

A Descriptive Study On Historical Ballads: The Popular Narrative Poems Available In North Kamrup Area Of Kamrup District

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Abstract:

The word 'Ballad' has originated from the french word 'Ballade' that referred to original 'dance songs. 'Ballad must contain a story. The Assamese equivalent of the word is 'Malita' or 'Gatha'. Malita or garland of flowers is created as a chain of flowers similarly the ballad singers sing the ballad, the story in the accompaniment of a lyre in a cyclical dance form. Lakshminath Bezbaruah labels Ballad as 'Kahini Git'. Such 'Kahini Git' is popularly known as 'Git' or song in North Kamrup area. The Assamese language is rich with several ballads, however the number of collection of such ballads is only a handful. Barphukanar Git, Manikonwar-fulkonwarar git, Jona Gabharur Git are only available in its entirety. Jaimati Kuanwarir Git is partially collected and only a couple of stanzas are collected on Padmakuwari or Paddokuwari, the daughter of Haradutta. In this research work an attempt is made to present two important ballads available in the North Kamrup area of Kamrup viz. Paddokunwerir git and Swarajar Nam (Song of Independence). The researcher will pour focus on reflecting certain ballad characteristics in the two ballads.

Key Words: Ballad, Malita, Git, Haradutta, Swaraj

Introduction:

Oral literature is an important branch of folklore. William Richard Bascom has applied the term 'Verbal Art' to refer to 'Oral Literature'. To him the term Verbal Art '...has the further advantage of emphasizing the essential features which distinguish the folk tale, myth, proverb and related forms.'¹

From different points of view oral literature is divided into two main types:

- a. Ethnic genres
- b. Analytical categories

From the point of analytical category, texts of oral literature can be divided into-

- i) Folk songs (Lokagit), ii) Poetic folk tale iii) Proverbs and Riddles and iv) Folk language.

Folk songs or Lokagit are sub categorized as Ballad, Religious Songs, Love Songs, Work Songs, Theological Songs, Festival Songs, Hunting Songs, Satirical Songs, Lullabies, Nursery Rhymes, and Children's Game Songs etc.

Ballads are descriptive poems and originated from folk people. It contains a dramatic plot that is sung in a typical tune with the help of special instruments. Some ballad contains Invocation, simple repetition of certain stanza and in some other incremental repetition is seen. Sometimes it contains rhyme refrain.²

Objectives of study:

Objective of the present article is to present the two ballads that are prevalent in the North Kamrup area and the authors have made an attempt to find certain Ballad characteristics reflected in the two ballads.

Scope of study:

The scope of this research work is delimited into the study of ballads available in the North Kamrup area.

Methodology:

Methodology is an important part of any research work. In this study the researcher has applied field work, analytical method, observation method and interview method. The researcher has visited District Library, Gauhati University K.K.H Library, Asom Sahitya Sabha Library for collection of information.

Discussion:

According to M.H.Abrams, 'A Ballad is a song, transmitted orally, which tells a story. Ballads are thus the narrative species of folk songs which originate and are communicated orally, among illiterate or only partly literate people. In all probability the initial version of a ballad was composed by a single author, but he or she is unknown; and since each singer who learns and repeats an oral ballad is apt to introduce changes in both the text and the tune, it exists in many variant forms'.³

Ballads are classified into several forms. These are also kind of lyrical literature. 'Prevalence of Lyrical literature is seen almost in all countries. This type of literature has certain universal characteristics. Emotional as well as Simplicity in writing style are main characteristics

of such literary works. Civilization is antagonistic against these lyrical numbers. Because of its simplicity such poems are different from modern poems. Besides, like the modern poets there is no mention of poets' names in such poems.'⁴

Assamese folk literature is also rich in such lyrical resources. However the collection of such poems, especially the Ballads, is not complete. Assamese Ballads that have already been collected may be classified in the following ways-

- a) **Historical Ballads:** Ballads based on authentic historical incidents or figures.
- b) **Ballads of Magic:** where the marvelous predominates and which use ancient and universal folklore themes.
- c) **Realistic Ballad:** These ballads are based on real life.
- d) **Satirical Ballad:** These ballads caricature an event or a person.

P.Goswami has classified some Ballads as Etiological Ballads. A few of the ballads available in the area can be categorized within this class.

In the North Kamrup Area following ballads are prevalent.

