

A Comparative study of *Lalilang* and *Nagelee Geet* of Assam

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Abstract:

Folk song like other forms of folk narratives has been carrying vital social and cultural significations all through the ages in every society and culture. Folk songs indeed reflect human life in all its manifestations in the real sense of the term. In Assam also each and every ethnic group has their own folk songs being in circulation since the time immemorial. These are some types of folksongs which are forbidden for open performance, which are regarded as 'Row songs' as they are loaded with erotic tones and subjects such type of songs are known by different names in different parts of the state e.g. *Lalilang* in Dimoria, *Habitatia* in Mayong, *Aghaitong* in Sivsagar and *Nagelee* in Darrang. Erotic appeal, sorrow of break up in love, Love and lust are some of the main preoccupations of such songs, this kind of songs are generally performed by the cowboys, fisher man or by people while working in the paddy fields, in the present paper an attempt has been made to configure a comparative study of the *Lalilang* of the Dimoria region and the *Nagelee* of Darrang. In order to develop the study the method of field survey has been applied along with the utilization of secondary data collected from different published materials.

Key Words: Nagelee, Lalilang, Folksongs, erotic songs

Introduction:

Assam is profuse with folk literature of different tribes and communities. The folk culture is enriched with multifarious colours from places to places, tribes to tribes. The folk songs that come under the umbrella of folk literature, reflect the comprehensive Assamese culture and traditions. Assamese literature has an abundance of folk songs, some of them are inflamed with erotic content that cannot be brought to the light of civil society, yet have been an integral part of folk literature. Such folk songs are sung or performed in solitary fields, open places adjacent to forest regions, near rivers, lakes etc. Such traditions have different names in different places. In Assam, such songs are called *Lalilang*, *Nanggelee*, *Oghaitong* etc. Though names are different, the content and subject matter remains the same. Such songs are named as *Lalilang* in Dimoria. In Darrang, these songs are called *Nagelee*, in Sivasagar they call it *Aghaitong*. It has prevalence among the tribals also, named as *Kesha Geet*, i.e. raw

songs. The *Lalilang* of Dimoria and *Nagelee* songs of Darrang have their distinguishing features and taste though having differences in the art of performance, singing and in other dimensions. Such songs reveal the outburst of passionate love, intimacy and instinctive sexual feeling, and of melancholy of personal lives.

Scope of Study:

This study aims at studying the *Lalilang* songs of Dimoria and *Nagelee* songs of Darrang. A comparative study is also carried out between *Lalilang* and *Nagelee* songs.

Significance of the Study:

There are many folk songs which are out of practice and are in the verge of extinction as such songs can be sung or performed only on particular, more precisely on rare occasions. The performers of such folk songs are also giving up on these traditions. So study of such songs and making such traditions accessible for the public will help preserve them as well as an unfold scope for future study in that field.

Method of the Study:

The study has been carried out through field studies. Moreover the songs discussed here are taken from the *Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah* and *Passkuri Lalilang*. The study endeavours to bring out a comparative study of the songs of both the regions. For vital information, related books have been consulted.

Scope of the Study:

Prevalence of *Nagelee Geet* can be seen among the people of Darrang region. There are various interpretations of the term 'Nagelee'. The word comes close to the pronunciation of the word 'nangol', which means plough in Assamese. So some claim that the word is derived from the word plough. But as the word 'nangoth' expresses nudity, it comes close to the word 'nangoth' now which means nudity in Assamese (*Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah*, p-190). It is significant to mention that during quarrels among people of Darrangi communities, unsolicited words, slangs are hurled. Such an act is popularly termed among them as 'nangol mara'. It implies that truth has been unveiled, or secrecy has been revealed. However there is also a reasonable ground for considering the origin of the term from the Assamese word 'nangol'. Like the ploughshare splits the land apart, the *Nagelee geet* also splits the young performers to form different groups and unfurl the truth or any secret thought of their minds. Both the processes are demonic in nature (*Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah*, p. 192). During the work of ploughing, no one accompanies, no one stays around. Likewise, *Nagelee* songs are also sung in solitary state, i.e. in absence of public. So as both *Nagelee* and ploughing comes close in its basic nature, there is a general assumption that the term 'Nagelee' comes from

ploughing. In the Darrang region, 'Nagelee geet' and 'Nagelee mara' have different implications. 'Nagelee mara' is to abuse someone, verbally, hurling slangs in a rustic sense. But 'Nagelee geet' are songs, they have lyrical body and rhythmic expressions. Solitary places, like the open field away from the village are preferred by the cowboys to freely and loudly sing such songs.

