Research Article

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CURRENT ADVANCED RESEARCH
ISSN: O: 2319-6475, ISSN: P: 2319-6505
Available Online at www.journalijcar.org
Volume 14; Issue 07; July 2025; Page No.308-311
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2025.0311.0065

Subject Area : Folk Literature

CLASSIFICATION OF ASSAMESE FOLK TALES BY PRAPHULLADUTTA GOSWAMI AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO INFORMAL EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF DARRANG

***Mr. Bipin Sarma Baruah, **Ms. Sumitra Jyoti and ***Dr. Homen Baruah**

*,**Research Scholar and ***Assistant Professor

*,**Gauhati University, Guwahati,***K.B.R. Degree College, Orang

ARTICLE INFO

Received 11th June 2025
Received in revised form 22nd June, 2025
Accepted 16th July 2025
Published online 28th July, 2025

Key words:

Assamese Folk Tales, Praphulladutta Goswami, Darrang, Informal Education

ABSTRACT

This study explores the classification of Assamese folk tales by the renowned folklorist Praphulladutta Goswami and examines their contribution to informal education, with specific reference to the Darrang district of Assam. Folk tales have long functioned as vehicles for transmitting indigenous knowledge, moral values, cultural traditions, and historical memory within Assamese society. In his seminal work *Ballads and Tale of Assam*, Goswami categorizes these tales into four major types: animal tales, supernatural, jokes, and trickster tales. Each category reflects unique pedagogical functions, providing ethical guidance, stimulating imagination, and reinforcing social norms.

The research focuses on how these folk narratives, especially in the socio-cultural setting of Darrang, a region known for its vibrant oral traditions such as community storytelling, contribute significantly to informal education. Through field observations, oral interviews, and literature review, the study reveals that folk tales serve as an alternative mode of learning, especially in rural areas where formal education may not be fully accessible. They foster moral reasoning, enhance cultural awareness, develop language skills, and transmit collective memory across generations.

The paper argues that the continued oral transmission of folk tales in Darrang plays a crucial role in sustaining community identity and informal learning practices. By analyzing Goswami's classification in the local context, the study underscores the relevance of folk literature in educational discourse and cultural preservation. This research further suggests that integrating folk narratives into modern pedagogical frameworks can enrich curricula and make education more culturally rooted and inclusive.

Copyright©

Copyright© The author(s) 2025,This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

The rich oral tradition of Assam has long served as a vessel for transmitting cultural values, historical memories, and moral education. Among its varied forms, folk tales occupy a central place in shaping the informal learning processes of Assamese society. This seminar examines the classification of Assamese folk tales as undertaken by the renowned folklorist Praphulladutta Goswami and investigates their contribution to informal education, with particular reference to the Darrang district. Goswami's pioneering work in documenting and categorizing Assamese folk narratives provides not only a literary and anthropological resource but also an invaluable pedagogical tool for understanding indigenous modes of knowledge transmission.

*Corresponding author: **Mr. Bipin Sarma Baruah**

Gauhati University, Guwahati

Folk tales, unlike formal curricular texts, impart values through allegory, metaphor, and collective memory, often tailored to the socio-cultural contexts of their listeners. In Darrang district, a region steeped in oral tradition, these tales continue to serve as instruments of informal education-instilling ethical values, environmental awareness, historical consciousness, and communal harmony. By analyzing Goswami's classification-encompassing legends, animal tales, moral fables, and wonder tales-this study foregrounds how folk narratives reinforce cultural continuity and social norms outside institutional learning frameworks.

Folk tales form an integral part of Assamese culture, shaping not just its literary heritage but also its moral and social framework.

In a state as diverse and linguistically rich as Assam, folklore operates as a parallel educational system that predates formal schooling. Among the scholars who systematized this tradition, Praphulladatta Goswami is recognized for his pioneering efforts in the classification and documentation of Assamese folk literature.In his seminal work *Ballads and Tale of Assam*, Goswami categorizes these tales into four major types: animal tales, supernatural, jokes, and trickster tales.