- a) Historical Ballad
- b) Realistic Ballad
- c) Satirical Ballad
- d) Etiological Ballad

a) Historical Ballads: These ballads are based on authentic historical facts and figures. Historical Ballads are also known as Heroic Poetry. Such ballads play a tremendous role in arousing a sense of patriotism.⁵

Historical Ballads available in the North Kamrup area are Paddo –kuwarir git, that is the song of Paddo Kuwari and Swarajor Nam i.e The Song of Independence.

i) Paddo-Kuwarir Git:

Jirkiri is a place situated 35 kilometers far from Guwahati in the modern district of Kamrup rural. Haradutta and Biradutta are two powerful brothers who keep holding in the area as if as a ruler. Haradutta is the elder brother of Biradutta. Haradutta had a daughter whose name was Padmakuwari or Padum Kuwari or Paddockuweri. They did not follow the commands of Ahom King. Badan Chandra Barphukan's predecessor at Guwahati had quelled certain disturbances started by Haradutta and Biradutta. It is informed that taking support of the king of Cooch Bihar and Bijni, the duo occupied the whole of North Kamrup and planned to chase away the dominance of Ahom from Lower Assam.

During that period Suklingpha or Kamleswar Singha was the king of Ahoms at Gargaon. Kaliya Bhomora was his Viceroy posted at Guwahati. He dominated the revolt of the people of Kamrup (1794-1795). That revolution later became well known as Dandua Droh. The younger

brother Haradutta was killed in the battle known as Dandua Droh. Haradutta fled away into jungle however he was combed out and later sentenced to painful death. Padum Kuwari, after her father's death committed suicide. However the folk people have made history eternal by composing Ballads. The anonymous poets have added certain local traditions with this realistic history to make the ballad tragic.

As per one another traditional oral history prevalent in the North Kamrup area there is certain reason for why the two brothers fell out against the Ahom regime. In 1788 Gaurinath Singha was the ruler of Ahom dynasty. Mahamati Ghanasyam was his minister or Buragohain. In Guwahati his general or Barphukan was Badanchandra. During that time the North Kamrup area was very wide. That covered part of present Nalbari and Barpeta too. The area was subdivided into many Parganas where the rulers were Chaudhurys and Baruas. The role of these sub rulers was to collect revenue from their subjects and deposit the collected tax in the treasury of Barphukan at Guwahati on the day of Sat Bihu i.e 7th Day of Bohag Bihu. Haradutta was one of such sub rulers who lived with his brother at Titkuri then known as Jikiri situated by the bank of the river Puthimari under Pub Kachari Mahal Mauza, 5 kms far from Rangiya. It is said that Barphukan of Guwahati did not give due recognition to the Chaudhurys and Baruahs of Kamrupa and often misbehaved and insulted them. Haradutta was disappointed with such behavior and therefore internally planning to revolt against such deeds. He motivated other Baruahs and Choudhurys viz. Batahghuliya, Bahjaniya, Borigogoiya, Bajaliya, Bhabanipuriya, Chamarkuchiya, Khatriya, Kamarkuchiya, Nambarbhagiya, Panduriya and they have decided to join hands together and drive away Ahom rule from North Kamrup. Haradutta who was popularly known as 'Hardat' was the ringleader of the revolution. From 1788 till 1795 they continually revolted against the Ahom ruler and the whole North Kamrup remained independent from Ahom. They hired Kumedan, a Sikh soldier to learn tactics of war against the Ahom.

In the year 1795 after Gaurinath Singha, Kamaleswar Singha ascended to the throne. In the meantime Ghanasyam Buhragohain, the prime minister, died. Purnananda, the son of Ghanashyam Buhragohain was installed as the Buragohain. Purnananda Buragohain being aware of the misbehavior of Badanchandra, and revolt of the people of North Kamrupian, recruited Kaliya Bhomora as Barphukan of Guwahati replacing Badan Chandra to restore normalcy defeating the two brothers. Kaliabhomora after arriving at Guwahati managed to bribe Kumedan and persuaded him not to support the revolutionary force of Haradutta. In the battle of Cecamukh Barphukan faced Haradutta and killed his brother Biradutta. At such a juncture some people took the part of Barphukan's army. Some others, nervous at the sight of Birdutta's death fled away from the battlefield. Haradutta had no other way out but to fly away and go into hiding in the jungle of Sandhiyajhar situated one and half kilometer towards the south from present Rangia town. There he lived with his wife, daughter Paddo Kuwari and a man named Mahiram who took shelter under Haradutta. He started to spend a miserable life and had to beg in disguise for living. There he lost his wife. One day when his wife went to fetch water from the river she was bitten by a venomous snake and she died. Paddo Kuwari went in search of her mother and discovered her corpse in the

jungle and out of grief became senseless. Mahiram went to call a Vaidya and on that very day Haradutta while coming back from begging was caught red handed by the soldiers of Borphukan. After regaining sense, Paddo Kuwari came to know all these and she became mad. She jumped into the river and killed herself. Later out of grief Mahidhar also killed himself. After the trial of Haradutta the Ahom ruler gave a verdict to kill him at Sagunthuti.

