacked* where the demon is shown a rope, a tortoise, and some lime as hair, louse, and milk. It may further be seen in *The Tiger and the Billy Goat* where the goat threatens to eat the tiger.

Motif K 1715.13, "Tiger made to believe that his captor has eaten many crabs. Tiger fears crabs and releases him:" in *The Tiger and the Crab*.

Motif K 1766, "Trickster's boasting scares his powerful opponent from contest:" see K 1951 below.

Motif K 1816, "Disguise as a menial," is illustrated in *Petbhatu*.

Motif K 1818.6, "Deception by pretended faint:" see Motif K 1676.1 above.

Motif 1822.2, "Fox disguised as scholar:" in *Teacher Fox*.

Motif K 1861, "Death feigned in order to be carried," is seen in *The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller* (see above Motif K 1400).

Motif K 1911, "The false bride: an impostor takes wife's place:" is seen in *The Seven-horned King* and in *Teja and Teji*.

Motif K 1911.2.1, "True bride transformed by false," is seen in *Teja and Teji*.

Motif K 1911.3, "Reinstatement of true bride," in *The Seven-horned King* and in *Teja and Teji*.

Motif K 1911.3.1, "Substitution of false bride revealed by animal," is seen in *The Seven-horned King* where the revelation is made by a pet salika and in *Teja and Teji* where the revelation is made by the true bride in her bird form.

Motif K 1915, "The false bridegroom: takes place of true bridegroom:" see K 172 above.

Motif 1923.4, "Woman pretends to be mother of child chosen to be king:" in *The Gold-producing King*.

Motif K 1951, "Sham warrior," has an analogy in *The Strong Man*. A tiger and a naughty elephant make havoc in a kingdom. A man with a view to committing suicide takes some rice-powder mixed with poison and as he goes to drink water leaving his packet of powder behind the elephant comes and eats it up. The elephant loses its life and the king takes

the man as the hero of the occasion, as he declares it is he who has killed the elephant with one blow. The king asks him to remove the tiger also. He goes to the forest with a long rope and the stout tooth of the paddy-husking pedal. He climbs up a tree and whiles away his time by making queer sounds in his mouth. The tiger comes up and asks him what he is doing. "Oh, I am teaching songs to the birds," he replies. The tiger desires to learn songs and on its promising not to do harm to the man the latter comes down and persuades the tiger to be tied, and after securing the beast the man begins to beat it. The tiger cries, "Leave me, I won't learn songs." But the man goes on beating and kills the tiger. The king is highly pleased with the hero and wants to test him in a wrestling match with a stranger. At night the man and the stranger sleep together and the tiger-killer tells the other that he has killed a wild elephant with but one blow and further despatched a ferocious tiger: how can the other wrestle with him? The stranger gets scared and leaves the place immediately. The hero is rewarded by the king.⁴³

Motif K 1951.1.1, "Boastful elephant killer: killed at one blow:" has an analogy in the boasting of the strong man in the above tale. The elephant was actually poisoned off.

Motif K 1952.1, "Poor boy said by helpful cat to be dispossessed prince," has an analogy in Officer Fox where the fox declares the old man is a rich man (a prince in certain variants of the tale).

Motif K 1955.6, "The sham physician and the devil in partnership," is seen in *The Devil and the Broomstick*.

Motif K 1956, "Sham wise man," is paralleled in *Pharing the All-knowing*.

Motif K 1964, "Sham astrologer," is seen in *The Demon Astrologer*.

Motif K 1975.2, "Sham miracle: rupees turn to ashes, etc.," in the Angami trickster tale summarized in chapter 3, section X.

Motifs K 2100—2199: False accusations

Motif K 2101, "Falsely accused minister reinstates himself"

by his cleverness," is seen in *The Master Thief* (see under Motif K 512 above).

Motif K 2110.2, "Slander: woman has given birth to objects:" seen in *The Cat's Daughters*. See E 761.49 above.

Motif K 2115.3, "Prophecy of ogre-child so that pregnant woman will be killed:" in *The Gold-producing King*.

Motif K 2152.1, "Dead dog set up so that woman knocks it over. Must pay damages:" in the *Angami* trickster tale.

Motifs K 2200-2299: Villains and traitors

Motif K 2211, "Treacherous brother," is seen in *The Seed Prince* where the hero's brothers leave him in an unknown place. A deceitful brother is found in *Ajala* and *Tentan*.

Motif 2212.1, "Treacherous stepsisters," is seen in *Teja* and *Teji*.

Motif K 2213, "Treacherous wife," is seen in a variant of *The Strong Man* where the wife gives her husband some poisoned powder to be taken on the way when he goes out.

Motif K 2222, "Treacherous co-wife," is seen in *The Kite's Daughter*, *Teja* and *Teji* and *The Cat's Daughters*.

Motif K 2240, "Treacherous officers and tradesmen," may be paralleled in the barber in *The Minister and the Barber*.

Motif K 2284, "Treacherous priest:" in *The Gold-producing King*.

Motif K 2299.1, "Treacherous astrologer:" in *The Gold-producing King*.

(X)

N: Chance and fate: "In N the large part that luck plays in narrative is chosen. Tales of gambling, and of the favours and evil gifts of the goddess Fortuna appear here.*** Luck is not necessarily a personified or mystical entity: it does not have any logic: frequently even rascals and tricksters are found more successful than good persons.

Motifs N 0-99: Wagers and gambling

Motif N 2.3.3, "Eyes wagered," is seen in *The Prince and his Low-born Friend*.

Motif N 2.6, "Wife as wager," is seen in *The Prince and his Low-born Friend*.

Motif N 50, "Other wagers," may be seen in *Pharing the All-knowing* where the wife wagers that whoever gets up late next morning will have the larger share of the cakes.

Motif N 51.1, "Wager about tree names: learned and common names:" in *The Brahman and his Servant* analyzed in section X of chapter 3.

