The fourth sector of folklore and folklife study is designated as the performing Arts. This sector concerns primarily the traditional music, drama and dance. The performing art is a very old form of folk entertainment. Folk arts which include traditional music, drama and dance exercise important influence on men's emotions and sentiments. It can control the social and individual behavior of men. The influence of folk arts is universal. It makes the human tendencies refined and community feeling is enhanced by performing these arts in groups.

Out of the above mentioned three important branches of performing arts, 'drama in folk communities has been little discussed by folklorists primarily because it has not often been regarded as a folk genre. And even when it has so designed it has commonly been discussed as one of a number of performances – types in festivals and rituals. (Dorson 1982, P. 351)

However in recent years more folklorists work on South Asian data had widened the scope of studying folk drama and has also helped the theoretical growth in both anthropology and folkloristic, so much so that anthropology like Peacock believe that semantic aspects of cultural change and the cosmological categories of human societies can be accurately deciphered through drama and more particularly through folk drama. (Peacock, 1971, pp.125-139)

Folk drama differs from written sophisticated drama in performance – audience relationship and also in mode of transmission. It exists on a village or in a small group level. The performers are members of the community and therefore known to most of the audience. In folk drama to focus the attention of the audience on the performance, the performer has to use a wide variety of techniques. 'Consequently, one encounters clowning, dancing, singing,
instrumental music, bombastic speeches and other highly stylized type of performance. As part of the repertoire of effects in countryside drama.’ (Dorson. 1982. P .354)

Most of the forms of folk drama are associated with ritual and festival and have close affinity with music and dance. Indian folk drama almost always carries the element of dance and music within it so much so that it is impossible to draw a line between the dances, the music or the drama.

Although it is very difficult to establish a concrete definition of folk drama, following the definition of democracy we can say that, folk drama is performing art of the folk, performed by the folk and esteemed for the folk.

Folk music is another important area of this sector. Traditional music is ‘passed on by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written and printed musical score.’ (ibid.p.363). Besides having its limited independent place in the genre of performing arts, traditional music as we are aware usually crosses the generic barriers and forms part of many other genres. For example, folk dance, folk drama, dance drama, oral poetry, ritual and prayers always carry some amount of music with them.

‘Folk music is a term of musical folk. The term originated in 19th century, has been defined in several ways... as music transmitted by mouth, as music of the lower classes, as the music with unknown composer. It has been constructed with commercial and classical style. Since the middle of the 20th century the term has also been used to describe a kind of popular music that is based on traditional music. Fusion genres include folk rock, electric folk metal, progressive work, psychotic folk, freak folk and neo-folk.’(Source, Wikipedia).

India is unique so far as its folk musical heritage is concern. It varies from place to places and region to region. Thus, the cultural diversity of the land multiplied the forms of these traditions and made them more colorful and more enchanting. It is true that music is basically an entertainer. In the
preliterate societies, music is used more as an unambiguous signal for expressing human thoughts than as a finer symbol. Being present in all the human societies from very ancient times, music has unfolded in diverse forms. But it has a special role to play in the primitive society.

In earlier stages when languages was not much developed, man relied more on vocal tunes for his communication with the supernatural powers, whom he had the supplicate for food and drink, for a cure of illness, for protection against the enemies and for so many other daily necessities of life. Thus apart from using music to please his companions and for his personal pleasure and relief, music had much greater use in daily life of a man in preliterate societies. The traditional songs are generally sung by the priests at the functionally important juncture of various rituals ranging from harvest festivals to birth, marriage and death. Long back music was divided into two categories by the Hindus. These two categories are folk and classical or absolute music. ‘The first is born out of the free expression of human feelings, and the latter is based on conscious symbolization and codification with a view to reaching and impersonal transcendental world of aesthetics. (Sinha, 1986, vol. ix)

Folk music more often is confused with popular music. Avoiding such confusion it is enough to say that, folk music and popular music are not synonymous terms although as forms they share common traits. Popular music may or may not be transmitted by musical score. It is often varied in performance and at times is improvisatory in nature. Popular music however, is generally and ephemeral commercial product intended for mass consumption rather than a tradition known and practiced in a restricted area or by a sub culture.’ (Dorson, 1982, P.365)

However in India, cities and villages have always been in contact and popular and folk music have influenced each other. Folk music has not only
influenced popular music in India but also some of the classical forms of music.

Like folk music the traditional musical instruments also have equal importance in the field of performing arts. Just as a tale or a folk song is passed from one generation to another by word of mouth, so is the instrument and its kind of music passed on from generation to generation by ear and memory. In fact the impact of instruments on folk music in India as elsewhere is so strong that many of the folk traditions are known by the name of the instrument or instruments. Moreover particular kind of folk music is at times identifiable by its instruments only.

