

**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF URBAN
LEGENDS OF GUWAHATI**

**Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dated: 03.05.2018

DECLARATION

This thesis titled **A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF URBAN LEGENDS OF GUWAHATI** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institute.

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Dedicated to My Family

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Urban Legends and Critical Discourse Analysis

1.0 Introduction

Language is an integral part of social life. People working in different disciplines face different issues about language and are functioning with different materials – oral texts, written texts, transcripts of (spoken) conversation, interviews, television programmes, internet texts and so on. There has always been a widespread uncertainty about how to use and analyze a piece of language material (Fairclough, 2004:1). Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA), provides a usable framework to study a spoken or a written text for scholars in social science and humanities, presented in a way that suggests how language analysis may enhance research into a number of issues which concern social scientists (Fairclough, 2004:1). Urban legends are some narratives that tend to be bizarre, scary and macabre than overtly supernatural and are presented as topical and newsworthy reports from the everyday world (Bennett, 2005: xii). The term “Urban Legend” has been interchangeably used with other terms such as “Contemporary Legend” or “Modern Legend” or “Urban Belief Tale”. The term used in this study is “Urban Legend”. This scholarly terminology is significant since it belongs to the sub-class of folk-narratives in a contemporary background with reference to urbanization, industrialization and social networking. It is the beginning of a new enterprise, a landmark that shifts interest from legends of “rural”, “archaic”, and “primitive” cultures to the current legendry. Stewart Sanderson, a folklorist has rightly pointed out “Urban Legend” as follows:

The modern legend constitutes...the most widespread, popular and vital folklore form of the present day; and what strikes me as perhaps its most outstanding feature is the creativity, imagination and virtuosity brought to its performance by all kinds of people, old and young, well read and barely literate, educationally privileged and educationally deprived (1981:14).

As a part of informal conversation, these legends are not always clearly separable from tall tales, fables and personal experience stories (Bennett 1985:222-223). Linda Dégh in the book *Legend and Belief* (2001: 86-87) has defined “urban legends” as “stories about sensational occurrences in cities and concerning people, places and

structures known to the urban folk- have been noted and published since the mid-nineteenth century.” Urban legends are communicated mostly by word of mouth, which could be as simple as story –telling or narrating an incident. But, gradually they have started disseminating frequently through the mass media such as newspaper, radio, television and film as well as some communication technologies such as fax, photocopier, email as well as other literary genres like novels, short stories and so on (Smith, 1999:6). Contemporary trend of the use of the Internet has brought up a notable change in people’s primary sources of information. The Internet is also considered as one of the media to disseminate the legends in the modern times. These media legend variants are as fluid as their oral counterparts, oscillating in their thematic fixity around a stable core. And thus, these oral and non-oral versions are conditioned by each other and are bound together in a lasting symbiotic relationship, as long as they have social relevance (Dégh, 2001:167). These stories are interesting because of their history or the multiplicity of the media through which they have been presented and at the same time, they are interesting for cultural, social or psychological reasons (Bennett, 2005: xiv).

This study makes an attempt to collect some urban legends of Guwahati, which have been circulated orally or through social networking sites. This study attempts to examine the social problems reflected in the legends. In order to do so, this study further focuses on the textual analysis of the urban legends based on Fairclough’s approach to CDA in terms of discourse, genre and style they draw upon and articulate together.

1.1 CDA as a Theoretical Perspective

Being a part of critical social analysis, CDA looks at the discourse and the relation between discourse and other social fundamentals. It considers a variety of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) which differ in theory, methodology, and the type of research issues to which they give importance. British sociolinguist Norman Fairclough has provided the following definition for CDA:

By CDA I mean discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive - practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and

processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (1995 a: 132-33).

CDA concentrates upon the interaction of language, discourse and social structure (van Dijk: 2009). Teun van Dijk (2001:352) describes CDA as follows:

CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysis takes an explicit position and thus, wants to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality (2001:352).

The function of CDA is to investigate “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak, 1995:204). It has been seen that CDA has neither a particular way of research nor a uniform theoretical outline. There are many types of CDA, which are theoretically and analytically quite different from each other. For instance, critical analysis of a conversation and a news report and teaching at school will not be similar. But, looking at the extensive perspectives and the universal endeavor of CDA, we may come to the general conceptual and theoretical structure of CDA that are very much related to each other (van Dijk, 2001:353). In this context, Teun van Dijk has forwarded a number of requirements in order to fulfill the aims of CDA:

- As is often the case for more marginal research traditions, CDA research has to be 'better' than other research in order to be accepted.
- It focuses primarily on social problems and political issues, rather than on current paradigms and fashions.
- Empirically adequate critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary.
- Rather than to merely describe discourse structures, it tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure.
- More specifically CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce or challenge relations of power and dominance in society (2001:352).

Wodak and Meyer (2001: 16) referred to another branch of CDA, that is ‘transmedia’ to relate to the sets of related media (e.g., a book and film, a website and a game, merchandise, stories written by fans of the movie or games, etc.) that either

form a commercial franchise (e.g., Harry Potter, Star Wars) or some more loosely connected inter-textual set. In this context, Theo van Leeuwen has argued:

[c]ritical discourse analysis has also moved beyond language, taking on board that discourses are often multi-modally realized, not only through text and talk, but also through other modes of communication such as images ... Overall, then, critical discourse analysis has moved towards more explicit dialogue between social theory and practice, richer contextualization, greater inter disciplinary and greater attention to the multimodality of discourse (2006: 292).

Fairclough & Wodak summarize the main tenets of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse Constitutes Society and Culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action. (1997: 271-280)

M. A. K Halliday's famous linguistic theory Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth, SFL) can be considered as one of the approaches in order to pursue CDA (Halliday 1978, 1994). SFL intensely studies the relationship between language and other facets of social life. It's approach to the linguistic analysis of text involves the social character of the text, which makes the text a valuable resource for CDA.

One of the most prominent and elaborate attempts towards theorizing the CDA program is undoubtedly Fairclough's *Discourse and Social Change* (1992a). Fairclough (1992a) has forwarded a three-dimensional framework for analyzing a discourse. The first aspect is discourse-as-text, i.e., the linguistic elements and organization of actual instances of discourse. Choices and patterns in vocabulary (e.g., wording, metaphor), grammar (e.g., transitivity, modality), cohesion (e.g., conjunction, schemata), and text structure (e.g., episode, turn-taking system) should be systematically analyzed. The second dimension is discourse-as-discursive-practice, i.e., discourse as something that is produced, created, circulated, distributed, and consumed in society. In order to approach discourse as discursive practice, one needs to give attention mainly on analyzing vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. Linking speech acts, coherence, and intertextuality will further help to connect a text to its context. The third dimension is discourse-as-social-practice, i.e., the ideological effects and hegemonic processes of a discourse. Appearance of

discourse sheds light on various aspects such as the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, resistance against regimes of power and so on. In order to carry out this analysis of the urban legends as a discourse in this study, I have drawn on a Fairclough's version of CDA, based on the works of Norman Fairclough (e.g., 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1995c, 2001a, 2001b) and his writing with Chouliaraki (Chouliaraki&Fairclough, 1999) and others (e.g., Fairclough&Wodak, 1997). Fairclough's CDA consists of three aspects: description, interpretation and explanation. Fairclough's (1989) analysis has gone further than the "whatness" of the text description towards the "how" and "whyness" of the text interpretation and explanation.

As such, CDA looks upon discourse as a social process and sets a social-theoretical basis for accomplishing discourse analysis (van Dijk, 2009). By studying the language of urban legend with the help of CDA, it is expected to find out the social processes found in the collected narratives and the complete ideology embedded in them.

1.1.1 Principles of CDA

CDA and Critical Linguistics (henceforth, CL) are at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993 b: 131). In order to get a comprehensive idea of CDA and CL, RuthWodak has suggested the following principles of CDA and CL.

These are as follows:

- (1) The approach is interdisciplinary. Problems in our societies are too complex to be studied from a single perspective. This entails different dimensions of interdisciplinary theories drawn on neighbouring disciplines and tries to integrate these theories.
- (2) The approach is problem-oriented, rather than focused on specific linguistic items. Social problems are the items of research, such as "racism", "identity", "social change", which, of course, are and could be studied from manifold perspectives.
- (3) The theories as well as the methodologies are eclectic; i.e., theories and methods are integrated which are adequate for an understanding and explanation of the object under investigation.
- (4) The study always incorporates fieldwork and ethnography to explore the object under investigation (study from the inside) as a precondition for any further analysis and theorizing. This approach makes it possible to avoid "fitting the data to illustrate a theory". Rather, we deal with bottom-up and top-down approaches at the same time.

- (5) The approach is abductive: a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data is necessary. This is a prerequisite for principle 4.
- (6) Multiple genres and multiple public spaces are studied, and inter textual and inter discursive relationships are investigated. Re-contextualization is an important process in connecting these genres as well as topics and arguments. In our postmodern societies, we are dealing with hybrid and innovative genres, as well as with new notions of “time”, “identity” and “space”. All these notions have undergone significant changes; for example, “fragmented” identities have replaced the notion of “holistic identities”. CDA connects all of them together.
- (7) The historical context is always analyzed and integrated into the interpretation of discourses and texts. The notion of “change” (principle 6) has become inherent in the study of text and discourse.
- (8) The categories and tools for the analysis are defined in accordance with all these steps and procedures and also with the specific problem under investigation. This entails some eclecticism, as well as pragmatism. Different approaches in CDA use different grammatical theories, although many apply SFL in some way or other.
- (9) Grand Theories might serve as a foundation; in the specific analysis. Middle-Range theories serve the aims better. The problem-oriented approach entails the use and testing of middle-range theories. Grand Theories result in large gaps between structure/ context and linguistic realizations (although some gaps must remain unbridgeable).
- (10) Practice and application are aimed at. The results should be made available to experts in different fields and, as a second step, be applied, with the goal of changing certain discursive and social practices(2006: 5- 6).

1.2 Urban Legends and Their Significance

The term “Urban Legend” gained popularity among the readers through the publication of Jan Brunvand’s books on urban legends in America. These publications between 1981 and 1993 not only disseminated some commonly known scary stories but also motivated their oral and media retellings and the creation of new stories within Brunvand’s network of correspondents, who yielded and continued to yield many more fresh data. Brunvand’s books on popular horror and ghost legends inspired the newspaper columns, television talk-shows, comic book version, media adaptation and so on. The movie industry particularly was very much interested in them. Thus, “Urban Legend” became a household term and got popularity as a prestigious sub-class of folk narrative genre. According to Brunvand,

Urban legends are all those bizarre, whimsical, 99 % apocryphal, yet believable stories that are too good to be true. They are too odd, too coincidental and too neatly plotted to be accepted as literal truth in every place where they are told. Such stories deal with familiar everyday matters like travel, shopping pets, babysitting, crime, accidents, sex, business, government and so forth. Although the stories are phrased as if actual and are often attached to a particular locality, urban legends are actually migratory and like all folklore, they exist in variant versions. Typically, urban legends

are attributed to friend-of –a-friend, and often their narrative structure sets up some kind of puzzling situation that is resolved by a sudden plot twist, at which point the story ends abruptly (2003: xxviii).

Urban legends can be distinguished as a recent concept in the world of folklore which is mainly some exciting stories in a contemporary background (not necessarily a big story) and is reported as true individual experiences that have traditional variants which indicate their legendary character. Urban legends are comprised of the urban elements of the contemporary settings like high-rise buildings, parking lots, departmental stores, shopping malls, college dormitories, movie theatres etc. The repertoire involved modern equipment such as computers, televisions, automobiles, airplanes, cameras, ATMs, perfume attacks, e-mails and so on where, performers could be from any walk of life. It is worth mentioning that the declining trend of oral traditional urban legends have been replaced by the Internet circulation of rumors, messages and legends. Scholars like Bennett, and Paul Smith (2001: 86) have referred urban legends as “Contemporary Legends”. Paul Smith in his paper ‘Definitional Characteristics of the Contemporary Legend’ shared certain basic features with all other forms of cultural tradition:

1. Contemporary legends do not exist as single, unique item, as do works of art. Instead many examples of any one text will be in circulation at any one time.
2. Contemporary legends are highly mutable and are not static; consequently, no two examples of the supposedly “same” story exactly alike.
3. Contemporary legends appear to be anonymous creations, although they may have discoverable sources. On the other hand, it is not unknown for texts to have spuriously attributed authorship (1999:6).

Urban legend is a conversational genre, primarily communicated through the word of mouth although they are frequently disseminated through different mass media (Smith, 1999:6). The popularity of the Internet, however, is altering this once purely oral tradition, as more and more urban legends become the subject of Internet sites and have become textually documented in the cyber world. The Internet is the premier forum for studying urban legends, chain letters, hoaxes and jokes (Blank, 2001:17). In this context, Linda Dégh has responded that the Internet discussion groups often specialize in disseminating folklore, religion, urban legend, rumor and related topics, creatively influencing the current legend repertoire (Dégh, 2001:114).

According to Dégh ,

The communities of discussion groups are similar to folklore communicating groups in that their membership is voluntary; individual participation is spontaneous; and participants share a common knowledge of and interest in current legendry. On the other hand, these groups are composed of people physically isolated from each other by potentially large distances. They have never seen each other, may not identify themselves by real name and address, and sometimes have no knowledge of each other's true cultural environments. In their acts of performance, participants on the Web tell, discuss and debate legends just as people in normative legend conduits do. However, like lighthouse operators they are isolated from their human contacts; they sit alone in front of the computer and, in lieu of live performance and the development of a natural face-to-face dialogue, they have only interactive writing on the screen (2011:114).

The recent tradition of online communities and folk groups identifiable by blogs, and various online activities in various web pages have been circulating several forwarded messages as Bill Ellis has pointed out, "increased internationalism of email conduits now makes it normal, even commonplace, to exchange impressions and reactions across continental and even linguistic barrier... Comparing the content and form of [topical humor] to previous oral-based collections may reveal some significant ways in which the Internet has impacted the folk process" (Ellis, 2001:1).

This study is based on urban legends from Guwahati - stories that many people of this region have heard as true accounts of real-life experiences as well as Internet based text and their subsidiaries. These internet based texts contain some messages which are neither orally transmitted, nor contain a strong narrative element but they have been considered as urban legend for the anonymous, stereo-typed, bizarre or frightening notes of the messages (Brunvand, 2001: 42).Thus, this study will try to collect and study legends, which have arrived through different communicating medium in different shapes.

1.3 Area of the Study

In order to study the urban legends of Guwahati, multiple dimensions of the city including physiographic, demographic, socio-cultural, economic dimensions have been taken into consideration. Some of these details of the city are discussed in the following paragraphs.

1.3.1 Physiographic Background

Guwahati is situated on the bank of the river Brahmaputra in the Northeastern part of India. Guwahati is located at 26°10' N latitude and 92 ° 49' E longitudes and average elevation is about 52m from the main sea level.

1.3.2 Demographic Dimension

Guwahati can be considered as the category of river front location with hilly terrain. Guwahati is the largest city in the North-eastern region and enjoys a prime status with broad population base in relation to other centers of the region. The rapid growth in population signifies the increased functional efficiency of the city as well as the various urban conditions of urban living.

According to a survey by Morgan Stanley Business Standard, Guwahati is ranked 34th out of the top 50 most populous cities of India¹. The growth rate of the population for the period 1991-2001 was 3.32 % per year and the decadal growth rate of population for this period was 38.24 %, whereas decadal growth was decreased by 27.61 % in 2011. The urban population within the Guwahati Metropolitan Area in 2011 is 9, 68,549. The following table shows the trend of population growth in Guwahati city.

Table 1.1 Population growth in Guwahati

Census Years	Population	Growth(%)
1901	11661	-
1911	12481	7.03
1921	16480	32.04
1931	21797	32.26
1941	29598	35.79
1951	43615	47.36
1961	100707	130.90
1971	123783	22.91
1981	268945	117.27
1991	584342	117.27
2001	809895	38.60
2011	968549	19.59

Source: Census Reports of India, relevant years

¹ /article/economy-policy/Guwahati-ranks-34-in-morgan-stanely-s-population-survey-111022500047-1.htmlGuwahati ranks 34 in Morgan Stanley population survey

Growth of population has a great impact on the density of population. Socio-economic conditions and urban conditions of living are greatly influenced by the population density which is as high as 2,695 persons per square km. As per the recent census, population of Guwahati in 2011 is 9,68,549. Of this, the sex ratio in Guwahati city is 918 female per 1000 males.

Urban growth due to migration is a common factor in the developed countries. Guwahati is the first major town in the Northeastern region which is connected to Rail, Air and Road with the rest of the country. Traditionally, Guwahati has been attracting lots of tourists as there are many religious places like Kamakhya temple, Navagraha temple situated in the city. At the same time, Guwahati has been playing a very important role in the field of trade, commerce, education, health and so on. In Guwahati, like several other developing societies, the rural poverty is a major cause to push the people to towns and cities to seek better economic opportunities (Sharma, 2014: 43). As such, the flow of people from various towns and villages of the region has led to an enormous expansion of the city area in recent years. The average rate of urbanization in northeast India compared to the other parts of the country is comparatively very low. In that case, Guwahati, with the decadal growth of population at the rate of 188.25% in 1991 occupies a significant position in the urban hierarchy of the entire region. Growing number of job seekers in Guwahati stands as one of the main factors responsible for migration. The population explosion in the entire state is another factor. The composition and structure of the immigrant population show three distinct sources: intra-state migration, inter-state migration and migration from outside the country. Large scale migration from other country especially from the neighbouring country like Bangladesh has raised an immense economic burden on the city management system. The illegal occupation of land leading to growth of slums in the city is a clear outcome of migration. Thus, both inter and intra-migration are found in Guwahati.

1.3.3 Socio-Cultural Dimension

The city is a social unit, a centre of human interaction with diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. As such, besides being a legal city, Guwahati can be referred as a “social entity” that reflects the socio-cultural life and attributes of urban behaviour in the city.

There are several linguistic groups in Guwahati but Assamese is the pre-dominant linguistic group. Although Assamese groups are found all over the city but there are some predominantly “Assamese Zones.” The eastern Guwahati, extending towards south, has 70% of the total Assamese speaking population. One can see affinities towards language, religion, culture and native place in these areas. Caste or class division is negligible in all these areas. Uzan Bazar which is considered as the oldest part of Guwahati also seen to have caste populations like Kaibartas, Hiras along with the upper caste populations like the Brahmins, and the Kayasthas since the British period. Apart from Assamese speaking people, Bengali and Hindi are some other linguistic communities living in Guwahati. Another important community living in Guwahati is the Rajasthani business community that speaks Rajasthani (Marwari) language. All these communities living in Guwahati have had a distinct imprint of their culture, which is expressed through their festivals and cultural activities.

The cultural isolation of the people can be observed on the religious basis too. In Guwahati, Hindu is the major religious group followed by Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Jains. Areas like Machkhowa, Lakhtokia have been dominated by Muslim community living from the days of Ahom rule. A small group of Sikh people can be found in the middle of Guwahati city. Similarly, the Christian community has been living in Fancy Bazar and Pan Bazar areas since British days. The Jains and Marwari Hindu form a social group in the Fancy Bazar, Pan Bazar, Paltan Bazar, Kumarpara and Athgaon areas who have contributed a lot towards the construction of a cosmopolitan character of the city. Thus, in Guwahati we find a large number of religious groups living together peacefully with a good intra-religious group relationship. Religious tolerance, which is a unique feature in Guwahati, has contributed a lot in the growth of urbanism in the city. Urbanism, the impact of urbanization on the individual (Wright, 1938), has influenced in the radical transformation of urban Guwahati. The undisciplined growth of the city resulted in the uprooting of traditional homes leading to destructive influences of new environment as a result of which social fabric has been highly disturbed due to the rapid change of the city structure and its content. As a matter of fact, it is widely believed that criminality, in particular, violent crime has increased.

Education is an important factor in order to realize the socio-cultural dimension of the city's development process. According to the 2011 census, total literates in Guwahati are 7,98,726 out of which 4,26,401 are males and 3,72,325 are females. Average literacy rate of Guwahati city is 91.11% of which male and female literacy rates are 92.89% and 89.16% respectively, which shows a high rate of literacy and a rich socio-cultural standard (Sharma, 2004:127). This has been influenced by the concentration of the educational institutions in and around the city. The educational facilities in the city are provided by a large number of lower, middle and higher levels of social organization. There are mainly 03 Universities, 14 technical or professional institutions, 17 arts/science/commerce colleges, 65 Govt. High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools, 8 schools under the Central Govt. and Central Authorities, 250 Private Schools and institutions. Guwahati IIT stands as an outstanding educational institute in the country (Sharma, 2004:127). Moreover, Guwahati is a good sports place too with its various sporting facilities that include both indoor and outdoor stadiums with all the modern facilities. Along with the river Brahmaputra and many other water bodies, Guwahati is always equipped for the water games.

1.3.4 Economic Dimension

Economic functional base is directly associated with the transitional process of a city's growth and development. Economic and commercial establishments, work force participation, distribution of workers and household incomes are some of the attributes through which one can study the economic growth of a place. Being the first major city in Northeast India, Guwahati possesses miscellaneous economic sectors like trading activities. Cloth trade, publishing houses, pharmaceutical distributors, hardware, software etc are the main businesses in Guwahati. The corporate offices, stock brokers, courier services, advertising agencies, architectural firms are some of the new concepts in the city.

According to 2001 census, workforce participation in Guwahati is 32.72%. Among these workers, 0.48% are marginal workers whereas remaining 66.80% of the total population constitute non-workers. About 79.66% are in tertiary sector, 12.18% are in secondary sector, and 7.20% are engaged in primary sector. The rate of work force in the tertiary level is much high as the administrative and commercial activities constituted the largest share in the city's activity pattern. In Assam state level, work

participation rate is found to be as low as 25.16% whereas at all India level it is 30.16%. It is seen that except in household industries, the participation of women in all other sector is quite low although excellent results can be seen in last few years' school and college examination results. Administration, professional categories, trade and commerce, transport, storage, and communication, servicing, household are the main sectors, where women are found to be engaged with. This increasing number of working people in the city suggests the higher rate of migration to the city as well as the growth of population in the city. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Guwahati metro was estimated at \$1 billion in 2010. Being the most important trading hub of the entire Northeast India, Guwahati serves as the major whole sale distribution center, a marketing hub, and also retail hub of the region. As a river port too, Guwahati emerges as a business center in Assam. The Guwahati Tea Auction Center can be considered as one of the largest Tea Auction Center in the world. Above all, the most important manufacturing unit in the city is the petroleum refinery of Indian Oil Corporation Limited at Noonmati, which is also known as Guwahati Refinery. It has been seen that since last two decades that there is rapid growth in the finance and real estate development sectors. In recent times, retail chains have opened up many new outlets in the city. Thus, ever since the shifting of the capital, the growth of the city has led to the development of different sectors improving the economic conditions of the city.

1.3.5 Problems in Guwahati

In the history of Guwahati city, the British period is regarded as the milestone of the foundation of modern Guwahati. The overall process of urban development of the city indicating the social change was started in the British period. As a result of urbanization, many changes such as a new educational system, health care system, transport, communication network, trade and commerce were seen. Thus, Guwahati became the central point of the entire northeast with the establishment of economic, political, educational and administrative organizations with more service class profession. The year 1845 was remarkable as Christian church was first inaugurated in the city followed by hospitals, parks etc. The present judge's field near High Court was used for sports activity and the nearby area was used for the purpose of recreation for the British officials. City bus service was introduced after the Second World War.

By 1947, Guwahati was established as a centre of trade and commerce. An indigenous industrial class from Rajasthan arrived and established businesses such as rice, oil mills and cloth in Guwahati which contributed a lot in the economy of Guwahati. Moreover, as a centre of education, trade and commerce, and culture, Guwahati has been attracting people from other parts of the region. All these continuous flows of people have a great impact on the growth and development process of the city.

Now, with the haphazard growth pattern in the population, the economic and commercial realities are constantly changing the urban morphology of the city along with the transformation of the ways of life. With the intensive construction activities, mushrooming of the commercial organizations, the city has got all the distinctive features of urban ways of life. All these have initiated several problems such as population, narrow roads, heavy city transport, congestion in the roads, water logging, poor drainage system, pollution, lack of water supply, inadequate installation of street lights, irregular collection of garbage, poor waste management system etc. These are rapidly increasing the health threatening problems of the civilians of the city.

As such, the effects of over population in Assam is seen in many ways such as in the case of depletion of natural resources, degradation of environment, rise in the number of vehicles and industries, quality of air and so on. Rise of over population has given rise to unemployment resulting in crime, especially in order to manage the basic amenities of life.

Natural calamity particularly flood in the river Brahmaputra creates havoc in Assam every year. Thousands of people become homeless, and displacement happens after that which is one of the main reasons of human trafficking from India. Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relation between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men. Although both men and women face violence, an overwhelming majority of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are women.

Table 1.2 Status of crimes against women

S.No	Types of Cases	Year 2009	Year 2010
1.	Rape	1631	1721
2.	Molestation	1389	1611
3.	Reported trafficking	41	47
4.	Domestic Violence (Cruelty by Husband)	4355	5189

(Statistical Handbook, Government of Assam, 2011)

Assam is the second state in the country with the highest report on crimes against women. Dowry and witch hunting are considered as the main grounds for this (Devi, 2013). Domestic violence, kidnappings, rape and other crimes which fall under section 498 of IPC are being the most registered cases in Assam (Manipur News, 2012). Crime against women data shows that cases relating to crimes against women and girls are on the rise. The number of rape cases increased from 1,631 in 2009 to 1,721 in 2010; during the same period, molestation cases increased from 1389 to 1611, and the number of reported trafficking cases also increased from 41 to 47.

HIV/AIDS is another most prominent problem amongst the youth in Assam. As per Assam AIDS Control Society, till December 2011, blood test had been carried out among 1, 82,834 people across the state, out of this, 112 pregnant women tested positive for the HIV virus and 76 of them have already been delivered (Devi, 2013).

Urban legends are set in the real world and focus on familiar places we recognize and inhabit. The selection of an urban legend for narration is based on the current context of the discourse taking place. This is a primarily a conversational genre but they may be found embedded in other types of traditional discourse such as joke, memorate, rumour, gossip, personal narrative (Smith, 1999:6-7). The legend touches upon the most sensitive areas of our existence and it appears as products of conflict situations, contradictions, additions, implementations, correction, approvals and disapprovals during all the phases of transmission from inception through various courses of elaboration (Degh, 2001:2). As such, this study of urban legends is expected to bring forward a wealth of social problems of Guwahati based on people's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and so forth.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Present Study

Guwahati, being the main city of Northeast India is famous for its kaleidoscopic structure as it is a dwelling of several communities with their various cultural entities, religions and languages. With the rise in population, Guwahati has coupled with the development of all the modern elements of urban technologies and metropolis. Globalization has removed the restrictions on trade with foreign countries which has resulted in a commendable change in the socio-economic sector in the state. Urban legend emerges like a counterpart of a real life phenomenon. Apart from oral transmission of urban legends, significant exchange has been realized in the intervening years through the Internet. As such, the act has been shaped more by the electronic medium as well as by the face-to-face and mouth-to-mouth transmission. Though the narrative aspect of urban legend has not changed but the mode of transmission has expanded to some more fixed versions appearing on computer screens in e-mails, on blogs in social networking sites or on YouTube videos. This work will make an attempt to collect and explore both oral and non-oral texts of urban legends from the city. Then an attempt will be made to translate the legends into English followed by International Phonetic Alphabet (henceforth, IPA) transcription.

Identification of some common types of problems in the texts of urban legends will help in the classification of the collected legends. The present research proposes to analyze the structure and significance of urban legends from Guwahati, within the theory of CDA based on the analytical tools of Hallidayan SFL (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) and Fairclough's (Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2001) methodological framework. In this study, with the help of CDA, I would like to connect the internal elements (semantic, grammatical, lexical or vernacular relations) of the texts to the external elements (social events, practice and social structure) through the mediation of inter-discursive analysis of the genres, discourses and style (Fairclough, 2003).

Thus, while talking about the content of the urban legends in the relationship of the context, this study will look at the social problems reflected in the texts of the legends. This is the first stage of CDA. Identification of obstacles will be tackled in the social network through the analysis of the network of practices located within, and

the relationship of semiosis to other elements within the particular practice of urban legend telling will be done accordingly in the next stage.

In order to find out the obstacles that need to be tackled in CDA of urban legends, I will work on the following checklist based on Fairclough's key elements for text analysis (Fairclough, 1989:110-111):

1. Texts, social events and social practices
2. Intertextuality and Assumptions
3. Genre and Generic Structure
4. Meaning relations between sentences and clauses
5. Clauses: types of exchange, speech functions and grammatical mood
6. Discourses
7. Representation of social events
8. Styles
9. Modality and evaluation

This will further help to see the obstacles and their relevance in the semiotic aspect of the urban legends. Then an attempt will be made to find out the possible ways to overcome these obstacles. During a legend telling session, being a part of social exchange, several information, opinions, views and emotional experiences are put across by a narrator. This research will try to analyze the legend from different angles like actual reason of recounting and telling, significance of narration of a narrative as a social medium of exchange.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Urban legends are realistic stories concerning recent events (or alleged events) with an ironic or supernatural twist. Bennett affirms that urban legends are narratives, "stories of some sort, with a beginning, middle and end, and traditional in that they were widely disseminated through numerous times and places" (Bennett, 2005, xii).

According to Sanderson, urban legends are an integral part of our culture and are told and believed by some of the most sophisticated “folk” of modern society –young people, urbanites and the well-educated. The decline of oral traditional urban legends and commercialization through the advent of the Internet has opened up various fields of research that deserves folklorist’s attention (Brunvand, 2001: xxvii). Alan Dundes, in his presidential plenary address to the American Folklore Society in 2004 with a grim outlook on the future of the discipline by challenging that the “state of folkloristics at the beginning of the twenty-first century is depressingly worrisome” (Dundes, 2005: 385). Similarly, after few years, Richard Dorson also lamented in 1972 that in “a few more years, there will be no more folklore, and no need for any folklorists”. But later, Dorson himself responded again by looking elsewhere and found folklore in the media and a folk in the city (Blank, 2009:8). Similarly, Dundes also realized that despite all the doom and gloom, folklore “continues to be alive and well in the modern world, due in part to increased transmission via e-mail and the Internet” (Dundes, 2005: 406). So, it is time to look at the Internet, not only to expand the scholastic horizons but also to carry the discipline into the digital age (Blank, 2009:2).

CDA is considered as a resource for critical social research, which is problem based and can be best used in combination with theoretical and analytical resources in various areas of social science. Fairclough’s framework for CDA developed on the basis of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics henceforth SFL provides a useable framework for analyzing spoken as well as written discourses for people in sciences and humanities with little or no background in language study, presented in such a way that it implies how language study may upgrade research into a number of social issues for social scientists. Urban legends are not only good to hear but also good to think. Being a powerful basis of analysis, CDA of urban legends can give an insight into the social norms, beliefs, and values expressed by the narrators. It is a powerful way to reveal what is in the text as well as what is absent and omitted from the text. This text linguistic study presents methodological models for more precise and analytical study of the schematization of narratives.

Fairclough has used the term ‘Trans-disciplinary’ to mean the theoretical and methodological development of CDA and the disciplines or theories in dialogue

which is informed through that dialogue and a matter of working with the 'logic' and categories of the other in developing one's own theory and methodology (Fairclough, 2003:6). This will further help to identify the particular linguistic, semiotic and 'inter-discursive features of texts' of the legends. As such, fuller analysis of these could be very productive in giving a more detailed account of the total communicative style including phonetic, prosodic and paralinguistic properties of the mode of utterance and other semiotic modalities of the collected legends. Fairclough's threefold model of CDA is suitable for a study of narratives, since both such discourse analytical and folkloristic approaches attach great significance to the context of the emergence of a text, to the text itself, and to the broader social context which include, social, cultural, political, and economical and circumstance. This offers the advantage of emphasizing the interaction between discursive and non-discursive aspects revealing how the discourse influences and is influenced by social aspects. As Fairclough summarizes, "discourse makes people, as well as people make discourse" (Fairclough, 1995:39). From this perspective, discourse analysis offers an angle of approach to social change - even in narratives meant by the ethnographer to prove homogeneity. Thus, this research mainly focuses on various aspects such as (1) the context of emergence of the urban legends, (2) the texts approached folkloristically with focus on the teller's active strategies of narration (3) the implications of the discourse expressed in the texts of urban legends.

Fairclough states, the concepts of genre and discourse "cut across disciplines and theories, and can operate as 'bridges' between them" (Fairclough, 2003:26). Fairclough's trans-disciplinary analytical framework represents refinement and adaptation of critical discourse analysis to folklore studies which provides the analytical categories as transparent as possible for social analysis of discourse. Based on this, the study is significant in analyzing the collected urban legends through a trans-disciplinary tool with the perspectives on language and discourse within the social theory. Considering the continuation of such folkloric narratives through time and role that it plays in society, this research can present a more comprehensive analysis of how the textual structures of urban legends relate to the social structures as a whole by practicing such questions like a) What is expressed by means of these narratives? b) How does the narrator weave his/her own views into them? c) What is the position of the narrative tradition in culture as a whole? d) How far does the

narrative tradition manifest the narrator's personal views while narrating an urban legend? e) What is the significance of the narrative tradition as a means of social exchange?

Thus, this work on urban legends draws on a variety of theoretical perspectives from the social sciences as well as from literary studies. For the last three decades, Guwahati has been facing profound social, economic and political transformation. These changes are perceived as a part of nature. These economic and social changes are to a significant degree show transformations in the language and discourse; thus, CDA can help in theorizing these transformations and creating an awareness of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives (Chauliaraki and Fairclough, 1999:4).

Guwahati, which is the homeland for many communities with a diversified culture, provides a lot of scope for the research of narratives. This includes both oral narratives and cyber-ethnographic data. By including cyber-ethnography, scope of the analysis has been extended to a great extent. By studying urban legends circulated in Guwahati orally or online with the key concepts of CDA, a communicative interaction can be systematically studied with the semiotic and linguistic features that are operational socially and individually.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters including an Introduction and a Conclusion. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the attempted study; the conceptual and theoretical background to urban legend and the CDA method adopted for the study. A brief detail of the area of study is also incorporated in the chapter. This further focuses on the aims and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2 looks at the literature review to legend and urban legend studies as well as CDA. An overview of theoretical and methodological contributions of CDA has been studied with special mention to Norman Fairclough's methods and contributions. It also focuses on different aspects of research methodology, such as fieldwork experience, ethical concern in the field, collection, classification, translation and transliteration of the data along with the constraints of the study.

Chapter 3 provides the texts of urban legends, collected in Assamese, transcribed into IPA fonts and translated into English. This chapter works as the reservoir to the collected data.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the first stage of CDA, which provides the problem reflected in the text of the urban legends. It focuses on how the outside of a text is brought into the text in order to study the social problems of Guwahati.

Chapter 5 provides the identification of obstacles being tackled in the texts of urban legends, which is the second stage of CDA. This incorporates an analysis of network of practices located within urban legend; relationship of Semiosis to other elements within particular practice(s) and a textual analysis of the urban legends of Assam, which will further help to tackle the obstacles in the text of urban legends.

Chapter 6 is related to the third, fourth and fifth stage of CDA. This chapter discusses whether the social order need the problem or not and what are the possible way to past the obstacles. Further it gives a reflection on the analysis done.

Finally Chapter 7, Conclusion revisits the research questions and offer final considerations. It also offers limitations to this study as well as some future projections.

1.7 Summary

This chapter introduces the term CDA and Urban Legend. It gives the details about how the concept of CDA will be used in order to analyze urban legends of Guwahati, the aims of the study, and the significance of the study. It gives a brief idea about the background of the study too. At the end, this chapter outlines the organizations of the study in order to make it more systematic and coherent.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Methodology

2.0 Introduction

This research is an attempt to inquire into the urban legends of Guwahati, Assam with the help of CDA method based on Norman Fairclough's technique (1985, 1989, 1992, 1993, 2001, and 2004). The chapter starts with a two part literature review: First part (2.1) presents the literature review of legends and urban legends and second part (2.2) presents the literature review of CDA. Finally, it ends with a presentation of the research methodology (2.3) proposed for the research project.

2.1 Literature Review: Legends and Urban Legends

In this part an attempt has been made to focus on the historical development of the following two of scholarship: 2.1.1 Legends Studies and 2.1.2 Urban Legend Studies.

2.1.1 Legend Studies

Legends are considered as one of the most fascinating genres of folklore. Legends are timeless and a universal form of oral tradition. Legends reach back to antiquity as well as they survive in our highly industrialized modern society too. Legends are of endless variety in content, length and form. In early nineteenth century, perhaps Grimm brothers were the first that introduced and distinguished legends from other kinds of traditional oral prose narratives (Bascom, 1965:4). In the *Teutonic Mythology*, Jacob Grimm has declared:

The Fairy tale (*Märchen*) is with good reason distinguished from the legend, though by terms they play into one another. Looser, less flattered than legend, the fairy tale lacks that local habitation, which hampers the legends, makes it more home like. The fairy-tale flies, the legend walks, knock at the door, one can draw freely out of fullness of poetry, and the other has almost the authority of history...

(Quoted in Bascom, 1965:4)

Jacob Grimm recognized the main characteristics of the legend that establish it as a different genre from other kinds of folktales. He has noted that legends are more

immediate than other forms of oral prose-narratives. In some cases, even migratory legends told around the world are localized in their retellings, acquiring new ideas and familiar settings as they move from one place to another. Being anonymous, legends often serve to instruct or to educate. Grimms' categorization of legend description based on idealistic, antiquarian and nationalistic prejudices really proved to be resourceful for oral narrative scholars later:

The fairytale is more poetic, the legend is more historical; the former exists securely almost in and of itself in its innate blossoming and consummation. The legend, by contrast, is characterized by a lesser variety of colors, yet it represents something special in that it adheres always to that which we are conscious of and know well, such as a locale or a name that has secured through history. Because of this local confinement, it follows that the legend cannot, like the fairy tale, find its home everywhere (Translation of *Deutch Sagen*, 1816 by Ward, 1981).

Grimms' study of legend was the beginning of a new era in the field of folk-narratives. While describing and comparing the tale and the legend, Grimms advocated that the tale is a world of fiction and fantasy, not tied to time or location whether the legend is related to time-honoured reality from familiar environments and people by known persons. The Grimms sub-divided the legend genre into two main sub-genres: one is local legend and another is historical legend. The Grimms' work *Deutsche Sagen* (1816) inspired many to collect and publish their legends from different parts of the world mainly America and Europe. Thus, attempts had been made to set up archives and classifying the legends became a practical need at that time (Bascom, 1965).

Early scholars like Karl Wehrhan's (1908) initial study of legend, as well as Friedrich Ranke's (1971) and Will-Erich Peuckert's (1965) works on legend mainly examined legends and focused their efforts on literary approaches to the genre, with disregard for social context, performance and psychological motivations, preferring to examine the legend in relation to other folk narrative forms, mainly the folktales. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars began to consider legend from a wider perspective that includes considerations of context and performance. Referring to the 1962 congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, Leopold Schmidt acknowledged that a new era in legend scholarship had begun (Schmidt, 1969:53). This new era visualized the growth of an international legend catalogue as well as the new approaches to legends that included anthropological and psychological perspectives. On the other hand, Stefaan Top declared that legend research had fallen into a crisis

(Top, 1969). He further joined in this evaluation of crisis initiated by Lutz Röhrich (1973:13). The crisis was mainly related to classification, based in the problems that scholars faced when they tried to categorize legend. Most categorizations were based on the content available then, and were trying to establish a legend type index similar to the Aarne- Thompson folktale index. Catalogues of this type overlooked the importance of the context and mode of performance. A synthetic view of legend, one that considered legend from literary, anthropological and psychological viewpoints, was missing in these catalogues. But, at the same time, literary approaches to the definition of legend were very much available and the majority of these studies considered aspects of legend form in relation to other types of folk narrative. Lutz Röhrich has remarked that “the legend demands from teller and listener to believe the truth of what it tells. This is what sets it apart from *Märchen*, *Schwank* and *Witz*” (Röhrich, 1949). Another important aspect that Röhrich raised was that of fear. He said that legend is the cultural language of fear and by telling a legend, people verbalize anxieties and fears and legend telling is a kind of self-therapy to free themselves from oppressive power of their fears (Röhrich, 1949).

Thus, it was seen that a good response came from German Philological School especially in the works of Kurt Ranke, Max Lüthi, Lutz Röhrich and Hermann Bausinger. Literary Folklorist Max Lüthi in his *Volksmarchen und Volkssage* (1961) has observed that *Märchen* and *Sage* are two main possibilities of oral narratives that reveal the basic needs of human psyche. According to him, the *Märchen* is *flachenhaft* i.e. depthless and one dimensional; whereas the legend is deep and multidimensional. While the folktale uses reality in an ironic way, legend tries to reconstruct reality in a believable fashion. Legend narrative is linked to outer reality, opposed to the inner reality of folktale, making specific allusions to verifiable topographic features or historical personages. Also, unlike folktale, the core of a legend narrative consists of a single experience (Lüthi 1961:46-48). Friedrich Ranke, another German legend scholar, referred as the first modern fieldwork-oriented legend scholar (Dégh, 2001:39) has pointed out that the legends are objectively untrue but it asserts to be true. Ranke believed that legends are believed to be true by both narrator and listener. These legends are popular stories with fantastic, objectively untrue contents, told as factual event, in the form of a simple report (Ranke, 1925).

Paul Smith has considered legend to be based on some underlying truth related to fantasy (Smith, 1987), whereas, Gerndt adds that legends stand in a twilight zone of credence and doubt (Gerndt, 1991). Many other scholars like Čistov, Bausinger, Peuckert have made a considerable contribution towards the establishment of legend scholarship. Čistov discussed different way of presentation of reality in tale and legend (Čistov, 1967). Bausinger (Dégh, 2001:39) drew a developmental scheme for different kinds of legends: 1) a subjective incident of a fearsome vision commences supernatural legends; 2) a significant actual happening, natural phenomenon, historical event, or murder is the beginning of historical legends; 3) the objectification of an existing phenomenon demands explanation and that is the basis of an etiological legend. But, all these are decided by the existing combined structure and relevant motif patterns.

Peuckert (1965) has observed that mythical thinking, which has long been considered as an important part of legend is the main factor in the formation of legend. He added, "The legend wants to be true, to report truth." Many other legend scholars like Laistner, Jungian Gotthilf, F.W Schmidts accepted legends as mostly mono-episodic, non-artistic, plain and often a personal experience. Legend morphology and the study of structural elements have played important roles in the advancement of legend scholarship. Focusing on the contemporary legends, Nicolaisen, a German folklorist, has regarded morphological aspects of legend structure as one of the important areas needs to be considered in the legend studies. On the basis of his study on William Labov's (1972) study of Afro-American vernacular narrative, Nicolaisen has suggested that legend narrative consists at a minimum level of three structural elements- orientation, complicating action, and result (Nicolaisen, 1987:72). However, he has said that the legend may encompass as many as six distinct structural elements or as few as two (Nicolaisen, 1987).

