

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 The Name - Nalbari

Nalbari district in the state of Assam is being carved out from the erstwhile Kamrup district in 1985. Located strategically in the lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam, the district is a melting pot of people, culture and traditions.

The study on nomenclature exceeds the limits of grammar and dictionary and it is an important tool for studying the cultural history of any community. It also becomes an important material in reconstructing the ancient culture. The formation process of Nalbari town is started approximately from 1864. In 1938 Nalbari was recognised as one of the Assam's prominent towns. Etymologically, the word Nalbari is derived from the Austric word *Nal* which means a kind of reed and the Sanskrit word *Vatica* which means a garden or a compound or a courtyard or an area i.e. *Bari*. Thus this area was once known for *Nal* i.e. the reed and hence thus it was known as Nalbari. This name Nalbari was used from late 19th century A.D. The ancient name of Nalbari was *Govindapur*. This was named after famous *Govinda Ata* [Phukan, S. K: 577]. Once it was also known as *Khata Pargana* during the rule of *Ahoms* and *Mughals*.

4.2 Nalbari: A Historical Account

In ancient day, the district Nalbari was a part of the kingdom of Kamrupa, which according to *Jagani Tantra* and *Kalika Purana* extended from Karotoya in the west to the east of *Dikkarabasini*. *Narak* was a very powerful and prosperous king whose capital was named as Pragjyotishpur, the present Guwahati of today. Nalbari formed a part of this kingdom of king, Narak. After Narak, Nalbari was ruled by a chain of non-Aryan princes a thousand years before the Christ. The copper plates of 11th century after Christ depict that Narak was displaced by *Salastanbha*, a Mech or foreign conqueror and after him several other kings ruled Pragjyotishpur. The last king was Indra Pala and after him the history of Pala king remained in dark. After Pala dynasty, the dynasty of Koch was started with the king *Viswa Singha* who who founded a magnificent city in Cooch-Bihar. He constructed a beautiful temple at Nilachal. But after his rule he was succeeded by his son *Mala Deva* in 1534 A.D. He took the name

as *Nara Narayana* while the Chutia kings ruled the country east of Subansiri and Disang, the Kachari kingdom was flourishing in central Assam. A number of petty chiefs called *Bhuyans* held sway over the territory. These chiefs ruled the territory of *Chutia* and *Kacharies*. The kingdom of Kamrupa altered from time to time. These chiefs were remembered as *Baru Bhuyans*. However, after *Bikramaditya, Dharmapala* of *Kshatriya* family from Kanauj appointed as prime minister. *Samudra*, a son of this prime minister became the king and administered a big territory defeating all his rivals with his *Bhuja* i.e. arm. Since then his descendents came to be known as Bhuyans. After Samudra, Manohar became the king. After Manohar his daughter, Lakshmi ruled for about 14 years. This period was called as *Nariraj*. She attained maturity and gained the love of Sun god. She gave birth two sons-Santanu and Samanta. Santanu and his twelve sons came to Nagoan district and their later generation came to be known as Bara Bhuyans. Samanta remained at Lakhimpur and his descendents were called as *Saru Bara Bhuyans*.

These Bara Bhuyans maintained their independence prior to 15th century. But with the entrance of Ahoms into the power race the glory of the Bhuyans started declining. In 1335, the Ahom king *Dihingia Raja* defeated the Bara Bhuyans and ransacked the territory. During Pratap Singha reign, the power of Bara Bhuyans totally collapsed.

Sukapha laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. After a long period of rule, he died in 1268 A.D. followed by Sutepha, Subinpha and Sukangpha. Sukangpha was engaged in war with the Raja of Kamata. The Kamata Raja, the Chutias and the Kacharies were defeated by Suhungmung, the *Dihingia Raja*. In 1527 A.D. *Muhammedans* first invaded his country. But the Ahoms defeated the Mohammedans in a series of battles.

The Ahoms who were defeated by Muslim Subedar of Bengal were driven away from Kamrupa in 1658. In 1662, *Mir Jumlla*, the new Subedar of Bengal drove away the Ahoms from Guwahati and occupied Guwahati along with Nalbari. In 1681 A.D. Kamrup was recaptured by Gadadhar Singha and from this time Nalbari was a part of the Ahom territories. The territory of Ahom was extended to the river *Manas* by

Gadadhar Singha. After Gadadhar Singha, his son Rudra Singha, the Ahom name *Sukhrungpha* ascended the throne.

Then in 1833 the British portion of the valley was divided into four districts- Goalpara, Kamrup including Nalbari, Darrang and Nagon. During the last part of the nineteenth century, a new national awakening inspired the people of India and Kamrup district did not lag behind. In Assam, Kamrup including Nalbari played the most important role in the quit India Movement for independence. In this movement, the Sahid Mukanda Kakati of *Sonkani* village of Nalbari district lost his life. Thus Nalbari is the birth place of some famous people who have significant contribution to the Indian society. They also have enriched the cultural heritage of the district [District Census Hand Book, Nalbari, 2011: 9-11].

4.3 Topography of Nalbari

The Kaibarttas of this area have been surviving on their traditional knowledge. Nalbari district is situated in between 26°N and 26.51°N latitude and 91°E and 91.47°E longitude. Flanked by the mighty river Brahmaputra on its southern fringes and the foothills of Baska district towards its northern end, the district represents diversity in agro-climatic and geographical situations.

Nalbari district is large in areas as well as in population concerned. It presents a panorama of folk elements in the cultural life of the Kaibarttas. Besides, this area have sufficient no of fishery resources, such as, the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries. The Kaibarttas of this area have been surviving on their traditional knowledge based techniques for fish harvesting. Therefore, this area is found to be suitable for the study.

Diversified water bodies in various forms, such as, beel-Behkuri, Dhansiri, Bouta, Kapla etc, swamp, wasteland, ponds and tanks are located in Nalbari district. The Kaibarttas of Nalbari district have been adopting the old traditional techniques of fishing as these techniques of fish harvesting have been generously passed on to newer generations by the older ones. The oral literature of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district in relation to fish is also rich. But research particularly on fish lore and fishing practices of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district has not been done. There are a number of

riddles, proverbs, stories in relation to fish and fishing practices among the people of this community of Nalbari district.

Bhutan is in the north of Nalbari district and Kamrup district is on the east of Nalbari district. The Brahmaputra falls on the south of Nalbari district and Barpeta district is on the west of Nalbari district. Nalbari district is covering an area 2257sqkm. According to 2011 census, the total population Nalbari district is 769919 among which the number of male is 395804 and the number of female is 374115. Nalbari district holds 22nd rank by population size in 2011 among the districts of Assam.

Kaibartta is a major scheduled caste in Assam sharing more than half of the total population. According to 2011 census, the total Kaibartta population in Nalbari district is 23048 among which the number of male is 11758 and the number of female is 11260.

There are a number of religious communities in Nalbari. These communities are Hindu, Anukul Hindu, Baishnava, Bathau, Kabir Patni, Sanatan Dharma, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain. The following Table No. 3.1 shows the population of each of these communities.

Religious Community-wise Population in Nalbari District [Census of India, 2001].

Table No-4

Sl. No.	Name of Religious Community	Total Population
1	Hindu	873749
2	Anukul Hindu	151
3	Baishnava	84
4	Bathau	63019
5	Kabir Patni	2
6	Sanatan Dharma	568
7	Muslim	253842
8	Christian	18495
9	Sikh	117
10	Buddhist	899
11	Jain	907

The population structure of Nalbari may be broadly divided into two religious groups - Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu population are consisted of many communities, castes and tribes. Kaibarttas are one of these divisions and they play a major role from the point of view of Hindu religion.

4.4 Religion and Culture

Though the formation process of Nalbari was started in 1864 and it was recognised as one of the famous towns of Assam. Nalbari has been the living place of several religious sects. Each of the religious communities, living in Nalbari district have been observing and enjoying their own religion and culture. Some of the important religious occasions and places, which have been influencing the life and culture of the people of Nalbari have been tried to discuss as follows.

A. Rasa Festival at Nalbari

Rasa festival is celebrated in Nalbari with much pomp and grandeur during the month of November along with the rest of Assam. The festival has got intertwined with its socio-cultural life. In fact, this celebration is associated with the *Rasa Leela* of Lord Krishna with the *Gopis*. It is said that the bewitching autumn moon accompanied by gentle breeze wafting through made Lord Krishna pick up his flute. The captivating music that deftly flowed from his flute made the *Gopis* leave their household chores and join him in *Rasa Leela*. This festival finds mention in ancient scriptural like Shri Bhagawad Purana. In Nalbari, Rasa festival is celebrated in the premises of Hari Mandir, the heart of the town. The festival has a big Mela along with local mobile theatre performance, giving a festive atmosphere throughout the town with people even from other parts of the states flocking to see it [District Census Hand Book, Nalbari, 2011: MOTIF].

The Rasa festival is one of the important festivals of Nalbari district of Assam. This festival has been observing in the famous Sri Sri Hari temple situated at the very heart of the Nalbari town. This festival was first observed in 1933 at the old *Hat Khola* of Nalbari town and the construction of the Sri Sri Hari temple was started in 1939. The present *Puja Mandap* was established in 1968 by the money donated by the famous tea trader Sri Damharam Das [Barman, H. K: 5-9].

In due course of time, a lot of changes have taken place regarding the small hats made of bamboos and thatches which are the central attraction of the viewers coming from different places of Assam and outside. These hats have been now made of bricks and tins and these hats are lighted using the modern technology. The statues became lively on the hands of the artists such as Adyanath Goswami, Makhan Paul etc. Their statues told the stories of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Purana* etc.

B. Sri Sri Bilbeswar Devalaya and the Durga Puja

The historical *Sri Sri Bilbeswar Devalaya* is situated at Belsor in the Nalbari district of Assam. This *Devalaya* was made in the mid 6th century by the king Nagsanka. There goes a legend regarding this *Devalaya*. The old name of *Bilbeswar* was *Bilbesila*.

Many years ago, there lived an old Brahmin named Rupnarayan Bhatta at Belsor. He was very honest. This Brahmin took care of a cow. But strangely the cow gave milk only near an old tree at *Bilbeswar*. This was a shocking thing for everyone in the village. One day the Brahmin digs near the ground of the tree with a spade. Then the Brahmin found a piece of stone stricken by the spade. Later on it was recognised as a 'Siva Lingo' i.e. the statue of the sex of god Shiva [Medhi, P: 12].

C. Basudeva Devalaya and Shova

Basudeva Devalaya is situated at Balikoria village in the Nalbari district of Assam. There goes a legend regarding the establishment of this Devalaya. The legend is as follows.

Long, long ago some fishermen were fishing in the Jaymangla beel of Khata mouza of Nalbari district. Suddenly one fisherman could not manage to bring the net from the water. His name was Gada Kaji. Gada Kaji tried again and again to lift the net from the water for seven days. But he failed again and again. One night Gada Kaji dreamt that god Basudeva was in that beel in the forms of two pieces of stones and ordered to bring and establish the same. Next day he with some of his friends went to this beel and easily could lift the net with the pieces of stones. He placed the pieces of stones in his barn. But in his father's yearly feasting the drummers could not make the sounds by beating the drums. Then Gada Kaji was frightened and went to sleep. In his

sleep god Basudeva ordered to establish the pieces of stones in some sacred place. After awaking from sleep, he went to the bharal and he discovered there snail, wheel, Basudeva, Lakshmidēvi, Sraswatidēvi etc. instead of the pieces of stones. Then the sound of drum beating started. Stantly he placed all these statues in a sacred place. Then he placed the statue of Basudeva at Balikoria Village [Barman, P. K: 12]. Shova is observed in the month of Magh i.e. an Assamese month.

D. Kubalaya Thaan

The Kubalaya than is a historically religious construction situated at the Murmela village of Nalbari district. The myth related to this is interesting. This than was established in 1896 by Kameswar Chakravarty. In 1896 the Chakravarty family purchased a land of 1575 *Bigha* 10 *Lesa* from the Bhutiya princes [Pathak, P. K: 23]. According to folk belief some folk in the past could tell the future happenings with the help of a particular practice. This practice is known as the *Daudha Zoka*. The first *Daudha Zoka* was Raju Sheik. Sacrifices of animals were also offered in this *Thaan*.

E. Kulbeelghat Razhuwa Shibalaya

The historical Kulbilghat Razhuwa Shibalaya is situated at Rupiabathan village of Nalbari district of Assam. It is near the Burahdiya tributary. Here 'Kul' means edge and 'Beel' means place of fishing. Once, this place was near a beel. So it was named as Kulbeel. The Shibalaya was established in 1930 by Padmadhar Goswami. There is a myth regarding the construction of this Shibalaya. Once Padmadhar Goswami visited the Kahara village of Kumrup district with his friends Hagoram Das, Mararam Das, Kazoram Das, Matiram Das. During 1930 there was a beel in the Kahara village. [Medhi, P: 31] When they were sailing boat in the beel, their boat was attached to something under the water for which the boat could not move. Then they discovered a piece of *Shiva Bigrāh*. Later on the *Shiva Lingo* was carried to Rupiabathan village and placed it in the Kulbeel.

F. Rasa Festival at Tihu

Tihu Barawari Rasa festival was started in 1953. Umesh Chandra, Kamala Kanta Choudhary, Prankanta Sarma, Ratna Kanta Choudhary, Ratnaswar Das, Avhiram

Deka, Nripen Baishya, Mahipal Bhatta and Krishna Talukdar were the leading persons for starting this festival at Tihu [Kalita, S: 39].

G. Muharram

Muharram is a religious festival of the Muslims. It is observed with reference to the tragic story of *Karbala*. It reminds the Islamic world the fight against injustice and corruption, in which the two grandsons of prophet *Mohammad* and their family members sacrificed their lives one by one. This religious occasion is observed by the Muslims of Nalbari district also.

H. Fateha-E-Dowaj-Dham

Another religious occasion observed by the Muslims of Nalbari is *Fateha-E-Dowaj-Daham*. It is observed in the memory of the sacred day of birth and death of the prophet *Mohammad*. Prayer is performed in the mosques to offer due reverence to the great prophet *Mohammad*.

I. Id-Ul-Fitre

Id-Ul-Fitre Is observed among the Muslims of Nalbari after a month of fasting and witnessing the new moon. For the occasion they gathered in a *Maidan* for a public prayer with a view to praising *Allah*. *Fitra* i.e. poor tax is distribute among the poor, blind and physically handicapped before the prayer. It is done so that they also can enjoy this occasion by eating and buying new clothes.

J. ID-Uz-Zoha

Id-Uz-Zoha is also a religious occasion Observed by the Muslims of Nalbari. It is festival of sacrifice of the most beloved in the name of Allah. The sacrifice is known as *Korbani* that reminds us of *Ismail*, the son of *Ibrahim Khallilullah*.

4.5 Institutions of Folk Performance

Folk performances provide entertainment in the life of the folk. The village people remain busy making hard labour to run their life. So they get entertained at the evening through folk performances. Of course, these performances are also observed in relation to the festivals during the year. Some of the folk performances of Nalbari district are as follows [Das, R: A4-A7].

A. Ojapali

Ojapali is one of the lively and popular performing art form of Assamese culture. This is a traditional art form. *Ojapali* is a combined performance of narrative singing, dancing, gestures and dramatic dialogues. In the term *Ojapali*, *Oja* represents guru i.e. the teacher and *Pali* represents *Shishya* i.e. the pupils. The art form in which the *Oja* perform *Nritya Git* i.e. dance and song with the assistance of pupils is called *Ojapali*. The *Ojapali* group is generally consisted of five to six men. The lead artist is known as *Oja*. The *Oja* is accompanied by the assistant artists known as *Palis*. The right hand side of *Oja* is known as *Daina Pali* and he is the chief among the *Palis*. The *Daina Pali* makes the performance interesting by his humorous dialogue. During performance a pair of cymbals is used as the main instrument. This instrument is known as *Khutital*.

Ojapali is seen in Nalbari district from 1902 performed by Mamoriya Oja, Daya Oja Baishya, Indra Baishya, Devera Oja, Chakra Oja, Thanu Oja, Lakshya Daynapali, Nidhani Oja. They were the leaders and performers of *Ojapali* of Nalbari district in the past. At present, Devan Baishya, Dhatu Oja, Mono Oja, Mahendra Danyapali, Naroram Barman, Dhaniya Oja are performing this art form in Nalbari district and outside. Dhaniya Oja, Manu Oja and Devan Oja even formed a women group of *Ojapali*. This was known as *Api Oja*. The popularity of *Ojapali* in Nalbari district is proved when the people of Bodos community formed an *Ojapali* group in Darman village.

B. Bhaira

Bhaira is an important folk performing art form observed in Nalbari district. In *Bhaira* the *Ojapali* emphasised on the dramatic elements. The *Bhaira* group is consisted of one *Oja*, one *Daynapali* and four *Palis*. *Tal* is the only musical instrument in this performance. The *Oja* wears a *Satiya* cap on head, *Gamkharu* on hand, *Karu* on ear and *Napur* on leg. The stories are mainly taken from *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*. *Bhaira* is one hundred year old performing art form in Jagara of Nalbari district. Baga Bhot Oja constructed the *Bhaira* group before one hundred years ago.

C. Putla Nas

Putla Nas is traditional performing art form in nalbari district. The group is consisted of 3-4 people. There is one *Sutradhar*, one *Bayan* and 3-4 *Palis*. The stories are taken from *Ramayan*. The group of *Putla Nas* is seen in Doukuchi, Pipalibari, Mohkhuli, Chandkuchi, Sursuri and Barnaddi of Nalbari district.

D. Dhuliya

Dhuliya Group is consisted of 30-40 people. It is also a kind of folk performing art form. *Dhol* is the main musical instrument along with the Tal. It is performed in relation to festivals and *Pujas*. At first beating of *Dhols* is performed. Then a person with a kind of strange dress tries to entertain the spectators. Physical exercises are also performed here. The stories are taken from the *Mahabharat*. The *Dhuliya* groups are seen in Roumari, Barni, Kaihati Bori, Borbila and Jowariddi of Nalbari district. The Bodo people also constructed *Dhuliya* group in Sripur Deor of Nalbari district.

E. Khuliya Bhaona

Khuliya Bhaona group is consisted of 15-25 people. The instruments necessary for this performing art form are Khol, Tal and Juri. Thge stories are taken from the Mahabharat. *Khuliya Bhaona* was started in Nalbari long before the 1924-25 A.D. The names of then existed *Khuliya* groups are Bhabit Masteror Dol, Oti Panditor Dal and Uro Bayanor Dal.

4.6 Education and literature

A. Gordon High School

A local board was established in 1882 in Nalbari. In the leadership of Puspa Narayan Choudury a primary school was established in the midst of Nalbari town. This primary school was promoted to a minor school in 1887. Then in 1919 Gordon High School was established. At present Higher Secondary classes of Arts and Science are continuing. This institution has been the centre of learning for the people of Nalbari district and outside [Rahman, M: 242-243].

B. Sanskrit Language

Sanskrit learning in Assam is about 1500 years old. East Nalbari has been the centre of Sanskrit learning from the past. Pundula, Deharkuchi, Borkhola, Chatma,

Lorma, Nagarkuchi, Dotor, Guwakuchi, Vankuchi, Koharjar, Sonkoriha, Dhurkuchi, Namkhola, Raitkuchi, Barmurikona are some of the regions where Sanskrit learning has been still the attraction for learning. Even a *Tol* was established in 18th century in Guwakuchi. *Ratnamala Bayakoran Tol* was established 1921 in Pundula. A Sanskrit college was established in 1938 in Nalbari district. At present a Sanskrit university has been established in Nalbari [Sarma, D: 246-249].

C. Education of Law

An executive committee was formed in 1980 with a view to forming a Law College in Nalbari district. This committee contacts to the Bar Council of India and Guwahati University. In 1981 the Law College was established. The regular classes were used to continue in a Satra M.V. School. This institution has been providing knowledge of law since long [Medhi, H: 255-256].

D. Literature

The name of the first published magazine from Nalbari was *Jeuti*. Kalindra Kalita was the editor of this magazine. Asom Tarun Lekhok Sangha was established in Guwahati in 1944. A subsection of it was formed in 1946 in Nalbari. In the field of literature Nalbari has an old history. Gopal Mishra was the first writer from Nalbari. He was born in 1545 and died in 1627. After him there was no writer for about a century. Then from 1929, Daiva Chandra Talukdar and Trilokya Nath Goswami started writing poems, dramas and novel through *Abhan* [Chakravarty, J: vii].

E. Astronomy

Gandhiya is regarded as the centre of astronomy of Assam. It is an old village of Nalbari district. Astronomy was started long before 1000 years in Gandhiya. In 1815 astronomer Sivanath of Gandhiya prepared *Dasakosthi* of king Chandrakanta Shina. He was rewarded for it. There were 4-5 *Tols* in Gandhiya for the learning of astronomy in Gandhiya. Students came from different parts of Assam to these *Tols* for learning astronomy [Sarma, B: 309].

4.7 Movements and Industries

A. Communist Movement

The first C.P.I.M. group was formed in 1965 in Nalbari. Then in 1966 another group of C.P.I.M. was formed in Nalbari. This group consists of Naren Dutta, Sansit Narayan Dutta Barua, Suren Dutta, Jugga Das and Sarat Barman. Communist movement was started long before 1942 in Nalbari. Even Bishnu Prasad Rabha attended meeting in Belsor, Tihu, Gagrapar and formed several groups in relation to this movement [Mishra, D: 534].

B. Freedom Struggle

The contribution of Nalbari district towards the freedom struggle of India is undeniable. Dharmakanta Sarma, Gourisankar Bhattacharya, Kesav Deba and many others from Nalbari district joined the freedom struggle [Sarma, D: 530].

C. Pottery

Raw material for the pottery is the *Hira Mati*. Kulbil and Koihati are the two villages where the practice of pottery art is seen. In the past *Hira Mati* was available in Nalbari district. At present the artists of pottery bring *Hira Mati* from Guwahati. The pottery artists mainly made *Pat Saru, Kolah, ghai, Thal, doll, Paila, Hari, Takeli*, etc. [Goswami, B. B: 564].

5. Society and Culture of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari

5.1 Assamese Society

Assam is one of the beautiful states of India and she is called the gateway of the north-eastern parts of India. The Brahmaputra is an indispensable part to the life of the Assamese people. The green hills, flora and fauna have made Assam an exquisite place for the tourists of all over the world. The remarkable features of Assamese society are the presence of diverse tribes and cultures, the vibrant life styles and the all smile people of Assam. The name Assam has got its mention in the epics and in the Vedic and Buddhist literature. The people of Assam are friendly and they belong to different tribes and communities. The Kaibarttas are one of such communities of Assam. Assam is the place of several kinds of religious orders and sects.

As the Assamese society is an assimilated society, so the diverse culture of the society has brought a rich treasure of art, craft, and music with it. The Assamese society is famous for its woods, cane and bamboo crafts, Jewels, pottery, handlooms and colourful masks. Bihu and Jhumur are the two popular dances of the Assamese society.

The Assamese Society has transformed mainly because of the modern education, tendency to lead urban life and the industrialization. Some Assamese youths went to Calcutta for taking higher education. These youths, towards the end of the 19th century were influenced by English literature. Their interests in English literature were flourished through their Assamese writing. The modern education has also changed the mentality of the Assamese people. This change is seen in the social system of the Assamese people. Changes are seen in all respects in the life of the Assamese people.

5.2 The Kaibarttas and their Social Life

No human beings can live without society. Social life grows out of constant pattern of social interactions and relationships among human beings. Society is a system whereby people live together in organised communities. Raddiffe Brown comments: “The social life as a phenomenal reality is a process consisting of a multitude of actions of human beings, more particularly their interaction and joint actions” [Radcliff, B: 18]. Literature of any nation or community depends on its social actions and activities. Dr. A.N Johri observes: “Literature is closely associated with the general of men in a particular age. Literature has social origins, in the folk song, folk ballad, folk dance and folk stories. It is the result of self expression on the solid foundation of social life” [Johri, A. N: iii].

Every society emphasises on its own customs. The customs have very much importance in social life. Society is the mean which stimulated the all round development of the personality of human beings. The term society is derived from the Latin word ‘socius’ which means companionship or friendship. In wider sense society includes in it different activities and professions, relation with one another, rights and duties of individuals and their behaviour in the various aspects of human life. Rightly does observe R.N. Sarma: “The term ‘social’ pertains to society or social relationships.

In an organised society, social relationships remain organised. Social organisation is inclusive of habits, institutions, associations etc.” [Sarma, R. N: 342].

The elements of society are likeness, abstract social relation, co-operation, independence, permanent nature etc. Human life and society almost go together. To live in utter isolation is a terrifying thing for man. He may live among the cannibals but not alone. The society is a must for him. Ellit and Merrill Observe: “Social organisation is a state of being a condition in which the various institutions in a society are functioning in accordance with their recognised or implied purposes” [Ellit and Merrill: 4].

An attempt has been made to analyse and discuss the data, Collected for the general study of the Kaibarttas in the light of the above mentioned statements of eminent sociologists.

5.3 Family Composition

Among different social groups family occupies the pivotal place in the formation of social structure which is the elementary unit of society. Bottomore says: “Social structure as M. Ginsberg says is the complex of the principal groups and institutions which constitutes societies” [Bottomore, T. B: 3]. Family occupies the fundamental primary unit in the society. Thus family is considered to be the basic social group. Rightly does observe Rose: “The family is the basic unit in all societies. The family is considered to be the basic social group. The family is the main conduct of norms and values, the chief agency of socialization. The family is the quintessential primary group. The family is the source of solace, the most enduring of all social institutions in trouble” [Rose, Glazer & Glazer: 200].

It is from the above statements that there are some modes of reckoning descent by having manufacturer. Then a family is an economic unit, particularly so far as the mother and the infant are concerned. Finally, a family is always associated with a common habitat for all its members. It is seen that among the Kaibarttas, the family is a closely knit unit. Most of the Kaibartta families are simple i.e. nuclear families which are consisted of husband, wife and their off-springs.

The Kaibartta families are patriarchal in nature. Being patriarchal, father is the head of the family and exercises authority over all members of the family. On the death of father, the elder son becomes ready to take responsibility of the family. Then he also inherits the larger part of the property, which includes the main residential house and the biggest fishing net of the family.

Though, Kaibartta family is of nuclear type which is consisted of father, mother and their children, it becomes an extended family when the sons get married and remain under the same roof forming biggest family work together for the common good of the household. The members of the family try to earn money mainly from fishing. They are supposed to deposit the earned money at the hand of family head. The family head is responsible to meet their requirements for food, clothes, shelter and so on.

The husband and wife take equal responsibility to look after the family and take care of the children. After becoming mature the children become free but they remain obedient to parents and the elderly members. Though most of the Kaibartta families are nuclear, a few joint families are also seen. Marriage makes separation among the father and sons or brothers. After separation they start new household and affection is not seen for each other after separation. Then the parents have to make their choice regarding with whom they are going to live.

From the survey of 360 respondents in Nalbari district, there are 305 nuclear i.e. single families and 55 families are the joint families in Nalbari district. This means that only 15.28% is found as joint families. It also shows that 84.72% is found as nuclear families in Nalbari district. And it shows some factors that help in disorganising the joint family such as – lack of co-operation among family members, disobeying to the family head and migration of a part of the family to another place in search of fishing opportunity.

Type of Kaibartta Family

Table No-5

Sl. No.	Type of Family	Members	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Nuclear	Father, mother and children	305	84.72
2	Joint	Father, mother, children and grand-father and grand-mother	55	15.28
		Total	360	100

From the survey it is seen that a family is generally constituted of 1 to 10 members. This is seen from the following table.

Size and Composition of Kaibartta Family

Table No-6

Sl. No.	Family Member	Grade of Family	No. of Family	Percentage
1	1	Single member	17	4.72
2	2	Two members	33	9.17
3	3-4	Medium	140	38.89
4	5-6	Small	92	25.56
5	7-8	Big	50	13.89
6	Above 9	Very big	28	7.78
		Total	360	100%

After surveying of 360 respondents in Nalbari district regarding the family composition, the following patterns come to the notice.

1] Father and mother without any issue 2] Parents with unmarried children 3] Widows without unmarried sons and daughter 4] Mother with unmarried sons and daughter 5] Father with unmarried sons and daughter 6] Father with a married son and unmarried grandsons and daughters 7] Mother with married daughter with grand children 8] Parents with a married son with other issues 9] Mother with a married son and unmarried grandson and daughters 10] Parents with married sons with their

children unmarried son and daughter 11] Parents with a married son without other issues.

All property belongs to father and his sons but not his daughters. Daughters only can inherit the clothes and Jewellery of her mother. After the death of the father, the sons become the boss of the property. A wife always lives in her husband's house and visits her parent's house only occasionally. The married couple lives with his parents or establishes new house for living with their children. Generally the children inherit the father's title. After marriage wife also inherit her husband's title.

5.4 Status and Role of the Family Members

In a Kaibartta family each and every member has a special role and status. Their role helps in running the family without facing any danger. They also help the family economically. Likewise status is also maintained in a Kaibartta family regarding the members.

Men always have been taking the responsibility of family, society and nation from the time immemorial. As like as the other patriarchal societies of Assam, father have been the head of the family in the Kaibartta society. He is the supreme authority in the family and he can do anything according to his will.