Like folk drama and folk music the area of Indian folk dances is also very vast. Dance has a special status in the daily life of the people of the land. In common parlance folk dance is the dance done by folk. According to some folklorists, folk dance is that kind of performing art which is performed by some non aristocratic group that has a traditional, unselfconscious, anonymously choreographed dance that is both distinctive and quaint. In the words of Kapila Vatsgyan, ‘In the Indian sub – continent…. Dance forms….. have survived, whose origins can be traced back to pre-historic times, now forms have grown up in the other places, the buoyant tenacity with which they have continued in spite of many momentous historical, sociological changes presents a bewildering rich and complex phenomenon. (Vatsayan Kapila 1976, p.14) Curt Sachs claimed that ‘folk dance fits on an evolutionary continuum, midway between primitive and civilized dance, and its presence in the contemporary world is a kind of living relic.’ (Sachs Curt, 1937, p.216) Folk dances share all of the following attributes:

(i) They perform dance at social function by people with little or no professional training with traditional music.
(ii) They are not designed for public performance or in the stage, although traditional folk dance may be a matter arranged and set for stage performances.

(iii) Their execution is dominated by inherited tradition, rather than by innovation (although like all folk traditions they do evolve).

(iv) New dancers often learn informally by observing other and or receiving help from others. More controversially, some people define folk dancing as dancing for which there is no governing body or dancing floor which there are no competitive or professional performances. (Source: Wikipedia)

J.W. Kealiinohomoku says that, 'they are Vernacular, redundant, and a part of a 'little tradition'. They provide the performer with a means of group identity, the individuals with a means of expression, and they give the performers both physical and emotional outlets. In all cases, the folk dances in their first existence are performed primarily for the benefit of the dancers rather than for spectators. Dance is the only means of affective expression that exits in both time and space, and it is the only activity that so completely involves mind body activity. It probably always has been, and probably will be, the most totally satisfying activity for the largest number of people, both as participants and, variously, as observers.' (Dorson ed. 1982, pp. 397-98)

Like other parts of India a group of performers who join the performance in the important social and religious rites are available in prose and cons of Assam also. A big number of performing arts in forms of music, dance and drama are still prevalent in its original form among the Bengali community of Chamaria and Nagarbera Mouza of Kamrup district of Assam, which deserves a special significance. Generally the folk plays are represented by them in two ways, namely, dramatically and semi-dramatically. In dramatic institution the full-fledged plays is represented. On the other hand semi-dramatic elements are contained in the ritualistic mimetic performances,
connected with Padmapurana, Kirtana etc. Some of these performing arts are mentioned below which are associated with the following rites and festivals.

6.1 **performing Art in Kirtan**

Kirtan is the act of telling, narrating or singing the praise or proclaiming the good qualities of Lord Krishna in human society. In other words, to sing the name of God and his virtues to the human society in the accompaniment of khol and tal in a high pitch with a particular rhyme is known as Kirtan. It is an unique creation of Bengali community. The Kirtan and Sankirtan is stands for same meaning. On the basis of content there are two main schools of Kirtan, namely, Nam Kirtan and Lila Kirtan. In Nam Kirtan, the names of the Lord Krishna are sung in different tunes. On the other hand Lila Kirtan is mainly confined to the young life of Krishna, Radha and Gopa- Gopinies. The liveliness and the charming cheating activities of Lord Krishna are the subject matter of Lila Kirtan. Nam Kirtan is regarded as the highest form of worship. Love is roused in the mind of the devotees by singing about the names of kirtan and forgetting the external world, they became immerged in the divine love of Krishna. There is another form of Kirtan which is generally sung by the male folk on the occasion of any kind of puja or when they celebrate any festival in their society. Sri Chaitanya founded the compete form of Kirtan and since then it has been widely popular among the Bengali community. There are five parts of Kirtan, namely Katha, Donha, Akhar, Tuk, and Shut.’ (B.K. Chakraborty, (ed) 2005, p. 97)

The main purpose of Kirtan is to show the path of devotion and love to god. Kirtan is sung in the accompaniment of mridanga, khol harmonium and kartal.