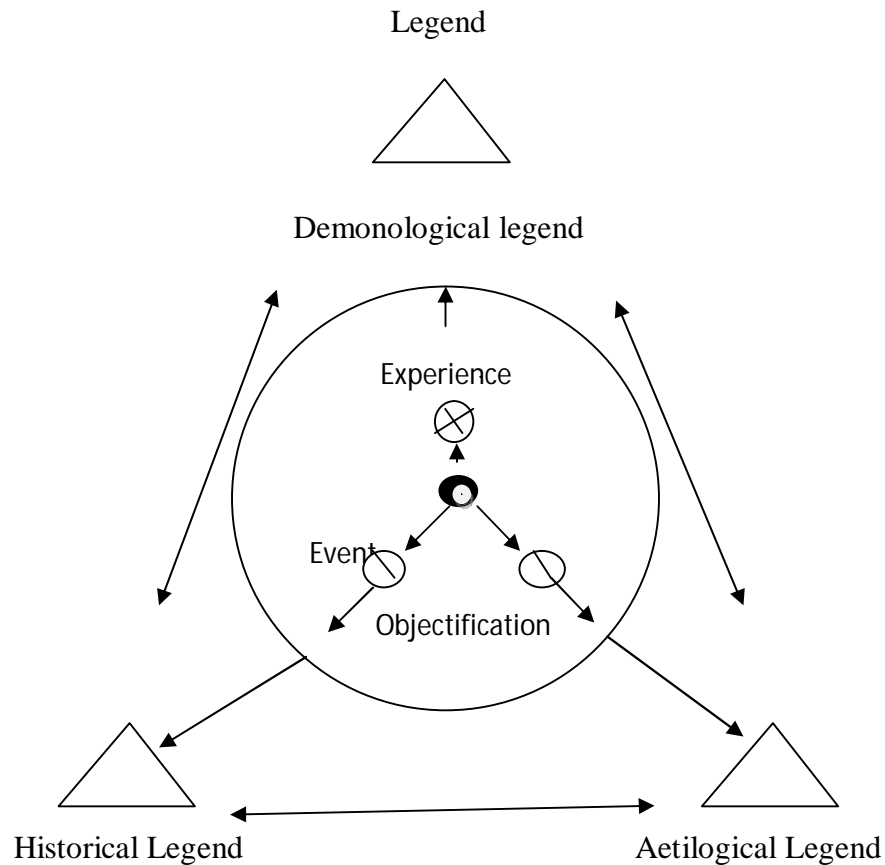


Figure1: Bausinger's developmental scheme

Despite the promise of these structural approaches to legend study, none has been able to establish any set rules of legend morphology. These approaches lie in the extreme flexibility of the legend narrative, the approaches are enforced to ignore some important aspects of context and performance, emphasizing mainly on the content. Oldrich Sirovtka with his introduction of a morphological approach has focused on legend motifs to develop a legend index (Sirovitka, 1964). According to him, unlike folktale motif, legend motif is a more autonomous entity and subject to greater variation (Sirovtka, 1964:101). Axel Olrik, a Danish Folklorist, a pioneer in the methodological study of oral narratives, identified eighteen “epic laws” that governed the composition of all folk narratives (Olrik, 1921). Johann Folkers from Germany modified this approach later specifically in order to fit the legends. He mainly developed a morphological approach to the compositional elements of legend, and attempted to establish a group of functions serving as the grammar for the narratives (Folkers, 1910). Vilmos Voigt also suggested a morphological approach as a means for developing the grammar of legend (Voigt 1973:80).

Folk beliefs can be expressed through various ways of folk narration, and one of these can be legend. Peuckert tried to examine the relationship between legend and belief and viewed legend primarily as a historical narrative, whereas, Röhrich's study on the demon and magic suggested that legends restate and reinforce belief. Thus, connecting to the historicized nature of legends, it can be said that legends derive part of their believability from the folk beliefs they reflect, while folk beliefs are supported by legend narratives. An early psychological study of legends was also seen in the works of German scholars like Gerhard Gesemann and Gotthilf Isler. Gerhard Gesemann (1928), while presenting an understanding in legend, mainly focused on sociological and psychological continuity. Similarly, Gotthilf Isler (1971) has suggested that legend narrative is itself not the narrated experience but serves a deeper religious function. Thus, starting with Grimms' effort to establish legend as particular genre, German folklorists contributed a lot towards the development of the legend tradition.

In the development of legend studies, contributions of Nordic folklorists hold a significant position. Their rigorous fieldwork, collection further stressed them to describe and identify legend categories and later prompted them for the classification of the legends. Carl Wilhelm von Sydow's work of legend first published in 1934, was considered to be an excellent work later on was used by many Nordic folklorists such as Abraham, Louri Honko, Cochrane, Palmenfelt. His work had initiated many Nordic scholars to think about the genre, its textual formulations and contextual whole. Sydow introduced the concept of "oikotype" and "active and passive bearers of tradition." As Dégh (2001:40) has observed that Sydow's article on folklore separated legend from tale, among other genres and assigns names to subcategories which he identified under unifying terms. Carl Wilhelm von Sydow differentiated "memo- rate" and "fabulate" (von Sydow 1934:261) according to which firsthand accounts of supernatural experiences are a different type of folk narrative than second or third hand accounts. To avoid the exclusionary nature of such a distinction, von Sydow considered the movement of memorate across the border into fabulates, labeling this group of cross-over narratives.

On the basis of this, Gunnar Granberg has said that legend springs from the imagination of the folk and exhibits a fixed form in tradition (Granberg 1935:121).

Later Christiansen provided a theoretical modification of the distinction when he observed the memorates and fabulates. Christiansen's catalogue of migratory legends (1958) presents a very good collection of Norwegian legends. According to him, memorate derives importance from the narrator having personally experienced the related event whereas, fabulate, on the other hand, derives importance from the narrated event (Christiansen, 1962:99). In 1968, Pentikainen presented a clear summary of the memorate and fabulate distinction, stating that fabulates, in contrast to memorates, exhibit a more fixed form, with anonymous characters (Pentikainen, 1968). Pentikainen later explored the link between legend structure and legend function. He discovered that legend structure differs according to each particular legend function (Pentikainen, 1976). His concise version reports legend or fabulate as a "report of the explicitly fabulated, composed of non-empirical, non-believable elements." Simonsuuri's *Finnish Mythological Legends* (1961) is considered as a distinctive source that gives us a classification of the legends that is available in the Archive of the Finnish Literature Society. In his catalogue, Simonsuuri tried to pursue von Sydow's categorization separating "belief legends" from "memorate" that later on turned into a practice of most Nordic folklorists.

The stylistics of legend narrative has also been considered as a basis for genre definition. Friedrich-Wilhelm Schmidt, a Danish scholar investigated stylistic features of legend based on its form and content. According to him, legend is an artistic expression with a definite form, using narrative frame to structure the account and it is often *episch-dramatisch* and exhibits a poetic lyricism (Schmidt, 1929). Carl Hermann Tillhagen later shared the same view (Tillhagen, 1967). Thus, in the process of characterization of legend, a great deal was discovered about legend style and form. According to the general trend in legend research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, legends are a form of folk history, encapsulating actual events in a traditional narrative form as well as a source of archaeological and historical studies (Tangerlini, 1994). The Grimms also characterized legends as historical. But, Franz Muth in 1888 commented on the connection between legend and rumour, stressing narrative types as historical events and folk interpretation of these events (Muth, 1888). Thus, it is found that through their industrious collection of texts followed by classification, Nordic scholars enriched the legend scholarship to a significant extent. Modern Anglo American Folklore Scholarship has shown a great

significance towards the development of the legend study. Their attempt to explore more approaches in order to describe, and analyze performance situations of legend enable in exploring sub-categories. Rather than concentrating in general, these scholars were seen more interested in one specific feature of legend as a genre.

Hand, an American scholar with his classification of American folk legend (1965) made an attempt to classify the American folk legends and that was submitted to Archives of the Folklore and Mythology Center at the University of California of Los Angeles. But later it was found that no systematic collection was conducted; as a result of which it remained as a source for belief and superstition encyclopedia. Hand writes, “folk legends seem endless in bulk and variety and they are often so short and formless as to defy classification” (Hand, 1965). According to him, a principal problem in the analysis and classification of legend lie in the multiple agents performing a single function and that stable function and variable dramatis personae are the most difficult factors.

Two famous American scholars - Alan Dundes (1971) and Halpert (1971) at a symposium on the American Folk Legend in 1969 discussed various formulas and problems of legends where, Dundes contrasted the legend to the tale and myth whereas, Halpert noted that the legend is told as truth or is believed to be true. Alan Dundes in his casebook of an anti-Semitic legend, “The Blood Libel Legend : A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore” (1991) has described that power of folklore to influence thought and history. In his essay he makes a distinctive folkloristic approach, where he states that legends are part of belief system that Christians developed about the Jews. His study of blood libel legend interests folklorists, scholars of Catholicism and Judaism and general readers for its scholarly approach and literature. Alan Dundes first introduced “oral literary criticism” to the American folkloristic and the folk-evaluation of its lore and performer-audience connection in the field. In the later part of the twentieth century, collecting and classifying folklore data became out of fashion while interpretation or analysis got a strong acclaim. Alan Dundes in America criticized folklorists for their “predilection” with collecting and classifying (Dundes, 1966, 1969, 1980, 1996). He said, “They just collect, collect, collect. They classify, classify, classify. They build these big archives, and they don’t interpret it” (Dundes, 1996). Since legend study was never been off from

the debates, Dundes calls the legend study “sterile and unrewarding.” Dorson, another important American folklorist, mainly emphasized on the common knowledge of social groups that formulate the body of legends. His collections of legends are considered as an important resource in the fields of contemporary legends study. Indiana University is one of the centers for the study of legend scholarship. Professor Linda Dégh with her scholars started collecting and publishing legends especially urban legends, in the journal *Indiana Folklore* in 1968.

Very little research has been done on Indian legends. R.C. Temple’s work on legends (1884-1900) and Tod’s study in Rajasthan include few legends of royal families of Rajasthan along with historical facts. Handoo’s (1977) *A Bibliography of Indian Folk Literature* includes few legends as well as Elwin’s (1943, 1944) studies are some of the rare studies of legends in Indian folklore study. In India, attention has been paid more to other genres rather than legends since legends served neither of the causes of colonial administration nor nationalists. Being a popular genre, legend occupies an important role in Indian folklore and it interconnects high and popular views about nature, places, local histories, social heroes, saints and so on by incorporating popular beliefs in it (Bhattacharjee, 2007). Based on the Christensen, Kvideland and Sehmsdorf’s classification of legends, Bhattacharjee, an eminent legend scholar from Northeast India has classified Indian legends into the following themes:

1. Black Magic
2. Spirits of rivers, lakes and trees
3. Place names
4. Buried treasure
5. Origin of temples
6. Healers and wise folks
7. History seen by the people
8. Bibliographical anecdotes of saints’ lives and
9. Local heroes and legends related to royal families. (Bhattacharjee, 2007)

Further, Bhattacharjee has argued that two classes of European legends such as legends of 1) human souls, ghosts and revenants and 2) supernatural spirits are not culturally regarded as legends in India. A considerable part of western tradition incorporates such legends whereas, in Assam, such stories are identified as personal narratives or anecdotes or memorates. He has also observed some differences between the study of legends in the west and in India. Western scholars seem to be more interested in history rather than the length. In the west, legends are more involved with spirits and ghosts whereas in India, supernatural incidents are related to

places, saints, and kings, which constitutes majority of the legends. According to Christiansen, legends hardly incorporate knowledge of ancient Gods and Goddesses, whereas in India, it is found that temple legends can add immensely to the understanding of the interpretation of classical deities in popular religion and constitute a counter system (Bhattacharjee, 2001).

2.1.2 Urban Legend Studies

It is difficult to say where and how – the study of urban legend has started. Paul Smith (1996: xxiv) believes that British folklorists began to document, collect and discuss similar stories that we consider as urban legend at least as early as in the mid-nineteenth century. For instance, in the 1850s, a magazine titled *Notes and Queries* featured a lively exchange called “Newspaper Folklore” on the subject of a legend which later was known as “The Bosom Serpent”. Similarly, another story which is commonly known as “The Devil at the Disco,” was also published as “Scraps of Welsh Folk-lore” (Smith, 1996: xxiv). Thus, this type of study about some contemporary popular phenomenon was realized when A. R. Right, President of the (British) Folklore Society 1927-28, talked about “new manifestations of the folklore spirit in the present”, while discussing about “The Folklore of the Past and Present.” Three years later, German scholar Otto Görner was also found to work in his “Sinister Wedding Present” with a similar approach (Smith, 1996: xxiv). This was much emphasized in the same year by Andre Jolle when he talked about the significance of newspaper in publishing the “new” sort of folk narrative (Kawan, 1995:103). The term “newspaper folklore” in 1930s became more popular among a group of people such as Leopold Achmidt, Hermann Kügler and Alfred Karasek-Langer and so on(Smith, 1996:xxvi). As such, few German scholars were found studying legends in 1930s which were later categorized as “contemporary.”

Alexander Woolcott in America is considered as one of the earliest scholar, who contributed a lot in the development of urban legend studies. His column “Shouts and Murmurs” in the *New Yorker* in 1930s presents endless stream of supernatural, bizarre and humorous narratives, which we would now call urban legend (Smith, 1996: xxvi). His famous anthology *While Rome Burns* (1945) acclaimed legends, where he has described five stories including “The Vanishing Lady”, which now called “The Vanishing Room” or “The Foreign Hotel”. Woolcott has further pointed

out three criteria of an urban legend viz. “friend-of-a friend”, authenticating ploy; and the impossibility of either effectively challenging or establishing an originating event (Smith 1996, xxvi-xxvii).

In 1941, “The Myth of the Corpse in the Car” was published which was later recognized as “double prophecy” legend by Smith. In this legend, a mysterious hitchhiker predicts the end of the war and death of Hitler. Drawing several materials from Woollcott, two anthropologists Beardsley and Hankey in 1942 started working on the most popular urban legend called “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”. They declared that the legend “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” features peculiar to contemporary civilization and its natural acceptance is crucial for the successful narration. The work was later much criticized by another folklorist from New York L.C. Jones who claimed that the legend “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” is much older than Beardsley and Hankey suggested (Smith 1996, xxviii).

Another very important work of Ernest Baughman and others at Hoosier Folklore society in the 1940s has established certain narratives as urban legends for example, “The Cadaver Arm”, “The Fatal Initiation”, “The Poisoned Dress” and so on, which resulted Stith Thompson in identifying few motifs of these narratives such as G60, i.e., “Human flesh eaten unwittingly” and N334 i.e., “Accidental fatal ending of game or joke” in the *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (1955). In this context, Brunvand has rightly stated that texts of these texts were finally named as “urban legends”; they first appeared in the regional folklore journals of the time, then eventually in the standard indexes of folk-narrative plots and motifs (Brunvand 2004). Thus, in the 1940s and 1950s, folklorists in America started collecting some popular repertoire of shockers about marauding hook men, campus killers, terrified babysitters, women attacked driving alone at night, poisoned dresses, fraternity hazing pranks gone awry, and so on. Richard Dorson in his *American Folklore* (1959, 250-54) has discussed about the death car, narratives about academe, grades, examination. Ernest Baughman successfully added few more types such as “The Bosom Serpent”, “Vanishing Hitchhiker” in his *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (1966).

A major development took place when a symposium took place in America at the end of 1960s, which was very crucial in case of building the theoretical foundation of the

recognized story types. Under the convenorship of one of the great folklore scholar Wayland Hand, this symposium is considered as the first step to mobilize the country's resources for the important work at hand (Hand 1971:213). In 1959, International Society for Folklore Research (ISFNR) held its first meeting in Kiel and Copenhagen, Germany, which is another landmark in order to find out a great deal of material that can fit into definitions and categories designed by preceding generations of narrative scholars (Hand 1965, 441-42). There were three very important papers which gave a complete new direction to the study of urban legends. Linda Dégh in her paper "The Belief Legend in Modern Society: Form, Function and Relationship to Other Genres" argues that (i) belief related stories are "traditional" in that they reflect age-old concerns as adapted by transmitting communities; (ii) the newness of the "new" material is "an optical" illusion "born of the unfamiliar method of transmission and the way the stories have become both fragmented in the telling and adapted to modern equipments; (iii) the heart of a legend is belief, not text and therefore, esthetic considerations should not be a criterion by which it is judged (Smith 1996, xxx-xxx). Another very important paper "The Psychology of Legend", mainly concentrated on the reason of transmission rather than collection and classification (Dundes, 1971: 21). One more essay by Robert George laid the ground in case of definitions, forms and genre. Thus, these papers laid a strong ground for some conceptual shifts, which later became very crucial for the further development of this genre and the symposium was marked as an important event in the history of urban legend. Second important symposium held in Britain under two very important scholars of urban legend, Paul Smith and Ervin Beck in early 1970s, provided another forum which focused on the research interests and established the internationality of the phenomenon (Smith 1996, xxxi-xxxii).

Urban or contemporary legend has an older history in France too. As Jean-Bruno has pointed out that the French Magazine *Me'lusine* (1877-1900) had a regular column titled "Legends Contemporaries". With the establishment of French Folklore study in nineteenth century, Marie Bonaparte's book *Myths de guerre* (1946) was published that examine the aspects of "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" tradition during World War II. Later in 1987, Jean-Noël Kapferer's book "Rumeurs: Le plus vieux média du monde" (Rumors: The World's Oldest Media) was translated and published as *Rumors: Uses, Interpretations and Images*. Kapferer, another scholar of

communications and folklore has demonstrated the French analytic approach to the creation, change, spread and control of rumours referring several established legends such as “The Hook”, “The Stolen Grandmother” as “migratory rumor stories.” In 1992, Campion –Vincent and Renard came out with “Légendesurbaines” which is considered as the first full length work on urban legends in French. Apart from discussing several international urban legends like “Alligators in Sewers”, “The Choking Doberman”, and “The Hippy Babysitter” etc., the authors have discussed many other stories that are specifically Gallic and supposed to have satanic significance of the Louvre Pyramid monument constructed in 1988. In 1999, a useful review of French and international urban-legend was published in a paper titled ‘Rumeursetle´gendesurbaines’ by Jean-Bruno Renard. In France, urban legends are many a time referred as fait divers, literally “diverse facts” whereas, in journalistic term, it is referred as “human interest stories” (Brunvand, 2001:159).

An important French monograph “The Murdered Son” (1966) as Folklore Fellows Communication is considered as one of the early studies, which was unacknowledged for many years (Smith 1996, xxxii). Doctoral dissertation in Leeds University, UK and discussion on urban legend by Scottish scholar Sandy Hobbs in a newsletter are marked as one of the former studies in Europe. Two very important scholars from Europe are Stuart Sanderson and Carsten Bregenhøj . Sanderson’s works “The Folklore of the Motor- Car”, “The Death Car”, “The Severed Fingers,” were published in several notable European journals (Smith 1996, xxxii). Klintberg, a Nordic scholar, encouraged many students to collect and study contemporary legends in Swedish University. According to him, if legend is considered as a scientific, ideal-typical genre, then there is no difference between old and new legends. They belong to the genre, which has continuously changed concurrently with changes in society, but which has not been documented continuously- quite the contrary. A historical perspective can help us to identify which of the modern legends merely seem to be new (Klintberg, 1990: 123). The Europeans were much influenced with the research works on urban legend done by the Anglo-American team. Following Brunvand, Europeans began to gather stories from various sources. As Linda Dégh (2002:) has stated that texts like “Mickey Mouse Acid”, “UFOs”, “Satanist Child Abuse” are extremely dry and warning flyers distributed to the public. European legends are no doubt entertaining and educational but they are lacking in scholarly

documentation, classification and interpretation. They cannot be taken as a folkloristic data as the texts are not literally transcripts of field recorded legends or copies of originals, without professional commentaries that contextualize the performance and performer. Brednich's three volumes with a total of 385 texts titled *Sagenhafte Geschichten von heute* (legends like stories of today; 1990, 1991, 1993) includes versions of the best known American and British horror and ghost stories, rumors, several humorous and grotesque anecdotes and personal experience narratives.

According to Smith, 1970s might characterize as a time of consolidation, in which scholars and students became interestingly familiar with the field through the steady accumulation of examples in numerous small collections and case studies. 1969 can be broadly taken as a time when urban legend was discovered by academics (Smith 1996: xxxiii). Indiana University became the first centre of urban legend collection and studies in the 1960s through the efforts of the folklorist Professor Linda Dégh, who started collecting and publishing "urban belief tales" first from her students, colleagues, and also from colleges and universities. She started collecting stories from popular collection of shockers about raiding hook men, campus killers, terrified baby sitters; women attacked driving alone at night, poisoned dresses etc. Texts of these stories first appeared in the regional folklore journals of the time, then finally in the standard indexes of folk-narrative plots and motifs. She and her students who started publishing their findings in the journal *Indiana Folklore* in 1968, started raising interest in legends among other American and international folklorists in the following decades. Thus, under the influence of scholars such as Alan Dundes, Dan Ben-Amos, Dell Hymes, Richard Bauman, Roger Abrahams and Robert Georges, a shift was realized in folklore studies (Smith 1996, xxxiii).

Publication of William Hugh Jansen's study "The Surpriser Surprised" in 1973, Jan Brunvand's *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* in 1981, first international conference on contemporary legends in 1982, the founding of the International Society on Contemporary Legend Research (henceforth, ISCLR) in 1988 are some of the landmarks in the development of urban legend scholarship. Since its inception, ISCLR has been taking a prestigious role in the study and dissemination of urban

legends worldwide. Linda Dégh along with her husband Andrew Vázsonyi contributed some major works into this field such as *Legend and Bel*

ief (1971), *The Dialectics of the Legend* (1973), *The Crack on the Red Gobler or Truth and Modern Legend* (1978). Subsequent works such as *The Bosom Serpent: A Legend in American Literature and Culture* (1972) by Daniel Barnes, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker Among Mormons* (1975) by William Wilson, *The Influence of Mass Culture in Modern Legends* (1976) by Ronald Bakers, *Coke lore and Coke Law* (1979) by Gary Alan Fine created an information-explosion in urban legend studies (Smith, 1996:xxxiv-xxxv).

Brunvand published “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” in 1981 with a popular and scholarly repute. And 1981 onwards he has published several volumes on urban legends (Brunvand, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1993, 1998, 2001, 2002), articles that focus on various stories that are too good to be true like “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”, “The Choking Doberman”, “AIDS Mary” and so on. In 1981, his several publications including aforementioned provides rich sources for evaluating or expanding the insight to this “classic automobile legend.” Brunvand has stated that since 1940’s, “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” legend has remained in the focus of American folklorists; as it has circulated throughout the continent, and has retained its solid core, even while exhibiting a remarkable flexibility in narrative development (Brunvand 1981:24-40). He has discussed materials from 40 different sources dating from 1940 to 1979. “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” is not just a folk narrative, but it has inspired fictional writings, films, radio, TV dramas, and artworks, advertising, tabloid-news exploitation and popular songs too. Brunvand’s *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends* (2001) and its several editions can be considered as comprehensive and compellingly readable reference work that can answer all urban legend questions, sometime offer alphabetical entries on almost every aspect of the subject including descriptions of hundreds of individual legends and their variations, legend themes and scholarly approaches to the genre. Each entry is cross-referenced and features a short bibliography followed by a scholarly discussion. Brunvand includes entries that explain how to collect, classify and analyze texts and performances. He traces the evolution of the legends and their connections to other areas like film, literature, comic books, music and other fields of popular culture. Particular attention is paid to

the internet and how the computer has speeded up dissemination of urban legends. Moreover, it introduces the idea of various approaches to study urban legends in several parts of the world like Japan, Sweden etc. It is very rare to find a reference title that is both informative and fun to read. Thus, this volume of Encyclopedia fills the gap between traditional folklore and stories of popular culture. His several other works like “The Choking Doberman”(1984), “The Mexican Pet”(1986), “The Tale of AIDS Mary”, “Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid”(2004) are collections of some incredible tales that always happen to a friend of a friend. From the classic hook-man story told around many campfires to “Saved by a Cell that they cannot be true”, which certainly addresses some relevant issues of contemporary times, survives. As such, publications of Brunvand’s articles, books and several other works have influenced various disciplines such as folklore, newspaper columns, television talk shows, and comic book version as well as movie industries too (De Vos , 2012: 4). Thus, Brunvand set up a platform that can be considered as a potential continuation of urban legend tradition.

Since the introduction of the term “Urban Legend”, this genre has been undergoing many controversies especially about the validity of the terms “modern”, “urban” and “contemporary” (Brunvand 2001:91-92; Smith 1996: xxxviii). Many scholars were comfortable with the term contemporary legend because of the time factor despite of its awkwardness (Brunvand 2001:91-92; Smith 1996: xxxviii). It became difficult to distinguish “real contemporary legends” from similarly situated and performed “contemporary horror stories.” These legends show the rejuvenation of old themes, transported from rural to urban environments and the themes of the contemporary legends innovatively satisfy new needs of the society which assists in the survival. These confusions came to an end when Brunvand came out with a definition - variant of the urban legend in contrast with myth.

Urban legend belongs to the subclass of folk narratives, legends that –unlike fairy tales-are believed, or believable, and that – unlike myths- are set in the recent past and involve normal human beings rather than ancient gods and demigods. Legends are folk-history, or rather quasi-history. As with any folk legends, urban legends gain credibility from specific details of time and place or from reference to source authorities (Brunvand, 1981:3). Brunvand’s best –selling books on legends educated

the public about “urban legends,” including all the legend bearing folk that he mentioned as contributors to his collections and collective columns. Thus, studies and research continues on urban legends and with new collaborations and findings, legend scholars have started studying folk narrative in a much dedicated and serious way. Their annual meetings invite all the collaborative projects which include representatives from various disciplines such as writers, journalists, film makers. Leander Petzoldt in his book *The History and Research of Our Folk Legends* (1989) has stated that Anglo-American folklorists and pseudo-folklorists along with the mass media are responsible for the reinforcement and proliferation of “urban legends” (Dégh 2001: 93). Petzoldt’s work on legends include legendry to globalization via tourism and foreign travel which has immensely stepped up in the dissemination of legends (Petzoldt, 1999: 5-12). According to Petzoldt, Brunvand is an “eager - multiplier” of legends through his popular books and his encouragement of correspondents who send him their stories.

Urban legends are some interesting narratives based on true, sensational stories having traditional variants which although reported as true individual experiences, are usually exaggerated and indicate their legendary character. They are too odd, too coincidental and too neatly plotted to be accepted as literal truth in every place where, they are told and retold. Although the stories are phrased, as if actual, and are often attached to a particular locality, urban legends are actually migratory, and like all folklore, they exist in variant versions. Typically, urban legends are attributed to a friend-of-a friend (FOAF) (Brunvand 2001: xxviii). In 1981, in a lecture delivered to the Folklore Society in London, legend scholar Stewart Sanderson stated, “The modern legend constitutes one of the most, may indeed even constitute the most widespread, popular and vital folklore form of the present day; and perhaps the most outstanding feature is the creativity, imagination and virtuosity brought to its performance by all kinds of people...” (Brunvand 2001: xxvii). But in recent time, some twenty five- thirty years after his lecture, the urban legends have much less vitality as an oral narrative genre. Linda Dégh (2001) has declared that urban legend has started to vanish from the oral tradition and mostly migrated from folklore to popular culture where, they became identical, stereotyped, co-modified and repackaged in different ways. The most common medium for the transmission now is the internet. As such, their ‘performance’ tends to be shaped more by this electronic

medium than that of face-to-face processes of word of mouth transmission. Thus, the onset and public commercialization of the Internet since the beginning of the 1990's, has brought up a considerable change in people's primary sources of information around the world that has replaced oral, written (especially newspaper, magazines etc), televised and radio communication (Dégh 2001:166-168).

Another very influential scholar till date, who is involved in rigorous research on urban legend, is undoubtedly Paul Smith from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. From early 1970s, he has been publishing several books and substantial amount of articles on urban legends. His works include two major collections of contemporary legends and two on photocopy joke sheets. In association with Dr. Gillian Bennett, Smith has edited five-volumes of *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend essay series* (1984-1990), wrote *Contemporary Legend: The First Five Years* (1990), compiled *Contemporary Legend: An Annotated Bibliography* (1993) with 1,116 entries . These are considered as the milestones in the history of urban legend. His edited work *Contemporary Legend: A Reader* (1996) provides the history of the scholarship, status of the scholarship and finally discusses the current scholarly debate over the matters like terminology, definition and so on (Smith 1996, xxi).

Gail de Vos, an eminent scholar of urban legends has done a massive survey on contemporary urban legends. Her works such as *Tales, Rumors, and Gossip: Exploring Contemporary Folk Literature in Grades 7-12* (1996), *What Happens Next? Contemporary Urban Legends and Popular Culture* (2012) explore how urban legends have been adapted by popular culture media and especially the Internet. According to Brunvand (2013), “ Researching these developments is a daunting task—one that I have neither the energy nor patience to pursue on a large scale - so all students of urban legends should be as grateful to Gail de Vos as I am for compiling this massive survey which includes literary adaptations, graphic novels, films, TV, websites, blogs, Facebook and You Tube postings, crypto zoology, the Darwin Awards, doomsday prophecies, chain letters, scams, hoaxes, photo-shopped parody images, ghost hunting, ghost tourism, and even such exotica as ‘shoefiti’ (hanging shoes on overhead wires or in trees) and ‘shag or sex bracelets’ (supposed code meanings of colored gel bracelets)”.

Another very important work “The Forward as Folklore: Studying E-Mailed Humor” (Blank, 2009: 98-122) by Russell Frank needs to be mentioned here especially in the context of the shift of research paradigm, where more and more people were gaining access to the electronic media. Frank has shown that “the forwarded e-mail messages or forwards challenge the canonical folkloristic ideas about the importance of performance and context and the roles of individual creativity and audience response in textual variation.” However, Bill Ellis, Bayn, Fernback (Frank, 2009: 98-100) another group of legend scholar in recent times have shown the possibilities of “virtual ethnography” by online discussion group. According to them while discussing online people do more than exchanging items of folklore; they converse, and their conversations lead to their reactions to the folklore.

Trevor Blank has been working on folklore in the context of internet, social media and so on. Trevor Blank in his edited volume *Vernacular Expression in A Digital World* (Blank, 2009:8) has mentioned, “how folklore continues on the Internet whether we examine it or not, so it is practical to study folklore in an Internet context. We must rethink the topics that have previously captured our interests and contemplate their Internet correlates. Perhaps some folklorists fear that the Internet will undermine the credibility of their work or negatively impact the content of their research”. In this context, Blank has quoted (Blank, 2009:8) Kirshenblatt and Gimblett, “new technologies do not necessarily displace, replace, or eliminate earlier ones. They alter the relations among them and incorporate one another—with far-reaching effects” (Kirshenblatt- Gimblett 1998, 310). New technology has made it possible to transmit a single text in fraction of a second with a command to the fingers, which can be distributed to potentially thousands, even millions of people.

It was realized that the study of urban legend reached Japan too when few publishers translated few books on urban legends to Japanese language (Brunvand, 2001: 221). It was realized that a much richer tradition of urban legends in Japan has been continuing that needs to be systematically studied. Few popular urban legends circulated in Japan are the localized version of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”, stories of abduction of young women to prostitution (so called white-slavery legends in Western countries); stories of Japanese tourists abroad being harmed or murdered; and several versions of “the Mutilated Bride”, where the woman is spotted despite her badly

wounded body exhibited in a circus slideshow in the Philippines (Brunvand, 2001: 221). In “Urban Legends and the Japanese Tale”, David Schaefer has found several similarities between urban legends of America and Japanese Tales. He has asserted that “many of the characteristics of urban legends can also be found much earlier in a literary genre from classical and medieval Japan (Scheaefer, 1990: 4).

Study of urban legends in India is a recent phenomenon. Sanjay Sircar in his article “For all is dirty ideas: three cross- community forms of the same urban legend from India” has stated the problems that aroused because of the racial differences in the pre or post independence era. In recent times, several websites are updated with some popular urban legends collected across the country though serious research work is not yet been done. Very little work has been done on Assamese Urban Legend. Two unpublished M.phil dissertations related to urban folklore can be found in the University of Gauhati: one on Corporate Lore by Pallavi Dutta, and the second one is on Personal Narratives of the Construction workers of Guwahati by Sajida Begum. An Interesting paper was found titled "It Happened to a Friend of a Friend": Urban Legends in Contemporary Mizo Society, by Cherrie Lalnunziri Chhange. He has described the contemporary legends available in the Mizo society. A legendary character from World War II tales has been discussed, who went to join the French forces. His trademark wit, sarcasm, cunning, physical strength and bravery make him a much beloved and oft-quoted character even in contemporary times. This fictional hero's activities are told repeatedly in the form of humorous anecdotes, and exaggerated at every telling. Another paper, “The Vanishing Hitchhiker in Shillong: Khasi Belief Narratives and Violence against Women” (2012) by Margaret Lyngdoh has discussed the vanishing hitchhiker theme, paradoxically set in a place named Shillong, India, where hitchhiking is virtually unknown. It tries to demonstrate this popular international legend, which has generated a locally constructed set of Meta folklore that derives from the framework of traditional Khasi beliefs.

This study on the urban legends of Assam will explore various urban legends of Assam. As a part of my M.Phil research work, I collected and thematically analyzed few urban legends from Guwahati in 2006, which was considered as the first study of urban legends in Assam (Bhattacharjee, 2007; Brunvand, 2013). Moreover, this

was taken as the one and only collection from India added in *Encyclopedia of Urban Legend* (2013) by Jan Brunvand published in Indiana University. In another study in Assam (Das, 2006), an attempt has been made to show how the anxiety, inter-ethnic suspicion, wish fulfillment, social criticism, re-enforcement of religious beliefs, fear and sometimes over-estimation of the power of anti-socials find an outlet in urban legend. These locally constructed and orally transmitted set of narratives are derived from the broader perspectives of the contemporary Assamese society that have reflected various issues of Assam. Urban legends have created bizarre scares in Guwahati lately through internet especially through emails and messages. Health hoaxes like food contaminations, rampant on the Internet, have scared people to death. All these have emphasized more on the electronic but not oral circulation of urban legends. Since this kind of urban folklore study is a new study in Assam, it will further explore how these urban legends are supported by the current Assamese belief system and social reality, which have been further circulated by Internet.

2.2 Literature Review: Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA is a branch of critical social analysis into language studies that mainly focuses on discourse and language. Appearance and endorsement of CDA can be considered as one of the most striking developments in the field of linguistics in the latter decades of the 20th century. CDA is seen as one of the best interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary theories in social sciences. In this section, an attempt has been made to study the development of methodological and theoretical contributions of CDA by different scholars at different point of time. These can be considered as the most shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis.

2.2.1 CDA: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

The origin of manifold CDA, a version of Discourse Analysis lies in classical rhetoric, text-linguistics, anthropology and sociolinguistics as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics. The emergence of comparative linguistics and structural analysis of language in the earlier part of nineteenth century replaced rhetoric as the primary discipline of the humanities and social sciences, which ultimately led to the emergence of discourse analysis. Finally, discourse analysis proceeded towards the

direction of linguistic analysis of the text which later was known as Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak& Meyer, 1999:1-2).

“Russian formalism”, an interdisciplinary movement in 1920s, witnessed numerous researchers working together with anthropology, poetics and linguistics. Russian theorists Bakhtin and Volosinov postulated an integration of language and social processes during 1930s. Since the appearance of Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), first English translation 1958, there has been an increasing interest in attempting structural analysis in the study of narratives in several disciplines like folklore, linguistics, anthropology, psychology etc. This possesses the first structural analysis of Russian folktales on the basis of structural principles of early linguistics (Phonology, Morphology) in terms of a set of fixed thematic functions (Wagner, 2003:xi). Stimulating ideas of Propp’s structuralism inspired a group of new scholars in America and Europe. One of the most influential works in anthropology and structural analysis in this context is *The Structural Study of Myth* published by Claude Levi-Strauss in the 1955, where, he has discussed the manner in which anthropology should approach the study of myths. At the same time, structural linguistics in Europe was developing simultaneously which influenced the restitution in anthropology, poetics and several other branches in humanities and social sciences. These early interdisciplinary developments of the middle 1960s are considered as part of ‘semiotics’ which associates famous names like Barthes, Greimas, Todorov and others engaged with structural analysis of narratives and discourse forms or cultural practices. Another influential book namely *Language in Culture and Society* by Dell Hymes in 1964 proposed the term “ethnography of communication” that suggests a new approach to understand language not only as a discourse, style, forms of address and verbal art, but also as the social, cultural, and historical perspectives which needs to be studied systematically (Hymes, 1964). Hymes considers speech not only as an abstract model but also as a part of ethnographic fieldwork. Farah quotes the theoretical perspectives of Hymes mainstream ideas of language as follows:

[T]he study of language must concern itself with describing and analyzing the ability of the native speakers to use language for communication in real situations (communicative competence) rather than limiting itself to describing the potential ability of the ideal speaker/listener to produce grammatically correct sentences (linguistic competence). Speakers of a language in particular communities are able to communicate with each other in a manner which is not only correct but also appropriate to the socio-cultural context. This ability involves a shared knowledge of

the linguistic code as well as of the socio-cultural rules, norms and values which guide the conduct and interpretation of speech and other channels of communication in a community ... [T]he ethnography of communication ... is concerned with the questions of what a person knows about appropriate patterns of language use in his or her community and how he or she learns about it (Farah, 1998:125-127).

Thus, Hymes introduced a theoretical basis for language, use of discourse and communication forms that is based on both linguistic variation from individual to individual, and relative linguistic coherence across the social territory. As such, Hymes' works are the foundation of sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics that connect several popular names like Boas, Greenberg, Goodenough, Malinowski, Firth, Sapir and many others. Their studies of narratives in various indigenous languages are closely related to the analysis of discourse (Grimes, 1975; Longacre, 1977). M.A.K Halliday's SFL introduced a new linguistic theory profoundly concerned with the relationship between language and various other aspects of social life. In contrast with Chomskyan tradition of Universal Grammar, SFL is related to the social character of texts (Halliday, 1978, 1994). This approach gave a systematic attention to discourse analysis which later was termed as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Against the notion of the more influential Chomskyan tradition of Competence and Performance (after Saussure's distinction between *Langue* and *Parole*), SFL stressed more concern on the relationship between language and other aspects of socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, its approach to linguistic analysis of text is always oriented to the social character of texts, which has made it a valuable resource for CDA. Thus, SFL has made a major contribution to the development of CDA (Fairclough, 2003:5).

Thus, sociolinguistics replaced the concepts such as 'ideal speaker' or 'homogenous speech community'. Labov's analysis of natural story-telling about personal experience marked the functions of discourse in the social contexts (Labov, 1972a, 1972b). Another significant development in the early 1970s was the famous speech act theory postulated by Austin, Grice and Searle, which suggests that speech is not only made of sentences but also a specific form of social action. This connotes the idea that sentences used in particular contexts refer speaker's intentions, beliefs or evaluations or relation between speaker and hearer. On the other hand, development of the text grammars in Germany, and some other European countries soon led to a more widespread interdisciplinary study of discourse and text-linguistics. The study

of pre-supposition, pronouns and other cohesive markers, topic and comment, overall semantic macrostructures and other typical features of texts considered as a sequence of sentences began to be studied within this new and integrated scholarship.

In this way, the prospect of discourse analysis extended with a much higher pace all over the world. Psychological study of discourse including Bartlett, Kintsch, Bower, Rumelhart and others open a new scope for the discourse studies. Charniak's (1972) work showed how the knowledge activation strategies are embedded in the understanding of a very simple children's story. Sociology also showed their increasing interest in the analysis of everyday conversation and other forms of natural dialogue in social interaction. Goffman, Harvey Sacks, Sinclair, Coulthard reinstated the predominant idea of monological discourse genre such as texts, stories, myths etc with that of everyday conversation and other forms of dialogue in the social situation. Van Dijk (2002) declares:

... the circle of these independent beginnings of contemporary discourse analysis can be closed by returning again to the discipline where much of it had started in the first place: anthropology. The work by Hymes, Gumperz, and others had yielded an increasingly autonomous orientation of ethnographic research on communicative events, labeled the "ethnography of speaking" (or the "ethnography of communication"). Under the inspiration of the influential and programmatic work of Hymes in the 1960s, new theories and fieldwork were collected in two readers (Bauman & Scherzer, 1974; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). The boundaries between the sociolinguistics of discourse and this new branch of anthropology were fuzzy: the study of "real" language use in the socio-cultural context no longer stopped at form of address, rituals, or myth, but also began to pay attention to the mundane forms of talk in different cultures, such as greetings, spontaneous storytelling, formal meetings, verbal dueling, and other forms of communication and verbal interaction.

M.A.K. Halliday mainly focused on the relationship between the grammatical system and the social and individual requirement that language needs to provide. Halliday's linguistics methodology is crucial to CDA practices as it offers clear and rigorous linguistic categories for analyzing the relationships between discourse and social meaning (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). Next to Halliday's three meta-functions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual), systemic-functional analyses of transitivity, agency, nominalization, mood, information flow, and register have been adopted by CDA. In the studies of CDA, whether the critical approach focus on micro-linguistics features, macro-linguistics features, textual, discursive or contextual features or whether it is of philosophical, sociological or historical perspectives, in most of the studies there is a reference to Hallidayan SFL. Martin (2000) reviews the usefulness

of systemic-functional linguistics for CDA, which suggests that CDA should apply systemic-functional notions more systematically and consistently. Thus, by this time, CDA had already emerged as a distinct theory of language, a radically different kind of linguistics. In such context, attention to texts, their production and interpretation and their relation to societal impulses and structures, signaled a very different kind of interest (Beaugrande & Dressler 1981; Titscher et al. 2000).

The work done by Kress & Hodge (1993), Fowler, Kress, Hodge & Trew (1979), Van Dijk (1985), Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (ed.) (1989) propose, clarify and illustrate the main assumptions, principles and procedures of what had then turned out to be CL. Over the years CL has effectively morphed into CDA with both enterprises occupying 'the same "paradigmatic" space' (Wodak, 2001a) being "broadly concerned with highlighting the traces of cultural and ideological meaning in texts" (O' Halloran 2000 : 13). By the late 1990s, the term CDA restored the term CL and they established the basic principles of CDA programme (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The initiation of Van Dijk's journal "Discourse and Society" (1990), publication of Norman Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989), Teun van Dijk's book on racism, *Pride and Prejudice in Discourse* (1984) are considered to be the beginning of CDA network (Wodak, 2001:4). A small symposium in January 1991 in the University of Amsterdam determined an institutional beginning of CDA. An exchange programme known as The Erasmus network consisting of a cooperation among Siegfried Jäger, (Duisburg), Per Linell (Linköping), Norman Fairclough (Lancaster), Teun van Dijk (Amsterdam), Gunther Kress (London), Theo van Leeuwen (London), and Ruth Wodak (Vienna) was formed in order to work on CDA collaboratively and the outcome of this was a massive success. New journals were launched, multiple overviews were written. Following *Discourse and Society*, several journals like, *Critical Discourse Studies*, *The Journal of Language and Politics*, *Discourse and Communication* and *Visual Semiotics* were started. E- Journal like *CADAAD* was launched. Several book series were published. Meetings, conferences started to take place as a result of which CDA was approved as an established paradigm in the field of Linguistics and became popular globally (Wodak, 2001:4).

CDA considers a good range of approaches towards the social analysis of discourse (Fairclough & Wodak 1997, Wodak & Meyer 2001) which differ in theory,

methodology, and the type of research issues that has their own distinctive quality. Wodak (2006) has mentioned six different approaches on the basis of the available trends of CDA studies. A systematic study of these approaches will give a clear picture of CDA studies and their developments which can be discussed as follows.

A. Social Semiotics:

Gunter Kress' works serve as the beginning of CL. Kress' work (1990:84-97) gives an account of the theoretical foundations and sources of Critical Linguistics (CL). He indicates that the term CL was 'quite self consciously adapted' (Kress, 1990: 88) as a term by a group of scholars working at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s. Wodak has cited few basic assumptions of CDA on which Kress's work is based on

- Language is a social phenomenon;
- Not only individuals, but also institutions and social groupings, have specific meanings and values that are expressed in language in systematic ways;
- Texts are the relevant units of language in communication;
- Readers / hearers are not passive recipients in their relationship to texts;
- There are similarities between the language of science and the language of institutions, and so on (Wodak & Meyer, 2001: 5).

Kress wanted to connect the specificities of semiotic forms, in any medium, with the specificities of social organizations and social histories (Kress, 1993). And this was the foundation of the famous theory which sees language as a semiotic system in which meaning is made directly rather than as a linguistic system and meaning is indirectly associated with linguistic form. Kress was mainly concerned with 'political economy' of representational media. He worked on multi-modality and semiotics too. Along with Theo van Leeuwen, Kress developed taxonomy which later on was considered as very influential especially on the research of new media. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) provided a useful framework for considering the communicative potential of visual devices in the media. An important tool used for data analysis known as "the Actor Analysis" (1993) was introduced by van Leeuwen. He was seen focusing on some areas of visual communication especially the semiotics of handwriting typography and the question of colour. His interest lay on different types of discourse for example, histories of art and design that focus on the semiotic innovations of specific individual in their historical contexts rather than synchronic approach to semiotic systems. Thus, his approach led CDA to a particular relation between discourse analysis, ethnography, history and theory.

Jay Lemke and Ron and Suzie Scollon also have to be mentioned in the development of Social-semiotics. Lemke mainly emphasized on multimedia semiotics, multiple timescales and hypertexts or traversals. In all his work, he had used critical social semiotics as an extension of CDA, combined with models of the material base of emergent social phenomenon. Ron and Scollon's work *Mediated Discourse: The Nexus of Practice* (2001) shows the relation between discourse and a nexus of practice. Ron and Suzie Scollon's *Discourse in Place: Language in the Material World* (2002) explains a kind of analytical method called geo-semiotics which helps to analyze the meaning inherent in public settings, the sign system encountered in the material world and the actions that people take according to both settings and signs. The study of public signs like traffic and street signs, commercial signs for business and logos of commercial brands shows how to incorporate the methods of diverse fields, for example, discourse analysis, linguistics, communication, cultural geography, anthropology etc in order to analyze the socio-political structures of power in the world around us. As such this book extends the studies of semiotic systems beyond the analysis of grammar of languages into grammars of texts taken in much broader sense (Giddens, 2002).