Women in the Kaibartta family have a special importance. She is seen to take the responsibility of running the family. As a woman of fishing community, she also sells fishes in the market. She co-operates with her husband in everything. She also works with her husband. The woman offers her helping hand towards her husband during the time of crises, sorrows and troubles. Woman's contribution to the family as well as to the economic matters is undeniable.

In a patriarchal society the position of women is much more dependable on men. They have to keep only busy in cleaning the houses, taking care of the children, washing the clothes, preparing foods etc. A Kaibartta woman cannot take part in the religious activities during menstruation and childbirth. During this time she cannot prepare food for others. She is not given the same priority as the male regarding education. But the woman is seen as the constant companion of her husband. As

mothers the Kaibartta women have to bear and rear child which is a universal phenomenon.

Children are the future of the family. Parents take care of them and bring up under their responsibility. The father hands down the family tradition to his children by applying his authority through some instructions. Father is always affectionate to his children. Father offers his helping hands when his child is in difficulty. Father and mother are the real teachers of the children. Most of the moral lessons are taught at home by parents. Mother's role is more important than father in shaping the moral conducts as she spends most of the time at home. Mother's duty is to bring up the daughters with all the womanly virtues.

5.5 Society and Social Structure

Society is a system whereby people live together in an organised community. It is also a way of living. It is a particular grouping of humanity with shared customs, beliefs etc. Society indicates the mutual relation among human beings. Rightly does observe E.B. Tylor: "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" [Tylor, E. B: 1].

Generally a society is consisted of the people. Society includes the political issues, economic issues, friendship, mutual understanding, relationship etc. It is also the combination of arts, religion and language. It is a web of social relationship. Several organisations help in establishing social relationship. These organizations control and regulate the mutual relationship between individuals. Rightly observes R. N. Sarma: "Society is an organisation, a system or pattern of relationship among human beings. It may be defined as the total complex of human relationship, a complex of forms or process, living and growing by interaction" [Sarma, R. N: 50].

It is observed that the Kaiabrttas in Nalbari district live along with the general caste people in some groups in the same village. They have their own identity and culture. But the Kaibarttas are not seen living together in a separate village. But they are seen living in a Suba i.e area inside a village. The Kaibartta families are patriarchal in nature. The whole family affairs centre round the father as he is the head of the family.

According to the social customs of the Kaibarttas, when the head of the family dies, his sons cremate his dead body. They also observe the *Sraddha* ceremony. After the death of father, the son automatically inherits the property. On the other hand if the man dead has no male issue, daughter inherits the whole property.

In the social system of the Kaibarttas they are categorised into four classes, such as, A. Halwa Dom B. Jalwa or Jaliya Dom C. Suriya Dom D. Kacharipuria Dom. The main occupation of the Halwa Doms is the cultivation. They tilt the soil with plough. But they also catch fishes and sell it in the market. The Jalwa or Jaliya Doms basically run their life by catching fishes. They are also known as - A. Patni B. Dom-Patni C. Dom or Nodiyal D. Motak Dom.

Motak Doms are different from Nodiyals in some respects. The Nodiyals follow the Vaisnavism. Motak Doms are the pupils of Moamoria Goseion [Bezbaruah, D. K: 22]. Motak Doms do not eat giant snake head. On the other hand the Nodiyals do not even touch the giant snake head. The Souriya Doms carry the dead body and they rear pig as occupation. The Kacharipuria Doms also carry the dead body and play the role of sweepers [Census of Assam, 1961].

From the survey it is found that child marriage is not observed among the Kaibarttas. Divorce is seen in Kaibartta society. After divorce she can remarry counselling with the elders of her family. In such cases marriage ceremony is not observed.

Every society possesses the social structure. It is an essential and basic element of the society. It presents the communication among several relationships, such as business relations, family relations, friendship relation, kith and kin relations etc. Rightly do observe D.N. Mujumdar and T.N. Madan also observe: "The relatively permanent aspects of respective social relations constitute social structure. It is the pattern of inter relations between persons, i.e. the institutionally fixed types into which the members of a society have to fit themselves. Within the broad framework of social structure, persons always keep making choices between alternatives, which have significant consequences. The appearance of a social structure at a particular time, as it

is being activated by then choice-making persons is social organizations. It explains social change” [Majumdar & Madan: 32].

S. F. Nadel says: “Social structure is an ordered arrangements, system and network of the social relationships obtaining between individuals in their capacity of playing roles, relation to one another” [Nadel, S. F: 16]. Thus it can be said that the continuity of society can be known by studying the social structure in the social life. The human societies can be studied not only in terms of cultures but also in terms of structures. The structure of society and social life both represent culture.

The culture of the Kaibarttas is mixed with the culture of the Assamese Hindu community of Assam. The process of acculturation and assimilation is observed among the Kaibarttas. As a result changes are evident in their life and culture. It also has affected their social institutions, economy and occupation. The social structure of the Kaibarttas is related to the institutions and families with the passing of days. The joint family system has been now rare. After marriage the Kaibartta young couple like to live separately.

5.6 Social Institutions

The social institutions run through rules and regulations and procedures. The social institutions are established to meet the basic needs and demands of people of the society. It helps the people to be unified by a chain. It simplifies and unifies the diversified human behaviours. These institutions possess some basic aims and objectives regarding the good of the society. It teaches people to work uniquely. P. I. Rose, M. Glazer and P.M. Glazer observe: “Social institutions meet basic human needs in regard to family life, education, the production and distribution of goods, the allocation of political power and implementation of religious beliefs” [Rose, Glazer & Glazer: 257].

R. N. Sarma also observes: “A social institution, transfers cultural elements from one generation to another generation, introduces unity in human behaviour, controls their conduct and guides men according to circumstances” [Sarma, R. N].

The above statement notes that the social institutions always possess some aims. These aims are helpful in uplifting the physical and mental position of the people of a

society. The moral values, customs, traditions rules and regulations pass from one generation to other generation. The social institution mostly helps in flourishing these among the people. It also helps in extending the knowledge in the society. It also helps in solving the problems that is confronted in our daily life. Thus the social institutions execute as the torch bearer in the society showing the right path.

The Kaibarttas in Assam also lead their life going through the social institutions. These institutions among the Kaibarttas have been performing some assigned functions. Several opinions in respect of the social institutions are observed in the Kaibartta society. The institutions such as family, kinship, education, property, marriage, widow remarriage and religious institutions can be termed as social institution in the Kaibartta society. Kaibartta society has mostly been affected by the social institutions.

5.7 Economic Condition

Rightly does observe R. Thapor: “Land being an important economic asset, problems concerning the division of land and inheritance received special attention in contemporary Dharma Shastra and commentaries” [Thapor, R: 452]. Economic condition is an important factor in the life of a community. It plays a vital role in the social and cultural life. For a rural community land plays a vital role in the formation of the economic status. Other occupations also influence the economic life. The actions require meeting up the demands of essential materials.

The study of economic system means the combination of three economic structures, such as, production, distribution and consumption. Paul. A. Samuelson observes: “Economics is the study of how men and society choose, with or without the use of money, to employ scarce productive resources, which could have alternative uses, to produce various commodities overtime and distribute them for consumption now and in the future among various people and groups in the society” [Samuelson, P. A: 5].

The Kaibarttas can be identified as poor in terms of nutrition, per capita income, physical quality of life index, hygienic condition etc. The occupation related to the Kaibarttas can be classified into two categories, such as, primary and secondary. The

occupation is considered main when it contributes more than 50 percent to the family income. On the other hand the occupation which helps in enhancing the level of total income of the family may be regarded as the subsidiary occupation. Fishing is the primary occupation of the Kaibarttas. The secondary occupations include people engaged in mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, animal husbandry, poultry farming etc. Of course, now-a-days the young generation of the Kaibarttas have changed their traditional occupation of fishing. To run their life smoothly, they have chosen the occupation of wage earning, rickshaw pulling, hand cart pulling etc. Only a few people are holding their govt. services.

Table No-7 shows the distribution of main occupation among 360 surveyed respondents. From the survey it is found that out of 360 respondents 185 respondents i.e. 51.39% earn their livelihood depending mainly on fishing occupation. The members of the family directly or indirectly take part in this profession. It shows that the Kaibarttas more inclined towards fishing than other occupation.

Distribution of Main Occupation

Table No-7

Sl. No.	Main Occupation	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Fishing	185	51.39
2	Cultivation	21	5.83
3	Hand Cart Pulling	26	7.22
4	Business	23	6.39
5	Rickshaw Pulling	25	6.94
6	Service	22	6.11
7	Contract	25	6.94
8	Wage Earning	33	9.17
	Total	360	100%

The distribution of subsidiary occupations among the surveyed families is shown as follows:

Distribution of Subsidiary Occupation

Table No-8

Sl. No.	Subsidiary Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Fishing	61	16.94
2	Mason	36	10
3	Grocery	38	10.56
4	Net-making	57	15.83
5	Carpentry	55	15.28
6	Daily Wage	113	31.39
	Total	360	100%

The above Table No-8 shows that a significant number of families does not possess any subsidiary occupation. Out of 360 respondents 61 have been running their life by depending on fishing occupation, 36 respondents keep themselves busy in the profession of mason, 38 respondents run the business of grocery. Moreover 57 respondents are found involved in net making profession. While 55 respondents are busy in the profession of carpentry and 113 respondents are working as daily labourers in different fields. 360 respondents have also their main occupation besides the subsidiary occupations.

A very large family will not be burden in the way of economic prosperity when majority of the members of such family are earners. The economic condition of a family depends on the ratio of working and non-working member of the family. The following Table No-9 shows the distribution of earners and dependant

Distribution of Earners and Dependants

Table No-9

Sl. No.	Family Grade	No. of Family Member	No. of Earning Member	No. of Dependand	No. of Respondent
1	Single Member	1	1	0-3	39
2	Two Member	2	2	2	27
3	Normal	3-4	1	4-6	86
2			3-5	58=144	
4	Small	5-6	1	7-10	18
2			6-9	40	
3			5-8	14=72	
5	Big	7-8	3	9-11	23
5			7	11=34	
6	Very Big	Above 9	3	12	6
5			11	8	
6			11	6=20	

The Table No-9 shows that 39 families have one earning member and number of dependants varies from 0-3. Again 27 families having 2 members include 2 earning members and 2 dependants. In the grade of normal families out of 144 families 88 families have only one earning members and the number of non earning member vary from 4-6. Again 58 families of the same category include 2 earning members and numbers of non-earning members vary from 3-5. Then in the grade of small family, out of 72 families 18 families have 1 earning member, 40 families have 2 earning members and 14 families have 3 earning members and the non-earning members vary from 7-10, 6-9 and 5-8 respectively. In case of big families out of 34, 23 families have 13 earning members and 11 families have 5 earning members and number of non-dependant members are 9-11 and 7 respectively. In case of the very big family 6 families show 6 earning members, 8 families show 5 earning members and 6 families show 8 earning members and non-earning members are respectively 12, 11 and 11. So

it is impossible to run the family smoothly for a single earner and poverty is must in such families.

The economic condition of the Kaibarttas is not sound. The Kaibarttas have to consume more goods than produced. Among the consumed goods - foods, clothing and articles of shelter are the basic goods. The economic activity of the members of a family is different from another family. The following Table No-10 shows the economic activities and status of the members of a Kaibartta family.

Distribution of the Economic Activities and Status of the Members

Table No-10

Sl. No.	Status of the Member	Economic Status of the Members
1	Father	Agricultural works, fishing, marketing, ploughing, house construction, making of fishing net, fishing implements made of bamboos, rickshaw pulling, hand cart pulling, grocery, carpentry etc.
2	Mother	Preparing food, making of fishing net, house management, assisting in agricultural works, selling fish going door to door, collecting fire woods, fishing etc.
3	Old Persons	Making fishing net, selling fishes in the market, looking after children and animals
4	Widows	Net making, fishing and household work
5	Children	Assisting in fishing, domestic affairs and agricultural work.

From the above Table No-10 it can be noted that a large number of Kaibartta people run their life depending upon the profession of fishing. Of course, the contribution of the Kaibartta women cannot be denied in constructing the economic foundation of the family.

Land plays an important role in the rural economy. Of course, the survey among 360 respondents discloses that most of the Kaibartta families possess no land for cultivation except the homestead land. It is because of the indifferent attitude of their

fore-fathers towards the possession of land. They have been traditionally engaged in the profession of fishing. The following Table No. 6.7 shows the land pattern among the 360 surveyed families.

Distribution of Families by Land Ownership Other than Homestead Land

Table No-11

Sl. No.	Land Possessed [in Bigha]	No of Family	Percentage
1	Landless	187	51.94
2	Less than 1 Bigha	69	19.17
3	1-2 Bigha	49	13.61
4	3-5 Bigha	55	15.27
	Total	360	100%

The survey discloses that among 360 respondents, 187 families have not possessed single plot and land for cultivation except the homestead land. It also shows that only 173 families are able to use their land for cultivation.

5.8 Education

It is said that education is knowledge and knowledge is the third eye of man, which can give him insight into all affairs and teach him how to act. Education is the greatest instrument for the development of society. Polite behaviour and ideals can be taught with the help of education. Education helps man to be prepared for simple living.

Rightly does observe R. N. Sarma: “Education gives him the ability to succeed in his struggle for existence. Education is the part of adoption. For man, adoption is more social than natural. Hence education adopts man to society. A man receives education in the family, school, playground, club, office in fact everywhere” [Sarma, R. N: 17].

The derivative meaning of education is to draw out the innate abilities and talents of children leading them out of darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. The word education is derived from the Latin word ‘educare’ which means it ‘draw out’ to bring up ‘to foster’. Formal education is pre-determined, pre-planned and time-bound, while informal education is incidental and spontaneous. On the other hand non-formal education is open-ended and non-competitive.

The Kaibarttas are not well adorned by education. There is educational institution in every village to provide educational facility to the children. But poor enrolments of the students in the schools are noticed during the time of survey. Many students have left schools without completing the primary education. Poor economic condition, lack of awareness of the guardians, calamities etc are the main reason after leaving the schools by the students. Moreover lack of proper educational facilities also effect in the higher studies. From the survey it is observed that the over-all educational condition of the Kaibarttas is miserable. The causes of the low rate of illiteracy may be as follows.

- A. Majority of the Kaibartta people are dependants on the profession of fishing. So, directly or indirectly the children have to help their parents in catching, selling and rearing fishes.
- B. The Kaibarttas mostly live near the beels, ponds and rivers in rural areas.
- C. Lack of awareness of parents regarding the benefits of education comes in the way of educating children.
- D. Economic condition is another factor which is responsible for the increase of non-literacy among Kaibarttas.

5.9 Kinship

Each individual is a member of two nuclear families as a result of exogamy. And it gives rise to the kinship term. The importance of kinship is seen in the Kaibartta society. Of course, no *Gotra* i.e. clan is observed among the Kaibarttas. The Kaibarttas are uniquely belonged to the *Baishya* clan. The term *Bhagi* represents the members of the same blood relation from the father's side. On the other hand the term *Kurma* is used to denote kin originated from the martial relations.

The following terms regarding the kinship current among the Kaibarttas have been shown as follows.

List of Kinship Current among the Kaibarttas in the Nalbari District

Table No-12

Sl. No.	Kinship Group	Kaibartta Term	Standard Assamese Term
1	Father	<i>Pite</i>	<i>Deota</i>
2	Mother	<i>Mai</i>	<i>Ma</i>
3	Grand-father	<i>Ata, aite</i>	<i>Kokadeota</i>
4	Elder Brother	<i>Koka, dada</i>	<i>Kokaideo</i>
5	Younger Brother	<i>Bhai, hono, guda</i>	<i>Bhai</i>
6	Elder Sister	<i>Bai</i>	<i>Baideo</i>
7	Younger Sister	<i>Boine</i>	<i>Bhoni</i>
8	Husband	<i>Lalak</i>	<i>Swami</i>
9	Wife	<i>Ghainnak</i>	<i>Patni</i>
10	Son	<i>Choli</i>	<i>Putra</i>
11	Daughter	<i>Beti</i>	<i>Jee</i>
12	Son-in-law	<i>Jongai</i>	<i>Jowai</i>
13	Uncle	<i>Khutta</i>	<i>Khuradeo</i>
14	Father-in-law	<i>Sahur</i>	<i>Shahur</i>
15	Mother-in-law	<i>Sahu</i>	<i>Shahu</i>
16	Brother-in-law	<i>Khulhali</i>	<i>Khulshali</i>
17	Husband of Younger Sister	<i>Bhani-jongāi</i>	<i>Bhoni-jowāi</i>
18	Women	<i>Tiri</i>	<i>Tirota</i>
19	Girl	<i>Api</i>	<i>Sowali</i>
20	Grand-mother	<i>Abu</i>	<i>Aita</i>

These kinship terms are seen used in their day to day occupational and social life. These terms are also influential in their fish lore.

5.10 Social Custom

Social customs are based on some traditionally followed beliefs. He or she can enlighten social life by following the customs bound by the society. The customs of a society are being transmitted orally from generation to generation. Children follow and obey the customs of their forefathers. In due course of time, they become able to possess all the customs of their forefathers. Traditional beliefs and religion, festivals, folk medicine and games and recreation play an important role in social customs. Social customs are the accepted or the habitual practices of a traditional way of living a life. Each and every community possesses some own ways of a traditional of life.

The study on the social customs of a particular community helps in acquiring information and knowledge about their social structure, art, rites and rituals, festivals etc. The social customs also help in controlling a society, making unity among people. Indra Deva observes: “Folklore is actively shared by both men and women of even lowest castes. Not only the rural people but a large part of the population of the pre-industrial urban centres is active bearers of the oral traditions. This wide sharing is brought out by the selection of themes and their treatment in various genres of folk literature. The attitudes of different castes towards each other, including that of lower castes towards the higher, the nature of the diverged relations in them and the resentment of the women, operative religious and magical beliefs and practices among the folk, and even the impact of modern social forces and ample expressions in the folk literature of various groups of India” [Deva, I: 88-89]. The social customs are the pulse of the people of a society.

Kaibarttas in Assam observe social customs at the various stages of their life cycle and at the different time round the year. Most of the social customs of the Kaibarttas are identical with those, generally observed by the common Assamese society. But some certain and specific customs of the Kaibartta community are prevalent in their society. The Kaibarttas of Nalbari have their own social customs related to fish and their fishing practices. Social customs of the Kaibarttas are seen in the following ways.

A. Festivals B. Beliefs and Religion [Rites and Rituals] C. Games and Recreations and D. Folk Medicines.

A. Festival

The folk people meet together in some fixed date and time of the year for the celebrations taking mirth with a view to relaxing themselves from fatigue and tension of hard physical and mental labour. Festivals mean a joyous season with feast, plays, music celebration of historical events, birth and death of a famous man or god. In Assam several kinds of festivals are observed in a year like other places in the world. These festivals are observed among the folk society and several caste and tribes of Assam.

Popularity and universality are the main characteristics of festivals. It exposes the external expression of social behaviour. During festivals and celebration people get the opportunity of exchanging their emotion among their friends and kith and kin. Rightly does observe Robert J. Smith: “Thus the festival is a prime device for promoting social cohesion for integrating individuals into a society or group and maintaining them as members through shared, recurrent, positively reinforcing performance. It is, indeed, the most concrete expression of collective emotions and loyalties” [Smith, R. J: 167].

The modern festivals are the result of magical rituals performed by the primitive people to please the ferocious nature and to fertilize the mother earth. William H. Hendelson observes: “Festivals held by primitive people consisted of collective magic or religious rites for propitiation of evil spirits and invocation of friendly supernatural powers. The development of agriculture was accompanied by new festivals, also consisting of magical religious rituals, in connections with seasons” [Hendelson, W. H: 430].

Like the Kaibarttas, living in the several parts of India, the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district observe certain festivals round the year. The Kaibarttas are belonged to the Hindu religion. The Hindu society has been observing a series of rites and rituals and festivals from the time immemorial. Observing the rites and rituals and several kinds of festivals is a distinctive feature of the Hindu society. Some of the festivals of the Kaibarttas are related to fishing and fishing practices, agriculture and religion.

Fishes play an important role while observing the festivals. *Zon-Beel Mela* is such a kind of festival of Assam observed by the Tiwas. In this festival fish takes an

important role. Before the celebration of the *Zon-Beel Mela* they caught fishes together in the *Zon-Beel*. They bring the *Senafala* fish to the festival. The Kaibartta people prepare feast by fish in the *Magh Bihu*. The seasonal festivals like *Magh Bihu*, *Doul Utsav*, *Aho-Moho* show the uses of fishes among the Kaibartta people. The Calendar festivals observed in relation to fish are mainly *Durga Puja* and *Kali Puja*. These are observed among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari. In some areas of Assam fishes are offered to the gods and goddesses during festivals. Māgur fish is sacrificed at Garua of Kamrup district. Rou and Bhakua fish are also offered at Kamakhya [Gogoi, A: 160].

The festivals may be categorised under following heads [Gogoi, A: 148].

I] Seasonal Festival II] Calendar Festival III] Limited Participation Festivals IV] Sacramental and Domestic Festivals

I. Seasonal Festival

The festivals which are observed according to the seasons in a year are called seasonal festivals. Traditionally several kinds of festivals are observed in several seasons round the year in all over the world. Seasonal festivals help in bringing freshness to the mind and body after spending most of the time of the year making hard labour to run their life. The seasonal festivals observed by the Kaibarttas are as follows.

i. Magh Bihu

The *Bihu* festival is observed thrice at several times in a year by the Kaibartta community like the general Assamese society. It is observed mainly in the *Pousha Samkranti*, *Chaitra Samkranti* and *Ashina Samkranti*. *Bihu* festival mainly originates from harvesting of agricultural products. The *Bihu* is of three types, such as, *Bohag Bihu* or *Rangali Bihu*, *Kati Bihu* or *Kangali Bihu* and *Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu*.

Feasting is the special feature of the *Magh Bihu* or *Bhogali Bihu*. The Kaibarttas observe it on the last day of *Puh* i.e. 9th month in the Assamese calendar. They welcome this *Bihu* with the worship of god of fire. The youths make *Bhela Ghar* i.e. a make-shift thatched house structure in the paddy field. All the people of the village assemble there and celebrate the feasts with newly harvested rice, fish and meat. Every

family prepare cakes, curd and snacks which are made of rice. Fish is an important food item during *Magh Bihu*. Feast is observed with fish. Community fishing is also seen among the Kaibarttas during *Magh Bihu* in the *SaulKhowa Beel*. Even in the *Bihu* songs the reference of fishes are found.

ii. Aho-Moho

Aho-Moho is another seasonal festival which is observed by the Kaibarttas. The youths mainly take part in this festival. During this festival they go door to door of the people in the evening and collect money and rice. The youths make some groups for the purpose. This festival is observed by the children and youths in the last day evening in the month of *Kati* i.e. 7th month in the Assamese calendar. The collected money and rice is used in feasting. They recite songs hitting the bamboo sticks with each other. In the songs of *Aho-Moho* the reference of fish is found. Of course this festival is known differently in the different regions of Assam. The Kaibartta youth of Nalabri district performs a special song in this festival. This festival is also known as *Auroi*, *Mahaho Kheda*, *Bhaotaliya* etc. [Sarma, N Ch: 328]. The song speaks of fishes in the pond.

Hori bol, hori bol e bol

Mongal hok

Kushal hok

Barit tamul pan hok

Golit garu hok

Pukharit mas hok

[Gogoi, A: 152]

This means:

The youths uniquely shout 'Harridhani' i.e. the name of God. They pray to God asking blessing for the owner of the household. They also hope for the good breeding of beetle nut, beetle leaf, fish and cow.

II. Calendar Festival

The calendar festivals are mainly observed in the *Tithis*, *Samkrantis* and lunar months. Of course, some seasonal festivals may also be inclusive to the calendar

festivals. Each and every religious community celebrates some kinds of calendar festivals. The Kaibarttas observe festivals, such as, *Kali Puja*, *Durga Puja*, *Lakshmi Puja*, *Manasa Puja*, *Dol Utsav*, with utmost devotion and merriment and with some specialities. Some of the calendar festivals observed by the Kaibarttas in relation to fish are as follows.

i. Dol Utsav

The Kaibarttas celebrate *Dol Utsav* in the month of *Phagun* i.e. 11th month in the Assamese calendar. It is a spring festival for them. From the point of view of purpose, characteristics and meaning some similarities are observed with *Bhaltheli Utsav*. During the days of the kings of Darrang the *Dol Utsav* got expanded. The kings of Darrang observed it as the festival of the kings like the Ahoms [Sarma, N. Ch: 272]. The *Dol Utsava* continues for three days. Both of men and women, girls and boys play mud, indigo, *Phaku* i.e. a kind of colourful powder with each other. They sing a kind of special song during this festival. These songs are known as *Holi Geet*. In the evening they take bath, wear clean and new clothes. They also gathered in a public place and sweets are eaten. Several kinds of performing art forms are also performed in the public places. In this Utsav reference of fish is found. During Dol Utsav, the Kaibarttas make an altar of soil. The symbol of fish is also fixed in this altar. Besides, the relatives of the Kaibarttas are served with fishes during this Utsav.

ii. Durga Puja

Durga Puja is another calendar festival observed by the Kaibarttas. They celebrate it like the Assamese Hindus. It is celebrated by them publicly. In each of the Puja Mandops, the statues of goddess Durga and Kali are kept. The people pray goddess Durga to save them from un-welcomed difficulties in life and to create peace among people. It is celebrated in the month of *Ahina* or *Kati* i.e. 6th or 7th month in the Assamese calendar. All the members of the family took part in this *Puja*. Sacrifices are offered in this *Puja*. In this *Puja* the Kaibarttas of the Jaysagar of Nalbari offer Magur fish. Besides, rouh and freshwater shark are also sacrificed in this Puja.

iii. Kali Puja

The *Kali Puja* is also a calendar festival. The Kaibartta people celebrate it collectively. It is observed in the month of *Magh* i.e. 10th month in the Assamese calendar. It is observed with the sacrifices of animals, birds and fishes. The Kaibarttas observe it collectively in a public place. Arrangement of dancing, theatre shows are done for enjoyment of village folk. The local youth performs several art forms in the stage. The Kaibarttas of Barnibari of Nalbari district sacrifices fish before goddess Kali. Ma-Kali is the folk goddess, and she is worshiped by the Kaibarttas in some parts of Nalbari district. The Kaibarttas in some places, like Barnibari, Jaysagar, Bonmaja believe that this folk goddess protects them from diseases like cholera and typhoid.

iv. Lakshmi Puja

Lakshmi Puja is also observed by the Kaibarttas. Goddess Lakshmi Devi is considered by the Kaibarttas as the goddess of wealth and crops. The Kaibarttas believe in offering prayer with offerings in some religious occasions. The Kaibarttas believe that this folk goddess helps them in catching fish, the wealth of water.

v. Manasa Puja

Manasa Puja is another calendar festival. The Kaibarttas like the Assamese Hindus observe it individually and collectively. This is observed in the month of *Saon* i.e. 4th month in the Assamese calendar. Of course the preparation for this *Puja* is seen from the very 1st day of *Saon*. On that day *Padma Purana*, a religious book is kept on an altar. From that day also *Padma Purana* is read regularly. The *Purana* is completed on the last day of the month of *Saon*. Last worship is done on that day. Each and every Kaibartta family observe the *Manasa Puja* on that last day of the month of *Saon* i.e. an Assamese month. The family members also place the statue of *Manasa* inside the campus of the family. People offer various animals such as the goat, pigeon etc as sacrifice to the *Manasa*. Sacrifice of several animals at the altar of *Manasa* is an important characteristic of *Manasa Puja*.

Manasa Puja is the specific Puja observed by the Kaibarttas. They believe in the power of *Manasa*, the goddess of snake. The Kaibarttas have to face snakes when they

go for fishing. They prayed her as the queen of snakes. They do not go for fishing on the day of worshipping her. And if they disobey the same, the snake goddess becomes angry and sends snakes to bite the person concerned.

III. Limited Participation Festivals

The limited participation festivals are limited to some particular regions and some small occupational groups. These festivals have been continuing traditionally from generation to generation. *Bagra Puja*, *Jali-Putitir Biya*, *Nau Puja* etc. are some such festivals which have been traditionally observed in the Assamese society. Limited participation festivals are mainly observed by the traders, fishing community, Carpenters, Mariya, Kumar, Komar, Hira. These are *Gosh Lowa*, *Gosh Utha*, *Ag Ana* etc. The Kaibarttas of Nalbari observes some special fish and fishing practices related limited participation festivals. The importance of fish is seen in these festivals. Some limited participation festivals observed by the Kaibartta community are as bellow.

i. Basli Puja

The Kaibarttas give utmost importance to this festival. In this *Puja* prayer is offered to the goddess *Basli*. They believe goddess *Basli* as another form of goddess *Durga*. It is also known as *Kalashi Puja*. They observe it in the month of *Chaitra* i.e. 12th month in the Assamese calendar. For this *Puja* a big statue of horse, made of clay is necessary. Then they go door to door of their own community people. Then the statue is placed at the altar of *Puja* and the head of the horse is broken. Then again fruits, flowers, dry fish and earthen lamps are offered to the statue. Besides, animals are also offered for sacrifice.

ii. Nag Panchami Puja

Nag Panchami Puja is observed before starting the fishing season in the mid April. This *Puja* is observed individually or in group. This *Puja* is observed to pacify the snakes while go for fishing. Bananas, jackfruit etc. and *Bhog* are offered to the deity of snake. The fisher folk pray to the deity of snake not to make any harm to him so that he can complete the fishing season.

iii. Ganga Puja

The *Mahaldars* of the Kaibartta community particularly observe this *Puja*. They celebrate it before catching fishes with the help of nets in the *beels* or ponds. To celebrate this *Puja* a he-goat is thrown in the river or ponds. But later on the young *Mahaldar* catches the he-goat and make an arrangement of feasting. They believe that Ganga is the queen goddess of water and she dwells in water. Thus she is the possessor of everything in water including fishes.