Motif N 53, "Wager: it is an auspicious day:" *The Prince and his Low-born Friend* has the wager: This day is auspicious. In spite of all misfortunes the prince insists that he is right.

Motifs N 100—299: The ways of luck and fate

Motif N 100, "Nature of luck and fate:" Luck is not personified as a god or goddess. Lakshmi, the goddess of luck and wealth in popular belief, does not find mention in the tales referred to in this study: in a Kachari myth Lakshmi is introduced as bringing paddy to the earth, there being no association of hers with luck. Luck is seen as a magic entity in *The Merchant's Welfare*. The daughter-in-law in *The Gold-producing King* is lucky. Jama, the king of death, may be identified with fate, who is also called Bidhata sometimes, as in the tale of Chandravali and Kathiya (see under Motif N 121). In the variant of *The Messenger of Titkuji* Jama appears as symbolizing luck, or rather, the god of fortune.

Motif N 111, "Fortuna," is not found in Assamese tales referred to in this study, but Bidhata in *Chandravali* and Kathiya and Jama in the variant of *The Messenger of Titkuji* may be taken as parallels to the European goddess.

Motif N 121, "Fate decided before birth," is seen in *Manikowarar Git* where the astrologer finds out that Prince Mani will lose his life before the birth of his son: in this instance the calculation is made on the basis of the prospective birth of the son. In *The Messenger of Titkuji* Jama tells the hero that at a certain place a girl will be born and she will answer the question: What kind of merit causes a man to be reborn as man at a good place? The girl is found and she solves

the hero's problem. This motif is illustrated further in Chandravali and Kathiya.**5

Poor Kathiya aspires to the hand of the merchant's daughter Chandravali who spurns his advances. Kathiya tells her of the un-welcome prophecy connected with her destiny. She throws her bangle at his forehead, leaves her home and goes away. After years of grief and wandering Kathiya arrives at the residence of a rich lady. She recognises him by the wound on his forehead, gives out that she is Chandravali and submits to her fate declaring:

One cannot bypass the writ of Fate:

So long there is Chandravali there is Kathiya.

A considerable section of this tale is in verse, thus taking on the character of a ballad. This tale has a Kachari version.

Motif N 135, "Objects effect change of luck," is seen in *The Merchant's Welfare* where the merchant loses his fortune along with the loss of his "welfare". In *The Gold-producing King* the merchant loses his fortune when his daughter-in-law leaves home.

Motif N 170, "The capriciousness of luck," may be seen in *The Gold-producing King* where the disinherited and dispossessed come to luck and the lucky come to misfortune. Also seen in *The Tiger and the Crab* where the peasant lad is found to be fortunate in spite of ups and downs.

Motif N 178, "Loss of eye saves man from execution," has an analogy in *What God does He does for the Best*.

Motif N 211, "Lost object returns to its owner," is seen in *The Merchant's Welfare*.

Motif N 228, "Leopard tied in bag in water floats to shore and finds a mate. Grateful to trickster who has tied him up:" in *The Tiger's Marriage*.

Motif N 271, "Murder will out," is seen in *Tejimala*.

Motif N 275, "Criminal confesses because he thinks himself accused:" in *Pharing the All-knowing*.

Motifs N 300—399: Unlucky accidents

Motif N 311, "Separation of persons caused by looking for water," is found in *The Gold-producing King* and in *Two Princes*. In the latter tale the princes leave home because of

their stepmother and while the elder goes in search of water the younger is picked up by a white elephant and placed on the throne of a kingdom which has fallen vacant. The elder brother stays as a cowherd and is seen by the sister of the dead king. She chooses him as husband and both are banished by the new king but the latter in grief for his lost brother as well as his new sister sends people to procure a couple of deer to keep by him. The wife of the elder prince takes the responsibility of supplying deer. She hides behind a screen and recites the history of her life as well as that of the new king and his lost brother. Recognition and reinstatement follow.*66 (See also Motif B 150).

Motif N 332.2.1, "Accidental poisoning," is seen in The Strong Man where the wild elephant gets killed by eating the powder.

Motif N 339, "Accidental death—miscellaneous:" The instance of the cat hit by the deer in The Cat may be brought in.

Motif N 381.1, "Ant pinching frog causes chain of accidents:" in The Ant and the Frog.

Motif N 392, "Robber attempting to steal cow at night seizes thieving tiger:" in The Long-legged One.

Motif N 400—699: Lucky accidents

Motif N 400, "Lucky accident," is seen in The Strong Man and in Pharing the All-knowing. In the first tale the elephant's accidental death leads the man on to fortune and in the second Pharing's prognostications prove to be fortunate; his calculation of the cakes his wife has eaten is the first incident that leads him on to success.

Motif N 440, "Valuable secrets learned," may be illustrated in The Messenger of Titkuji where the hero learns the secret lore of the second old man.

Motif N 478, "Secret wealth betrayed by money left in borrowed money-scales:" in The Trickster.

Motif N 511.1.9, "Wealth buried underneath tree:" is seen in The Messenger of Titkuji. In this tale treasure is found under a mango tree.

Motif N 538, "Treasure pointed out by supernatural

creature:" in The Messenger of Titkuji, where the discovery is possible because of secrets revealed by Jama.

Motif N 611.1.1, "Name of criminal accidentally spoken out:" in Pharing the All-knowing.

Motif N 640, "Accidental healing," may be seen in The Blind and the Humpbacked.

Motif N 683, "Stranger accidentally chosen king," is seen in The Royal Elephant, The Gold-producing King and Two Princes. In the first and the last tale it is an elephant which chooses the king.

Motif N 688, "What is in the dish: Poor Crab," has an analogy in Pharing the All-knowing where the king clasps a cricket or "pharing" and asks Pharing what it is. In despair he cries out that this time it is death for Pharing, the king understanding that he has guessed rightly.