Fowler et al. (1979, 1991, and 1996) also help to understand the basics of CL as well as show various possible tools of standard linguistic theories (which are versions of Chomskyan Universal Grammar and Halliday's theory of SFG) can be used to reveal the linguistic structures of power in the texts. On the basis of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and the Chomskyan tradition of Universal Grammar (UG), Fowler shows how the tools provided by standard linguistics theories can be used to explore the linguistic structures of power in the texts. He further demonstrates how these systematic grammatical devices function in establishing, controlling and naturalizing the social hierarchies (Wodak, 2001:6).

B. 'Orders of Discourse' and Foucauldian Post-Structuralism

Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, and 1993) refers to CDA as a branch of critical social analysis into language studies which mainly focus on discourse and its relation between other social elements like power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities and so forth. CDA sees 'language as social practice' (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997:258) and considers the 'context of language use' to be very important.

Fairclough has published eight substantial books on CDA since 1989: *Language and Power* (1989), *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), *Media Discourse* (1995), *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995), *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (1995), *Language and Power* (2001), *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (2003), *Language and Globalization* (2006) and a lot of articles have been published in several journals and edited books. All these have established him as a scholar with a significant reputation in the field of CDA. Based on functional and systemic linguistics of M. A. K. Halliday, with its dialectical account of language structure, social and institutional relationships and identities, CDA shares this theoretical basis with other approaches, notably the school of "Critical Linguistics (CL)". Therefore, Fairclough and Wodak states:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258).

Fairclough distinguishes CDA from critical linguistics in terms of the greater commitment to social and historical analysis in the former. Fairclough’s approach of CDA consists of "a 'three-dimensional' framework where the aim is to map three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practice"(Fairclough, 1995a).

Fairclough is mainly concerned with the study of power and institutional discourse stressing the intertextuality of different forms of social practice. In his book *Language and Power* (1989), According to Fairclough, CDA being a part of critical social analysis should make “a contribution to the general rising of consciousness of exploitative social relations” (Fairclough, 1989: 4). Influenced by Foucauldian post-

structuralism, Fairclough is seen giving more emphasis on language and power relationships. Fairclough (1992, 1995) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) show how an analytical structure for researching language in relation to power and ideology can be developed. Here, language of mass media is analyzed as a site of power, of struggle. In *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language* (1995), Fairclough has presented a compilation of essays that offers some practical analysis as illustrations which are done very carefully. He has talked about a wide range of genres such as interviews, political speeches and pamphlets, a television discussion, conversations, newspaper reports, university prospectuses and even an extract from Fairclough's own C.V. Thus, in his works, Fairclough has presented an analytical framework for exploring how discourse features in projects for social change (Fairclough 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 2003) and later he has applied that framework to the projects which he has considered of 'late modernity' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999): the co-modification of cultural and social life (Fairclough 1991, 1993, 1997), globalization (Fairclough, 2006), and the rise of 'new capitalism' and its colonization of all spheres of economic, social and cultural life (Fairclough, 2000b, 2002, 2004). In 2000, Fairclough published *New Labour, New Language?* (Fairclough, 2000a). This influential study, despite being written in a 'clear and non-technical style' and having inspired and convinced a broad (non-academic) readership, is a prime application of what he terms as "Faircloughian CDA".

C. The Socio-Cognitive Model

Teun van Dijk is the most often referred and quoted representative of this approach. His critical studies mainly focus on the (re)production of ethnic prejudices and racism in discourse and communication. In the 1980s, he first started to apply his discourse analysis theory to media texts mainly focusing on the representation of ethnic groups and minorities in Europe. In critically analyzing various kinds of discourses, van Dijk has mainly developed a theoretical model that explains cognitive discourse processing mechanisms (Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). Cognition is the missing link of many studies in CDA, which fail to show how societal structures influence discourse structures and precisely how societal structures are in turn enacted, instituted, legitimated, confirmed or challenged by text and talk (Wodak, 2011:60). The socio-cognitive model by van Dijk is based on the assumption that

cognition mediates between 'society' and 'discourse.' According to van Dijk, 'cognition' is a notion that is jointly defined by all the disciplines currently integrated under the label 'cognitive science', such as psychology, linguistics, philosophy and logic as well as the brain sciences. He refers to some typical cognitive notions such as:

- Mind, defined, for example, as a central function of the human brain.
- Cognition as the set of functions of the mind, such as thought, perception and representation.
- Memory: Short Term (Working) Memory (STM) and Long Term Memory (LTM).
- Episodic (personal, autobiographic) Memory (EM) and Semantic (socio-cultural, shared) Memory — as part of Long Term Memory (LTM).
- Semantic Mental Models (represented in EM) as the subjective representations of the events and situations observed, participated in or referred to by discourse.
- Goals as mental models of the situations to be realized by action.
- Pragmatic Context Models: specific mental models of subjective representations (definitions) of the relevant properties of communicative situations, controlling discourse processing and adapting discourse to the social environment so that it is situationally appropriate.
- Knowledge and its organization: shared, socio cultural beliefs that are certified by the (knowledge) criteria or standards of a (knowledge) community.
- Ideology as the shared, fundamental and axiomatic beliefs of specific social groups (socialism, neo liberalism, feminism, (anti)racism, pacifism, etc.).
- Attitude as the socially shared, ideologically based opinions (normative beliefs) about specific social issues having given rise to debate or struggle (abortion, divorce, euthanasia, immigration, etc.).
- Cognitive processes such as the production and comprehension of discourse/ interaction on the basis of specific mental models, controlled by context models, and based on knowledge and ideologies (van Dijk, 2002: 64-65).

Along with this, van Dijk has related socio- cognitive interface of discourse to the relations between mind, discursive interaction and society. For instance, in his works on racism (van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993a, 2005, 2007b), and in his research on ideology (van Dijk, 1998) and context (vanDijk, 2008a, 2009), he has shown that these are both mental and social phenomena. van Dijk states that whatever cognitive and social dimensions of discourse CDS (Critical Discourse Studies, a term used by van Dijk for Critical Discourse Analysis) deals with, it always needs to account for at least some of the detailed structures, strategies and functions of text or talk which may include grammatical, pragmatic, interactional, stylistic, rhetorical, semiotic, narrative, argumentative or similar forms and meanings of the verbal, para-verbal and multimodal structures of communicative event (van Dijk, 2002). In his writings on discourse and racism, van Dijk claims that in many ways the elites play a crucial role in the reproduction of racism. He has also seen turning to more questions of

abuse of power and reproduction of inequality through ideologies in his various works (van Dijk, 1999). According to van Dijk, no direct relation can or should be constructed between discourse structures and social structures; they are always mediated by personal and social cognition. van Dijk has also examined the role of news media in the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1991). Combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis of thousands of news reports in the British and Dutch press, van Dijk concluded that the most regular matters in racism in the press can be referred to the existing ethnic discriminations expressed in everyday chat such as immigration as invasion, immigrants and refugees as sponges, crime, violence and problematic cultural differences (van Dijk, 1991).

D. Discourse-Historical approach

Realizing the necessity and relevance of historical perspectives of CDA, Ruth Wodak and her colleagues in the Vienna School of CDA, started a new approach which is known as “discourse-historical approach” (Wodak1996, Muntigl, Weiss, Wodak, 2000).The main focus of this approach can be seen in the study of racism, anti-semitism in particular as well as identity constructions and changes at national and international levels. During the process of explanation and interpretation, main emphasis is given on the historical contexts of discourse which make this approach different from other approaches such as Dijk’s socio-cognitive model. In the discourse-historical approach, it is believed that language manifests and constitutes social processes and interaction. As such, according to Wodak and Ludwig (Wodak& Ludwig, 1999), language entails three things: first, discourse always involves power and ideologies. No interaction exists where, power relations do not prevail and where values and norms do not have a relevant role. Second, discourse is always historical. It is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before which is similar to Fairclough’s notion of inter-textuality. The third feature is interpretation. Depending on the background knowledge, information and their position, readers and listeners might have different interpretations of the same communicative event. Therefore, Wodak and Ludwig say, “The right interpretation does not exist; a hermeneutic approach is necessary. Interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate but they cannot be true” (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999:13).

By discourse –historical approach, Wodak and her colleagues attempt to integrate systematically all available background information in order to analyze and interpret multi-layered text (spoken/written). They have shown the importance of context on the structure, function, and content of the anti-semitic utterances too. Gradually, considerable amount of studies on racism, prejudices have come along which led Vienna group to work more on foreigners, indigenous minorities, immigrant workers etc. In comparing anti-Semitic discourse with other racist discourse, Wodak and Matouschek (1993) suggest that the norms and taboos controlling the utterances about foreigners and Jews differ, depending on the targeted discriminated group and the specific historical traditions and socio-political contexts of the speakers and discourses. Through the study of anonymous contexts of conversations tape-recorded in the street, sexist, racist and anti-Semitic prejudices, discourse-historical approach enable the analysis of indirect prejudiced utterances as well as to identify and reveal the codes and allusions contained in prejudiced discourse. Based on historical- geographical approach, Wodak and Van Dijk (2000) have discussed some context-based and historically rooted illustrations on the issues of immigration and human rights of six European countries. The discourse-historical approach has been further seen in a number of studies that is concerned with investigating identity politics and patterns of decision –making in European union organizations in which, together with sociologists and political scientists, models were proposed to explain the context-dependent tensions and contradictions (Wodak, 2006).

E. Lexicometry

Influenced by Karl Marx’s political philosophy, another systematic study begins in the field of CDA in French Linguistics. On the basis of lexicometry, two major types of approaches for CDA are developed: the first is ‘political lexicometry’, a computer-aided statistical approach to political lexicon, developed at the École Normale Supérieure at Saint Cloud. In this approach, texts are prepared and then the text is compared on the basis of relative frequency. A second related approach is based on Althusser’s theory of ideology and Foucault’s theory of CDA. This approach mainly refers to the work of Michel Pêcheux (1982). According to him, CDA analyzes ideological dimensions of language use, and materialization in language of ideology.

Use of words and the meaning of words vary according to the class of the society. His main focus was political discourse in France, especially the relationship between social-democratic and communist discourse within left political discourse. Based on Althusser, he suggests that people are placed in the 'imaginary' position of sources of their own discourse, whereas actually their discourse and indeed they themselves are the effects of their ideological positioning. According to him, the sources and processes of their own positioning are hidden from people. Discursive formations within which people are placed are themselves shaped by the "complex whole of dominance" of discursive formations which is termed as 'interdiscourse' (Pêcheux, 1982). Gradually, studies shifted to emphasize on the complex mixing of discursive formations in texts as well as on the heterogeneity and ambivalence of texts. In this context, analysis of detailed rhetorical patterns of presidential campaigns of 1988 and 1995 by some French scholars can be mentioned. Moreover, the influence of Anglo-Saxon pragmatics and the works of French linguist Benveniste are also prominent in the works of Pierre Achard's analysis of the political text (Achard, 1995).

While looking at the situation of CDA at the beginning of 21st century, Cameron (2001: 140) suggests that "while CDA has adherents in many parts of the world, it is better known and more widely practiced in Australia, continental Europe and the UK than it is in the US". *Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (2004), edited by Rebecca Rogers, an educational linguist at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, USA, consists of 13 chapters by ten authors, with American authors comprising nine of the ten contributors, with Fairclough, the sole trans-Atlantic representative aims to find a place for CDA within theories of language and education in the American context, drawing particular attention to the form-function interface derivable from SFL. Chapter 2 of the collection is written by one of the best known figures working in the SFL-based CDA tradition in the US, James Paul Gee, author of *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* published in 1999. He has mainly concentrated on language, literacy and schooling, most recently on the 'new capitalism' and in particular, its cognitive, social and political implications for literacy and schooling. Despite the variety in the positions occupied and approaches adopted by CDA practitioners, it is generally acknowledged that Norman Fairclough is considered as one of the major exponent of CDA on the European side of the Atlantic (Cameron, 2001).

2.2.2 Fairclough's Version of CDA: Theoretical Contributions

Fairclough's functional approach is one of the most elaborate and ambitious attempt toward theorizing a very comprehensive framework for CDA program. In his 1989 book *Language and Power*, Fairclough (1989: 5) refers to his approach to language and discourse as 'critical language study', exploring the connections between language use and unequal relations of power.

For Chauliaraki & Fairclough (1999), CDA “brings social science and linguistics...together within a single theoretical and analytical framework, setting up a dialogue between them.” This aim resulted in the development of an approach that is probably the single most influential one within CDA (Fairclough 1992a, 1995a, 1995b, 2000b, Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). Halliday's SFL is the foundation of Fairclough's analytical framework. Fairclough's approach draws upon a number of other critical social theorists, such as Foucault (i.e., concept of orders of discourse), Gramsci (concept of hegemony), Habermas (i.e., concept of colonization of discourse), Althusser (ideology of material practices in social institutions), Mikhail Bakhtin (dialogical properties of text). Chauliaraki & Fairclough (1999) states that the last few decades have been period of profound economic and social change on the global basis. These changes have been perceived as a “part of nature” but not due to people's causal actions. These economic and social changes are nothing but transformations in the language and discourse to a significant degree. CDA helps in theorizing transformations and creating awareness “of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives” (Chauliaraki & Fairclough, 1999: 4). “CDA of a communicative interaction,” according to Chauliaraki & Fairclough “sets out to show that the semiotic and linguistic features of the interaction are systematically connected with what is going on socially, and what is going on socially is indeed going on partly or wholly, semiotically or linguistically. Thus, CDA systematically charts the relations of transformation between the symbolic and the non-symbolic, between discourse and the non-discursive” (1999: 113).

Fairclough has categorized CDA as a method which can be used in socio scientific research. CDA is as much theory as method – or rather, a theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis (including ‘visual language’, ‘body language’,

and so on) as one element or ‘moment’ of the material process which gives rise to ways of analyzing language or Semiosis within broader analyses of the social process. It is a theory or method which is in a dialogical relationship with other social theories and method which should engage with them in a ‘transdisciplinary’ rather than interdisciplinary way. Thus, the particular co-engagement on particular aspects of the social process may give rise to developments of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and methods (Fairclough, 2000a). Fairclough’s version of CDA is based upon a view of “semiosis” as an irreducible part of material social process. To avoid the confusion and to refer both verbal and semiotic modalities in CDA, Fairclough has used the term “semiosis” to refer to “discourse” (Fairclough, 2004:112). Social practices can be seen as articulation of different types of social element associated with particular areas of social life. Fairclough has listed the following elements as an articulation of social practice:

- Productive activity
- Means of production
- Social relations
- Social identities
- Cultural values
- Consciousness
- Semiosis (Fairclough, 2004:113)

These elements are different but not discrete, fully separate elements. They flow into one another; they ‘internalize’ one another without being reducible to them. According to Fairclough (Fairclough, 2000b), semiosis figures in broadly three ways in social practices (and the articulations of practices which constitute social fields, institutions, organizations) and social events. Thus, any sentence in a text is analyzable in terms of the articulation of these functions, which he has relabeled as relations, representations, and identities:

- First, it figures as a part of the social activity, part of the action (and interaction). This refers to Halliday’s ‘textual’ function. For instance, part of doing a job (for instance, being a shop assistant) is using language in a particular way; so too is part of governing a country.

- Second, semiosis figures in representations. Social actors acting within any field or organization produce representations of other practices, as well as ('reflexive') representations of their own practices, in the course of their activity, and different social actors will represent them differently according to how they are positioned within fields or organizations. This corresponds to Halliday's 'ideational' function.
- Third, semiosis figures in ways of being, in the constitution of identities i.e related to 'interpersonal' function – for instance the identity of a political leader such as Tony Blair in the UK is partly a semiotically constituted way of being (Fairclough, 2000b).

Semiosis as a part of social activity constitutes 'genres'. Genres are diverse ways of acting discursively in their specifically semiotic aspect. For examples, meetings in various types of organization, political and other forms of interview, news articles in the press and book reviews. On the other hand, discourses are diverse representations of social practices-representation of material world, of other social practices, reflexive self- representations of the practice in question. For example, the lives of poor and disadvantaged people are represented through different discourses in the social practices of government, politics, medicine, and social science, as well as through different discourses within each of these practices corresponding to different positions of social actors. Finally, semiosis as part of ways of being particular social or personal identities which constitutes 'styles' – for instance the styles of business managers, or political leaders or his or her way of using language as a resource for self-identifying. Thus, the concepts of 'discourse' and 'genre' are both used in a variety of disciplines and theories. The popularity of the term 'discourse' in social research owes a lot in particular to Foucault (1972) and 'genre' is used especially in cultural studies, media studies, film theory and so on (Fairclough , 2003).

'Mediation' involves the 'movement of meaning' from one social practice to another, from one event to another, from one text to another. Thus, it can be said that mediation involves texts, or types of texts as well as 'chains' or 'network' of texts which includes different types of texts. For example, in case of journalists, they produce articles on the basis of sources in fairly regular and predictable ways, converting the source materials according to the established convention and fashion. Thus, by keeping a fairly regular and systematic relation between different types of texts complex modern societies involve the networking together of different social practices across different domains or fields of social life (e.g., the economy, education, family life) and across different scales of social life (global, regional, national, local). This 'network' or 'chain' of text is known as 'order of discourse'. In

this context, Fairclough has referred to the political concept of ‘hegemony’ which can be used in analyzing orders of discourse (Butler et al 2000, Fairclough 1992, Laclau & Mouffe 1985) - particular social structuring of semiotic difference may become hegemonic; become part of the legitimizing common sense that sustains relations of domination but hegemony will always be contested to a greater or lesser extent, in hegemonic struggle. An order of discourse is not a closed or rigid system, but rather an open system, which can be changed by what happens in actual interactions (Fairclough, 2011:124).

2.2.3 Fairclough’s Version of CDA: Methodological Contribution

Based on the critical theorist Roy Bhaskar’s concept of “Explanatory critique”, Fairclough has presented an analytical framework, which gives a schematic picture of how CDA works as a form of language critique (Chaouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, Fairclough, 2001.). This can be mentioned as follows:

1. Focusing on the problems which have a semiotic aspect.
2. Identification of obstacles through the analysis of
 - A. The network of practices within which it is located
 - B. The relationship of Semiosis to other elements within the particular practice(s) concerned.
 - C. The discourse (Semiosis) itself
 - i) Structural analysis: the order of discourse
 - ii) Textual/ interactional analysis – both inter discursive analysis and linguistic (and semiotic) analysis
3. Consideration of the social order in a sense that ‘needs’ the problem or not.
4. Identification of possible ways past the obstacles.
5. Critical analysis of the above stages.

Stage 1 shows that this approach to CDA is a problem-based. This version of CDA focuses on certain features of social life as ‘problems’, confronting what we can loosely refer to as the ‘looser’ within particular forms of society such as the poor, the socially excluded, those subject to oppressive gender or race relation and so forth (Fairclough, 2011:125)

Stage 2 refers to the diagnosis of the problem by initiating certain queries such as what are the different obstacles need to be tackled: what are the ways in which social life is structured and organized that make this a problem which is resistant to easy resolution? This diagnosis considers the way social practices are networked together, the way Semiosis relates to other elements of social practices and features of

discourse itself. Stage 2.C gives some sense of CDA as ‘method’. It mainly focuses on linguistic analysis or textual analysis of the text and has referred to inter-discursive analysis.

In *Analysing Discourse*, Fairclough (2004: 191) has forwarded the following stages that summarize the main issues in textual analysis :

Part i

Social analysis, discourse analysis, text analysis

1. Texts, social events and social practices
2. Intertextuality and Assumptions

Part ii

Genres and generic structure

3. Genre and Generic Structure
4. Meaning relations between sentences and clauses
5. Clauses: types of exchange ,speech functions and grammatical mood

Part iii

Discourse and representations

6. Discourses
7. Representation of social events

Part iv

Style and identities

8. Styles
9. Modality and evaluation

Fairclough has distinguished two types of relations of texts i.e., ‘external’ relations and ‘internal’ relations of texts. ‘External relations’ can be stated as follows:

- External relations of texts relate the analysis of their relations with other elements of social events and more abstractly, social practices and social structures. Analysis of relations of texts to other elements of social events includes analysis of Actions, Identifications, and Representations on the basis of SFL.
- Relation between text and other external texts such as how elements of other texts are ‘intertextuality’ incorporated and since, these may be other people’s texts, how the voices of others are incorporated; how other texts are alluded to, assumed, dialogued with and so forth.

On the other hand, 'internal relations' of texts includes the analysis of the following:

- Semantic relations that include relations between words and longer expressions, between elements of clauses, between clauses and between sentences and over larger stretches of text.
- Grammatical relations include relationship between 'morphemes' in words (e.g., 'kind' and 'ness' in 'kindness'), between words in phrases (e.g., between definite article 'the', adjective 'cold' and noun 'house' in 'the old house'), between phrases within clauses and between clauses in sentences.
- Vocabulary or lexical relations include relations of collocation i.e., co-occurrence of vocabulary items.
- Various relations i.e., relations in spoken language, including prosodic patterns of intonation and rhythm; geographical relations in written language etc.

Inter-discursive analysis is a central and distinctive feature of this version of Fairclough's modal of CDA. Fairclough has considered a relational view of texts and text analysis, in which the 'internal' (Semantic, grammatical, lexical) relations of texts are connected with their 'external' relations (to various elements of social events and to social practices and structures) through the mediation of an 'inter-discursive' analysis of genre, discourses and styles which they draw upon and articulate together (Fairclough, 2004). In texts, discourses, genres, and styles are organized together through inter discursive relations, and as a social elements, they are articulated together in particular ways in orders of discourse. Analysis of texts includes linguistic analysis, and semiotic analysis. It allows one to incorporate elements of 'context' into the analysis of texts, to show the relationship between concrete occasional events and more durable social practices, to show innovation and change in texts, and it has a mediating role in allowing one to connect detailed linguistic and semiotic features of texts with processes of social change on a broader scale (Fairclough, 2004).

In stage 3 of Fairclough's analytical framework, one need to find out whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense need the problem reflected in the text? Stage 4 of the framework tries to identify possible ways past the obstacle. This stage is crucial to stage 2 and looks for hitherto unrealized possibilities for change in the way social life is currently organized. At last, in the stage 5, critical analysis of the previous stages needs to be done. This will help to reflect on where he or she is coming from, how he or she, himself or herself is socially positioned and so on (Fairclough, 2004:210). Thus, Fairclough's analytical framework for CDA can be considered as an important research tool for social research that can be used in

combination with both theoretical and analytical resources in various areas of social science.

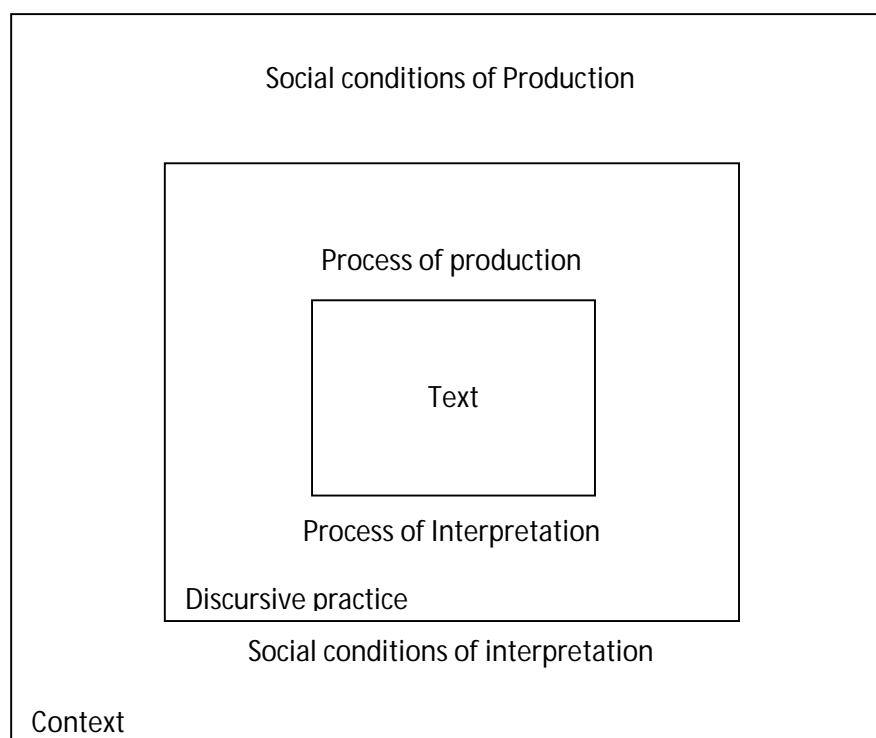
Fairclough (1989, 1995b) has forwarded a three dimensional framework for conceiving of and analyzing discourse. These three dimensions are:

1. The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts) that is, the Text.
2. The processes by means of which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects that is, text production and text consumption.
3. The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

According to Fairclough, each of these dimensions or stages requires different kinds of analysis:

1. Text analysis (Description)
2. Processing analysis (Interpretation)
3. Social analysis (Explanation)

Table 2.1 Dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis



The first analytical focus of Fairclough's three-part model is "text". Text is the semiotic dimension of events which includes not only written texts but also spoken texts such as conversations, interviews, as well as the 'multi-modal' texts (mixing language and visual images) of television, internet, and games and so on. Formal

properties of text are the traces of productive process and cues for interpretation from the perspectives of CDA. In order to decode a sentence or text, one has to arrive at an interpretation through active process of matching features of the utterance at various levels with representations that are available in the long-term memory. These representations are prototypes for a diverse collection of things such as knowledge of language like shapes of words, the grammatical forms of sentences, the typical structure of a narrative; representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions and so on. These prototypes are collectively known as ‘members’ resources’ or MR for short. Some of these are linguistic and some are non-linguistic. The MR that people draw upon to produce and interpret texts are cognitive since they are in people’s heads but have social origins and they are socially generated. Their nature is dependent on social relations and struggles out of which they were produced as well as being socially disseminated or distributed. People internalize what is socially produced and made available to them and use this internalized MR to engage in their social practice including discourse too. Moreover, the nature of all these cognitive resources are determined socially and also by the conditions of their use. These are the basic critical perspectives that an analyst has to take account of while analyzing different discourses.

Texts being elements of social events have causal effects i.e., they bring about changes. Texts can bring about changes in our knowledge, beliefs, attitude, values and so on. Most importantly, text has long-term causal effects too. For example, prolonged experience of advertising and other commercial texts contribute to shaping people’s identities as ‘consumers’ or their gender identities. It may initiate wars, contribute to changes in education, industrial relations and so on. Thus, their effects may include changes in material world such as urban design, architecture, and design of particular types of building. ‘Social constructivism’ which has influenced contemporary social science a lot these days claims that the (social) world is socially constructed and many theories of social constructivism emphasize the role of texts (language, discourse) in the construction of the social world. Another concern related to CDA is the ideological effects of texts in inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies. Ideologies which are the representations of the aspects of the world contribute in establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, dominations, and exploitations (Fairclough, 2003).

Fairclough has used the term “text” as the linguist M.A.K.Halliday does in his ‘Functional approach’ to language which has emphasized on the ‘multi-functionality’ of texts. The pattern of certainty or uncertainty, essentially an analysis of modality and polarity, establishes a hierarchy of power which is confirmed by the naming practices and the transitivity analysis. This instability does not surface elsewhere in the textual analysis and can only be understood by using the other dimensions of CDA. “Interpretation,” according to Fairclough (2004:11) “is a matter of understanding –understanding what words or sentences or longer stretches of text mean, understanding what speakers or writer mean. But it is also partly a matter of judgment and evaluation: for instance, judging whether someone is saying something sincerely or not or seriously or not; judging whether the claims that are explicitly or implicitly made are true; judging whether people are speaking or writing in ways which accord with the social, institutional etc. relations within which the event takes place, or perhaps in ways which mystify those relations”(Fairclough, 2004:11). Moreover, there is an explanatory element to interpretation. According to him, some texts receive a great deal more interpretative work than others as some texts are very transparent whether others more or less complicated to particular interpreters. Interpretation is sometimes unproblematic but effectively automatic, but sometimes highly reflexive, involving a great deal of conscious thought about what is meant or why something has been said or written as it has (Fairclough, 2004:11).

The third dimension of the analysis is a discursive event – that of social practice, which relates to the different levels of social organization: the situation, the institutional context, the wider group or social context. Questions of power are of central interest in this context. Thus, Fairclough’s method of CDA is based on three components: description, interpretation and explanation. Linguistic properties are described, the relationship between the productive and interpretative processes of discursive practice and the text is interpreted, and the relationship between discursive and social practice is explained (Fairclough, 1995b:97).

2.3 Research Methodology

This study is based on collection, translation, transcription, classification of urban legends and their analysis in the full social and cultural context. An overall research methodology adopted for this study has been described in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1 Tracing the Research Interest

The research is based on primary and secondary data. The starting point of study is based on theory, concept and detailed description, thus secondary research first discussed and then the study followed with primary research. The whole work was done in two phases:

Table 2.2 Two phases of data collection

Phase 1	Collection of secondary data
Phase 2	Collection of field data

2.3.1.1 Secondary Research

Every research or study relies on secondary data for representing the overview of research topic, place (universe of study) and also for proper research design (Greenfield , 1996). Thus, this study also followed the same criteria in gathering more information. The secondary data were collected from books and articles that explained the basic concepts of urban legends and CDA. In order to collect data, related local Assamese magazines, newspapers were examined.

Search was made through online mode or websites as social networking sites are reservoir of urban legends, scams and hoaxes. It was possible to find out many online articles and books. Websites like <https://www.academia.edu> , www.snoopes.com were very helpful.

2.3.1.2 Primary Research

The primary research is followed after secondary research. Here primary data review the method used for data collection and justify the choice. It has been indicated that the most suitable primary data methodology depends on what kind of information is

sought (Kumar, 1999). Here in this study most of the information collected through qualitative primary data collection methods like participant observation, unstructured interviews and focus group discussion.

2.3.2 Fieldwork Experience

Human society itself is a laboratory for social research. The subjects are the real people who interact and act in relation to each other. The research methodology is quite essential to seek out basic information and fundamental about a particular domain of phenomenon in the society or universe.

Coming from an urban area, I was in touch with the grounds of urban legend. As such, I did not have to travel a long way to collect my data. I made a list of people among my friends and family, especially who keep in interest on social issues, politics, and news and so on. Since the first day of my research, I started talking, discussing casually with different people from different ages, castes, communities, genders, and educational background. This is still continuing and I have noticed that some people seem to be very much interested in sharing these types of messages and incidents.

I have included the newly developed social networking sites and the various web-posts and messages, considering as urban legends. So, in order to collect data, I started being alert in various networking sites and was able to collect a good amount of data.

2.3.2.1 Rapport Establishment

Rapport establishment with the informants was not a problematic factor for me. First data collection began when I started collecting my data for my M.Phil research in the month of August, 2005. I started talking and discussing about my interest on some bizarre stories, especially to my family and friends. I started sharing some stories from books like *Encyclopedia of Urban Legend* (Brunvand, 2002), *Legend and Belief* (Dégh, 2001) with my friends in my hostels especially after dinner. First, I started the discussion with some issues related to supernatural beings and then started shifting to different topics. Once I began, I realized that almost everyone started sharing and discussing about similar experiences and that yielded several

stories at the end. After that whenever they find such stories, they would inform me. I continued to discuss the same with other people, my family members from different age groups, sex and occupations. Thus, I have established a good rapport with them and since then they have been providing information, which is very helpful in enriching my database.

2. 3. 2.2 Methods and Techniques used in the Field

The data for the study has been collected through interviews, and observations. The material has been collected from the respondent's interviews and web posts. Apart from this, participant observation is key part of the data collection.

A. Participant Observation

As Brunvand (2003) has said that he started collecting the legends by writing down those that he, his family and friends were already aware of. So, I too started in the similar way. Whenever, wherever I was travelling, especially while attending any party, or get-together, I started being conscious about any incident, story that I came across. Fieldwork involves "active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly, patience" (Dewalt, 2002). Bernard (1994) adds to this understanding, indicating that participant observation requires a certain amount of deception and impression management. He defines participant observation as the process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that members act naturally. In a similar way, with the help of participant observation method, I tried to check the non-verbal expression of feelings that determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities.

B. Focus Group Discussion

Many a time, it happened with me that I came across quality data, when I was not equipped and prepared for data collection. In that case, I went and met the people once again to collect the data. In order to create discussion, I invited people and arranged get togethers, which can be considered as focus group discussion in this study. Once it happened with me that I visited one patient of middle age as she was

seriously unwell. While visiting her place, I saw few ladies of her age group who were sitting and talking about hospital, treatment and different diseases. While observing, it was found that the incidents they were talking about were similar to the urban legends that I came across. All were friend of a friend's (FOAF) tale. But I was unable to collect it properly. So, I invited them to my place in order to collect those stories. In this group, two of them were primary school teachers, two were house wives and one was a bank employee. Three very important informants were close relatives of mine: one studying engineering, one studying commerce and one studying medical. One of them used to keep a record in his phone and whenever he met me, he used to inform the stories that he heard over a period of time. We used to sit in the evening and discuss over cups of tea, snacks and so on. Then I realized that their peers in classes may have a good stock of such stories. One day, I visited one college hostel and met 8-10 students and successfully collected few stories. Thus, the technique of focus group discussion can be considered as one of the very useful techniques that I used in my study.

C. Unstructured interview

Another method conducted in this study is unstructured interview method. With this method, I started connecting with my respondents and sharing some current issues of Guwahati. We easily make rapport through this method starting with some casual interaction with the people of the area. Unstructured interviews are more like an everyday conversation. They tend to be more informal, open ended, flexible and free flowing. Questions are not pre-set, although there are usually certain topics that I wish to cover which I got through conversation. Along with this, close attention was paid to context, style while discussing urban legends in realistic and induced situation.

2.3.3 Ethical concern

Qualitative research takes place among real human beings. Before the researcher begins a proposed study, there must be a specific awareness of special ethical concerns. In my study, I was more concerned about the goal, ethics so that it does not harm or exploit those among whom the research is being done.

2.3.4 Collection

I have collected urban legends from oral conversation as well as from internet. Oral legends are from different people and from different backgrounds of different age groups. There are 13 oral urban legends with several versions of each legend were collected. 11 non-oral urban legends were collected from Internet.

2.3.5 Classification

There is no complete acceptance of a single classification system for all urban legends; most folklorists do it on the basis of their contents, subject matter (Brunvand, 2001:74). Brunvand (2001:74), the most prolific collector and researcher of urban legends both in oral and written format, proposes ten major categories of subject matters which have been followed or expanded by several of his peers (Brunvand, 2002; Craughwell, 1999; Genge, 2000; Harding, 2005), and hence it will be accepted as the established classification in this study:

1. Legends about automobiles
2. Legends about Animals
3. Horror Legends
4. Accident Legends
5. Sex and Scandal Legends
6. Crime Legends
7. Business and Professional Legends
8. Legends about Governments
9. Celebrity Legends
10. Academic Legends

On the basis of this, classification of the collected legends has been made according to various problems found in the urban legends. In this study the collected legends can be classified in the following way:

1. Academe
2. Human Trafficking
3. Medical Horror
4. Supernatural Elements
5. Religious Beliefs
6. Nudity, Dalliance and Nightmares
7. Terrorism
8. Dreadful Contamination
9. Unidentified Killer Insect

2.3.6 Translation

Oral urban legends are collected in Assamese which were translated into English. There was one online legend found in Assamese, which was later translated into English. Literary translation is not possible, but a close translation was done. Since, the legends were collected from day today conversation, so while collecting, the grammar of the lines were not correct. As it was collected through conversation, therefore, in order to document the legends, the sentences of the narratives had to organize to some extent. Accordingly, a close translation was done later on.

2.3.7 Transcription

An IPA transcription was done with all the urban legends collected in Assamese. This will help the scholars to read the Assamese texts.

2.3.8 Analysis

In order to achieve the objectives set out above, I will make use of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2001) methodological framework based on Halliday's SFL. In order to cover urban legend studies, Brunvand (1981, 1984, 1993, 2002), Dégh (2001), Bennett (1985), Smith (1996), de Vos (2012) will be used to contextualize such texts in the broader socio-cultural environments where they appear and are (re)circulated. SFL (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2004), socio-semantic categories (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996) and

narrative studies (Toolan, 1988; Longacre, 1996) will aid in the description of the data from a linguistic perspective.

The word 'text' in this study will be used in a broad way to include oral texts as well as texts of urban legend collected from internet. According to Fairclough (2001: 240), what is going on socially is, in part, what is going on inter discursively in the text. Keeping it in mind, the main aim of the analysis is to show how semiotic, including linguistic properties of the text connect with what is going on socially in the communication of urban legends.

I shall begin with the first part of the analytical framework –identifying a social problem in the semiotic aspect of urban legend. Then, obstacles to the problems will be tackled, which can be identified in the networks of practices through textual analysis. I shall focus on genre and action where, main emphasis will be given on genres and generic structure, relations between sentences and clauses, different types of clauses, the types of exchange, speech functions, and mood. To find out the obstacles, representation of social events will be studied. I will look at the obstacles in the structuring of the order of discourse and will try to find out if the social order needs the problems. Then possible ways to past the obstacles will be identified and critical explanation to the above stages of analysis will reflect on how we are working, on how we write, on the meta-language we use for analyzing semiosis, on where we publish and so forth.

The choice of this framework is explained by the fact that these are all socially-oriented approaches, where language is seen as a semiotic system, that is, using language involves making meaningful choices and oppositions, which are established by social conventions. As there is no text without interpretation, analysis will see how the conventions of social interaction are used in different genres. The explanation throws light into the contribution of discourse to social action, for example, in case of ideological views and unfolding bias or power relations. In order to carry out the analysis (in Faircloughs' terms, description) of representation of the urban legends, I will draw on the Hallidayian SFL. Such analysis will be carried out clause by clause in each selected urban legends. The ideational and the interpersonal meta-functions will be considered as follows: the types of processes, participants and circumstances in these texts uncovered by the analysis of the Transitivity system (Halliday&Matthiessen, 2004) will shed light on the ideational meaning of language, that is, on what is being represented. Mood analysis can inform us about the roles and

relationships between the interactants, degrees of formality or familiarity and attitudes expressed. Summing up, through the analysis of lexico-grammar, I will investigate the way in which the content of the message is materially expressed, while semantics will unveil the discursive meanings these material realizations have in a specific context of use.

The interpretation of discourse, according to Fairclough, is related to the analysis of the discursive practices which examines aspects of production, distribution and consumption of texts (Heberle, 2000). The main focus here is to investigate how people produce and interpret texts and the relation to other orders of discourse. This level of analysis may be particularly interesting for the present study as aspects of production, distribution and consumption of urban legends have so far only been discussed by researchers in other areas such as sociology and folklore studies.

2.3.9 Constraints during fieldwork

Ideally, as with all folklore, urban legends should be collected in natural social situations with the least possible interference from the collector and with maximum data recorded about the oral performance. But, it was not solely possible to do all the time in this study.

2.4 Summary

Being a canonical part of folklore, urban legends often appear in contemporary tradition without being recognized as folklore neither by audiences nor by narrators. Urban legend draws attention to the potential of folklore to generate meanings, shapes attitudes and affects the social life. In this chapter, I have made an attempt to provide an overview of the historical development to urban legend studies. Attempts have been made to provide an outline of some important approaches with definitions. I have tried to focus on the concepts, terms and names of scholars along with the historical development of CDA. Thus, in this chapter, I have summarized the theoretical and methodological contributions within the research paradigm. This will help to pursue the textual analysis as a part of the wider framework of CDA. Choice of methodology used for a successful research is very important and crucial. A detailed account of the methodology used for this research has been provided in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Frozen Urban Legends of Guwahati

3.0 Introduction

This chapter works as a reservoir of 24 urban legends collected from Guwahati in tenure of 12 years. In order to make the collected legends more particular for the international scholars, legends collected in Assamese have been transcribed into IPA fonts and then translated into English.

3.1 Legends of Academe

3.1.1 Miraculous Hands

ওঁচ(উৎকলৰ বাঁহী

উল্লেখ্য যে এই অধ্যায়খনত উল্লেখ কৰা গল্পসমূহ গুৱাহাটীৰ বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলত প্ৰচলিত আছে। এই গল্পসমূহৰ মাজত কিছুমান অসমীয়া লোকগল্পৰ আধাৰত লিখা হৈছে। এই গল্পসমূহৰ মাজত কিছুমান অসমীয়া লোকগল্পৰ আধাৰত লিখা হৈছে। এই গল্পসমূহৰ মাজত কিছুমান অসমীয়া লোকগল্পৰ আধাৰত লিখা হৈছে।

এই গল্পখনত এজন ছাত্ৰৰ বিষয়ে ক’লৈছে যে তেওঁৰ হাত দুখন অস্বাভাৱিকভাৱে দৃষ্টিশক্তিৰ সৈতে কাম কৰিব পাৰে। এই গল্পখনত এজন ছাত্ৰৰ বিষয়ে ক’লৈছে যে তেওঁৰ হাত দুখন অস্বাভাৱিকভাৱে দৃষ্টিশক্তিৰ সৈতে কাম কৰিব পাৰে। এই গল্পখনত এজন ছাত্ৰৰ বিষয়ে ক’লৈছে যে তেওঁৰ হাত দুখন অস্বাভাৱিকভাৱে দৃষ্টিশক্তিৰ সৈতে কাম কৰিব পাৰে।

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korisil. xei bea dintur pisore para lorazone maze maze hustelot dek^ha die kintu kaku eku onisto nokore.

Miraculous Hands

Once in the beginning of a new academic session in Gauhati University, a fresher was allotted a room in a hostel. His senior roommate had not returned home after the vacation. Therefore, this new boy knew nothing about his senior room partner.

However, after a couple of days when the new boy came to the hostel one afternoon, he found his room locked from inside. When he knocked the door, a boy opened the door from inside. The new boy thought this boy to be his senior roommate and he did not dare to ask anything as it would be against the rules where only seniors ask questions. Henceforth, the new boy went to his table and opened a book while the senior was lying on his bed.

After a while, again a knock was heard from outside and the new boy stood up from his chair to open the door. But, to his utter astonishment and fear, he saw his senior room partner, who lying on his bed was extended his right hand from the bed itself and opened the door. His hand became almost three times longer than usual at that moment. After. The new boy tried to follow him but he had already vanished in the dark.

After the initial hustle and bustle, the new boy made a thorough search in and around the hostel campus but no avail. And lastly, the watchman explained what was thought to be true tale. He said that the boy who had vanished in the air was once a boarder in the hostel and had committed suicide due to excessive ragging by the seniors. And since that inauspicious gloomy day he used to appear occasionally in the hostel but he did not harm to anyone.

3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt

Ṭōkō,1 kōēb Ō±Ryñ kē±

Ūkō±1 Ūēōōē1 Bñi ± Ūēk q;ōbōtū Ṭkō±»± kēā;āñ ū &»yñēñ j;ō «j;ōōē±ūūp Ūæb ūē Ō±1ñ ūi j±ōūp> kēōkē1 1 Ṭāē»±ūīēūpō1īZkēyñūīā Ōūē ēñkō±ūpō»ūyō Bñē1 kēāñ1± kō;1;āñ% ṭkēyñ j;ōēāñ j;ōēūō, ŪēBkē ūñā±ēñBā Bkē÷ Bñ1± ò±āñ% kō1īZkēyñūīā ÷ōīā

Uaò Tìb;àl òlèù ; ÀùtÀ Àò;ì Àòfù ;àlèÀ Àò;ý;àlù% Tù;ì Àù; Tù;ý; ;ùŽÀù;Sìá 1±BAIÈù;TÌAY01
Àò;SBA Tù;ý; ;ò;Èùù;ò1 Àò1± TÌAY0à;BÀ; 1 BÀ1± ;ò;Èùù;ò1ù ò;ù; BÀ; 1Àfù ÷±ò±
BÀ; 1Èù , Tù;ý; ; Àùàò1 ;> ò; Àò±ù;èÈò TÌAY0BÀ à;BÀ; 1 1 Àò1± ; 1;è;ý;ò ;ò;fù BÀÈù%

besarkari bidjaloi

sòhòrk^hònr(guwahati)kisuman bidjaløe etiau nizò bidjaløjør kòrmòsarirupòròt tēu lukòr òporiwòrtònjò xuxòn sòlai ase. ebar ek^hòn proxidd^hòskulòr ussò sreni porhua xikk^hòjòtri egòrakik skul kortripòkk^hò; sakorir pòra istap^ha dibòloi kòle. ijar karòn asil zè xei xikk^hòjòtrizònir lòrai teūr xikk^hòkòta kòra skulk^hònòtkò; besi b^hal skulòt porhibòloi sit paisil. zetija xei xikk^hòjòtri gòrakie teūr putròk xei bidjalòik^hònr pòra teū sakori kòra bidjalòik^hònòloi insipalzòne teūk skulòr pòra rizain dibòloi kòle.

