



# Classification of Place Names of Dhubri District of Assam: A Study

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**Abstract:** Every element in the universe has its own identity. The scientific study of attributing identity by naming objects is known as Onomastics. It has various branches including Toponymy, the study of Place Names. This study of Place Names covers a major portion of Onomastics. 'Toponymy' is combination of two Greek words 'Topos' and 'Onoma' meanings of which are 'place' and 'name' respectively. One of the concepts obtained about the study of 'toponymy' or place names is- "A set of place names is called 'toponymy' and their study is called 'toponomastics' (Phukan, *Toponymy of Assam*, p.4). The origin of the name of a place can only be obtained by studying all aspects of its location, culture, religion, history, etc. Most of the places are usually named by the local inhabitants of the place. The place names of Assam are usually influenced by the natural and geographical environment, various social activities, folk beliefs and customs, various dynastic rule, the influence of the languages of different ethnic groups and culture etc. The present paper deals with classifications of some of the place names of Dhubri district of Assam.

**Index Terms – Place Names, Onomastics, Toponymy, Classification, Dhubri District.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The unique identities of the elements of the universe carries distinctive characteristics and the distinctive characteristics determine the uniqueness of the components. It also carries its own identity and its inter-structural relationships with various aspects of society including history, language, culture, geography, anthropology, geology, archaeology etc. The concept of 'specific identity' originated in the necessity of the cultural and environmental interactions associated with the various components of the universe of the human species' excellence and consciousness. Onomastics is a concept that deals with such unique identities. The scientific study for naming the objects is known as Onomastics. It has various branches including Toponymy, that studies the Place Names. 'Toponymy' is combination of two Greek words 'Topos' and 'Onoma' meanings of which are 'place' and 'name' respectively. Sarat Kumar Phukan, in his book *Toponymy of Assam* states, "A set of place names is called 'toponymy' and their study is called 'toponomastics'.

One may obtain place names properly by studying the aspects of its location, culture, religion, history, etc. Most of the places are usually named by the local inhabitants. The place names of Assam are usually influenced by the natural and geographical environment, various social activities, beliefs and customs, the influence of the languages of different ethnic groups. The current paper is an attempt to find out some names of places of Dhubri district of Assam and to classify them for scientific and systematic study and future references.

## II. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPES OF THE RESEARCH

The current research work is confined to Dhubri district of Assam. The major objectives of the present paper are:

- To classify the place names of Dhubri according to their origin and features.

- To find out popular legends regarding origin of place names of Dhubri.
- To find out possible reasons behind naming of the place names of Dhubri.

### III. METHODOLOGY USED

This study is based on an onomastic perspective. The following approaches are adopted to study:

- a. Collection of Data
- b. Analysis of Data

#### Methods of Data Collection:

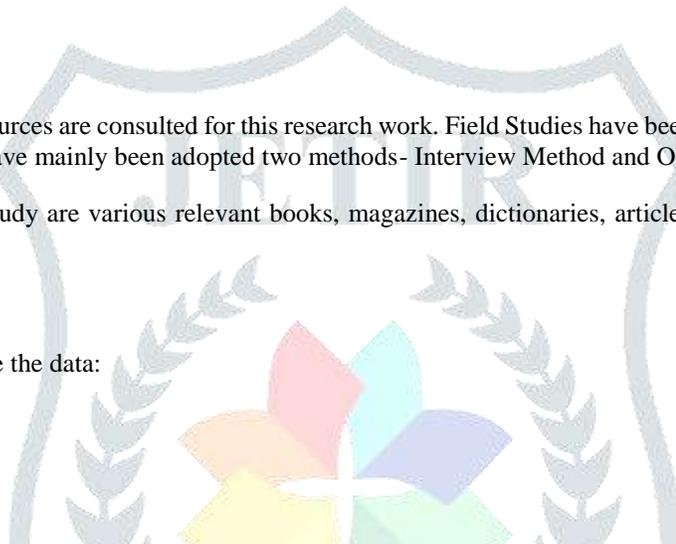
Both primary and secondary sources are consulted for this research work. Field Studies have been done as part of primary source of data collection. These field studies have mainly been adopted two methods- Interview Method and Observation Method.