Motif N 691, "Objects accidentally picked up used to over-awe ogre:" in The Blind and the Humpbacked and in the Kachari The Blind and the Hunchback.

Motifs N 700—799: Accidental encounters

Motif N 711.2, "Hero finds maiden in (magic) castle," is seen in The Seed Prince.

Motif N 715, "Lovers first see each other on shores of lake," has an analogy in Two Princes where the sister of the dead king and the elder brother of the new king discover themselves on the bank of a river.

Motif N 730, "Accidental reunion of families," may be seen in The Messenger of Titkuji where the hero finds his aunt in the land of the demons.

Motif N 732, "Accidental meeting of father and daughter," is illustrated in Tejimala.

Motif N 733, "Accidental meeting of brothers," is seen in Two Princes where the younger prince meets his elder brother most unexpectedly.

Motif N 741, "Unexpected meeting of husband and wife," is seen in The Gold-producing King.

Motif N 771, "King (prince) lost on hunt has adventures," has an analogy in What God does He does for the Best where the king meets the dacoits after losing his way.

Motif N 774, "Adventures from pursuing enchanted animal," has an analogy in *The Demon Astrologer* where the elder prince is led on by a magic deer and meets his death in a cave.

Motifs N 800—899: Helpers

Motif N 812, "Giant or ogre as helper:" In *The Speechless Maid* a demoness helps the hero.

Motif N 825.2, "Old man helper," may be seen in the second tale under Motif H 588 above.

Motif N 825.3, "Old woman helper," is seen in *Champavati* where the heroine relieves her husband of her snake covering with the advice of a begger woman. Also in *The Ow Princess* (See Motif D 431.4 above).

Motif N 831.1, "Mysterious housekeeper," is seen in *Panesai*.

Motif N 832.1, "Boy as mysterious housekeeper for buffalo herd:" in *The Tiger and the Crab*.

Motif N 886.1, "Hunchback leads blind man:" has an analogy in *The Blind and the Humpbacked* where the blind and the humpbacked go out to seek their fortune on the principle of mutual help, but it is not stated whether the one carries the other. This does not seem necessary as the humpbacked can walk as well.

(XI)

P: Society: "Chapter P concerns the social system. Not all tales about kings and princes belong here, but only such motifs as rest upon some feature of the social order: customs concerning kings, or the relation of the social ranks and the professions, or anything noteworthy in the administration of such activities as law or army. A very large number of cross-references appear in this chapter."⁵⁷

Motifs P 0—99: Royalty and nobility

Motif P 10, "Kings," is seen in many tales—in *The Fox and the Prince*, *The Tiger and the Crab*, *The Frog*, *Teja and Teji*, *The Gold-producing King*, *Pharing the All-knowing*, *Officer Teton*, *The Ant and the Frog*, etc. and in the

ballads Barphukanar Git, Manikowarar Git, Phulkowarar Git, Janagabharur Git, etc.

Motif P 11, "Choice of kings" is illustrated in The Gold-producing King, The Royal Elephant, Two Princes. A prince is sometimes chosen as the "standing king," symbolizing the active principle of government, as in The Seed Prince. In the tale of the Gold-producing King the hero is chosen king when the throne falls vacant; this is also seen in The Royal Elephant and Two Princes where the choice is made by an oracular elephant. In The Tiger and the Crab the hero acquires kingship as a result of marrying the daughter of a king: the king's daughter is frequently accompanied by her father's kingdom or at least half the kingdom. In The Young Merchant the hero gets a queen along with the throne which falls vacant at the death of the earlier king.

Motif P 12, "Character of kings," seems to be illustrated in the habit of executing anybody who fails to satisfy the king, as seen in Pharing the All-knowing where the hero escapes death only because he guesses rightly. In Tit for Tat the owl escapes death only by cleverness. Motif P 12.13 is "King quick to anger."

Motif P 14.6, "King's (Prince's) sulking chamber:" in Manikowarar Git and Dubalar Santir Git. Barphukanar Git mentions a 'dark room'.

Motif P. 15.1, "Disguised king punished by peasant," has an analogy in The Master Thief where the oilpresser beats the king tied to his oilpress.

Motif 16.1, "King retires from the world," seems to be illustrated in The Seed Prince where the king makes the prince the "standing king" and himself remains the "sitting king". In The Tiger and the Crab the king gives the hero not only his daughter but his kingdom as well.

Motif P 17, "Succession to the throne:" see Motif P 11.

Motif P 20, "Queens," is seen in The Young Merchant, Teja and Teji, Janagabharur Git, etc. In Teja and Teji are jealous queens, in The Young Merchant is a queen from whose nose a snake comes out. In Tit for Tat is a queen who

persuades the king to do foolish things. In *The Scholar* is a presumptuous queen (J 950 above).

Motif P 30, "Princes," is seen in the ballads *Manikowarar Git*, *Phulkowarar Git*, *Janagabharur Git*, and in the tales *The Seed Prince*, *Two Princes*, *The Four Friends*, *Pet-bhatu*, etc.

Motif P 40, "Princesses," is seen in *Two Princes*, *The Demon Pandit*, *The Frog*, etc. Also seen in *Janagabharur Git*.

Motif P 50, "Noblemen," is illustrated in the *Gosain*, head of a religious institution, in the tale of the *jakh* summarized under Motif A 400. But noblemen as a class do not seem to find prominence in Assamese tales. In *Barphukanar Git* officials like *Burhagohain* and the *Barphukan* belong to the nobility.

