INTRODUCTION
Author being an integral part of a society is naturally influenced by various traditional and customary norms and strictures inherent in the society. This influence is veritably reflected in his literary creations. In this connection we understand that oral literature is a divergent form of written literature. Such creations are visibly exceptional from the general folk literature, because these personal creations bear the uniqueness of the style, expression, verbiage and identity of the author, which can be re-written or rectified only if the author wishes to do so. The relation between folk and written literature is both antique and deep and can be correctly expressed in the words of the Spanish poet Huan Ramoth Himeneth:

“Roots are the branches down in the earth,
Branches are roots in the air”.¹

The same ideology is more explicit in Rabindranath Tagore’s book ‘Loksahitya’, where he emphasises the inherent relationship between folk literature and written literature through the metaphor of a tree and its parts.

“পাদ্রের শিক্ষা যেমন মাটির সঙ্গে জড়িত এবং তার অগ্রভাগ আকাশের দিকে ছড়িয়া পড়িয়াছে, তেমনি সবজাতি সাহিত্যের নিম্ন অংশ বর্ণনা মাটির মধ্যেই অনেক পরিমাণে জড়িত হইয়া ঢাকা থাকে... তাহা কেবল দেশের জনসাধারণের উপভোগ ও আঘাতময়... সাহিত্যের যে অংশ সার্বভৌমিক তাহা এই প্রাদেশিক নির্মিতের থাকার উপর দাঁড়াইয়া আছে। এইরূপে নিম্নসাহিত্য এবং উচ্চসাহিত্যের মধ্যে বরাবর ভিত্তিকর একটি যোগ আছে। তাহার ফুলফল ডালপালার সঙ্গে মাটির নীচের শিক্ষা গৃহের তুলনা হয় না।... তবু তত্ত্ববিদের কাহারো তাহাদের সাদৃশ্য ও সহস্র্য কিছুতেই যুক্তির নাহে।”²
In this regard some scattered information of various folk elements being included in written literature can well be cited. Such as the source of Shakespeare’s play, Hamlet can be traced to the works of a Danish writer, *Saxo Gramtikas* which is included in the 12th century edition of *Jesta Danoram* or *Historia Dani*. The historical authenticity of the story cited therein is unknown. Moreover, modern researchers consider the story only as a legend. This is so because the of the ruler of Juteland being Horvenville’s son Amoleth mentioned in Saxo’s text can be traced to Norse folk literature where the son of a deceased king feigning insanity, plans to avenge his father’s death. The roots of Shakespeare’s creation of ‘King Lear’ and his three daughters can likewise, be located in the folktales of various countries. In fact, even in India, there exists a similar tale of a king whose youngest daughter admitted that she loved her father like salt, which invariably enraged the king. But after a series of happenings the Princess was proved to be right. In Stith Thomson’s observation this motif has an international presence for which he indicated it by the No. M-21. The phenomenon of mortgaging a pound of flesh from the chest, as depicted in another of Shakespeare’s drama, ‘Merchant of Venice’, and the ultimate triumph of the borrower by dint of a gap in the conditions of the contract, can, likewise be traced to the well-known European ‘Ballad of Jeretunusa’. In the folktale of Tiutony, ‘Lock and Brock’, also there is mention of the occurrence of a similar event where the head must be severed without slicing even a slightest portion of the neck, to remain true to the contract, which refers to same technique of verbiage. Play-acting is, in fact, a branch of written literature, where the ballads used in Brecht’s plays are highly influenced by popular folk song *Bankelsong*. *Bankelsong* actually means ‘popular journalism related ballad’. Various crimes, misfortunes, defamation are the subject-matter of *Bankelsong*. Like the pictorial ballads
of our country, *Bankelsong* ballads were also sung and recited in markets and fairs with displays of pictures or paintings. Accordingly, Brecht composed song for the road in ‘Brecht, Three Penny Opera’. He used these folk forms in his plays to make them popular.