Darrang district, situated in the northeastern state of Assam, is a region steeped in oral history and traditional narratives that have shaped its cultural and social identity over centuries. Known for its fertile plains and strategic location along the Brahmaputra River, Darrang has served as a vibrant center of folk culture, where oral traditions continue to play a vital role in preserving the memory of its people. The district's oral history is richly woven with tales of heroism, resistance, spiritualism, and daily life, passed down through generations in the form of folktales, ballads, proverbs, and songs. One of the most prominent historical events preserved in the oral memory of Darrang is the Patherughat Peasant Uprising of 1894, locally remembered through "Bharuwa Geet" or ballads, which recount the bravery and sacrifice of local farmers who protested against British-imposed taxes. These narratives not only serve as a source of historical knowledge but also reflect the socio-political consciousness of the region. Additionally, oral legends associated with the Dholpur Satra and other local religious sites preserve spiritual beliefs and community practices that are often missing from written records. The storytellers, folk singers, and elder members of the community function as the custodians of this intangible heritage, ensuring that the district's cultural memory remains alive and relevant. Through these oral histories, Darrang emerges not merely as a geographical entity but as a living archive of Assam's folk wisdom, collective memory, and resilient spirit. As modern education and digital media begin to reshape modes of communication, the oral traditions of Darrang stand as both a legacy and a pedagogical resource that continues to influence informal education and identity formation among its people.

At the core of your paper is Praphulladutta Goswami's classification of Assamese folk tales. This classification can be supported by folklorist theories, especially the works of scholars like Stith Thompson (motif-index and tale-type classification) and Vladimir Propp, whose structural analysis of narratives helps understand common functions in tales.

Goswami's classification into categories like animal tales, supernatural, jokes, and trickster tales reflects a functional understanding of folklore—where tales serve various roles in society: entertainment, moral education, preservation of tradition, etc.The functionalist approach (Malinowski, Bascom) also views folk tales as tools for maintaining social norms and values, which directly ties to their educational potential.

2. Statement of the Problem

Assamese folk tales are a rich repository of oral tradition that encapsulates the cultural, ethical, and educational values of Assamese society. Despite their historical and cultural significance, these narratives have often remained outside the purview of formal academic curricula, particularly in modern education systems that prioritize standardized content. Although Praphulladutta Goswami's classification in *Ballads and Tales of Assam* provides a foundational framework for categorizing these folk narratives, their potential as tools for informal education remains underexplored in pedagogical discourse.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to critically examine Praphulladutta Goswami's classification of Assamese folk tales as presented in his seminal work *Ballads and Tales of Assam*, with a particular focus on identifying the narrative types, motifs, and functions embedded within the tales. By understanding how Goswami categorized these folk narratives—such as animal tales, supernatural stories, romantic ballads, and trickster tales—the study aims to reveal the inherent pedagogical value of folk literature. Secondly, the research seeks to explore how these folk tales, particularly those found in the oral traditions of the Darrang district; contribute to informal education by transmitting moral values, cultural norms, historical consciousness, and life skills. In doing so, the study will shed light on how storytelling practices within the local community function as informal educational mechanisms, sustaining intergenerational knowledge and fostering cognitive, emotional, and ethical development among listeners, especially children. The study aims:

To analyze the classification of Assamese folk tales as proposed by Praphulladutta Goswami and identify their structural characteristics.

To examine how these classified folk tales function as tools of informal education within the socio-cultural context of the Darrang district**.**

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The study of Assamese folk literature, particularly folk tales, has garnered scholarly attention due to its deep-rooted significance in cultural transmission and informal education. One of the pioneering figures in this field is Praphulladutta Goswami, whose landmark work *Ballads and Tales of Assam* (1960) serves as the cornerstone for any exploration into Assamese oral traditions. Goswami not only collected and translated these stories but also provided a classification system based on their thematic and narrative structures—such as animal tales, supernatural tales, romantic sagas, heroic ballads, and trickster stories. His approach emphasized the pedagogical value of folk narratives in shaping ethical values, communal identity, and socio-cultural awareness, especially among the rural population.

Several scholars have since expanded upon Goswami's foundational work. Birendranath Dutta in *Folk Literature of Assam* (1995) highlights the role of folk tales in preserving indigenous knowledge systems, moral lessons, and local wisdom through oral traditions. He particularly emphasizes how rural communities use storytelling as a tool for intergenerational learning. Similarly, U.N. Goswami in his studies on Assamese folklore stresses the narrative as a living educational tool that reflects the socio-political consciousness of rural Assam. These works collectively affirm the idea that folklore is not merely a source of entertainment but a form of *informal curriculum*, embedded in daily life and cultural memory.