Secondary resources for the study are various relevant books, magazines, dictionaries, articles, government surveys (Census 2011), internet etc.

#### Methods of Data Analysis

Four methods are used to analyse the data:

- a. Etymological Method
- b. Analytical Method
- c. Descriptive Method
- d. Historical Method



### IV. DISCUSSION

The Place Names of Dhubri may be classified based on the following criteria for proper study:

- i. Place Names related to flora
- ii. Place Names related to fauna
- iii. Place Names related to geographical bodies
- iv. Place Names related to personal names, titles and surnames
- v. Place Names related to community and occupation
- vi. Place Names related to religion and folk beliefs
- vii. Place Names related to foodgrains and food items
- viii. Place Names related to number, colour, size, shape, direction etc.

#### i. Place Names related to flora

Some of the place names of Dhubri district related to flora are- Beldubi, Boraitari, Fulgacha, Gobratari, Jambari, Katheralga, Taltari, Kathalbari, Pipulbari, Roghupara, Shalibharin, Adabari, Baraibari, Bashbari Bazar, Beguntoli, Binnyachara, Dalgram, Fulkumari, Gaspara, Kolapakani, Patamari etc.

##### Beguntoli:

*Begun* means 'brinjal' and *toli* means 'a land for cultivation'. The name Beguntoli literally means a land for cultivation of brinjal. So, the name of the village Beguntoli is associated with flora. It is now a revenue village under Dhubri circle of Dhubri district. The present Beguntoli is located at latitude of 26.080509<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.984653<sup>0</sup> East.

##### Kathalbari:

Here, *Kathal* means 'jackfruit tree' and *bari* means 'a garden or land' where such *Kathal* trees are found abundantly. So, Kathalbari means a land with abundance of jackfruit trees. The name of the village Kathalbari is associated with flora. It is now a name of a revenue village under Mankachar circle of Dhubri district. The present Kathalbari is located at latitude of 26.736501<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 92.846335<sup>0</sup> East.

**ii. Place Names related to fauna**

Some examples of place names related to fauna are- Bouserkuti, Kaimari, Khalisamari, Paborchara, Bausmari, Khalisakuri, Kurshakati, Mowamari, Mowamarijhar, Siltoka, Soulmari, Airkata, Baushkata, Bhakuamari, Boalea, Falimari, Narowamari, Bowalia, Fekamari, Hatsingimari, Folimari, Madhusaulmari, Singimari, Takimari, Chagolia, Gharialdanga, Pokalagi, Charaikhola, Harinchara, Kheksialy, Baladmara, Kukurkandi, Bhutiadanga, Kakripara, Kukurmara, Moinabandha, Moishaldanga, Baghmara, Bagulamari, Bhaishpuri, Chagalchara, Durahati, Geramari, Hatibandha, Pakhihaga, Tiamari, Khudimari, Salmara etc.

**Hatibandha:**

The literal meaning of *Hatibandha* is 'to tie or captivate an elephant'. So, the name of the village Hatibandha is associated with fauna. It is now a name of a revenue village under Dhubri circle of Dhubri district. The present Hatibandha is located at latitude of 22.1845<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 84.8646<sup>0</sup> East.

**Salmara:**

*Sal* is 'a fish' found in the natural water-logged areas in Assam. *Mara* in this context means the process of 'fishing'. So, the name of the village Salmara is associated with fauna. It is now a name of a revenue village under Bogribari circle of Dhubri district.

**iii. Place Names related to geographical bodies**

A good number of place names of Dhubri district of Assam are derived from names of rivers and other water bodies. Some examples are- Moragodhadharchar, Dhakabil, Horincharabil, Morakura, Joldoba, Dighirpar, Bramputraberabhanga, Chamaibil, Dubirpar, Bengdoba, Balajan Chapar, Balatari, Char Bastir Char, Dariaparamajuli, Pathuria, Tangaon, Baladuba, Dhubrichar, Dighaltari, Kaimbhasani, Matibag, Matiabag etc.