In relation to India, we can mention Kalidasa after Shakespeare. In Kalidasa’s drama ‘Abhigyan Shakuntalam’ (Act I, Sloka No. 15) there is an incident where the King Dushyanta, seeing his right hand shivering while entering Rishi Kanva’s ashrama, reflects in wonder, ‘শার্মা প্রাণপদম স্নাতন কৃতঃ ফলমিহাসা’, which means “The ashrama cannot provide me a beautiful wife; then why is my right hand throbbing?” The belief that the throbbing of the right hand is a good omen is a folk belief. In the concluding part of Abigyan Shakuntalam it is mentioned that if the *Kavacha* worn by Bharata falls on the ground, then only he or his parents could pick it up, else it would be transformed into a snake and bite him. The concept of this magical *Kavacha* is again a folk belief. Besides, the instance of King Dushyant marrying Shakuntala can be related to the phenomenon of kings marrying poor but beautiful women is identified according to the international motif index N-455-4. In modern literature also variegated forms of customs, explanations and expressions of folk culture are projected. This is clearly observed in the first stanza of Arden’s poem ‘As I Walked Out One Evening’, where he used the concept of the posture of a musician standing beside a floating ship, as depicted in the ‘Broadside Ballad’.

Rabindranath Tagore had taken significant initiatives in the restoration of early folklore materials of Bengal and applying them in his literary compositions. In fact, for him it began at early age with the creation of the incantation of the lion sacrifice.
Rabindranath created the above incantation by assembling excerpts from three separate Bengali rhymes—“তালগাছ কাটিয়া/ বোসের বাটিম/ পৌরী এল খি”, ‘উলরাট দুররাট নলের বাশি’ ও ‘চামকচুড়িকুড়ি বাংলাদেশের ফেলতালি খটাটি খটাটি বর্ষামন্দির পাটাস”

Much later he dedicated himself to the restoration of the lost wealth of folk literature. On the other hand, he layered his own creations with the elegance of folk culture. ‘Bimbabati’ of ‘Sonar Tori’, prince and princess lying in deep slumber, are anecdotes of fairytales. Besides tales and stories, elements of fairytales are also found scattered in several of his poems. In the story ‘Ekti Aashare Galpo’ of ‘Galpoguccha’, the characters, the Prince, his friend, the merchant’s son, the unknown island in the middle of the sea, curse, the loss of humanity, unidentified man are all elements of fairytales.

The last edition of collection of short stories ‘Galpsalpa’, which appeared in 1941, contains short-stories like ‘Raja-rani’, ‘Pori’, ‘Chandani’, which are all fairy stories. In the tale ‘Raja-rani’, the hero, Raj Rajeswar, travels distant lands in disguise of an ascetic, searching for an ideal princess to be his wife. Ultimately disgusted and distressed he is moved by the humble services of a poor damsel and decides to marry her. The whole narration is a beautifully presented fairy tale. In the story ‘Pori’ the narrator is Dadamoshai or grandfather, through his story-telling carries Kusumi to the fairy land, where she learns of her true identity as a human-fairy. The story ‘Chandani’ is also written in the same style. Besides these, one of the last works of Rabindranath, ‘Shey’, also contain some writings which bear the character of fairytales.
Novelist Bankimchandra also cannot be exempted from this discussion. In ‘Devi Chaudhurani’, we find Brahmathakurani narrating the tale of *Bihangam-bihangami* to Sagar and others. There are also various elements of rhymes, dreams, divine medication, sudden discovery of treasure and other folk elements found scattered in his novels.

Mention, herewith, may be made of Sarat Chandra’s remarkable novel ‘Srikanta’ where the character, Annadadidi, is a living example of Hindu Bengali folk tradition and rituals. The traditional as well as conventional rituals performed by a Hindu Bengali woman are all inherent in them from their birth, and not bound by any scriptural dictum. In this novel also Sarat Chandra gives a vivid description of the traditional folk rituals performed by Annadadidi.

“It is not merely observation of traditional rituals, but the characterization of Annadadidi is an appropriate example of the fact as to how cultural beliefs and habits give shape to a man’s life, influence his concept and thought, defining him as a distinct personality.”

However, in the works of Ratore (the Leopard Princess) or Jeane Aoile (The Clan of the Cave Bear) traces of folk literature has entered as part of anthropological research. The basis of Ratore’s novel rests on his research findings regarding the Ashanti-fanti people of the Ghana-Guinea people. Similarly, Mrs. Aoile’s novel rests on library-based information about the cave people of the stone-age. Thus, their literary creations are
actually representations of their research findings collected through field surveys or library researches, and readers have already accepted the folk terminologies of taboo, totem, manna, etc. Conversely, academic concepts of folk elements have found their ways, although indirectly, in Tarashankar’s ‘Nagini Kanyar Kahini’. Here folkloristic aspects have been entwined throughout the novel in terms of the neighbours’ sympathetic attitude and deep observation, as part of anthropological culture. Shiva had promised to *Vyadh* (hunter) that *Kalnagini* would be reborn as a woman. Consequently, even till date, an innocent widow of less than five years must have to be constantly kept in watch till she attains sixteen years of age, lest she deviates from the path of austerity and ritualistic restrictions and escapes to enjoy a blissful marital life. If that happened, then following Ma Bishahari’s curse she would inculcate the characteristics of a snake and would kill her infant. This folk belief and various other folk related tales and sagas have gone into the creation of ‘Nagini Kanyar Kahini’.