IV. Domestic Festival

Human life is a series of fair and festivals. Life of the human beings is full of transitions. The life cycle from birth to death is consisted of several rites and rituals. A man passes through different stages from birth to death. In each of these stages of life he or she meets a number of traditional ceremonies. Rightly does observe Arnold Van Gennep: “The life of an individual in any society is a series of passage from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, So that a man’s life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginning birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization and death” [Gennep, A.V: 2-4].

In a completed life cycle of a human being there are four basic and universal stages, such as birth, maturity, reproduction and death. The basic pattern of the sacramental festivals of the Kaibartta people is same with the Assamese Hindus of Assam. Festival related to birth, puberty rite, marriage and death are the sacramental festivals of Assam. In these festivals the reference of fishes are found and the Kaibarttas of Nalbari follow these festivals.

i. Marriage

Marriage is one of the important transitions in life. It is observed by following different types of rites and rituals. It is a complex social norm. The marriage ceremony has been showing great importance in the life cycle of Kaibartta people. The Kaibarttas also consider it a sacramental rite. The Kaibarttas believe that man and woman represent the halves of the divine body. Marriage may be defined as a social

ceremony which transforms a man and woman into husband and wife. The marriage ceremony plays a great role in the life and society of the Kaibarttas. When they celebrate it, they observe some specific customs. Customs associated with the wedding ceremony of the Kaibartta community are as follows:

Joran Diya is a pre-marriage ceremony and observed before the wedding ceremony. The mother of the bridegroom visits the house of bride along with the bridegroom's friends. Bride's mother greets her. Bridegroom's mother then applies vermilion on the forehead of the bride. She also decorates her with ornaments and accepts her as daughter.

Invocation of the spirits of the last seven generation ancestors is another ceremony observed on the wedding day. In this ceremony the last seven generation ancestors are offered due reverence. Father of the bride takes active part in this ceremony and offers reverence to them and requests them to attend this auspicious occasion. They believe that the spirits of the ancestors will guard the marriage ceremony.

Fish has a special place in marriage. Fish is brought by the bridegroom to the house of the bride. Fish is culturally and traditionally important among the Kaibarttas. They believe fish as the symbol of sex. Fish is sexually very strong. Magur is believed to be the symbol of male sex. Fish is the symbol of foetus. The shape of the foetus at the very early stage is like a fish. Fish is also believed to be the symbol of goodwill.

ii. Rites of Pregnancy and Birth

Pregnancy plays a vital role among the women of Kaibartta society regarding her position and status in the family. Some rites are observed regarding pregnancy in the Kaibartta society. Child birth is considered as an act of divinity. The Kaibartts follow some customs at the time of pregnancy. In most cases, these customs are identical with the customs of the Assamese society. But they possess some certain customs in respect of their culture and occupation.

The pregnant woman and her husband follow some rites and regulations. They are not allowed to go to cremation ground. They are even not allowed to touch dead person because they believe that the evil spirits may attach to the woman and her expectant child. They are even forbidden to kill birds and animals.

One specific custom during the pregnant period, the woman concerned is not allowed to catch fish because the Kaibartta fisher folk believe that the fish is the incarnation of the Lord Vishnu. So, catching fishes may bring misfortune to the pregnant woman.

After birth of the child, the woman is offered a separate room and bed. The woman has to keep an iron knife with her. At the very beginning, the newly born child's tongue is cleared with the tip of hair of the mother. Then the child is given a drop of honey to taste. A Kaibartta woman follows the rites of *Mangala Khowa* after eight month of pregnancy. During following the rite both the pregnant woman and her husband are asked to touch a pair of magur. They believe the fish to be the symbol of strength.

iii. Rites of Purification and Name Giving Ceremony

Purification ceremony is related to a new born child. The Kaibarttas follow a specific ritual after the birth of the child. The new born child a fish washing sieve is burnt wishing good health to the newly born child. The Kaibarttas also believe that the non-benevolent deity can make no harm to the child in doing so. In case of female child the ceremony is observed after 5 days from the day of birth. The ceremony of male is observed after 7 days from the day of birth. Following the traditional rites the child's hair gets cut. After cutting hair, holy water is thrown on the child which is prepared mixing *Dubri* i.e. a kind of green grass, basil leaves and a piece of gold. At the end of the ceremony, the relatives, villagers and elders offer their blessings to the child. The ceremony brings refreshment to the child and mother.

Another specific ritual regarding the new born child is that a new baby may fall under the spell of the evil spirits. They specially believe that the baby can be protected by covering the doorway with a piece of an old fishing net. A net is believed by the Kaibarttas to be a weapon of heaven. They believe that by using the weapon of Indra, the king of heaven the child remains safe and protected. Using of the fishing net also exhibits their belief on the power of their fishing tools.

Another ceremony observed by the Kaibarttas is known as *Gonowa* i.e. the name giving to the child. In some regions this ceremony is observed after 5 days from the

day of birth. But in some other regions it is observed after one month from the day of birth. The Kaibarttas of Goldighla of Nalbari follow the rites of *Posati* in relation to the name giving ceremony. In this ceremony the invited relatives are served rice with fish. Mustard oil and salt with fish and paste of dry chilly are distributed among the relatives and neighbours. The names symbolise an individual's personality and social status. E.A. Hoebal does observe: "Names that are associated with good luck or great deed tend generally to be preferred" [Hoebal, E. A: 324].

iv. Annaprasanna

The *Annaprasanna* is locally known as *Bhatmukhat Diya*. This ceremony is observed as birth rites to new born child. It is observed after 9 or 11 months from the day of birth. But in some regions this ceremony is observed after one year. This ceremony is performed according to some Vedic rites. A priest is invited for it. Relatives and kith and kin are invited to this ceremony. Fish is an essential food item in this ceremony. According to a specific custom, the Kaibarttas offer soup of fish so that he can only smell it.

v. Puberty Rite

The menstruation is the signal of attaining puberty for the female. The puberty is observed among the Kaibarttas with some rites. It is observed when a girl becomes damsel. The ceremony related to puberty is known as *Dhuwani* or *Toloni Biya*. When puberty is attained, the girl has to stay separately in a bed for 3 to 5 days. Then after 5 days the purification ceremony is observed. In this ceremony only girls and women are seen participated. On the purification ceremony the invitees are served with tea, sweets, rice and fish.

Relating to the puberty the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district observe a specific religious rite. This religious rite is known as *Japa Thowa*. It is observed on the previous day of the purification ceremony. A group of young girls of the village carry the *Japa* from the house of maternal uncle to the destination. The girls also sing songs during this time. These songs are locally known as *Japa Thowa Git*. But at present this ceremony is seen only in some regions among the Kaibarttas, such as, Jaysagar and Goldighla.

vi. Death Rites

Death is the end of physical existence of an individual. In the primitive Age people believed in the immortality of soul. The Kaibarttas perform the Vedic rites and rituals in case of a dead person. When a person dies the dead body of the person is taken out and kept near a *Tulsi* plant i.e. basil. Then the dead body is washed with soap. Then the dead body covered with white piece of cloth. Earthen lights and incense are lighted. Then water mixed with *Tulsi* leaves is sprinkled on the dead body.

The Kaibarttas always have been cremating the dead body. After the death of any member of a family, the whole family has to observe a ritual impurity for the period of 15 days from the date of death. The dead body is taken to the cremation ground. The funeral pyre is arranged to cremate the dead body. A bamboo pole with a white piece of cloth is attached is fixed on the ground near the cremation site. Some food items and coins are kept at the cremation site of the dead body. The members who come from the cremation site have to take bath in the river or stream.

On the 10th day, after the day of death, the rite of *Daha* is observed. For this occasion the son of the dead person have to shave his hair and beard. For the soul of the deceased food is prepared. The food is offered in an earthen pot.

The Kaibarttas observe the *Shraddha* or *Suddhi* on the 13th day from the day of death. From that day the family members are supposed to free from ritual impurity. J. Hastings observes: “The Sraddha, the mind-rite of orthodox Hindus, known as Sraddha i.e. Sanskrit, Srat, faith, belief is a more highly developed form of the primitive funeral feast and of the custom of feeding the dead” [Hastings, J: 452]. The priest performs all the ritual activities related to *Shraddha*. The priest murmurs the mantras facing to the south following traditions and customs of the Kaibartta community. The *Kirtan* is chanted by a group of *Kirtanians* i.e. singers. Finally, on the 15th day after the date of death another kind of ceremony is observed. This ceremony is called *Mashyasparsha*. The relatives, villagers and kith and kin are served with a feast on that day. Fish is served in *Mashyasparsha* ceremony. It is also the occasion in which the family members of the deceased person offer *Matshya* i.e. fish to the relatives, neighbours and other village people.

B. Beliefs and Religion and Rites and Rituals

The idea of God is associated with exaltedness, happiness and nobility of thought and it is always present in the mind of the folk people. Their religious rites, customs, rituals beliefs are originated from the ideas of the very God. Religion establishes on the beliefs of the folk life. The natural calamities and disasters created fear and shock in the mind of the primitive folk. To keep themselves safe they followed some sorts of beliefs. Belief, religion, rites and rituals are the four social elements which more or less govern the life of the people in a society. These elements have been playing an important role in the life of the Kaibarttas. Beliefs construct mental instinct of the human beings. The mental instinct has been always pervading over the tendency of reason. Rightly does observe Charles Darwin: “Instinct is more powerful than reason” [Darwin, Ch: 8].

Several kinds of animals, trees, the sky, the natural phenomenon around the atmosphere created a kind of fear in the minds of the primitive people. They raised questions and suspects in their minds regarding all these things. When they failed to get the appropriate answers of these questions, myths, legends and tales were created by them. P. Goswami does observe: “It is difficult to explain the whys and wherefores of popular beliefs. Beliefs are traditionally handed down and in a society which does not appreciate the sceptical and critical attitude of minds, how they started is hardly remembered” [Goswami, P: 6].

Difference is seen between folk beliefs and superstitions. To some extent folk beliefs are based on reason. But the practices of superstitions may harm the human beings. The tendency of harm is not seen in case of folk belief. The tendency towards beliefs and superstition are also seen among the educated persons. Rightly does observe Charles Platt: “Nearly everyone is more or less superstitious, than most people would deny this, nevertheless, ninety nine persons out of hundred will walk around ladder rather than under it” [Platt, Ch: Front Page].

The beliefs associated with fish played an important role in the life of the Kaibartta people. The Kaibarttas, a fishing community are well introduced with several kinds of fishes. The fish plays an important role in forming the economy of the Kaibarttas

along with in their cultural life. They have been observing some beliefs associated with fish. Some of the beliefs are as bellow:

I. Beliefs Associated with Fish

The Kaibartta community of Nalbari district follows some specific beliefs associated with fish. Magur is not cut into pieces because it is offered in several Pujas. In the month of *Kati*, i.e. an Assamese month the, Kaibarttas do not eat fish. Fish eaten on Saturday by throwing in the fire is believed by them that it can save one from the spell of evil eye. It is also believed that fish eaten by throwing in the fire can save someone from the evil influence of charms. *Gad-gedi* i.e. mottled nandus is not eaten by the male one. They believe that if male folk eats this fish, he may join the war. The first fish seen during the flood is not eaten by them. They believe that in doing so the flow of migrating fish becomes good and then fish catch also becomes beneficial in the fishing season. *Sang* i.e. Smooth brassed snake head is not eaten in the month of *Kartika*, i.e. an Assamese month. Asking for a small fish is believed not to give someone because one may use it for some harmful purposes as a small fish is supposed not to use for consumption. Fishes with scale is believed no to eat by burning in fire. The Kaibartta fisher folk when go for fishing spit on the fishing tools because they believe that this act of spitting makes the fishing tools free from the power of evil influence. [Gogoi, A: 138-139]

II. Dreams Associated with Fish

Dream is a series of emotions, ideas, images and sensations. It occurs involuntarily in the mind during sleep. It is a wild fancy or hope. The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district also follow some beliefs in respect of dreams associated with their occupation. They admit that a predawn dream is a reflection of the coming event. Witnessing flood is believed by them as forerunner of good news. They specifically believe that crossing the river *Ganga* means death may occur soon. Catching fish is believed by them to be fortunate with money.

III. Fish and Sacrifice

Some beliefs of the Kaibarttas are associated with sacrificing fish. When someone falls under the spell of *Daini*, an evil spirits they offer freshwater shark as sacrifice.

The sacrifice is kept in the name of *Daini* in the courtyard of the victim's house. *Zokh*, an evil spirit is also offered freshwater shark, when one becomes victim of *Zokh*.

IV. Zokhe Dhara

The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district believe in the malevolent power of *Zokh*, an evil spirit. When they go out for fishing with help of earthen lamp at night, *Zokh* is believed to cast its spell on them. It does not make any harm to the fisher folk. But it is their specific belief that *Zokh* eats fishes they caught.

V. Peurai Dhara

Peura is also a kind of evil spirit, believed by the Kaibarttas. It can cast its spell on the fisher folk when they go fishing at night. *Peura* can create puzzle in the mind of the fisher folk regarding the direction. As a result the fisher folk have to move and move, but they cannot reach their destination. They fail to make out the way to their own home. Sometimes they have to spend the whole night in the midst of field.

VI. Religious Belief

Religion is the combination of beliefs, values, rituals and ceremonies. Man as an indispensable part of the society learns religion, beliefs, values, behaviour etc. from the society itself. An individual as a conscious member of the society acquires religion through commands and indications. Religion is a great force which is observed in all societies in one form or other. Anthropology regards religion as a cultural institution which has grip over people in all the societies. Religion as a social phenomenon has its transformation.

Kaibarttas, all over the India follow several religious norms and practise rites and rituals. Kaibarttas in Assam practise religion and develop some beliefs, customs and traditions depending on it. The Kaibarttas in Nalbari district develop and share several narratives about the existence of folk deities. They also believe the presence of evil spirits. They believe that these spirits can kill them if the fisher folk visit their dwelling places. The Kaibarttas in Nalbari district believe that if they observe some rites and rituals and observe some religious occasions, evil spirits along with gods are pacified. The narratives run among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district revolves round

these rites and rituals and the religious occasions. Some of the religious beliefs are as follows:

i. Belief Associated with Deities

Several kinds of beliefs, regarding the folk deities are seen among the Kaibartta people, living in Nalbari district. It is seen that the Kaibarttas are the followers of the doctrine of Hinduism. Generally two cults are prevailed among the Kaibarttas. Some of them follow *Sakta Dharma*. On the other hand some others follow *Vaishnava Dharma*. Of course, *Vaishnava* cult includes different sects. The Kaibarttas follow goddess *Bhagawati* as their chief goddess. They also accept the goddess of snake i.e. *Vishahari* as their special goddess [Saikia, S: 1995].

The neo-*Vaishnav* movement was introduced towards the end of the 15th century by Sankardeva. It is known that Sankardeva gave equal respect to the people of scheduled caste community in the Assamese society. The door of *Vaishnavism* was opened to all classes of the society. Prior to Sankardeva, only *Sakta* practices were prevailed in which Shiva, Durga and Kali were regarded as the main deities. But Sankardeva tried to preach a pure and simple form of Hinduism. According to Sankardeva, salvation could only be possible by devoting Vishnu in the form of Krishna. Rightly does observe Brinchi Kumar Barua: “The Vaishnava functions are devoid of ostentation. Simplicity and devotion are the main characteristics of the religious functions of Vaishnavas. Detachment towards worldly objects is the main teaching of Vaishnava cult. But the religious functions of Saktas are full of rituals and ceremonies and instead of poverty, the Saktas pray and worship for health, beauty and wealth etc” [Barua, B. K: 179].

The Kaibarttas believe in several kinds of gods and goddesses. They worship the gods and goddesses, such as *Durga*, *Vishnu*, *Lakshmi*, *Kāli* and some other goddesses on various occasions and times. All these gods and goddesses have been influencing the daily lives of the Kaibarttas. Several deities from epics like *Mahabharat*, *Bhagavat Purana*, *Padma Purana* and *Vishnu Purana* have been influencing their minds and thoughts. They believe in the power of these deities. They follow some rites and rituals, while go for fishing to some distant beels and river. They want to make

themselves relief from anxiety and fear by offering prayer to these deities and performing rites and rituals. Malinowski rightly does observe: "...where man can rely completely upon his Knowledge and skill, magic does not exist, while in the open sea fishing, full of danger and uncertainty, there is extensive magical rituals to secure safety and good results" [Malinowski, B: 30-31]. Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district worship some common deities in order to protect them from upcoming danger while go for fishing. These deities are: Kali, *Lakshmi*, *Manasa*, Vishnu and *Chandika*. They like to identify themselves with these deities in respect of their occupation. They believe these deities as the possessors of beels, rivers, streams and ponds. Of course they also believe in some other deities like Assamese Hindu society, such as, *Jal Devata*, deity of *Nag*, *Kuvir*, *Ganga*, *Jaleswari* and are worshiped by them. Some of such deities and beliefs associated with them are as follows:

a. Benevolent Deities

To have faith on some benevolent force is universal. Blessings are the result of the benevolent forces. The benevolent deities are regarded to be the controllers of some of the worldly objects. The life of human beings and animals are also under the control of the deities. People adore them for good health, good crops and for some other good activities.

Vishnu is regarded by the Kaibarttas as the controller of water. They believe that *Vishnu* controls all the objects of nature and he is the lord of paradise. So, they believe that fishes are under the control of *Lord Vishnu*.

Goddess *Lakshmi* is worshiped by the Kaibarttas as the benevolent deity of wealth and crops. Kaibartta fisher folk believe that this goddess help in catching good amount, the wealth of water. So, worship is offered in some religious occasions.

The Kaibarttas of Nalbari, living in some places like Goldighla and Paykan Bonmaja, believe the folk goddess *Chandika* as the incarnation of Goddess *Druga*. She is regarded by them as the benevolent deity and observe ceremony in *Chandika Puja*. At the end of the Puja her idol is thrown into the water. Thus they try to make her related with their occupation.

b. Malevolent Deities

They believe that epidemics, disasters, sufferings are the result of the malevolent forces. The Kaibarttas believe in a number of deities as the malevolent deities. These deities may cause diseases in several forms. While the benevolent deities help people, the harmful deities are associated to bring sufferings, misfortunes, calamity to the human beings. The Kaibarttas believe that these deities do harm to the people. People have to face them in several forms, such as disease, pain, death etc. After detecting the cause of illness, one may offer Pujā to the particular deity sacrificing animals and birds. If it is neglected, deity may kill the person concerned.

Manasa, the snake god is regarded as the malevolent deity by the Kaibartta fisher folk. The Kaibartta fisher folk have to face snake, while go for fishing. So, they try to pacify this snake god by offering Puja like *Nag Panchami* and Manasa Puja.

Kali is regarded by the Kaibarttas in some parts of Nalbari district as the malevolent deity. They specifically worship this goddess to protect them from the diseases like cholera and typhoid. The Kaibarttas of Barnibari believe that cholera occurs due to excess consumption of fish. So, during when cholera occurs, selling fishes is banned temporarily in their places.

c. Deities Associated with Water

Apart from the deities, stated above, the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district also believe in some deities which are believed to dwell in water bodies. They generally regard these deities as the watery deities.

Nag is believed by them as the king of waterbeds by the Kaibarttas. They face snakes while go for fishing in their day to day life. They ardently believe that these snakes are the follower of the snake king *Nag*. So, they worship *Nag* to be protected from the biting of the snakes while they are in water.

Ganga is considered by the Kaibarttas as the goddess of water. They worship this deity as the queen goddess of river and water. They believe this goddess to dwell in water. They also believe that everything in the water including fish is possessed by her.

Kuvir is another folk deity believed by the Kaibarttas. They believe that this deity dwell in river, beels and ponds. This deity can transform its shape and generally appears at night. This god is considered by them as the malevolent deity that can harm the fisher folk when it is annoyed.

Jal Devata is also a watery deity believed by the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district. Some Kaibartta fisher folk of Narua, Barnibari specifically worship this deity as the possessor of the water bodies. They believe that this deity fortunate the fisher folk with a good amount of fishes if he is appeased by them. So, they offer prayer on the bank of the beel before starting the first fishing season.

The above study shows that the deities believed by the Kaibarttas are associated with fishing and related activities.

VII. Belief Associated with Evil Spirits

Existence of spirit is an age-old belief. The Kaibarttas also believe in the existence of evil spirits that revolves round some narratives popular among them. Some of the evil spirits are influential in their day to day life and while others are associated with fishing and related activities and water. These evil spirits are considered as the malevolent forces. Yet, they perform worship on some certain occasions. Some time they perform rites and rituals to invoke these spirits. Some beliefs are associated with these spirits. Some of these beliefs are as follows:

i. Bhot

The Kaibartts believe in *Bhot* i.e. evil spirit. The *Bhot* represents some evil spirits, such as *Zokh*. It is believed that *Zokh* is greedy for fishes. The Kaibarttas When go for fishing at night, they spit on the fishing tools. Generally it is believed that when the *Bhot* possesses the soul of any person, then it causes madness in the person concerned. *Bhots* are believed to live in cremation site, old big trees and in some lovely places. They may also appear in dreams. They create panic in the body of the person concerned. Later on, it leads him to madness. The tantric i.e. a person having knowledge of incantation may drive away the *Bhot* from the body of the person. The *Bhot* leave the body of the person with some signs, such as breaking the branch of a tree during the treatment period.

ii. Jal Kuvir

Jal Kuvir is an evil spirit believed by the Kaibarttas. This evil spirit lives in water. It is regarded by them as a malevolent spirit. According to them it looks like a dog and its eyes sparkle like torches. Generally the fisher folk fall under its spell while go for fishing. As a result the fisher folk may suffer from extreme cold and fever that some times results in death. Some time its effect on them is minor. This evil spirits may also take a fisher under its spell and enter into the fisher folk's body. Then the fisher folk lose sense and move from one place to another place.

iii. Paka Dhara

Pak is believed by the Kaibarttas as an endemic evil. This evil spirit lives in beel and river. It looks ugly and smells like fish. The fisher folk can know its presence by its smell. They specifically believe that a *Pak* comes to the fisher folk and eats all the fish they caught and if necessary kills the fisher folk.

iv. Ghora Paka Laga

The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district also believe in *Ghora Pak*, an evil spirits. It is similar with *Pak* in its appearance. *Ghora Pak* is more dangerous than the *Pak*. If any fisher folk come under its spell, then it is difficult to come out from its spell. It hardly spears any fisher folk. They believe that a *Ghora Pak* always carries a bag with it. They believe that if a fisher folk can keep a mustard leaf in that bag, then the *Ghora Pak* becomes slave of that particular fisher folk.

v. Piyachani Powa

Piyachani is an evil spirit. It is greedy for roasted fish. They believe that it appears in the form of a known person and asks for roasted fish. It generally appears at noon and night. Sometimes it asks fish throw window and if someone knows its original character, then it is struck with a knife.

VIII. Belief Associated with Some Religious Occasions

Religious usages and ceremonies are inclusive to the rites. These are observed with some taboos. There are penance and mourning after observing some primitive rites. W.H. Hendelson does observe: "Rites originally involving physical exertions evolved into dances in later times. Rites which in early societies merely symbolized cruelty and

blood lust became transformed in later times in to such sadistic spectacles as the gladiatorial combats of ancient Rome, the knightly jousts of medieval times, and the bull fights of modern times” [Hendelson, W. H: 430].

It is said that rites without religion have no fruits, religion without rites have no root. As the Kaibarttas are the followers of the Hindu religion, the Sanskritization process has opened the path to practise many Hindu beliefs throughout their lives. S.K. Chatterji does rightly observe: “The progressive Sanskritization of the various pre Aryan or non-Aryan peoples in their culture, their outlook and their ways of life, forms the keynote of India through the ages. And in this course of this Sankritization, the affected people also brought their own spiritual and material milieus to bear upon the Sanskrit and Sanskritic culture which they were adopting and thus helped to modify and to enrich it in their own circles” [Chatterji, S. K: 5].

Man’s life is a series of observing the rituals from birth to death. Rituals may be considered as the way of following religion. Observing of these rituals helps in strengthen one’s faith in religion along with its practices. Rituals are the external means of following religion. The primitive people observed rituals on the basis of some magical beliefs. D.N. Majumdar and T.N. Madan do observe: “Ritual consists in the observance, according to a prescribed manner, of certain action designed to establish lesson between the performing individual and the supernatural power or powers” [Majumdar & Madan: 152]. Thus rituals are the means of implementing of our beliefs. The Kaibarttas celebrate several rites and rituals round the year. Of course, some of the Kaibarttas who are the followers of the *Vaishnavism* believe only in Vishnu.

The Kaibarttas believe that by following some religious function, associated with fishing and related activities, their desires and needs may be fulfilled. Keeping this belief before them, they follow some religious occasions. Some religious occasions along with their beliefs are as follows:

i. Vishnu Puja

Vishnu Puja is observed to appease Lord Vishnu. He is regarded as the King of paradise and the creator of this universe. They believe that their suffering and miseries

met during fishing may be diminished by offering him prayer. So, they observe *Vishnu Puja*.

ii. Ganga Puja

The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district believe *Ganga* as the goddess of water. Fish is the wealth of water. So, if Goddess *Ganga* is appeased, they will get more fish. They will be showered with blessings. To worship *Ganga*, they observe *Ganga Puja*.

iii. Manasa Puja

Manasa is the goddess of snake. They believe in the power of Goddess Manasa. While they go for fishing they have to face snake in water. They believe that by worshipping this snake goddess, they may be safe, while they are in water. So, Manasa Puja is observed by the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district to worship.

iv. Nag Panchami Puja

Nag is believed by the Kaibarttas as the king of snakes. This deity lives in waterbeds. Blessing from Nag is necessary for them, as they have to spend more time in water. So, they observe *Nag Panchami Puja* to appease this deity.

v. Jaleswari Puja

The Kaibarttas believe in the power of goddess *Jaleswari*, the water goddess. They believe that this goddess is the controller of all the objects in water. So, with a view to getting more blessings, they offer prayer in *Jaleswari Puja*.

vi. Bhel Diya Puja

This another religious occasion enjoyed by the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district. This religious festival is observed on the bank of river and beel before starting the first fishing season of the year. Prayer is offered to the water gods and goddesses, so that they can end their fishing with a good amount of fishes.

IX. Beliefs Associated with Fishing Tools

The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district believes in the power of some fishing tools they use. Some of such beliefs associated with their fishing tools are as follows:

i. Belief associated with Boat

Boat is one of the important devices for fishing. They use boat for fishing in river and beels. The Kaibarttas regards that boat is an important tool provided to them by

Lord *Vishwakarma*. They take care of boat and worship in some religious occasions. On the other hand Brahma also used boat. One day when Brahma was attacked by a big fish, a fisherman saved him from danger. Brahma, becoming satisfied gave him his boat.

ii. Belief Associated with Net

The Kaibarttas use several kinds of net for fishing. It is an essential tool for them. Some beliefs revolve round the net among them. They believe that net is the great contribution to them by *Indra*, the king of heaven. They also believe that net is offered to them by the goddess *Manasa*. They also believe in the magical power of net. So, they use net in their doorway to drive away the evil spirits.

iii. Belief Associated with Fishing Basket

The Kaibarttas believe the fishing basket as a sacred tool. They try to keep it clean as it the symbol of their happiness and prosperity. They believe that this tool is given to them by Brahma and they use it to remember him.

X. Bhel Diya - An Occupational Custom

Bheldiya is one of the popularly known rituals among the Kaibartta community. From the survey it is come to know that this ritual is confined only to the fishing community. It is performed both individually and collectively. *Bheldiya* is observed on an auspicious day in the month of *Jestha* or *Ahara*, i.e. 2nd or 3rd month in the Assamese calendar. Of course some villagers celebrate it in the month of *Bhadra*, 5th month in the Assamese calendar. To get the blessing of *Jala Devata* i.e. deity of water is the main purpose of this ritual. Through prayer they ask *Jala Devata* to get rid of the sorrows and trouble arising out of the flood. They also pray to *Jala Devata* to help in catching a good number of fishes. A *Bhel* i.e. raft is made of banana trees on the day of the ritual. The raft is adorned with garland and some other items, such as, nine pairs of egg, nine pairs of ripe banana, nine earthen lamps and nine pairs of betel nuts and betel leaves.

After preparing all these things, a special kind of *Bhog* called *Gopal Bhog* is offered. After performing incantation according to Vedic rite i.e. *Hom* by a Kaibartta

priest, the *Bhel* is thrown into a river or a pond with *Harridhani* i.e. shouting the name of God.