Private Schools

It is believed that some of the private schools in Guwahati practice monotonous exploitation on their staff.

During one such instance, school authority from a reputed school of a city threatened a serving senior lady teacher to resign from her job. The reason was that her son had successfully secured a seat in a better school. When the teacher refused to transfer her son from that school to her working school, the principal of her school asked her to leave the job.

3.2 Human Trafficking

3.2.1 Save Me, Save Me

T ÷ ±BÀ;ò;à;Y0BÀ , T ÷ ±BÀ;ò;à;Y0BÀ

Ùù; &»±ý;è; 1 Ù;è;ò ; Àù Tù;»± ù'1±1 BÀ;ý;ò; TÌAY0 ÷±BÀ;ò;ÈÀò;BÀ1 Ù;BÀ;÷±S ù'1± Ù;ò;ò;à;ò ; ÀùTù; Èá ; BÀ; ù ÷ ù; À;BÀ; ;BÀ;ÈÀ;Tò;ò; BÀ1± ý;ù; ; ÌÈ1 Tò;ý; ; ;BÀ;ò; ò;À1 » ù;= ;ý;ò;TÌAY0 ÒÈ;à;Tò; BÀ1± È;ý;à;ù;%

b^hɔjanɔk b^hrɔmɔn

ei bixex storitu guwahati sɔhɔrɔt prɔt^hɔm dilaks bas xewa arɔmb^hɔ huar xɔmɔjɔt xɔŋg^hɔtɔtɔhoisil.

storitu enɛd^hɔrɔnɔr, duzɔni mohilai god^huli xɔmɔjɔt g^hɔrɔloi ub^hɔti zabɔr babe ɛk^hɔn dilax basɔt ut^hisil.kintu, durb^haigjɔbɔxɔtɔ tɛk^hɛtxɔkɔl ɛkmatrɔ zatri asil.teŭluk duzɔnɔr bade bask^hɔnɔt kebɔl draib^har aru bask^hɔnɔr baki keizɔnman stap^h asil. ei poribexɔr xubid^ha pai draib^har aru teŭr xɔhɔrkɔrmi xɔkɔle mɔnɔt ɛk kɔkɔrɔmɔr sɔkrantɔ korile. teŭlukɛ dugɔraki mohilar lɔgɔt ɛk ɔnistɔzɔnɔk d^hemali kɔrar xidd^hantɔ lɔle.

xe:he, garisalɔkzɔne sɔhɔrɔr rastat xɔŋg^hatk bege kunu eta bas stɔpezɔt nɔrɔk^hakoi garik^hɔn sɔlaboloi d^horile. begɔr hɔt^hat ene poribɔrtɔn dek^hi dujugɔraki mohilai siɔr bak^hɔr koriboloi d^horile aru bas salɔkzɔnɔk bas rɔk^haboloi onurud^h korile. kintu, bas salɔkzɔne ei onurud^h nuxunile aru lɔikk^hɔhin b^habe rastat sɔlai goi t^hakil.

eija god^huli xomoi asil aru xɔmɔi zuar lɔge lɔge and^har hoi goi asil. bahirɔr kunu manuhe basɔr b^hitɔrɔr ei mohila dugɔrakir durɔbɔst^ha dek^ha nasil, karɔn garisalɔkzɔne basɔr b^hitɔrɔr lait keita bɔnd^hɔ kori rak^hisil. garir b^hitɔrk^hɔn xɔsakoie bohut and^har asil aru basɔr b^hitɔrɔt ki hoi ase,xɛijaekdɔm d^horibɔ pɔra no goisil.

xexɔt, keig^hɔntaman pisɔtb garisalɔkzɔne bask^hɔn rɔk^haisil. mohila dugɔrakik basɔr pɔra namiboloi di garisalɔk aru teŭr kɔrmixɔkɔlɔk loi oti xunkale bask^hɔn sɔlai tar pɔra pɔlai gusi goisil. kintu xɔsakoie eija mohilagɔrakir xoub^haiggjɔ asil zɛ teŭlukɔk xaririk^habe kunu oxubid^ha nidiakoi zaboloi eri disil.

എടുത്തുപോയി. അതിനാൽ, ഞങ്ങൾ ഇതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് ചിന്തിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. ഞങ്ങൾ ഇതിനെക്കുറിച്ച് ചിന്തിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു.

lab^hor hetu porupakar

eta g^hotona xuna hoise ze ezon proxidd^ho muslim bjowaxajie ek^hon gāot ek^hon hospital st^hapon korisil. tēu ijate b^halek^hini tōka inb^hest korisil aru anor tritmentor karone b^halek^hini xa xubid^ha rak^hisil. xehē, ei onsolor bohutu duk^hia manuh , zie besi dami sikittja k^horas koribo nuare, tēuluke tēur hospitaloloi zai. gurutor bemari, zie bēmar b^hal huar kunu sin nedek^hai, tēulukōkn b^hal sikittjar babe hospitalor k^horasote bidexoloi loi zua hoi.tēulukor dexor bahiror mritju hoi aru tēulukor xoriror ongo zene kidni, itjadi bahiroloi ulijai bikri kori dia hoi. tēulukor xorirtu b^harotoloi ona hoi.kintu, xoriror b^hitoror suraj bostu aru tōka poisa loi ona hoi.

Charity for Profit

A story was heard that a famous Muslim businessman established a hospital in a rural area. He invested a lot of money here and there were scopes for charitable treatment there. For that reason, many poor people of that area, who could not afford expensive treatments, came to his hospital. The serious patients, who showed no signs of recovery, were taken abroad for better treatment at the expense of the hospital. They die outside the country and their physical organs like kidneys were taken out to sell. Their bodies were brought back to India. But, inside the bodies, smuggled goods and money were allegedly brought.

3.2.4 Women under Threat



3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids



kidnəpiŋ bai kids

oti guruttəpurnə

op^his ba skul kələzoloji əkələ zua protigəraki sualir babe oti

guruttəpur nə :

zodi apunaluke rasta g^hate kunu xixue əkələ kandi t^həka dek^hε aru apunak xixutie
g^hərəloi loi goi t^hoi əhar kət^ha kəi tente apuni xei xixutik sidhai pulis sokiloi loi
zaək. suri, d^hərən , ba kidnepər ajikali eitu

eta notun kouxəl.

onugrəh kori ei bartatu xəkəlu band^həbiloi sejar kərək aru bond^huxəkəlloiju sejar
kərək zixəkəlor b^həni ase.

sejar koriboloi laz nokoribə.....

apunar eta sejarə ənek sualir jibən rək^hja koribə parə...

ei bartatu si en en aru en di ti b^hit prokax paise.

Kidnapping by Kids

Very Important:

This is very important:

This is very important for every girl that goes to office or school-college alone:

If you find a kid crying alone in the street and the kid asking you to take him or her home, then you take the kid straight to the police station. This is a new intrigue to rob, rape or kidnap.

Kindly share this news with all the female friends and male friends that have sisters.

Do not feel ashamed to share.

pisot daktore petor b'itrot bezi nai buli k'atan korile. tetu kole ze bezitu sage paik'anan
logot bahircloi ulai gol. teu kunu dh'aron sarzarir dorkar nai buli kole. manuhzone anondo
t zopijabo d'orile aru phurtite gh'rcloi ub'oti gol.

Needle Left Inside

One lady had to undergo an operation for a tumour in her stomach. Suffering from severe pain, she went to a doctor in a reputed government hospital in the city. After a successful surgery, she was released from the hospital and went back her home.

After a few days, she started to feel pain in her stomach again. Doctors thought it to be a part of the stitching which was done during the operation and asked her to wait for few more days. Ultimately, they had to visit another doctor. The new doctor advised them to go through an x-ray. Having no other option, the family took the lady to an x-ray house reluctantly and got an x-ray done.

However, it was the result that shocked the people. According to the x-ray report, a needle was found in the stomach that was assumed to have been left inside by the doctors while operating the tumour. As the health condition of the lady was deteriorating after the surgery, it became impossible to go for another operation. Henceforth, the doctor advised the lady to take some medicine in order to minimize her pain and they waited for the improvement of her health condition so that after that the needle can be removed by another surgery.

Days were going on and she stopped taking medicines gradually. She prepared herself for the next operation. But, what was surprising that she had stopped feeling the pain even after not taking medicine. She went to the doctor and the doctor advised to go through an x-ray again. She did accordingly but this time the needle was not found inside her stomach.

As such, the doctor confirmed the absence of the needle inside the stomach. He confirmed that the needle might have come out with stool from her body. He declared that no more surgery was required. The lady jumped in joy and left the hospital happily.

ai si jut saridin rօkհ^har pisօt daktօրօ mohilagօրakir mritju hua buli ց^huxօna korisil. duk^h aru abegօt manuhօրakir porijalօ daktօր aru հօspital kօtripօkk^hօk p^hրօd buli kolօ. k^hօղ aru abegօt tօulukօր ei k^hօղ aru bidruh d^hօղxօlilaloi porinօtօ hol.

porijalօր mօtօ mohilagօրaki daktօրօ ց^huxօna kօրar bohu agօtօ d^hukaisil kintu tօulu kօ ai si jur sarz bօrhabօloi kubudd^hi kori pօlօmkoi mritօ ց^huxօna korisil. kintu da ktօրօ buzai koisil zօ mohilagօրaki tօur sikitsar prօt^hօm barօtօ հօspitalօրօրա riliz koribօ pօրa յօօst^hat nasil. kintu porijalօ ց^hօրօt b^halkoi porisorza korim buli koi dakօtrօk onurud^h kօrat zabօ dija hoisil.

daktօրօ mohilagօրakir sek apօր babe aniboloi koisil zodi u xeja kօra hua nasil aru xejehe tօu besi bօmari hoi goisil. ditijօbar հօspitalօt ք^hօրti korua xօmօյօt tօur յօօ st^ha oti gurutօր asil.

Inflated Hospital Bill

Once a lady was admitted in a famous hospital in Guwahati. The lady was admitted in the hospital two months before too and was released after the treatment. This was the second time that she was admitted in the same hospital. But this time her condition was more serious and right after her admission in the hospital, she became unconscious and finally was shifted to I.C.U (Intensive Care Unit).

After four days in the I.C.U, the doctor declared her to be dead. Sad and depressed the family members of the dead lady charged the doctors as well as the hospital authority to be fraud. In anger and excitement they went on a rampage spree. They caused a good amount of loss to the hospital belongings.

According to the family, the lady had died much earlier than the actual announcement of the death by the doctors but they declared it late with an evil design of increasing amount of the I.C.U charge. But, the doctors clarified that the lady was not in a stage to be discharged from the hospital in the earlier admission in the hospital. But the family requested them to release the patient with the

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

nixidd^ho p^hotu

ei kahinitue bohut xomija manuhor mazot gulmal logai disil. bohut xomija agro nua megazin aru doinik batori kakote bohuxomjor babe ei lagi d^horall k^hobortu prokax korisil.

kahinitu enekua ze ebar duzon bond^hu bond^ho jilongoloi goisil. teuluke jilong aru tar usor pazoror t^haiburor xit aru praktik xoundordzo upob^hug korisil. teuluke ijat ek borhia xomoi kotale aru ei bond^hotu zugomija koriboloi izone xizonor p^hotu lole . aru jilongot k^hub b^hal xomoi kotai teuluk guwahatilo ub^hotil. pisdinai dui bond^hu e teulukor p^hotuk^hini dev elop koriboloi p^hotu studio loi gol aru teulukok kisudi n pisot ahi p^hotuk^hini xongroh koriboloi dia hol.

p^hotu xongroh nird^harito dinor dina duju bond^hu aru ezon bond^hur logot studio palegoi. p^hotu xongroh koriei teuluke teulukor smoronijo muhurtoburor p^hotu saboloi d^horile. p^hotubur sai t^hoka xomjot timiuzo bond^hure nozor ene ek^hon p^hotu loi gol, zik^hon xosakoie teulukor babe bor rohoissozonok aru bhrantikor asil. teuluke p^hotuk^honor bekgraundot ezoni asorit aru rohoissozonok maiki manuhor rupot eta sa p^hotu pua nasil. kuwoli aru boga p^henere abori t^hoka rohoissozonok asil. ijar pisot tini bond^hue ei akatur asol prokrititu zaniboloi k^hub zotno korile kintu ekuke koribo nuarile.

xei houk, ijar pisot ki hol, xe:he birat asorit aru odb^hud. tar pisdinak^honei tinizon bond^hu teulukor nizor nizor g^horot rohoissozonok obost^hat mrito pua gol. prathom inb^hestigasonor para pua gol ze, teulukor kunubai na atmohoitja korise na kunu no rohoittjar boli hoise. anki ek xompurno porikk^har pisotu pulise kunu d^horonor beja

kardzər xənd^han napalɛ.məra ləra keizənər mak deutake pulisək zənale zε mərar
agər xənd^hia xihōte kiba rəhəissəzənək p^hotu kət^ha koi asil. əbəxexət, boigganik
zuktik əbəgja kori pulis aru manuhbur ɛta xidd^hantət uponitə hol zε, ɛnɛ əxad^ham
mritjur arət ei rəhəissəzənək p^hotuk^hənərei hat asɛ.

Forbidden Snap

This particular story has starred quite a rage among the people of Assam. Many leading Assamese magazines and dailies have published this sensational topic of fixation for quite a long time.

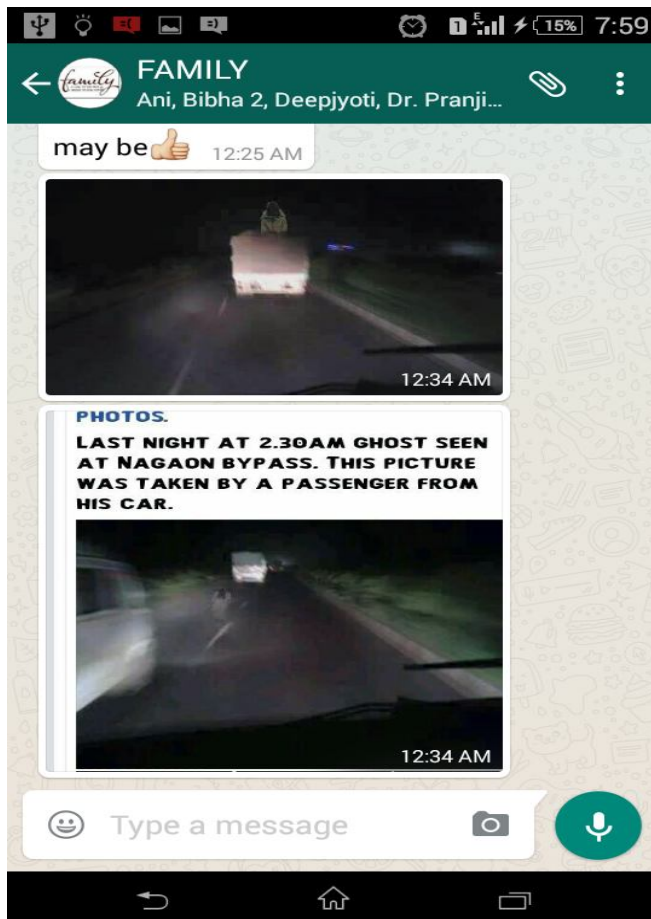
According to the story, two close friends went to Shillong . They enjoyed the cold and the scenic beauty of Shillong and its neighbouring places. They had a great time there and clicked each other's picture in order to make their vacation memorable. After having enjoyed to their satisfaction they returned to Guwahati. The very next day, both the friends went to a photo studio in order to develop the print of their snaps. And they were asked to come back after a couple of days to collect the fully developed prints of the snaps.

On the scheduled day of collection of the photos, both the friends went to the studio along with another friend. After the collection of the photos, they started to have a look at those much cherished moments that were captured. While looking at their photos, three friends noticed a particular photo that appeared quite mysterious and illusory to them. They saw a strange and a mysterious shadow in a form of female body in the background of the photo. The shape was not distinct and so they could not get a clear picture of it. The shape looked very mysterious as it appeared to be draped in white foam and surrounded by the mist. Thereafter, the three friends tried hard to distinguish the exact nature of the shape but failed to do so.

However, what happened after this was quite surprising and queer. The very next day, these three friends were found dead at their respective homes under mysterious condition. After the initial investigation, it was found that neither any of them had committed suicide nor was they victims of homicides. Even after a thorough investigation, the police could not suspect any foul play behind these deaths. The police was informed by these deceased boys' parents that the day before their

death those boys were discussing about the strange photo. Ultimately defying scientific logic, the police and the people came to a conclusion that the mysterious photo was the main cause of their weird death.

3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera



3.5. Faith in Religion

3.5.1 Holy Apathy

লিঙ্গৰ প্ৰতি

2002 চনত অসমৰ এটা অঞ্চলত এটা ঘটনা ঘটিছিল। এটা গাড়ীখনে এটা পথত গৈছিল। গাড়ীখনৰ ভিতৰত থকা এজন যাত্ৰীয়ে গাড়ীখনৰ কাঁচৰ পৰা এটা ফটো তুলিছিল। ফটোখনত এটা অস্বাভাৱিক দৃশ্য দেখা গৈছিল।

সেয়েহে, চহৰৰ হেঙোৰাবাৰী অঞ্চলৰ পৰা এটা মন্দিৰ ভাঙিবলৈ অৰ্ডাৰ জাৰী কৰা হয়। উয়ীয়াৰ পৰা এটা গাড়ীখনে এটা পথত গৈছিল। গাড়ীখনৰ ভিতৰত থকা এজন যাত্ৰীয়ে গাড়ীখনৰ কাঁচৰ পৰা এটা ফটো তুলিছিল। ফটোখনত এটা অস্বাভাৱিক দৃশ্য দেখা গৈছিল।

যদিও > ১৩৫৬ ১৩৫৬ ০৫৫৬৬৬ ৬৬৬৬৬৬ ০৬৬৬৬৬, ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬
কোনো উপায় নেদেখি নিজৰ ইচ্ছাৰ বিৰুদ্ধে গৈ হাতীটোৱে বন্দীৰটো ভাঙি পেলালে।

pobitro udaxinota

dui jazar dui sonot gutei guwahati sohoret ebar dokhol ussedkaron hoisil. guwahati
municipality corporation sohoret bibhinno sukora pora bohutu xoru danor bildin
used hoisil .

xe:he, sohoret hejrabari onsolor pora eta mandir bhajiboloi ordar zari kora hoisil.
ei bhajara karzor babe kotripokkhai eta haiti anisil. kintu haititue protomote ei kam
otukoriboloi obogja korisil aru kunupaidhje ei pobitro thaidukhor bhajiboloi itfa
prakax kora nasil. zizei nohouk, kotripokkhor bohut sestar aru zuror bolot kunu
upai nedekhi nizor itfar biruddhe goi haititue mandirtu bhaji pelale.

Holy Apathy

During the year 2002, there was an eviction drive in the whole city of Guwahati.
Guwahati Municipality Corporation (GMC) had demolished a lot of small as well as
large unauthorized constructions in various corners of the city.

Henceforth, an order was passed out to demolish a Mandir (temple) located in
Hengerabari area of the city. An elephant was brought in by the Municipality
authorities to carry out the demolition work. But, there was a prevailing thought that
the elephant at first was reluctant to carry out the job and the elephant was not at all
willing to destroy the sacred place. However, after much persuasion and being forced
by the authorities, the elephant had no other option but to bring down the temple
against his own willingness.

3.5.2 Sacred Sign

০৬৬৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬

ভাৰতবৰ্ষত হিন্দু মানুহৰ মাজত সাপক এটা অতি স্বৰ্গীয় বস্তু বুলি ধৰা হয়। যদি সাপক
০৬৬৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬
১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬ ১৩৫৬৬৬
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Yl61tA O±E±ab± Blj1E± O±1n, u±E±yA u±E±yA t±t±N±E±u±B±A1 UyA O±E±ab± jB±A±±±o
T±A±o±i±u±j±o±u±f±u± i±A±o±u± t±÷±u±E±u±%

1±t±A±o±± t±u±t±A±u±e± o±E±u±e± j±o±æ±t± a±L±o±E± |±±o± A±o±E±u±, t±E±A±±± ÷±j±y±u±æ±b±i±E±u±p± ÷±o±j±y±æ±b±B±A
j±o±b±E±æ± U±E±B±A±u±E±A± U±a±o± t±y±E±E±A±u±t±A± B±æ±A±b±o±t±u± j±o±÷±L±A± B±l±j±1E±u±% 1n±÷±1± T±A±o±o± O±»± |±t±A±
t±t±N±E±u±B±A1 ÷±æ±A±A± u±1±j±1±B±A± u±±o±B±o± |±±o±o± y±A±u±%j±o±a±j±o±b±± 1±t±A±o±± t±u±t±A±u±e± ÷±o±j±y±æ±E±o±
u±1± A±o±E±u±, t±t±N±O±t±o±j±a±E±u± t±u±, t±t±N±O±t± u±N±A±t±æ±b±i± j±o±a±b±±t±A± o±±y±A± t±t±N±O±j±o±a±b±±1± A±o±1± e±k±e±E±u±
O±±1n± t±A±y±B±A± j±o±a±æ±±1±o± n±j±1E±u±% j±B±A±c±, t±t±N±O±t±A±y±B±A± j±o±a±æ±±1± o±±o±±E±u±% y±E±A±E±t±A± t±t±N±O±t± a±B±A±
j±o±a±b±±t±A±o±j±1± i± B±æ± U±e±æ± B±æ±a±æ±t± e±B±A±1±t±u± a±'u±% t±t±N±O±B±æ±a±æ±a±o± e±k±e±E±u± O±±1n± B±æ±a±æ±a±o±t±A±
j±u± j±u±a±± O±±j±a±u±, t±A±B±A± t±o±j±a± O±j±o± «±u± O±±1n± a±a±t±A± O±±a±j±1±t±A± A±y±A± e±k±e±E±u±% U±u±e± a±A±o±æ± O±±1n±
e±A±æ±t±A± O±±a±E±1E±1± j±u±a±± O±±j±a±u±

“t±»±u±B±æ±±± e±A±o±æ±»±< ÇO±o±A± Uy±E±A±A±t±”

adb^hut suali

ebar ek^hon nait supar basot zatra kori t^hakute ezon manuhe tēur usorote bohi t^hoka ezoni noga mohilar logo mitrota st^hapon korile. zaratut tēuluke bib^hinnō bixojor up rot alusona korile. lahe lahe tēulukor ei alusona kisuman guponijo bixojloi d^hap oli melile.

ratipua zetija duju nizor gontobjo st^han pale, deka mohilazone manuhzonok dintu ekeloge ek^hon hutelot kotboloi nimontron korile. rumor gupon obost^hat tēulukor mazot xaririk xomporko st^hapon hol. todupori, izone xizonor logot besixomoi kotab oloitēuluke ratitu ekeloge kotaboloi xidd^hanto lole pisdina ratipua zetija manuhzon e xar pale, tēu dek^hile ze, tēur xongizoni bisonat nai. tēu bisonar pora ut^hile aru taik bisariboloi d^horile. kintu, tēu taik bisari napale. hot^hate, tēur soku bisonat pori t^hoka eta kagozor tukuraloi gol. tēu kagozk^hon ut^hale aru kagozk^honot zi lik^ha asil, tak dek^hi obiswax aru k^honot asorit hoi ut^hil.eija sap^ha aru danor ak^horere lik^ha asil

-welkam to da world op^h eids̄

Mysterious Girl

During a bus journey, a young man developed friendship with a young girl sitting next to him. During the whole bus journey, they gossiped on various topics and gradually, their conversation continued to be intimate.

In the morning, when both of them reached their destination, the girl asked the man to spend the day together in a hotel. They had a physical relation in the privacy of the room. Next morning when the man woke up, he saw that the girl was missing from the bed. He got up, searched her in and around the room but could not find her. Suddenly, his eyes fell on a piece of paper lying on the bed. He picked that up and got shocked with fear and disbelief of what was written on that paper. It was allegedly written in clear and bold letter as –

Welcome to the world of AIDS.

3.6.2 Wrapper Blues

Í1kó±11 jkòø±ðÁ

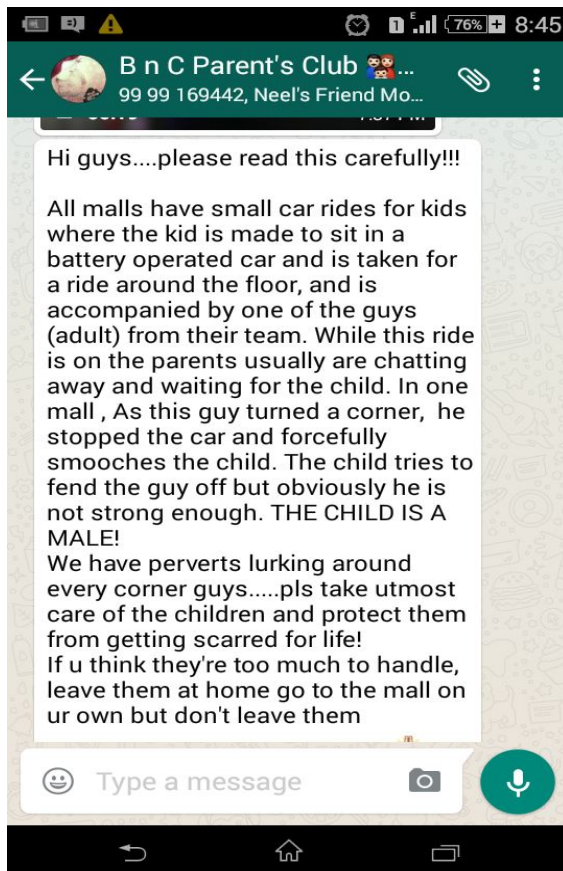
Úkò±1 Úæb ù1± Ò±1ñ, ÚæbÍ Íáæ»±úíËúþ&»±ýkèÁ àÿÁ1 1 jòñ Á1 íÁ ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúíÁ èkèá àj1 òk1 jìáú¼ Íáæ»±úíæbÍ ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúàð1 jkòáñ jàkèÉéÁ Á kòjyáú¼ íÿÿ ÚéÁ jéÁ ákèj Ò±1ñ, Úàð Ò±Ëú±»±ò BÀÉÁó±1 [òÁ1 íÁ kòø±1 èÁÁ1-Áó» úí÷±L1 ÚBÁ æbæÁ1 Á úþ Íkò±áBÁ Ò±1ñ, ýúþ1 ÍòÿÁ1 íÁú1 ÒñúíÁ jkòg± ýúþ¼ jkòjgìáú¼ jBÁáú ÷ úþjkòáñ Á jüÿÁ ðËúþæb Úàð BÀÉúæÁ1 úÿúáíÁ jBÁò± BÀ±1 kò±ò 1±àËú¼ Òúò jkòáñ Á jüÿÁ ðËúþæb BÀ±1 Íúø, BÁ1Ëú Ò±1ñ, Úàð BÀÉúæÁ1 ú±S± kòb1±y BÁ1kòíú ú±æÁ ýú¼ jBÁc íÁ1 jkòáñ Á jü ýú, Íúþ1 úáÁËúþò1 ÒáÁ1 íÁ Ò±áú¼ ù1±æËò ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúàð àkúþòíú Ò±1y BÁ1Ëú Ò±1ñ, Íáæ»±úíæbÍ jkòáñ Á kòyÁ kòjü òkèò ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúàð àkúýÁ &jáá á'ú¼ jBÁc, òkèkòbòíú òkúþúéÁ Íú, Íáæ»±úíæbÍ Ò±Ëú±»±ò BÀÉÁó±1 àð1 ÚéÁ Òñú ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúàð1 jkòáñ àBÀÉéÁ àÿÁ Ò±áú Ò±1ñ, ÷ éÁ1 àÿÿËBÁúàð àkú Íú±»±1 úÉá úÉá íÿÿ BÀBÀú1 kò1± BÀÉÁó±1 àð1 kògÉéÁ àkú àkú Áá jìú± ÁÿÁ úþòíú ñj1Ëú¼ ù1±æËò jkòéáÁ jBÁ ÁÿÁ Ò±áú íÁ1 ÚËBÀ èÁ-á±÷ýÁ Íkò±»± ð±áú Ò±1ñ, jü íÁ1 kòyÁòàð àkúýÁ íÁ1 úáíÁ BÀÉÁó±11 Í÷1ËéÁ Áú Áá Ò±áú¼ ÚÉððË1, íÿÿ BÀBÀú1 kò1± Ò±Ëú±»±ò BÀÉÁó±1 àð1 Í÷1ËéÁ ÝúýÁ á'ú Ò±1ñ, íÿÿ 1±M±1 ÷±æÁ Ákòðú±SËÉkò±11 úÿúáíÁ jkòò± BÀÉÁó±11 jì úþÁÿÁ1'ú¼

Íáæ»±úíæbÍ íÁÉíÁ ÒÉáñ kò ÍýÁ»±1 ðË1 jì úþÁÿÁ1'ú¼ íÿÿ íÁ1 kò1± ÚBÁ ýÁ=ÝòyÁòÁú- jüðkú òýú Ò±1ñ, àkè1 ÝóÁËú ÒúýÁ úþÁÿÁ àÿ× í±BÁú¼ íÿÿ ÚÿÁkòÉíÁ úá±

front of a college for some work. After a few moments, they finished their work and were ready to resume their ride. But, what happened thereafter was really astonishing. The boy started his motorcycle and thinking her to be on pillion seat, he drove on. But, to the utter disbelief of the girl, a part of the wrapper got struck in the rear wheel of the motorcycle and her wrapping around her waist started to loosen up. The boy did not have the slightest inkling of what was happening and he simply drove on taking the wrapper with him in the progress. Thus, the wrapper went off completely from her waist and she stood undressed in the middle of the road and in full view of the passers-by.

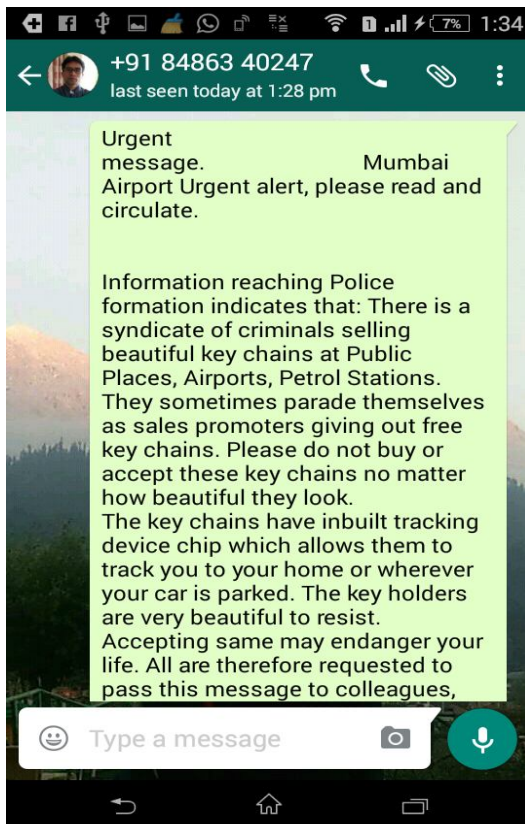
The girl stood there as if in a trance. She did not move an inch and looked around helplessly. Looking at her pitiable condition, a rickshaw puller standing nearby offered his towel to her. She quickly put the towel around her waist and went away in an auto-rickshaw.

3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert



3.7. Terrorism

3.7.1 Free Key Holders



3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army



zəruri sutfna

səbhi dhjan se pərhe

0092 je nəmbər pakistan ka kođ hē. je nəmbər istartıñ hē...00923044164317 ese nəmbər hē. je kəl kisi bhı halət mē risib na kəre. Pakistan wale kəl kərke əpne mobail ka pura data tjura rəhe he....

adž si ən eks nijuz mē dekhlo...

pliz msgzjada se zjada pħərwođ kəre....

English Translation:

X Important Notice X

All of you please read carefully.

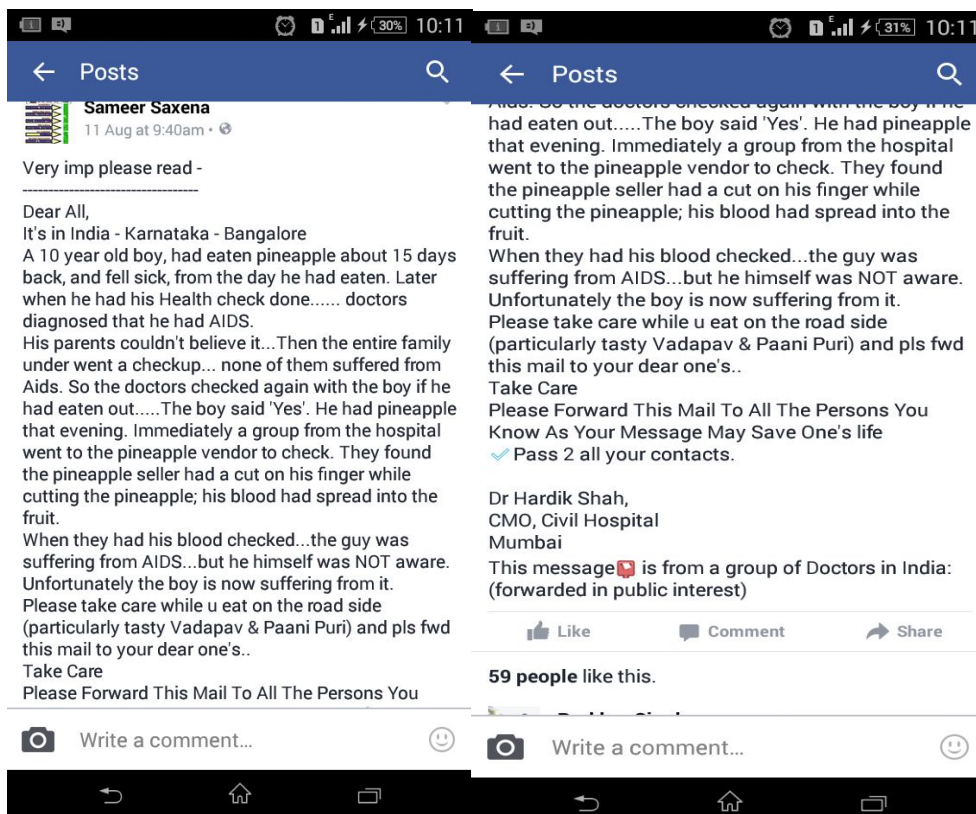
0092 is the code of Pakistan. This number is the starting...ex. Number is like this...Do not receive this call in any condition. Pakistani people are stealing all your mobile data. Watch this in CNX News today...

Please forward this message as much as you can.

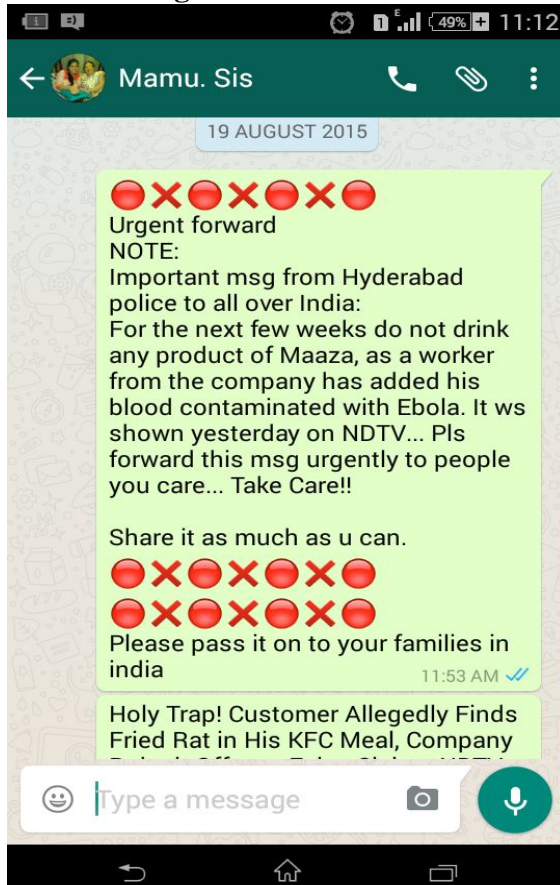
Issued by Indian Army...

3.8. Dreadful Contamination

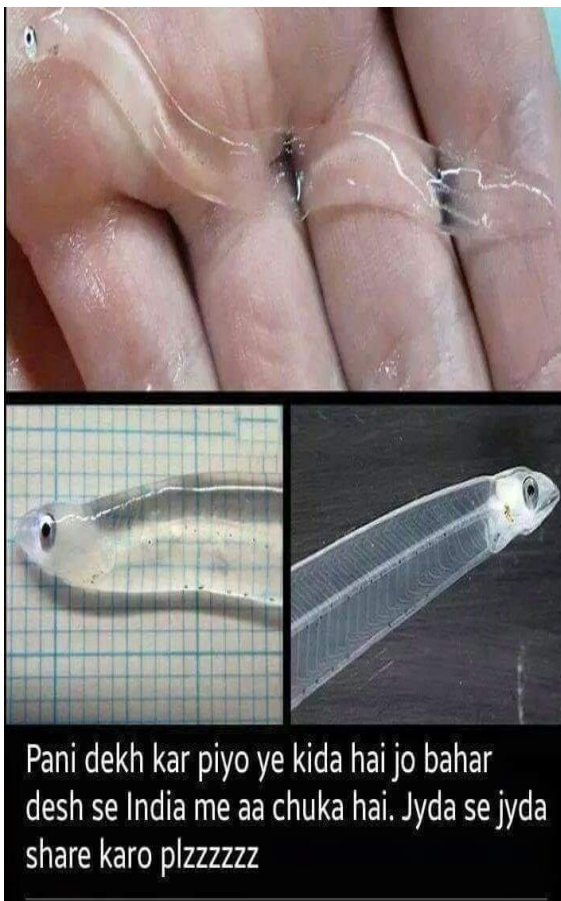
3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food



3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink



3.8.3 Water Contamination



Watch water before you drink. This is kind of insect that has entered into India. Share as much as possible plzzzzzz.

3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect



3.10 Summary

This chapter entails good number of urban legend text. This is expected that these data will certainly fulfil the criteria to complete the research based on CDA .

Chapter 4

Social Problems reflected in the Semiotic Aspect of Urban Legends

4.0 Introduction

CDA based on Fairclough is a problem based model. It is a form of social science that envisaged as social science geared to illuminate the problems which people are confronted with, by particular form of social life and to contribute resources that people may be able to draw upon in tackling and overcoming these problems (Fairclough, 2001:125).

This section examines the problems of the best circulated Assamese urban legends tracing the oral and the typed versions. For the purpose of this study, orally circulated stories were tape-recorded while collecting and thereafter were translated to English. While a few stories were collected from web-posts, the others were publicly shared messages, shared via popular websites such as Facebook and android based mobile-applications such as Whatsapp (using personal cell phone) as well. These messages were saved individually for the documentation purpose by capturing the screenshots from the devices in which they were received. In order to find out the social problems as the first part of CDA in this study, one has to go outside the text, using academic and non-academic sources to get a sense of its social context (Fairclough, 2001:125). Therefore, to carry out the discussions across the document conveniently, the legends studied have been categorized based upon the problems encountered in the text. Nevertheless, these categories are never mutually exclusive. The texts of urban legends collected for this research work (Chapter 3) consist of the problems, which can be broadly classified as follows:

- The accounts of anxiety
- Threats related to human trafficking
- Medical horrors
- Supernatural powers and
- Teenage horror stories

Cockroaches, spiders, rats, snakes even relatively harmless ants or mice have found their places in urban lore of infestation and contamination (Brunvand, 1981:75). There is no complete acceptance of a single classification system that exists for urban legends but most folklorists seem to do it on the basis of the content (Brunvand, 2001: 75). Therefore, on the basis of “A Type Index of Urban Legends” in The Encyclopedia of Urban Legends (2012), the urban legends revisited in this study have been classified in a similar fashion where each category suggests a common problem reflected in their semiotic aspect. These problems are discussed as follows:

4.1 Academe

Schools, colleges and university campuses despite being the centers of research, learning and sophistication are also fertile grounds for the emergence and growth of the academe legends and other folklore (Brunvand, 2001:1). Legends related to academe correspond to the problems that are related either with the eccentric faculty members or with the crises experienced by the students, within the campus perimeters. The students undergo considerable stress and anxiety during college days which are in turn the results of the demands associated with the changes in their lifestyle such as adjustments with new friends, challenging circumstances, independent decision making events and competing against the new standards and new expectations. Transition from home to college environment and adjustments with new people (seniors and batch mates) increase the demands and the expectations from the students, which increases pressure on them, at least relatively. Thus, the newly acquired coping mechanisms create a lot of apprehension and tension among several students. Problem arising as an after-effect of unhealthy ragging constitute another category of issues patterned inside several academic institutions across Assam.

Legends have been studied from the campus surfaces and some crucial aspects of school, college and university lives from Guwahati which can be found in the legends related to academe (chapter 3). This takes into account some pertinent information about the problems encountered during the student-life and in the hostels including ‘sharing hostel rooms with unknown senior students’, ‘refraining juniors from questioning the seniors but not vice-versa’, ‘watchmen cooperating with the boarders’, ‘suicides inside the hostel rooms’, ‘strict performance in the evaluation

systems', 'biased employment policies' and so on, which are received as a cautionary intent among the people especially students and teachers.

William S. Fox, New York has pointed out three major concerns of the students in American College of Folklore which includes grades, roommates and death (Brunvand, 2002:358). For many students, studying in a particular college or university is a high point of their lives and therefore, they look forward to it eagerly. Along with the pleasant unforgettable memories, there are certain ugly experiences as well that are filled with anxiety, doubts and struggles (Sears, 1964). It is an established fact that students suffer at a personal level while facing problems, which are academic in nature such as greater pressure for maintaining their grades and how to score higher. In addition to this, psychological problems are quite widespread among students from the university itself. In an informal conversation with the students from the University, one student shared, "*I feel stressed out when we have a problem in the family, it makes me overact...*" (Moral, 2016). Another student shared, "*I'm scared to fail. My family expects a lot from me as my entire family is highly educated...*" (Dewan, 2015). As Pfeiffer (2001) maintains -"Stress is created by excessive environmental and internal demands that need constant efforts and adjustments. People get stressed with many activities and external problems. Some of them experienced physiological (excessive workouts) and psychological stress, fear of failure and pressure pressed upon them by their families and the educational institution" (Pfeiffer, 2001: 2-3). In the account titled, "3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt" a reflection of the family pressure was well-observed; the reputation of family was at stake which resulted in the fear of failure, guilt, a blow to the self - esteem and finally, the fatal suicide of the girl.

It is experienced that these academe legends travel down the grapevine and are discussed repeatedly, especially in the college student's dormitories, the roof top parties in the hostel, the night trips to the scary places and during the examination days when students hardly sleep during the night hours. This extended timeline provides ample time to exchange legendary information. As Linda Dégh (2001) has said, college student's dormitory parties, nocturnal trips to scary places, and teenage boys' supermarket hangout sessions seem to be more conducive venues for the

distribution of legends than the ad hoc, professional, recreational, social or family gatherings planned along with adults from the families.

Legends travel beyond the campus life to the professional life as well. The larger themes of urban legends discuss academic problems sometimes, stretching into the employment related decisions also. During this phase of life, when college students are looking up for lucrative job opportunities either in private or government sectors and analyzing their respective advantages or disadvantages of the opportunities available, they discuss, criticize and start taking their own decisions under the influence of the legends already known to them. The account titled – “3.1.3 Private School” (Chapter 3) is a legend collected from a recently pass out university student. She had joined a private school only recently. She was disappointed with the pay scale offered to her and with the foul mannerism of her fellow colleagues towards her. In such cases, disheartenment is not limited to the salary only; newly appointed teachers suffer with humiliation because of the relentless exploitation from several sources within the institution itself. Furthermore, analyzing the situation, it is found that facing these atrocities silently makes dispensing duties difficult and painful.

Discussions with a couple of private school teachers in Guwahati, further revealed that the salaries offered to these school teachers are much less than that of an untrained labourer working on daily wages. Teachers hesitate to reveal the salary amounts as they feel ashamed of it². Report from one of an event held in 2013 highlights what the education minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Bishwa Sarma had revealed. He said that the situation of private school teachers in Assam is frustrating, which is a humiliation and insult to the dedicated profession (Chakrabarty, 2013). As such, the emergence of such problems in the texts of the private school oriented legends is very much obvious and appropriate.