"Buhri Aru Sadhu," (1911) penned by the celebrated Assamese

litterateur Lakhminath Bezbaruah, is a poignant narrative that explores themes of hospitality, gratitude, and the subtle interplay between the mundane and the mystical. In the tale, an elderly woman ("buhri") offers shelter and simple fare to a wandering sadhu, only to discover—through a series of gentle miracles—that her humble kindness has been richly rewarded. Bezbaruah's elegant prose and keen insight into rural Assamese life bring both characters vividly to life, while subtly reinforcing the idea that true wealth lies in compassion and generosity. This story remains a cherished example of how Bezbaruah wove moral instruction into engaging folk-inspired narratives.

In the context of the Darrang district, folk tales continue to play a significant educational role, often narrated by grandparents and community elders. For example, in tales like "Bandar Aru Xiyal" (The Monkey and the Jackal) and "Budhimaan Kauri" (The Clever Crow), children learn about intelligence, caution, and wit as means of survival. "Bandor Aru Ghariyal" (The Monkey and the Crocodile) teaches the importance of using one's mind over muscle in dangerous situations. The story of "Lobhilu Xiyal" (The Greedy Jackal) warns against selfishness and greed. These animal tales reflect Praphulladutta Goswami's classification and emphasize their instructional function.

Thus, existing literature and the selected examples affirm that folk tales, particularly those classified and studied by Praphulladutta Goswami, function as rich resources for *informal education*. They provide a moral and cultural framework for understanding life, relationships, and societal expectations, especially within the rural context of the Darrang district. The classification system and pedagogical significance of these tales remain crucial to the ongoing discourse on indigenous education and cultural preservation in Assam.

Praphulladatta Goswami and His Classification of Folk Tales

Praphulladatta Goswami (1919–1994), a renowned folklorist and cultural historian of Assam, was instrumental in collecting, preserving, and categorizing Assamese folk tales. Praphulladatta Goswami, a pioneering folklorist and literary scholar from Assam, made a remarkable contribution to the preservation and study of Assamese oral literature through his extensive research and documentation of folk narratives. His seminal work, *Ballads and Tales of Assam* (published in 1960) remains a foundational text in the field of Assamese folklore studies. Goswami undertook the meticulous task of collecting, translating, and categorizing various oral tales and ballads from different regions of Assam, particularly focusing on those that were at risk of being forgotten due to rapid modernization and the decline of oral transmission. His fieldwork and scholarly insight allowed him to bridge the gap between academic study and indigenous knowledge systems. With a deep understanding of local dialects, customs, and storytelling traditions, Goswami was able to capture not only the content but also the cultural essence of the narratives. His writing exhibits a rare sensitivity to the rhythm, symbolism, and socio-cultural backdrop of the tales, making them accessible to readers beyond Assam while preserving their authenticity.

In *Ballads and Tales of Assam*, Goswami classified folk tales into four major types of coherent categories: animal tales, supernatural, jokes, and trickster tales. This classification was not arbitrary but reflected the functional and thematic diversity of Assamese oral literature. For example, he identified heroic ballads like the story of "Tejimola" and "Champavati" as belonging to a genre that both entertains and educates, highlighting values such as courage, sacrifice, and justice. Romantic and tragic tales, often centered on young lovers or oppressed characters, served as cultural critiques of social hierarchies and gender norms. Goswami's classification system thus provided a framework for understanding how these stories operate not only as entertainment but also as tools of informal education, moral instruction, and cultural preservation. By documenting these oral traditions, he safeguarded a vast repository of Assamese wisdom and imagination that might otherwise have disappeared with the passing of generations. His work continues to be a valuable academic and cultural resource for those studying folklore, anthropology, literature, and indigenous pedagogies in Assam and beyond.

CLASSIFICATION OF FOLK TALES OF DARRANG

Keeping in mind the classification of folk tales propounded by Praphulladutta Goswami, the folk tales of Darrang can be subdivided into four major types of coherent categories: animal tales, supernatural, jokes, and trickster tales.