6.2 **Performing Art associated with Charak Puja**

During Charak puja a group of performers perform some folk dance, drama and music to give entertainment to the audience. These performances run side by side with the main puja. Different religious songs and songs of
Baida-Baidani have been mentioned in an earlier Chapter. Besides these songs they also compose some parody on the spot, which are generally funny and humorous, pleasantry and of joking type. The most important part of these entertainments is folk drama through which they try to present the corruption, deception, arrogant behavior, fraud activities, unfair love affairs etc. of the ministers, M.L.A.s or so called big men of their society. These dramas are performed in an open place without any platform or decorative stage and in the light of hurricane lamp or hatcheck light. The audience sits on the ground. To focus the attention on the performance the performers use a wide variety of techniques. For example, during the field study, in Lakhyanpur village of Nagarbera Mouza the author has got such experience that, in the midst of 'Dik Bandana', which is a part of Charak puja, two performers become Siva and Parvati by wearing ridiculous attire. Siva wears a long pant keeping the inside out and a wig of long hair in his head. On the other hand Parvati wears a scart and a blouse. He smears powder in his face by mixing some amount of vermillion, paints, lipstick and eyebrow etc. but without shaving his whiskers and mustache. It was just a gesture without any dialogue. The performers suddenly came forward and present some very short acts. For example, in a scene, Parvati repose on the lap of Siv and Siv searches the lice in her hair. After that, they dance together reluctantly for a few seconds with the beating of dhaks, and then again goes back to the audience. Again after sometimes they came forward and present another short act.

In another play they insulted a sister of their M.L.A. as a broker. The humorous dialogues were composed by the performers on the spot and acts without any practices. The performers wear saree and blouse. Some of the performers used a transparent and sparkling vail on head, and slipper on foot. It is remarkable that, all the performers are at a time actor, dancer and singer. They perform their dances in a cyclic order with songs and musical
instrument. Harmonium and kartal is the only musical instrument used by them.

Another interesting play was performed by a man wearing a musk of Hanuman. He also fastens a long tail with some dry fibers of the sheath of plantain tree along with the back of his waistcloth. A big branch of mango tree was already placed on the court-yard. The hanuman jumped on the courtyard from a roof of a little distance and started to eat the mango bud in a destructive manner. Then the other players try to drive away or to catch him, and at last they catch up the Hanuman and put fire in his tail. Thus the plays come to an end.

On the day of main puja, two boys became Siva and Kali. Siva smears ashes in his whole body. He holds a horn of buffalo (Singa) in his left hand and a Trishul in his right hand. On the other hand Kali holds a bata with a pot of vermillion in his left hand and a Jata in his right hand. He wears a red sari and hanged a red lolling tongue from his mouth.

The interesting matter of Charak puja is that, the female roles are performed by the male performers by wearing the female attire.

In Charak puja some horrible activities like walking on fire and sharp swords, piercing iron hooks and arrows through tongue, cheek, lip, stomach and back etc. are performed. These activities are known as jibha banam, Kukshi banam, trishul banam, barshi banam etc. In the last part of the puja a man is hanged on the Charak tree by piercing a big iron hook in his back. Before piercing the hook, the main priest or the matthuma put some incantations in the hook which is kept for sometime in milk. The man who will be hanged, is asked to sleep on a banana leaf by facing downwards and the matthuma put some incantations by smearing some amount of resin in that part of his body where the hook will be pierced. After piercing the hook in his back he is hanged on one side of the Charak tree. On the other side a man is hung by holding a rope connected with the Charak tree to keep the balance.
The Charak tree is then rotate in full swing for a few minutes and at the same time the pierced person throws prasad from his ‘juli’ over the devotees.

6.3 Performing Art associated with Holi

Holi is a festival of colour celebrated by the Hindus. During this festival small Children of the Bengali community of the age group of 4-10 years, perform Radha-Krishna Dances. Two small boys or girls dressed like Radha and Krishna and goes doore to doore along with their Gopa-Gopinies to collect money, which is locally called ‘holi maga.’ Radha takes a plate in her hand with some abir and dances following Krishna.

6.4 Sardar bari

Sardarbari is a game, which is played by bamboo stick. It is a very interesting game among the Bengali community of Chamaria Mouza. This game is played between two groups of young boys. Previously it was played between two groups of boys of both bride and bridegroom party during marriage ceremony. But presently it has become a traditional sport of the community. In this game, some dramatical dialogues are used between the two groups. Each and every performer of the group tighten their heads and waist with gamochas and with a bamboo stick, they fight each other according to the direction of their leaders. The leaders are called Sardar. The player of the group, who is defeated, is driven away from the game. In this way the game continues for some time.

References:
   Ibid : Introduction: concepts of Folklore and Folklife studies, pp.4-5
   Ibid : kealiinohomoku J.W. ‘Folk Dances’ pp. 397-398