4.2 Human Trafficking

Northeast India has been struggling incessantly with the problems of “ Human Trafficking” since past several decades. It is nothing but a sort of modern-day slavery, wherein the victims are deceived to be compelled into low-grade professions such as cheap labour, organ trade, prostitution, sexual assault and sometimes even murder

² Das S. (2016, February 15) . Personal Interview.

(Kharbhih, 2013: 347). More than 98 percent of North-east India shares borders internationally with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. Inhabitants of these areas residing near the international borders witness problems including discrimination, natural calamity, poverty, unemployment, armed conflicts and oppressive social structures. These problems account for the top-rated reasons leading to human trafficking prevalent in this region. Alerts highlighting this entire crisis, have literally introduced some narratives which have been referred to as urban legends in this study.

These legends are communicated in conversational mode which makes them yet more realistic. According to the experts, the conversational mode of communication is psychologically a symbolic representation of the folk-beliefs, reflecting the collective experiences and the values of the groups from which these traditions and the beliefs originate. Most of these legends are eventually localized, where the horror perpetrated or are said to have been perpetrated as the victim loses possession of his or her body, which becomes a commodity later.

These legends are transmitted orally and recently through the internet. Furthermore, these legends have been supported by these contemporary belief systems and the social reality perspectives as well. These narratives contain many of the corroborative features which Brunvand (1984:50) argues, are typical of an urban legend - a strong story line based on an actual belief which ends with a popular moral. These story-based narratives have strong basic plots with echoes from several popular stories, told by "a friend of a friend", who are near enough for the source to be credible enough but distant enough to be verified against specific details such as 'hospital', 'hotel', 'school', 'principle', 'doctor' etc.

As with the legends of many countries, several familiar international stories are also found in the Assamese repertoire of the urban legends. The first section discusses some of the widely known and frequently found stories mentioning the body parts being stolen, which fit into Brunvand's category of "Organ Theft" (Brunvand, 2001:302) and Bennett's classification of "Dispossessed" (Bennett, 2005:188-246). While analysing the legend titled, "3.2.3 Charity for Profit", it was observed that the illicit forcible acquiring and trading of the organs and sometimes explicit surgery was practised for unknown reasons. Different versions of this story have been circulated

orally. In some versions eyes were missing, whereas, kidneys went missing from the patients' bodies in some other versions. Surprisingly, it was also found that these patients died for some unknown reasons later. In addition to this, there is always a hint of some unknown leader in these stories under whose influence all such ghastly deeds take place and who remains hidden with ulterior motives by conspiracy.

Next section analyses problems such as alleged kidnapping and murder of the women and children. These problems find a mention in the well-known legends such as "The Attempted Abduction" and "The Kidney Heist" (Brunvand, 2001:19). According to Bennett, problem such as "organ theft" in narratives was first identified in Poland during the mid 1970s. This phenomenon later on spread to and became popular in Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia. During the time period between 1977 and 1989, the distribution was intense. Dionizjusz Czubala has reported that one could hardly meet a pole, who is not familiar with this type of stories (Bennett, 2005:191).

Similar sensational problems highlighted in the narratives began to appear in Assam and most of the adjoining Northeast states of India during early 2000 (Bhattacharjee, 2006). It is found that there are around four-five different versions of such legends which were heard during the period 2005-2007 (Bhattacharjee, 2005). Different versions of the legend related to "Organ Theft" such as "3.2.3 Charity for Profit" highlighted several problems including the necessity of the body to be operated for an arbitrary reason such as contracted appendicitis, gall bladder stones or kidney stones; only to be found later on, by the victim that the supposedly affected organ is still completely functional whereas some other vital organ from the body (such as kidney) is found missing.

In another version of this legend, it was noticed that the hospital authorities decide to take the patient to a hospital located in some other city on the pretext of providing a better treatment at a comparatively lower costs. Such a pretext was well received as a consideration which was attractive enough, especially for the patients thriving below the poverty line. Sadly, the family was usually informed only later on about the deteriorating condition of the operated patient and suddenly the patient dies. To make matters worse, in order to bring the lifeless body back home, the hospital authorities used to direct for the dire requirement of undergoing embalming. Therefore, in such a manner, the much needed organs, especially kidneys were extracted for executing

shady business practices and the misdeeds were veiled in the name of embalming. It has also been reported by the informer that these embalmed bodies were stuffed with drugs (especially inside the tummy) and thus the bodies were used as the drug carriers. Furthermore, the extremist problems comprising of ethnic clashes together with the news of smuggling of various non-permissible drugs inside the state and across in the plot, provided a solid foundation for such urban legends to bloom (Malakar, 2016).

In this study, we find a missing young boy, who is alleged to become a commodity but later freed under the pressure of politics. Such a case was studied, analysed and documented under the account titled - "3.2.1 Save Me Save Me". Here, we find a kidnapped child returned safe. In some similar instances, it was observed that sometimes the abducted child was found to be the son or the daughter of an influential politician or a rich businessman; while sometimes the gang itself collapsed and sometimes the child escaped³. Analysis of another variation of this legend, surface rumours about abduction followed by mutilations. In these narratives, the abducted child returned but either blinded or scarred or with a missing kidney or with such kind of similar problems⁴.

Folklorists claim that sometimes abundance of genuine atrocities and murders are found in urban legends and with negligible variations; people identify these legends as some interesting sensational stories which they report and share as true individual experiences. In these narratives, they particularly talk about some of their genuine concerns and mixing bits of fantasies with the real incidents (Brunvand, 2001: xxviii). Based on this belief it can be proposed that similar incidents reported in Assam may have introduced several urban legends based here as well. The narrator of the text "3.2.1 Save Me Save Me" is a father to three school-aged children and he believes this story to be a true incident - a warning for other parents who would send their children to school alone, especially during the 1990s; when the extremist problems were prevalent in Northeast India⁵. The anxiety of the parents is thus well reflected in the legend itself. Attitude towards belief is the main essence of one legend and can be expressed in diverse ways varying according to sex, gender, age and the context.

³ Medhi, U. (2016, March 20). Personal Interview.

⁴ Medhi M. (2004, January 23). Personal Interview.

⁵ Das D.M (2006, June 10). Personal Interview.

In another text, collected from a twenty year old girl, it was found that the girl was kidnapped and then trafficked. It was found that at the time of rescue, she forgot everything though she was saved from the brothel. It was only after administering her with a long medication regime that she had her memory back. Thereafter she revealed that she developed friendship with a boy online and one day she had gone to meet him. After that she could not recall what had transpired⁶. Thus, depending upon diverse descriptions and interpretations of similar extra normal experiences by individual tellers, the identical content of the same legend type may develop differently.

In some cases, rumour becomes more like a legend and less like a news feed; as it was documented in the accounts titled – “3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride” and “3.2.4 Women under Threat”. In the former account, a public transport became a symbol of crime while the driver and the conductor became the symbols of distrust. Analysis of another legend titled, “3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride” proclaim that the drivers and the conductors might play prank with the helpless and innocent women while they are alone on-board, especially during the late evening hours when the sky turns dark. This unpleasant event caused a grave scare in the city of Guwahati (during early 2000s) when super-fast deluxe mini buses were only recently introduced in the city and until then were servicing the masses, untarnished. Later, the police department tried to lighten the public anxiety but the alarm persisted for a long time.

Different versions of such legends include certain common elements such as victims are most often the women or the children on the hands of men; violence seems pointless and the culprits come from a relatively low socio-economic category. Crimes against women are as old as the civilizations and equally ancient are the efforts to stand against them. Analysis of the mentions from the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata further strengthen the facts and findings of the research done. In the epic Ramayana, Ravana (the evil king) abducted Sita (a hindu Goddess and wife to Lord Rama) and took her to his kingdom - Lanka. Similarly in Mahabharata too, the Kauravas (kins to Pandavas) insulted Draupadi (their sister-in-law and wife of Pandavas). Perhaps these beliefs result in the formation of several stories of the modern times too where the violence against women is still prominent.

⁶Barman M. (2005, October 5). Personal Interview.

A reflection of the insecurity of women while travelling by public vehicles especially during the evening hours can be well depicted through this narrative. In December 2012 in New Delhi, as reported by the cops, a 23-year-old medical student was brutally gang-raped in a moving bus and later on thrown out from the bus. This fatal assault generated a widespread national and international coverage and was extensively condemned, both in India and abroad. Subsequently, public protests against the state and the central governments were held across major cities throughout the country (The Indian Express, 2017) demarcating the failure in providing adequate security to the women in the region. During the research, it was found that this real incident resulted in the growth of multiple Assamese urban legends with some local details and an air of conviction that public transport is a symbol of insecurity and unknown danger during 2013-2015.

Study shows that according to “Feminization of Migration”, demands for women and children is more because they are considered to be the soft targets, less empowered, more submissive and less complaining as compared to the men-folk (Mishra, 2013:8). This further strengthens the belief that women make up for around half of the world’s 214 million international migrants (United Nations, 2009) under the influence of the similar reasons. Helper services including domestic help, nanny or elderly care, surrogate mother, bride for bride markets and sex industry are the main drivers driving women trafficking in Assam. Thus, urban legends are slated to be the products of social strains and respective responses to those strains just like a collective hysteria and an organized claim-making.

Crimes using cards soaked in a scary drug famous as “Burundanga” started circulating through legends, chain letters and emails during 2010-2015 (de Vos, 2012: 92). This legend started circulating initially through word of mouth, continued to be disseminated through contemporary internet properties and most-recently through social networking sites such as Facebook and web-driven applications such as WhatsApp also. While analysing the turn of events in the account titled, “3.2.4 Women under Threat” (Chapter 3), it was observed that a lady driving a four wheeler, met stranger and offered her a business card laced with Burundanga, with an intention to numb and harm her thereafter. Somehow the lady escaped from the venue. Different versions of this legend were found in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore too

(Ghosh, 2011). Research reveals that the police denied the authenticity of occurrence of such incidents and claimed that they have not come across any of such kinds of incidents. It was also found that the doctors were unable to identify and tell about the exact nature of the drug used on the victims (Ghosh, 2011). In most of these Burundanga legends, a lady is robbed and sexually assaulted; a shop keeper loses all his stuff from the shop and a beautician loses all articles from her parlour (de Vos, 2012: 92). Burundanga has no scent and only causes dizziness and disorientation. While researching for the related references, it was found that these Burundanga card stories are also popular in North American cities (de Vos, 2012: 92). As with several “perfume robber’s” tale, the dissemination of the “Burundanga” legend has been followed by copycat reports of such crimes supposedly taking place, most prominently in Houston and Kansas City⁷. While analysing the facts and findings, it was noticed that these different variations have some common elements in them. It was observed that the victims were not in danger from any type of drug absorbed in the card paper as reported and they are often females. The legend, “3.2.4 Women Under Threat” (Chapter 3) is a screen shot, which was extracted from a Facebook post, and was sent to me by a working self-driven woman. Few more similar stories were found in circulation (not included in data) among the working parents that reflect the problems of insecurity about the babies and toddlers. They talk about gang of baby sitters, who send the babies with the beggars while their mothers are away at work. The beggars keep the babies with them for the whole day along the roadside displaying them to passersby and commuters as they demand money for their food or clothing. Hence, it can be deduced that they exploit the babies as bait and use them as a source of earning for them. Later in the evening, the beggars bring the respective babies back home, just before the time when their mothers used to reach home from their offices. Rumours multiplied that sometimes this gang kidnapped the babies too. These types of problems are common in the messages circulated among the working mothers, especially who used to leave their babies with the babysitters first. These are a few reasons for which, now-a-days working mothers prefer a day-care centre more than a nanny at home⁸. There are certain online messages found in the social networking sites where a well-dressed baby, seemed to belong to a good family; is spotted with a poor man or a woman

⁷ www.snopes.com

⁸ Barman M. (2005, October 5). Personal Interview.

travelling in a bus⁹. There seems no resemblance in facial features and therefore, the fellow travellers doubt it to be a kidnapping case. Therefore driven by apprehensions, they click their pictures and circulate.

Another group of legends, “3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids” is a popular type of legend in Assam. Published in Assamese, one version cautions that while helping a missing small child to find out his or her parents, one should not follow the child blindly. Instead of taking him or her to his or her home, people should take them to the nearby police station because this has comparatively become a new technique used by the criminals to rob, kidnap and rape. This type of legend has been further made more influential by adding claims that this news has already been broadcasted by the popular Indian TV News channels such as CNN and NDTV as well. Another version was found, where we find that while playing in the park, kidnapers take the help of the other kids. They send a group of kids to play with the targeted kid and taking the advantage of their parent’s slight distraction; they kidnap the besieged child to a corner and take them away¹⁰. These are some rumours that have been going around since ancient days, where kidnapers used to come in disguise. In India, stories about kidnapping have been circulating since the ancient times. In Ramayana, we get the reference of kidnapping of a beautiful queen Sita, by Ravana - the king of Lanka, who concealed as a monk and came to beg help from her. There is a possibility that these stories about kidnapping might have influenced the modern tales to some extent.

In the legend titled, “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise”, it is seen that a lady, who introduces herself to be a representative of a gas company, shows her identity card on arrival. After entering into the house, she expresses to use the washroom and thus tries to rob the homeowner. This perennial theme in accusations brought against persecuted minorities is that they indulge in some businesses made for some personal gain or most of the times in the service of some dark lord. Legends gain a great deal of mass - media debunking in recent times, especially the cyclical appearances over Internet. It has been seen that many a times, the horror legends of human trafficking, organ theft are drafted and maintained even now by the exploitation of these propagandists and the media industry who utilize these stories for commercial advantage in selling their stories making them more sensational (Campion- Vincent, 2005: 192). Frequent

⁹ www.snoopes.com

¹⁰ Chetia, V. (2016, February 2). Personal Interview.

appearances in fictional narratives aid in promoting the belief of crimes like child trafficking. Moreover, vampires, monsters, zombies, dissection, mutilations, blood suckers also lay at the centre of many horror films and literature (Bennett and Smith, 2007: 126). In such a context, depiction of sexual violence, crime and brutality, rape scenes cannot be denied either in the storyline or in the screenplay or in the narratives of the viewers. As such, these parameters have certainly influenced the dissemination of urban legends especially dedicated to the women and the children. Since the Internet became popular in the early 1990s; it served as a locus for predation and consolation, as well as expressions of the confusion and the resolution (Tucker, 2009:67). In this context, the Internet theorist Sherry Turkle explains that all of us who choose to spend time online become the “dwellers on the threshold between the real and the virtual environment, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along” (Turkle, 1995: 10). Therefore, it is not surprising that the websites disseminating information about the missing women and children can develop some sort of folkloric patterns as reflected in urban legends of Guwahati.

4.3 Medical Horror

Urban legends crafted around medical problems have been portraying a great deal of fear from the hospitals, surgeries performed and even physical examination, depicting horrible ways in which these processes might go wrong (Brunvand, 2012: 308). There are several stories found in Assam, which are related to the problems of the medical gruesomeness.

The Government of Assam has been emphasizing on the adequate provisions for primary healthcare and awareness programmes as well on the health-related issues, hygiene and healthy practices, food security and nutrition, family welfare etc. But there are several cases where, general public claims that the patients have lost their organs and lost their lives due to the malpractices executed during the treatment. My research shed light on a few cases encountered unveiling the helplessness of the patients. The paragraphs include accounts from three patients documented, as follows.

In one case, Late Mrs. Lilawati Chetia, a 60-years old teacher, lost her voice due to the installation of the food pipe in the vocal cord in Assam Medical College,

Dibrugarh in June, 2008¹¹. In another case, Minu Kalita, from Guwahati, a 60years old lady, was advised to undergo a heart surgery, immediately after her admission into a reputed hospital in Guwahati during May 2016. She was told that if the surgery would not performed within a month, she might collapse anytime. But later, the family approached a prominent heart institute located in Bangalore, and there, after diagnosis and undergoing the treatment referred, she recovered within a month¹². No further surgery was required; a short medication helped her to cure the problem. In another case, in a hospital in Guwahati, in the year 2016, a 30-yrs old research scholar entered coma because of a mistake that happened while carrying out a minor surgery of fistula and her family was informed after two days of operation only when she reached a stage of coma. Later, she was referred to a better hospital by the hospital staffs by demanding a bill containing a huge amount to the family. It took her almost one year to recover¹³. In another incident at least four people contracted the AIDS virus after they underwent blood transfusion at Mangaldoi Civil Hospital in Mangalodoi, Assam from a professional donor who later turned out to be an HIV positive person in 2013¹⁴. It is allegedly claim that in some cases people were found to be waiting for the treatment to get started during the first few days after admission¹⁵. Later, the hospital bills inflated due to unnecessary initial stay before the treatment commenced.

Thus, based upon the findings, it can be understood that medical negligence is arising as a burning problem in Assam in current times. Nation-wide reports claim that medical negligence has been leading to a loss of around 30 Lakh people per year. Every year, about 52 Lakh of medical injuries are recorded in India, of which around 98,000 victims lose their lives. In India, around 10 people fall victims of medical negligence every minute and more than 11 people die per hour due to medical error and negligence (Dutta, 2016). Dr Putul Mahanta, renowned doctor and Editor-in-Chief of “The International Journal of Health Research and Medico Legal Practice” regretted that once medical service was regarded as a mission and gradually has been emerging as a profession and now it has turned into a business and unethical practices in this profession are growing with each passing day (Mahanta, 2016). Organ-lifting

¹¹ Sharma P. (2016, January 21). Personal Interview.

¹² Kalita. K. (2016, June 20). Personal Interview.

¹³ <https://milaap.org/stories/help-purabi>.

¹⁴ <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/assam>.

¹⁵ Dutta D. (2016, June 17). Personal Interview.

rackets are also operating in some parts of the country, he lamented. Research findings highlighted a phenomenon termed as “Surgical Terrorism”, where surgeons estimate their charges on the basis of the screws and stitches they affix. Charging higher fees or rates from the patients is also termed as “Medical Terrorism”. In addition to these practices, prescribing wrong medicines, wrong doses, leaving surgical apparatus during operation are also considered as “Medical Negligence” (Mahanta, 2016).

Fears and general awareness of such medical negligence has generated some seemingly credible stories which can be referred as urban legends. While collecting and discussing these urban legends related to medical problems, the informers also said that apparatus and procedures related with the medical treatment should be made transparent and video graphing of all the surgeries conducted inside the operation theatres should be made mandatory (Baruah, 2016).

4.4 Supernatural Elements

Supernaturalism is a familiar problem reflected in the text of urban legends (Brunvand, 1981). In Assam, people encounter with several stories that evolve around some supernatural elements which can be referred to as the tradition of the haunted properties, mysterious trees, return of the dead and images of the long dead person and so on. But, supernatural legends are not culturally considered as legends in Assam whereas they are identified more as personal narratives or anecdotes or sometimes regarded as memorates (Bhattacharjee, Khiangle, Subbachary 2004:106) Kvideland and Schmsdorf’s division of 76 legend types out of which 43 belonged to human soul, ghosts, revenants and supernatural spirits which are considered as supernatural legends in European legend studies. Thus, Kvideland and Schmsdorf’s half of the major divisions of the legend deal with such stories. Bhattacharjee further insists that the tradition of such stories is very much alive in Assam and such stories can be found in various contexts in the contemporary society. Oral tradition of such story through generations with endless variation and unusual details has certainly initiated some basic stories, which have been considered as urban legends in this study (Bhattacharjee, Khiangle, Subbachary 2004:106).

In 1981, Jan Harold Brunvand took the study of urban legends to a new, scholarly dimension when he collected the American versions of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”:

Driver (or cab driver in some cases) traveling by a lonely road sees a girl (or a nun) and stops to give her a ride. According to one version; there is little conversation between them and when they reach the destination or house where she was supposed to get off, he stops and looks around to find that she has disappeared (Brunvand, 1981)

In another version, he goes back to return some belongings that she left in the car, only to be informed by the occupants of the house that the girl had died a while ago (Brunvand 1981, 30-45). Brunvand has discussed fifteen versions of the vanishing hitchhiker legends in his work, all of which contain the constant narrative elements of the borrowed sweater, the road, the automobile, the disappearance, and the discovery. Various versions of this tale have been collected and examined (Bennett 1998, 1-17; Brunvand 1981, 49-55; Carrol 2006, 21-26; Cunningham and Cunningham 1989, 223; Jones 1968, 161-84). Each version was adapted to a local folkloric context that gave the story authenticity, thus confirming and making it relevant to its immediate environments and contexts. In the process of the localization of the narrative, each folk group concerned with altered key details relevant to social, cultural, and economic issues and these changes in turn explicate and explain prevailing actuality in the area of its localization (Brunvand, 1981:26).

As argued by Bhattacharjee, legends like “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” may be available in Assam but they are considered as Memorates or Personal Narratives sometimes (Bhattacharjee, Khiangle, Subbachary 2004:106). Here is a version of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” (Not included in the sample) collected from Assam:

A boy was found to be accompanied by a lady sitting in the pillion on a bike. A Tata Sumo car was following the bike. The Sumo car was said to be loaded with few passengers from a place known as Agiathuri, near a cremation ground on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, located within the periphery of Guwahati. The car tried to stop the bike as the passengers saw something weird – a girl with long tongue licking the boy from back side. After a lot of effort the car was successful in stopping the bike. While the bike rider was asked about whom he was carrying in his backside, he told them that there was a lady who had just asked him for a lift. Since it was night time and there was hardly any vehicle passing by, he agreed to give her a lift. But to their utter astonishment, there was nobody sitting in the pillion when they looked back into the seat. Then those car passengers revealed what they actually saw which provoked them to stop the bike. They said that there was a lady in a white dress with long open hair sitting in the pillion whose face was blurred and was unable to be recognized.

After that incident, the bike rider fell sick for no reason and died in a hospital. Doctors could not diagnose any ailment¹⁶.

In a similar version of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” found from New Delhi, Palam fly over, where a bike rider was found carrying a pretty girl with long hair in a white dress during night hours. At one point, she stopped, got down from the bike and went away. Later, few people came and asked the biker about the girl as what they saw was not normal - a blurred face licking the boy from backside, where face was unable to be recognized. Then the biker replied that she wanted a lift and then asked him to stop. Later, the biker was found very sick and collapsed within few days. Here also doctors could not find any reason behind the death of the boy¹⁷.

In a similar way, “3.4.1 Forbidden Snap”, presents three friends deceased under some mysterious conditions. This legend is very much popular since 2004 or 2005 and people believe that this has been published in some popular magazines too. In “3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera”, we see a picture of female ghost in Nowgaong which is around 15kms away from Guwahati. This picture is making lots of round in WhatsApp though many people believed this to be a trick photography.

It has been informed that in Guwahati, after the introduction of Internet apparatus based taxi services like Olacab, Uber Taxi people have started relating “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” story to the taxi services too¹⁸. Unlike the various versions of “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”, in these versions, there is no mention of any jacket or sweaters. But, it has been seen that in all these versions the ghost is a female ghost either killing the person or taking a drive-in taxi¹⁹. In this context, Gillian Bennett has acknowledged the haunting of the vanishing hitchhiker to be an expression of the loss of life at its fullest. And most of the vanishing hitchhikers are prone to be women. The journey of the hitchhiker is his or her desperate submission to get to wherever he or she wants to go, which Bennett has referred to as a "search for an exit from an existential maze" (Bennett 1998, 10-11).

Here the problem related to these urban legends is not to trace the authenticity of the horror plots through history nor across geography but rather simply to provide some

¹⁶ Baishya. N. (2016, March 20). Personal Interview.

¹⁷ Bharadwaj, U. (2016, March 18). Personal Interview.

¹⁸ Das. M.P. (2017, Jan 15). Personal Interview.

¹⁹ Dewan. J. (2016, June 12). Personal Interview.

underlying lessons such as “try to avoid travelling in night alone!”, “do not believe on strangers” and so on. These stories are may not be literally true but these friend-of-a-friend (FOAF) tales really raise the possibility of something that might really have happened and may happen in future.

4.5 Faith in Religion

It has been observed that several faith promoting and inspirational stories are much in circulation, though many a times people believed them to be true with doubtful claims. In India, unscientific and irrational beliefs have a wide currency in society and it is witnessed on several occasions. As a result several thought provoking inspirational stories are much in circulation, which are based on some folk beliefs. This section portrays the blind faith of Indian people on the religion.

On September 21st, 1995, it was documented that the Hindu Lord Ganesha was drinking milk all over the world. Experts explain that this occurred due to capillary action - the surface tension of the milk was pulling the liquid up and out of the spoon, before gravity caused it to run down the front of the statue²⁰. A specifically religious belief is observed in “3.5.1 Holy Apathy” where, an elephant does not want to demolish a temple during a government eviction process. Similarly, in the legend titled, “3.5.2 Sacred Sign”, we see a leaf of pumpkin plant getting the shape of religious figure like Lord Shiva. Brunvand has pointed out that some of these religious details are doubtful and claims to truth (Brunvand, 2001:349). In a similar manner, these collected legends which are seen to be based on some popular religious beliefs can also be pointed as being doubtful.

4.6 Nudity, Dalliance and Nightmares

Problems have been raised in this section, which are related to the humiliation of intended infidelity, AIDS hysteria, and terrible consequences after having physical relation with the strangers, nightmares after having exposed the naked body publicly and so on.

During 1990s, a strong legend like narrative had appeared in Assam titled, “3.6.1 Mysterious Girl”. According to this legend, a woman featured as the AIDS aggressor

²⁰ Wikipedia: Hindu Milk Miracle

and a heterosexual man was shown as her victim. The plot was so realistic that such kind of horrendous adventures could have happened to anybody and that they could happen to anyone at any time. Rampant rumors of AIDS infection in Assam especially in north-eastern part of India have been circulating for many years . Rumors point out that the truck drivers and the barbers are the most victimized, by this dreadful disease. This legend began sweeping in Assam since 1990s and got published in some local magazines too²¹.

Similar story was found widespread internationally especially in America and Europe. Jan Brunvand has declared “3.6.1 Mysterious Girl” (Chapter 3) as the full version of AIDS Mary (Brunvand, 2013). In Europe, the sinister sometimes read, “Welcome to the AIDS Club” whereas in America it read like, “Welcome to the (wonderful) World of AIDS.” By 1990, the female character was replaced by a male character in America, which later was known as “AIDs Harry.” Later in a study made by AIDS researchers has asserted that this kind of incident never happened in reality (Brunvand , 2002). According to Bennett (2005), these multiple versions of AIDS legends can be considered as specific and imaginative, both.

Later, it was observed that this version of the legend began to fade from public consciousness and to evolve into a new form when there was a rumor like story- panic outbreak in Guwahati about HIV-infected needles in cinemas. This type of legend was more popular as needle prick legend too (Bennett, 2005). This was the time when AIDS hysteria was at its peak and even Government was actively launching several awareness programs, campaigns educating the masses about HIV/AIDS in order to control the panic outbreak. In 2001, according to the census report, Manipur has got the highest number of HIV/ AIDS cases in India. Some major reasons encountered included the used injections of drug users, negligence of the spouse, having intercourse with the infected sexual partners and genetic combination of the children produced from infected mothers. Geographical proximity of Manipur to Burma (Myanmar) and consequently the Golden Triangle Drug trail has made it a major transit of injecting drug users (IDUs) and their children (Ahanthem, 2003). In 2000 and 2001, the story about needle prick attack was rampant in Guwahati, where cinema halls, market places were terrified by the attack of needle which was kept

²¹ Medhi M. (2004, January 23). Personal Interview.

intentionally by the HIV affected person in order to increase the number of HIV infected people²². Later, it was also found in Delhi and many parts of India as well as foreign countries like Melbourne, Australia which reported to have similar localized versions of this needle prick legend (Bennett, 2005).

Similarly, “3.6.2 Wrapper Blues” is a story that holds all the terror of a bad dream from which one cannot immediately wake up. What makes it worse is that such nightmares can occur with everyone. This legend is often told as true rather than a joke or fiction. The characters as well as most narrators tend to be young people, often a dating couple, where the girl is from a tribal state wearing their traditional outfit. The outcome is more tragic for the girl than the boy and the ruined date was saved by the rickshaw puller. Brunvand (Brunvand, 2001:296) has rightly mentioned that being caught naked is a persistent theme in many urban legends. Strangely enough, even though the story is told mostly by young girls presumably are sympathetic to the victim girl and pass the consistent lesson of safety rules while driving or riding.

The legend titled, “3.6.3 Kids on High Alert” has been collected from some parents’ WhatsApp group, where parents share their views, concerns about kids. This message confirms the worst fears of today’s parents in India regarding child abuse. The story may also reflect feelings of modern child care practices and their concern where the child is not safe outside own loving care. In India, the percentage of child abuse has been increasing. Cases of molestation are found even in the schools sometimes. As such, these problems are definitely making people alert of such possible nightmares which have contributed in the circulation of urban legends in the form of web messages.

4.7 Terrorism

Terrorism is a systematic use or a threatened use of violence to intimidate a population or government for political, religious or ideological goal (“Terrorism”, Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia). This is a threat to the entire world, which has encountered contemporary hoax, rumors and legends that are set in the context of everyday life packed with local details.

²² Tamuly, J.P. (2007, March 20). Personal Interview.

“3.7.1 Free Key Holder” and “3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army” contain two warning messages which were in circulation after Pathankot terrorist attack on 2nd January 2016 by a heavily armed group. Pathankot Air Force Station was the main target of the terrorists in that attack²³. After the attack, the legend “3.7.1 Free Key Holder” went rampant in the mobile phones and social networking sites. This message was captured as a screenshot taken from a cell-phone. It was sent to me by an Airside Monitoring Inspector working in Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, when all the airports in India including Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati were also under high alert and the security personals in the airports were trying to cover all security measures²⁴.

Messages regarding key chains have been doing rounds online from many years. According to www.hoaxorfact.com, this originated from an incident that happened in South Africa in August 2008. As a part of promotion of their Power Diesel Brand, a petroleum brand named Caltex distributed free branded key rings to its customers in South Africa in 2008. The key holder contained an LED (light-emitting diode), a battery, and a computer chip. Someone dismantled the device and found the chip inside, and passed a remark that it was some RFID (Radio-frequency identification) transmitter used for tracking. Then a worried listener reported Johannesburg radio station that he found electronic gadgetry, tiny solar panel inside the hard plastic cover of the key ring that was giving off signal and could possibly be traced. This is how the message went viral. After much investigation by the South African Police, it was proved that the range of the signal was roughly one kilometer and is not at all possible to be used as a tracking device. Later it was revealed that, Caltex used the electronic gadget inside key holder to produce flash and brighten up the display, which produced the “signal” (Damarala, 2015). “3.7.1 Free key Holder” is a version of this legend circulated through social media. Thus, the fear and the anxiety created by the problem of terrorism continued to give rise to some oral and media circulated urban legends in Assam as well as in the entire country.

²³ NDTV News, January 05, 2016

²⁴ Chetia, V. (2016, February 2). Personal Interview.

4.8 Dreadful Contamination

These legends mainly signify the problem of unhygienic conditions of the street food in Guwahati and serious health issues that arise on consuming these food-items. Sometimes consumption of these ready to eat food leads to several dangerous diseases and infections. Although the fast food industry plays a major role in cities and towns of many developing countries like India and in meeting food demands of city dwellers but fast food corners and packaged foods have always been a matter of doubt.

There are abundant examples of rumors about food vendors in Guwahati. Cooking food without washing hands and cooking raw vegetables without cleaning and so on are very common notion that Guwahati people have about fast food corners (Das, 2016). A study was done in Silchar, Assam where a total number of 37 street vended food samples such as Paanipuri, Chats, Egg rolls were collected in sanitized container and were later examined. The isolates found were identified as *Escherichia coli* (37.5%), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (3.57%), *Staphylococcus aureus* (14.2%), *Salmonella sp.*(5.36%), *Klebsiella sp.*(10.71%), *Shigella sp.*(19.64%), *Enterobacter sp.*(8.93%) respectively. In this study, 56 isolates were susceptible to ciprofloxacin. These findings demonstrated that the ready to eat foods vended in Silchar city constitute an important potential hazard to the human health leading to food contamination (Sharma, Mazumdar, 2014: 169-171).

In a major outbreak of food poisoning that took place in Kamrup, Assam during the month of February 2013 on the event of Saraswati puja, the students of Darang ME School, Koraiguri LP School and Koikari LP School suffered vomiting, fever, dizziness, diarrhea and abdominal pain after consuming gram (prasad) and khichiri. More than 400 students were affected. Currently it has come into notice that, cases of similar food poisoning arise very frequently in different parts of Assam (Sharma, Malakar, Gupta, Dhandar: 2014:46-49). In such a context, Assamese people feel that there is a great need to find out the causative agent of food poisoning in every outbreak so as to control the problem in due course and prevent from further spreading. Although the scene is not uniform but the fear and anxiety of food poisoning have made people much concerned about the food that they are taking every day (Sharma, Malakar, Gupta, Dhandar: 2014:46-49). Every Assamese citizen feels the need to find out the high risk areas and the causative agent of food poisoning

in every outbreak so as to control the problem in due course (Medhi, 2016).Fear and anxiety caused by various rumours are so intense that people have a tendency to link the stories to dangerous diseases like AIDS or Ebola as we can find in “3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food” and “3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink”. In India, rumours of finding a cockroach in soft drinks, plastics in baby food, and several foreign matters in municipality drinking water is common day-to-day news. As such, these random experiences of listening to all these news entail some urban legend, which is circulated later through mouth to mouth and now days through the medium of Internet.

In this context, a well known Assamese writer and thinker Debakanta Handique has said that media especially various local news channels in Assam has been playing a major role in circulating these type of news for last few years. Expressing his thought over the various fast food or packaged food items, he further said that sometimes, as an exception, mistakes can happen but that may be an exceptional case. It is better not to generalize this as a big issue and popular brands are conscious about their image and continuity of their sales too. In contrast, he added that at certain point, these types of stories are beneficial too as these alert us but everything cannot be accepted. Now, after getting lead in a popular Indian noodle manufacturing company known as Maggi, people have become more conscious about the food that they are consuming every day²⁵.

Urban legends are the re-workings of the older themes, motifs and plots reappeared and adapted to new contexts and combined and accepted in new ways (Dégh, 2001: 86). In 2015, these AIDS Aggressor legends took a new shape when they started circulating through the form of mobile phone messages or social networking sites. Although these legends are missing a proper plot sometimes but nevertheless it has the similar theme and passes the same threatening messages which can be termed as “sites of danger.” They not only form a public opinion but also follow public understandings. In the legend “3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food” and “3.8.2 Packaged Drink”, we find people getting affected by HIV contaminated fruit drink and raw cut fruits, where people are deliberately being infected through fruits and drinks. Thus, it can be seen that various versions of AIDS aggressor legends have been largely

²⁵ Handique, D.K (2016, January 15). Personal interview.

replaced by messages in telephones, internet which have taken a simpler, vaguer media frenzy and public panic rumour like form.

In June 2015, a Los Angeles man, Devorise Dixon posted a picture and a video in his face book account where he claims that a rat was found in his KFC meal. Soon the image went viral with the alert of food contamination in the fast food corners. “Los Angeles Times” later reported that a third party independent lab has confirmed the suspicious meal to be a piece of hand-breaded chicken (Los Angeles Times, 2015). Soon after the outbreak of this legend “Rat in Kentucky Fried Chicken” worldwide, many people have stopped visiting the brand outlets. It was realized that people in Assam have started localizing the story. There were several versions of rumor. According to one version, a customer of one KFC in Guwahati was allegedly found a batter-fried rat in a bucket of chicken. And then there was some inspection by the FSSAI²⁶. In this case, informants were found very much in shock and literally stopped going to fast food corners. One of the informants who are a middle aged person with two kids, seemed to be very frightened after hearing this as the kids visit KFC often. According to him, this is something which needs careful attention of the government of Assam²⁷ .

Figure 2: A rat shaped KFC chicken piece



Photocourtesy: LosAngelesTimes, June, 2015

²⁶ Choudhary, K. (2016, March 20). Personal Interview.

²⁷ Moral , A. (2017, November 17). Personal interview.

Brunvand, the most famous urban legend scholar has claimed that this legend about fried rat served in the outlet of KFC is a very popular and widely circulated since early 1970s in America and later it has spread abroad with the establishment of KFC franchises in other countries too (Brunvand, 2002:226). Thus, emergence of such rumours about KFC in Guwahati is quite possible like several other places, soon after the establishment of the franchisee. The common problem found in these stories shared a reservoir of recurring themes, motifs and narrative patterns which show that everyone's health is at risk because of the quality of food found in the market.

4.9 Unidentified Killer Insect

This legend “3.4.9 Unidentified Killer Insect” is based on a weird kind of phobia termed as - “Tryphobia”. This is generally considered as the fear of shapes. According to Wikipedia, the reaction is based on a brain response that associates the shapes with danger. Shapes that elicit a reaction were said to include clustered holes in innocuous contexts such as fruits and bubbles, and in contexts associated with danger, such as holes made by insects and holes in wounds and diseased tissue such as those caused by mango worms in animals, especially dogs²⁸.

Upon seeing these shapes, some people said they shuddered, felt their skin crawl, experienced panic attacks, sweated, palpitated, and felt nauseated or itchy. Some said the holes seemed "disgusting and gross" or that "something might be living inside those holes." The legend “3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect” has got several versions, where we find a deadly insect leaves harmful effects of its virus and we see a large number of small holes throughout the palm and fingers. The entire message is accompanied by a skin-crawling sensation –inducing picture of a human hand infected with the virus through the contact with the unidentified killer insect.

Similar image of virus affected fingertip has been circulating which according to Snoopes.com is an example of the effect of excessive computer use and was created by morphing an image of fingers with images of lamprey mouth. Another story “Wash before wearing” went viral in social media, where we find a story of an anthropologist (supposedly from North America) who finds her breasts infected by

²⁸ “Tryphobia”, Wikipaedia: The Free Encyclopaedia

larvae. This story was intensified by the alleged picture which looked like a lotus seed pod to create fake rash in the breast accompanied by an e-mail²⁹.

It has been seen that in both these legends, common motifs of the fear of the outsider and of bodily invasion are present. “Bosom Serpent,” is a term used by the folklorists to mean such living creatures invading human body (Brunvand, 2002: 74). According to some analysis, this “Bosom Serpent” may represent fear of pregnancy or fantasy. The website tryphobia.com says that these images contain cluster of holes which induce fear. And this fear covers “clustered holes in skin, meat, woods, plants, coral, sponges, mould, dried seed pods and honeycomb”³⁰. Finally, we see these images have started featuring wounds and diseases.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter, we looked at the several problems that we encounter in the urban legends of Assam. In order to find out the problems, some realities related to the problems have been explored from various resources as they certainly influence the folkloric communication in getting transmitted spontaneously from one individual (or group of individuals) to another undergoing several modifications.

²⁹ <http://www.foax-slayer.com/breast-larvae.html>

³⁰ “Tryphobia”, Wikipaedia: The Free Encyclopaedia

Chapter 5

Identification of Obstacles being tackled in the Text of Urban Legend

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt is made to identify the obstacles being tackled in the texts of urban legends. For the aforementioned purpose, the study is divided into three sections namely: an analysis of the network of practices within urban legend telling (5.1); the relationship of semiotic aspects within these networks of practices identified (5.2) and a textual analysis of urban legend (5.3).

5.1 An Analysis of Network of Practices Located within Urban Legend Telling

A network of legend telling traverses through several stages. Each stage contains some obstacles in analyzing the problems. Obstacle to a problem can be identified within the networks of practices in which it is located at different levels of generality (Fairclough, 2001:239). It is believed that “Properties of discourse”, are part of the obstacles only. This analysis involves gaining an understanding about - how the ‘Order of Discourse’ is structured and how Semiosis itself is structured within the network of practices (Fairclough, 2001:239).

The network constituted within the process of legend telling, is a part of the narrative tradition which, includes the oral and the written tradition as both. Dégh admits that we speak of legend as an entity where, we find real and assumed knowledge, fears, magic anticipations, hopes and passions. Formation, structuring, compiling of legends generate up-to-date variants in limitless numbers which are always tailored to current needs. The story has content or some facts of events. The content is told by words or other means, and it can be formulated into words and then it becomes a text (2001:400). Additionally, personal choices of the topic, amalgamation of different motifs including traditional and popular further proves the creativity of the narrator, and show an artistic behaviour too. Moreover, through the process of communication, “sender” as initiator, and passivity on the side of “receiver”. The senders select and

send the messages that appeal to them in anticipation that the message will also appeal to the receivers and receivers will obtain what they want (Dégh, 2001:420).

The study of urban legend has been followed by two contradictory views. Firstly, the assumption that urban legend is false and secondly that the urban legend(s) are cautionary tales, at-least reflections of the fears of the modern society (Bennett, 2005: 304). The practice of urban legend telling always brings together some small clusters of extraordinary, eccentric, perhaps, even bizarre narratives that provoke laughter, pity, goose-pimples or raised eyebrows including ready belief, followed in all probabilities by a little meditative reflection and personal reaction (Nicolaisen : 1997). These reactions serve as the identifiers of the very nature of the legends, thereby associating these legends with lengthy narrative sessions or discrete settings similar to the ones, in which folktales or jokes are told. In case of oral legends, the performer sometimes performs in a modified way for gaining the listener's consideration, which might change the text to a certain level. Thus, narrator's inherent intent and the desire play a crucial role in the performance of an urban legend. As such, the performer's personality gets blended with the legend and thereby the legend gets a new individual touch. Therefore, the authenticity of the problem reflected in the text of urban legend is sometime doubtful to certain extent. This is certainly a prime difficulty in order to find out the validity and existence of the problem.

Transmission of folklore happened through multi-conduit system (Dégh, 2001:421) which includes photocopiers, fax, internet and so on. Internet can be identified as an ideal channel for transmission of legends, through chat forums, blogs, online promotional activities and multiple interrelated concepts. Cyber-ethnography is similar to conventional ethnography as explained by Internet scholar Denise Carter. It has got the similar moral obligations of dealing with human subject, such as the principle of non-maleficence, the protection of anonymity, the confidentiality of data and obtaining of informed consent (Carter, 2005:152).In the media-oriented urban legends found in this study, the network constitutes of the social space, through which the media files are transmitted. These days, internet provides easy access to tools for making several kinds of changes such as cut-copy-paste, which can be done so easily. On similar lines, morphing of the images and later-on merging them with another images or the text-messages becomes very convenient and this in-turn makes the

image-added messages completely unpredictable. Therefore, this finding brings the content of the text messages under severe uncertainty. Thus, it may be easy to find out a text on a venue like the internet, but the context may be difficult to ascertain. This becomes an obstacle in order to find out a problem in a text.

Jan Brunvand said, "Urban legends are folklore, not history...To some degree urban legends must be considered false" (Bennett, 2005:305). In this case, Bennett states the assumption of rumours and legends lacking standards of evidence (Bennett, 2005:305-306). Moreover, from the point of view of psychological approach, the specialist documenter, interpreters of urban legend claim their unique sights. Their expertise enables them to open a window on contemporary culture by revealing its hidden fears and coded messages and thus to interpret the culture to itself (Bennett, 2005:306). Therefore, in that case, it is necessary to get exact information and make sound judgment in urban legends. Bennett further argues that central issues of legend study are based on "evidence" and on "truth". Problem arises when we (as readers) ponder over the questions such as - "What is the 'evidence?'" and "Who decides what the 'evidence' is?"

Thus, obstacles as a part of the discourse of urban legends can be considered as relatively marginal but constitute formidable obstacle to tackling the problem.

5.2 An Analysis of the Relationship of Semiosis to Other Elements within the Particular Practice(s) concerned

Fairclough's CDA is a consolidated "three dimensional" framework consisting of spoken or written texts, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice related to it. Problems and issues reflected in the urban legends can be analyzed in terms of text and language; genre and the order of discourse; society and culture. This framework can be further related to Gramscian theory of hegemony (Fairclough, 1995a:2).

Thus, the social practice of urban legend telling can be related to the account of social class, political power and the state in the modern society, especially in terms of Gramsci's concept of Hegemony. For Gramsci, in modern capitalist society, the political power of the dominant class in a society is based upon a combination of 'domination' - state of power in a narrow sense, control over the forces of repression

and the capacity to use compulsion , against other social groups and ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ or ‘hegemony’(Forges, 1988:249).

In this study, few cases were found where hegemony can be observed which can be listed as follows.