Motifs P 100—199: Other social orders

Motif P 100, "Other social orders:" The tales exemplify caste as the basis of social orders. The *Greedy Astrologer* is about an astrologer who holds an intermediate position between the Brahman and the Sudra; The *Jakh* mentions a *Gosain* who is a Brahman but holds the position of a church dignitary; The *Brahman's Servant* mentions a Brahman who is orthodox and may not take food touched by a Sudra or is not supposed to eat anything which is compared to an untouchable animal like the dog. The Sudra is not mentioned as such, but it should be understood that the peasant in *Officer Fox* or the heroine in *Tejimala* is a Sudra. The fisher class is represented by a woman in *Radhika Santi*, and a man in *The Trickster* and in *Manikowarar Git*.

Motif P 110, "Royal ministers," is seen in *The Minister and the Barber*, *Officer Teton*, *The Master Thief*, and such tales. In the ballad *Barphukanar Git* the prime minister is known as *Burhagohain* and the viceroy in Lower Assam as *Barphukan*. The term *Tamuli Phukan* is used as synonymous with minister in *Officer Teton*; *Tamuli* is a minor official in *Manikowarar Git*.

Motif P 111, "Banished minister found indispensable and recalled," has an analogy in *The Master Thief* where the king

passes orders for the execution of his minister and feels his want when he is supposed to be no more.

Motif P 120, "Church dignitaries," is seen in The Jakh; the priest in the legend of Viswasimha is a religious functionary. Also in Ajan Phakirar Git.

Motif P 150, "Rich men," is represented by the merchant found in Tejimala, The Young Merchant, The Four Friends, The Merchant's Welfare, and in ballads like Saudar Git and Dubalar Santir Git.

Motif P 160, "Beggars," is seen in Panesai, Champavati, and Tejimala.

Motifs P 200—299: The family

Motif P 200, "The family," is seen in such tales as Teja and Teji, Tejimala, The Cat, The Messenger of Titkuji, Champavati, The Kite's Daughter, The Gold-producing King.

Motif P 201, "Inherent enmity between members of a family," is seen in a way in tales which deal with the jealousy of co-wives or stepmothers, as in Teja and Teji, The Kite's Daughter. The Cat's Daughters and Tejimala. Champavati shows a mother's maliciousness towards her son and the latter's retaliation.

Motif P 210, "Husband and wife," is seen in The Gold-producing King, Tejimala, Tit for Tat, Pharing the All-knowing, Barphukanar Git, etc.

Motif P 230, "Parents and children," is seen in The Messenger of Titkuji, Teja and Teji, Tejimala, Champavati, The Seed prince, The Merchant's Advice to his Son, Officer Teton (see Motif H 583 above) etc.; also in the ballads Manikowarar Git, Janagabharur Git, Barphukanar Git, etc.

Motif P 231, "Mother and son," in The Messenger of Titkuji, The Gold-producing King, Teja and Teji, and in the ballads Janagabharur Git and Phulkowarar Git.

Motif P 232, "Mother and daughter," in The Kite's Daughter, Teja and Teji and The Cat's Daughters.

Motif P 233, "Father and son," in The Messenger of Titkuji, Officer Teton, The Merchant's Advice to his Son, The Gold-producing King, Phulkowarar Git, etc.

Motif P 234, "Father and daughter," in Tejimala.

Champavati, Teja and Teji, The Fruit of a Tree Planted by Oneself, etc.

Motif P 250, "Brothers and sisters," in Teja and Teji.

Motif P 251, "Brothers," in The Seed Prince, Two Princes, The Seven Numskulls, The Demon Astrologer, The Demon Pandit.

Motif P 252, "Sisters," in Teja and Teji, Champavati, especially stepsisters, and in The Cat's Daughters.

Motif P 261, "Father-in-Law," in Janagabharur Git, The Demon Pandit, The Tiger and the Crab: but the father-in-law in these tales is prospective, not an accomplished fact; a regular father-in-law is seen in The Gold-producing King, The Son-in-law and Barphukanar Git.

Motif P 271, "Foster-father," in Officer Fox, The Singara Fish, but the term usually used in Assamese tales is grandfather rather than father.

Motif P 272, "Foster-mother," in Panesai and The Kite's Daughter.

Motif P 274, "Foster-sister," may be seen in Panesai and Two Princes.

Motif P 282, "Stepmother," is seen in Teja and Teji, Tejimala, Champavati.

Motif P 283, "Stepbrother," in The Seed Prince.

Motif P 284, "Stepsisters:" See Motif P 252 above.

Motif 292, "Grandmother," in Phulkowarar Git.

Motif P 294, "Aunt," in The Messenger of Titkuji.

Motifs P 300—399: Other social relations

Motif P 310, "Friendship," is seen in The Prince and the Minister's Son, The Four Friends, Petbhatu, The Prince and his Low-born Friend, The Gingerseller and the Black-pepper-seller, The Devil and the Broomstick, Janagabharur Git, The Fox and the Monkey, etc.

Motif P 315, "Friends offer to die for each other," has an analogy in The Prince and the Minister's Son where one offers his life and the other offers his baby. Two good friends are found in Petbhatu and in the ballad Janagabharur Git.

Motif P 320, "Hospitality," is seen in The Messenger of

Titkuji where a good but poor couple offer the hero hospitality ; in The Trickster the hero cheats his host.

Motif P 340, "Teacher and pupil," in Teacher Fox, The Demon Pandit, and in Beating a Donkey into a Man.

Motif P 360, "Master and servant," in The Brahman's Servant and in The Seven-horned King.

Motif P 365, "Faithless servants:" in The Seven-horned King where a maid cheats her mistress. In The Brahman's Servant the servant is a rogue.