**Joldoba:**

This name is a portmanteau word and combination of two words *Jol* (water) and *Doba* (naturally constructed low land or water-logged area). It is now a name of a revenue village under Golakganj circle of Dhubri district. The present Joldoba is located at latitude of 26.2245<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.8833<sup>0</sup> East.

**Dighirpar:**

*Dighi* means a kind of manmade huge 'pond' whereas *par* means 'edge or bank' or surrounding area of any water body. That is, Dighirpar is a village situated around the pond *Dighi*. It is now a revenue village under South Salmara circle of Dhubri district. Today's Dighirpar is located at latitude of 26.0428<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 90.1600<sup>0</sup> East.

**Balajan:**

*Bala* means 'sand' in local language of Dhubri and *jan* signifies 'a natural water body'. That is, it refers to a water body with sandy soil. It is now situated under Golakganj circle of Dhubri district. The present Balajan is located at latitude of 26.1078<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.8844<sup>0</sup> East.

**Digholtari:**

*Dighol* means 'long' and *tari* means a comparatively 'high land'. So, Digholtari means a high land covering a long and extensive area. It is now a name of a revenue village under Dhubri circle of Dhubri district. The present Digholtari is located at latitude of 26.1856<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.6087<sup>0</sup> East.

**iv. Place Names related to personal names, titles and surnames**

Bhekurchor, Ramraikuti, Raipur, Aminerchar, Golaperalga, Mahajanpara, Boriralga, Dewaneralga, Manullapara, Monjuri, Nepureralga, Shadullabari, Alomganj, Aminerchor, Bhasanichar, Dalsingalga, Hariarkuti, Kuntirchar, Lalmonir Alga etc. are some examples of place names of Dhubri under this classification.

**Aminerchar:**

*Char* is a 'sandy and barren land created by river'. People started to migrate and make such land useful for habitation. Amin was most probably the first one to start inhabiting at that particular char area. So, it was named after him. It is now a revenue village under South Salmara circle of Dhubri district. The present Aminerchar is located at latitude of 25.9719<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.9778<sup>0</sup> East.

**Shadullabari:**

*Shadulla* is one of the surnames of Islamic people in Assam. *Bari* is a word indicating 'a house or place of residence' in local language of Dhubri. The present Shadullabari got its name after an influential person with surname Shadulla. This village is now under Mankachar circle of Dhubri district. Aminerchar is located at latitude of 25.6214<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.9580<sup>0</sup> East.

**v. Place Names related to community and occupation**

Some of the examples of place names related to community and occupation are- Bamundanga, Baniamari, Bamunervita, Bororavatary, Bamunpara, Jogipara, Maliralga, Bamnipahar, Bamuni, Baniyaguri, Kajigaon, Kajigaon-Ravapara, Kumarkati, Madatiparabasti etc.

**Bamunervita:**

*Bamun* is a substitute term for 'the Brahmins' in informal and colloquial language of Dhubri. *Vita* means a 'high land' suitable for residential purposes. So, Bamunervita is a place or colony of Brahmins. It is now a village under South Salmara circle of Dhubri district. The present Bamunvita is located at latitude of 26.0346<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 90.2016<sup>0</sup> East.

**Kamarpara:**

In local language of Dhubri 'blacksmiths' are known as *Kamar*, whereas *para* means 'a part of a village' where a group of specific community resides. So, literal meaning of Kamarpara is a colony of *kamars*. It is now a name of a revenue village under Chapar circle of Dhubri district.

**vi. Place Names related to Religion and Folk Beliefs**

Jinkata, Lakhimari, Materjhar, Sreerampara, Thakurerbari, Debitola, Debottor-raipur, Dharmoshala, Gambhiraghat, Kismathasdaha, Ramsarobar, Gopalpur, Harkata Hindupara, Harkata Muslimpara etc. are some examples of place names related to religion and folk beliefs.