A hegemonic practice can be observed in case of the ongoing popularity of Internet where, all the juicy, crazy and spine-chilling oral story-telling sessions have been altered to be transmitted through e-mails and text-based messages (SMS). Marshal McLuhan has declared that “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 2003:17) in online transmissions. This declaration is sometimes juxtaposed with the adage which states, “Content is the king” especially in the cyberspace. The widespread acceptance of new media has changed the scale of human interaction. Internet itself as a new medium, is a novel way of conveying information about social interaction and is shifting the sense of, what it means to be a part of an audience for public-folklore programming. On the other hand, folklore - as content has important implications for this innovative media; for thinking about ways, in which public folklorists use the Internet. In many cases, collections are simply waiting to be digitized and widespread preservation efforts to convert archives and other collections, into a particular format easily exposes them to online applications. In this respect, using the Internet blends together the importance of the medium with the message; because with this, it addresses the dual goal of preservation and dissemination (Hansen, 2001:197). For instance, “Did you hear that?” has been replaced by “Did you read that?”, “Did you find the message?” or “Did you see that?” As a result, to maintain that particular legend-tradition of the post-modern world, the communication channels such as the photocopiers, telephoning, photography, tape and video-recording, e-mails etc. have become indispensable tools for the society (Dégh, 2001:298) and have been altered by the traditional oral communication. People would preferably make a shift from a traditional medium of legend performance to a convenient internet-based medium. The use of electronic media does not replace the folkloric exchange because it addresses the concerns where they are located and they remain members of the folk group and receive the legend from someone of the same kind (Dégh, 2001:298). This non-oral transmission has become a trend for today’s folklore performance unlike the oral circulation in older days. Hence, a hegemonic practice of dominance over orality,

is witnessed in the transmission of legends in present times. In this case, the discursive practices are public where, formulation of stories is also guided by some ground rules, routines, techniques and purposes of their communicative channels. Legends, in the form of messages are guided by some trained professionals, who make them in variable ways, telling them directly or selling something else and using legends for packaging (Dégh, 2001:199). Thus, the oral legend tellers are dominated by the modern technically sound online legend tellers, who translate, produce a text and sometimes attach relevant pictures for making the text of the legend more convincing.

Another aspect is the use of English language in widespread online circulation of the legends. Out of 11 internet circulated messages, 1 is published in Hindi and 1 is published in Assamese. Rest 9 out of 11 are published in English, thereby confirming the dominance of English language over other regional languages in Assam; where the native language is predominantly, Assamese. This certainly adds to preserve or restructure and renew the urban legends. In addition to this, as far as the power struggle is concerned, hegemony can be seen in case of the English language of transmission of the legends as well.

Hegemony can be linked to the problems found in the contents of the urban legends too. In case of the problems found in urban legends such as: “human trafficking”, “kidnapping”, “murder”, “assault”, “terrorism”, we find a hint of a dark lord under whom all the atrocities are being inflicted upon, where the power struggle continues amongst the victims. Nevertheless, existence of such a big racket is merely impossible without the help of a powerful authority. Examples such as practicing planned distribution of card soaked in Burundunga to women driving alone (3.2.4 Women under Threat), kids making the weapon to assault people (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids) and so on exhibit the hegemonic structure of the dominant forces.

The concept of hegemony can be seen in several other domains mentioned in the legends such as, legends related to religious beliefs (3.5.1 Holy Apathy; 3.5.2 Sacred Sign). These legends are considered as sacred in Assamese society and people have a strong belief on these, including the state machinery as well. Though, in one of the legends (3.5.1 Holy Apathy), we find authority (Govt.) willing to demolish a temple but the religious belief seems to be very powerful. In an instance, during the

construction of Tezpur Central University in Tezpur, Assam, a Shiv-ling was found which later on was dugged out. Shiv-ling is considered as a holy symbol to pray Lord Shiva. People of the area had a firm belief that very existence of Shiv-ling there, was the reason behind numerous snake-spottings in that area because snakes are also related to Lord Shiva³¹. Later on, the university authorities established a Shiv-ling near the university campus, in order to get rid of the snakes. Hindus (and Assamese as well) visit the temples not just to respect the deities but also to energize themselves with the positive energies. According to the people of Assam, when milk is poured on the Shiv-ling to do milk bathe, the flow of positive energy starts getting accumulated towards Shiv-ling. So, a person who is a devotee of Lord Shiva, gets the flow of positive energy into his body. Milk, is considered a very good conductor of positive energy. Milk of Indian cow, when poured on Shiv-ling while reciting mantra – “Om Namah Shivai”, strengthens the body, mind and inner consciousness of the devotee offering prayers. Other than this, Maha Shivratri is declared a public holiday, all over the country. Thus, it is understood that religious beliefs certainly get a hegemonic control in Guwahati.

Another very significant example of hegemonic struggle can be seen in case of medical conflicts between hospital authority and patients or patient’s families. In Assam, doctors are considered as the creamy layers of the society. In a dominant mode, they do whatever, whenever and howsoever, they wish to do. As a result, sometimes despite of their mistakes, the victimized patients (and their families) do not protest or argue at all, against them. The entire medical unit has got such powerful and influential ties that they can veil their mistakes easily. In the legends related to medical horrors, we find dominance of doctors (and medical staff) over the common and helpless patients (and their families). We also find opposition and confrontation by the general people in case of negligence from doctor and other medical staff. Whatever, the protest is but because of the links with the higher authorities, the medical authority escapes easily; though there are exceptions to this finding. Nevertheless, some common people have suffered a lot; as a result of which, several campaigns such as “Stop Medical Terrorism” in Assam have been initiated. This campaign, under the aegis of Dr. Anamika Ray Memorial Trust, raises voice to draft a separate law for combating medical negligence. Despite of implementing numerous

³¹ Nath, Dr.A.K. (2016, November 20). Personal Interview.

efforts opposing them, the hegemonic power continues to thrive within the medical authority³².

Similarly, in an educational institution (whether a school, a college or a university), faculties (including the professors and the teachers) are endowed with the power to control the allotted class. During the examinations, they utilize their powers to decide - what is right and what is wrong? They have complete authority in punishing the student(s), whom they suspect, in the manner, they wish to. Often, they turn deaf ears towards the suspected student(s), and hence, no explanation is entertained, from the student. In such a manner, a hegemonic struggle continues between these two classes - namely, the teachers and the (victimized) students.

5.3 Textual Analysis of Urban Legend

Textual analysis comprises an essential part within discourse analysis studies. It comprises two different yet complementary forms of analyses: firstly, the linguistic analysis and secondly, the inter-textual analysis. It is understood that a close attention towards multiple linguistic or inter-textual analyses, will further strengthen CDA of urban legends. In the following, a systematic and detailed textual analysis to study the problems is being done in order to understand the obstacles tackled while performing these studies.

5.3.1 Text, Social Event and Social Practice in Urban Legend

Text is a broader term which includes written and printed texts as well as transcripts of (spoken) conversations and interviews as well as television programmes and web pages (Fairclough, 2003:3). Texts being an element of social events, have causal effects by bringing about changes in our knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values , actions, social relations, material world and so forth (Fairclough, 2001:8).

For analyzing the “text” of urban legends, we need to refer to two different products - firstly, a product of direct oral exchange, coming from the ordinary day-to-day conversations, constituting straight oral folklores. They are memorable, repeatable and fit for recurring social situations. This can be seen as a part of the complex chain

³² <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/Activists-launch-drive-against-medical-terrorism/articleshow/52275073>.

of events of the broader tradition of oral communication in folklore. Secondly, a product of the legends which are communicated through other-than-oral means; to larger audience such as web-posts in internet and text-based messages (SMS) in modern cell-phones (Dégh, 2001:111). People might build up a website for any conversational genre such as a legend and people may join the Internet and become bearers, tellers and receivers of stories in a voiceless, faceless, imaginary face-to-face narrative medium that invents, learns, circulates, discusses and recycles legends from oral and printed materials (Dégh, 2001:112).

The causal effects of the textual elements of social events in social life, shape the structure of the text. “Functional” approaches to language have emphasized the “multi-functionality” of texts. Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics claims that texts simultaneously have ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ functions. Accordingly, multi- functionality of a text simultaneously represent aspects of the world (the physical world, the social world, the mental world); endorse social relations between participants in social events and the attitudes, desires and values of participants; and coherently and cohesively connects parts of texts together and connect texts with their situational contexts (Halliday 1978, 1994). Considering as the three main ways in which discourse figures as a part of social practice – “ways of acting” , “ways of representing” and “ways of being” - which can be referred to Halliday’s ‘ideational’, ‘interpersonal’ and ‘textual’ functions respectively. Fairclough has further related “ways of acting”, “ways of representing” and “ways of being” to three aspects of meaning – “Action”, “Representation” and “Identification” respectively.

According to Fairclough (2003:26), discourses figure in three main ways in social practice:

- Genres which suggests ways of acting and interacting, suggesting “part of the action.”
- Discourses which suggest ways of representation of the material world, of other social practices, reflexive self representation of the practice in question.
- Styles suggests bodily behaviour in constituting particular ways of being, particular social and personal identities.

Social practices can be seen as articulations of different types of social elements, which are associated with a particular social life. According to Fairclough (2003: 25), social practices are an articulation of the following elements:

- Action and interaction
- Social relation
- Persons (with beliefs, attitudes, histories etc)
- The material world
- Discourse (Fairclough, 2001: 25)

Urban legends can be seen in terms of a network of social practices and as a part of a genre chain. Being a social practice of transmission of knowledge and information through the day-to-day conversations, urban legend plays a significant role in our life. In urban legends, we find explorations of some occult phenomena, some extraordinary occurrences, deliberate deceptions narrated as tales, anecdotes, personal stories, jokes, rumours, anecdotes, and personal stories etc. Sometimes, the same stories have been told and re-told by some of these narratives. Folklorists have been long aware of the fact that traditional folklore genres are attractive formulas (Honko, 1984) to be filled with meaning at will. Therefore, it can be said that folklore has been used and abused for both the creative and destructive purposes (Dégh, 2001:5). Being an ideology- sensitive par-excellence, urban legends are popular in society, which play a leading role in the development and maintenance of a ‘culture of fear.’ Therefore, urban legends, whether it is oral or online can be considered as a sub-genre of folk-literature, which guard against some potential danger. Transmission of such messages consisting of warnings of some reported crimes, scams, deceits end up reinforcing the discursive structure of fear and concern of the common people. Urban legends in the form of web-messages have been collected from the people living in Guwahati. These are also considered as legends, sharing the same fear and anxiety in the globalized world; it does not matter how geographically far those others are. These can be seen as a part of the chain of events such as discussions (of fear, anxiety, relating to the day-to-day incidents); typing and producing messages (by incorporating images within these messages); publishing them online (in an appealing way) and transmitting them (arousing responses from the readers).

In this study, a relational view of texts and textual analysis will be considered in order to connect the ‘internal’ relations of urban legends such as semantic, grammatical , lexical (vocabulary) to the ‘external’ relations such as social events, social practices and social structure through the mediation of an ‘interdiscursive’ analysis of the genres, discourses and styles.

5.3.2 Intertextuality and Assumption

“Intertextuality” and “Assumption” are two different terms that can be referred to the “external” relations of the text. These two features of a text show the relations between one particular text and other texts, which are “external” to it and outside it, yet in some way brought into it. Reflections of these features of a text address few themes of social research such as “social difference,” “universality or particularity” and “ideology”. An analysis of “intertextuality” and “assumption” of urban legends in the following paragraphs will bring other external “voices” into the texts of urban legends and will decrease the difference by assuming common grounds on which the texts are based upon.

5.3.2.1 Intertextuality

For any particular text or type of a text, there is a set of other texts and a set of voices which are potentially relevant and incorporated into text (Fairclough, 2004: 47). It may not be possible to identify these sets with great accuracy as they may be rather wide and multifaceted. Intertextuality functions as an important and powerful attribute in creating and disseminating texts that involves a direct or indirect relation between two or more texts (Bremner, 2008: 306). This analytical tool is useful to get some rough idea such as, “Of relevant other texts/voices, which are included, which are significantly excluded? Where other voices are included? Are they attributed? Are these attributed voices directly reported or indirectly reported? and so on (Fairclough, 2004:192).

Mark Glazer has pointed out that “there is no structured context for the narration of contemporary legends. There is no possible way a folklorist can know where and when the performance of a contemporary legend will take place” (Brunvand, 2002:93). Glazer has told that the typical setting for the narration of urban legends is nothing but “casual and spontaneous” (Brunvand, 2002:93). In a typical urban legend, one encounters some shocking elements such as lurking criminals, threatening maniacs, vague unknown dangers, faulty products and isolated victims and all are set in the context of everyday life (Brunvand, 2004: 13). In this study, data are a set of urban legends consisting mostly of reports of threats which is mainly related to supernatural things, bodily contamination, medical horror, human trafficking,

academics and terrorism. In the study, 45% texts offer some kind of explicit warnings to the reader concerning ways in which he or she could avoid falling victims to the threat, 13% of the texts reflect anxiety and 42% of the text (of urban legends) were exchanged in social situations such as family and friends meet, community centers and college. Informants in these stories are found to incorporate their friend's voice as something that has happened to his or her close acquaintance (a friend of a friend, or FOAF). In "3.3.1 Inflated Hospital Bill", "3.3.2 Needle Left Inside", "3.4.1 Forbidden Snap", they have referred to their friend's version. It has been seen that all these collected oral narratives convey information that concerns subjective human experience and answers an implicit question. Each legend informs, explains, instructs, warns or exemplifies through the telling of an extraordinary, unexplainable experience. For example: "3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect", "3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride", "3.6.2 Wrapper Blues", "3.3.2 Needle Left Inside" and so on are the stories circulating in the oral tradition with odd details. They co-exist in several versions and are unverified, although told as true.

Young people seem to be more enthusiastic about supernatural or extra-normal experiences. It is observed that while talking about supernatural incidents and academic legends, participants established an appropriate social context, network and stabilize the text while they also multiply it by continued re-telling. On the other hand, while talking about "3.6. Nudity, Dalliance and Nightmares," informants are much controlled and shy. They hesitate to speak in front of their siblings and I had to collect it later alone. So, in such cases, not much discussion was found. While collecting legends regarding "3.5. Faith in Religion" it is observed that informants are much keen about religion. While visiting their house it is seen that their rooms are full of pictures of gods – Lord Ganesha, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva and Parvati. It is found that they are much into the religious values and believes related to the miracles of God. They believe these two legends to be true and signify sacred. Thus, different context, individual conventions of style, performance of the legend teller makes every legend different from each other and places them in their own position.

Legend tellers are subjective, personal, introspective and it persuades the teller to reveal his or her feelings (Dégh, 2001:211). During the study, it is found that most of the legend exchange session turns to a conversation and a discussion later on where,

the speaker becomes emotional too. For instance, while talking about “3.1.3 Private Schools”, the speaker who is an employee in a private school becomes very sentimental during the performance of the legend. She realizes that like many people, she is also a victim of the larger entity of the private organization. Legend telling session comprises of all the supporting information related to the legend which satisfies their audience’s curiosity. And then audience’s familiarity with the subject helps out the speaker with additional information (Dégh, 2001:220). While discussing about “3.4. Supernatural Incidents” and “3.3. Medical Horror” participants are very much keen in informing the incidents. While talking about the legend “3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera,” two of the five participants in that legend telling session are not found to be convinced with the pictures. They think the pictures to be examples of trick photography. Urban legend tellers are guided by their own tastes and interests. It is observed that legends like, “3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride”, “3.2.4 Women under Threat”, “3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids”, “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise” are mainly popular among ladies. All kids-related stories are collected from mothers who have got small kids. They believe these narratives to be based on real life situations in human time and are about events involving general people. They think it could happen to anyone and has its practical value in warning people about specified threat of human life.

Urban legends discussed so far in this study are considered to be as a part of oral communication. However, beyond the natural expression, other non-natural legend transmission has been made available by modern technology. In this study, several urban legends have been collected from Internet as well. It has been observed that now-a-days, internet has become a popular convenient social media to socialize, to discuss, to share various affairs. Like any traditional performance of folklore, no matter where they are, people in their groups, exchange, comment, discuss on urban legends in social media. Folklore performers may use any oral or non-oral mean to communicate legends (Dégh, 2001:298) where, legend tellers perform professionally. Their performance is public and the formulation of these stories is guided by ground rules, routines, techniques and purposes of their communicative channels. Collected legends reflect some social issues such as human trafficking, women safety, food contamination and so on, which address anonymous, unknown mass of audience at large influential for a great variety of purposes (Dégh, 2001:299). An addition of the

photos, morphed images to the narratives has made some texts more convincing and powerful. Narrator often begins by declaring that, " This didn't happen to me, but it has happened to a friend of a friend of mine..." Such a pseudo-connection to the story lends the tale some reliability but still tracing the exact origin of an urban legend becomes very difficult. Since urban legends are FOAF tale, the voices are reported indirectly. As such, there is no direct reporting (quoting) of voices found in these stories.

It is seen that the included voices are those, who may be the supposed victim of the problem in future. Plenty of voices include some dangerous situations of kids and women. Problems are found inherently geared to the exploitation in case of teachers working in private schools, the poor innocent people that seek medical treatment in government hospitals, or sometime in private hospitals. Several voices, who have become the victim of infected food, sex and so on. Number of voices includes miraculous events, religious beliefs too.

5.3.2.2 Assumption

Assumption refers to the implicit meanings of a text. In order to refer to the term Assumption number of other terms have been used in literature of pragmatics and semantics such as, pre-supposition, entailment, implicature and so on (Fairclough, 2004:55).

Fairclough has distinguished three different types of assumptions:

1. Existential assumption: includes assumptions about what exists.
2. Propositional assumption: includes assumptions about what is or can be or will be the case.
3. Value assumption: includes all about what is good or desirable (2004:55).

Levinson (1983) further states that each of these assumptions are marked or triggered by some linguistic features. Existential assumptions are triggered by markers of definite reference such as definite articles and demonstratives such as "the", "this", "that", "these", "those" and so on. Propositional assumptions are triggered by certain factive verbs such as - "forget", "remember" and so on. On the other hand, value assumptions can be triggered by certain verbs such as - "help", "hate" and "love" and so on.

Numerous existential assumptions can be referred to as the urban legends, which are either circulated orally or online; among the people of Assam. This identifies to the existence of several problems such as kidnapping, fraud, which can be assumed in the texts of urban legends of Assam. Following sentences can be considered as few examples of existential assumptions:

- *This* particular story is alleged to have occurred during the time when Deluxe City Bus Operation was first introduced in the city of Guwahati (3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride).
- *There* is a lady may come to your house and ask for annual membership of Rs 200 for gas stove maintenance (3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise).
- *This* particular story has starred quite a rage among the people of Assam. Many leading Assamese magazines and dailies have published this sensational topic of fixation for quite a long time (3.4.1 Forbidden Snap).
- All malls have small car rides for kids where the kid is made to sit in a ride around the floor (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert).
- *There* is a syndicate of criminals selling beautiful key chains at Public Places, Airports and Petrol Stations (3.7.1 Free Key Holders).
- In *that* way, existence of snakes projects the appearances of Hindu God, Lord Shiva and his wife, Goddess Parvati (3.5.2 Sacred Sign).

Propositional assumptions are assumptions triggered by certain factive verbs:

- And lastly, the watchman explained what was *thought* to be true tale (3.1.1. Miraculous Hands).
- The new boy *thought* this boy to be his senior roommate and he did not dare to ask anything as it would be against the rules where only seniors ask questions (3.1.1. Miraculous Hands).
- They died outside the country (3.2.3 Charity for Profit).

- This drug is four times more dangerous *than* the date rape drug (3.2.4 Women under Threat)
- Such incident *can* happen with everyone (3.2.4 Women under Threat).
- She *may* ask for using your toilet and *may* call her group and explain the position and situation of the house; and they will break in and rob each and everything in your house (3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise).

Few numbers of urban legends show that there are some value assumptions that stand on the ground of religious beliefs:

- In India, snakes are considered as the *symbols* of heavenly bodies among the Hindu communities (3.5.2 Sacred Sign).
- If any mark or anything *resembles* that of a snake, it is supposed to be very auspicious (3.5.2 Sacred Sign).
- It was sheer *luck* of the two ladies that they were let off by their captors without harming their chastity or abusing them physically (3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride).

Thus, occurrences of different types of assumptions in urban legends are related to the various types of problems reflected in these texts. This assumptions show how bits and pieces of popular knowledge can be combined, confronted, dropped or added in virtual texts following the beliefs or intents of their readers and re-producers. As Fairclough has mentioned, existential and propositional assumptions may also be discourse specific like a particular discourse includes assumption about what there is, what is the case, what is possible, what is necessary and so forth (Fairclough, 2004:58). Assumption, identified here in this study show the circulation of certain incidents reflecting some major social problems related to human trafficking, food contamination, terrorism, hospital and so forth which presuppose the fear and anxiety of possible crimes and violence that may occur in future.

Ideological work of text is connected to hegemony and universalization. Text can be seen as doing ideological work in assuming, taking as an unquestioned and unavoidable reality. Thus, ideological assumption is indeed effective along with other

propositions and beliefs, in sustaining relations of power (Fairclough, 2004:59). Significant number of urban legends assume about violence, academic problems, food security and so on in the study. Nobody denies that crimes like kidnapping, assault, mutilations, food contamination do occur, but it is observed that such structural traditional stories with their repeated motifs and unverified details are a part of the urban legend tradition, but not real world (Brunvand, 2001:469). Urban legends based on the religious assumptions show the power of Indian tradition of religious belief. A number of trick warnings, circulated via Internet assume the hypothetical violent attacks upon the innocent people.

Thus, the analysis of urban legends with reference to intertextuality and assumption can be seen in terms of claims made by the legend teller and the sender of the messages, who believes it to be true. They claim that what is informed is actually said, that what is assumed has indeed been said or written elsewhere.

5.3.3 Genre and Generic Structure

Genres are the discursive aspects of ways of acting, of producing social life in the semiotic mode (Fairclough, 2003:65). Individual genres can be analyzed in terms of three aspects: Activity, Social Relations and Communication Technology (Fairclough, 2003:65). In Critical Discourse Analysis, “genre” is defined as a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity (e.g. interview, narrative exposition) (Fairclough, 1995a: 14). In order to study the contemporary legends in this study, the texts have been analyzed in terms of Social Activity, Social Relation and Communication Technology in the following way.

5.3.3.1 Social Activity

Urban legend can be considered as a discursive activity which touches the most sensitive areas of our existence and it gets manifested in our day-to-day discussions, contradictions, additions, implementations, corrections, approvals and disapprovals during all phases of transmission from their inception through various courses of elaboration, variation, decline and revitalization (Dégh, 2001:2-3). Paul Smith has declared that the contemporary legends are primarily a conversational genre, they may be found embedded in other type of traditional discourses such as jokes, memorates, rumor, gossip, personal-experience narratives and in diverse settings ranging from

news-reporting to after-dinner speeches (Smith, 1999: 5-6). They do not have an artistically developed form and in general, they use informal and colloquial language. They may or may not be an elaborate, underdeveloped or fragmentary narrative or find expression as an essential part of narrative, a statement of belief or as a reference or allusion to a narrative or proto-narrative. Folk narratives have always existed in both oral and non-oral forms. Scholars have acknowledged that we no longer depend on the fellowship between storyteller and audience (Dégh, 2001:166-167).

In terms of network of practice and as a part of genre chain, urban legends are nothing but the process of storytelling. Throughout the years, there have been various attempts to describe the characteristics of narratives. Propp found thirty-one functions of folktales in his study of morphology of folktales (Propp, 2003). Later, Barthes narrative studies concentrated on the study of both text and context together in Critical Language Studies (Barthes, 1977:83). On the other hand in Variation Theory, the notion of 'overall' text structure which is analogous to the concept of generic structure became central in much of Labov's (1972a) work on discourse. In case of urban legend, the narrator has mainly completed an action by narrating a particular incident, which represents various aspects of the physical, social and mental world. And thus, legends coherently or cohesively connect parts of texts together and their situational context. Thus, text of an urban legend completes three main functions of a text, which is interpersonal, ideational and textual respectively. This way, urban legend has a predictable and a well-defined generic structure, which can be summarized as follows:

Title + Lead Paragraph (the opening paragraph of the story) + Satellites (paragraph 2 & 3) + Wrap-up (paragraph 4). Here is an example of an oral legend (3.1.1. Miraculous Hands) that follows the above generic structure:

Table 5.1 Generic structure of urban legend

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title | Miraculous Hands |
| Lead Paragraph | Once in the beginning of a new academic session in Gauhati University, a fresher was allotted a room in a hostel. His roommate had not returned home after the vacation. Therefore, this new boy knew nothing about his senior room partner. |
| Satellites | <p>However, after a couple of days when the new boy came to the hostel one afternoon, he found his room locked from inside. When he knocked the door, a boy opened the door from inside. The new boy thought this boy to be his senior roommate and he did not dare to ask anything as it would be against the rules where only seniors ask questions. Henceforth, the new boy went to his table and opened a book while the senior went and lay on his bed.</p> <p>After a while, again a knock was heard from outside and the new boy stood up from his chair to open the door. But, to his utter astonishment and fear, he saw his senior room partner, who lying on his bed was extended his right hand from the bed itself and opened the door. His hand became almost three times longer than usual at that moment. The new boy tried to follow him but he had already vanished in the dark.</p> |
| Wrap up | After the initial hustle and bustle, the new boy made a thorough search in and around the hostel campus but no avail. And lastly, the watchman explained Embedding what was thought to be true tale. He said that the boy who had vanished in the air was once a boarder in the hostel and had committed suicide due to excessive ragging by the seniors. And since that inauspicious gloomy day he used to appear occasionally in the hostel but he did not harm to anyone. |

A non-mediated face- to- face conversation has been observed, where the speaker has taken over the entire conversation. Though the interviewer is found to be taking turn to express her excessive excitement, but that is not an interruption. This is nothing but the expression of venting out her increasing interest and excitement blended with terror as well.

Narrative can be defined as having clear boundaries, a linear structure, and recognizable stage in its development. Classifying and delineating story patterns are the two stages of narrative study. One of the most influential theories was written in 1972 by sociolinguist William Labov. His research essay "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax" isolates recurring narrative features in narratives. His theory is based on sequence narratives being "one method of recapitulating past

experience by matching verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events that actually occurred” (Labov and Waletzky, 1997:12). They argue that the 'overall structure' of a fully formed narrative of personal experience involves six stages (1997: 32-41):

1. Abstract – How does it begin?
2. Orientation – Who/ What does it involve and when/where?
3. Complicating Action – Then what happened?
4. Evaluation – So What?
5. Resolution – What finally happened?
6. Coda – What does it all mean?

Urban legend collected from Internet as a form of web message can be clearly placed under the narrative type of prose discourse, since they can be considered as narratives with the goal of informing, warning and maybe to a lesser degree, entertaining sometimes. Therefore, these texts of the urban legends collected from Internet can be demonstrated with Labov’s model. The following Table no. 5.2 exemplifies this in the few texts of the printed internet legends:

Table 5.2 Structure of urban legends demonstrated with Labov’s model

| Sections | 3.2.4 | 3.7.1 | 3.8.1 | 3.8.2 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Abstract | Share with everyone you know, particularly your wife, sisters, daughters, nieces, mother, female, friends and colleagues. | Urgent message. Mumbai Airport Urgent alert, please read and circulate. | Very imp please read. | Urgent Forward.

Note: Important msg from Hyderabad police to all over India: |
| Orientation | At a petrol pump a man offered his services as a painter to a lady filling petrol in her car and left his visiting card. | There is a syndicate of criminals selling beautiful key chains at Public Places, Airports, Petrol Stations. | A 10 years old boy has eaten pineapple about 15 days back and fell sick, from the day he had eaten. | For the next few weeks do not drink any product of Maaza. |
| Complicating Action | She started to feel dizzy and could not catch her breath. | They sometimes parade themselves as sales | Doctors diagnos ed that he had | A worker from the company has added his blood contaminated |

| | | | | |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| | | promoters giving out free key chains. | AIDS. | with Ebola. |
| Evaluation | Apparently, there was a substance on the card that could have seriously injured her. This drug is called 'BURUNDUNGA.' | The key chains has inbuilt tracking device chip which allows them to track you to your home or wherever your car is parked. | Pineapple seller had a cut on his finger while cutting the pineapple; his blood has spread into the fruit. When they had his blood checked...the guy was suffering from | It was shown Yesterday on NDTV. |
| Resolution | | Accepting may endanger your life. | Unfortunately, the boy is now suffering from it. | Pls forward this msg urgently to people you care. |
| Coda | Yes...such incident Can Happen With Everyone..Be safe | All are therefore requested to pass this message to colleagues. | Take care.
Please Forward This Mail To All The Persons You Know As Your Message May Save One's life. | Please pass it on to your families in India. |

It is observed that the narrative composition in e-mail format urban legends reveals two important aspects: first of all, the abstract in all these texts are constrained to the title of the message. Due to the very limited space, the description is very brief and to the point which calls for the readers' attention. 64% online text of urban legend contains some type of warning or caution such as "Share with everyone you know, particularly your wife, sisters, daughters, nieces, mother, female friends and colleagues" in 3.2.4 Women Under Threat , "3.7.1 Urgent message. Mumbai Airport Urgent alert, please read and circulate", "3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect" etc.

Another very important aspect of narrative structure in urban legends lies in their coda. All texts signal the end of the narrative by overt reference to onwards call of action, after reading the narrative. The reader must take measures not to fall victim or be responsible enough to spread the news by forwarding the message. Thus, in a way,

it indicates that the turn-taking of the sender has ended once the reader reads it and now is time for the reader to initiate his turn.

In the internet texts, Internet abbreviations like *imp* instead of *important*, *pls* instead of *please* have been used. In Hymes language, the “economy of effort” (Hymes, 1974) has been maintained. Moreover, few of these internet legends include photographs and images as well. In such examples, the text is made up of different parts and there are two major styles which can be identified. In the first case, text consists of a ‘leader’ photo + highlighted quote, as in legend no. 3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera and 3.8.3 Water Contamination. In the second case, text consists of title + photograph + series of factual statements for example in legend 3. 2.4 Women under Threat, 3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids, 3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise and 3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect. In all these texts, the sequence of elements in the body of the text is topically controlled.

5.3.3.2 Social Relations

Social relations are relations between social agents such as organizations or individuals in a particular discourse. Genres constitute some particular social relations between interactants such as social organizations, groups or individuals (Fairclough, 2003:74). Communication can be mainly between organization or groups or individuals or combine different types of social agents. Brown and Gilman (1960) suggested that social relations can be of two types: ‘power’ and ‘solidarity’ or ‘social hierarchy’ and ‘social distance.’ In this part, an analysis of the social relations in urban legends has been done to explore the social relations among the various social means present in the narratives.

There are few legends where power, social hierarchy and social distance is very much evident. Contemporary legends, “3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt” and “3.1.3 Private Schools” illustrate social hierarchy and social distance in case of an institutional power over individuals. The organization is operating on a regional scale whereas the individual is occupying a specific backdrop; this exhibits the exploitation of private school teachers and the power of educational system as well. Similarly, “3.1.1 Miraculous Hands” is an example of prevalent junior- senior concept in hostels, where social distance is a much crucial part of the student’s life in Assam. Legends about

“3.3. Medical Horror” show a substantial social distance between the organization and the individual(s) of the society. These two legends certainly show the negligence of the hospitals and helpless poor state of the patient(s) and their respective families.

Pre-occupation of supernatural power in urban legend is a very common phenomenon, which is beyond our reach and control. Since the early forties of twentieth century, “The Vanishing Hitchhiker”, a horror legend has remained in the focus of American folklorists and is considered as a classic legend (Dégh, 2001:230). Such scary urban legends are likely to be supernatural and the favoured plots feature corpses, cemeteries, helpful strangers, nightmares and so on with a hint of some terrible conspiracy (Brunvand, 2004:26-27). This study also considers few urban legends as samples to study some paranormal situations within the society, which certainly characterize the inequality and social distance between normal human beings and the paranormals; the mystifying elements of the society.

In the legends related to “3. 2. Human Trafficking”, “3.7. Terrorism”, we find power of males which basically operate by being ‘physical’ at an increased scale over ‘female’ and ‘children.’ On the other hand, this entails potentially a responsive behaviour as many a times, standing together against such gruesome activities. Many a times, public demands lead to the initiation of new policies by the Government against those criminals such as the rapist(s) or the kidnapper(s) and similar offenders. These certainly echo the sense of solidarity among the individuals of the society. Lines such as, “Please Forward This Main To All The Persons You Know As Your Message May Save One’s Life” in “3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food”; “Be kind enough to forward this information ...” in “3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect”, show the concern of one person for another person.

There is another important group of urban legends, where we find naked body publicly getting exposed (Brunvand, 1981:125) for example, in “3.6.2 Wrapper Blues”, we see a rickshaw-puller coming and helping the poor girl with cloth and saving her from this helpless shocking accident. This shows the social solidarity of the people living in the society. This has certainly reduced the distance and has shown a power of shared aims which may save many lives. Thus, we see a complete positive attitude among the common people helping each other by passing important information.

5.3.3.3 Communication Technology

According to Fairclough (2004), discourses can be differentiated with respect to communication technology in terms of four possibilities:

1. Two-way non-mediated: face to face conversation.
2. Two-way mediated: telephone, email and video-conferencing.
3. One-way non-mediated: lecture etc.
4. One-way mediated: print, radio, television and internet.

On the basis of the above possibilities of communication technology, the urban legends collected in this study can be classified into two ways:

5.3.3.3.1 Two-Way Non-Mediated: Face to Face Conversation (oral text)

In this study, 54% of the total legends are collected from everyday conversations. It has been observed that often, my question triggered a session. There are few legends, which I came across during family visits. For example, I got an opportunity to talk about medical horror when I visited a lady who had the problem of enlargement of heart. There, I met few more people, who came to visit her. While discussing about her problem, few more stories were discussed, revealing medical terror. As a result, this discussion yielded 12 legends with a lady of 54 yrs as the lead speaker. Her interests further intensified the legend-telling session; thereby urging the other members, as well; to join-in. It was experienced that each legend is a response, commentary, evaluation and a reflection of his or her degree of belief, disbelief and doubt. Many a times, it was witnessed that the conversation continued for long hours and then it shifted from one topic to another, which in-turn characterizes group's general attitude towards the discussion.

In another family gathering, while initiating a discussion about some paranormal incidents, most of the participants started sharing various incidents about the extension of the dead, haunted houses located at more remote locations such as - highway stretches, cemeteries and spooky woods etc. Along with the texts, legend telling sessions are found with contextual commentaries and these commentaries vary

according to the theme. This style of telling-retelling started from personal experience narratives to objective incidents expressing diverse attitudes such as belief, disbelief, fear and superstition. Thus, we find a two-way non-mediated face to face conversation in case of the collected oral text of the urban legends.

5.3.3.3.2 One-Way Mediated: Print, Radio, Television and Internet (Non-oral Texts)

The classic forms of oral tradition of urban legend transmission have been replaced by the increasing complexity of the networking of social practices in contemporary societies, which is linked to new communication technology including telephone, radio, television and internet. Today people are far less dependent on oral transmission than earlier generations (Dégh, 2001:166-167). Brunvand argues that the contemporary legend is losing its vitality as an oral narrative legend and it has mostly shifted from “folklore into popular culture, where they become stereo-typed, standardized, exploited, co-modified and repackaged in a number of ways” (Brunvand,2001: xxvii). He further states that performances of contemporary legends are now being shaped by the Internet rather than face –to –face communication (Brunvand, 2001: xxviii).

The Internet plays a crucial role not only in case of dissemination but also in debunking them although, as Brunvand has pointed out, “even when a story is identified and revealed as a mere legend, that does not stop it from being forwarded and retold” (Brunvand, 2004:237). Russell Frank has considered the transmission of several forms of folklore, news lore and so on that transmits through technology, Internet as netlore (Frank, 2011:194). These have significantly enhanced both one-way and two-way mediated communications. Internet format brings together a platform that is taken from other technologies such as various websites, which combine information, arguments and debates at a global level. It combines different semiotic modalities, including photographs and language. In this study, 46% legends are collected from Internet. Out of this, 34% legends are descriptive without photographs whereas, 66% urban legends contain some digitally altered photographs followed by description. Two types of purposefully altered photographs are found in this study: first, real photograph and second, trick photograph. These photographic urban legends are seemed to be extraordinary yet believable and express anxiety about

threats to our society. Software computer applications have reduced the cost and labour intensiveness in producing these texts. As a result of which, these texts are available to amateurs on a range which was not possible earlier (Frank, 2011:215). Widespread communities on Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and Personal Homepages are also strongly involved in connecting, influencing and disseminating contemporary legends. Vos has further argued that despite the many directives from innumerable sources to check possible contemporary legends with responsible websites such as www.snopes.com, the mediated transmission of contemporary legends has not subsided. Apparently, these websites are functioning as a restoration house of the legends, emails and hoaxes and so on (de Vos, 2012).

5.3.4 Meaning Relations between Sentences and Clauses

In this part, I shall be looking at meaning (semantic) relations between sentences and clauses (or simple sentences), which is realized in grammatical structures. Attempt will be made to find out the causal and the logical relations between sentences and clauses or contrastive relations. Focus will also be given on how these semantic relations are 'realized' in various grammatical structures. A number of social research issues can be elucidated by focusing on these semantic relations such as legitimation, hegemony, equivalence and difference, appearance and reality (Fairclough, 2003:87). These will further assist to focus more on the social problems reflected in the urban legends in order to complete the textual analysis.

Fairclough (2003, 89-93) has distinguished six different semantic relations between sentences namely, Causal including Reason, Consequence and Purpose, Conditional, Temporal, Additive, Elaborative and Contrastive.

Table 5.3 Meaning relations in urban legends

| No. | Relation | % |
|-----|-------------|-----|
| 1 | Causal | 10% |
| 2 | Conditional | 5% |
| 3 | Temporal | 18% |
| 4 | Additive | 15% |
| 5 | Elaborative | 41% |
| 6 | Contrastive | 11% |

Causal relations appear in three ways like, Reason, Consequence and Purpose. They give a causal power to both the social structures and the practices as well; and to the agency of their participation. 10% relations are found to be causal relations in the study. For example:

- (Reason) Since the family requested them to release the patient with the confirmation of taking good care of her in their residence itself, they permitted to send her back home (3.3.2 Inflated Hospital Bill).
- (Consequence) However, it was the result that shocked the people (3.3.1 Needle Left Inside).
- Henceforth, the doctor advised the lady to take some medicine (Purpose) in order to minimize the pain (3.3.1 Needle Left Inside).

5% relations are considered to be Conditional relations which, can be seen in the sentences including:

- In one mall, (Conditional) as this guy turned a corner, he stopped the car (Additive) and forcefully smooches the child (3.6.3 Kids on High Alert).
- (Conditional) If u think they're too much to handle, leave them at home go to mall ... (3.6.3 Kids on High Alert).

These legends can be compared to some unverified reports which are narratives based on temporal relations between events to be specified. Following are the examples of temporal relations that can be traced in the legends:

- (Temporal) Then the entire family underwent a checkup (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).
- (Temporal) Immediately a group from the hospital went to the pineapple vendor to check (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).

Additive relations add sentences or clauses together. 15% relations are found to Additive. For example:

- (Additive) NOTE: Important msg from Hyderabad police to all over India (3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink)
- He saw different types of writings on the four walls of the room in (Additive) that spell like “save me save me” (3.2.1 Save Me Save Me)

Urban legends are collectively elaborated with alarming allegations of threats to the safety of the common people and their families. 41% relationships are found to be elaborative, for example in the sentences mentioned as follows:

- The words go around that once the daughter of an honest (elaboration) and respected Professor of Guwhati University resorted to unfair means in the examination hall (3.1.2 Suicide For Guilt).
- They died outside the country (elaboration) and their physical organs like kidneys were taken out to sell (3.2.3 Charity for Profit).

On the other hand, contrastive relations show the differences; for example in the following sentences mentioned as follows:

- The new boy tried to follow him (Contrastive) but he had already vanished as soon as he went out to the balcony (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands).
- And since that inauspicious gloomy day, he used to appear occasionally in the hostel (Contrastive) but did not harm anyone (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands).

Since the grammatical relations are realized in a range of grammatical and lexical (vocabulary) features of texts or to put it differently, there is a textual marker of these relations (Fairclough 2003:92-93). According to Fairclough (2003:92-93), grammatical relations between clauses within sentences are:

- a) Paratactic: where, clauses are grammatically ‘equal’ or ‘coordinate’;
- b) Hypotactic: where, one clause, the ‘subordinate’ clause , is subordinated to another, the ‘main’ clause and
- c) Embedded relations: where, one clause functions as an element of another clause.

Grammatical relations found in this study can be shown in the following way.

Table 5.4 Grammatical relations in urban legends

| Paratactic | Hypotactic | Embedding |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| 59% | 16% | 25% |

A number of social research issues can be explained by focusing on the above semantic relations. One of them is legitimation, which can be described as follows.

5.3.4.1 Legitimation

Any social order requires legitimation, a widespread acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how things are done. Much of the work of legitimation is textual, though text varies considerably in how explicit or implicit legitimation is (Fairclough, 2004:219). Legitimation gives the answer to the spoken or unspoken “why” questions - “why should we do this?” or “why should we do this in this way?” and so on (van Leeuwen, 2008:106). While critically analyzing the construction of legitimation in discourse, four major categories of legitimation have been distinguished (van Leeuwen, 2008:105). In the following sections, each type of legitimation and the way in which they are represented in urban legends will be further discussed.

5.3.4.1.1 Authorization

Legitimation refer to the authority of tradition, custom, law and persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested (Fairclough, 2004:98). Authority is related to the power between discursive participants. In that case, participants with power can be addressed as - the legitimizers.

In this study, the authorization can be referred to six types of legitimizers listed as follows:

A. Personal Authority

Personal authority is inherent in the status of a person in a particular context being represented and needs no explicit justification. In case of personal authority, the

person is given authority as somehow that particular person has got the knowledge on the subject, whereas others may not. “The watchman”, “Family”, “Parents and friends” in Table no 5.5 are supposed to know about the problem occurred in the text. Nominalization is found in one case i.e., Dr. Hardik Shah in Table no 5.5.

Table 5.5 The representation of Personal, Expert, Role Model, Impersonal authority with the authority of Conformity and Tradition

| Sample | Personal Authority | Expert Authority | Role Model Authority | Impersonal Authority | The Authority of Conformity | The Authority of Tradition |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3.1.1. | The watchman | | | | | |
| 3.1.2 | | Invigilator–in-charge | | The words
The hearsay | | |
| 3.1.3 | | | | | Private School Authority | |
| 3.2.1 | | | | The story | | |
| 3.2.2 | | | | The story | | |
| 3.2.3 | | | | A story | | |
| 3.3.1 | | The doctors | | x-ray report | | |
| 3.3.2 | Family | Doctors | | | Hospital staffs | |
| 3.4.1 | Parents and friends | | | Particular story,
Magazines and dailies | | |
| 3.5.1 | | | | | Guwahati Municipality corporation | |
| 3.5.2 | | | | | | Snakes, Shiva and Parvati |
| 3.7.1 | | Police | | | | |
| 3.7.2 | | | Indian Army | | CNX News | |
| 3.8.1 | DrHardik Shah | Doctors | | | | |
| 3.8.2 | | | | | Hyderabad police, NDTV | |
| 3.9. | New killer insect | | | | | |

B. Expert Authority

In the case of expert authority, legitimacy is provided by expertise rather than status. This expertise may be stated explicitly (van Leeuwen, 2008:107). Here, expert authority appears in several cases such as - we find “invigilator-in-charge”, “the doctors”, “police” explaining what happened to the victims. Expert authority here found to investigate, for example doctors diagnose, and police verifies and then comments. The experts’ utterances will carry some kind of recommendations, some kind of assertions that particular idea is the “best”, or is a “good idea” (van Leeuwen, 2008:107).

C. Role Model Authority

Only one role model authority is found in this study, which is “Indian Army” in 3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army in Appendix 1. Indian army is describing a problem related to terrorism and warning people in order to save them from a potential danger. This again reclaims the power and duty offered by Indian army to establish peace and security among the Indian civilians. People follow the examples of role model authority (van Leeuwen, 2008:107).

D. Impersonal authority

Not all authority legitimation is personal. Laws, rules, regulations are considered as impersonal authorities. Data contains several impersonal authorities such as, “the words”, “ the hearsay”, “the story”, “X-ray Report”, “Magazines and Dailies” in Table no 5.5 and so on.

E. The Authority of Conformity

In case of authority of conformity, we get the answer to the “why” question not “because that’s what we always do,” but “because that’s what everybody else does” or “because that’s what most people do”. Here the implicit message is that “everybody else is doing it and so should you” or “most people are doing it and so should you” (van Leeuwen, 2008:107). “Private School Authority”, “Hospital staff”, “Guwahati Municipality Corporation”, “CNX News”, “Hyderabad Police”, “NDTV” in Table

no 5.5 are the various the authorities of conformity, which seems to be same for everyone and need to follow as said.