Motifs P 400—499: Trades and professions

Motif P 400, "Trades and professions:" References to carpentry in Viswakarma and Phulkowarar Git, to cultivation in The Frog, Champavati, The Seven Numskulls ; to sugarcane plantation in Officer Fox and The Monkey and the Fox ; to day labour in The Gold-producing King ; to astrology in The Astrologer and The Gold-producing King ; to fortune-telling in Pharing the All-Knowing and in Manikowarar Git ; to stealing in Officer Teton, The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller, The Master Thief ; to commerce in Tejimala, The Kite's Daughter, The Young Merchant, The Merchant's Advice to his Son, Dubalar Santir Git, Saudar Git ; to garland making in Phulkowarar Git ; to teaching in The Demon Pandit, Teacher Fox, Beating a Donkey into a Man ; to sweetmeat selling in The Trickster ; to king's services in The Scholar, The Minister and the Barber, Officer Teton, The Master Thief ; to bird catching in The Old Bird ; to fishing in Manikowarar Git and The Trickster ; to ferryman's work in Janagabharur Git and Naharar Juna ; to spinning and weaving in The Kite's Daughter, Teja and Teji and Jatarar Git.

Motif P 410, "Labourers," in The Gold-producing King.

Motif P 411, "Peasant," in Officer Fox, The Frog, Champavati, etc.

Motif P 413, "Ferryman" in Janagabharur Git and Naharar Juna.

Motif P 421, "Judge," in Beating a Donkey into a Man where a magistrate is found. In The Woman and her two Husbands a herdsboy acts as judge between claimants. Mani-

ram Dewanar Git mentions Holroyd as the magistrate who ordered Maniram to be hanged.

Motif P 426, "Clergy," may be seen in The Brahman's Servant, The Gold-producing King, The Jakh, the legend about Viswasimha.

Motif P 431, "Merchant," in The Gold-producing King, The Young Merchant, Tejimala, The Merchant's Advice to his Son, Saudar Git, Dubalar Santir Git, etc.

Motif P 445, "Weaver," in Jatarar Git. In Assam weaving is not exactly a profession, it is a domestic occupation.

Motif P 446.1, "Barber as bungler of plans," has an analogy in The Minister and the Barber where the barber is a meddlesome person.

Motif P 447, "Smith:" An ironsmith is seen in The Crow and the Tipsi and in O Flower, O Flower.

Motif P 456, "Carpenter," in Viswakarma and Phulkowarar Git.

Motif P 481, "Astrologer," in The Demon Astrologer, Manikowarar Git, The Astrologer.

Motifs P 500—599: Government

Motif P 500, "Government:" The king himself is the government though he has his minister (or ministers), as in most tales which mention a king. In The Master Thief the king feels the necessity for a clever minister. In The Globe Fish there is a parliament of the fishes. In The Seed Prince are found two kings, one "standing" and the other "sitting." In Barphukanar Git the Prime Minister runs the government.

Motif P 510, "Law courts:" In Officer Teton and in The Prince and the Fox is found the king's court. In Beating a Donkey into a Man there is a court, not with a king but with a magistrate.

Motif P 550, "Military affairs:" Spying in a foreign country is seen in Barphukanar Git where the king of Burma sends Kamini Phukan to assess the strength of the Burhagohain in disguise. The Burhagohain directs his four generals to study the progress of the invaders. Companies of soldiers also find mention in the ballad. The king of Burma

helps the Barphukan with tuskers, horses, daos and javelins, and an army of three lakh soldiers.

Motif P 551, "Army:" See Motif P 550 above. In The Frog is an army of wasps and gnats and beasts.

Motifs P 600—699: Customs

Motif P 600, "Customs:" Customs hardly enter as part of narratives in the present study, but certain exceptions can be noted. The peculiar dress of the Burmese, sacrifice of white buffaloes, use of mascots about the person, in Barphukanar Git, finding an auspicious day to start on a job, in Janagabharur Git, examining the fortune of a new-born with the help of an astrologer in Manikowarar Git, may be taken as customs. Looking back when a girl goes to her husband's place after marriage is prescribed in a version of Teja and Teji.

Motifs P 700—799: Miscellaneous motifs

Motifs P 710, "Nation," is seen Barphukanar Git and in Viswakarma. In the latter is the clear conception of Assam as "our land"; in the ballad mention is made of the Burmese, the Assamese, and the Sahibs. In Janagabharur Git the term *Bangal* implies foreigners. Sahibs are mentioned also in the ballads associated with the peasants' revolt in the last century.

Motif P 711, "Patriotism," is seen in Barphukanar Git in the words of the Burhagohain, and in an indirect way in Maniram Dewanar Git. See also chapter 2, Section IV(G).

Motif P 715, "Particular nations (races):" see Motif P 710 above and also A 1611. Ajan Phakirar Git mentions Mussalmans.

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CHAPTER 5

THE BALLADS AND THE MARCHEN

It has been observed in chapter 2 that Assamese ballads do not seem to be a large corpus. Probably verses of a religious type and having a literary birth—like *Padmapuran* of Narayandev and *Ushaparinay* of Pitambar Dwij—and which to a certain extent absorbed the tone and spirit of popular poetry, had tended to push out the ballads from currency even before the Vaisnavite literary movement was in full efflorescence. Poetry of a popular type seems indeed to have suffered in the hands of the Vaisnavite masters of the sixteenth century. It is recorded that when a person recited the verses of Pitambar Dwij Sankardev directly stopped him because the verses were too self-conscious, being erotic and not congenial to the spirit of renunciation which characterized the cult of devotion initiated by the great saint.*¹ The great Vaisnavite revival carried the folk mind off its moorings in the soil. There are also instances of Vaisnavite poets remodelling popular themes to suit their special needs. Sridhar Kandali borrowed from the nursery the bogey, the Ear-eater, and wove around it metaphysical reflections, though, it is amusing to note, the poem came in later times to be used in the nursery again! It is not that popular songs did not survive, but the onslaughts made on them by the Vaisnavite compositions seem to have had some permanent effect. It may be added that most folksongs are found in Upper Assam where the Vaisnavite movement could not get firmly established.