**Dharmapur:**

*Dharma* signifies 'goodness, justice and religion'. *Pur* means a 'small town or place'. So, *Dharmapur* as-a-whole stands for name of a place where people were inclined towards religious activities as compared to other surrounding areas. It is now a name of a revenue village under Bilasipara circle of Dhubri district. Dharmapur is located at latitude of 22.8769<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 88.3846<sup>0</sup> East.

**Jinkata:**

According to local folk belief *Jinns* are supernatural beings, similar to humans. *Kata* means 'to cut or to destroy'. As per folk beliefs, the specific place had occupation of *jinns*. Later on, they were destroyed and human habitation was established. The place then got its name Jinkata. It is now under Agomoni circle of Dhubri district. The present Jinkata is located at latitude of 26.2500<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.7673<sup>0</sup> East.

**vii. Place Names related to foodgrains and food items**

Aluabari, Patanerkuti, Bhogdanga, Dimakuri, Sukatikhata, Chirakuta, Chirakuti, Chirakhowa, Molakhowa, Lawkhowa, Niz Chirakhowa, Dimatala, Kaunbari, Narikalkhowa, Piasbari, Tamakubari etc. are some examples of place names related to foodgrains and food items.

**Chirakhowa:**

*Chira* is a food item produced from rice. In Assamese language, *khowa* means 'to eat'. So, the name of the village Chirakhowa is associated with food item and action of eating. The village is under Mankachar circle of Dhubri district. The present Chirakhowa is located at latitude of 25.6184<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.9370<sup>0</sup> East.

**Aluabari:**

*Alua* is 'non-boiled rice'. *Bari* means 'a place'. The name of the village Aluabari is therefore, associated with food item which means 'a place where rice is produced at a large scale'. It is now under Golakganj circle of Dhubri district. The present Aluabari is located at latitude of 26.2038<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.8903<sup>0</sup> East.

### viii. Place Names related to number, colour, shape, size, direction etc.

Some of the place names of Dhubri district are associated with number, colour, shape, size and directions. They include: Atgharitari, Borobalchar, Boromera, Choto Digholtari, Digholtari, Choto Pokalagi, Atharokotharjhar, Boro Charaikhola, Chechapani, Choto Barundanga, Borovita, Attorokotharjhar, Borovita, Choto Bashjani, Dighaltari, Pachim Rangamatipahar, Lalkura, Lalmati, Rangapani, Dakhin Raipur, Pachim Raipur etc.

#### Atgharitari:

*At* or *Ath* is used for the number 'eight' in local language of Dhubri. *Ghari* signifies 'house' and *tari* means 'high land for inhabitation'. Atgharitari is a place where eight families started to stay together in distant past. It is now a name of a revenue village under Agomoni circle of Dhubri district. The present Atghariatari is located at latitude of 26.2451<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 89.8060<sup>0</sup> East.

#### Rangapani:

*Ranga* means 'red' and *Pani* means 'water'. So, literal meaning of Rangapani is 'red water'. The place Rangapani got its name for its colour of water. It is now a name of a revenue village under Bilasipara circle of Dhubri district. The present Rangapani is located at latitude of 26.7725<sup>0</sup> North and longitude of 92.7308<sup>0</sup> East.

## V. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we may conclude that,

1. Most of the place names related to flora are associated with fruit bearing trees.
2. In case of Fauna related place names, the names of fishes are found abundantly.
3. In place names related to geographical bodies, it has been noticed that the water bodies and river centric landforms found prominence.
4. In the classification under Title, Surname etc. influential and powerful males got dominated.
5. While assessing place names related to religion and folk beliefs it has been noticed that the place names associated with the Hindu Gods, Goddesses and folk beliefs are relatively more in number.
6. Dominant number of place names related to food items are associated with names of rice items and vegetables.
7. In case of colour, direction, size and shape small, big, red and the four directions are noticed.

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