There are different other legends associated with the birth and death of Haradutta and Biradutta. As per oral history Jikeri Baruah was the predecessor of the warriors. As per another story Haradutta was the illegitimate child of the Ahom king. Haradutta came to know about the secret and his mother showed him a gold ring. He took the ring and went to Gargaon in search of his father. The Ahom king made him Baruah at Jikeri now known as Titkuri in the Pub Kachari Mahal Mauja. In Spite of these historical variations one thing is universally acknowledged that Haradutta was the one of the first freedom fighters from the North Kamrup area. He lived at Jikeri, now known as Titkuri. He was killed by the Barphukan, Kaliya Bhomora and his daughter Paddokuwari killed herself. The fall of Haradutta and Biradutta and the life of Paddokuwari have been commemorated in a few songs by the folk poets in the following way...

Haraduttar jiyari paddokuwari,
Nanarat nakhala bhat
Haradotar barire bar bar au,
jikerit pari ral au
ha bapu haradat, ha bapu biradut
a kok geli khap khao eara
umanan bangale hatot dharile
paddo bicare jat
baruwar pukhurit marile jap
padde bicare jat ⁶

Here reference is given to Umanan that might be Umadatta or Kumedan who as a Sikh captain of Koch King came to help Haradutta. Umadatta was very much eager to marry Paddokuwari. After the defeat of Haradutta he attempted to take Paddo Kuwari under his control. As per another story after the death of Haradutta Paddokuwari was married at Nanara where she did not have her meal. In the backyard of Haradutta there was a big Au tree.

Ha bapu Hardat ha bapu Birdat e
Jikeri Baruar bar abar au
Jikeri Baruar bar abar au
Jikerit pari ral bau
Uma bangale hatot dharile
Paddo bicare jat
Pukhurit dile yei jap
Bidheli baruwak bisay pila
Jikeri baruwak cikei khala ⁷

Both the songs are similar. 'Bidheli baruwak bisay pila, Jikeri bariuwak cikei khala' is a rhyme refrain. The folk poets 'cikei khala' might have refer to Kumedan as Cike a kind of rat who in the long run came under the control of the Ahom Borphukan and betrayed Haradutta.

Ulei thoi ashilo ghun ghuni jotarto
Tani thoi ashilo tat
Lagare lagarei sodhe athu kari
Kot goli to haradat?
Kot goli to Biradat?
Haradator jiyarik mane lai jai
uruli jokora pari
Haradotar jiyari paddokuweri
Behi bui achili tat
Lagare lagariai sodhe athu kari
Ki khai bolali dat
Lachari phura sindhisat dupura
Kaladoi othara pura
Lagarir barite bhitha jaratari
Mor barit pariche chaya
Lagare lagarei kandiba lagichi
Lagai ahogoi mat
Siparar banni dhan nile bane mari
Iparar banni dhan pan
Lagare lagarek nile mane dhari
Kar mukhe batari pam?
Haradatok mariya sandhe pukhurit
Tate thaile gacha kari
Bannadi ujiyai, bannadi bhathiyai
Bannadi ki puja khai
Pujao nalage, patalo nalage
Lage sandhejharor kannye
sandhejharor kannye anibo narilo
bannadi utali pare
iphale bannadi siphale bannadi
bannadi utali pare ⁸

All these ballads contain stories related to Haradutta, Biradutta, Paddokuweri. This narrative song is particularly sung by women folk in the context of marriage ceremonies and puberty rites. These ballads like other ballads of Assam are impersonal and are similar from the point of view of structure. Moreover the heroes and heroines of such ballads have inspired and infused enthusiasm throughout the ages in bringing social change, providing social identity,

restoration of cultural and political freedom of a nation. With its soft tune and expression of legendary stories of past heroes the ballads performed the role of lullaby and have inspired people to be patriotic and courageous.

ii.) Swarajar Nam (Song of Independence):

This ballad is an historical ballad prevalent in the North Kamrup area. Although the word ‘Swaraj’ has a secular nature, the word ‘nam’ has religious connotation. This song is generally sung as the Ojapali art form associated with dance. The song describes the story of how India wins freedom at the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The song goes thus.