It is seen that of the songs which are found at present those of a purely lyrical type are considerable in number and variety as against the small corpus of the ballads. Indeed, where the ballads are dying out light lyrical quatrains of the Bihu song type are being still composed. The predominance of the lyrical temper in a people does not conduce to the composition of narrative songs. Most of the Assamese ballads are composed in the quatrain characterizing the Bihu song type and frequently verses from the latter are found incorpo-

rated in the ballads. There seems to have been an inroad of the lyrical temper on the narrative bent. The predominance of this lyrical temper must be taken as a weakness in the Assamese balladry as this has tended to make the ballads less corporate. Disintegration has also set in more easily. This phenomenon is to be observed also in German *ballade*.^{*2}

When ballads disintegrate the thread of the narrative gets weakened. The best elements of the population come away from them and the disintegrated ballads often survive in fragments in the nursery, as lullabies. In investigating the sources of English nursery rhymes Iona and Peter Opie have found that the rhymes are often "fragments of ballads or of folk songs."^{*3} In Assamese fragments of Maniram Dewanar Git, Manikowarar Git and Phulkowarar Git have been found not only in the nursery but in the corpus of the Bihu songs, especially in the repertory of choral singers at the Bihu festival of the Spring.

The elimination of sympathy from the ballads is caused, among others, by the reading habit and the modern means of amusement like printed books and the cinema. When the age of the true ballad is over its place is taken by vulgar and jocular specimens.^{*4} Bhuikapar Git and Bahuwar Git are attributed to the buffoon Ninga. Ninga's prototype in Upper Assam, Nigani, composed even worse specimens. Naturally the circulation and survival capacity of such compositions are limited.

The disintegration of ballads is also seen in the way in which they pass into the stage of prose tales. It has already been observed that a ballad like Janagabharur Git is but a tale in verse and contains many motifs found in folk-tales. But the process by which a ballad may pass into a tale throws interesting light on the relationship of ballads and tales.

In Russia there stands a class of prose ballads between the ballads proper and the tales and fables. These employ the measured formulas of the ballads, but not the verse pattern. Prose-ballads seem to be an intermediate ground through which ballads pass while transforming themselves into tales.^{*5} Nobody up to date has spoken of such prose-ballads in Assamese, but there is a tale which is a number of

songs strung together in a dialogue frame and with a prose introduction which suggests that it was at one time a ballad which sort of got disintegrated. In the tale of Kamala Kuwari (see also under Motif A 420) a king has a dream that unless he sacrifices his wife to the Water goddess water will not well up in a tank which is being dug by his subjects. Kamala Kuwari steps into the tank and water begins to ooze. The king cries out to the victim in the tank:

O lady of my heart, Kamala,
How much is the water?

Kamala responds:

O lord of my heart, King,
To my ankle is the water.

Thus the drama goes on—asking and replying—till the queen is swallowed by the rising surge of water. In a variant the queen is carried away by the Water god on a golden barge. The tale has the peculiar evocativeness of a sad lyric.⁶⁶ The motifs of sacrificing a queen in this manner and her being carried off by the Water god are also found in the East-Bengal folk-play *Kamalaranir Gan* edited Dr. D. C. Sen.⁶⁷ Dr. Sen takes the narrative of the folk-play (usually passed off as a ballad) to be based on some historical incident which took place in the sixteenth century. It is difficult to determine whether the Assamese tale is an echo of this long folk-play, but the similarity of the central motifs and the identity of the names of the heroines are significant. The Assamese tale however seems self-contained. It seems to have also a Maithili parallel in which the victim is a princess, and the princess after having stepped into the tank cries out piteously to the people to take her out.

If it is taken that the core of the tale is a string of songs of the dialogue pattern with the introductory portion in prose, the conclusion that at one time it was a ballad seems to be warranted. It was a ballad which in the course of time got itself transformed into a sort of tale. It has further to be noted that the songs do not possess a verse rhythm though they are of a fixed form paralleling ballad stanzas. There is perhaps no harm in calling the tale a prose-ballad.

A verse ballad recorded after this was written seems to corroborate my deductions to a certain extent. Kamala Ranir Juna, as printed by Sri P. N. Barua (*Prachin Asamiya Git Samkalan*, 1953, pp. 61-2) has a preamble of four quatrains in which the king urges the victim to make haste. Then:

Kamala Kuwari, lady of my heart,
How much is the water?
Listen, O listen, my king,
To my foot is the water.

Thus seven quatrains, till the water reaches to her mouth. The ballad does not tell us why the queen has to be sacrificed, indicating that a prose introduction is to be presumed.

To press this conclusion home, that is, to show the transformation of ballads into tales, independent tales which could be paralleled with stories found in ballads would probably have been helpful, but such tales have not been recorded. The only exception seems to be the tale of Chikan Sariyah current in the Sibsagar district which has its counterpart in the incomplete ballad of the same name and discussed in section V of chapter 2. Unfortunately the prose narrative does not agree with the ballad in the incidents. The prose tale seems to be an independent growth altogether. In the tale Chikan Sariyah is not the brother but the bridegroom elect of Phulcheng. Chikan Sariyah is chosen because there is none more handsome than he. The "lame king" or Khora-raja, as he is known, gets jealous of this young man and has him killed. The king causes the death of also Nahar the Sweet-faced, another suitor of Phulcheng. In the ballad Phulcheng's brother invites the lame king to accept the girl's hand; in the tale the king imposes himself of his own accord. The Sariyah Ali (Road) in the Sibsagar district is said to be after the name of the murdered Chikan Sariyah. The tale is thus a place legend.*