‘Witchcraft’ is a widespread folk belief in Bengal, which is beautifully crafted in Bibhutibhushan’s ‘Pather Panchali’, where he creates the character of *Aturi Daini*. The fearful existence of *Aturi Daini* in the childish concept of Apu is revealed in the following words of the author:

“অপুর মুখ খুকায়া গোল... আতুরী ডাইনির বাড়ি... সন্ধ্যাবেলা কোথায় তাহারা আনিয়া পড়িয়াছে। কে না জানে ওই উঠানের গাছে চুরি করিয়া বিলাপি আমড়া পাড়িবার অপরাধে ডাইনিটা জেলে পাড়ার কোন এক ছেলের প্রাণ কাড়িয়া লইয়া কচুর পাতায় বাধিয়া জলে ডুবাইয়া রাখিয়াছিল, পরে মাঝে তাহা খাইয়া ফেলিবার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে কেঁচারির আমড়া খাইবার সাধ্য এ জন্যের মতো মিটিয়া যায়। কে না জানে সে ইচ্ছা করিলে চোখের চাহনীতে ছোট হলেদের রক্ত চুরিয়া। খাইয়া তাহাকে ছাড়িয়া দিতে পারে, যাহার রক্ত খাওয়া হইলো সে কিছুই জানিতে পারিয়ে না, কিন্তু বাড়ি গিয়া খাইয়া দাইয়া সে সে বিযাহায় হইবে আর পরিণম উঠিবে না।
Other than this incident, traces of folkloristic anecdotes and cultural elements are found scattered throughout the novel.

From the third decade of the twentieth century, Bengali novelists are experimenting on writing novels based on the style of spoken narratives of folktales and fables. Most of such novels are illustration of the social lives of the oppressed class. Although primitive traditional values and culture gradually eroded, yet they are actually contained in the subconscious of the future generations. The comfort, affluence and education of the modern class-divided society are inversely related to conventional and traditional rituals. As such the manifestation of these practices is largely observed among the uneducated and economically weaker sections of the society. That is why, all literary creations which depict the community lives of the downtrodden, naturally draw upon folk elements. For example, Manik Bandopadhyay’s ‘Padma Nadir Majhi’, Samaresh Basu’s ‘Ganga’, Adwaitya Mallabarman’s ‘Titas Ekti Nadir Naam’, Satinath Bhaduri’s ‘Dhonrai Charit Manas’, Debesh Roy’s ‘Tista Parer Brittanta’, Amiyabhushan Majumdar’s ‘Mahishkurar Upakatha’, are such other novels, where the reflection of individual life or communal life is achieved through the use of folk anecdotes.

In this connection we can also cite the names of some renowned poets of Bengal like Buddhadev Basu, Jibanananda Das, Sudhindranath Dutta, Sankhya Ghose and the others are definitely to be mentioned. Various items of folk culture are embedded in their creation also. A clear
indication of fairytale is observed in Buddhadev Basu’s poem ‘Shesher Ratri’ in his book of poems named ‘Kankavati’. “এসেছিলো যতো রুপকথার রাত বরং হযে পাতার মতো—!” The entire collection of poems ‘Kankavati’ carry the tenets of fairytales. Besides this poem also reveals various other traits of fairytales, such as --

(ক) তিনির তোরণ চাঁদের চূড়া।
(খ) দিগন্ত থেকে দূর দিগন্ত ধূসর পৃথিবী করিয়ে থােঁ খায়।

These descriptions reveal the common motifs of Bengali folktale and create the atmosphere of _Tepantarer Maath_ of the fairy stories.