Nagelee songs can be broadly divided into two categories: one is of altercation, exchange of slangs in a lyrical rhythm. *Nagelee* songs about love and passion fall under the other category.

Sometimes, *Nagelee* songs are sung to tease or persuade someone to see how the opponent tactfully survives the verbal altercation and bounce back efficiently. Sometimes, some cowboys sing *Nagelee* songs to appeal to other fellow cowboys to join the rhythmic battle of songs or to retreat.

Haah di kuhiyar shal *Thela oi johora*
Haidi kuhiyar shal thelu
Sabhasodluke *Beya nubuliba*

Nagelee peratu melu. (Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah, p. 120)

Summary: Here the singer begs the audience to pardon for performing *Nagelee geet*.

Or,

Nagelee ekuri *Nagelee dukuri*
Nagelee uthoro kuri
Eparor gorokhiyai *Hat jur korisu*

Nagelee namerba buli. (Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah, p. 40)

Summary: The cowboy requests the other group of cowboys not to sing *Nagelee geet*.

Although some *Nagelee geet* starts with songs that exchange hot words within the songs, it ends with laughter. Everyone carries back home jest and mirth. In the vigorous oratorical war in *Nagelee* songs, each side packed with young and energetic cowboys. Each side tries to prove their superiority in terms of wit and courage through eloquence. The war treads on a team spirit, rather than individual efficiency.

Manifestations of passionate love, longing and desires of the cowboys finds outlet through the songs. Their desire to get a girl intimately finds the language of songs often profused with sexual implications. Though, such desires can't be termed as baseless, as they target specific women or a girl of their village or of adjacent region; such desires seldom turn into reality, neither they attempt to fulfil such desires. These songs just provide a vent to their

emotions and thoughts in front of fellow cowboys. The aim is to express themselves vigorously with their emotional expressions and desires.

Amore gosote *kuliye binale*
Biseri logore logori
Goru sari thakute *tuloi monot pore*
Moru sati-futi kori. (Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah, p. 101)

Summary: Like the Koel bird searches for partner, the cowboy also seeks the presence of his beloved.

It's not only about persuading own self to be steady-minded, by self-pity. But also involves vigorous censuring with their sharp tongue and hurling harsh words ceaselessly through their songs, such as:

Chari khuti mari *athuwa torilu*
Boholai patilu pati
Enuwa patite *xuboloi nahili*
Khopili kar logot rati. (Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah, p. 200)

Summary: The cowboy's desire for lovemaking is expressed through this song. But as his beloved didn't turned up for his bed, he blames her.

Again, passion for being united with beloved and desire for love making finds expression thus:

Tumar gaal dukhoni *kune kamurile*
Dugale dudhari tej
Tumar kiba hole *kaku nokoba*
Moi hom tumare bej. (Darrangi Lokgeet Sangrah, p. 150)

Summary: The singer asks a girl/woman to keep it secret, whatever has happened, and promises to lay beside.

Societal norms bind young minds in their rituals and customs, so they find riverside, places near swamp, lake, open field etc. to express their irresistible emotions loudly, without any hindrance.

Lalilang:

Lalilang are folk songs sung in the Dimoria region of middle Assam. *Lalilang* are popular in nature and appealing folk songs are prevalent among people of the Dimoria region. *Lalilang* songs have similarity in terms of subject matter. It manifests the passionate love, strong desire for love making, longing of a young heart. Explicit sexual implications find place in such songs. The performing style has resemblance to Bihu songs. But performance of

such songs can't be done in public gatherings. However, on the night before *Magh Bihu* festival, such songs are sung by young adults. Again, while going for fishing to Parshali, Bomani, Jalishara; *Lalilang* songs are sung. On such occasions, they are allowed to sing *Lalilang*, no one objects.

Joss and melancholy, love and passion of young boys as well as girls are expressed through such songs. At the very outset of such songs, the performer seeks apology beforehand for the vulgarity and begs to not take offence.

Isware soroja dhanore kothiya
Brahmai soroja oi naam
Beya naam ulale khemiba raije oi
Prothome lalilang oi gaam. (Paskuri Lalilang, p. 20)

Summary: The singer seeks pardon from the public for singing *Lalilang*.

Lalilang songs are sung while going for fishing and during fishing activities. Description of fishes, their shapes are used to depict implicit sexual implications in such songs. Outburst of desire for love-making, longing, lamentations and distress of a broken heart finds a vent through such songs.