A problem common to ballads and tales is that of dating them. When the non-identification of the author is an essential feature of a ballad or tale, to attempt to date it is apparently a thankless task. It may be easy to date approximately a composition if it is legendary or related to some historical

event, as in the case of the legend of Viswasimha's attempt to see Kamakhya or the ballad Barphukanar Git. Viswasimha is a historical figure and the Burmese were brought into Assam by Badanchandra Barphukan. So it is easy to conclude that the legend must have been born during or after the reign of King Viswasimha and that the ballad was composed after the Burmese invasions. Sometimes written literature either incorporates or refers to popular tales. For example, the myth of Purnananda's birth is found in an eighteenth-century prose biography of Sankardev;*⁹ a variant of the legend of Radhika Santi is found in a prose chronicle of the late seventeenth century, but associated with the life of the sixteenth-century general Chilarai;¹⁰ the fourteenth-century *Ramayana* of Madhav Kandali has the phrase: "as great a thief as Tentan," thus suggesting that the tale or tales associated with the trickster Tentan (Teton) must have been current at that date.*¹¹ The same work alludes to King Sivi saving a dove by giving a piece of his own flesh to a hawk which pursues it, thus making it clear that the tale of the Sivi Jataka must have been known to Madhav Kandali.*¹² Old Assamese books do not seem to have alluded to any ballad that is extant today, only references to certain tales are found, the eighteenth-century *Sakuntala Kavya* even incorporating a long tale about a parrot bringing about union between a king and a queen separated by unhappy circumstance.

When written literature records or alludes to tales it is easy to date them to a certain extent. But how to date Tejimala or Teja and Teji or a ballad like Janagabharur Git? Prof. Entwistle argues that because a ballad is a complex of motifs—a distinctive grouping of certain elements, therefore it is possible to date it.*¹³ The same argument may hold good of a tale also, if indeed Prof. Entwistle's proposition is valid or workable. References or allusions to distinct historical figures or events may sometimes admit of certain deduction, but motifs as such hardly tend to be helpful. The mere use of terms; say, names of royal officials of a late date in Manikowarar Git, does not allow valid or conclusive deductions. A reference to customs is also not helpful inasmuch

as customs incorporated in tales and ballads are usually very old and their age cannot be gauged with the measuring rod. It is possible to make only broad deductions. When Queen Manyavati visits the minister's place for his daughter for Manikowar, the minister replies:

She knows neither cooking nor laying out the food,
She burns fuel by the bundle,
She knows neither weaving nor spinning
But loiters about others' looms.

the deduction that is warranted by the situation and the words is the survival of "memories of a simply organized social system: the stories had been told first, not of kings, but of the headman of a village community and his family, of the petty chiefs of small groups, not far removed from their subject."¹⁴ Similarly the plant or animal transformations in Tejimala or Teja and Teji may suggest the survival of the memory of an animistic ("animatistic") stage of thought. Talking animals, magical incidents, the life-index, tabus—all may simply suggest that the tale or ballad in question is made of material which is in a way beyond time, that is, cannot be dated in the conventional sense.

It has to be remembered that not to speak of a tale, even a ballad is a mere outline for certain adventures, and it may undergo protean transformations in the telling of it, at least considerable contractions and expansions, in accordance with the mood and memory of the narrator. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, the editor of *Barphukanar Git*, informs the writer that the minstrel from whom the ballad was taken down could hardly remember considerable portions of it after the lapse of a year or so. It seems reasonable to believe with Franz Boas that the formal background of the narrative art of primitive people is almost entirely conditioned by their present culture state. The plot may be old, but the narrative takes on the colour of the present.¹⁵ Further, as the ballad or tale does not have a fixed text so long it is not recorded as in modern times, it cannot be examined as we do a modern sonnet or short story. Because of this subjective factor—the factor of the narrator whose personal qualities and social setting deter-

mine so much—it has been the special concern of Russian folklorists.*¹⁶ How the subjective element enters a ballad may be illustrated from Janagabharur Git which contains a number of Persian words—the narrator was a Mussalman whose ancestors should not have settled in Upper Assam before the sixteenth century, to speak from historical deductions,*¹⁷ or from Phulkowarar Git which has the casual phrase used by the mother of the prince in describing her grief: I laid out the full market, only could not sell anything there," which echoes the figurative terminology employed by the initiates of the Barsewa Tantric cult, suggesting that the narrator must have been brought up in an atmosphere where the cult had a deep hold on the people.

In general, the tales and ballads of the more fictional type reveal an atmosphere which is psychologically rather primitive and economically agricultural and rural. In both certain simple themes recur, in both the narrator is satisfied with the minimum of moods or motives and there is no attempt at complexity in character drawing. There is plenty of repetition in the texture of both the ballads and the tales, and, on the whole, they belong in the same imaginative atmosphere. To echo Macculloch again, "Their material is as old as to be prehistoric, while yet they have often introduced matters of a much later age. They lead us into a world which is not that of those who tell such tales."*¹⁸

One further aspect of the tales and ballads is not irrelevant here. The tales and ballads have come down to us through the peasantry, but the personages of their stories are not necessarily peasants, they are frequently high-born. The ballads are mostly of merchants and kings and queens, a large number of the tales deal with kings and princes and merchants. There are palaces and much silver and gold about. Does this fact indicate that the folk attach considerable importance to events and persons which dominate society and thus are always in the centre of popular attention? From an examination of the English ballads and finding similar elements Prof. E. K. Chambers was led to conclude that "somewhere, therefore, in the ancestry of these particular ballads

there is a courtly strain, which the fancy of a lower class has appreciated and elaborated."¹⁹ Kings and queens, gold and palaces do indicate that the tales belong to a comparatively civilized people. The older elements: animals, ogres, the dead, survive, but later elements, suggesting a more disciplined way of thinking, have made their presence felt; but the subjective elements, wishful imagination, may also account for what has been called this "courtly strain," otherwise why should a poor boy attain to riches and secure the princess? As has been observed, the most fantastic Märchen is ultimately "a fabrication out of subjective symbols, not out of observed folkways and nature-ways."²⁰

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INDEX OF ASSAMESE BALLADS AND TALES SUMMARIZED

(Asterisks indicate tribal material)