XI. Jal Dangariyak Thagi Diya - An Occupational Custom

Jal Dangariyak Thagi Diya custom is the mostly popular customs among the Kaibartta community. This custom is mainly associated with fishing. This custom is both individually or collectively observed. The festival is observed to appease the *Jala Devata* i.e. deity of water so that they can run their fishing season of the year smoothly facing without any difficulty. It is held just before the peak season of the fishing is started. For the preparation of the ritual, a pan made of banana tree i.e. *Dona* is offered to *Jala Devata*. *Prasad* i.e. a kind of food prepared by mixing several kinds of fruits is kept in it and thereafter it is regarded as *Thagi*. The relatives and villagers are invited to celebrate it. In the presence of all the people invited the *Thagi* is offered in the name of *Jala Devata*. Then incantation and *Nam Prasanga* i.e. religious verses are performed and the *Prasad* is distributed among the people gathered there. The *Dona* is floated on the pond. On the other hand the *Mahaldars* i.e. the owners of *beels* or ponds also celebrate it in the same way. Of course, besides *Prasad* some Kaibarttas also use egg, raw milk, rice, banana to worship the *Jala Devata*. After performing the ritual with Vedic rites the fisherman start their first fishing session. *Bhog* is also offered to the *Jala Devata* in observing this ritual.

C. Games and Recreations

I. Games

Games and recreation is an important part of human life. Most the games run among the Assamese society show the reference of fishes. The songs related to games illustrate the name of fishes. These songs refer to the names of fish, such as, magur, rohu, humped feather back, smooth brassed snake head etc. Food, clothing and housing are the three necessary essentials of human life. To accumulate all these things man chooses some occupational work. Apart from these, one needs some entertainments or recreations during free or spare hours. Some of these entertainments are called hobbies. On the other hand, hobbies include games. Games have a wide

range. In the modern world, cricket, football, volley ball, hockey, badminton etc. are the most popular sports.

Games have great values. The chief utility of any game lies in the fact that it keeps a person in good bodily condition. The usual ailments of the stomach or the throat, headache or minor fever remain quite away from sportsman. Several kinds of games provide a regular exercise in nice way. A sportsman learns team spirit which is something very essential for success in later life. Play is a pleasant social control both for children and adults. Rightly does observe Robert. A. Georges: "Play is a form of expressive behaviour common among all human beings and manifested overly in all cultures like language and religion. Play is a complex phenomenon that cannot define succinctly" [Georges, A: 173].

A sportsman acquires the quality of team work very clearly in the field. A sportsman remains a successful man in the sphere of work because he knows how to keep others cheerful and in friendship. Games teach discipline too. A sportsman on the field has always to act under certain discipline. It helps one to develop a disciplined mode of life in one's domestic environments. A sportsman imbibes qualities of selflessness and fellow feeling. Games also bring fame and reputation. Many sportsmen often travel in teams to distant places to play a match. When they are on field they are cheered and applauded by crowd.

The Kaibarttas are generally connected with the occupation of fishing. The Kaibarttas are hard workers. Some of the Kaibarttas are daily labourers also. They also keep busy themselves with sports and games. They play games and sports to make themselves relief from the tiredness and tensions of daily labours. Most of the games have been handed down traditionally from generation to generation. The sports and games played by the Kaibarttas including young and old may be categories into two divisions - outdoor games and indoor games.

The games that are played in the open air are called outdoor games. Outdoor games are better than indoor games for our health. Hau, Tangli, Dhop, Daira, etc are some of the old outdoor games in the Assamese Society. Football, cricket, tennis, badminton etc are some of the European outdoor games. Outdoor games not only give us

enjoyment but they give us health also. After the day's work, if outdoor games are played in the afternoon, people get refreshed. They inhale fresh air in the open field and their body is exercised. In playing most of the games children sing songs. These songs mention the names of fishes, such as magur, rohu, humped feather back etc. Some of the outdoor games prevalent among the Kaibarttas are as follows.

i. Suwa-Sui

In this game a betel nut or coconut tree is supposed to be the centre. The number of player is not fixed. In this game a player is first has to stay near the centre. Then the other players are away from the centre. The centre player has to touch the other player with the help of a rhyme without taking breath. In doing so if he loses breath then he is defeated. Otherwise without losing breath, if he touches other player then the touched player has to stay near the centre. Thus the game continues.

ii. Hoi-Godu

Hoi-Godu is a kind of traditional game. This game is played by the Kaibartta children. In this game number of player is not fixed. It is played between two groups. The number of player of the both groups is equal. This game is played in an open field. A mark line is drawn on the soil and the groups take their own side. One player goes singing rhymes to the other side to touch in a single breath. The touched one has to retire from the game.

iii. Lach

The games which are played inside the house are called indoor games. Lach i.e. a kind of games played with small stones is popular among the Kaibartta children. This game is played by the Kaibartta children in rural area. Sometimes the young and old people participate in this game. The educated generation of today also read about games and sports through several news papers and magazines. The little boys and girls are not accustomed to any specific games. They play games without any rules. They like to climb trees, throw stones, run in the open field and fish on the pond or nearest beels. When they feel tired, they return to home.

II. Recreation

Recreation is refreshing or entertaining oneself after work. It is a means of relaxing one's mind from the daily busy life. The source of recreation may vary from person to person. While for someone playing chess is a source of recreation, for others walking and climbing mountains may be a source of recreation. Human beings become tired maintaining daily busy schedules. Both children and adults want recreation to be relaxed themselves from tensions of life. R.N. Sarma does observe: "In the recreational group a person under goes socialization and learns the methods of behaviour towards other people" [Sarma, R. N: 185].

Fishing is the traditional occupation of the Kaibartta community of Assam. Most of the time of the day they keep themselves busy in catching fishes in the beels, ponds and rivers. They also relax themselves after finishing their tasks. The family members sit around the fire in the evening during the winter season. The winter season is very difficult for them as they used to stay in the midst of water. Sitting around the fire, they talk about the fishes caught. They also talk about the condition of the beels. Thus they relax their tensions and fatigue after the day's work. Fishing gets prominence when discussion goes among them. Of course, they also discuss the family matters and other matters. The Kaibarttas are accustomed to singing also during the fishing and other works. The song sung during this time help in dispelling fatigues due to hard labour. It also relaxes their body and mind. Two important amusements seen among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari are as follows:

i. Naukhel

Naukhel i.e. race of boats is enjoyed by the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district along with the other people. Kaibarttas of several regions of Nalbari participate in boat racing held in *Saul Khowa* beel. The winning team is finally awarded with a prize.

ii. Community Fishing

The Kaibarttas of Nalbari also get recreated by enjoying community fishing during Mag Bihu. The Kaibarttas catch fishes in different parts of the Saulkhowa beel. The Kaibarttas of Barnibari, Jaysagar and Paykan Bonmaja enjoy the community fishing in

this beel. They use different types of fishing tools during fishing, such as, *Zakhe*, *Kook*, *Parangi Jal*, *Asra Jal*, *Pola*, *Julki* etc. They also offer a community prayer to the water *Jal Devata* before start fishing.

D. Folk Medicine

The medicines which have been traditionally practising especially by the people isolated from medical services are called folk medicines. Hence the remedies are plant-derived on an empirical basis. People have been using and practising folk medicine for centuries. In many countries and cultures it has been practising in its original and ancient forms. The history of folk medicine is unique and rich. It can be traced back as far as 3000 B.C. In folk medicine herbs, rituals, plants, ceremonies, magic and witchcraft are used as a means of healing. On the other hand many communities, tribes and cultures are influenced by the belief that illness and death caused by spirits, gods and other forces. The folk medicine incorporates religious elements. The practices used to cure illness have been handing down through word of mouth from generation to generation. Many cultures perform purification ceremonies to ward off the evil eye. People even hold festival to cleanse the body and the soul of deceased and evil.

They who practice folk medicine may be called medicine men. Such men are able to recite incantations. They use ancient formulas to drive away illness. They can cure both mental and physical ailments. Folk medicine has evolved and is today practised by using many alternatives herbal and organic treatments and methods. Rightly does observe Don Yoder: “The practices of healing of various diseases among the non elite folk which have been transmitted traditionally and almost orally may be termed as folk medicine. Folk medicine is more or less related derivatively to the academic medicine on our fore fathers” [Yoder, D: 191].

The folk medicine practised among the Kaibarttas is categorised into two divisions, such as, i] Magico religious folk medicine and ii] Natural folk medicine. The magico religious folk medicine is practised with the help of charms, incantations, holy words

and holy actions. The treatment where folk medicines and magical practices are used is also called *Akhuri Chikitsa*.

I. Magico Religious Folk Medicine

The magico religious folk medicine mainly imply the process of uttering words, charms, incantations and physical manipulation to heal the ills of men and animals. The primitive societies believed that diseases were caused by the influence of several evil spirits. The victims of the evil spirits approach to the Tantric i.e. one who is capable of uttering charms, incantation etc. He could drive away the evil spirit from the body of the person concerned. To do this the Tantric observes some traditional rituals. Richard M. Dorson does observe: “Folk religion overlaps at points with folk medicine in instance where a famed miracle-makes saves souls and heals bodies” [Dorson, R. M: 4].

Assam is known as the land of *Tantra Mantra* i.e. magic. The land of Assam is full of magic, witchcraft, animism and some wild tribes. P.C. Bhattacharya says: “The Tantra Mantra, *Jadu-Vidya*, *Jara-Phuka* and some materials prevalent in the villages of Assam are originally obtained from the tribal people” [Bhattacharya, P. C: 105].

The Kaibarttas of Assam also have been keeping faith in *Tantra Mantra*, *Jara Phuka*, *Jadu-Vidya*, black magic and white magic. Locally the medicine man is known as Tantric. To apply all these to the person concerned, the medicine man has to perform some rituals and ceremonies. He has to offer prayer to the disease curing deities. The Tantric learns the mantras orally by going through some training and some of the mantras illustrate the names of fishes.

II. Natural Folk Medicine

The Kaibarttas have been treating several kinds of diseases, such as mental and physical with the help of natural folk medicines. The natural folk medicines are practised in the rural areas by the Kaviraj. To remove illness and troubles from body they have been traditionally depending upon natural objects as medicine. The natural folk medicines can cure the illness of the person concerned. The Kaviraj i.e. the medicine man generally knows the symptom of disease and its treatment. It is come to know from the survey that some medicine men get some herbal medicine in their

dream. The herbal medicines got in dream have the capacity to cure ailments. The Kaviraj collects these herbal medicines from the local areas as well as from the hilly areas. Generally the Kaviraj uses the root of plant and leaves of trees and prepare it according to the diseases concerned. Some of the folk medicines used by the Kaviraj collected from nature are related with fish and the fishing practices.

Distribution of Fishes and Uses [Gogoi, A: 182-183].

Table No-13

Sl. No.	Fishes	Uses
1	<i>Kowai</i> i.e. Climbing Perch and Magur	Given to the woman after child birth to recover strength and increase breast milk
2	<i>Pani Matura</i> i.e. Bar-eyed-goby	Given to the child to stop urinate at night in bed
3	Any Fish	To cure disease of liver
4	<i>Puthi</i> i.e. Chola Barb	To cure disease of stomach
5	<i>Goroi</i> i.e. Green Snake Head	To cure liver disease
6.	Fates of fish	Used in body massage
7	Magur and <i>Xingi</i> i.e. Stinging Cat Fish	To stop loose motion
8	Dry Fish Powder	Used in heart disease and malaria
9	<i>Misa Mas</i> i. e. Prawn	Used for disease in neck
10	Crab	To cure cough and tuberculosis

5.11 Material Culture

The term material culture in social science refers to the relationship between artefacts and social relation. The study of material culture also helps in understanding how a particular culture was organised and functioned over time. Material culture responds to techniques, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and subject to the same forces of conservative tradition and individual variation as verbal art. How men and women in tradition oriented societies build their homes, make their clothes, prepare their food, farm and fish, process the earth's bounty, fashion their tools and implements and design their furniture and utensils are questions that concern the student of material culture [Dorson, R. M: 2-3].

The relationship to and perception of objects of the people are socially and culturally dependent. The concrete things or objects used by man such as household commodities, houses, instruments, several kinds of apparatus, weapons, pots etc are all inclusive to the material culture. The physical objects of the culture and the ideas associated with these objects are the two interrelated aspects of human culture. Material culture also includes arts and crafts of plastic and graphic nature. The physical objects include homes, neighbourhoods, cities, schools, churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, offices, factories and plants, tools, means of productions, goods and products, stores and so forth. These physical objects help to define the behaviour and perception of the members of a society or community.

The Kaibarttas possess a very rich material culture in terms of fish and the fishing practices. The tradition of material culture has been continuing from the past among the Kaibarttas. Their arts and crafts have been handed down from generation to generation with a geographical area.

The data collected for the study of material culture of the Kaibarttas have been tried to analyse in the light of the above quoted statement. The material culture is seen among the Kaibarttas as follows.

A. Basketry and Fishing Equipments

The Kaibarttas make several types of baskets which are used in their day to day life. The baskets are in varied forms and sizes. The main occupation of the Kaibarttas is fishing. There are some craftsmen also who run their lives by making baskets and fishing equipments. The baskets and fishing tools are mainly made of bamboo and cane. These bamboos are found in the homestead mainly. The bamboo is of different kinds, such as *Bijuli Bah*, *Jati Bah*, *Bhulka Bah*, *Makal Bah* etc.

To make basket and fishing tools, splints of varied forms and shapes are necessary. These are found from the bamboo. The process of making baskets and fishing equipments goes through some stages, such as shaping the splints, weaving the base and then developing the walls. Then the boundary is tightened by the *Tangal* i.e. kind of splints found from the young bamboo. The fishing and fishing practices related tools among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari are as follows.

The *Pachi* i.e. a kind of round shaped basket is an essential article among the Kaibarttas. The folk craft of the Kaibarttas is seen in the making of *Pachi*. Inside a *Pachi* fishes are kept besides several other articles. The kitchen accessories are also made of bamboo strips. These accessories, such as *Chalngi* i.e. a sieve, *Khare* i.e. a small basket etc. enrich the artistic beauty of the folk kitchen of the Kaibarttas. *Chalngi* is used for washing and cleaning the fish. *Khare* is used to store fish. The Kaibarttas, a fishing community make several items of fishing equipments for catching fishes. These equipments help in forming the economy of the Kaibarttas. Among various fishing tools the following are frequently used. *Chepa* is a kind of drum like fishing tool. It is made of bamboo sticks. The two ends of it are flattened and closed. It has an inlet at the middle. The *jal* i.e. net is a kind fishing implement which is made of nylon strings. The nets used by the Kaibarttas are of different types, such as *Asra Jal*, *Ghoka Langi Jal*, *Chitika Jal*, *Bar Langi Jal*, *Kawai Langi Jal*, *Garai Langi Jal*, *Dai Jal*, *Ber Jal* etc.

Baldha is another form of *Chepa*. There is an inlet at the one end and the other end is closed. *Julki* is a kind of fishing equipment. It is also made of bamboo and used to fish at shallow water. *Hurum* is also a kind of fishing equipment. It is a kind of bamboo pan. The caught fishes are kept here. *Hukuma* is another kind of fishing equipment. It is also made of bamboo. *Zakhe* and *Polah* are the two other fishing equipments. The *Zakhe* is generally used by the womenfolk. It is a kind of triangular basket. One end of *Zakhe* is opened and the three triangular sides are closed at a point at the other end. The three sides are attached to a bamboo handle which is three or four feet in length.

Polah is made of bamboo split. The bamboo splits are fastened together by cane strips. It is 4.5 m. in height and 3 c. m. in diameter at the base. *Bana* is another kind of equipment for fishing. It is a kind of fencing and made of bamboo. *Bana* is generally used after the flood season. After flood when the water level in the river Brahmaputra is reached and the water flows from the beels towards the deep areas, the fishermen enclose at the different suitable low-lying places with their *Bana*. It is done to prevent the in-coming fishes from escaping back into the rivers.

B. Weapons

The weapons for catching fishes seen among the Kaibarttas are *Torowal* i.e. big knife, *Kochtar*, knife etc. These are made of iron. The Kochtar is made of a number of small and long iron umbrella strings. One end of it is very sharp. It is used to catch fishes and kill poisonous snakes.

C. Architecture

Architectural traditions includes not only the types of structures designed and built, but also the ways in which buildings are arranged upon the land, the method and materials of constructions. Folk architecture includes those huts, places of worship, barns and other structures that are designed and built without the assistance of formally schooled or professionally trained architects. The folk architecture also reflects the customs and beliefs of a particular community. Folk architecture refers to hut that is generally related with architects who learn the art of construction and design traditionally. The architecture of a house is related to the fund position and natural phenomenon. Architecture may be divided into two distinct genres, such as, 1] Folk Architecture and 2] Academic Architecture.

Rightly does observe Warren E. Roberts: “Folk architecture may be said to be traditional architecture. It is concerned with all traditional aspects of building, the shapes, sizes and layout of building of all kinds, such as dwelling, barns, sheds and craft shops, the materials used and the tools and techniques of buildings; the sites chosen and the placement of various buildings and various parts of building were put” [Roberts, W. E: 253].

The folk architecture of the Kaibarttas is mainly connected with bamboo, wood and cane. They build houses with bamboo, wood and cane and other articles. The builders are not formally and professionally trained. The overall arrangements of a homestead of a Kaibartta family are very much similar to that of the other caste people of Assam.

A portion of the selected site is kept for orchard, bamboo, kitchen garden, bathing tank etc. Then the house is constructed in a planned way. The minimum numbers of house constructed by a Kaibartta family may be, such as, *Chora Ghar* i.e. guest house and the *Bar Ghar* i.e. residential house. Besides, *Ranni Ghar* i.e. kitchen, *Gosai Ghar*

i.e. prayer house, *Goli Ghar* i.e. cowshed, *Dheki Ghar* i.e. paddle grinder house and *Bhakri Ghar* i.e. granary are also constructed. Construction and uses of some of the houses are discussed as bellow.

The following Table No-14 shows the different houses of the Kaibarttas.

List of Houses of a Kaibartta Family with Fishing Tools and Paintings

Table No-14

Sl. No.	Kaibartta Name	English Name	Approximate Size	Place for Construction	Fishing Tools or Paintings
1	<i>Chora Ghar</i>	Guest house	10x10ft.	Front side of the courtyard	Folk paintings of <i>Zakhe, Kook</i> and Fish etc.
2	<i>Dhekisal</i>	Paddle-shed	10x10ft.	Western side of the courtyard	<i>Zakhe, Kook, Jongar, Koinal</i> etc.
3	<i>Goli Ghar</i>	Cow-shed	12x10ft.	Western or northern side of the courtyard	<i>Zakhe, Kook, Jongar, Koinal</i> etc.
4	<i>Bhakri Ghar</i>	Granary	10x10ft.	Eastern side of the courtyard	<i>Asra Jal, Ketha Jal, Parangi Jal</i> etc.

The neighbouring people also help when one construct a new house. For their assistance, nothing is paid generally. But they are served with rice. But in some cases workers are paid as the economic condition of the Kaibarttas is not sound. After completing the work, the edge of the both roofs is cut trimming with sickle by the people. The whole process of building a house takes more than one or two days. The rich families build their houses in the modern way. Such houses are made of bricks and tins. Besides, they also construct some occupational related small huts.

I. Baha

Baha is a kind of small hut. It is generally constructed near beels. Only male folk stay in the fishing season. The purpose is to protect the fishes from thieves. In such hut 4 or 5 people stay together [12. Photographs, Fig.20].

II. Paira

Paira is also a kind of small hut. It is smaller than *Baha*. It is constructed far away from the *Baha*. The number of inhabitant in a *Paira* is only one. The fisher folk staying here tries to protect the fishes from thieves [12. Photographs, Fig.21]

The material culture includes food item, clothes, equipments used for constructing houses etc. necessary for the human beings in day to day life. Fish has been playing an important role in material culture. As the fishes are available in the rivers, streams, swamps, ponds and beels of Assam, fish has been an important food item of the Assamese society.

D. Cooking

Folk cooking can be readily defined as traditional domestic cookery marked by regional variation. As everyday domestic family cookery based on regional tradition, it is obviously the opposite of the commercial, institutional and scientific nutritional versions of cookery [Yoder, D: 325]. Food in its acquisition and its preparation not only provides nourishment but also serves as a medium to exert power. Specific food has some ethic importance. Cooking is related to the food ways. Generally food ways include the study of the foods themselves, their morphology, their preservation, and their social and psychological functions. It also includes the ramifications into all other aspects of folk culture. Of course, the folklorists and anthropologist use the term food ways to refer not only to food and cooking but to all food related activities, concepts and beliefs shared by the people of a community.

The study of folk cookery covers such subjects as the influences of environment on seasonal foods, and local crops and local foods of various cultural landscapes. In providing pleasure and satisfactions food can enliven social relations, enrich spiritual affairs and enhance an individual's sense of well-being. To make a food tasteful one should know the process of cooking. The taste of food depends upon the act of cooking. Of course taste may be varied according to persons, regions and community. The meal systems, taboos and attitudes are all inclusive to the cookery of complex.

Folk cookery is connected integrally and functionally with all other faces of culture. In a survival situation having knowledge of wildness cooking technique is

important. In the primitive society people had not proper equipments for preparing food. The art of cooking was not known to the primitive people. So the foods prepared by them were not properly healthy. It is obvious that the food ways of the Kaibarttas have been gradually changing owing to the assimilation with the non-schedule caste people and other communities of Assam. The Kaibarttas learnt food habits and folk cookery from their forefathers. Some of the food habits of Kaibarttas, associated with fish are as follows:

I. Sukta Khar

Khar i.e. alkali is common cooking material which is used by all the Kaibartta families. Generally alkali is prepared from the ashes of dried banana stems. It is generally used to cook the dry leaves of jute plants which are known as *Sukta* i.e. dry leaves of jute. It is an important food item of the Kaibarttas.

II. Shidal

Shidal is an important food item among the Kaibarttas. The powder of dry fish is locally called Shidal. The taste of the powder of dry fish is delicious. To prepare it, the fish is first dried on the heat of sun and fire. The dry fish is grinded in a wooden mortar called Dheki by adding chillies, salt and other spices. The mixture is kept in a bottle and its opening is tightly closed. It can be kept for several months. It is served with rice.

III. Soup of Fish

Fish is one of the favourite food items of the Kaibartta people. Kaibartta people use fish every day in their food items. *Masor Tenga*, *Mas Patot Diya*, *Mas Kharikat Diya*, *Mas Amitar Khar*, *Pora Mas* etc. are some of food items of fish. Some tribes in Assam use dry fish as food item.

IV. Fish Food with Ceremony

The Kaibarttas observe several ceremonies and festivals round the year. Some food items are linked with fish in such ceremonies. The following table shows some of such food habits among them.

The List of Ceremonies and Festivals and Types of Food

Table No-15

Sl. No.	Name of Ceremony and Festival	Time of Ceremonies and Festival	Types of Food
1	Magh and Bohag Bihu	Month of Magh and Bohag	Various types of cakes, curd, beaten rice, fish, meat, sour, bitter etc are taken
2	Na-Khawa	Month of Aghona	Feast is arranged and rice, meat, fish, cake are served among family members
3	Vijya Dashami	Month of Āhina	Curd, beaten rice, coconut, meat, fish are eaten

E. Arts and Crafts

For the smooth continuation of life the day to day commodities are necessary. The pots made of soil, knife, axe, jewellery; dolls etc are inclusive to the folk art. The folk art of human beings is the complement of social and economic life. The Assamese women are expert in weaving. The influence of folk art is seen in clothes in their weaving. The picture of fishes is seen in clothes, houses, temples. The people of Hajo area use the pots having pictures of fishes [Gogoi, A: 191].

People of Assam have been traditionally using the equipments necessary for life from the past. These equipments are basically hand-made. The bamboo works, cane works, and wood works etc are inclusive to the folk crafts of Assam. These folk crafts also show the influence of fish. Even most of the folk crafts are related to fishing practices. To catch fishes several kinds of fishing equipments are made by the by several castes and tribes of Assam. Besides the Kaibarttas, Kalitas, Keots, Kosh, Brahman, Muslims etc make fishing equipments using bamboo. Some of the fishing implements used in the Assamese society are *Chepa, Khoka, Thoha, Zulki, Pal, Dalanga, Dingara, Bhoir, Pauri, Choik, Chora, Kheta, Hukma, Zakoi, Khaloi, Uvati, Ban, Tuna, Pasa, Basa, Kool, Salani, Paroi, Elangi, Chip-Baroshi, Punga-Baroshi, Khuti-Boroshi* etc.

Arts and crafts comprise a number of activities and hobbies that are related to making things with one's hands and skill. Craft generally requires a combination of

skill, speed and patience. The arts and crafts movement was a late 19th century social movement. The term craft also refers to the products of artistic production or creation that requires a high degree of tacit knowledge. The expression of beauty can be termed as art. The distinction between art and craft is possible regarding their utility. Art generally means aesthetic secure whereas craft is connected with daily life. Henry Glassic does rightly observe: “If a pleasure giving function predominates, the artefact is called art, if a practical function predominates, it is called craft” [Glassic, H: 253]. Art is generally concerned with the aesthetic view of life. In primitive society art is of the people and for the people. Folk art is social in its character. Of course artistic nature appears to be subordinate in a folk craft.

Henry Glassic does observe: “The artistic nature of a folk artefact is generally subordinate to its utilitarian nature so that most art exists within the immediate context of folk craft. The problem of folk art as appeared in folk craft scholarships, then lies less identifying specific forms and techniques than it does in identifying the characteristic of the traditional aesthetic philosophy that governs the selection production, treatment and use of forms” [Glassic, H: 253-254].

The arts and crafts of the Kaibarttas are highly rich. Their arts and crafts are reflected in their composite material culture. The folk arts and crafts are exposed in the uses of the raw materials, such as bamboo, wood, cane, thatch, metal, reed etc. They make different types of articles out of these raw materials. The articles serve the functional and decorative purposes. Some of the house materials made by the Kaibarttas are as follows.

F. Wood Work

The Kaibarttas have been using wood to make varied crafts and designs. So the wood has been occupying an important place among the Kaibarttas. The woods have been used as the important raw materials by the Kaibarttas. They mainly use wood in making houses, building, furniture and household tools. Their wood work shows reference to fish. It is also used in making boats which are used in fishing. W. E. Roberts does observe: “Throughout the history, wood has proved to be durable, early worked, elastic, smooth touch, capable of absorbing shock and possessing many other

useful qualities. Wood has served man in an astonishingly wide variety of ways” [Roberts, W. E: 233].

G. Blacksmith and Pottery

A small portion of the Kaibarttas is related with the blacksmith and pottery. Some blacksmith centres are seen in the Kaibartta regions. *Koinal* i.e. a kind of spear, *Kostar* i.e. a king of spear, *Sickle* are some items used among the Kaibarttas in their day to day life and fishing related activities. The Kaibarttas also buy some other items from the local markets. B.C. Allen does observe: “As the wheel revolves the patter works the clay with his fingers and gives it the derived shape. The vessel is then sun dried, placed in a mould, and beaten into final shape with a mallet, a smooth stone being held the wheel against the inner surface. It is then again sun dried, the surface is polished and it is ready for the kiln” [Allen, B. C: 160].

H. Textiles and Handloom Designs

The clothes woven and worn by the Kaibarttas show their artistic taste of folk art. They produce the clothes necessary for their daily life. Their artistic tendencies are reflected through the textile design. On the other hand handloom is an important part of the domestic lives of the Kaibarttas. The women folk generally weave dresses, such as *Gamasa*, *Sadar*, *Mekhela* etc for themselves and men folk. During leisure women folk spin in the traditional way. The women can design on their weaving loom as far as they imagine. The colour also plays an important role in the weaving of clothes. The Kaibarttas use several colours in their weaving clothes. The designs are mostly in diamond, stripes and several geometric patterns planned in most striking manners. The colours they used are chocolate, black, yellow, blue, red, white etc. The design of fish and fishing tools, such as, *Zakhe*, *Kook* etc. are seen in *Gamasa*, *Sadar*, *Mekhela*.

I. Painting

The Kaibarttas exhibit their artistic design and craftsmanship throughout the several bamboo and wood works. Their bamboo works show great skill and aesthetic taste. The bamboo goods are decorated with carving. Most of the bamboo articles look fine in themselves, such as *Chepa*, *Boldha*, *Julki*, *Zakhe* etc. And some other articles of bamboo are made beautiful with the help of their craft. The Kaibarttas are also

expert in carving wood. They make figures of birds, fishes and animals in the wood work. Articles like spinning wheels, accessories of music and fishing are also carved with designs.

The artistic craftsmanship is seen in the folk painting of the Kaibarttas. They paint the picture of Beula Lakhinder, goddess Saraswati, goddess, Durga etc. According to B. Dutta in most parts of Assam today the local traditions of folk paintings are as good as dead except in some particular form. He says that in the regions of lower Assam the folk painting still survives more or less vigorously. Thus the Kaibarttas show a rich tradition of wood carving.