Duwoni bilore oi raghuwa barali oi
Totolat epasi oi xil
Ghorongor tolote oi sitoltu pisole oi
Topote topote oi gil (Paskuri Lalilang, p. 22)

Summary: The singer tactfully expresses sexual desires through citing name of fish.

Aghunor potharot oi Kasi hera lalilang
Aghunor potharot oi kasi
Dudinor jibontuk oi othole niyali oi
Deka lorak furili oi jasi
Jasi hera lalilang oi
Khopat dhori hali jang oi
Khaloi dangi dangi oi sang (6)

Summary: The singer censures a girl/woman for her affairs and love making with other young men.

Lalilang songs are sung on the night before Magh bihu festival by the young adults accompanied by patidhol (a beating drum), singa (a blowing horn), cymbal etc. Such performance can last nightlong, as they have to wait another year to find the occasion.

Ahure ashate oi *Shali narakhilang oi*
Tuhot narakhilang oi joui
Ture ashate oi *boniyerak nanilong oi*
Suda sangot thakilang oi xui (Paskuri Lalilang, p. 25)

Summary: Here, the singer laments for not marrying sister of his beloved, and cites his measurable life.

Fish and fishing activity finds symbolic, yet vivid expressions in a *Lalilang* song. Rivers, lakes are mentioned specifically in such songs. Sexuality and reproduction part of life is vividly represented through symbols of fish and fishing activities.

Kakor kusia oi *Sobake dhori jang oi*
Dhori jang oi botiya mash
Eketa khondite oi *Sodaiye mashe mare oi*
Lage oi nalage oi lash (Paskuri Lalilang, p. 30)

Summary: The singer implies that making love with a single all the time is shameful.

Young minds in a rural setting express their thoughts, their secret intentions for young girls or women. Their concealed lush and desires for love making finds a vent through such songs. Gathering of young people, while fishing, or at the feast of *Uruka*, they openly express their minds.

Comparison:

Both *Nagelee* and *Lalilang* songs are homogeneous in nature prevailing in specific parts of Assam. Both have similar nature of sexuality profused in abundance. Like the *Bihu geet* and *Bonghosha*, such folk songs are composed as triplets. However, they can't be sung publically unlike the *Bonghosha* and *Bihu* songs. A perfect place for such songs are riverside, lakes and open solitary fields.

Nagelee songs are sung by cowboys in the grazing field or in an open field adjacent to a forest. While *Lalilang* are sung during fishing activities, or on the eve of *Bihu*. Again, *Nagelee* are mainly sung by cowboys, while *Lalilang* are sung by the young as well as aged people of the communities.

Nagelee songs are not accompanied by musical instruments. But the *Lalilang* songs are accompanied by *dhol* (drum), cymbal etc. Sometimes, *Lalilang* songs are sung without musical instruments also.

Mention of women and girls can be found in *Nagelee* songs, but no such songs are composed by women. But, *Lalilang* songs are written by both men and women.

Both *Nagelee* and *Lalilang* songs have varied imagery.

Herei sahabor piriti oi lороке foroke
O bhai policer piriti khor
O bhai deka lorar piriti singi mashor bindheni
O ratite tuli diye jor (423)

Summary: The love a young heart is always passionate, that does not allow beloved to sleep at night.

Duwoni bilor parore oi Hijol gosh ejupi oi
Tate lola kuruwai baha oi
Jongakoi thotore oi dekhata bindhila oi
Dehatuk korila suwa. (12)

Summary: The singer indicates about love making through example of birds. The beak of the bird is used as an imagery for love making.

Sexuality is quite vivid in both *Nagelee* and *Lalilang* songs. Passionate love and love making are expressed in these songs. Such songs are sung both in individual and in group.

Lalilang songs have popular influences such as king and their subjects, train, *Saheb* (gentleman), police etc in their songs. *Nagelee* songs have also such influences, but are comparatively less. Contemporary words are not used extensively as they are used in *Lalilang* songs. The songs don't belong to any specific community or religion or tribes. They are sung by any tribe or communities. Assimilation of words from Tiwa, Karbi language can be traced in *Lalilang* songs.

Conclusion:

With the changing passage of time, both these traditions have been on the edge of extinction. Due to urban migration, the relations between man and forests, man and nature are loosening. Gradually, such songs are losing their relevance and significance in the rural scenario. Such songs are sung on specific occasions in a specific rural setting. With the changing scenario, it is losing its prevalence. However, many scholars are trying to make refined and cultured versions of such folk songs and promoting them through various

platforms. Such rare traditions, enriched with the essence of folk life, need to be preserved and promoted.

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