- Airavata, 173
- Ajan Phakirar Git, 29-30
- Ajala and Tentan, 103
- *"Angami" 133
- *The "Angami" Trickster, 135-6
- The Ant and the Frog, 106
- * 126
- Aruna Aru Jagarar Git, 37
- The Astrologer, 99

- Bakhar Barar Git, 30
- Bardaichila, 163
- Barphukanar Git, 19-25, 16
- Beating a Donkey into a Man, 211
- Bhaurar Git, 54
- Bhuikapar Git, 53-4
- Bihu song, 67
- The Black Cow, 172
- The Blind and the Humpbacked, 132-3
- *The Blind and the Hunchback, 133
- *The Brahman and his Servant, 130-1
- The Brahman's Servant, 96-7
- The Bride and her Three Claimants, 193

- The Cat, 86-7
- The Cat and the Tiger, 170
- The Cat's Daughters, 196
- Champavati, 91-3
- Chandravali and Kathiya, 228
- Chikan Sariyah, 245
- Chikan Sariyahar Git, 48
- *Cinderella (Lushai), 143
- *The Clever Old Man, 214, 128
- The Clever Prince, 146
- The Crow and the Tipsi(wren), 106

- The Demon Astrologer, 94-5, 116
- The Demon Pandit, 183-4
- The Devil and the Broomstick, 215
- Dubalar Santir Git, 49

- Fatal Deception, 220
- The Fox and the Monkey, 82
- The Fox and the Prince, 81

- The Frog, 86
- The Four Friends, 209-10
- The Fruit of a Tree Planted by Oneself, 99

- Gandhi, 31-2
- Garura and the Tipsi, 172
- The Ghar-jenti, 164
- The Globe Fish, 175
- The Gingerseller and the Black-pepperseller, 118, 222
- *Goddess of Music and Dance, 167
- The Gold-producing King, 93-4
- The Greedy Astrologer, 163
- The Greedy Bride, 223

- Haidang Git, 11-12
- The Hawk, 173
- The Helpful Dog, 176
- The Helpful Mongoose, 176
- *How Rice was Brought to Earth, 166-7
- How Rice became Covered with Husk, 170
- How the Squirrel Came by its Stripes, 168
- *Hunchbili, 148

- The Jakh, 164
- Janagabharar Git, 39-45, 202
- Jatarar Git, 55-6
- Jaymati Kuwarir Git, 29

- Kalikalar Git, 15
- Kamala Kuwari, 244
- Kamala Kuwarir Juna, 245
- Kanya Baramahi, 51, 58
- The Keteki Bird, 169
- Khoba and Khubi, 166
- The Kite's Daughter, 95, 174

- *The Lazy Boy, 164
- Latkan, 102-3
- *The Lhota Trickster, 135
- The Long-legged One, 84

- Magic Sight, 192, 195
- Maluwar Git, 54
- Manikowarar Git, 32-4, 38
- Maniram Dewanar Git, 28

The Master Thief, 220, 218
 The Master Thief tests his Son, 217
 The Merchant's Advice, 200-1
 The Merchant's Tiya (Parakeet), 173
 The Merchant's Welfare, 94, 183
 The Messenger of Titkuji, 122-3
 The Minister and the Barber, 110-1
 *The Monkey and the Hare, 127
 *The Monkey and the Jackal, 136
 *Mouse-maid made Mouse Again, 153

*The Naga and his Three Sons, 168
 Naharar Juna, 55
 Narakasur and Kamakhya, 179

O Flower, O Flower, 105
 Officer Fox, 80, 211
 Officer Teton, 100-1, 200
 The Old Bird, 173
 The Old Father's Advice, 207
 *The Old Man and the Tiger, 123-9
 The Ow Princess, 185

Padmakumarir Git, 27
 Pagala-Parvatir Git, 52-3, 67
 Panesai, 90-1, 120
 Patharughatar Ran, 31
 Petbhatu, 215
 Pharing the All-knowing, 98-9
 Phulkowarar Git, 35-7
 The Prince and his Low-born Friend, 177
 The Prince and the Minister's Son, 205
 Prithu Barkakatur Git, 30
 The Proud Toad, 212
 The Purlblind Son-in-law, 98
 The Myth of Purnananda, 162

Radhika Santi, 191-2
 Refusal to Make Sacrifice, 216
 The Royal Elephant, 174

Saudar Git, 49-50

The Scholar, 208

The Seed Prince (Beta Kowar), 182
 The Seven-horned King, 174
 *The Seven Simpletons, 131-2
 The Seven Numskulls, 96
 Sister Ohatimati, 124
 The Snake Goddess Manasa, 193
 *The Snake which Marries a Girl, 137
 The Son-in-law, 97
 The Son of Vikramaditya, 185
 The Speechless Maid, 199
 The Strong Man, 224-5, 226

The Tale of the Cakes, 85
 Teacher Fox, 81-2
 Teja and Teji, 88-90, 143
 Teja and Tula, 90
 Tejimala, 87-8, 143
 Tentan, 101-2
 " 133-4
 The Tiger and the Crab, 82-3
 The Tiger in the Trap, 85
 The Tiger and the Billy Goat, 85-6
 The Tiger's Marriage, 84-5
 Tit for Tat, 180
 *The Toad, 137-8
 The Tokora Bird and the Chital Fish, 169
 Tree of Life, 193
 Trial of Strength, 214
 The Trickster, 103-104
 Two Princes, 228-9, 230

Viswakarma, 162-3
 King Viswasimha, 179-80

What God does He does for the Best, 206-7
 Why Big Trees have Small Fruit, 171-2
 Why do Trees have Leaves, 165
 Why Men Die, 166
 Why the Sky is so High, 165
 Why the Dhekiya Curled up, 170-1
 *Why there are Spots on the Moon, 165
 *Why Tiger Lives in Jungle, 170
 The Woman and her Two Husbands, 182-3

The Young Merchant, 207



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