J. Costumes

The folk costume mainly includes clothes and jewellery. It carries some sort of characteristics of each community. The Assamese women are expert in weaving. They make their own clothes, such as, *Mekhela Chadar*, *Gamosa* etc. They draw pictures of several things in their clothes. Among these fish plays an important role. They also draw picture of *Dasa Avatar* in their clothes. Two *Avatars* are fish among these. Kaibartta traditional jewellery also shows some part of the fish when made, such as, the eye of the fish known as *Biri* and *Gajera*

Folk costume expresses an identity through costume which is usually associated with a geographic area and community. It can also indicate social, martial or religious status. It comprises clothing that is characteristic of certain region. The costumes also identify certain community. The traditional dresses are loved by every community. They wear this dress mainly in the ceremonies and festival. Don Yonder does observe: “Folk costume is the visible, outward badge of folk group identity, wear consciously to express that identity. In every case the costume is distinct and identifiable, it identifies the wearer to the outside world as well as his own community, it is prescribed by the community and its form is dictated by the community’s traditions” [Yoder, D: 295].

Costumes vary from community to community. It represents the culture and tradition of community. Folk costumes may be differentiated in accordance with sex, age, social status, occupation, work, leisure and confusion [Yoder, D: 295].

Some of the costumes that are related to fish and related activities are as follows:

I. Gamacha

Gamacha is a hand woven cotton cloth piece. The male folk use it when they are at home and when they go out to catch fishes. It is also used during the bath. It is adorned with designs of flowers. It is 1.5 to 2 metres in length and about 0.75 metres in width. It is seen from the survey that at present the educated people and those who live in town areas do not like to follow the traditional dresses. They like to wear dresses which have become the fashion of the day. Now the young boys like to wear shirts and pants instead of traditional dress.

II. Mekhela

Mekehla is an important dress item of the Kaibartta women folk. They wear it during fishin in the beels. *Mekhela* is a hand woven cotton cloth piece. It covers the woman's body from the waist to the ankle. They weave it at their own loom. The size of the cloth varies from individual to individual. The colour of the *Mekhela* may be green, yellow, black and red. The old women folk mostly like the green one. The lower part of *Mekhela* is adorned with designs of flowers. A *Mekhela* is 2.5 metres to 3 metres in length and about 1 metre in width.

III. Sadar

Sadar is also a kind of traditional dress worn by the Kaibartta women folk at home and while fishing. It is generally woven at their own family loom. The lower part of it adorned with design of several flowers. It may be of several colours. It covers the middle part and waist of the women folk. A *Sadar* is 5 metres to 7 metres in length and about 1 metre in width. The Kaibartta women folk use blouse to cover their chest. It is generally bought from the market. In due course of time, the Kaibartta women folk have been showing interest in the modern types of dress. The young children prefer to wear jeans pants, shirts and tops.

5.12 Performing Art Form

The performing folk art is an important part of folk life. The traditional songs, dance and drama constitute the performing folk art. The reference of fish is seen in these three sections of performing art.

Performing folk art is an essential part of the folk life. Traditional dance, music and song are three main parts of performing art forms. These are performed in the festivals and Pujas. Fish has been playing an important role in the performing art form among the several castes and communities of Assam. The oral songs of Assam show the place of fish. The Bihu songs and work songs refer to the name of fish.

In performing art forms generally the artists move their body or voice to convey artistic expression. It includes several kinds of arts, such as, dance, song, theatre, magic, circus etc. An artist in performing arts may be an actor, comedian, dancer, magician and singers. The artists who participate in performing arts in front of an audience are called performers. Performing arts are also supported by other works such as song writing and stage craft. In such art forms the performers sometimes have to use costumes and stage make up.

The synthetic nature of performing art form makes it collective art involving the efforts of music, dance and theatrical performance. The performing arts are generally celebrated in the discourses of various occasions, such as rites and rituals, festivals or public celebrations. Performing folk art is one of the important dimensions of folklore. The performing folk art is comprised of *Gita-Nritya* and *Abhinaya Gita* i.e. music means an emotional experience and the idea imbued with feeling expressed through a special kind of sound based on the intonation of human speech [Borev, Y: 260]. While *Nirtya* i.e. dance is an echo of music, a melodious and rhythmic movement of human body revealing the characters of people, their feelings and thoughts [Borev, Y: 261]. The *Abhinaya* connotes the meaning of dramatic action performed by the actors before the spectators. [Borev, Y: 257]

There is usually no technique of teaching, certainly no formal technique, connected with the making and singing songs, they are learnt by the ear and transmitted in this fashion from generation to generation. The features common to different performing arts of the tribal society is very simple nature. Though everyone may not exactly know the art, the fact is known to them and enjoyed by all to their heart's contents. It is a spontaneous feeling of joy that gather from purposeful activities like music, dance and drama.

Through the medium of dance, the elements of drama are expressed. The purpose may be primarily movements, the creation of an ephemeral kinetic design in which concept i.e. ideas about dance, process i.e. what leads to performance, medium i.e. the body instruments and product i.e. the dance of performance merge but physical motion is the primary end. It is termed as *Autateli* by A.R. Anderson and D.K. Moore [Anderson, A. R: 203-216].

The Kaibarttas enjoy their aesthetic lives through the performance of song, dance and drama. They engage themselves in their performing arts during the leisure time particularly in the evening. They perform these arts in the festivals and ceremonies. Their arts try to depict the picture of the lives of the Kaibarttas. The philosophy of life and the keen observation of life are expressed through the performance of song, dance and drama.

A. Song and Dance

Several forms of oral poetry which are sung, chanted and recited are designated as song in the most communities. The language of the oral songs is seen different from that of the ordinary speech. Different groups perform such songs in different ways. Repetition and vocal interpolations characterise the sign of the folk song. The folk dances of Assam include most prominently the *Bihu* dance and the *Ankiya Nat*. In every element of the performing arts of Assam there are many other local elements which are always present in Hinduised or Sanskritised form. A moving beautiful expression in song or drama is dance.

A dance may include the movements of the hand or feet or sometimes it covers the whole body. Circle dance is the basic formation of folk dance. In the primitive societies dance was a means of collective entertainment. The performing art forms of the Kaibarttas, such as, song, dance and dram are same with that of the non-tribal and non-scheduled Hindus of Assam. Folk dances are generally more famous than classical forms of dances in India. In the primitive undeveloped society, dance was born for satisfying the needs of the early man. But in due course of time, dance became refined and accurate mean of expression. Thus in due course of time, several

branches of folk dance were born on the basis of regional geographical differences and variety of form and culture.

The living primitive people led a simple life. There are no special costumes for *Loka Natya*. The primitive people painted their bodies and stick peacock feathers to enhance the impact of *Loka Nritya*. The main features of folk dance are the simplicity and spontaneity. Rightly does observe N. Sarma: “Dance is an important facet of Abhinaya. Indian dance involves both Nritya, and dance. The Nritya suggests the rhythmic movement of the body for its own sake. But it can express Bhava i.e. state by means of Abhinaya. On the other hand, the Nritya can suggest rasa as well as Bhava e.g. state” [Sarma, N: 16].

Songs, music and dance of the Kaibarttas are a composite whole. Music and verse go together in the folk songs of the Kaibarttas. Their folk poetry is merely a vehicle for the folk tune. Of course, the tune is anonymous. The handclaps and timely ejaculation act as instruments which reinforce the rhythm. The Kaibarttas use the terms *Nach* and *Gan* to indicate the meaning of song and dance respectively. The songs are one of the subgenres of the oral literature of the Kaibarttas. The features common to the folk song and folk dance of the Kaibartta community are very simple in nature. The folk songs among them bear no formal technique of teaching, making and singing of songs. The folk song of the Kaibarttas presents an amazing melody of music, rhythm and folk elements. Their dance and song reflect their struggle for existence, their attitude to nature and their childlike attitude of wonder. Like the other communities of Assam the Kaibarttas also believe in the worship of supernatural powers and evil spirits. Their dances may be so considered as sacred act. The dances and songs are performed in the rites and rituals. The Kaibartta song and dance is of varied types and nature. An attempt has been made to study the songs and dance of the Kaibarttas as follows.

I. Bihu Dance and Song

Bihu dance is one of the popular folk dances of Assam. Bihu dance and song is also observed and performed among the Kaibartta community like the non-tribal and non-scheduled Hindus of Assam. The Bihu dance and song is related to the festival of

Bihu. This song and dance is performed by both the men folk and women folk. The Bihu dance is popular for its brisk dance steps and rapid hand movements. The dancers wear traditionally colourful Assamese costumes. The Bihu is a kind of group dance. The male and female participate together in such dances. Generally the female dancers follow circle formation. The male dancers and musicians enter the dancing area first. Then they maintain their lines and follow synchronized patterns. After entering the female dancers the male dancers break up their lines to mingle with the female dancers. The Bihu dance is basically characterised by several movements of the hip, arms, wrists, twirls, squats and bends.

The *Bihu* dance is performed to the accompaniment of *Bihu* songs. The musical instruments are *Dhol* i.e. a twin faced drum, the *Mohor Xingor Pepa* i.e. an instrument made of buffalo horns, *Tal* i.e. cymbal, the *Gogona* i.e. a reed and bamboo instrument, the *Toka* i.e. a bamboo clapper and *Bahi* i.e. a kind of bamboo flute. The drummers are known as *Dhuliya*. The *Dhol* is played with one stick and a palm. The rhythmic composition of the *Dhuliya* is known as *Seus*. The *Bihu* songs that accompany the dance have been handed down from generation to generation.

The subject of *Bihu* songs ranges from welcoming the Assamese New Year to describing the daily life of farmers. These songs also depict the historical reference of invasions to Assam and contemporary socio-political commentary in a satirical way. The song also symbolically depicts the names of fishes. The performers of *Bihu* dance wear new costume. The boys wear *Dhooti*, i.e. *Churia*, *Tangali*, i.e. belt, *Phulam Gamacha* on the head and *Chapkan* i.e. a kind of shirt made of Muga and silk. The girl performers wear Muga silk *Mekhela* and *Sadar* with red coloured blouses. They also wear *Gamkhaur*, *Jonbiri* and ear rings.

II. *Dhuliya Bhaona* and Dance and Song

Dhuliya Bhaona is one of the Assam's most popular performing art forms. This art form is known and popular among the Kaibarttas also. The comic activities of the *Dhuliya's* i.e. the drummer offers pleasures and enjoyments to the audience and spectators. The *Kusti* i.e. the art of moving body pointing his feet towards sky is popular among the folk society. A *Dhuliya Bhaona* group may be consisted of four to

twenty five people. The instruments are Tal i.e. the cymbal, *Dhol* i.e. big drum. The performers show several activities among the people. It is performed as a theatre art.

It is a unique art of dance, song and acting. The *Dhuliyas* first beat the drums and then dance is performed. Then drama is performed taking stories from *Puranas*. They select a place as stage among the viewers and they use *Dhol* and Tal as their chief instruments for performance [Bhattacharjya, H: 85]. The costumes used by the performers for this performing art are generally the dhoti and short shirt. Of course, sometimes they wear masks also for performance.

Fishing is an important activity of the Kaibarttas. The Kaibarttas of Nalbari district perform a song during fishing in the Brahmaputra. The groups of Kaibartta fisher folk gather before fishing. Then they sing a special song.

[i]

Hey hey pubfāle pāni

Hey hey pachim fāle pāni

Dusuku lore ghane kenebā kore mone

Dusuku lore ghane kenebā kore mone

Luitote māsore ujān jālawākāi

Luitote māsore ujān

Oi sābi sābi nāworiyāi

Nāwto tāni nibo

Oi sābi sābi nāworiyāi

Nāwto tāni nibo

Hey hey pub fāle pāni

Hey hey pachim fāle pani

[Gogoi, A: 224]

This means:

The water of Brahmaputra flows in full swing from the east to the west in the summer season. The Kaibartta fisher folk become excited for fishing at that time. They go for fishing with the help of boat in group. Abundance of fish of several kinds becomes available in the Luit i.e. the Brahmaputra. The fellow fisher folk is also conscious of

the heavy current of water. So, he warns his fellows to sail the boat carefully while fishing, otherwise the current of water can drive away the boat putting the fisher folk in danger.

During singing the song they also perform dance. They raise their hands moving it in a special way. They perform the song on the boat. Another kind of song with performance known as ‘*Bohuwa Git*’ also runs among the Kaibarttas of this area. This kind of song illustrates the names of fishes. It is sung in *Shova* and marriage ceremony.

[ii]

*Johā sāul ghiou magu jogār korā bor bāpu
Bahuwā āhise gāong furi sarujorā jotān kori
Māgur, kāwoi, pitonir sol tehe baribho jutit bol
Subaloi dibā bhogā dhāri tāko nāpāle sorātor thāri*

[Gogoi, A: 243]

This means:

The elder son is asked to collect soft rice, ghee and white lentil for the Bohuwa, a sarcastic character. Bohuwa has reached here visiting several villages having with him the pan and cauldron. The elder son is also asked to collect fishes like Magur, climbing perch and giant snake head from beel as these fishes are delicious to consume. The elder son is also asked to arrange either broken mat or branch of Sorat i.e. pulutus.

Music and dance are the two important parts of folk performing art. These are performed by the folk people. It expresses the spontaneous emotions of their hearts. These have been transmitting orally from generation to generation. The influence of fish is found in the Bihu songs.

[iii]

*Mās māriboloi goisilo
Māsot pālo singi
Tenekoi ra lāgi nāsābā kokāiti
Bhanihote buliba Bhini*

[Gogoi, A: 219]

This means:

The girls went to fish. They got stinging cat fish while fishing. The girls asked the young boys not to stare at them with love while fishing. Otherwise our sisters will address them as husband of elder sister.

B. Drama

Drama presents fact in fiction in a form that could be acted before an audience. A play generally possesses a plot, characters dialogues, an atmosphere and an outlook of life. A play full with qualities is revealed in presentation on the stage. W.B. Worsfold does observe: “The drama alone is a composite art, in which the author, the actor and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect” [Worsford, W. B]. Drama is mainly designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors takes the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue. In a drama dance, music and dialogue are mixed.

Rightly does observe R. D. Abrahams: “Drama of any sort calls for the creation of a play world by the players. Generally through the uses of conventional symbolic objects-masks, costumes, special area for playing and conventional stylized actions. Drama in other words, is primarily recognizable as a play activity and therefore is closely related to game, dance and ritual. All of these calls the establishment of a play world that is recognizable removed from the real world and yet in many ways similar to it” [Abrahma, R. D: 352]. According to the historians it is very difficultly to determine that what kind of religion was there among the Assamese people before the entry of Arjyas to Assam. From the point of view of religion Hinduism is not the primitive religion of Assam. It is not known that what kind of religion the primitive people followed [Statistical Account of Assam: 39].

The Kaibarttas of Assam follow Hindu religion. The Goddess *Bhagawati* is one of the popular goddesses of the Kaibarttas. Bishyahari, the goddess of snake is also popular among the Kaibarttas. Of course, the Kaibarttas also follow the God Shiva. The followers of Shivaism worship an oval shaped black stone as the symbol of Shiva Jyoti. Once, the Kaibarttas were also influenced by the Jainism and *Buddhaism*. As a

result the Kaibarttas were divided into two groups, such as Kaibarttas as vegetarian and the Kaibarttas as non-vegetarian. Then some religious leaders of Kaibarttas opposed against the preaching of the *Bhuddaism* and they supported the Shivaism.

Towards the end of the 15th century Sankardeva began the neo *Vaishnava* movement in Assam. This movement helped the scheduled caste people to be equal with other castes in Assam. Sankardeva dismissed the caste discrimination among the people. The unity of Indian culture is a speciality among the diversity. Many dramatic institutions have been connecting with the rural life of the people of Assam. The dramatic institutions in the several parts of Assam have been bearing some regional characteristics. But similarities are observed among these regional characteristics regarding the folk dramas of Assam. The similarities observed regarding the folk dramas in the several parts of Assam may be as follows.

I. Ojapali and Folk Performance

Ojapali is one of the lively and popular performing art form of Assamese culture. It is a traditional art form. It is popular among the Kaibartta community of Assam. It is a combined performance of narrative singing, dancing, gestures and dramatic dialogues. In the term *Ojapali*, *Oja* represents guru i.e. the teacher and *Pali* represents *Shishya* i.e. the pupils. The art form in which the *Oja* perform *Nritya Git* i.e. dance and song with the assistance of pupils is called *Ojapali*. The *Ojapali* group is generally consisted of five to six men. The lead artist is known as *Oja*. He maintains the rhythm with his feet and explains the theme with suitable body movements and facial expression. The costume worn by them is white gowns with long sleeves. He is accompanied by the assistant artists known as *Palis*. The right hand side of *Oja* is known as *Daina Pali* and he is the chief among the *Palis*. The *Daina Pali* makes the performance interesting by his humorous dialogue. During performance a pair of cymbals is used as the main instrument. This instrument is known as *Khutital*. *Ojapali* can be categorised into three major forms such as 1] *Byash Ojapali* 2] *Sukanarayani Ojapali* and 3] *Ramayan Ojapali* [Bharali, S: 18].

Byash Ojapali performers are also known as *Byash Gowa* among the Kaibarttas. In such type of performance the performers focus on the great epic. On the other hand

Sukanarayani Ojapali performers are known as Maroi Gowa. The performers sing the song of the goddess Manasa Devi i.e. god of snake in such performance. The verses are taken from the Padma Purana composed by Sukani Narayana Dev. The Ramayan Ojapali performers take the songs from the Ramayan composed by Madhav Kandali.

The performers of Baysh Ojapali sing the songs of Durga Devi and Shiva. Their songs are known as *Malansi Git*. The costumes worn by the Baysh Ojapali is simple. They use a long cloth on the body with a white shirt. They wear a normal hat. They never use anklet on their feet. The performers use their Khutital i.e. the cymbals on the both hands. The song sung by the Sukanarayani Ojapali deals with the story of Beula-Lakhindar. Such kind of Ojapali performance is observed in the Manasa Puja. Manasa Devi is regarded as the goddess of snake. But the Sukanarayani Ojapali performers use both the cymbals on their own hand. The Ramayan Ojapali performers are also known as *Durgabori Oja*. They recite the verses from Giti- Ramayan by Durgabor in such Ojapali. The costumes and dance of Byash Oja has similarity with that of the Ramayan Ojapali.

- I. Priority of dance and song is observed. Dialogues are also delivered along with dance and song
- II. *Oja* i.e. guru or teacher takes the main role in developing the story through songs and body movements with the help of assistants known as *Pālis*.
- III. Decorated stages are not needed for such performance. The performance is done in an open space among the people.
- IV. The movement of performance is slow.
- V. In the folk dramas some humorous characters are introduced to give some kind of comic relief. Some of the folk performances among the Kaibarttas are as follows.

Folk drama is the orally transmitted drama from generation to generation. Folk drama is related to religious festivals. These are performed during the religious festivals. In such dramas fishing scene is also performed. In Nalbari the *Dhuliyas* i.e. the traditional performers performed such dramas. The *Dhuliyas* take the story from the religious books and sometimes stories are done on the characters of the society.

[i]

*Bhāirā: Mahāsoi, mahāsoi**Magistrate: Ki hol**Bhāirā: Kāli āmār mās bilāk khālā**Magistrate: Thik āse kālir parā mās nāvājibā*

[Gogoi, A: 237]

This means:

Bhaira, a comic performer comes running and speaks shouting about fish. Then the magistrate, another performer inquires about what has happened. The Bhaira tells that Kali, the goddess has eaten their fishes. The magistrate then replies in a comic tone ordering not to fry the fish from yesterday.

Sometimes the *Dhuliyas* dramatically perform the *Pohari* song i.e. a kind of song sung mainly by the women who sell fish going door to door to the people. One such example is as follows.

[ii]

*Mās lobi nāre girighoriā**Lobi nā lobi zāso cittalakhāria**Mās lobi nāre bāmun sudiyā**Natun bilor mās ānsu itta mārā**Mās lobi nāre.....*

[Gogoi, A: 238]

This means:

The Pohari i.e. fisher woman goes door to door for selling fish. She offers humped feather back to the Brahmins and Sudras telling that these fishes have been caught in the new beel. She also tells that the fishes are fresh.

Rightly does observe J. C. Mathur: “Drama in rural areas means performance in which music and dance are as much used for expression and communication as dialogue. In fact, in most local and regional drama, song is the main vehicle of ideas

and artistic expression and proper dialogue is the fever for advancing the plot or story” [Mathur, J. C: 101].

6. Fish Lore and Fishing Practices of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari

6.1 Oral Literature

Literature is a mirror of the age and culture. The body of written works of a language, period and culture is called literature. It may be imaginative or creative having recognised artistic value language is called the medium of literature. The language in which literature is written reflects and reinforces the cultural patterns and values. Thus literature helps in expressing life through the medium of language. Rightly does observe Henry Bedford Parkes: “Every writer grows up as a member of a particular society and the structure of his personality, his view of life and his emotional conflict and communication are conditioned by social faction. He is likely, moreover, to be generally receptive to those broad currents of thought and feelings, which are shared by the other members of his society. For this reason the content of his work, including its deeper emotional, quality as far as its subject matter cannot be explained without reference to his social background. In revealing his self the writer also reflects his society” [Parkes, H. B: 25].

Oral literature possesses no author. It has some performers. There is no specific time when the work was created in oral literature. It also can be performed to an audience. During performance accompaniments, facial expressions and other paralinguistic communication can be employed. The audience to the oral literature is generally the listeners. On the other hand the written literature demands its authors. It shows the specific time when the work was published. Most of the time, its materials may be collected from oral literature. The audience to the written literature is the reader.

The folk literature is also known as traditional literature or oral literature. It may be defined as the collection of tales passed from generation to generation. It is passed from old to the young by words of mouth i.e. oral tradition. Folk literature is said to be the people’s effort to organise their experiences into meaningful patterns. Folk literature follows some characteristics or conventions. Its settings take as to a time and

place which rests in our imagination. In such setting animals talk, witches and wizards roam and magical spells are common. In folk literature characters are presented as flat, simple and straightforward. The characters are either completely good or entirely evil. The folk literature presents short and simple plot than other genres of literature. Repetitious patterns are common in folk literature. The themes in folk literature are simple but serious and powerful. In such type of literature the language is typically economical. The uses of dialogues are frequent. R. M. Dorson does observe: “Oral literature can and frequently does enter into written literature” [Dorson, R. M: i].

A number of broad genres are found regarding the orally transmitted information. The genres in oral literature are defined by both function and form. Of course, every society or community does not possess each of the genres. Genres of oral literature which have also some subdivisions are: A] Epics and sagas B] Panegyrics C] Prose stories D] Lyric poems E] Ritual Songs and F] Genealogies.

Literature is an artistic expression of the best that is known and thought in the world. It is a record of man’s dreams and ideals, his hopes and aspirations, his failures and disappointments, his motives and passions, his experiences and observations. Literature appeals to the widest human interest and the simplest human emotions. Oscar Wilde does observe: “Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy it, but moulds it to its purpose” [Wilde, O: 35].

The functions of oral literature are: I] To make society and community educated on the past events II] To act as a means of passing information from generation to generation III] It helps in entertaining people IV] It is helpful in preserving the culture and norms of a community V] It is used as a way of passing time and VI] It inspires people when they are busy in the working field.

Man attains sociality going through literature. The study of communication, words and symbols which conveys meaning between persons in a society constitutes the study of linguistics. In a way literature is use of language. The domain of oral literature of the Kaibartta community of Assam is rich. It is found generally in Assamese language. But it is also a notable thing that in day to day transactions the Kaibarttas use their own local dialect. The Kaibarttas have oral songs and folk

narratives which have been handing down orally from generation to generation. Besides, proverbs and riddles have added much to the fabric life of the Kaibarttas.

6.2 Fish Lore

Fish lore is the literature that revolves centring round fish, fishing, fishing tools, fishing practices, waterbeds etc. Fishing is the traditional occupation of the Kaibarttas of Assam. The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district are also occupationally engaged in fishing. In their day to day occupational life, they have to use several kinds of fishing tools. Oral literature in the form of song, riddles, proverbs, charms, tales, myths and legends are found among them. These genres of oral literature reflect their sense of pride of their community. They want to glorify their past associating themselves with the epic characters, kings, gods and goddesses who are originally associated with fish and fishing. The Kaibarttas have songs, proverbs, riddles and prose narratives in relation to fish. The fish lore of the Kaibarttas is generally found in the form of oral literature. The domain of the oral literature of the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district is rich. The Kaibarttas have prose narratives as well as an impressive store of oral songs. The oral literature of the Kaibarttas in relation to fish may be discussed as follows.

6.3 Oral Literature of the Kaibarttas

Oral literature is a way of communicating several kinds of practices of a community. It helps in expressing the inner feelings of the community concerned. In the same way, the oral literature of the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district try to reveal their beliefs, thoughts, hope and expectations, feelings, such as hatred, love, fear and anxiety mostly associated with their occupation.

The oral songs like children song, work song, festival song, love song, religious song, festival song and devotional song are prevalent in their society. The diverse tradition and culture of the Kaibarttas are expressed through these songs. Overall the oral literature of the Kaibartta community is rich and colourful both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The genres of oral literature regarding the Kaibatta community have been attempted to study which are available in the Kaibartta society. The genres discussed bellow has some subheads also. Each of the heads and subheads has been tried to

study against their proper background. The oral literature of the Kaibarttas is qualitatively rich. The data related to oral literature of the Kaibartta community has been tried to present in the following way.

A. Song

Greek song was categorised into two divisions: i] Melic or lyric song and ii] Choric song. The lyric song was sung by a single voice to the accompaniment of a lyre. On the other hand choric song was intended for collective singing to the accompaniment of instrumental music. The Greek song was an expression of a single emotion and it was also a musical composition.

The folk songs are set to tune and passed down orally from generation to generation. It expresses the life style of the rural people with all their hopes, expectation, sorrows and dreams. Folk songs influence the individual as well as the social life and religion and occupations.

Ideas of the body and the soul, the guru and his disciple, of god and humble devotees are found expression in the oral songs. The oral songs ask for boons and blessings from God or the deities. The oral songs have also been helping in refining the human tendencies.

Worldly love is the central thing to the folk songs. The oral songs describe the love between man and women. The form of oral poetry which is sung, chanted and recited may be regarded as songs. The composer of such songs is also not known to anybody. Verrier Elwin does observe: "It is true that great many of the songs are the possessions of the people as a whole, nobody knows when they are composed" [Verrier, E: 1].

The Kaibarttas are rich in oral songs. Both the men and women folk participate in singing these songs. The oral songs sung by the Kaibartta people are simple in composition. It is remarkable that sometimes repetition of lines is frequent. The oral songs of the Kaibarttas are found in the following way.

I. Song of Children and Games

The children are always free from the loads of life, reason and grammar. This child world may be called a big, blooming, buzzing confusion. They keep running in the imaginative world of mind. The children are closely intimated with their mothers,

grandmothers and nurses. The children are always fond of listening lullabies and nursery rhymes with the help of their grandmothers, mothers and sometimes the nurses. The grandmothers and the nurses try to soothe a weeping baby into silence with the help of some oral songs. These oral songs may be called as children song. These songs have been transmitting orally from generation to generation.

These oral songs present the picture of the rural life and the beliefs of the Kaibarttas. The Kaibartta children are also fond of oral songs during the time of playing several games. The nursery rhymes are known differently in Assam, such as *Nisukani Git*, *Omala Git*, *Dhai Nam* etc. The children songs include lullabies, nursery rhymes and songs associated with children sports and past time. When the children listen to these songs, they roam in a world of wonder and imagination. Sometimes these songs frighten them also.

The Kaibartta mothers and the nurses sing these songs to make the children sleep. Some other nursery rhymes are recited by the children themselves. As the Kaibartta women are busy with fishing during day time. At night when they have to prepare food, grandmothers recite the cradle song to make the crying baby sleep. Sometimes they do it to amuse the child.

The Kaibartta mothers or grandmothers recite the above song when the children go to disturb and do not sleep at night. The children generally are frightened when they hear the names, such as fox, *Kankhati*, i.e. an imaginative character and they become silent and sleep. Among the Kaibarttas it is found that most of the children songs are addressed to *Jonbai* i.e. the moon, stars and birds. Such kinds of songs are recited by the slightly older children. When the women of a family go out in search of livelihood, the little children are under their supervision.

The children do not find any difference between the human and animal world. The clouds, flowers and birds etc. are the playmates of child world. Some of the oral songs are recited by the children themselves when they play with their mates. Of course, these songs sometimes do not carry any sense. These meaningless songs are known as nonsense rhymes. The play songs are also popular among the children of Kaibartta society. These songs are associated with birds, animals and other objects of nature. To

achieve enjoyment and pleasure is the main purpose of these songs. They play several types of games. Some games are played between two participants. In such games dialogues are thrown in the form of song.

[i]

Āgur gur māguror jāli

Ghorār nākot dilo jori

Ghora gol uttare

Sāl māse gujare

Sālor gujgujani

Madaror thou

Sutiyā sālikā Lankā lou

[Gogoi, A: 59]

This means:

A young magur is there. The horse is tied by rope through its nose. The horse has gone to the south. Giant snake head makes roaring sound. Roaring sound of the giant snake head is heard. Wave of Indian coral tree is felt. Bird captures Lanka.