Diha: a bhai swaraj lau, bol bande mataram e
Pada: Kai bole congress kamiti pratisthane
Khai bole khadder pindha swarajar karane
A bhai swaraj lau
Gai bole gujratat Gandhi avatar
Ghai bole ghare ghare howa bholentar
A bhai swaraj lau
Ungai bole urdha bahu hai naca bholentar
Sai bole sala jao phatek khatibare
A bhai swaraj lau
Shai bole chata era bideshiya buli
Jai bole japi loa kan soman kari
A bhai swaraj lau
Jai bole jor julum nakariba age
Nyai bole niyam kara bideshi nalage
A bhai swaraj lau
Tai bole tupi pindhi nisan lai phure
Thai bole thatta bidrup nakara amare
A bhai swaraj lau
Dai bole danger bhai phatekat pore
Dhai bole dhak dhole joa agebahri
A bhai swaraj lau
Nai bole anandat nakara bimangal
Tai bole saraloke kare non co-operation
E bhai swaraj lau
Thai bole thora thori bholentar phura
Dai bole dokan pohar hat bandha kara
A bhai swaraj lau
Dhai bole dhara sabe manor jog kari
Nai bole nohaloi swaraj nedibaha eri

E bhai swaraj lau
Pai bole para mane ki para kare
Phai bole phandat parsi ingrazsakale
Bai bole bak birodh hachi barambar
Bhai bole bhara basi aru englandar
A bhai swaraj lau
Mai bole melche amak kino dei sunu
Zai bole najai ami kenekeno mano
Rai bole raja hai amak atyachar kare
Lai bole lanadnbasi kimitra amare
A bhai swraj lau
Wai bole brench pati jagat jagai dila
Sai bole santa bhabe bhulai rakhila
A bhai swaraj lau
Sai bole saddarat amak bhulai rakhila
Sai bole sarbananda hal ingraj ebar gaila
A bhai swaraj lau
Hai bole hartal kara gandhir nam lai
Kshai bole kam kara nichay bijay
A bhai swaraj lau
Suna swaraj anbeklegi jaoa aguai
Michamichi eipad uttam ojai gay. ⁹

This ballad is sung as per the sequence of Assamese consonants. A sentence is always started with each of the initial letters of Assamese consonants. The ballad contains motivating dialogues urging the people to revolt against the intruders, British. People are encouraged to take part in the agitation and go ahead to realize the goal of getting freedom. These songs contain encouraging pace and tune to motivate the people to revolt against the British regime in North kamrup Area. The poets use the colloquial words prevalent in North Kamrup area.

Conclusion:

Ballads are thus the creation of folk people and such people nourish a desire inside their heart to inbuilt some real motivation and share some rare message into the minds of the listener. Ballads originated on the ground of the folk social customs so much so that the poems carry with it a sense of love, hatred, irony, rites and rituals, local history, habits and practices of the people. It contains rhyme refrain, for example,

In the ballad named as Swarajar Nam, the phrase E bhai swaraj lau, is repeatedly occurring in frequent intervals throughout the ballad where the folk poet is encouraging fellow citizens to work for independence and to go forward facing all obstacles.

Like the characteristics of different other Ballads available in other cultures around the world, some Ballads contain certain phrases that have no any coherent relation with the development of the Ballad's plot. Similar characteristic is seen in the ballad Paddokuwerir Git. For example,

Ulei thoi ashilo ghun ghuni jotarto
Tani thoi ashilo tat
Lagare lagarei sodhe athu kari
Kot goli to haradat?
Kot goli to Biradat?

In the above stanza there is reference to the weaving instrument named ghun ghuni jotar. This has no direct context with the plot of the ballad story. The folk poets might have created it to make the ballad rhythmical and sweet in tune. Thus the two ballads available in North Kamrup area have left an impression in the listeners' mind and compels them to look back into the glorious past of Kamrup and feel the pangs and pains of those unsung heroes who fought for their own right and sacrificed their lives during the legendary period of Haradutta, Biradutta and during the war for independence.

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