F. The Authority of Tradition

Authority of tradition refers to “tradition”, “practice”, “custom”, “habit” and so on. Here, the “why” question is not “because it is compulsory”, but “because this is what we always do” or “because this is what we have always done” (van Leeuwen, 2008:108). There is only one instance of the authority of tradition found in the data “Snakes” and “Shiva and Parvati” in “3.5.2 Sacred Sign”.

Thus, with reference to the authorization in legitimation, we see that personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authorities influence the text in a significant ways. Their voices in the text give the authenticity to the text, which further enhances the meaning and adds more to the believability. At the same time, the authority of conformity and the authority of tradition confirm why we should do this or why does it happen in this way or that way. They forward the logic of a statement and establish it.

5.3.4.1.2 Rationalization, Moral Evaluation and Mythopoesis

In this part, I have attempted to find out rationalization, moral evaluation and mythopoesis of urban legends for legitimizing as it finds out the governing logic behind and aids in gaining a better understanding of the legends. Van Leeuwen (1999) has three more strategies of legitimation, which are rationalization, moral evaluation and mythopoesis.

Rationalization refers to legitimation by reference to the utility of institutionalized action and to the knowledge society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity, whereas moral evaluation refers to legitimation related to value system and mythopoesis is the legitimation conveyed through narrative (Fairclough, 2004:98). Rationalization is the clearest and most explicit form of legitimation. Observation from legends of academe “3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt” reveals an important aspect – the code of conduct. In case, anyone crosses the line demarcating the wise-unwise, legal-illegal conduct, they are tagged as being unwise, wrong and they get punished in due course. This legend discusses about a girl, who is tagged unwise and is barred from

appearing in the subsequent examinations. However, opting for such a drastic decision to vent out her dissatisfaction is not wise enough though. But, as far as the instrumental rationality is concern, it assumes certain agreed ends and legitimizes action or procedures or structures in terms of their utility in achieving these ends. Thus, this means that Rationalization overlaps with Moral Evaluations, in the sense that the reasons and purposes given for the procedures evoke value systems that are taken for granted and constitute “the generalized” motives which are used “to ensure mass loyalty”.

Another striking legend of academe, “3.1.3 Private Schools”, elaborates how the responsibility of being wise does not always lay with the seekers (such as students or patients or employees) only; rather legends bring forth the instances where, the working procedures of the providers (such as educational institutions or hospitals) need to be checked upon. Generally speaking, the non-management personnel (students or parents or teachers or patients etc.) do not always fall in-line with the vested interests of the management. Therefore, the motif of discontentment plays an influential role; paving way for such legends to spread; just like a wildfire.

Medical horrors legends such as “3.3.1 Needle Left Inside”, “3.3.2 Inflated Hospital Bills” and, “3.2.3 Charity for Profit” helped to understand yet another variation of a wise-unwise conduct and dissatisfaction of the service rendered. It is observed that in these legends, though the hospitals highlight the wise ideas such as to serve the needy (financially poor or quality-treatment seeking) patients, the real idea is altogether unwise and shocking. It is learnt that sometimes, the patients are treated without caution, shelling hefty amounts and sometimes it is shocking to learn that they are not treated for the diagnosed ailment only but, their bodies are used for practicing illegal trade (human trafficking) as well. This all is done without inkling to the patient’s families. In most of the cases, the families got hold of the real scenario only after the patient i.e., their family member passed away. To make the matters worse, some do not have a financial height to question or to raise their voice against the real culprits and the misdeed done. The dissatisfied families are forcibly left, to remain silent in the absence of the proofs and the necessary resources required to voice their opinions – which would in-turn prove the real culprit guilty.

The legends about the wise –unwise image overlap with the legends discussing kidnapping and encountering diseases by the victims. “3.2.1 Save Me, Save Me”, “3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids” and “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise” exhibit the un-wise behavior of kidnapping. “6.1 Mysterious Girl” exhibits how diseases are transmitted to the victims and further elaborate how victims are be fooled by the different players in the society. Legend “3.1.1 Miraculous Hands” describes how a hostel student witnesses some magical (or super-natural) powers in his roommate. Since the students (potential victims) themselves visit the locations mentioned frequently, the relatable and believable legends get viral fast easily. Supernatural legends (including the dead) do not happen within the academic institute premises only; they extend beyond academe boundaries to tourist places which are (again) frequented by the potential victims i.e.,the tourists. “3.4.1 Forbidden Snap”, mentions about the tourists who spot a (magical or say a supernatural or may be a dead) figure in a few of the pictures while, it is absent in some others which were clicked on same location and at the same time. Ghosts are not always (completely or partially) invisible but “3.4.2 Real Ghost caught in Camera” proclaims that ghosts do exist and proves how people have encountered and captured them for spreading a word around.

Samples such as “3.2.3 Charity for Profit” and “3.2.1 Save Me, Save Me” are perfect examples of human trafficking where, the women and children are left vulnerable under critical conditions. Samples such as “3.2.1 Nightmarish Night”, “3.2.4 Women under Threat”, “3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kid”, “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise” and “3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert” exhibit how the soft genders become an easy target for the deceivers thriving within the society. These are examples of deception legends, where the deceivers (individuals, gangs, representatives from organizations) deceive the victims (ladies, kids and children) either with a motif of theft, kidnapping or stealing some crucial information. Such legends focusing on deception (ranging from deceptive bargains to thefts and cheats) are forwarded with a caution to be aware of. Usually no attempt can be made to check the authenticity of the messages but still, readers forward it on humane grounds more so, to protect themselves from feeling guilty.

Another sort of legend helps in establishing the faith in religion (God) whereas certain legends attempt to reinforce the religious belief. Samples like “3.5.1 Holy

Apathy” and “3.5.2 Sacred Sign” exhibit how legends play a pivotal role in reinforcing the concept of the existence of the god and religion. In legend, “3.5.1 Holy Apathy”, an elephant is believed to display a behavior, where he refuses to go against religion by demolishing a Hindu temple, which is very much unlike being an animal; whereas in the legend, “3.5.2 Sacred Sign” spotting markings (signs) reinforces the godly images (symbolic of a Hindu god, Lord Shiva’s snakes) we have set in our minds since time immemorial. All these samples reinforce the existence of god by matching the shapes of the plants or fruits with some godly symbols. Though, there is no information about where these produces, originated and in what form and at what time but still, the readers choose to share such kinds of legends to convince more number of people: some, whose belief in god might become stronger after witnessing such kinds of proofs while the non-believers might reconsider altering their strong verdicts against the god and godly powers. Some might even share just in sheer amazement.

The legends of horror overlap with the motif of taboo in majority of legends. The motif of a taboo dealt with the horror of witnessing some embarrassing incident. “3.6.1 Mysterious Girl” legend depicts a sex taboo of embarrassment on encountering a dreadful disease such as AIDS on having sex with an unknown person.

In order to study the moral evaluations of the urban legends in this study, the legends here have been categorized according to the motif index introduced by Stith Thomson (Thomson, 1946). “3.1. Legends of Academe” can be classified as magic legends and wise-unwise conduct legends. Based on the guiding motifs, it is evaluated that:

- Students’ minds are very fragile and influential.
- Students should focus on their studies and should not go by the hearsay alone.
- Students should stick to wise code of conduct and refrain themselves from following an un-wise and unacceptable behaviour.

The legends related to “3.2 Human Trafficking” can be termed also as vulnerability legends, wise – unwise conduct legends and deception legends. It can be evaluated that:

- Adults should be alert while out of the house to avert the danger of kidnapping.
- Kids should be trained and guided not to hear or attend the strangers or unknown people.
- Women need to be aware of the surroundings including maids or baby sitters and other community helpers serving in vicinity.
- Keeping an eye on the helps left back at home. Being cautious and keeping all the necessary security checks up-to-dated is useful.
- Being alert and having someone escorting in case of travelling at odd hours is always safer. Keeping family or friends informed about timings of arrival and departure is much needed. Better to be stay-in-touch en-route.
- Better to be wary of the needy spotted on road. They might be bait to capture or harm in any sense.

The legends of “3.3 Medical Horror” can be called as dissatisfaction legends. It is evaluated that:

- We need to be aware of the common medical practices which need a medical intervention.
- Always better to have a second opinion before confirming any medical action with the first consultation.
- Comparing rates from different sources such as another doctor or hospital or from family and friends are beneficial.
- One should gain a clear understanding about what ailment is being diagnosed, what will be the line of treatment and what is expected during the tenure of treatment.
- One must look for the signs of discomfort or some surgical aids. One must question, raise his or her voice if there is anything found to be skeptical as one is paying for the service rendered.

- In case of any sort of dissatisfaction regarding the service of the treatment, family should raise a voice.
- Keeping all the documentation up-to-date and in place might prove beneficial, in case something negative happens.

The legends of “3.4 Supernatural Incidents” can be classified as magic legends and the legends of the dead. It is evaluated that:

- No one should completely rely upon the local hearsay. The purpose of travel might get defeated.
- Similarly, one should not completely disregard the local hearsay too as someone might not be willing to help, in case the need arises.
- Listening and following the tales cautiously and staying alert is a sign of intelligence.

The legends of “3.5 Faith in Religion” can be termed as mythological legends, marvels legends and legends of origins (includes plants and trees). It is evaluated that:

- We must respect every religion and religious beliefs.
- These legends should not be considered as the foundation of the religion or the religious beliefs. They are just the extensions.
- One should not come under any pressure of forwarding in case one is not convinced with the stated fact.
- Exceptions and marvels do happen in real life.
- If someone believes in some beliefs; one should respect their beliefs if not the belief itself. Counter them, might feel hurt.

The legends of “3.6 Nudity, Dalliance and Nightmares” can also be called as tabu legends, which can be evaluated as follows:

- Better not to establish relations (and/or have sex) with the unknown persons.

- It is not advisable to consume food or drinks offered by the strangers.
- One should not disclose one's personal identity to strangers.
- Better to refrain yourself from practicing what is considered a tabu – sex tabu or looking tabu.
- One should always wear protected and comfortable clothes.
- It is important to be extra cautious as you carry your dresses. One must ensure that all embellishments and extensions are tight enough and well-in-place before one steps out.

The legends of “3.7 Terrorism” can be classified (according to the motifs) as vulnerability legends, wise – unwise conduct legends, nationality or patriotism legends. It can be evaluated that:

- It is better not to accept the favor from unknown persons.
- One need not necessarily talk or hear to what the strangers are attempting to deliver.
- One should be alert as soon as one spot something fishy...raise an alarm.
- It is important to be extra cautious (but not superstitious) while boarding and leaving the public transport.
- One should refrain to be biased towards a single school of thoughts.
- It is better to take rational decisions rather than emotional ones.

The legends of dreadful contamination can be classified as wise – unwise conduct legends. It can be evaluated that:

- Maintaining a healthy hygienic regime is always sensible towards a healthy life.
- Consuming uncovered food or food from an un-trustworthy source may be dangerous.

- One should confirm any disease with the medical practitioner only. Going by hearsay is not worthwhile.
- In case of packaged foods and drinks, one must refer to the packet or company website for validating the incidents.
- It is important to refer to a trustworthy media websites for re-confirmations, as the case may apply.

Mythopoesis is a strategic legitimation conveyed through narrative as well as rather the building up of a picture of the new age (Fairclough, 2004:99). The urban legends here work as to legitimize the warning, sometimes hidden and sometime open. This warning is energetic and employs different techniques to employ reader's or listener's attention. A great part is written in capital letters time to time. Urgency and importance of dissemination of the urban legend is made more powerful by using the terms like, "Urgent forward" (3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect), "Very imp please read" (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food) and so on. These cautionary or moral tales characterize that certain good things will happen if we do share and follow whatever have been mentioned in the legends and certain bad things may happen if we do not follow these narratives.

Thus, rationalization, moral evaluation, mythopoesis plays a pivotal role in legitimizing the meaning of urban legend. Through the analysis of these legitimizing factors, we get to learn the logic behind the happening or mis-happening; morality out of the incidents and importance of knowing or sharing such narratives, where various characters and incidents exhibit certain problems, which seem to have great pain and suffering in the narratives.

5.3.4.1.3 Multimodal Legitimation

Urban legends are found in both oral and non-oral texts. In this study oral legends have been collected in Assamese, translated into English and then transliteration is being done. In case non-oral texts, legends have been collected from internet, where, different technologies become multi-modal. Texts of urban legends are full of images, videos, symbols, which have been used in order to make the text more powerful.

The data in the study presents several instances of multimodality that can be related to the legitimation of that which being narrated. Since, the data are typed, this allows going for the choice in the use of Italics, Bold and overuse of punctuation in a personalized way in order to make the sense more intense. For instance, in “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise” , we find alert in highlighted capital letters “BE ALER BE ALERT BE ALERT”; in “3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera” , we find the whole narrative in two lines written in bold letters i.e “LAST NIGHT AT 2.30 A.M GHOST SEEN AT NAGAON BY PASS. THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN BY A PASSENGER FROM HIS CAR”. Importance and intensity of the problems have been deeply empathized with signs like **X ... X, O X O X O X O** and so on.

In “3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect”, we find an image that represents a “new killer insect” sighted in India, which harbors a virus spreading through touch and which is able to “circulate [throughout] the entire human system in minutes.



Figure 3 Fabricated image based on wax

In January 2016, social media users began encountering an image as a form of online message, which warned that the insect and the harmful effects of its virus were graphically shown in accompanying images and were depicted in a hand with a large number of small holes throughout the palm and fingers but while examining it was found that here is nothing to this warning.

These images are fabricated ones combining elements from two separate and disparate life forms to produce a intuitive response from viewers. This fabricated image is based on trypophobia, which is defined as a “pathological fear of holes” (particularly irregular patterns of holes). Although many people claim to experience this disorder, but it is not covered in scientific literature or listed in the *Diagnostic*

and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Trypophobia is not listed in any major dictionary or in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This type of hands can be created easily with the help of wax and colours. The “insect” pictured here is real. It’s a giant water bug, a creature that is found in North America, South Africa and India but it is harmless to humans ³³.

Another example of multimodal legitimation is found in “3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise”, where we see a lady representative looting the household. Although, there may be incidents happening or possibility of happening in future, but it is difficult to confirm with a picture of that particular lady. Culprits will never allow anyone to click picture as that will create problems for the whole group. As such the authenticity of the picture of the lady is also doubtful.

The images we find in the data is to show the multimodality which has been used to legitimize the information in the texts of non-oral urban legends. Truthful or not, but these non-linguistic elements certainly substantiate more meaning to the plots of the urban legend they are related to and this always add more credibility to the text of the legends.

5.3.5 Clauses: Types of Exchange, Speech Function and Grammatical Mood

The focus in this part is on various types of exchanges, speech functions and grammatical moods, which can be distinguished on the basis of different types of exchanges in the sentence. This can be further developed with respect to the view of strategic and communicative action, promotional culture in case of urban legend study.

5.3.5.1 Types of Exchange and Speech Function

An exchange is a sentence of two or more conversational ‘turns’ or ‘moves’ with alternative speakers (Fairclough, 2003:106). Two types of exchange in the sentences have been recognized, namely: Knowledge Exchange and Activity Exchange (Fairclough, 2003:106). Knowledge exchange mainly focuses on exchange of information, eliciting and giving information, making claims, stating facts and so on.

³³ www.snoopes.com

On the other hand, “activity exchange” focuses on activity, on people doing things or getting others to do things.

Urban legend which is a type of narrative and hence mostly mono-logic, states some information about an incident with a request to pass the information. There is no question-answer session found in the data. Consequently, the statements are the most frequent types of sentences found in the study.

Table 5.6 Occurrences of the different types of exchanges found in the data.

| Knowledge Exchange (85%) | | | Activity Exchange (15%) | |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Statements of Facts (realis) | Irrealis | Evaluations | Demand | Offer |
| 96% | 1% | 3% | 95% | 5% |

It shows that these legends consist of mainly knowledge exchange, where one person initiates, who has the knowledge (the ‘knower’) and other person listens, who wants the knowledge. A higher rate consists of 85% exchange is knowledge exchange and only 15% is activity exchange.

The primary speech functions are distinguished in terms of the different moves in different types of exchange (Fairclough, 2003:108). Fairclough has distinguished four primary speech functions, which are: Demand, Offer, Question and Statement (Fairclough, 2003:108). These generalized speech functions could be elaborated and differentiated in terms of many different “speech acts”. For instance, “offer” includes promising, threatening, apologizing and thanking whereas, “demand” includes ordering, requesting, begging and so forth. Similarly, different types of Statements can be distinguished such as Statements of Facts (Realis Statement), Irrealis Statements and Evaluation (Fairclough, 2003:108). It is observed that most of the sentences present in collected oral legends are statements, whereas the non-oral legends collected from internet screenshots contain demand and offer.

Few of the statement of facts found in the data can be mentioned as below:

- In the beginning of a new academic session in Gauhati University, a fresher was allotted a room in a hostel (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands).
- At a petrol pump, a man came over and offered his services as a painter to a lady filling petrol in her car and left his visiting card (3.2.4, Women under Threat).
- Currently, she/this group is operating very actively (3.2.6, Kidnapping in Disguise).

On the other hand, an Irrealis statement consists of predictions and hypothetical statements. The data presents few occurrences of Irrealis statements too such as,

- She may ask for using your toilet and may call her group and explain the position and situation of the house... (3. 2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise)

Evaluations also seem to be engaging the reader to show a possibility in the following way:

- Accepting same may endanger your life. (3.7.1 Free Key Holders).
- So, please take care and make sure you don't accept cards when you are alone or from someone on the streets (3.2.4 Women under Threat).

Likewise, demands, commands are archetypically imperative. These are the second most- frequent type of speech function in the samples. These commands are passed by the sender to the reader who is supposed to pass the information by sending or re-sending the message. These demands are shown in the following way:

- If you find a kid is crying alone in the street and kid asking you to take him or her (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids).
- Kindly share this news with all the female friends and friends those who have sisters (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids).
- Do not feel ashamed to share (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids).

- Do not allow her into your house, instead try to inform police immediately (3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise)
- Watch water before you drink (3.8.3 Water Contamination).

‘Demand’ is modalized through the use of the term ‘Please’, ‘Kindly’ a type of entreaty modal adjunct in several sentences of the legends collected from internet.

- Please forward this message as much as you can (3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army).
- Please Forward This Mail to All the Persons You Know (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).
- Please share (3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect).

In above cases, the channel distances the sender from the reader, as a result there is no assurance whether the receiver will fulfill it or not. Although these entreaty modal adjuncts are the realization of requests, the text of the legend shows the importance of sharing. This is not a power relationship but a relationship based on alliance, agreement. No hierarchy has been maintained here.

Offer can be interrogative (e.g. Do you want to go?) But, in this study no interrogative lines were found but several imperative sentences were found such as:

- Welcome to the world of AIDS (3.6.1 Mysterious Girl)
- Hi guys! (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert)

Thus, we see that in urban legend, problems are mainly stated as a Statement of Facts, which are evaluated and through activity exchange, demand, command an offer is made in order to save the near and dear ones from that type of problem.

5.3.5.2 Grammatical Mood

Grammatical mood in Systemic Functional Grammar has been described as “the grammar of the clause in its interpersonal aspects” (Halliday, 1973:42). Mood is related to the topic of information or service and whether it is giving or demanding and the tenor of the relationship between interactants. Muir (1972:92) and Halliday

(1981:30) define mood as parallel to interpersonal communication which embraces three grammatical categories of speech function, modality and tone. The interpersonal meta-function concentrates on social roles and relations through formality degree, pronouns, clausal mood (whether declarative, imperative or interrogative) etc. The Mood element constituted by the Subject and the Finite (auxiliary or lexical verb) verb and the remainder of the clause as the Residue determine the Mood of a clause as verbal group. Hence, the order Subject+ Finite verb establishes the mood as declarative, while the order Finite verb + Subject establish the mood as interrogative.

In this present collection, sentences are mainly narrative with statements of facts and imperative with request and offer. No interrogative sentence was found in the entire sample. Imperative sentences with demands, commands are remarkably present in the data. There are a number of declarative sentences such as: “In the beginning of a new academic session in Gauhati University, a fresher was allotted a room in a hostel” (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands) and a number of imperative sentences such as “Kindly share this news with all the female friends and friends that have sisters” (3.2.6 Kidnapping by Kids). The difference of these sentences lies on the grammatical aspects. In declarative sentence, the order of grammatical elements is Subject followed by Verb (followed by other elements e.g. Object) (Fairclough, 2004:116). The table below shows the occurrences of the different moods in the data by number:

Table 5.7 Occurrences of moods in urban legend

| Declarative mood | Imperative mood |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 82% | 18% |

In a system network, a clause can be declarative or interrogative with wh or yes-no format including material, mental, verbal, relational, or existential processes. In terms of finite verb, subject and tense choice, SFL helps us to express the speech functions such as persuading, enticing, motivating, demanding, inviting, ordering, proposing, recommending, confirming, persisting and denying through a set of Mood clause systems (Fairclough, 2004: 109). In this study it is observed that communicative action have been made more concrete in terms of sharing and passing the information especially in the legends collected from social media. These messages represent and

advocate the sense of pervasive implicit value content of some factual statements and the calculative selection of factual statements for the values. These messages simultaneously anticipate another feature of urban legends: the messages ending with a warning tone. As such, a perplexing mixture of factual account and statement of warning about “Kidnapping” (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids, 3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise), “Dreadful Contamination” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food, 3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink), “Deadly Insect” (3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect) become the major attention of the general people in the legends.

As such, different types of exchanges, speech functions and grammatical mood applied to the texts of urban legend reflects the “strategic” and “communicative action” of the legend telling session.

5.3.6 Urban Legend as Discourse

The term “Discourse” is used across the social sciences in a variety of ways to represent the world which can be identified and differentiated at different levels of abstraction. Foucault

(1984) writes:

I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.

(Foucault, 1984)

“Discourse” is used abstractly for ‘the domain of statements’ and concretely as a ‘count’ noun for a group of statements or for the ‘regulated practice’ which governs such groups of statements. According to Fairclough, “discourses are ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the mental world of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth and the social world” (Fairclough, 2004:124). Discourses not only represent the world as it is, but they are also projective, imaginary, representing possible worlds that are different from the actual world and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. Discourses are different ways of representation, implying a degree of repetition, commonality in the sense that they are shared by groups of people and stability over time (Fairclough, 2004:124). One single discourse may contain different

representations of aspects of the world, which are represented as the main ‘themes’ (Fairclough, 2004:129).

Text of an urban legend are rooted in the social process of a collective tradition, using some contemporary figures, beliefs, values and norms in order to frame their presentation of the narratives in terms of actors, action and the setting. The text of an urban legend including both conversational and written have been selected in such a way that narrator produces it in a unique circumstance in which tradition, audience and a chosen method of communication interact. This is a balanced collaborative act where, narrator’s style shapes the words and the sentences into sense and conception converts epic units into coherent meanings. In case of urban legends, we mainly find some stories that can be connected to some transitory steps at critical turning points in the life cycle, appearing particularly as fearsome strain both physically and psychologically. Main themes are represented as academe, human trafficking, food contamination, medical problems, paranormal incidents, faith in religion, terrorism and so forth. We see people who seek the thrill of terror, are mainly young people, a child, a group of children and a woman. There are legends that address gender-related fears of both men and women too. They mainly find place in anxiety, curiosity about sex, conflict between norms and liberty of conduct, fear from violent crimes and attacks, the quest for food security and the curiosity about paranormal world between the living and the dead.

It is observed that the actors, actions, mannerisms and paraphernalia belong to the ordinary everyday living in case of an urban legend telling session. Each text, transmitted orally or online are coming out of the anxiety reflected in the adult stage, due to various insecurities found in the society. Spinning the legend around the cultural knowledge of the subject makes the performance of the story more artistic, enjoyable and meaningful. The cultural knowledge that people share, common fear that they feel; and their common understandings of traditional, educational and moral values makes the legend complete. Though these cognitive elements in the legend are restrictive but the narrators are free to make their own judgments, observing the ground rules of common consensus.

Discourses can be realized through different ways of representing in terms of a range of linguistic features. One of the most prominent features of a discourse is the features

of vocabulary- discourses ‘word’ or ‘lexicalize’ the world in particular ways. An example of such a covert semantic relation is in the relationship of “hyponymy”, which can be seen between “crime” and “kidnap”, “crime” and “rape” in examples like “3.2.5 “Kidnapping by Kids”. Similarly, “criminal” is being related to “pervert” in “3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert”. The vocabularies associated with different discourses in a particular domain of social life may be partly different but are likely to substantially overlap (Fairclough, 2004: 130). Different discourses may use the same words differently, which can be termed as “synonymy” for example, “forward” in “3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect” “Circulate” in “3.7.1 Free Key Holders”, “pass” in “3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink”, “share” in “3.2.6 Kidnapping by Kids”. Discourses are characterized by metaphor which represent one part of the world being extended to another for example, “Urgent forward” is related to “important msg” in “3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink”, “Very imp” is relate to “please read” in “3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food”. These show a shared understanding, a feeling of connection in the legends available for producing distinct representations of the world. This study further focuses on urban legend as a discourse of anxiety and fear, which is represented through various social events.

5.3.7 Representation of Social Events

In the systemic functional linguistics developed by Halliday, three main types of meanings can be found simultaneously: ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1985). Ideational meaning serves for the expression of “content” in language where, clause or simple sentence serves our experience to the real world. The textual meaning involves the use of language to signify discourse and the interpersonal meaning focuses the use of language to establish and maintain social relation. According to Halliday, these three types of meanings presented in language are not accidental but are necessarily in place as they need to perform function in social life (Halliday, 1985).

In constructing ideational function, there is one major grammatical choice involved: the system of transitivity. Transitivity refers to representation of meaning in clauses and worldview “framed by the authorial ideology” in a literary text (Fowler, 1985:138). Halliday identifies transitivity as follows:

A fundamental property of language is that it enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of their experience of what goes on around them and inside them. ...Our most powerful conception of reality is that it consists of “goings-on”: of doing, happening, feeling, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of language and expressed through the grammar of the clause... This... is the system of Transitivity. Transitivity specifies the different types of processes that are recognized in the language and the structures by which they are expressed (Halliday, 1985: 101).

Halliday’s transitivity system is based on three components of what Halliday calls a “transitivity process”, namely “the process”, “participants in the process” and “circumstances associated with the process”. Clause represents events and processes of various kinds and transitivity aims to make clear how the action is performed, by whom and on what. Based on Halliday’s transitivity analysis, Fairclough (2004) has presented a similar version of clausal analysis in order to study representation of different social processes in a text. Based on this, a systematic study has been done in this study, which will further help to find out the social processes and social actors.

5.3.7.1 Representation of Social Process

Fairclough has divided transitivity into six processes, namely, material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal and existential process. The following table shows different examples of different process types from contemporary legend that have been studied in the present study:

Table 5.8 Examples of different process types of urban legend legend

| Process Type | Examples
(Participants <u>underlined</u> ; Process in Regular; Circumstances in <i>italics</i>) |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Material | Due to <u>some drugs</u> injected <i>into his body</i> (CL 5 in 3.2.1. Save Me, Save Me) |
| Behavioural | <u>The child</u> tries <i>to fend the guys off</i> (CL 12 in 3.6.3.Kids on High Alert) |
| Mental | If <u>you</u> think <i>they are too much to handle</i> (CL 18 in 3.6.3 Kids on High Alert) |
| Verbal | <u>The parents</u> usually are chatting away (CL 7 in 3.6.3 Kids on High Alert) |
| Relational | This is <u>a story</u> of <i>one school going young boy</i> (CL1 in 3.2.1 Save Me, Save Me) |
| Existential | During the year 2002, there was <i>an eviction drive in the city of Guwahati</i> (CL1 in 3.5.1 Holy Apathy) |

Table 5.9 Processes found in this study

| Process | Percentage |
|-------------|------------|
| Material | 51% |
| Behavioural | 11% |
| Mental | 15% |
| Verbal | 11% |
| Relational | 11% |
| Existential | 1% |

According to Martin (2000), the representation of Ideational meaning through Transitivity system is relevant for a CDA, since ideational meanings construct power in assigning agency to some participants and not others. This dimension of meanings then becomes central to the analysis of inequality and power in discourse (Martin, 2000:276). Examination of different types of processes will unveil what participants are given the power of agency over each specific process type. Following sections will, hence, explain the use of different process types in the clauses that constitute the samples under analysis.

5.3.7.1.1 Material Process

It is seen that half of the clauses (51%) in these stories are found to be material processes. Most of the actors in these clauses are found to be victims, followed by a group of deceivers. Material processes always require that the actor, through some input of energy, brings about a concrete change in the flow of events (Halliday&Matthiessen, 2014). This change however can be either confined to the actor itself or extended to another participant. In these contemporary legends, the changes have been brought about by the victim and the deceiver. The victim's actions tend to unfold over the victims, while deceiver's actions tend to unfold over the victims. Moreover, the outcome seems to be confined to the victims representing a 'happening.' As such, it is seen that the outcome of the action does not affect another participant:

- She committed suicide *thinking that such an act would prevent her from facing the pangs of life* (3.1. 2 Suicide for Guilt).
- A 10 year old boy had eaten pineapple *about 15 days back and felt sick from the day he had eaten* (3. 8.1 Indian Roadside Food).

On the other hand, deceivers in material processes represent a ‘doing’, where the outcome of the process initiated by them extends to a different participant: the Goal. Moreover, the Goal of such material processes is mostly the victim:

- She may ask *for using your toilet* and may call her group and explain the position and situation of the house and they will break in and rob each and everything in your house (3.2.7 Kidnapping in Disguise).
- As this guy turned *a corner*, he stopped the car and forcefully smooches the child (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert).

It has been observed that the reader appears as Actor in material clauses that are commands. In that way, advising the reader to perform material processes in order to avoid becoming a victim of the reported crime or treachery. Following examples illustrate this:

- If you think *they’re too much to handle*, leave them at home go to the mall on ur own but don’t leave them (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert).
- If you find *a kid crying alone in the street and the kid asking you to take him or her home*, then you take the kid straight to the police station (3.2.6 Kidnapping by Kids)

In a few occurrences, a relation of causality is seen such as,

- If you ever see *this insect*, please don’t try to kill it with your bare hands or touch it... (3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect.)
- If you think *they’re too much to handle, leave them at home, go to mall on ur own but don’t leave them.* (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert)

Material action is related with the media reporting on the events such as,

- It was shown *yesterday on NDTV* (3.8.3 Packaged Fruit Drink).
- This msg forwarded *to me by TaTaHospDoct.* (3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect).

5.3.7.1.2 Mental and Behavioural Process

Mental processes in the samples are mostly performed by the victim. They contain 15% of the total processes.

Mental processes are concerned with the realm of perceptions and feelings or of consciousness: “ a ‘mental’ clause construes a quantum of change in the flow of events taking place in our own consciousness” (Halliday&Matthiessen, 2014:197):

- She was not able to reconcile *herself from the insult and the shame* (3.1.2 Suicide for the Guilt)
- And she felt *she needed to do something at that moment* (3.2.4 Women Under Threat).

Behavioural processes consists only 11% of the total processes. Few instances of behavioural process are:

- The daughter of an honest and respected Prof. of Gauhati University resorted *to unfair means in the exam hall* (3.1.2 Suicide For Guilt).
- She was accused *for writing a couple of words on her palm* (3.1.2 or Suicide For Guilt).
- He tried to open the door (3.2.1 Save Me Save Me).

5.3.7.1.3 Verbal, Relational and Existential Process

Verbal processes, which consist of 11% of total data, can be considered as an important aspect of representation in urban legends. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 253), in transitivity, verbal clauses might involve “any kind of symbolic exchange of meaning”, which connotes the idea that sometime, verbal processes may not look like verbal sometimes. In this study, examples like “Share as much as possible”, “Pass 2 all your contacts”, “pls forward this msg urgently” ,

where, *share, forward, pass* clearly refer to the transmission of the text and so, have been considered as verbal processes.

Victim is the most frequent Sayer in verbal processes. In some cases, victim simply interacts verbally with other people throughout the unfolding of the story or reports his or her condition. For example:

- He did not dare to ask *anything as it would be against the rules* (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands).
- Both the girls shouted and requested *the driver to stop the bus* (3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride).

Legitimizers, in the role of Sayer, mostly interact with the victim, where he explains what has happened:

- The watchman explained *what was thought to be true tale* (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands)
- The police was informed *by the parents and friends of these deceased boys* that one day before their death, these boys were discussing about mysterious photo (3.4.1 Forbidden Snap)

11% of the total processes are relational. Relational clauses in contemporary legends are those that characterize participants and they do so on the basis of three types of relation: they can be intensive ('x is a'), possessive ('x has a') and circumstantial ('x is at a') (Halliday&Matthiessen, 2014). Few instances of intensives are:

- This is *a story about a young school going boy* (2.1 Save Me, Save Me).
- The child is *a male* (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert).

Cases of Possessives can be found in:

- Her spirit still gives visits *to her room in the University campus occasionally* (3.1.2 Suicide For Guilt).

- We have perverts *lurking around every corner* (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert)

On the other hand, circumstantial reference can be found in instances such as:

- Some of the private schools in *Guwahati practice monotonous exploitation on their staffs* (3.1.3 Private Schools).

In several cases, the relational process is related to the victim and the deceiver, such as:

- The drug is called *Burundunga* (3.2.4 Women under Threat).
- This is kind of insect (3.8.3 Water Contamination).
- The child is a male (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert).

Existential processes are very less in the study. Only 1% processes are found to be existential. Few instances are:

- Once a lady was admitted *in a multi-facilitated hospital in Guwahati* (3.3.2 Inflated Hospital Bill).

5.3.7.2 Representation of Social Actor

Social actors are usually the participants in clauses but not all participants are the social actors; they may be physical objects for instance (Fairclough, 2004:145). In order to study the social actors, it is necessary to study the participants in the clauses, which will be followed by the critical discussion of social actors.

In order to study the participants in the urban legends, the participants can be classified into 8 categories. They are as follows:

A. Victim

Main participants in these stories are the victims, those who suffers from the cheating, fraud, scam or unavoidable event reported in the story. As we found in the stories, “a fresher” (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands); “Daughter of an honest and respected Professor” (3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt); “The teacher” (3.1.3 Private schools); “A young

school going boy” (3.2.1 Save Me, Save Me); “two young ladies”(3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride); “An elephant” (3.5.1 Holy Apathy) are the victims.

B. Swindler

Swindlers play the second important role in the urban legends. Swindlers are found both living and non-living participants in urban legend. They are the ones who carry out the scam or deceit. For example, “Principle of her school” (3.1.3 Private Schools); “the bus driver and helper” (3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride); “a famous Muslim Businessman” (3.2.3 Charity for Profit); “a kid” (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids); “a lady” (3.2.6 Kidnapping in Disguise); “new killer insect” (3.9.New Killer Insect) are some of the living entities found in the data.

Whereas, non- living entities such as, “drug” and “Burundanga” (3.2.4 Women under Threat), “AIDS” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food), “Ebola” (3.8.3 Packaged Fruit Drink), “Key chain “(3.7.1 Free Key Chain Holders) and so on.

C. Legitim�er

Legitimizers in the stories confirm the authority to the narrative and substantiate the reported facts. Legitimizers can offer expert knowledge; they participate as witness or may have knowledge of the reported facts. Some examples are like, “Doctors diagnosed that he had AIDS” (8.1 Indian Roadside Food), “It was shown yesterday on NDTV “ (3.8.3 Packaged Fruit Drink), “Msg forwarded to me by TATA Hosp doctor” (3.9.UnidentifiedKiller Insect), “Watch this in CNX News today” and Issue by Indian Army (3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army), “This picture was taken by a passenger from his car” (3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera), “The doctors clarified that the lady was not in a stage” (3.3.2 Inflated Hospital Bill).

D. Reader

The Reader in the stories mainly appears as ‘you’ in 3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food, 3.8.3 Packaged Fruit Drink, 3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect, 3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army. In many cases, the reader is embedded with commands directed at him or her such as, “Pass to all your contacts” (3.8.2 Indian Roadside Food), “Please read

carefully” or “pls take utmost care of the children..” (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert), “So please take care and make sure ...”(3.2.4 Women under Threat).

E. Sender

Sender is the one, who has sent the forwarded stories and can be considered as the legend-teller in these cases. Very few instances can be found in the lines such as, “Hi guys” (3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert), “Dear All” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).

F. Possible Victim

Every listener or reader can be considered as a possible victim in future. In addition to that, their relatives, friends and all other known people are also considered as possible victims. For example, “wife”, “sisters”, “daughters”, “nieces”, “mother”, “female friends and colleagues” (3.2.4 Women under Threat): “school or college going girls”(3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids in Appendix 1) and so on. According to sender, these people need to be warned from the possible crimes and therefore, they are the possible victims that need to be warned. It is seen that in most of the cases, the possible victims are female.

G. Others

Few participants like, “ghost” (3.4.2 Real Ghost Caught in Camera), “snakes” (3.5.2 Sacred Sign) do not represent any of the above categories of participants. They appear as the main character but they represent the main participant.

The representation of social actors involves a number of choices such as, inclusion or exclusion, noun or pronoun, activated or passivated, personal or impersonal, named or classified, specific or generic (Fairclough, 2004:145). All these legends involve some specific sets of social actors. Representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended (Leeuwen, 2008:28). Inclusions and exclusions found in this study have been discussed as follows.

5.3.7.2.1 Inclusion of Social Actors in Urban Legends

It is often found that the inclusion of social actors is seen in through the use of common nouns but not through the proper names. Victims such as, “a fresher”(3.1.1 Miraculous Hands); “the Daughter”(3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt); “ The teacher” (3.1.3 Private schools); “the lady” (3.2.4 Women under Threat) ; possible victims “wife”, “sisters”, “daughters”, “nieces”, “mother”, “female friends and colleagues” (3.2.4 Women under Threat), “school or college going girls” (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids) and so on. These common nouns are associated with personal or possessive pronouns as in “As the lady left the service station, she saw the man following her...” (3.2.4 Women under Threat), “the guy was suffering from AIDS...but he himself was not aware” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).

Very few nominations can be found such as, “Mumbai Airport” (3.7.1 Free Key Holders), “suffering from AIDS” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food); “Product of Maaza”, “Hyderabad Police”, “Ebola” (3.8.3 Packaged Fruit Drink); “TATA Hosp Doctor” (3.9. New Killer Insect); “Indian Army” (3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army), “Nagaon” (3.4.2 Real Ghost caught in Camera), “Gauhati University” (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands); “this drug is called Burundanga” (3.2.4 Women under Threat) and so on. Thus, 64% legends contain nominations, which, indicates that nominations play an important role in urban legends. Nominated legitimizers like, “Dr Hardik Shah” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food) are very formal with designation and proper address. But at the same time, no nominations were found in case of swindlers; terms like “a Muslim business man” (3.2.3 Charity for Profit) has been used in the legends.

Most of the times, the social actors are genericised. They appear to be a part of a group. For example, “sales promoters” (3.7.1 Free Key Holders); “snakes” (3.5.2 Sacred Sign) and so on. On the other hand, in few instances, the social actors are specified such as, “Product of Maaza”, “Hyderabad Police”, “TATA Hosp Doctor” (3.9 New Killer Insect); “Indian Army” (3.7.2 Warning by Indian Army); “Nagaon” (3.4.2 Real Ghost caught in Camera); “Gauhati University” (3.1.1 Miraculous Hands); “two young ladies” (3.2.2 Nightmarish Ride); “Three friends” (3.4.1 Forbidden Snap). Here, they are represented not only as a part of a group but as the group itself. Thus, legitimizers are found to be genericized and presented as a members of class, peer groups according to their age, occupation. For example, “particularly your wife,

sisters, daughters, nieces, mother, female friends and colleagues” (3.2.4 Women under Threat), which represents the group of ladies. Moreover, possible victims in urban legends are collectivized, such as “Share with everybody you know” (3.2.4 Women under Threat), “This is very important for every girl that goes to school-college alone” (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids), “Please don’t try to kill it with your bare hands or touch it, this insect spreads virus to the place of bodily contact and circulates the entire human system..” (3.9 Unidentified Killer Insect).

5.3.7.2.2 Exclusion of Social Actors in Urban Legends

The exclusion of social actors in representations signifies that the participation of a social actor is not pertinent and that is why they are either suppressed or backgrounded. According to Fairclough (Fairclough, 2004:145), two types of exclusion of social actors can be found – Suppression and Backgrounding. These two distinct types of exclusion of social actors can be discussed as follows:

A. Suppression

In this study, the sources of the legend in case of the oral texts are totally suppressed. There is no nominalization found in any of the oral legend, thus emphasizing on the structure of FOAF tale to legitimate the narrated events.

There is always a hint of a gang, or a powerful mafia, under which the whole gang accomplishes the task like kidnapping, murder which can be seen in urban legend “3.2.1 Save Me Save Me”, “3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids”, “3.6.3 Kids are on High Alert”, “3.7.1 Free Key Holders” and so on.

B. Back grounding

Several participants are back-grounded as they are not important for the development of the story. In these cases focus is on main task but not on the doer. For example, “caught red-handed while copying” (3.1.2 Suicide for Guilt), “this time needle was not found inside her stomach” (3.3.1 Needle Left Inside), “forcefully kidnapped” (3.2.1 Save Me Save Me) and so on. Similarly, “you” is inherent in sentences like “Be very alert”, “Share the information to all known people” (3.2.6 Kidnapping in

Disguise), “Do not feel ashamed to share” (3.2.5 Kidnapping by Kids), “Very important please read” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food).

5.3.7.2.3 Representation of Circumstances of Time and Place

Representation of circumstances of time and place is referred to the location and extent, i.e., duration, distance. According to Fairclough (2004:151) , space, time and space-time are routinely constructed in texts. In this study, organization of time and place have been systematically organized in the following table.

Table 5.10 Representation of Time and Place

| No. | Time | Place | No. | Time | Place |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1.1 | Was allotted ,
came, found,
opened, stood,
made , did not
harm | Gauhati University
Hostel
Room | 3.4.1 | Starred, published,
Went, had,
clicked, went,
developed, asked,
started, appeared,
happened, could
not | Assam
Shillong
Neighbouring
places
Guwahati
Photo studio |
| 3.1.2 | resorted , once,
accused, caught,
expelled,
committed | Gauhati University
Examination hall
Campus | 3.4.2 | Last night, was
taken,
2.30 A.M | Nagaon bypass |
| 3.1.3 | Threatened,
secured, refused,
asked | Private schools in
Guwahati | 3.5.1 | Year 2002, passed
out, demolished,
brought, thought | City
Guwahati
Corners of the
city
Sacred place
Mandir
Hengarabari |
| 3.2.1 | Got up, tried ,
failed, noticed,
remembered,
injected, opened | School
Hotel in Guwahati | 3.5.2 | Considered,
gained, reflected,
pasted, started | India |
| 3.2.2 | Introduced,
boarded,
happened,
developed, drove,
frightened, turned | In the city of
Guwahati | 3.6.1 | During a bus
journey
In the morning
Next morning,
reached, woke up,
picked , searched | Hotel
Bus
Bed |

| | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.2.3 | Heard, established, died, brought | Rural area
Hospital
Abroad
Country
India | 3.6.2 | Once
Thereafter,
Was riding, stopped, got struck, went off, did not move, looked around, offered. | City

College
Northeastern regions of India
Middle of the road |
| 3.2.4 | Came over, offered, said nothing, got into, saw, felt, applies, offer, applies | Petrol pump
Car
Service station
Driveway
Streets | 3.6.3 | Have, is taken, chatting away, tries to, | Mall
Car
The floor
Home |
| 3.2.5 | Goes, crying, | School
Office
Street
Home
Police Station | 3.7.1 | There is, giving out, have , allows, endanger | Mumbai Airport
Public places
Airports
Petrol Stations
Home |
| 3.2.6 | Annual
Immediately
Currently | House | 3.7.2 | This is, has been, please forward | Indian, Pakistan |
| 3.3.1 | After a few days,
Few more days
While, had to, went, started, shocked , left, became | Stomach
Hospital
City
Home
X-ray house | 3.8.1 | Had eaten, diagonosed, went, was suffereing, checked | Karnataka
Bangalore
Roadside
Civil Hospital |
| 3.3.2 | Once, admitted, released, reached, declared, died, requested | Hospital
Guwahati I.C.U
Residence
Home | 3.8.2 | Has added, was shown | India |
| | | | 3.8.3 | Watch, has entered | India |
| | | | 3.9 | kill, spreads, remember | India
TATA Hospital |

We see that in case of legend, representation of time frame is always found in simple past, present perfect showing that these incidents happened in the past. In case of passing the forewarning, the time frame used in the stories is future. Simple present is also used showing that these incidents are happening in current times. Regarding places, legends have covered the common places that human being encounter in urban setting like, school, college, university, hospital, petrol pump, airport service station ,hotel, mall, police station covering not only Guwahati city, but also several major

Indian cities like Bangalore, Mumbai , Karnataka. This shows that time and space has engulfed a wide range of possibilities, which makes urban legend closer to the common people.