[ii]

Isni bisni

Mou pore silā pore

Gāvorājāi sāul sore

Kumti māsor murā

Bhāt kur kur

Lāu kur kur

Māsto kihe nile

Makurito e

Makurito kot gol

Bunor mājot

Bunupā ki hol

Puri gol

This means:

The players refer to a hand fan. Bees and birds are seen. King Gavaru grinds the rice. They also refer to the head of Kumti fish. One player forwards the right hand before the other player. The he again forwards the left hand before the other player. Who does steal the fish? The cat has eaten the fish. Where does the cat go? The cat hides among the midst of grass. What happens to the grass? The grass burns in to ashes.

[iii]

Hāu kuli bāu kuli

Shilot kuli mārlu bhāi

Ghairālor bhāi e

Khedi mās khāi e

Khedānte khedānte kumti māsor murā

Gās hol burāh

This means:

The players murmur the words as 'Hau Kuli Bau Kuli' that carries no literal meaning. A rhyme is sung by them. They strike the stone. The crocodile eats fish. The crocodile catches the head of a Kumti fish after a long search. The tree also becomes old.

II. Work Song

During the rainy season, the ponds, small tanks, the beels etc. are filled with water. The happiness of the Kaibarttas during this season knows no bounds during this season. They catch fishes with the help of different methods and fishing tools. Fishes caught with help of *Zora Kata*, angle, *Bana Diya* etc. are popular among the Kaibarttas. The fishing tools generally used by them are *Pola*, *Zakhe*, *Chepa*, *Hari*, *Dingar*, *Kochtar*, *Asra* etc. Fishes caught with the help of angle is basically popular among the children. It is a kind of fun for them. They also use several kinds of songs during this activity. These are known as the *Boroshi Git* i.e. song of angle. These are inclusive to the work song.

The folk life of Assam is generally associated with the waves of rivers, clouds heavy rain, heat etc. The Kaibarttas are mostly associated with the occupation of fishing. Of course, a little portion of them is also associated with the profession of

agriculture. Work songs are popular among the Kaibarttas. These work songs are sung by the young and old girls and boys, man and women during the time of fishing.

[i]

Jākoiyā olāl e khāloiyā olāl e
Māro kon beelor e mās
Sarujoni Jākoiyāk singhi bindhile
Paril dekā lorār pās
 [Bordoloi, N. P: 65]

This means:

The girls and boys go for fishing. They are confused that in which beel fishes will be caught. A Stinging cat fish has injected the little fisher girl. Then she goes to the young fisher boy asking for help.

[ii]

Xingrā kakā lori āhā
Mor borosit dhari āhā
Tuputkoi māri dau
Tarot e pari āhā

This means:

The fisher folk call for the striped dwarf cat fish to gulp the bait clinging to the hooks. The fisher folk will check his angle stealthily. He will pull the string of the hook to the bank and will catch the fish.

[iii]

Xingrā kakā lori āhā
Sari āhā
Mor borosot dhari āhā
Tuputkoi māri dau
Tarot e pari āhā

This means:

The fisher folk call for the striped dwarf cat fish to gulp the bait clinging to the hooks invading through water. The fisher folk will check his angle stealthily. He will pull the string of the hook to the bank and will catch the fish.

[iv]

*Dhar mās dhar
Ek e tup e tal kar
Moi māri dau
Ei āhi bāmat e par*

This means:

The fisher folk call for the fishes to gulp the bait clinging to the hooks. The fisher folk will check his angle stealthily. He will pull the string of the hook to the bank and will catch the fish.

Fishing is still considered as a recreational work in the society. The above mentioned songs express the curiosity and wish for having the fish at hand. The fisher folk invite the fish to gulp the bait and talk like human being. Through the songs the fishes have been imagined to talk and response.

[v]

*Xingrā mās zāparāmuri
Toi hoisā māsor giri
Dhop dim dhop dim
Mor barāhat mās di*

This means:

Striped dwarf cat fish is shabby to be looked at. This fish is the head among all the fishes. I will provide bait to you. The fisher folk call for gulping the bait.

[vi]

*Etānu kāwer sānā āhate
Kārnu samu lāgil
Vetā lāgā samur moni ole
Samu hakar kar*

This means:

Who has given an evil eye on me after catching a little climbing perch? Let his or her evil eye go under damage. Thus he or she will be punished.

[vii]

Dātnir dāt

Bhutunir bhut

Āl sāulor khud

Jai jeni dāt dishā

Āmoitā bānnir kub

[Gogoi, A: 30]

This means:

The fisher folk vow in the name of the teeth of Datni i.e. an evil spirit and Bhutni i.e. an evil spirit. The fisher folk also mention grinded raw rice. The fisher folk warn one who has cast an evil eye on him to receive strike by a broom.

[viii]

Galito gali

Logairār āgat Kowa jadi

Bāpe māir murā khāli

This means:

The fisher folk express his sorrow after the fish get free from the hook. The fisher folk ask the fish not to tell it to other fishes, giving vow of its parents.

The above songs show some traditionally followed beliefs among the Kaibarttas. They believe in *Nojar Laga* or *Mukh Laga* when fishing with hook and line. When fishes are not found for long time these songs are sung to make free their hooks from *Nojar Laga*.

[ix]

Hāi mor dehi o

Sarute saru dāngi

Zākhe bui dishlā

Hāi mor dehi o

Puwān mās mārībāk lāgin

Puwān mās mārllu
Kaldiltu kātlu
Saru dāngi sudhā vāt khāi
Hāi mor dehi o
Āmi tini bhoni
Tini dishe olālu
Tiniore murote fāli
 [Bezbaruah, D. K: 52]

This means:

Our dearest little brother made Zakhe, a kind of fishing tool for us when we were very little. We caught breeding fish with the help of the Zakhe. Along with the breeding fish we collected the banana flower. Our little brother ate rice without taking breeding fish or banana flower. We, the three sisters go in three directions combing our hair.

The Kaibarttas are also expert in musical instrument. It is their inborn ability. They also form band party. They perform song in marriage ceremony with musical instruments. It is seen that the band party of Barnibari and Jaysagar sings the above song. It explains about the fish lore of the community. It talks about the *Zakhe* i.e. a triangle shaped fishing tool and breeding fishes.

[x]
Xingrār māiek zāperi
Toi holi māsor giri
Dhor xingrā dhor
Eke khute tal kor
Māri dau
Bāmote por
 [Gogoi, A: 30]

This means:

The mother of striped dwarf cat fish is shabby. Striped dwarf cat fish is the head among the fishes. The fisher folk call for the fish to gulp the bait quickly. He will pull the string of the hook to the bank and will catch the fish.

[xi]

*Dhor mās dhor**Mor borahot dhor**Kābār jadi sakkhu lāgshe**Sakkhu ole par*

[Gogoi, A: 30]

This means:

The fisher folk call for the fish to gulp the bait clinging to the hook. If someone has given an evil eye on me, let his or her evil eye go under damage. Thus he or she will be punished.

Again these songs are sung to invite the fish and to make free the hooks from *Najar Laga*. In the work song of the Kaibarttas the example of fishes are found. Catching fishes is the way of Livelihood of the Kaibarttas. They catch fishes personally and in group also.

[xii]

*Oh boini āshilibā kot**Oh boini nāshilibā kot**Dui boini mās mārōng mukāl pothārot**Mukoli pothārot sāmukh jāu jāu**Sāwā nai pokā nāi**Kāi puziba dau*

[Gogoi, A: 31]

This means:

Where are you sister? Where are you not sister? We, the two sisters catch fish in the open field. But there is abundance of snails in this field instead of fishes. There is no snake in this field. So, who will pray?

This song is sung during the fishing activity by the women in group fishing. It is popular among the Kaibarttas of this area.

III. Songs of Love

The songs of love have enriched the oral literature of the Kaibarttas. The love songs are generally sung during the *Bihu* festival. These songs are sung in the open field and sky. The desires, feelings of love and joy and sometimes sorrows are expressed through the traditional love songs of the Kaibarttas. Some love songs are found in the form of dialogue. The dialogue exists between the lover and the beloved. The lively scenario of Assam, the liveliness of nature, several kinds of beautiful flowers and festival like *Bihu* create sensuousness in the mind of young girls and boys.

In Kaibartta society some songs are recited during the menstruation period of a girl. After three days, the girl concerned has to take bath with the help of some old women. The old women sing songs. The wishful thinking is obvious in these songs. This type of songs may also be inclusive to the category of love song.

Love songs are the result of the special feelings felt. These are the songs of youth. Some love songs also run among the Kaibarttas of this area. The following song describes the physical beauty of the beloved. In doing so the lover singer has drawn the image of the pabo cat fish.

[i]

Tomār gāl dukhani pāv māsor nisinā

Ghorāfānar nisinā suli

Lom lom buli edino nolālā

Dukhani hātere tuli

[Gogoi, A: 27]

This means:

Your checks are like pabo cat fish. Your hair is like the hair of horse. You did not embrace me once with the help of your hands.

IV. Ballad

A ballad may be called a narrative poem. It is impersonal in nature and intensely dramatic in technique. Angus Ross does observe: “A revival of popular interest in traditional song, dating in Britain from the 1950s, has brought to general attention the fact that traditional ballads are still being sung by expert performers and are still being

composed and renewed. It is an indication of the perennial longing of the human heart for elemental simplicity and innocence” [Ross, A: 154].

Old time magic, homely pathos, superstition, ghost lore, fierce love of outdoor life are some of the characteristics of ballad. A brooding sense of tragedy is found in the ballads. It is the finer product of the primitive mind. The ballads possess a kind of measure known as ballad measure. The tale in a ballad opens abruptly. Some ballads are in the question-answer form. The ballads are impersonal in treatment. The author’s personality or identity is not known. Repeated lines are found in a ballad. There is no attempt at detail of time and place.

In the light of the points stated above the ballads among the Kaibarttas can be studied as i] Historical ballad ii] Legendry ballad and iii] Imaginary ballad. The ballad arises out of folk literature. It is one of the oldest forms of narrative growth. It is a song of the people in which a story is told. Originally the ballads were sung from village to village to the accompaniment of a harp by a singer. From the thematic point of view ballads are of two types, such as, Ballads based on history or reality and Ballads based on imagination. Above all the ballads express the real, historical or imaginative incidents, stories or events in a simple language. One historical ballad popular among the Kaibarttas is the ballad of *Nahar*. The reference of fish is found here. It goes as follow.

i. Ballad of Nahar

Ki mās māribar māli

Dighalkoi pukhari khandāle Nāhare

Bandhāle sanduri āli

[Bordoloi, N. P: 93]

This means:

What kind of fish will be caught? King Nahar digs a long pond. A road named ‘Sanduri Ali’ is made.

ii. Ballad of Folkowar

The ballad of *Folkowar* also runs among the Kaibarttas. In this ballad the reference of striped snake head is found. The ballad goes as follow.

Māsor kumoliyā sol mor bopāi

Māsor kumoliyā sol

Seuti māloti tagor guwāmāli

Fuli jokmok hol

[Gogoi, A: 24]

This means:

Striped snake head is very soft among the fishes, my son. Striped snake head is very soft among the fishes. Seuti, Maloti i.e. clove scented echites, Tagor i.e. Arabian Jasmine and Guwamali are some flowers that blossoming make the atmosphere beautiful.

iii. Ballad of Parasar and Matshyagandha

The saint *Parsar* was an Arjya Brahmin and *Matshyagandha* was belonged to the fishing community. She was a Kaibartta girl. The sage *Parasor* married *Matshyagandha*. This *Matshyagandha* was known as *Satyavati* after marriage. This story is popular among the Kaibarttas [Bezbaruah, D. K: v].

iv. Ganga Devi and Narad

Another significant and interesting ballad found among the Kaibarttas is established centring round the goddess Ganga Devi, the queen goddess of water. According to this narrative once when saint Narad was taking bath in the sea, he saw the *Opassaris* i.e. the beautiful ladies in the sky. Then he became sensual. As a result sperm was voided and a primitive goddess took birth in the midst of the sea. They believe this goddess as the primitive Kaibartta goddess [Bezbaruah, D. K: 47].

v. Ballad of Radhika Santi

Besides these ballads, the ballad *Radhika Santi* is also known among the Kaibarttas. According to this ballad Sankardev proved *Radhika Santi* who was a Kaibartta woman as pious in front of the traditionally known high caste people [Bezbaruah, D. K: 61]. Of course, most of the ballads among Kaibarttas are short and incomplete. Some ballads also express the romantic feeling.

Another kind of ballad popular among the Kaibarttas is found in *Barmahi Git*. These ballads are sung both by the men folk and women folk. These ballads express

the feelings of love between men and women. The Baramahi Git is also known as the Kanya Baramahi, Maduhmatir Git etc. It expresses the transformation of nature in each month of the year along with the condition of the women who are eager to fall in love. This kind of ballad tells the story of Krishna and Radha.

V. Religious Song

The goddess Lakshmi is believed by the Kaibarttas to live in the sea. She is the goddess of wealth. So, they pray to goddess Lakshmi to come to their barn. The following song also refers to the fishing tools, Viz. *Zakhoi* and *Khaloi*.

[i]

Ki korisā Lakshmi āi

Sāgarot pori

Bharāllōi jāba lāge

Zākoi Khāloi bhorī

[Rajbongshi, P: 31]

This means:

What are you doing Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, lying down in the sea? Fishes considered as Lakshmi have to go to barn. The fisher girls want to catch the fishes with the help of Zakoi and Khaloi.

VI. Festival Song

Festival songs are sung during the time of festival. The social life of the Kaibarttas is connected with several kinds of festivals around the year. Generally the festivals are celebrated with songs and may be termed as the calendar songs. Some of the festivals associated with songs are as below. The Kaibarttas observe the *Bihu* festival and they recite some *Bihu* songs on which the reference of fishes are found. Some of the songs are as follows.

[i]

Rangā Noi sukāise māsore bejārat

Louitkhan sukāise kiyā?

Moi senāi sukāiso tumāre bejārot

Tumi senāi sukāisā kiyā?

[Gogoi, A: 37]

This means:

Ranga Noi, a river has become sorrowful in absence of fish. But why has the Louit, the Brahmaputra become sorrowful? I have become weak and thin in absence of you, my beloved. But for thinking about whom have you become weak and thin?

[ii]

No-gharto bāinshā kuni e

Keshare kumati

Māgur mās jātā jāti e

Tomār māie rāndhā

Manor maton kainā nāpe

Kāthit bahi kānde

[Gogoi, A: 48]

This means:

Who has made the new house? Insects and crickets are there in the house. Your mother cooks Magur. She weeps for not getting the bride according to her wishes.

[iii]

Sarur porāi khāli āi toi

Māie rāndhā bhāt

Azir porā khābi āi toi

Dume mārā mās

[Gogoi, A: 54]

This means:

You have been eating rice from childhood prepared by your mother. But now, from today you have to eat fish caught by Dum, a person belongs to the Kaibartta community.

VII. Devotional Song and Song of Life Cycle

Every man's life has some purposes. Purposes of life are different according to man. The primitive people while started to live forming society observed several rites and rituals and worship several gods and goddesses. The Kaibarttas have also been

observing some rites and rituals round the year. They worship several gods and goddesses including harmful and non harmful gods and goddesses to keep themselves protected from diseases, misfortunes, sorrows and miseries and natural phenomenon. The devotional songs are recited by group of people or individual. When the religious or auspicious occasions are held, these songs are performed in the private or public place.

Some songs are recited in the name of lord Krishna. Some hymns are recited regarding Lord *Ganesh*, goddess *Durga*, *Shiva-Parvati*, goddess *Lakshmi*, goddess *Saraswati*, moon and sun also. The singing of *Nam* i.e. devotional song is also popular among the Kaibarttas. The *Nams* i.e. the devotional songs are sung both by the men and women. These are sung to the accompaniments of some musical instruments. A group of assistant singers help the main singer. The main singer begins the song and the assistant singers follow the hymns. Some *Nams* are also recited in the name of Sarwaswati and Lakshmi Devi.

The Kaibarttas of Barnibari and Jaysagar observe the Kali Puja. It is mainly observed in the month of *Magh* i.e. an Assamese month. Regarding this Puja, some songs are sung. The songs of *Beula* and *Lakhindar* are popular among them.

Here is an example.

[i]

Prabhu prabhu kari Beulāi maitlāk

Debatāsakal e Beulāk kolāk

Nākāinbi nākāinbi toi Beulā sunderi

Lakhindarak pābi Daibapurit

Prabhu prabhu kari beulāi kānde

Kālrāti Padmābati e mok koirlāk bāri

Dukhat e Beulāi kānde hiyā dhākuri

[Devi, S: 84]

This means:

Beula weeps calling her husband Lakhindar. The gods have called Beula and is asked not to weep. You will meet Lakhindar at Daibapuri. Beula cries by pining for her

husband and tells that Padmavati has made me widow at the miserable night. The sorrows make Beula to weep deeply.

Man's life passes through some stages. From birth to death, people observe some rites and rituals, such as the birth rites, the puberty rites, marriage ceremony etc. Rightly does observe Arnold Van Gennep: "Transitions from group to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of succession of stages with similar ends and beginning; birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to higher class, occupational specialization and death" [Gennep, A. V: 3].

The ceremonies, rites and rituals are generally celebrated with the singing of songs. The Kaibartta people are not an exception to this fact. The marriage ceremony, puberty rite etc. are observed with songs. The Kaibarttas observe the puberty rite with some songs. The songs related to the puberty rite are locally known as *Dhuwani Git* i.e. song of bathing. In relation to this rite, a religious performance is observed on the previous day of *Dhuwani*. It is known as *Japa Thowa*. But at present this tradition has been losing its importance among the Kaibartta folk. As Ruby Bharaty has stated, the song thus goes as follows:

[i]

Jāpār mure

Rām chare

Urāo purāo kare e

Jāpāre murate gendhe phular mālā

Kānote Rāmpuriyā phuti

Sarperiyā āyāk kune beyā bule

Āhiche motorat uthi

Apiketā saru saru

Rāstā bohut dur

Bulibāke naru āmi

Bharite nepur

Āpiketā saru saru

Bātketāo saru
Teriyā meriyā bātāt
Motar nibā naru
Jāpāte katāri āche
Dayāre Rukmini āmāke bāt chāi āche
Sunote sunilu māmiyāk bara dhani
Mātit Takā pari lekhe
Chāittā āyatik Khuwābā narilā
Bohut jāi bohut jāi dekhe
 [Bharaty, R: 53]

This means:

Ram chare, a kind of bird is near the Japa. The bird tries to fly. There is also a garland of flower near the Japa. The girl wears ear ring and she is not a bad girl. She has come by bus. The girls are little. They have to go a long distance. They cannot walk. Nepur is on their feet. The girls are little. The roads are small and are not straight. They cannot go by bus. A knife is with the Japa. Rukmini is waiting for us. Her maternal uncle is very rich having much money. He cannot arrange food for four girls thinking about the expense.

The Kaibarttas observe the marriage ceremony with great interest. It plays an important role in the life of the Kaibartta community. It is one of the important ceremonies of the life cycle. People express their joy by singing some sort of songs which are known as *Biya Git* i.e. song of marriage. The young boys and girls both sing these songs. Generally the marriage songs are sung by a group of singers. The group helps the main singer in singing song.

B. Charms

Generally the mantras i.e. charms are uttered in the *Puja* or ritual ceremony which carries some kind of purposes. These are words believed to have magic power. The Mantras or charms have been playing an important role in the life of the Kaibartta people. The Kaviraj or the village priest practises the charms.

The Kaibarttas observe several kinds of *Pujas* around the year. On the occasions of these *Pujas* the village priest chants mantras. The *Kali Puja* is observed collectively in a public place with the sacrifices of birds, fishes and animals. During sacrifices, mantras are spelled by the village priest. The Kaviraj also use the charms to cure illness.

The tradition of charms in India is very old. The influence of charms is seen more or less among all the communities of India. Assam is not free from the practices of such charms. Mainly *Maiong* is a well known place for such practices.

The charms are believed to have the magic power by the Kaibartta people. When the village folk suffer from illness they approached Kaviraj. The remedies are offered according to the characteristics of the illness. The Kaviraj offers water with magic spell to the patients. Sometimes the Kaviraj waves the leaves of *Dhekia* i.e. fern tree over the body of the patients with the magic spells. Following are two examples of charm collected from the informants during field work. The charm makes reference to fish names. Besides, some other charms are known among them which are already collected by the folklorists.

[i]

Shri Krishanoi nomo

Pachimor ākāshot bāndhisil Kāuror bāhā

Puwāi uthi pub e jāru

Singi masor bish

Sapor bish

Shir tonkā rog bāgrā

Shir pir pir kore

Kāli, kāl kāl sob tonkā

Hojā jol

This means:

Prayer is offered to Shri Krishna, the God. The crow made its nest in the sky to the west. Rising up in the morning, the courtyard is cleaned from the east. The Kaviraj

*speaks of the pain of the stinging cat fish, pain of snake and the pain felt in the vein.
The Kaviraj vows in the name Kali, the goddess and pray to relieve all kinds of pain.*

[ii]

Tiponi tiponi vāukāl koti bish kokloi niba

Nāi bish

[No pain is there]

Sāp mās gol soriba

Neul gol furiba

Sāp e neul e log lāgi

Āgor gor eri

Mājor sow khāi

Sunā sunā putāi

Neular bāni

Aothartā sorpor bish

Tipot korilo pāni

This means:

How much pain is there? Where will it go? The snake and fish go for a walk. The weasel goes for a walk. The snake confronts the weasel. The middle part of something is eaten leaving the bottom and top parts of it. The Kaviraj requests his son to hear the story of the weasel and the pain of the eighteen snakes that is relieved instantly.

[iii]

Xingi muri nimuri

Tor dolani e dolani e ghor

Amukār xingi māse futā zāriso

Pānikrita hoi par

[Gogoi, A: 119]

This means:

A stinging cat fish takes shelter in grass bellow the water. A victim inflicted by stinging cat fish is treated. The pain is relieved.

C. Proverbs

The proverbs are the briefest form of expression of the folk which contain concise homely truth on various aspects of life. Rightly does observe Alan Dundes: “In most of the genres and all those of verbal nature, the texture is the language, the specific phonemes and morphemes employed. Thus in verbal forms of folklore, textural features are linguistic features. The textural features of proverbs, for example include rhyme and alliteration. Other common textural features include stress, pitch, juncture, tone and onomatopoeia. The more important of the textural features are in a given genre of folklore, the more difficult it is to translate an example of the genre into another language” [Dundes, A: 25-26].

The above statement explains the importance of text, texture and context in studying the proverbs. The Kaibarttas also use proverbs in their day to day life. The proverbs are locally known as *Phokara Yojana* or *Dakor Bason*. The proverbs have enriched the speech of the Kaibartta people. The proverbs set before young generation the standard of value and codes of conduct.

A proverb may be defined as the didactic and metaphorical statement. The proverbs always carry some moral lessons. They offer suggestion regarding various occupations and deal with the behaviour of the people.

The proverb may also be defined as the traditional saying. It is consisted of quadripartite structure. The expression in a proverb is brief but its meaning is pregnant and deep. These are generally used by the common people. The proverbs are the outcome of the practical experiences in the different field of life.

A proverb is a short, pithy statement of a general truth. It condenses common experience into memorable form. It is also a strategy for dealing with situations. A proverb is popularly known and repeated. It expresses a truth based on common sense or practical experience of humanity. The proverbs are often metaphorical. It is also a maxim when describes a basic rule of conduct.

The proverbs are often borrowed from similar languages and cultures. These proverbs have been handing down from generation to generation. It helps in making powerful the speech of the ordinary folk. The Kaibartta people frequently use the

proverbs in their day to day life in relation to fish and fishing practices. The fishing men and women and other occupational classes use the proverbs.

The proverbs cover a wide range of things. The proverbs used by the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district are related to their fishing tools, beels, river and fish. Some proverbs collected from the field wok are as follows:

[i]

Ziyāte nāpāi kuyā puthi

Morār pichat dibo chiriāngthi

This means:

One does not get the rotten chola barb when one is alive.

One will give one a valuable ring after death.

The above proverb possesses a common lesson. The proverb states the huge difference of price between chola barb and *Chiriāngthi* i.e. a ring made of metal supposed to have magical power. One who cannot give the rotten cup fish when one is alive, nothing valuable can be expected from such person. Such person only can promise to give valuable things only after death.

[ii]

Mās mārili bhore

Khā suktār khāre

[Gogoi, A: 108]

This means:

One catches fish in abundance.

But one eats dry leaves of jute plants with alkali without fish.

The proverbs among the Kaibarttas are from the field of fishing. As they are mostly connected with the occupation of fishing, the proverbs are result of their practical field.

The above proverb expresses that some persons may catch fishes in abundance. But they cannot eat fishes because their target is to collect money by selling fishes. On the other hand it also exposes their poor economic condition. As a result they eat rice with dry leaves of jute plants which is prepared with the help of alkali.

Besides the above proverbs the following proverbs are prevalent among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district.

[iii]

Ghoini e mās khāi

Bundār morān

[Gogoi, A: 104]

This means:

Wife eats fishes.

But cat is made responsible instead of wife.

[iv]

Māsor kuyiā sorut

Tāmolor kuyiā mukhot

This means:

Rotten fishes become tasteful in the pan when it is fried.

Bad betel nut becomes tasteful in the mouth.

[v]

Adhik māsat bagali kana

This means:

A stork is blind among many fishes.

[vi]

Kiman pānir mās

This means:

At what depth of water does the fish live?

[vii]

Māsor bal pānir mājot

Kukuror bal nānglā mukhat

This means:

Fish exhibits its strength in the water

Dog shows its strength at the gateway of its master.

[viii]

Sālor mājot xingi

This means:

A giant snake head is among the stinging cat fish

It is worth mentioning that most of the proverbs stated above have already collected by some folklorists in their works. But it is noticed that these proverbs are popular among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district.

D. Riddle

Y. M. Sokolov defines riddle as “ingenious question expressed usually in the form of a metaphor, not in the form of a direct question without any figurative meaning of the words which enter into it” [Sokolov, Y. M: 283]. The riddle presents a kind of puzzling question. Mostly it is played among the children. It gives them a kind of recreation and amusements. The old people become the helper in such play. Each and every riddle has an answer. The riddles have been enriching the beauty of the oral literature. So, riddles are the important genre in the bulk of the oral literature. These are used to test the intelligence and wisdom of the persons.

Rozer D. Abrahams observes: “Riddles are questions that are formed with the purpose of confusing or testing the wits of those who do not the answer. They are commonly called forth during the ‘riddle session’-special occasions during which such witty devices may be used in a properly playful contest situation” [Abrahams, R. D: 185].

The Kaibarttas also play the riddles in their day to day life. Riddles are popular among the Kaibarttas. They play riddles after coming back from their working field at night. All the members of a family generally take rest at night. The children and adults are engaged in telling riddles. The riddles are locally known as *Sathor* among the Kaibarttas. Some of the riddles used by the Kaibarttas have been furnished as bellows.

Some of the riddles among the Kaibarttas are in the poetic form, which bear the metaphoric language. Some riddles are important and remarkable from the point of view of comic elements it bears. The riddles not only attract the adult minds but also the juvenile minds. The riddles are exercised during night under the open sky by the

children and adults. Thus the attitudes of the Kaibarttas towards life and soil are found expressed in their riddles.

The riddles are the most interesting and attractive folk genre of the folk literature. The riddles demand knowledge in the logical process. One may find out the answer by using wits and knowledge logically. The riddles also raise some joking questions which may be called reverse riddles. The objects of the riddles are derived from our day to day life. So these are lively and amusing.

A riddle may be called a well composed metaphor. In a metaphor a word is transferred from the object to which it proper belongs to another in such manner that a comparison is implied. High suggestiveness is a special characteristic of a good metaphor. In the same way a riddle is always in the form of a question in which a fact is concealed. The hidden of the implied sense is found out with the help of wit and intelligence.

Along with the old riddle, there also exist some newly composed riddles. Riddles prevalent among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district reflect their knowledge and ideas of fishing, waterbeds and fishing tools. But it is worth mentioning that some of the riddles are already popular among the Assamese society. Folklorists have already collected these riddles. But these riddles basically represent the occupational life of the Kaibarttas. Some riddles collected are as follows:

[i]

Bārohāt jālor terohāt fātā

Bhāl mārili bāpor betā

Rou borāli sorki golā

Puthi kholihā pāchie pāchie rolā

[Gogi, A: 113]

This means:

A net of twelve feet is with many holes. An expert catches fishes with the help of this net. Rohu and freshwater shark go free while fishing. Only chola barb and Indian paradise fish are caught.

The metaphorical use of language is found in the above riddle. The name of fish is symbolically used in this riddle. The higher class people were indifferent to *Vaishnavism* introduced by *Sankerdeva* during 15th century. On the contrary the lower class people were attracted to this religion. Here rohu and the freshwater shark represent the higher class people and chola barb and Indian paradise fish represent the lower class people. This riddle runs among the Kaibartta people.

Some of the riddles are related to the fishing tools and water, the dwelling place of fish. These riddles also reflect their day to day occupational life.

[ii]

Ekjani kali gāi
Ghāte ghāte pāni khāi

This means:

This is a black cow.
The cow drinks water at every bank of the river.