Animal Tales

These tales use animals as central characters to convey moral lessons, and cultural values, or reflect human behavior.

Bandar Aru Xiyal (The Monkey and the Jackal)
Bandor Aru Ghariyal (The Monkey and the Crocodile)
Budhimaan Kauri (The Clever Crow)
Lobhilu Xiyal (The Greedy Jackal)

***S*upernatural Tales**

These tales involve ghosts, spirits, deities, or magical creatures, often reflecting beliefs and fears in rural societies.

Champar Sadhu (The Tale of Champa)

Jokes and Humorous Tales

These stories are designed to entertain and are full of lighthearted fun, wordplay, and village humor.

Buhra Buhri Aru Xiyal(The Old Man, Woman and Jackal)

Kacu Rowa Burha (Planting of Arum by the Old Man)

*Raja Aru Xat Jani Ji (*A King and Seven Daughters)

Trickster Tales

These involve cunning and clever characters who deceive others to achieve their goals, often turning the tables on oppressors.

Akara Ningna Aru Tenton (Fool Ningna and Wise Person)

Aloshi Bamun (The Lazy Brahmin)

INFORMAL EDUCATION THROUGH FOLK TALES

Folk tales have long served as an important medium of informal education, especially in rural and oral cultures such as that of Assam. In the Darrang district, folk narratives like *Bandar Aru Xiyal* (The Monkey and the Jackal), *Bandor Aru Ghariyal* (The Monkey and the Crocodile), *Budhimaan Kauri* (The Clever Crow), and *Lobhilu Xiyal* (The Greedy Jackal) are told by elders

to children not merely for entertainment but to inculcate moral values, critical thinking, and survival skills. These tales, often dramatized in storytelling sessions by grandmothers or village elders, present animal characters as symbolic representations of human traits—such as intelligence, greed, deceit, and wisdom. For instance, in *Budhimaan Kauri*, the clever crow uses its wit to protect itself, teaching children the value of the presence of mind and strategy. Similarly, *Bandor Aru Ghariyal* showcases how the monkey avoids danger by outsmarting a crocodile, highlighting the importance of mental agility over physical strength. These stories offer ethical dilemmas and choices that listeners can reflect upon, thereby shaping their understanding of right and wrong in a subtle and lasting way.

Beyond the animal tales, narratives such as *Campar Sadhu* (The Tale of Champa), *Buhra Buhri Aru Xiyal* (The Old Man, Woman and the Jackal), *Kacu Rowa Burha* (Planting of Arum by the Old Man), and *Raja Aru Xat Jani Ji* (A King and Seven Daughters) contribute richly to social education and emotional development. These stories often involve familial relationships, generational tensions, gender roles, and the responsibilities of individuals within a community. For example, *Raja Aru Xat Jani Ji* presents the emotional depth of a father-daughter bond and the trials faced by women in patriarchal settings, promoting empathy and awareness among listeners. *Champar Sadhu* reveals the inner strength and moral integrity of its central characters, subtly conveying lessons about resilience and self-respect. The tale of the old couple and the jackal often reflects on trust, vulnerability, and the wisdom of age. These narratives help build social consciousness and a sense of community, offering models of behavior and responses to everyday challenges without the formal constraints of classroom education.

In the realm of humour and satire, tales such as *Akara Ningna Aru Tenton* (Fool Ningna and the Wise Person) and *Aloshi Bamun* (The Lazy Brahmin) deliver practical wisdom and life lessons through laughter and irony. These trickster and joke tales critique social hierarchies, question blind religious practices, and expose human follies in a light-hearted manner. In *Akara Ningna Aru Tenton*, the contrast between foolishness and cleverness teaches children to distinguish between blind imitation and thoughtful action. *Aloshi Bamun* presents the consequences of laziness and deceit, encouraging a work ethic and responsibility. Through satire, these stories function as social correctives, allowing communities to reflect on their values and behaviors. The informal nature of storytelling—conducted in homes, under trees, or during community gatherings—makes the learning experience engaging, inclusive, and deeply rooted in local culture. In this way, the folk tales of Darrang not only entertain but also serve as a vital educational tool that nurtures ethical awareness, cultural identity, and practical intelligence in the minds of young listeners.