Transitivity Analysis provides more detailed and more linguistic specific interpretation of the stories through the representation of different processes, as we can see in the above paragraphs. This merely shows “ who does what to whom and so on” in the story. It is found in this study that main characters are mainly the victims in the society and deceivers are granted power of agency. Victims and possible victims are granted little chance of escaping such threats. It is seen that victims are involved mostly in emotive reactions whereas, the deceivers act in material actions. Somehow, the conditions of the victims get the power to inform others, express the discomfort or pain and that is how public get to know about the incident. Existence of such narratives really matters as people get concern to some possible conflicts. Later, it becomes a kind of pre-cautionary message in order to escape from the possible crimes and atrocities in future, which may save someone’s life.

5.3.8 Style

Styles are the discoursal aspect of ways of being, identities. Styles are linked to identification- using nominalization, rather than the noun ‘identities’; it highlights the process of identifying, how people identify themselves and are identified by others (Fairclough, 2004:159). This can be identified at different level of abstraction like Genres and Discourses. Styles are realized in quite a range of linguistic features, includes: phonological features, vocabulary, and many other paralinguistic features. In the following paragraphs, an attempt has been made to look at some of the range of linguistic realizations in style.

Two renowned folklorists, Nicolaisen and Bauman & Schacker defined the “Style of Urban Legends” in their own manner. According to Nicolaisen (1997), in folklore, the term “Style ” is defined as “textual pattern, or the exploitation of available patterns within given contexts”; whereas, according to Bauman and Schacker, the “Style” is defined as “a characteristic mode or manner of expression” (Brunvand, 2002:423).

While collecting samples for the study, it is observed that primarily there are only two styles of urban legends, namely: Oral and Written. With everyday advancement of

communication technologies, the gap between the two; is losing its grounds. Numerous legends which are popular orally can now be found in written styles - SMSs or emails. Similarly, written texts once read, are narrated and spread or shared orally as well. The samples collected by me include text messages, including images (written style) as well. These styles are discussed in depth, as follows:

A. Oral Style of Urban Legends

For the analysis, audios of the collected oral legends are translated, and transliterated for the documentation purpose. While translating the legends' texts, it is observed that though the phrases used by the narrators often a bit unstructured, but they are much more effective during performance, i.e., during the narration of urban legends. This analysis further establishes the fact that the narrators employ a mix of speaking techniques during narration, as outlined below. I attempted to compile a list of parameters defining the oral style in the chosen samples.

A list of parameters defining the oral style of urban legends:

- Facial expressions: Blending of various facial expressions is found in emphasizing the key points of the incident. In most of the cases, the urban legends are depicting anxiety, anger and surprise. As a result, expressions of loss and happiness are often displayed on their faces. Nevertheless, in case of the legends related to the religion, a sense of satisfaction, happiness and believability is found.
- Voice modulation: Attempts are seen to be made for demarcating the narrative into an introduction, the body and an ending of the legend text. In most of the cases, there are two three lines found which gave the background of the story and at the end there are few lines, which state that the narrator does not know whether that is true or false. In every case, a desire to avoid or to escape from such an incident is explained in the legend and is observed.
- Repetition of the plot: There is a mention of repetition of the plots and schemes, which reinforces the incident.

- Usage of sound effects: There are merging sounds (wherever possible), which further enhances the efficacy of the narrative. Use of fillers are found, for example the word “means” (in Assamese “÷#ò”), “that”(in Assamese “ÎÛ ”), “yes”(in Assamese “ýÛ”), “and”(in Assamese “Õ±1¸,”)and hmm are found present among the legend tellers.
- A shocking (and timely) ending: Finally, after encountering several shocking elements, share of the legend with every single listener becomes the starting point for a new chain of dissemination.

B. Written Style of Urban Legends

It is observed that the variants of a few of the traditional texts are being circulated. I have attempted to compile a list of parameters defining the written style in the chosen samples.

A list of parameters defining the written style of urban legends can be mentioned as follows:

- Capital letters: Use of capital letters to assert the caution or the alert or a threat for example, “Alert” (3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect), “Health” (3.8.1 Indian Roadside Food) “BURUNDUNGA” (3.2.4 Women Under Threat) and so on.
- Strings of exclamations: It has emphasized the impact of the assertion made for example, “Take Care” (3.8.2 Packaged Fruit Drink), “This is an SOS Alert” (3.9. Unidentified Killer Insect) and so on.
- Appended remarks: It has directed the focus of the reader from other tasks in hand towards the message received for example, “We have perverts lurking around every corner guys”, “If u think they’re too much to handle, leave them at home go to mall on ur own but don’t leave them” (3.6.3 Kids on High Alert).
- Symbols, special characters and images: it beautifies the text presentation thereby increasing its retention power in minds for example, **O X O X O X O**

O X O X O X O

- Internet language: Several texting abbreviations are used to express thoughts, opinions and information in a way that minimizes the amount of space and time, conveying the entire statement a meaning and significance. For example, the abbreviation “plz” has been used in many texts for the term “please”, “imp” for “important” and “u” for “you” and so on.

A thorough analysis of the styles of oral urban legends unveils a few interesting findings. The intensity of employing the techniques of narration varies according to the live retort taken by the listeners. The narrators attempted reiterating the major sections, to incorporate or to counter the listeners’ reaction(s). The narration of urban legend is not an individual effort but is a group effort where, in the listeners participate actively by supplementing variations and responding to the turn of events being discussed. These styles act as precursors for different variations of one legend. Phonological features include pronunciation, intonation, stress and rhythm. In this study, the legends have been collected from the mainstream Assamese people. As a result their dialect is found to be the standard Assamese dialect found in a conversational way. In all the legends, the stress is always given on the problems that have been derived from the texts. However, Assamese is not a tonal language and since it was totally conversational, no rhythm was found in the entire legend telling session. In all the oral text, mainly third person has been used.

However, a detailed analysis of the styles of written legends shows that a limited styling factor is inscribed in them because they have a limited space of sharing e.g., the number of characters in messages. They are shared on as-is basis or as-received; without any tempering or modifications such as alteration in the source text and/or comments on a moral obligation. Most of these samples are warning-based messages while only a few were first- person narratives.

5.3.9 Modality and Evaluation

Modality and evaluation focus on what speaker or writer commit themselves to, with respect to what is true, and what is necessary (modality), and with respect to what is desirable, or undesirable, good or bad (evaluation).

5.3.9.1 Modality

The term ‘modality’ refers to a number of concepts within the field of philosophy and linguistics. Philosophy studies modality as logic and logical reasoning (Loux, 1979), whereas in linguistics, modality presents much more diversity in its problematic and its approaches. The morphological approach sees modality as an independent grammatical category similar to gender, tense, aspect, number and so on, whereas, the semantic approach defines modality in terms of content and examines how lexical forms, illocutionary functions and different forms of negation can be used to express different modalities (Sulkunen and Törrönen, 1997:44-45). However, in critical discourse analysis, modality encompasses much more than the simple occurrence of explicit modal auxiliaries such as *may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, must* and *ought* where, modality concerns the writer’s (or speaker’s) attitude toward and / or confidence in the proposition being presented. Modality may be expressed through certain types of main verbs, as well as through adjectives, adverbs and certain nominalizations. Fowler (1985) provides a brief list to illustrate these categories of modals.

Modality is signified in a range of linguistic forms: centrally, the modal auxiliary verbs *may, shall, must, need* and others; sentence adverbs such as *probably, certainly, regrettably*; adjectives such as *necessary, unfortunate, certain*. Some verbs and many nominalizations are essentially modal *permit, predict, prove; obligation, likelihood, desirability, authority*.

(Fowler, 1985: 73)

Thus, modality refers to the speaker’s judgment of probabilities or the obligations involved in what he/she saying (Halliday, 1994). Hodge and Kress have referred ‘modality’ to the ‘stance’ speakers or writer’s take towards representations, their degree of ‘affinity’ with them (Fairclough, 2003:166). The data contains very few incidences of modalization. The statements found to be modalized in terms of necessities, predictions, probabilities, abilities, requests, demands and offers.

Table 5.11 Modalities (linking to judgement) found in urban legend

| Probabilities | Abilities | Request |
|---------------|-----------|---------|
| 36% | 11% | 3% |

In this study of urban legends, I have counted almost every occurrence of modal auxiliaries. Then, I have attempted to classify each occurrence of an overt modal according to Fairclough’s two categories. Categorizing the modals by no means unproblematic since individual modals may function in more than one category. For example, in 3.2.4 ‘Such incident can happen with everyone’, *can* convey ability as well as possibility. Therefore, study of the context in which modal auxiliary appears is necessary.

Palmer (1986) and Fairclough (2003) have focused on two types of modalities i.e., ‘epistemic’ and ‘deontic’ modality. Epistemic modality is related to the speaker’s knowledge of the world, whereas deontic modality is related to the activity of the speaker or writer. Halliday (1994) has further declared that in modalized clauses, both epistemic and deontic, one can distinguish different levels or degrees of commitment to truth or obligation.

Table 5.12 Modalities (linking to exchange types) found in urban legend

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Epistemic | 15% |
| Deontic | 85% |

As the incidents are supposed to be reports of true events, similar to news narratives, where the intent is informational and hence, ideational meanings are given preference over interpersonal and textual relations. An overall lack of modalization is seen in the texts of the urban legends. In case of the oral legends in the study, the statements are elaborative and performer wants to pass the information to the listener. However, few cases of commands or requests can be seen issued in a friendly way by the narrator; while in case of the non-oral legends, we find instructions in every case about how to keep away from falling victim or get warning about the need to spread the message mostly modalized through the use of the word “please”. Instances of urban legends show the possibility of occurrences of such instances, which might be shared among the participants involved in the interaction. Different levels or degrees of commitment to truth or obligation have been identified, where, the level of truth and obligation is found to be very low. Since they agree that this is a FOAF Tale and people believe it to be true and so they are, the commitment to the truth is found to be very low. Nobody denies that such crimes do occur, but such structured traditional stories with

their repeated motifs and unverified details are clearly part of the world of urban legend, not the real world.

Modality can be seen initially to do with ‘commitments’, ‘attitudes’, ‘judgements’, ‘stances’ therefore, Fairclough further has related, the choices in modality to Identification, Action and Representation (2003: 166). Now, while moving to issues related to urban legends, we see that there are several predictions about some mishappenings by the common people who is sharing the problems with their near and dear ones.

5.3.9.2 Evaluation

Evaluations are statements about desirability or undesirability, what is good or what is bad (Fairclough, 2004:172). Words like “good”, “bad”, “wonderful”, “dreadful” are some of the commonly used terms that can be consider as the markers of evaluation. In case of urban legends found here, people condemn all the whimsical or merely bizarre cases of “ragging”, “assault”, “suicide”, “mutilations”, “murder”, “contamination” and so forth. The bogus warnings circulated via the Internet describe the supposed attacks upon the innocent people, which is a part of “netlore” and often drawn from and feedback into the oral tradition. As an evaluation, we see the discussions below the online messages and this shows a strong influence on the public’s awareness of the subject as well as their interest and their judgment over the misdeed done by the attackers.

5.4 Summary

This is a crucial chapter that identifies the problems reflected in urban legends, in both direct as well as indirect way, by finding out the obstacles being tackled in urban legends collected in the study , the various ways in which social life is structured and organized that make these problems.

Considering textual analysis as one of the analytical perspectives, an attempt has been made to show how different perspectives of textual analysis help in the diagnosis of the social problems. As a part of the integrated approach to the broader perspectives of Fairclough’s “three-dimensional” framework- analysis of (spoken or written) texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution and

consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of socio-cultural practice - a textual analysis of urban legend has been done in this chapter. This will help to diagnose the obstacles by throwing light upon a number of analytical categories discussed in this chapter. This analysis will further help to go deeper into the social problems which will help to find out the solutions.

Chapter 6

Need of the Problems in Social Order and the Ways to Overcome the Obstacles

6.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises three stages of CDA of urban legends. These include stage 3: does the social order “need” the problem (6.1); stage 4: possible ways to past the obstacles (6.2) and stage 5: a reflection on the analysis (6.3).

6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis of Urban Legends, Stage 3: Does the Social Order “Need” the Problem?

Fairclough has pointed out that in order to know if the social order (network of practices) needs the problem , we have to ask whether those who benefit most from the way social life is now organized have an interest in the problem not being resolved (Fairclough, 2001: 236). In this analysis, we have seen that urban legends are social practices which simultaneously signify and transmit fear and insecurities followed by some warning.

By sharing such texts either orally or online, people identify the possible victims as group of “us” and oppose themselves from the group of deceivers. It is seen that in these legends, everything happens under a dark lord, who is the most benefitted in the entire system. While problems such as “human trafficking”, “food contamination”, “medical horror”, etc. are profit making for one class of the society, these problems are considered necessary by the networks of these social practices such as gangs of swindlers, casual food manufacturers, medical practitioners and so on. Likewise, the private organizations such as hospitals, schools etc. always find out different channels for reaping profits from the system. For this reason, people’s doubt and beliefs will always lead to problems as discussed in this study. In addition to these, supernatural incidents continue as mysteries since ancient times and they, are until now, a mystery - to be solved. As a result, the supernatural narratives will continue to grow, circulate and hence, problems will persist within the network of supernatural practices as well.

Because people share their emotions such as hopes, aspirations, desires, panic through communication, verbally or non-verbally, these problems will continue to appear in folkloric communications, in the form of jokes, rumours or urban legends too. Problems reflected in urban legends fulfill the following aspects of the society:

- The prevalence of some horrible atrocities within the society.
- The happening of some common phenomenon in the society - some kind of danger, threat and conspiracy.
- It makes us feel (that we haven't) and what others might feel - i.e., to live another person's pain, joy, heartache, love, etc. (empathy).
- They are our reflections, we witness ourselves within these problems of lives and thus, we find friends in the characters.
- After knowing these problems, it purges - As Aristotle spoke of *catharsis*, when an audience would be purged of all its guilt, shame, fear, etc. by watching something awful, like a Greek Tragedy on stage.
- We find, we teach, we learn history of a culture through this (3.5.1 Holy Apathy& 3.5.2 Sacred Sign).
- They incite changes and intellectually stimulate and also inspire (as in innovation, social change, etc.)
- These are provoking enough and we feel agitated on reading them. Thus, these problems help to predict, protect or to shape the future.

In such circumstances, social order will always need the reflections of these problems in the text of urban legends. Problems are inevitable in society. These narratives include problems such as pain, suffering, victimhood followed by some social forewarnings, morality, principles and greatness. Problems reflected in these stories have gained wide acceptance and are often deemed sacred for their ability to communicate some of the fundamental truths about life. As such, inclusion of these elementary problems in the legend content has further enhanced their percentage of dissemination.

6.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of Urban Legends, Stage 4: Possible Ways to Past the Obstacles

In this stage, Fairclough has mainly talked about a dialectical logic, focusing upon variation and difference within the network of practices, to discern hitherto unrealized potentials for change within the way things are (Fairclough, 2001:239). This stage focuses on the gap, contradiction, incompleteness, paradoxes that exist in the text.

First obstacle lies in the network of practices located within urban legend telling session, which is regarding the “Order of Discourse”. Based on the assumption that urban legends are some stories believed to be true but not necessarily true, it is difficult to find out the evidence of the main content. Moreover, being anonymous, it is not possible to go much deeper into the network of transmission. But, at the same time, various facts revealed in the text resemble the common day today problems for which, urban legends has gained popularity as a folklore genre. Even if the social actors are anonymous, no narratives can come out of the blue. There should be definitely some similar incidences, which lies somewhere and influence in the formation of the urban legend. Therefore, in order to overcome this obstacle, it is important to go to the background of the story.

As we have discussed earlier in the chapter 4, all these urban legends are based on some genuine problems faced by people of Guwahati. Starting from academe, human trafficking, medical horror, and supernatural, to food contamination and terrorism, urban legends have got popularity in its content. Studying the background of the problems found will help to go closer to the urban legends. Background of some of the legends can be listed as follows:

- A. Suicide for ragging, suicide for being exposed by examiner for prohibited mean is a common phenomenon among the teenagers.
- B. Reports claim that human trafficking has perpetually plagued the North East India especially last few decades in particular, present a gloomier picture than ever (Mishra, 2013)
- C. There are certain greedy doctors and hospitals who do charge excessive fees, prescribe unnecessary and costlier medicines, order unnecessary

investigations, have unholy nexus with diagnostic setup and pharmaceutical companies, misleads patient for own benefit, take advantage of helplessness of patient or family, misbehave to patient and relatives, refuses to admit mistake, neglect in the duty of care and do inhuman acts of stealing organs, keeping dead persons on ventilation for days, illegal abortions after prenatal sex determination. Thus, these rotten fishes are degrading the noble profession and tarnishing the doctor's image totally.

- D. These problems are based on some unresolved mysteries based on some social and cultural knowledge. On the basis of existing knowledge, when we hear about any weird situation, such as supernatural or religion based incident, we try to rationalize the situation but it is very difficult. They are not based on any logic or evidence. People have a tendency to relate them to paranormals or some heavenly bodies. Since, super naturals are still a mystery, it is better to avoid such places in order to keep oneself away from such nightmare. At the same time, religion gives answer to the problems of our life. One needs to accept religion as a solution but not as a problem.
- E. The fight against terrorism should be global. People think that terrorists are from Pakistan only, as we find in collected urban legends too (3.7.2 Warning By Indian Army). But people are being killed there too and many bombings are happening there as well. Everywhere people are trying to find out where these terrorists are coming from and how to stop them. People need to realize that terrorism is a disease. It's not a matter of religion, which condone murder or violence. Killing or keep harming innocents in the name of religion or any other terror related issues is not a solution to terrorism. It just make situation worse. Violence with violence never solves anything. To stop spreading hatred, class division, and discrimination, peace and discussion is the only way out.
- F. Food contamination may happen in many different ways, such as restaurant food poisoning, food served in a hospital or school, homemade food, or from foods purchased at a grocery store. Symptoms include weakness, difficulty in breathing, difficulty in speaking, trouble with swallowing, double-vision,

dizziness and constipation, diarrhea, physical objects in food bacteria and viruses, toxin Material leaked in food.

Knowing the background of the story of the urban legends will certainly help to see the problems in the texts which will further help in solving the problems.

The problem lies in the hegemonic practice, which is clear from the text of urban legends found in the study. Dominance of online urban legends over the oral legends as well as dominance of urban legends published in English over Assamese language. This shows the popularity of English language and thinning of vernacular language, which is an instance of imperialism. Orality is vanishing as time is passing by, which has resulted folklore study and Internet to become a compatible duo, encouraging new dialogues and contributions from different scholars in the field of folklore and allied discipline. This is certainly stimulating and inspiring as several disciplines like anthropology, sociology, linguistics and so on are paying their careful attention to various socio-cultural dimensions of the Internet. Therefore, in order to revive and continue the culture of oral legend, an attempt can be made to organize some legend telling session which may at least induce some legend telling situation and then will be possible to get back the former tradition of legend telling culture to some extent. This may result in exploring few more urban legends, which may further reflect more problems in the society. At the same time, translating the online legends into Assamese language will further help to popularize urban legends more among all the strata of Assamese society.

Hegemony is directly linked to the problems found in chapter 4. Power relations are easily identifiable in terms of Teacher and Student, Swindlers and Deceivers, Doctors and Patients, Paranormals and Common Human Being, Religion and General people, Internet and Manual. This shows the social distance among them and at the same time, solidarity between the sender and the reader as possible victim is also found at the point when the sender asks the reader not to be victimized but to take proper care. This is well reflected through the textual analysis of the urban legends. These features are reflected through some knowledge exchange by the declaration of some facts, assumed to be true. Being a discourse, the facts are represented through different social processes and finally modalization indicates the necessity of forwarding or sharing the legend again and again in order to escape from the possible

problems. At the same time, sharing and asking others to share the problems reveal the need and urge of a change and to find out a solution of the immediate problems revealed. In such circumstances, we can certainly think of possible solutions, in order to limit the ill-effects caused by these social threats. These are discussed as follows.

6.2.1 Academe

Ragging is the first and the foremost problem that a student encounters during college life. Numerous measures have been implemented including - Constitution of anti-ragging societies and stricter supervision by college authorities, which ensure that any problematic issue is dealt with a strong stick. Understanding the gravity of the problem, even UGC has drafted regulations for curbing the menace of ragging, especially in the higher education institutions³⁴. In addition to these measures undertaken, it is proposed that the societies - constituting of psychological experts, should be made mandatory for advising the (victimized) students who might need help for stress management and related issues.

Another problem identified is the pressure for scoring good grades. It is proposed that parents' counseling could be of immense help to students and possibly go a far distance in keeping in check the ever increasing number of student suicides owing to family pressure. Counselors could guide parents about the trauma their children go through, as a result of the parents' over-expectations for scoring good grades and about the pressure of gaining forcible entry into higher paying jobs rather than taking up positions in the areas of interest and market demand³⁵.

6.2.2 Human Trafficking

It is proposed that imposing strict laws and punishment to the human traffickers will minimize the number of human trafficking cases. At the same time, increased public awareness can sensitize the people and thus, help in curbing the menace. It can be practiced at grass-root levels by following media, as listed below:

³⁴ http://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/ragging/Notice_raging.pdf

³⁵ <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

- **Digital Media:** The broadcasted news-bytes (particularly reporting about the interiors of NE India) should highlight the mannerism and styles frequently witnessed; about how the villagers got lured into false promises, including: free education and jobs for their wards. In addition to this, it is observed that every family has access to the television and the crime soaps like Crime Patrol, Savdhaan India CID, etc., which have been showing trafficking stories. These episodes impart a good knowledge about the entire crime scene and thus the long trail of the fan-following can learn lessons about how to be alert and not to fall into these traps.
- **Social Groups:** In recent past, numerous social groups have come forward to play an influential role in promoting education of girl child and other social causes. They drive awareness through organizing road shows and street-plays etc., thereby raising their voices against female infanticide, child marriage and dowry deaths etc. They also have a crucial role in bringing the threat of human trafficking (that is looming large, especially on lower-income groups of the society) into limelight. One such non-profit groups; "ImpulseNGONetwork"³⁶, and Ujjawala³⁷. They try to reach out the women and children of villages and tribal areas. Women and children, being less-socially empowered and weak in physical stature; are more vulnerable to the pangs of immoral trafficking. Therefore they educate them about how these native villagers might be deceived with false promises and then thrown into the rackets of internal body part transfer businesses, child labour, sex and other filthy industries. These NGOs while helping these less-empowered people; educate them against this menace, and provide rehabilitation and vocational trainings to the individuals, who have been rescued from such sufferings.

6.2.3 Medical Horror

Two main reasons can be considered behind this problem: first, the admission fees for MBBS admission in private medical colleges, which is around INR one crore, which they collect from the student as donation. The Return on Investment is either from donation or from exploiting the patients. Second, hospitals need huge

³⁶ <https://www.telegraphindia.com>

³⁷ <http://wcd.nic.in>

investments for its buildings, infrastructure and medical equipments. Thus, they expect a huge Return on Investment, which mainly comes from the patient again. Moreover, corporatization of health sector and hospitals has made the situation grim for general people. For instance, intensive care ventilator is a big business – steady income on daily rental, thus earning huge revenue (Bora, Nisarga, Shetty : 2017).

Considering this as a serious matter, we need the interference of Government with strict laws and actions against the culprits, who take the advantage of this noble profession by limiting themselves to some mischievous deeds such as inflating the hospital bill. The Supreme Court of India, way back, passed the legislation of Indian Penal Code, 1860 sections 52, 80, 81, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92 304-A, 337 and 338, which contain the law of medical malpractice, but due to poor implementation, indifferences towards accident victims and those in emergency medical conditions, and even to women under labour has not stopped. Strong, inflexible legislations and laws, uniformly executed with regular amendments, is perhaps, the ultimate time tested solution to exterminate this terrorism. The Law Commission Of India, in its 201st report on Emergency Medical Care, drafted a model law in August 2006, under the chairmanship of Justice M. Jagannadha Rao (Bora, Nisarga, Shetty : 2017).

An anti- medical terrorism movement, “Stop Medical Terrorism” was initiated on May 14th 2016, by a group of victims of medical negligence and supporters of the cause under the platform of Dr Anamika Ray Memorial Trust, Guwahati, demanding a separate legislation in the country to control such indefensible insensitivity of the medical professionals and malpractices at hospitals. To create the awareness, the Trust has decided to observe “Anti-Medical Terrorism Day” on July 19 to commemorate the untimely demise of Dr. Anamika Ray, a renowned media educator of the country, who passed away in her thirties due to absolute medical negligence at a hospital in New Delhi. This day has been observed in many parts of the country and even in Dhaka and Colombo (Dutta, A: 2016).

The Trust has prepared a list of demands to be addressed by the state and union governments on urgent basis, for improving the present healthcare condition of the country in both private and public sectors. This include CCTV surveillance in the hospital premises, ICU monitoring facility, availability of the indoor case file or ticket, recording of surgery, prompt action towards negligence issues, prevention of

laboratory nexus, prescription of generic medicine, incorporation of a course on medical ethics and communication between doctor-patients in the medical programme, development of skills of paramedical staff, development of record keeping methods on the cases pertaining to medical error and negligence, etc (Dutta, A: 2016). Such initiatives can help people to create awareness about medical crisis, which will help to overcome some pre-planned ghastly affairs in medical sector.

6.2.4 Supernatural Incident and Faith in Religion

It is seen that many a time faith in supernatural and religion have several logical interpretation. Therefore, it is important to find the logic behind every saying by avoiding certain buzz disseminated by certain mischievous public.

6.2.5 Terrorism

In order to bring any change in the field of terrorism, first step needs to come from the government. The problem of terrorism can be tackled if we emphasize on moral education in our education system. Kids should be taught that humanity is the prime religion and spreading brotherhood will definitely lower the clashes among different communities living in the world.

6.2.6 Dreadful Contamination

Many steps are involved in getting a particular food from the farm to plate; many different social actors are liable if the food injuries happen to someone. They are legally responsible under different legal issues including negligence, strict liability, and defective product liability. People, who have been injured from consuming contaminated food, are being sued for contaminated food. They may approach legal authorities against personal injury or product liability attorney. Strict laws and regulations adapted and imposed by Government of India will help to eradicate food contamination to much extent.

In general, the actors who can be liable for contaminated food are

- Farmers, under negligence or defective product liability
- Growers, under negligence or defective product liability

- Shippers, under negligence or defective product liability
- Packagers , under negligence or defective product liability
- Sellers or distributors, under strict liability or breach of warranty³⁸

These propositions are not exhaustive but certainly may add to pass the obstacles in CDA of urban legend to a great extent. This way, circumventing these obstacles, will further help to know the urban legend better.

6.3 Reflection on the Analysis

This stage of CDA concentrates on how the above analyses can help in contributing to tackle the problems listed as above. According to Fairclough (2011:135), academic life is organized as a distinct network of practices, indeed as a distinct market and critical research, which stays within the academic confines is unlikely to have much effect on the common people. Academics may have some people who spend some of their time in higher education, “carry” ideas and approaches into other parts of their lives. As such, academic papers of CDA are connected to some more concrete, limited aspects of the world. In such a circumstance, Fairclough has further emphasized on developing some possible ways of writing which are accessible to many people so that general people can also be related directly to the problems and the solutions, which will make CDA more effective in case of solving the problems. These certainly require critical reflection on how we are working, on how we write, on the meta-language we use for analyzing semiosis, on where we publish and so forth (Fairclough, 2011: 239).

Looking at the discursual aspects of urban legend, it is an expressive form of folklore and it is impossible to determine the authenticity of the problems. Each text has existed in historic literary sources or folklore collections and has undergone intentional and unintentional modifications in order to redefine, rewrite diverse intentions, ideologies and fantasies centering on the main problem. No matter how fragmentary or arbitrary a single text seem, they are equally important to serious reevaluation of the problem related to fundamental truths of human life (Dégh, 2001: 303). Rather than being limited to academics, an immediate connection between

³⁸ <http://www.legalmatch.com>

general people and solutions proposed to the obstacles found in the text of the legends, will simultaneously find the purpose of solving the problems in the wider field of CDA. In this context, this study further suggests some possible ways that may be helpful in order to figure out what needs to be done, how we should write, where to write and publish and so forth, in order to reflect more on the issues related to CDA. They can be illustrated as follows:

1. In order to make CDA more popular, CDA can be used to analyze newspaper columns, poems, pictures, video shows, TV shows which will make CDA more enlightening and entertaining and publishing in magazines, newspapers and so on.
2. Introduction of the term “CDA” in school or college text books in a simple format.
3. Broadcasting in media such as television talk shows, YouTube videos should be promoted for spreading the understanding of CDA.

It is expected that the extension of similar endeavors will help in bringing the general public closer to CDA. In that case, the provision of highlighting the problems will be two-folded: one, at academic level; and two, at common human being level including different classes and age group. This will help CDA to connect people immediately that will further enhance the process of CDA.

6.4 Summary

This chapter merely concludes the CDA part used for the analysis of urban legend in this study. This chapter discusses phase 3, which talks about whether the society needs this social problem or not. Besides, it discusses possible ways to pass the obstacles and finally, a critical reflection to the analysis is being forwarded, which may be helpful to bring CDA closer to common human being, in order to solve the problems reflected in the semiotic aspects of the urban legends.

Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

Fairclough's CDA is a problem based analytical tool, which helps to explore the social problems of narratives considering the language it has used in the text. Urban legends (interchangeably termed as Contemporary Legends, Modern Legends or Urban Belief Tales) are a specialized sub-set of folk-narratives set in the backdrop of urban society and, based upon the grounds of oral transmission and social networking. Basically, these stories resurface some anxieties and problems identified in the society. These set of narratives often spread through word-of-mouth or through mass media because they direct the focus (of the participants) towards the prevailing problems within the societies. As such, CDA of urban legends of Guwahati has helped to scrutinize the social problems revealed in the texts.

7.1 Aims of the Study Revisited

Adding a new dimension to the concept, the recent urbanization of the Assam region and flourishing urban society culture, the urban legends continue existing in the region; since decades, but until now, very few minimal dedicated effort has ever been made to document their existence, or to understand their transmissions or to identify the associated problems – including those encountered while transmissions or those which are being highlighted within the texts. A striking feature that is worth a mentioning is that all the texts of urban legends across the globe, irrespective of being oral texts, written or online published texts, and spoken conversations including interviews, are an integral part of the social life across the cultural, social, political and geographical boundaries. Same thought applies to the urban legends from Guwahati as well.

Though, parallel researches have been conducted at an international level in the various fields of folklore, the urban legends are comparatively nascent as a subject of research at national or local level. Despite the cultural, social, geographic and political limitations, these stories have successfully carved out their own niche in the industrialized urban society of the region. As people of Guwahati are continually

travelling and communicating with people across the region and outside the region as well, an effort is required to understand, how these legends are influencing the mental and physical behaviours of the society. With the introduction and widespread advancement of internet-based communications, legends are spreading faster than ever before, thereby making this study imperative to gain an insight into the influence of the language (discourse) in the society.

The contents of the dissertation, primarily constitutes of three sub-sections; namely: collection, analysis and solutions of urban legends based in Guwahati. The detailed analysis and findings of the research work conducted are summarized as follows:

Section – 1 – Collection: This section details with the different phases including collection, classification, translation and transcription of the legends. Respective phases are detailed as follows:

During **Phase – I: Collection:** Both the primary data (first hand legend collection from local residents, and internet etc. using observations, interviews and discussions) and the secondary data (daily newspapers, local magazines and so on) sources for making the information pieces comprehensive, effective, influential and rational at the same time.

During **Phase – II: Classification:** Initially the legends collected were classified based upon Brunvand's classification system. This included legends about academic, human trafficking, medical horror, supernatural incidents, faith in religion, nudity, dalliance and nightmares, terrorism, dreadful contamination. Thus, (elaborated in chapter 3) as the study progressed, the legends were classified according to the problems encountered in the chosen legends.

During **Phase – III: Translation and Transcription:** The legends collected in the local dialect - Assamese were translated into English language. Though, literal translation had its own limitations, but they had been altered to the nearest and best possible word matches, picked up for supplementing the accurate meanings of the translated word phrases. After this an IPA transcription was done in order to make the legends more readable for national and international scholars.

Section – 2–Analysis: This section details about the phases including analysis of the texts and their appropriate documentation criterion for the purpose of this study.

During **Phase – IV:** Once all the data was sorted and synchronized, the analysis of the synchronized data was initiated. This study engages in CDA of urban legends. Different scholars advocate different opinions about CDA, thus, a basic framework was required to initiate the studies. Therefore, an informed decision was made with the selection of “Fairclough’s Classification”, which can be considered as one of the most trustworthy resource in order to make a thorough research in an interdisciplinary way in the field of socio – linguistics, folklore and cultural studies.

Drawing every aspect together, I have taken up the following points in the analysis:

- What are the predominant social problems found in the semiotic aspects of the text of urban legends of Guwahati (Chapter 4)?
- What are the challenges in finding out the problems in urban legends (Chapter 5)?
- What are the networks of social practices need to be studied in order to find out the obstacles in solving the problem (Chapter 5)?
- How can the key terms like “hegemony”, “power” be conceptualized while analyzing urban legends with CDA? How the outside of the text can be brought into the text of urban legend (Chapter 5)?
- How can the textual analysis be applied within a wide spectrum of social research in order to find out the challenges in solving the problems (Chapter 5)?
- Does the social order need these problems (Chapter 6)?
- What are the possible ways to pasts the obstacle (Chapter 6)?
- What are the possible solutions to these obstacles (Chapter 6)?
- How can the above analyses help to contribute to tackle the problems (Chapter 6)?

An effort was made to re-group legends based upon the problems identified within the texts of the legends. For this purpose, the already documented Brunvand's categorization of the legends was revisited based upon the problems groups identified. It was realized that this re-categorization provided a new approach and amplified the scope of the study also, therefore, I decided to continue with this (problem-based) categorization only, for inclusion in the dissertation document as well. A list of problems identified, which were related to Academe, Human Trafficking, Medical Horror, Super natural elements, Religious Beliefs, Nudity, Dalliance and Nightmares, Terrorism, Dreadful Contamination, Unidentified Killer Insect (Chapter 4).

In chapter 5, we find the identifications of the obstacles that need to be tackled through the analysis of network of practices in order to come to a resolution. While examining the structure of individual urban legend texts, one problem come to us at the outset is the context of performance and function (Bennett, 1996:1). In this study, while analyzing the problems in urban legends, we can speak of neither "authorship" nor indeed of exact "intentionality." But it does not mean that there is nothing artful about urban legend or more to the point that there is no intentionality reflected by them as Bennett has declared (Bennett, 1996:1). The absence of an identifiable authorial intention give rise to Dundes "oral literary criticism" in urban legends, which get manifested prominently as explanatory motifs at the end of many texts (Bennett , 1996: 2). These may serve as the variety of possible functions of urban legends, such as the individual narrator feeling compelled to assess guilt or innocence (fixing blames or sympathizing with the victims), justify harsh punishments, and assures us of their own reluctance to suffer similar fate or simply teach a lesson in local history. But the main point is,all such impulses reveal the need to ascribe some kind of intentionality to behaviour, which seems pointless, very casual, haphazard and random. They exist in more general sense, where the accounts and reports seem to be curiously 'mute'. Moreover, the difficulty in understanding the problems in urban legend found in the study is about the truthful communication or something somebody has concocted in order to make the story more appealing. Addition of pictures in online urban legend make the story more believable, but in case of the urban legend For example, in "3.2.4 Women Under Threat" , the vehicle used by the lady is referred as "four wheeler" by using the term like, "car", " drive", "window" whereas, the pictures added to it is of a two wheeler.

Thus, this type of description of a text create doubt in the mind of the reader – about whether to believe it or not, whether the story –teller regards the story as facts and fiction and so on. Urban legends are often “just ordinary” forms of communication (Smith, 1996:111) In that case, legitimacy of the problems is doubtful. Since these cautionary tales are believed to be true and possible problems can happen to any of us, so, does not matter whether the elements are proper or not, but problems should be considered as a serious one.

Another important issue raised here in second stage is to relate the elements of texts to the other elements of social practices and features of discourse itself. These narratives consist of shared and universal elements, which exist in a process of social intercourse. People share cultural knowledge by which people handle the problems of life referred as folk models, cultural models and folk knowledge (Siikala, 1990: 28). Legends being the models of folk knowledge and popular thinking are bound to literary tradition and go under tremendous changes i.e, reassessing, reprocessing and restructuring. This depends on the legend telling event, the knowledge of the narrator, goals and expectations of the listener, whose attitudes are like-wise determined by the long-term expectations and situations (Siikala, 1990:30). In the process of urban legend telling, various elements of texts can be applied within a very wide spectrum of social research. In this analysis, a feature of the framework of analysis tries to combine a theory of power based upon the Gramscian concept of hegemony. The study of urban legends reflects the existence of hierarchies of senses in Guwahati, especially in case of Student-Teacher, Layman – Terrorist, Patient-Doctor, Human Being-Supernatural Being, and Human Being – God, Individual – Enterprises and so on.

Another important phase is the textual analysis of urban legends, which is mainly based on form and meaning. By studying three parts, genre, discourse and style in the texts of urban legends, an inter-discursive analysis have been done carried out. Urban legends have a predictable, well-defined generic structure with the pattern, Title+ Lead Paragraph+ Satellites+ Wrap-up. On the basis of Labov’s model, online urban legends can be demonstrated on the basis of six stages: Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution and Coda. In terms of communication technologies, 54% urban legends are two way non-mediated face to face

conversations. And, 46% legends are collected from Internet, out of which 66% are descriptive with pictures and 34% are descriptive without pictures.

Legitimacy found in the text of urban legends has helped in two ways: first, legitimizing the narratives themselves, by finding such representations as factual; and second, legitimizing certain social actions while delegitimizing others. In order to affirm the truth of the narrated events, these texts include the voices of more expert members of the society, who are considered knowledgeable in some particular field, such as doctor, police, and army, as well as some organizations, who are established for their truthfulness and honesty such as channels like NDTV, TATA Hosp and so on. Social actions conducted by the victims are usually legitimated. Social actors are acting in conformity to the social rules when they fall victim and they are further not engaged in any other action that might put people in danger. There is no particular reason found for being vulnerable as threats are inescapable in the society. At the same time, rationalization says being careful and taking lower risk level may help in avoiding such accidents. Positive evaluations like forwarding information, gentleness, sexual control, caring for other people, avoiding nocturnal trips, obeying rules and regulations, being unfriendly to strangers, being alert to health and hygiene presented as the possibilities for probable victims to avoid falling victim through mypothesis. The deceivers' actions are always delegitized. The deceiver or deceit is clearly negatively evaluated in lexical choices that describe them as 'sick', 'squimish', 'grotesque' or 'horrible'. Moral evaluations and mythopoesis work together as to indicate their actions are fearful, mostly intended and (possibly) life-threatening.

It is found in this study that 85% statements exchange knowledge, whereas only 15% exchange activities. Out of this, 96% statements are statements of facts, which suggest that through these legends, people share some statements of facts and realities. And out of this, 95% are demands and only 5% are offer which includes sharing, forwarding messages. 82% sentences are declarative whereas 18% sentences are found imperative, which implies that in urban legend sayers declare a difficult situation and propose, recommend others to be careful about the threat.

Urban legends are social practices that represent and propagate the fears and insecurities prevailing in the society. Sharing of texts helps in identifying the people as a group of 'us' (possible victims) opposing themselves from the group of 'them' (swindlers). Adapting, sharing the text re-inforces or challenges the social structure, where people suffer from elusive and widespread fear and anxiety. Transmission of such warnings may defy the existing social structure by preventing the repetition of the reported crimes, scams and deceits. Re-sending such texts ends up in reinforcing the discursive structure of fear. The pattern of representation of the narrated threats is widespread, additional and inescapable. Swindlers are granted power of agency over the victims, as most of the processes they perform are in material transitive clauses (51% Material process) are of doing that open up over the victims.

Relational clauses tend to assign features to the deceivers that indicate that they are real or their actions have undesirable consequences. Besides, relational processes (11%) identify the deceiver either by name so that they can be recognized by the readers, or generalize it so that it could be anyone. Circumstances of time and place add to the feeling that the reported threats are widespread, since the narrated events take place in everyday, familiar environments which are supposedly well known to the readers. Moreover, the victim got the responsibility to express his or her pain by means of narrating or spreading messages to the audiences or readers through verbal process, which is found to be 11% in this study.

In ULs, while victims are involved mostly in emotive reactions, the deceivers act in material actions. Victims' reactions are represented in their participation functioning as mental clauses, where they mostly express their feelings and are thus granted little power over the narrated events. This stresses their inability to escape falling victim of the threats. Swindlers extend over the victims as they commit crimes, deceive or scam. In other words, while deceivers act upon the victims, the victims only react to such actions. Readers, senders and possible victims, in order to avoid falling victim, are granted power over certain material actions. Such actions, however, only extend over objects so that they can avoid falling victim of the threat, but the only real power they have over other human beings is verbal that of transmitting the warning.

This status of truth is presented through an overall lack of modalization, but also the frequent use of the modal operator indicate the tragic and inescapable consequences of not resending the email. At the same time, *can* and *may* are used mostly to indicate the possibility of one falling victim. 36% data shows probabilities. The friendly tone is recognized in the use of rhetorical questions meant to engage the reader in a less formal relationship by creating a false sense of dialogism. Besides, the reader is the receiver of commands to either continue the spread of the information or taking measures not to fall victim. Most commands, however, are modalized through the use of *please*, so that the readers can admit such commands as suggestions on how to act for one's own good. Victims are most frequently genericized or treated as a group, kids and women in most of the cases so that readers can easily identify to the individual victim or consider him/herself to be part of such group. Men are not excluded, though. they are granted the power to inform the women in their lives (sisters, wives, girlfriends and cousins are a few mentioned) about the potential risks they are facing. Possible victims are collectivized as a group of 'we' - senders and readers and their friends who need to be warned – as opposed to the group of 'them' deceivers. Deceivers are usually genericised or indeterminate. Their anonymity takes the focus from 'who they are' and places it on 'what they do'. They constitute a group of 'others', people who share the same geographic space as victims, but who are capable of conducting scams, deceits and crimes.

In chapter 6, the third stage of the analysis shows the need of reflections of such social problems in the texts of urban legends as they will create awareness of this type of possible crimes in the societies, which will further help in taking precautions in order to bring an end to these crimes. Therefore, indication of similar ghastly affairs is functional in considering their usefulness in the social process of narrative structuring and dissemination. The analysis further shifts to some positive evaluation such as, identification of some possible solutions in order to solve the problems within the ways things are. Finally, making people aware of these problems through social or digital media; insisting on education system for example, education for all; enhancing the capacity building; counseling the teenagers about their changes in life; emphasizing on health education; awareness about law and human rights may solve the problems that we have encountered in the texts of the urban legends.

Fifth stage in chapter 6 brings us closer to make CDA helpful in general way. It suggests some possible stages that help in making CDA more workable for laymen in solving common problems rather than limiting within the boundary of academic research and certain folk groups.

7.2 Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study presents an overall look at the construal of meaning of urban legends of Guwahati, so results cannot be generalized as to concern all urban legends in existence. Based upon the analytical study conducted, it can be concluded that a critical discourse analysis of the urban legends is very important to understand the social behaviors in the urban societies. The present analysis had a limited scope because it was limited to the geographical confines of the Guwahati region. Nevertheless, this boundary was elastic due to the inclusion of digital modes of transmission of information. Conducting the study with a wide scope (extending beyond the geographical boundaries) could prove to be of immense help in shaping the studies in the field of linguistic studies at large.

It is found that only limited documentation is present providing proofs of the research conducted. It might be due to limited access to resources or limited exposure of the studies performed. It is therefore, proposed that more researchers should come forward to publish their works and index their publications to add on to the credibility of the studies in this field. All these efforts and studies collectively, will not only help in understanding the social behaviours better, rather, they will help in defining and shaping the discourse within the global social communication as well.

In case of CDA, as Fairclough has said, “CDA has passed through the first flush of youth and has embarked upon the maturation process. It is the moment for some consolidation, for some collective thought to be given to the unity and coherence of CDA, its theoretical base, its methods of analysis, and to its relationship to the adjacent areas of study”(Fairclough, 1994:20). As such, synchronizing urban legends with theories of CDA introduced by other scholars like Halliday, Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Van Leeuwen, Teun Van Dijk and so forth will further help in realizing more social phenomenon in the future.

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Appendix

List of Informants

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