Answer: Fishhook

[iii]

Māmāthertāk gelu
Sumābā pāllu olbā nallu

This means:

We go to the house of maternal uncle.
We entered but could come back.

Answer: Chepa i.e. a fishing trap

[iv]

Māke borosi bāi
Putake sāgor sāi

This means:

Mother catches fish with fishhook.
Son watches the sea.

Answer: Bamboo

[v]

*Petedi khāi**Mukhedi hāge*

This means:

*That eats by stomach.**That releases through mouth.*Answer: *Chepā*

[vi]

*Rojār fulonibāri**Somāba pāri**Olāba nowāri*

This means:

*That is flower garden of king.**One can enter into the garden.**One cannot come out from it.*Answer: *Chepā*

Some riddles carry a story associated with their day to day occupational life. Some of such riddles popular among the Kaibarttas, of Nalbari district are as follows:

[vii]

*Ott koinā**Lāgo sāti**Sudhi āhu jo jonāk rāti**Āire bāpāre burāhār dhāou**Topāt ānja topāt bhāt**Bisāri e jāou*

This means:

*Get up bride.**The old man asks to light up the lamp.**We [the old man and the bride] may go to ask in the moonlight night.**What an adamant old man.*

Hot soup and hot rice are ready.

Let us go to find out.

The above riddle narrates a story. During the rainy season, an old fisher folk always caught fishes with the help of the *Chorha* i.e. a kind of fishing trap. The old man brought the fishes to his home. But during the time of the meal the old man was not served with fishes he caught. The son-in-law of the old man was very clever and she ate all the fishes before serving the meal. She always told lies. She said that she has distributed all the fishes to their neighbours. So, one night the old man became very angry with the son-in-law. He wanted to prove her statement. It was a moonlight night. The son-in-law was preparing meal. He ordered her to light up the lamp and wanted to find out the fishes. Then she became also angry with him.

[viii]

Dhuwānte pislil

Shinke nāinli kiyā

Moi kāli neinlu kiyā

This means:

The fish got free when it was washed.

Why do not you bring it without washing?

Why did I not come yesterday?

One old fisher man was going with view to catching fishes. Suddenly he saw a fish on the sore of the beel. The fish was alive and it was jumping. He wanted to clean the fish and went to the water of the beel. The fish got free from his hand when he was cleaning it. He returned home without the fish. He told the whole story before his wife and said, *Dhuwante Pislil* i.e. the fish got slipped while cleaning. Then the wife said to her husband, *Shinke Nāinli Kiya?* i. e. Why did you not bring the fish without cleaning? Suddenly their son heard the dialogues between them with hearing the whole story behind the dialogues. He thought that his parents were suffering from mental illness and informed to the village Kaviraj for treatment. The Kaviraj came and offered medicine on their son's hand and instantly left the place. Next day when the Kaviraj asked for money to the old man he started to beat him because he knew

nothing about the treatment. Then the Kaviraj said, *Moi Kali Neinlu Kiya?* i.e. Why did I not take the fees for treatment yesterday?

[ix]

Zohār mohār sahur kāl

Sahur burāh bāiz olā vāl

Oho jāk boi toho jāk boi

Thupār tolot dhom gore

Shieo jāk de doi

This means:

Father-in-law is too old to move and is clever.

He should come out from the cowshed.

It should spread everywhere.

The big green snake head is in the fire.

It should be burnt into ashes.

The above riddle indirectly tells a story. During the rainy season, the old man catches fish everyday with the help of *Chorha*, a kind of fishing trap. But unfortunately the old man does not get his share at the time of meal. His daughter-in-law ate all the fishes caught by the old man. One day he was drenched in the rain and returned to home early from the field. He entered the cow-shed to get heat from the fire so that he could make his body warm. When he touched the fire with the help of a bamboo stick he discovered the fishes there. Thus he came to know the whole thing about why he did not get fish to eat.

[x]

Ākāshor kuruā

Pātālor raou

Bonor horin

Bātor gonok

Sārio moril eketi konot

[Sarmadoloi, H: 47]

This means:

Kurua i.e. a bird is flying in the sky.

A rohu is lying on the earth.

A deer is in the forest.

A priest is on the way.

The bird, fish, deer and the priest dies in one place.

The above riddle indirectly tells a story. A fish was lying there on the bank of the pond. The fish was alive and it was jumping. The bird on the sky comes down and catches the fish. At that time a deer slips down on the fish and bird coming to drink water. Then the priest tries to catch the fish, bird and deer. But unfortunately they all sink in the pond and die.

[xi]

Shiāl surajmukhi

Kāuri rājpokhi

Vekuli pātro

Gonoke pāi

Jolongāt bhorāle mātro

Chāi leti peti, sārikān kātā

Sodhya bhuban dekhuwāle

Silonir betā

[Gogoi, L: 16]

This means:

The fox is praised by the fish.

The crow is praised by the fish.

The frog is praised as efficient by the fish.

The priest finds the fish

He brings it in the bag.

With the help of ash the fish is cleaned and cut.

The prying bird shows the fish many places.

A story is there also in the above riddle. When the water became shallow, a rohu was moving from one pond to another pond. When a fox wanted to eat the rohu, it praised the fox and the fox left the rohu. Then again a crow wanted to eat the rohu. It praised a lot to the crow and the crow left the fish. But a priest caught the rohu and brought it to home. When the woman was cleaning the fish at home, a praying bird captured the fish flying in the sky. Another prying bird wanted to capture the same fish and the fish got free.

E. Prose Narratives and Its Genres: A Theoretical Study

The traditionally transmitted narrative stories are the narrative prose. Narrative prose is divided into three divisions, such as, 1] Myth 2] Legend and 3] Tale. The traditionally transmitted stories in the past are the myths. The myths carry the cultural traits, religious beliefs etc. of a community or tribes. The Kaibarttas of this area locally call the myths as *Gosai Kotha*. The legends are traditional and narrative. It expresses the stories of individual, place and local history, heroic deeds of the past, fight, victories and triumphs. Tales are imaginative creation of the folk mind. Fish is considered as the symbol of sex. Fish also represents the symbol of good will. The prose narratives found among the Kaibarttas are as follows.

Among myth, legend and tale, folk tale continues to be the most extensively studied genre. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are regarded as the first systematic collectors and scholars in case of the formal study of folk narratives. Along with the increased travel to and greater knowledge of other places in the world for the rapidly developing technology, the investigation in the origins of human race, language and culture were also increased.

Structural approach to prose narratives in folk literature had their heyday from 1950s to 1970s. Folk narrative scholars generally distinguish between two types of structuralism. Most of the folk narratives have ultimately been driven by the search for meaning. Some important contributions to the study of folk narrative style have come from literary scholars as well as anthropologists in the 20th century. Regarding the genres of prose narratives, varieties are observed around a limited number of plots. W.R. Bascom observes: "The verbal art, as a segment of culture was conveniently and

appropriately suggested to encompass folk tales, myths, legends, proverbs, riddles and literary terms” [Bascom, W. R: 65-66].

The dialect of folk narratives is always regional and it is capable of communicating among the folk people. It is composed verbally and transmitted verbally from generation to generation. The prose narratives are related with the origin of the social system, social customs and traditions. The human situations are presented through prose narratives. Some prose narratives run among the Kaibarttas. It has enriched their folk literature. Tales are the most popular prose genre among the children of the Kaibartta community. The adults mainly tell the tales to the children during the leisure time. As the minds of the children wander in the world of fancy and imagination, so they like the imaginative characters in the tales. Of course, it also provides moral lessons. The followings are genres of prose narratives.

I. Tale

People all over the world experience the same emotions, such as love, pity, fear, anguish, jealousy, hatred etc. The result of these emotions may be such as, greed, courage, selfish ambition, kindness etc. These emotions and its results and the conditions of people, such as cruel step parents, neglected children etc. are expressed through some fictional compositions which may be termed as tale. These fictional prose compositions have been handing down orally from the past. The tales are the product of human imagination.

Folk tales are comment of the society. The tales reinforce and codify the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behaviour of the people. Generally a tale aims to entertain the people. Rightly does observe W. R. Bascom: “They are fiction pure and simple, devised not to instruct and edify the listener but only to amuse him. They belong to the reason of pure romance” [Bascom, W. R: 119]. An inter relation is seen among the myths, legends and folk tales also. W. R. Bascom observes: “Myth, legends and folk tales differ in their setting in time and place, in their principal characters and importantly, in the beliefs and attitudes associated with them. The myth contains narrative about the gods and heavenly beings which are regarded as sacred. The

legends deal with heroes and heroines believed to be real character. Of course tales contain a well proportional structure and finished form” [Bascom, W. R: 119].

The folk tale often explains something that happens in nature or conveys a certain truth about life. The beginning of the story starts with phrase like ‘once upon a time’ or similar phrase, magic events, characters and objects are the parts of the story. Goodness is rewarded in the tales. A tale is locally known among the Kaibarttas as Sadhu Katha or Kahini i.e. story. The tales do travel, so relationship among the many tales of various communities of Assam is noticed. The Kaibarttas are fond of folk tales. The oral literature of the Kaibartta community regarding the folk tales is rich. Tales are generally classified as follows.

i. Animal Tale

In animal tale the principal characters are animals that talk like human beings and interact with them. In such tales animals portray human virtues and vices for the purposes of conveying a moral message. 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 towards ascribing human qualities to animals also appears when the tale is clearly not in the mythical circle. It is such non-mythological stories that we designate by the simple term animal tale [Stith, T: 9].

ii. Cumulative Tale

The cumulative tales include repetitious patterns, three wishes, three deeds, or repeated list that is added to. The cumulative tales are narrated in the spirit of pure form and are in the name of formula tales. In this type, the pattern is more important than the plot. In the cumulative tales, “the action, characters, names, speeches or whatever is the feature of the accumulation, builds up to an impasse or a climax and often, but always goes through the list again in reverse in order to resolve the plot” [Funk & Wagnalls: 269]. The cumulative tales use repetition in its narratives which is the most distinctive peculiarity of the primitive language. Stith Thomson observes: “The cumulative tales always work 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 at that is to be learned about the whole tale” [Stith, T: 230].

iii. Dilemma Tale

The ending of such type of tales is open to conjecture or is morally ambiguous. The audiences are allowed to comment or speculate on the correct solution to the problems posed. Dilemma tales function both as instruction and entertainment and help in establishing social norms. The dilemma tales are the fictional compositions in the oral literature. The term dilemma refers to tales which may have confusion of mind. These tales have been transmitting orally from generation to generation. These are told by the old men and women who also heard these tales from their fore fathers during their childhood. W. R. Bascom observes: “Narratives that tear the listeners with a choice among alternatives, such as which of the characters has done the best, deserve reward or should with an agreement or a case in the court” [Bascom, W. R: 1].

iv. Humorous Tale

Indeed the folk tales take us to the very beginning of people’s lives, to their hopes and defeats. The humorous tales have generally a humorous purpose. These tales may refer to the short anecdotes. Resemblance is noticed between the humorous tales and the animal tales. Rightly does observe Stith Thompson: “Short anecdotes told for humorous purposes are found everywhere. Among some they are usually animal tales but even where this is true than action is essentially that characteristic of main important themes producing these popular jests are the absurd acts of foolish persons i.e. numskull tales, deceptions of all kinds and obscene situations. There is a tendency for jests to form cycles, since humorous adventures become attached to some characters who thereafter attracts into his orbit all kinds of jests, appropriate and inappropriate” [Stith, T: 10].

W. R. Bascom also observes: “A large portion of the most popular anecdotes and jests are concerned with cleverness” [Bascom, W. R: 188-189].

v. Supernatural Tale

The supernatural tales are involved in introducing the romantic, imaginative, and magical elements with the help of the characters. The incidents happened in such tales

are supernatural. The supernatural tales narrate, “An ordinary human being encountered with supernatural world and his being endowed with qualities that enable him to perform supernatural acts” [Degh, L: 62]. Most of the supernatural tales shows an echo of the classical source. These tales are mostly derived from the classical sources.

vi. Trickster Tale

The trickster in such tales is a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman or anthropomorphic animal. These characters play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behaviour. Such tales are generally revolves round a clever rouse who goes about cheating others. The cleverness of the trickster is exposed through their activities involved. Of course sometimes the trickster seen deceived by himself. Stith Thompson observes: “The adventures of the trickster, even when considered by them are inconsistent. Parts are the result of this stupidity and about an equal number show him over causing 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” [Stith, T: 42-46].

vii. Tale of Folk History

The tales of the folk history are orally composed on the basis of history. The characters and places have some historical touches. Such kind of tales express about wars, victories, migration etc. of the past heroes. The story tellers and the listeners regard such tales as true incidents. P. Goswami does observe: “The legend or folk history refers to tales which may have a historical basis about some persons or places” [Goswami, P: xii].

viii. Incestuous Tale

Incestuous tales generally revolve round man and women between which an incestuous relationship is established. These characters revolve round an incestuous taboo. During survey no incestuous tales are found among the Kaibarttas.

F. Prose Narratives Run Among the Kaibarttas

Some of the tales run among the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district, during survey are as follows.

a. Tale of Ou Kuwari and Raj Kowar

In the past a king had two queens. The little one gave birth an *Outenga*, an acid fruit. She throws away it into the garbage. It again comes to the queen. One day it goes to a river and a beautiful girl comes out from it and takes bath in the river. A prince was fishing in the river at that time. He saw the whole thing. He wants to marry it. But he is in a sorrowful mood because he now has not seen original girl coming out from it. One day a beggar woman advises him to burn the surface of it. Accordingly he does it and the girl comes out from it.

b. The Sadhu of the Monkeys and the Old Couple

Once upon a time, there lived an old couple in a village. This old couple had no children. But they were happy .One night they discussed about planting the sweet potatoes. Next day when the old man started to plant the sweet potatoes, some monkeys approached him. They told him that his method of planting potatoes was wrong. He asked the monkeys how the potatoes were planted. One of the monkeys answered him that he should boil the potatoes and then plant it with a sign of bamboo stick near the potato. In addition to that the monkeys say that if he does this, he will shortly find good result. Thus the monkeys went way.

The old man returned to his house believing in what the monkeys said. So he advised his wife to boil the sweet potatoes and accomplished the task of planting potatoes accordingly. At night the monkeys came there to see whether the sweet potatoes have been planted according to their instructions or not. The monkeys became happy when they found it in the same manner as it was desired by them. Then they dig out the boiled sweet potatoes by observing the bamboo sticks and ate all the sweet potatoes. After eating the sweet potatoes, they instantly left the place.

Rising up early in the next morning, the old couple went to the field to see the sweet potatoes. But they did not see the sweet potatoes in the field. They understood the trick of the monkeys and became very angry with the monkeys. They planned to kill them. Accordingly the old man advised his wife that he would pretend to be dead

and she would be weeping near him. Thus according to their plan the old man pretended to be dead lying on the floor keeping a stick near him. The woman was sitting near her husband and started to weep. She was weeping and waiting for the monkeys to approach them. The monkeys heard the weeping of the old woman and came there to enquire what had happened. When the monkeys approached them, the old man sprang up holding the stick in his hand and started to beat up the monkeys. Some of the monkeys died then.

The old man thought of selling the meat of the monkeys. He carried the meat of the dead monkeys to sell it in the village. But a kite flying in the sky was watching everything done by the old man. The kite told the villagers about the meat of the dead monkeys. On the whole day the old man failed to sell even a single piece of meat. The old man became tired and returned home in the evening. At home he thought of killing the kite. So, in the next morning he went to the field in search of the kite. Then a crab bit in one of his legs. After this incident the old couple gave up the idea of killing the kite. They lived happily thereafter.

c. The Fisherman without Fish

At the request of his wife an old Kaibartta fisher folk went for fishing in a nearby river. He took an *Asra Jal* with him. It was the noon time. He started fishing with the help of a boat. There was an old tree on the bank of the river. He got more fishes than he expected at the beginning. But after an hour later when he checked the Kook, he found it empty. He became frightened at this happening. He understood that *Zokh*, an evil spirit has eaten all the fishes. The he instantly left the place without any fish. From that day he did not go for fishing alone at noon.

II. Myth

Myth is one story in a mythology. On the other hand mythology is a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by particular group. In classical Greek, *Mythos* signified any story or plot whether true or invented. The myths generally serve to explain why the world is as it is. It serves to provide a rationale for social customs and observances. Most of the myths are related to social rituals.

M. Leach does observe: “Myth is a story presented as having occurred in a previous age explaining the cosmological and supernatural tradition of a people, their gods, heroes, and cultural traits, religious believes etc.” [Leach, M: 778]. W. R. Bascom has defined myths as “prose narratives which in the society, in which they are told, are considered to be truthful account of what happened in the remote past” [Bascom, W. R: 98].

Myths explain the fact and phenomenon of what happened in our society in which they are told in the remote past. The myths thus explain the origin of the world, of mankind, of death or for characteristic birds, animals, geographical features and phenomenon of nature. These are mostly associated with patriots, national heroes, leaders, individuals, and institutions etc. *Bhisma*, *Krishna* etc. are some such personalities centring round whom many myths have been created. It can be said that a mythology is a religion in which we no longer believe. The term also has been extended to denote supernatural tales. The myths are generally a fanciful explanation of some natural phenomena with little factual basis. These tell us about the origin of man, world and nature, the gods and goddesses. The main function of myths is to help human beings cope with the inexorability of given reality.

Mythical tales also run among the Kaibarttas. Their myths are connected with the story of creation of the world and man. Of course some of the myths among the Kaibarttas also narrate in origin of natural phenomena. Some of the myths among them are as follows:

i. Myth of Krishna and the Serpent King

In most of the parts of India fisher men believe that *Krishna* started cleaning the waterbeds by dominating *Kaliya*. The Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari believe Krishna as the incarnation of Vishnu. For the existence of fish water also needs to be clean and pure. Thus the Kaibarttas do believe in cleaning the waterbeds that is associated with fishing. It is felt from the following myth.

Kaliya was occupying the river *Yamuna*, who was a serpent king. He poisoned the water of *Yamuna*. The forests near it had been also dried up by the poisonous air that *Kaliya* breath. Krishna knew the damage done to *Yamuna* and the nearby forests by

Kaliya. So, Krishna jumped into the river to dominate him. But Krishna fell into the trap of *Kaliya*. He caught Krishna in his coil. Later on Krishna freed himself from his coil with the help of his divine power. He started dancing on the hood of the serpent. *Kaliya* prayed for mercy and his wives begged him to spare their husbands. Then Krishna released him and asked them to leave the shores of *Jamuna*. Thus serpent king was released and went to the sea [Garrett, J: 307-308].

ii. Myth of the Birth of Fish

In the past an old couple planted crops in the paddy field. One day they went to the paddy field with a view to see their crops. On the way the woman becomes tired and wants water. Then the old man covers her eyes with a piece of cloth and took her to a beel. She is also warned not to remove the cloth. But when she heard the songs of the birds in the beel, she wanted to see the birds. When the cloth is removed, she sees the birds engaged in making sex. She also wants to have sex with her husband. She becomes pregnant and give birth many offspring. When they become unable to feed them, a pond is dug out in the Himalaya range. The children are kept in the pond. Later on they become fish.

iii. Myth of Beula and Lakhindor

According to the myth *Beula* and *Lakhindor* were husband and wife. *Lakhindor* died after biting by a snake. Then she starts journey to heaven taking the dead body of her husband in a raft of banana tree. It takes six months to reach heaven. During the journey the knee of *Lakhindor* was eaten by a freshwater shark. *Beula* satisfies the god *Shiva* by displaying her dance. She was advised to offer flowers to the goddess *Manasa*. Thus *Lakhindor* becomes alive. Later on the freshwater shark was caught by the fisher folk and the knee was found out from its stomach [Gogoi, A: 75].

iv. Myth of the Matshya Avatar and Manu

The Kaibarttas believe that fish is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the king of paradise. Lord Vishnu has ten incarnations and fish is the first among these. They believe that Lord Vishnu appeared in the shape of a fish. On the other hand, it may be identified with the myth of *Matshys Avatar* which is narrated in *Matshya-Purana*. The narration goes as bellow:

One day, while *Brahma* was sleeping, a powerful demon named *Hayagriva* stole the *Vedas* emerging from his mouth. But *Lord Vishnu* saw the incident of stealing the *Vedas* from *Brahma* and *Lord Vishnu* decided to kill the demon. He transformed himself into a very small fish for this purpose and glided into the hands of royal saint *Satyavrata*, who had attained the rank of *Manu*. In due course of time, the fish became bigger and bigger and *Manu* somehow come to know that this fish is no other than the *Lord Vishnu* himself. *Vishnu* informed him about the imminence of a great deluge. *Lord Vishnu* advised him to proceed somewhere with the help of the big vessel offered by him. He was also asked to take together the seven *Rishis* with him along with all the plants and all the seeds of the created things. *Manu* followed all the instruction given by *Lord Vishnu*. When the water covered the very surface of the earth, *Vishnu* again appeared to him in the form of a golden fish. He then tied the vessel to the horn of this golden fish. During while *Manu* was floating with the help of the vessel, *Vishnu* gave him the lesson of doctrines and science of spirit. At end of the deluge, the fish god *Vishnu* restored the *Vedas* from *Hayagriva* punishing him to death and gave it to *Brahma*. *Vishnu* also taught *Vedas* to *Manu* [Garrett, J: 389].

v. Myth of Varuna and Satyavati

The *Kaibarttas* give utmost importance to rain, river, beels and other waterbeds. These are regarded by the as pious and sacred. *Varuna* is the god of ocean and the *Kaibarttas* believe this god as the rain god. Water is essential for the survival of fish, that is related to their occupation and the rain is preserved in the form of water in the beels, river and other waterbeds. Here goes an interesting story in respect of this rain god.

King *Gadhi* had a daughter named *Satyavati*. An elderly Brahmin sage named *Richika* wanted to marry her. Accordingly when he approached the king, he agreed the sage on a condition of offering a thousand white horses having a single black ear. The king further told him that he could marry her daughter only if would fulfil this condition. After propitiating *Varuna*, he was blessed and succeeded in his goal. Accordingly the god appeared and fulfilled his wishes. Thus the sage gave the horses the king wanted and married *Satyavati* [Garrett, J: 568-569].

III. Legend

The term 'legend' is derived from the Latin word 'Legenda' meaning things to be read. It is a narrative of human actions that are perceived both by letter and listeners to take place within human history. Legends, for its active and passive participants include no happenings that are outside the realm of possibility.

Legend is one of the important sub-genres of prose narratives. The legends are some kinds of religious tales which are deeply rooted in tradition. Though there is religious flavour in the legends, but they also deal with the social and psychological aspects of the human beings. The legends may also be defined as folk tale historically grounded. Legends are used as a source of folklore. It provides historical information regarding the culture and views of specific legend's civilization. The legends have an imaginative nature. When these legends are transmitted from generation to generation modification to some extent is observed. Legends generally speak of the wars, victories, heroic exploits through the legendary heroes and heroines.

W. R. Bascom does observe: "Legends are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator or his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as is today. Legends are more often secular than sacred and their characters are human" [Bascom, W. R: 98].

The legends are classified into four divisions, such as 1] Mythical legend 2] Historical legend 3] Religious legend and 4] Etiological legend

The legendary tales as a genre of prose narrative is available among the Kaibarttas. The following is the legend regarding the name of a place. It has been transmitting orally from generation to generation. Some of the narratives run among the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district are from the Indian epics and scriptural books which somehow relates their occupational beliefs. The followings are of the myths narrated by the informants during field work.

i. The Kahini Regarding the Name Barnibari

Barnibari is a revenue village under Barkhetri Mouza in Nalbari district of Assam. A legend regarding the name Barnibari runs among them. This village was once situated on the bank of a beel named *Boria*. The beel was small one. This place is now known as *Puran Gaon*. The profession of the people who lived in that place was mainly fishing. They were Kaibarttas. The people of that village run their lives by catching fishes. Then boat was the only means of communication. The economic condition of the villagers was not sound. On the other hand the flood in each year affected the villagers. So, the people of this area were in search of a new comfortable place to stay. And fortunately they found a new place far away from the *Boria* beel which was not affected by flood. Several kinds of small trees and creepers were covering the place. People cleaned the place cutting the small trees and creepers. At first people called the place as *Bannabari*. In due course of time this name *Bannabari* became *Barnibari*.

ii. Legend of King Janaka and Astabakra

Janaka was the king of *Mithila*. He once met a sage named *Astabakra* and asked him some questions to test his wisdom. The king asked, “Which creature does not close its eyelid while sleeping? Which creature does not take breath during birth and which creature have no heart? And which creature does grow at a great speed?” *Astabakra* being a witty sage replied excellently. He replied that it fish that close its eyelid when sleeping. It is egg that does not take breath during sleeping. A hard hearted man has not a heart and a river does grow at a great speed [Bezbaruah, M. P: 73].

It is proved from the above narration that fish has been the utmost interest of fascination even among the king and the wise person. Fish is a very strange creature that does not close its eyelid while sleeping. The narration also tells about the river and its strength. Thus the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district relates fish and river narrated in the legend with their day to day occupational life.

iii. Legend of King Bhagiratha and Ganga

The Kaibarttas always like to refer *Ganga* as their river goddess that is associated with their occupation. *Ganga* is considered by them as their mother. The following one is a story drawn from the Ramayana. The narrative goes as follows:

Sagara was the king of *Ayodhya*. He had six hundred sons. Once, the king wanted to perform the horse sacrifice. But the horse was stolen. The all his sons went in search of the horse following the order of his father. Finally they discovered it near the great sage named *Kapil*. When they falsely accused this sage of stealing the horse, he became furious. In his instant rage, *Kapil* burnt all of them to ashes with the help of his heavenly power. The king became worried as his sons did not come back. So, he sent his grandchild *Angsuman* in search of his sons. *Angsuman* discovered only the ashes and came to know that the souls would find heavenly solace if the ashes were purified by the water of *Ganaga*. The king became shocked after getting this news and died soon. Then, the succeeded kings - *Angsuman* and *Dilip* also failed to do this job. But then *Bhagiratha* became the King of *Ayodhya*.

Bhagirathi is a section of the *Ganges*. According to the legend, king *Bhagiratha* of the solar dynasty subjected himself to austere penances for a long time to bring the celestial river *Ganga* down from heavens to purify the ashes of his 60,000 ancestors [Klostermaier, K. K: 36].

iv. Legend of Matsyendra

The Kaibarttas, as fishermen community are fond of fish. Some legends revolve round human being also. One such legend is as follows:

Matsyendranath the first human guru to whom the esoteric doctrines of *Natha* sect were communicated. He was so called because he received the secret teachings while in the form of a fish. The nature of the doctrine was such that it was not possible for more than one being at a time to comprehend it. Once, *Siva* was telling his wife *Parvati* about its deeper mysteries as they both sat by the sea. *Paravti* found it boring and fell asleep, but *Matsyendra* who happened to be swimming nearby overheard the discourse and became enlightened. *Matsyendra* had a great weakness for women, and

in popular terms this was expressed by saying that he was fond of eating the entrails of fish. He was also known as *Minnath* i.e. fish lord [Walker, B: 51].

Another story goes regarding *Matsyendra* in this way. *Matsyendra* was known as Min who was the king of *Kamrupa*. He was the king of fishermen community and was also a fisher folk. Once while fishing he was in a deep contemplation. At that time a big fish pulled his hook along with him and the fish ate Min. But he was alive for twelve years inside the fish as he was in a deep contemplation. So while *Siva* was explaining the *Jog Shastra* before *Parvati*, he overheard the discourse while he was inside the fish and became enlightened. Later on a fisherman discovered him inside the fish. Then his 13 years old son met his father [Bezbaruah, D: 10-11].

v. Birth Legend of Satyavati and Vyasa

Satyavati was the daughter of *Uparichara*, a demi-god, who according to the Mahavarata later became the king of *Chedi* by the command of *Indra*. *Uparichara* was a *Dasa*, whose people lived by fishing.

Once, *Uparichara* was away on a hunting expedition from his wife and five sons for several days. One day as he was resting, he thought of his lovely wife and his seed was voided. He placed it on a leaf and despatched it by a falcon to his wife. Another falcon thought that the other bird was carrying a piece of meat. The seed fell down into the river Yamuna as a result of the fight between the two falcons. In this river there lived an *Apsara* named *Adrika* who had been condemned by Brahma's curse to live on earth in the form of a fish. This *Apsara* swallowed the seed. Ten months later the fish was caught and its belly cut open and a boy and a girl were found inside. The fisherman sent the boy to the reigning king who adopted him and named him *Mashya*. The girl was adopted by the fisherman and named her *Satyavati*. She was dark in colour and extremely beautiful, but had an odour of fish constantly clinging to her. One day when she plied her adoptive father's ferry across the river Yamuna, sage *Parasara*, struck by her beauty, offered to remove her fishy odour from her body, provided she submitted to her embrace. He promised her that she would be the mother of a famous son. In due course a child was born on an island of Yamuna and later he was renowned as *Vyasa*, the author of *Mahabharata* [Walker, B: 360].