Such folk tradition is also observed in the works of Jibanananda which can be cited in the following excerpt from his poem ‘Paraspar’ in his collection of poems named ‘Dhushar Pandulipi’ which reveals the traditional picture of Bengal’s picturesque beauty:

“যুমানো সে এক মেয়ে
নিঃসরে এক পুরীতে এক পাহাড়ের কাছে,
সেইখানে আর নাই কেহ
এক ঘরে পালকের পরে
শুধু একখানা দেহ পড়ে আছে
পৃথিবীর পথে পথে রুপ খুঁজে খুঁজে তারপর—
তারে আমি দেখেছি গো
লেও চেখ খুঁজে পড়েছিলো
মসৃণ হাড়ের মত সাদা হাত দুটি রকে তার রয়েছিলো উঠি”।

It is clear that the passage talks about the romantic fervor of the Sleeping Princess of the age-old fairytale who was rescued by her Prince-in-dream. This motif of the sleeping princess is found in the folk literature all over the world. That folk culture was inherent in the creations of Sudhindranath, is revealed in many of his poems. An excerpt from his poem ‘Punarjanma’—

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his book of verses ‘Orchestra’, shows that he created some mystic environment with phrases as—

“গৌরী কাপালিকা’/… নরমেধ পল্লায়ের শিখা
… মঞ্জ উচ্চাটন/ … তুষ্টরক বলি…”¹²

These phrases were obviously meant to represent the basal qualities of earthly life, where the poet creates an environment of black magic and exorcism. Poet Sankhya Ghosh also could not dissociate himself from the influence of folk hierarchy as is clear in his poem ‘Jamunabati Saraswati’

“নোটন নোটন পায়রাগলি/ খাঁটতে বদ্ধি
দু-এক মুঠো ভাত পেলে তা/ ওড়তে মন দিত
হায় তোকে ভাত দিই / কী করে যে ভাত দিই হায়
হায় তোকে ভাত দেব/ কী দিয়ে যে ভাত দেব হায়
........................................................................
দু-পারে দুই রই কাঁঠালাই/ মায়ণী ফন্ডি
বাঁচার আশায় হাত হাতিয়াই/ মৃত্তিকে মন দিই।¹³

In fact, the poem is written in the traditional rhyming style of Bengali literature with little or no change.

Regarding the presence of folk elements in literature, eminent folklorist, Sankar Sen Gupta draws upon the remarks made by a scholar that, “From Folklore— that is oral literature— have evolved written literary forms, and folklore both generally and specifically becomes a favourite hunting ground for literary historians”.¹⁴ So to establish the deep relation between folk literature and written literature, several books and essays have been written both nationally and internationally, discussing the techniques and style of the usage of folk materials in written literature. Some such books are as follows:


Alan Dundes, in his book Analytical Essay in Folklore discussed about the influence of folk culture in James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’. There are several books on this topic in our country as well. Mention may be made of Durga Bhagat in this connection. In his ‘An Outline of Indian Folklore’, he highlighted the use of folk elements in Kalidasa’s literature, in a bid to explain the exchanges between folk literature and elite literature. Dr. Subhash Chandra Bandopadhyay’s ‘Bangla Upanyase Louka Upadan’ and ‘Bangla Natake Loka Upadan’ are also eminent examples of this kind survey. The book ‘Lokabritto O Sahitya’ by Sankar Sengupta is a remarkable work where discussions about the influence of folklore in the works of Boris Pasternuk, Auden and Brecht, are widely available. In the Special Issue of the Research Journal ‘Loksanskritir Uttaradhikar’, can be found analyses of the use of folk materials in the works of Bisnu Dey, Buddhadev Basu, Jibanananda Das and Sudhindranath, by Sipra Dey, Pallav Sengupta, Deviprasad Bandopadhyay and Sanat Kumar Mitra, respectively.
From the above analysis it is observed that the presence of folk elements in literature is bountiful and the methods and techniques of applying such folk elements have been widely discussed and analyzed throughout the world. In this connection, just as the simultaneous existence of various tribes, clans, communities in the North-east cannot be ignored, so also the presence of folk elements and their influence on Bangla literature of North-east cannot be denied.

The present research aims at analyzing selective Bengali literature of post-colonial North-eastern states particularly of Brahmaputra, Barak valley and Tripura region. The three integral parts of literature, namely, novels, short stories and poems form the subject of discussion of this research paper. The sole focus of the present research work is to demarcate and examine the use and application techniques of various folk elements like— folktales and myths, rhymes and folk songs, proverbs and riddles, along with other elements like folk games, folk dance, reservations and restrictions, customs and traditions, norms and practices, festivals and rituals, beliefs and conventions, in written literature.

In case of transliteration of Bengali words we have depended on the Bengali spelling system and these transliterated words are italicized.
Notes and References

2. Dr. Subhash Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Bangla Upanyase Loukik Upadaan, p.5.
5. Dr. Salil Kumar Bandyopadhyya, Rabindranath O Lokasankriti, p.127.