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Practice

In Darrang, storytelling serves multiple purposes: it is entertainment, moral instruction, cultural preservation, and historical documentation. Grandparents narrate tales by firelight; community elders use stories to resolve conflicts or explain customs. This mode of informal education remains especially vital where access to formal schooling may be limited or uneven.Storytelling, as a pedagogical practice, is one of the oldest and most effective methods of informal education, especially in traditional and indigenous societies where oral transmission forms the foundation of cultural continuity and knowledge sharing. It engages the listener's imagination, emotions, and intellect, making learning a holistic experience that goes beyond the mere transmission of facts. In the context of rural communities like those in Assam's Darrang district, storytelling serves as a powerful educational tool that teaches values, social norms, environmental awareness, and survival strategies in an accessible and memorable form. Through stories passed down from one generation to the next, children learn about moral choices, community responsibilities, gender roles, and historical memory without the need for formal schooling. The narrative structure of folk tales, with clear plots, characters, and resolutions, helps develop listening skills, critical thinking, empathy, and cultural identity. Moreover, storytelling encourages participatory learning, where listeners often interact with the storyteller through questions, repetition, or shared performances, thus fostering communication skills and a sense of collective belonging. Elders, particularly grandmothers, and village storytellers, become informal educators whose knowledge is respected and whose role is vital in shaping young minds. In modern educational theory, storytelling is increasingly recognized for its potential to create emotionally resonant and culturally relevant learning experiences, bridging the gap between home and school, tradition and modernity. Therefore, as a pedagogical practice, storytelling is not just a method of conveying content—it is a dynamic, multidimensional form of education that nurtures imagination, reinforces memory, and anchors knowledge in lived experience and cultural context.

Field Observations and Community Insight

Interviews and participatory observations in villages like Sipajhar, Mangaldai, and Kharupetia show that folk narratives are still transmitted orally. Tales like "Usha-Aniruddha", "Champa", and local versions of the Pancha-tantra serve as tools for teaching empathy, justice, and perseverance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the classification of Assamese folk tales by Praphulladutta Goswami offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the rich oral traditions of Assam, particularly as they relate to the socio-cultural landscape of the Darrang district. His meticulous work in *Ballads and Tales of Assam* not only preserves the diverse genres of folk narratives—ranging from myths, legends, animal tales, and supernatural stories, to trickster and moral tales—but also highlights their deeper pedagogical significance. These tales, passed down through generations in informal settings, serve as powerful tools of education, transmitting moral values, social norms, practical knowledge, and cultural identity to younger members of the community. The case study of the Darrang district reveals how these folk narratives continue to function as a vibrant form of informal education, especially in rural households where storytelling remains a daily ritual. Through characters like the clever crow, the greedy jackal, or the wise village girl, listeners internalize life lessons in engaging and memorable ways. As modern education systems expand, recognizing and integrating these traditional pedagogies can enrich learning experiences and help preserve the intangible cultural heritage of regions like

Darrang. Thus, Goswami's contribution goes beyond literary classification; it opens up pathways for understanding folklore as an enduring educational resource that blends imagination, ethics, and indigenous wisdom.

References

1. Baruah, S. L. (1995). *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
2. Borooah, J. (2023*). Folktales of Assam.* Shubhi Publications
3. Deka, K. (2014). Oral Traditions in the Educational Practices of Northeast India: A study of Folk Narratives. *Journal of Indian Folkloristics*, *16*(1), 34–45.
4. Goswami, P. (1960). *Ballads and tales of Assam*. Gauhati University Press.
5. Sarma, M. (2012). Role of Folk Literature in Informal Education: A Study in Assam. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, *2*(6), 501–504. https://doi.org/10.7763/IJSSH.2012.V2.151
6. Sharma, J. (2005). *Folktales of Assam*. Sahitya Akademi.

How to cite this article:

Bipin Sarma Baruah, Sumitra Jyoti and Homen Baruah. (2025). Classification of assamese folk tales by praphulladutta goswami and their contribution to informal education: a case study of darrang, International Journal of Current Advanced Research, 14(07), pp.308-311.

****