6.4 Fishing Activities

Fishing, to a considerable extent, is determined by the heterogeneous and uncertain conditions of the physical environment. The activities associated with fishing have been discussed widely as a cultural type as that of the pastoralists, horticulturists and so on. Such discussion on fishing have taken into consideration the variety of fishing techniques and technologies ranging from simple traps, spears, arrows etc., among indigenous peoples; to different kinds of sizes of boats and nets employed in small-scale or industrial fishing; general fishing or maritime cultures etc. Anthropological studies of the so-called 'extreme occupations' of the fishing communities have been analysed in terms of their distinctive values, social structure and organization inter-related to the special demands of the occupational role. In the small-scale traditional societies, fishing activities some time share many of the characteristics of hunting like danger, uncertainty, the use of physical strength and so on. These activities also resemble more closely the gathering of a reliable and easily captured resource. There are examples of regions where the comparative abundance and reliability of aquatic resources permitted a level of social development which is generally associated with agricultural societies [Seymour-Smith, 1986].

In many fishing communities of the world, fishing territories are not a common property resource. In some societies rights to fish are controlled and such ownership rights operate to reduce uncertainty. In most societies fishing rights involve control over "fishing space" - not the resource itself. The main object however is not to protect or conserve the fish as much to reserve the fish that are there for one's self [McCay: 399].

Fishing activities are undertaken in seas, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, inland pools and in paddy fields. The conditions of the weather and fish cannot be controlled by the fishermen. The uncertainty stems not only from the physical environment but also from the social environment in which fishing is undertaken [Acheson, J. M: 275].

The fishing profession in all over the world possesses similar difficulties and problems. The Kaibarttas are one of the sixteen scheduled caste communities of

Assam. In the same way the Kaibarttas of Assam have been facing the same problems as fishing community of Assam.

Fishing is the traditional occupation of the Kaibarttas, living in Nalbari district. As it is a seasonal occupation, the Kaibarttas do also perform the agricultural activities along with the fishing profession. Several types of fishes are caught by the Kaibartta fisher folk of Nalbari district. Most of the varieties of the fishes are found only during the peak season of the year. Generally, the peak season starts from mid September to mid May in the year. On the other hand, all other varieties are found all the year round through in fewer quantities. Some of the varieties of fishes available from mid September to mid May in the year are: Kanduli i.e. gangetic alia, Mirka i.e. mrigal, Bhakua i.e. catla, Sol i.e. giant snake, Borali i.e. freshwater shark, Chital i.e. humped feather back etc. In respect of fishing activities, the Kaibarttas of this area are seen to follow the Hindu calendar. The Kaibarttas depend on the fishing equipment and beels i.e. natural large wetlands. Each individual family possesses their own required fishing equipments. In some Kaibartta villages, the 'Fishery Co-operative Society' also provides boats and fishing nets to those fisher folk who cannot afford to have of their own. On the other hand fishing equipments like fishing gears are purchased by the fisher folk. Later on these are repaired by themselves. Shops of fishing equipments and accessories are seen rarely run by the Kaibartta people of this area. They purchase yarns, hooks etc. from the shops run by other community. The Kaibarttas of this area employ different fishing techniques such as traps, Banas, nets, fishing by road and line and several others.

The Kaibarttas of this area do not possess individual fisheries. They catch fishes in the nearby beels, such as Bouta, Kapla, Dhansiri etc. Generally these beels are owned by the Mahaldars i.e. the owner of the beels. These beels are auctioned by the government in every three years. The natural decrease of fishes in the fisheries and perennial pools has stood before them as a big problem. Many factors are observed responsible for this state. Some of them are as follows.

- I. Now a day, the area of beel fisheries is reduced and it has been used as the agricultural land by the villagers.

II. Different pesticides used by the cultivators in the paddy fields spread to beels which have largely affected the growth of fishes.

III. The construction of embankment on the river Brahmaputra has affected the circulation of fishes to the nearby areas.

IV. The advanced technique used in fishing has raised the quantum of catching fishes which has affected the future reproduction of cycle of fishes.

6.5 Fishing Practices

Through the development of technology, institutions, and communications, the fishermen can reduce risk and uncertainty. But for a terrestrial animal like man, the sea is still a dangerous and risky environment. Malinowski first suggested that human beings cope with incredible risk through ritual and magic. He noted that in the Torbriand Island no magic exists in lagoon fishing, where reliable catches can be obtained without physical danger, “.....while in open sea fishing, full of danger and uncertainty, there is extensive magical ritual to secure safety and good results” [Malinowski: 274].

Fishing practices mean the practices related to the fish and fishing activities. Several kinds of fishing practices are found among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district. Several kinds of water bodies are also found in Assam.

Statistics of Fisheries on Inland Water Bodies in Assam [Statiscal Hand Book, Assam:
2011].

Table No-16

Sl. No.	Type	Number	Water Spread Area in Hect.
1	Main river	2	205000
2	Tributories	53	
3	Registered Beels	430	60215
4	Un-registered Beels	766	40600
5	Forest Fisheries	5017
6	Swamps	9852	39240
7	Reservoirs	1	1713
8	Ponds and Tanks	208014	39696
	Total	219318	391481

District Wise Number of Registered Beel Fisheries and River Fisheries in Assam
[Statistical Hand Book, Assam: 2011].

Table No-17

Sl. No.	District	Registered Beel Fisheries	Registered River Fisheries
1	Dhubri	75	13
2	Kokrajhar	2	3
3	Bongaigaon	6	0
4	Goalpara	17	3
5	Barpeta	23	15
6	Nalbari	18	0
7	Kamrup[R+M]	20	5
8	Darrang	16	2
9	Sonitpur	20	5
10	Lakhimpur	11	8
11	Dhemaji	8	8
12	Morigaon	35	5
13	Nagaon	40	12
14	Golaghat	15	1
15	Sibsagar	17	8
16	Dibrugarh	23	9
17	Tinsukia	8	9
18	Jorhat	5	10
19	Karbi-Anglong	0	0
20	Dima Hasao	0	0
21	Karimgang	27	9
22	Hailakandi	6	9
23	Cachar	38	43
24	Chirang	0	0
25	Baska	0	0
26	Udalguri	0	0
	Assam	430	177

According to census 2011, there is total 219318 nos. of water bodies in Assam [Table No- 16]. And number of registered Beel fisheries in Nalbari district is 18 [Table No-17]. So, it shows that there is sufficient number of water bodies in Nalbari where the Kaibarttas can fish easily and make their livelihood.

6.6 Traditional Fishing Methods

Unlike the modern fishing techniques, the Kaibartta people of this area also have been using the indigenous methods of fish harvesting. The methods of fish catching among the people of this community have been passing on traditionally from one generation to other generation.

Some of the methods of fish harvesting among the Kaibarttas of Nalbari district are as follows.

A. Chali Di Mas Dhara

Chali Di Mas Dhara is one of the old traditional methods of fish catching among the Kaibarttas of this area. This method is generally adopted to catch fishes before harvesting the crops when the water level becomes low in the paddy field. It is used in the midst of crops. They use this method in the evening or morning of the day. This method can be categorised into four divisions. These are as follows.

I. *Matir Chali*

II. *Kal Donar Chali*

III. *Sungar Chali*

IV. *Bandhar or Latir Chali*

I. Matir Chali

Matir Chali is a traditional method of catching fishes among the Kaibarttas of this area. This method is generally adopted in the low level water in the midst of paddy field or perennial tank. The quantity of fishing becomes greater if the paddy fields or the perennial tanks concerned are connected with the stream.

The Kaibartta fisher folk can easily prepare the *Matir Chali*. The ingredients necessary for this *Chali* are available among them. The three ingredients for the preparation of this *Chali* are the rice bran, cow-dung and mud. The rice bran, cow-dung and mud are mixed well and then tight dough is prepared. It is prepared nearby

the targeted areas. The fisher folk generally bring the cow-dung and rice bran with him from home. After the preparation, the *Chali* i.e. attractant is kept in the targeted areas. As a sign, a small bamboo stick is kept erected in the targeted place where the dough is kept. The bamboo stick helps the fisher folk in finding out the targeted place easily.

The fishing equipments used in such fishing activities are the Zulki or Ploa i.e. a kind of cast trap made of bamboo splits. It is approximately 2 feet in length. The lower portion of the Pola or Zulki is wide open and its upper portion is like a narrow hole. Generally small fishes are caught by such fishing activities. Zulki is used to catch the small fishes and the Polā is used to catch the big fishes. The attractants are kept before one or two hours of catching the fishes.

II. Kal Donar Chali

Kal Donar Chali is also popular among the Kaibarttas of this area. It is also a kind of traditional method. The most important element for this method is the rice bran. The dry rice bran is used in this method as an attractant.

Another important element for this method is the peel of banana tree. The peel of banana tree is locally known as *Kal Dona*. The *Kal Dona* is kept on the surface of the water. Then some bamboo sticks are erected inside and outside the square. The bamboo sticks are used so that the wind and flow of the water cannot move away the *Kol Dona*. Thus the *Kal Dona Diya Chali* is prepared. Then the rice bran is kept inside the square floating on the water. The *Kal Dona* is used so that the rice bran cannot spread throughout the water body. Then after one hour the actual activity of catching fishes is started. The middle size net is basically used to harvest the fishes.

III. Sungar Chali

Sunga Thowa Chali is another traditional method of catching fishes among the Kaibarttas of this area. In this method, basically the rice bran and the boiled rice are the main attractants. For the preparation of this method a bamboo is cut into several short parts keeping one side of each part closed. The rice bran and boiled rice are kept inside the short bamboo pieces. Then these filled up bamboo pieces are kept in the ponds or tanks for one or two days.

IV. Latir Chali

In this method the *Lati* i.e. a small dam is itself an attractant. The *Lati* is made of mud in the midst of the paddy field. This method is used during the winter season when the water level is low in the field. The big fishes are caught along with the small fishes by implementing this method. The *Lati* is a long time method and remains for for many weeks [K. Photographs, Fig.33].

B. Dal Bandhi Mas Mara

Community fishing i.e. fishing in *Dal* is popular among the Kaibarttas of this area. The community fishing is executed in a group or band. This community fishing is done by implementing various traditional methods. These methods are adopted to catch fishes in the open fields or beels, ponds and lakes.

These methods are categorised as follows.

I. *Ber Di Mas Mara*

II. *Dal Bandhi Mas Mara*

III. *Zora Kata*

I. Ber Di Mas mara

Ber Diyais an old traditional fishing method. The fishing equipments used in this method are the *Zakhe* and *Khaloi*. *Zakhe* is a kind of cast trap with the help of which fishes are caught. The fishes caught are kept in the *Khaloi*.

Both the male and female fishers catch fishes by this method. Each of the fisher folk uses a *Zakhe* and a *Khaloi* to catch fishes. This method is adopted both in the morning and afternoon. At the very beginning the fisher folk select an area. Then they close the whole area by erecting a small dame with the help of aquatic weeds and grass. Before erecting the dam they keep a narrow way. When they make noise by clapping, disturb the water by hands and feet, the fishes entered covered area through the narrow way. Then instantly the narrow way is closed and the fishes are trapped inside the closed area. The fisher folk then catch the fishes with help of *Zakhe*.

II. Dal Bandhi Mas Mara

The Kaibarttas of this area observe the traditional community fishing during the Magh Domahi. The whole Kaibartta community take part in such fishing. Such fishing

generally practised in the community pond or stream. All the old and young catch fishes in such fishing. The fishing implements used are the *Zakhe*, *Khaloi*, indigenous gear, small net etc. The water is disturbed by the participation of a huge crowd. The fishes are frightened and come out from its shelter. The fishes get confused and fail to escape towards a safer place. Thus the fishes are caught [K. Photographs, Fig.05].

III. Zora Kata

Zora Kata i.e. light fishing is a traditional fishing popular among the Kaibarttas. In this activity *Zora* or *Veta* i.e. source of light is used. This fishing activity is practised at night in the rainy season. The *Veta* is kept in one hand and a knife or fishing gear is kept in the other hand. The fishes are seen in the shallow water with the help of the light. The fishing equipments used in such fishing are *Ballam* i.e. gear, *Kochtar* i.e. gear, *Dagar* i.e. knife and *Kacchi* i.e. sickle. This method is practised in the paddy field during the rainy season. Fishes are generally come out from shelter to clear water in search of food and oxygen. Then the fisher folk wound the fishes with fishing equipments and catch the fishes. Fishes are caught at night by using this method.

C. Ghera Fishing

Ghera fishing is an old traditional fishing method. This method is popular among the Kaibarttas.

Bana is made of bamboo strips with the help of coir and jute. *Bana* used in this method is known as *Sar Bana* or *Ghera Bana*. At the very beginning, the bamboo strips are prepared. Then these strips are knitted with the help of coir and jute. These are placed in the way through which the fishes migrate. It is fixed with the help of some bamboo sticks and rope. The *Banas* are placed keeping a way to enter the fishes with the flow of water into the collection area. The interesting thing is that the fishes only enter into the collection area, but it cannot come out from the trap. The collection area is locally called as *Ghera*

This method is a long time method. It continues for many days. After collecting the fishes, the fisher folk have to catch the fishes with the help of other fishing equipments. In such method, the fishes are remained alive [K. Photographs, Fig.35].

D. Pouta Fishing

Pouta fishing is an old traditional fishing method practised by the Kaibarttas of this area. For this fishing method boat and peel of the banana tree are the two main necessary things. At least two men are necessary for this method. Two bamboo sticks are attached in the both ends of the boat across the water level. Then the peel of the banana tree is fixed on the bamboo sticks. The two fisher folk sit on the both ends of the boat and slowly sail the boat. The small fishes on the surface of the water are hit by the banana peel and jump over it. The jumping fishes fall in the boat. Thus the fishing is accomplished.

E. Chera Fishing

Chera fishing is the last fishing in the year. The *Mahaldars* i.e. owner of the beel catches fishes for the last time in the year in March and April. After 18th Chot i.e. an Assamese month the local people can catch fishes without paying any tax to the *Mahaldars*. After this fishing new agreement is made with the government.

F. Safa Fishing

Safa fishing is an old traditional fishing. For this fishing method sack of rice is necessary. The sacks of rice are stitched by the local fisher folk by hand. It is called *Safa*. Then all the four sides of the *Safa* are connected by a piece of long string. Then the fishing area is covered with the help of bana. The *Safa* is kept inside it and three long piece of bamboo sticks are put under the *Safa*. The fishes under the *Safa* are in trouble because they cannot take air properly and make their way by the side of the bamboo pieces. The fishes come out under the *Safa* and gather over it. Thus the bamboo sticks are checked for three times. The *Safa* is projected in the evening and checked in the next morning.

G. Hand Fishing

Hand fishing is common among the Kaibarttas. This kind of fishing activity is seen in the month of January and February while the water level is low. In such kind of fishing activity hand is used as the main fishing tool. The fisher folk also carry a Kook i.e. a kind of tool to keep the fishes caught [K. Photographs, Fig.08].

H. Sickle fishing

Sickle fishing is common among the Kaibarttas. This kind of fishing activity is seen in the month of January and February while the water level is low. Sickle is the main fishing tool in such fishing activity. At least two persons are necessary for such kind of fishing. One person remains on the bank of the beel or pond. The other person draws the sickle from the water to his right or left. The fish is wounded and falls on the bank and the other person catch the fish.

I. Kata Fishing

Kata fishing is also seen among the Kaibarttas. *Kata* is a kind of fishing tool. A piece of bended iron of which one side is pointed is fixed with a bamboo stick. The stick is 5-7 feet long. It is drawn from the bank of the pond or beel towards his body.

J. Masor Uzan Utha

During rainy season the fishes like Kawai, Sing i.e. stinging cat act fish, magur etc. come out from the ponds, streams etc. That kind of activity of fish is known as *Masor Uzan Utha*. People catch the fishes with the help of *Pal, Zulki, Jal, Zakhe*.

K. Khal Shisa

Khal Sisa is a traditional fishing technique of the Assamese people. Khal is a small kind of pond. Some small ponds are dug out near the beel, stream and river. These ponds are filled with root of the trees, the upper part of the bamboo etc. during rainy season. The fishes take shelter in such ponds. When the water level becomes low, the open mouth of the pond is closed. Thus the fishes are caught.

L. Barasi Pata

Barasi Pata is a kind fishing activity in the rural areas of Assam. Bamboo stick, hook and a string are necessary elements for this activity. This are of several types: *Khuti Barasi, Chip Barasi, Punga Barasi, Nal Barosi* etc. The baits, such as, frog, small fish, insects are clung to fishhook.

6.7 Fishing Tools

Bamboo has been playing an important role in making the fishing implements in rural areas. Bamboo and cane have been playing an important role in forming the Assamese culture. Some of the fishing implements are as bellow. The Kaibarttas of the Nalbari district have been using a wide range of fishing tools since the past for catching several kinds of fish species. The fishing tools may be systematically categorised from the point of view of capture, design and operational methods of tools. From the point of view of capturing process the fishing tools may be of the following types [<http://indianresearchjournals.com/pdf/IJSSIR/2013/March/20.pdf>].

A. Tools related to gilling or tangling also known as entangling tools, such as, *Puthi Langi Jal, Kowai Langi Jal, Gorai Langi Jal, Ari Langi Jal, Rou Fansi jal, Karal Fansi Jal, Ari fansi Jal.*

B. Tools related to trapping also known as scooping tools, such as, *Ghani, Chepa, Chohra, Dingar, Pola, Julki, Jhupri.*

C. Tools related to filtering also known as trawling and encircling tools sub-divided into casting tools and surrounding tools, such as, *Mushari Jal or Mohri Jal, Guli Jal, Ber jal, Pam jal, Cheela Jal, Katalmara Jal, Khewali Jal, Angtha Jal, Moi Jal, Horhari jal, Shangla Jal.*

D. Tools related to hooking and spearing also known as impaling tools, such as, *Nal Barosi, Sip Borosi, Dhan Borosi, Dan Borosi, Pokora, Tiar, Jongar, Kol or Kati.*

E. Tools related to dewatering, such as, *Siseni, Kok, Zakhe.*

A. Pola

Pola is a kind of fishing implements made of bamboo. It is a kind of trap and is known as scooping tool. The male folk use this implement. It is used to fish in the small streams. In such kind of fishing generally a group of people participate. But sometimes only one person may catch fish using this implement. It has a small opening on the top ranging from 13 cm. - 18 cm. and on the bottom ranging from 55 cm. - 85 cm. It is generally 0.5 m. - 0.7 m. in height. The trapped fishes are caught

with the help of hand groping in the mud through the opening at the top [K. Photographs, Fig.15].

B. Zulki

In this fishing method *Zulki* is used. It is made of small bamboo sticks and this fishing trap is known as scooping tool. The upper part of it is narrow ranging from 17 cm. - 27 cm. and the lower part is wide ranging from 23 cm. - 27 cm. It is almost similar to that of the *Pola* in shape. The small fishes are caught with the help of *Zulki*. The *Laru* i.e. ball is made of rice bran mixing with mud or cow dung is used as attractant. It is then kept in the beel or swallow stream. The fishes are gathered near the *Laru*. Thus fishes are caught [K. Photographs, Fig.29].

C. Zakhe

Zakhe is another kind of fishing implement. This equipment is generally used by the women folk. *Zakhe* fishing is done in group in beel or small stream. Sometimes the *Zakhes* are kept in a line and the women come from the opposite side shaking the water so that the fish moves towards the *Zakhe*. It is triangular in shape. The front part of it is open ranging from 70 cm. - 90 cm. A handle is also attached to it and a piece of cane is also connected to it [K. Photographs, Fig.12].

D. Bana

Banas are made of bamboo splints using cane or string. It is like a fence where the bamboo splints are connected by the cane or string. This is kept sloppily against the current of the water. Some bamboo pieces support the Bana which are fixed in the water. The back side of the Bana is covered with a net. The fishes jump when obstructed by the Bana and take shelter in the net. The height of Bana is of different types. It is mainly from 2.5 feet to 5.5 feet in height. It ranges from 10 m. 100 m. Bana is of several types. These may be as follows.

I. *Sar Bana* [K. Photographs, Fig.13]

II. *Ghera Bana*

III. *Ghera Chepa Bana*

E. Chepa

Chepa is a kind of traditional fishing equipment. It is made of some small bamboo sticks. One side of it is closed with the help of a piece of bamboo. The other side is half closed with the help of a piece of bamboo. There is an opening at one side of the tool with the help of small bamboo sticks and these are extended towards inside the tool. The fishes can enter through this opening but cannot come out through it. The diameter of it varies from 15 cm. – 35 cm. Its total length ranges from 85 cm. – 135 cm. This is used in swallow water keeping its opening against the current of the water. Its shape is like a drum.

F. Khoka

Khoka is made of bamboo. It is long and its passage is wide. It is kept in water for few days and then checked.

G. Dalnga

Dalnga is a kind of fishing trap. Its shape is like a triangle. It is made of bamboo splints. This equipment is kept in the water. This is filled with upper part of bamboo and wastage of rice to attract the fishes. After two or three days it is checked and brought to bank of stream or beel with the help of three people [K. Photographs, Fig.36]

H. Chohra

Chohra is a kind of conical shaped fishing implement made of bamboo splints. It has a wide opening and a closed narrow end. Its length is about from 55 cm. – 65 cm. And diametrically its width ranges from 9 cm. – 11 cm. A ring made of bamboo is fixed at the mouth of the *Chohra*. The bamboo splints are connected with the help of a cane. This kind of fishing trap is used in the swallow water the rainy season. Some small and low dams are erected in the paddy fields for planting crops. *Chohras* are kept in a row in these damp [K. Photographs, Fig.25].

I. Dingar

Dingar is large kind of fishing trap. It is made of bamboo strips and its shape is like a rectangular. There is a mouth at one side of the *Dingar* with the sieve inwards. It is used in the stream to catch big fishes [K. Photographs, Fig.27].

J. Juphri

The design and shape of *Juphri* is quite similar to that of the *Pola*. The size of the mesh is small. Small and big fishes are caught with the help of this trap.

K. Gheni

Gheni is a cylindrical fishing trap. Its bottom is slightly flat. It has also a door at the top of the tool. One end of it is concave and has a narrow orifice. The large fishes are caught with the help of this trap. It is kept in the beel and checked after 4-7 hours.

L. Goildha

It is a rectangular shaped fishing trap. It has a long opening where the bamboo splits are interwoven with the help of the cane. The fish can only enter through this entrance but cannot come out. The other side has a small door through which fishes are brought out [K. Photographs, Fig.24].

M. Loiha

Loiha is a kind of fishing tool. It is used in carrying fishes from one place to another place. The front part of it is wide enough. The other side of it is closed and has a bend. The front part and back part are connected by cane or piece of string [K. Photographs, Fig.14].

N. Deli or Gas

Deli is also locally known as *Gas*. It is also a traditional fishing related tool. The fishes caught are kept in this tool. This tool is kept in the water and fixed it with the

help of a bamboo stick. The fishes are kept here to make the fishes alive [K. Photographs, Fig.19].

O. Pachi

Pachi is bamboo basket where fishes are kept for selling. It diametrically ranges from 70 cm. - 100 cm. Its depth ranges from 1 foot - 2.5 feet [K. Photographs, Fig.34].

6.8 Fishing Net

There are several kinds of fishing nets are used for fishing activity besides the fishing implements made of bamboo. Some of the fishing nets are as bellow.

A. Asra Jal

Its upper side is closed and lower part is wide enough. The lower part is attached with some iron balls making some pockets. A long piece of string is also attached with the upper part of the net. It is also known as *Khewali Jal*. It is inclusive to the type of casting net [K. Photographs, Fig.01].

B. Langi Jal

Langi Jal is another kind of net. It is kept in the water in the evening and checked in the next morning. Several types of *Langi Jal* are found used among the Kaibarttas, such as, Kawai Langi, Garoi Langi, Puthi Langi and Ari Langi [K. Photographs, Fig.17].

C. Fasi Jal

Fasi Jal is also used in Brahmaputra. This kind of net has big holes. This kind of net is used to catch fishes in the stream or river. These are of several types, such as, Karal Fasi, Ari Fasi and Rou Fasi [K. Photographs, Fig.30].

6.9 Fishing and Seasons

The Kaibarttas of this area harvest fish in the whole year. The whole year is divided into several fishing seasons and they apply different fishing methods and tools during these seasons depending upon the amount of fish and water level. The fishing season starts from the mid of April. The first fish harvesting is known as *Pratham Khewani*. The last fishing season end in the mid of March i.e. 18th *Chot*, an Assamese month. The last fishing is known as *Chera Mara*. Several kinds of fish species are found during these seasons. The Kaibartta fisher folk catch about 40 different kinds of fish species.

List of Fish Species Found in Nalbari District [2014-2016]

Table No-18

Sl. No.	Local Name	English Name	Scientific Name
1	<i>Ilish</i>	Indian shad	Hilsa ilisha
2	<i>Chital</i>	Humped feather back	Notopterus chitala
3	<i>Kanduli</i>	Feather back	Notopterus notopterus
4	<i>Saldarikanā</i>	Giant danio	Danio aequipinnatus
5	<i>Darikana</i>	Flying barb	Esomus danricus
6	<i>Boirala</i>	Aspodiparia	Aspidoparia morar
7	<i>Puthi</i>	Swam barb	Puntius chola
8	<i>Cheniputhi</i>	Olive barb	Puntius sarana sarana
9	<i>Bhouka</i>	Catla	Catla catla
10	<i>Mirka</i>	Mrigal	Chirrhinus mrigala
11	<i>Bhangna</i>	Bata labeo	Labeo bata
12	<i>Kuirha</i>	Kuria labeo	Labeo gonius
13	<i>Row</i>	Rahu	Labeo rohita
14	<i>Common carp</i>	Scale carp	Cyprinus carpo
15	<i>Grass carp</i>	Grass carp	Ctenopharyngodon idella
16	<i>Boita</i>	Loach	Noemacheilus beavani
17	<i>Silver carp</i>	Silver carp	Hypophthalmichthys molitrix
18	<i>Bairala</i>	Jaya	Aspidoparia jaya
19	<i>Xingra</i>	Day's mystus	Mystus bleekeri
20	<i>Gagol</i>	Medona cat fish	Mystus medona
21	<i>Ari</i>	Long-whiskered cat fish	Aorichthys seenghala
22	<i>Balli</i>	Freshwater shark	Wallago attu
23	<i>Kandli</i>	Gangatic ailia	Ailia coila
24	<i>Magur</i>	Magur	Clarius batrachus
25	<i>Singi</i>	Stinging cat fish	Heteropneustes fossilis
26	<i>Gaura</i>	Gagentic goonch	Bagarius bagarius
27	<i>Sal</i>	Giant snake head	Channa marulius
28	<i>Cheng</i>	Smooth brassed snake head	Channa gachua
29	<i>Gora</i>	Green snake head	Channa punctatus
30	<i>Sol</i>	Striped snake head	Channa striatus
31	<i>Kuicha</i>	Eel	Amphipnous cuchia
32	<i>Chanda</i>	Indian glassy fish	Chanda ranga
33	<i>Dom Vettali</i>	Dwarf chameleon	Badis badis
34	<i>Japani Kawai</i>	Tilapia	Oreocromish mossambica
35	<i>Panimutra</i>	Bar-eyed-goby	Glossogobius gutum
36	<i>Kawai</i>	Climbing perch	Anabus testudineus
37	<i>Kholihana</i>	Indian paradise fish	Ctenops nobolis
38	<i>Bami</i>	Spiny eel	Mastacembalus armatus armatus
39	<i>Turi</i>	One-striped spiny eel	Macrogathus panculus
40	<i>Koipla</i>	Freshwater gar fish	Xenentodon cancila

Thus the fishing seasons are categorised as follows. Their fishing season starts from the month of May and continues to the month of March of the next year.

A. April-May

This is the peak season for fishing. During this season almost all the fish species are available in this area. The beels, streams, ponds and rivers are fully filled with water.

B. May-June

This is the last peak season for fishing. The nets used in this season are Asra Jal, Parngi Jal etc. The fisherman uses the boat for fishing at this time.

C. June-July

During this season fish becomes scarce. Generally the fisher folk use the fishing traps and small nets in this period. Hooks are used for fishing at this time.

D. July-August

During this time fisher folk catches fish by using the hooks. Mainly *Sip Barosi* and *Nal Barosi* are used in the midst of paddy fields.

E. August-September

This is the time for the fisher folk to prepare themselves for the next peak fishing season. They repair their nets and boats. They also make the new fishing traps at this time.

F. September-October

During this season the fisher folk observe the *Ganga Puja* and *Nag Panchami Puja*. They use all kinds of net for fishing at this time.

G. October-November

Proper catch of fish is seen at this time. The fisher folk catch fishes and take it to the nearest market. Fishes are sold both in wholesale and retail price.

H. November-December

During this season the fisher folk mainly in the beels are busy for their last fishing. Fishes are caught by dewatering.

I. December-January

Fishing is seen less in comparison to that of the previous seasons. During this time they make busy in cultivation.

J. January-February

Fishing is as usual in this period. Mainly the fisher folk are busy in their household work. Small fishes are caught by them.

K. February-March

Small fishes like *Kawai*, *Gora*, *Puthi*, *Kholihana*, *Darikana* etc are caught by the Kaibarttas. The fisher folk also use the *Langi Jal* for fishing in the ponds.

L. March-April

Scarcity of fishes is seen in this period. The last fishing locally known as *Chera Mara* is done in this period mainly in the beels. After *Chera Mara* local people are allowed to fish in the beels without paying tax to the *Mahaldars*.