CHAPTER-III
Folk tradition of Assam
3.1. An Introduction to the Folklore and Tradition:

Folk Tradition are interrelated with the Folk and Folklore of a society. Folk implies a group of people who constituted the lower stratum – in contrast to the upper stratum or elite society. Allan Dandis stated that a definition of Folk is in narrow sense and view of eighteenth century only. In present times Folk refer any group of people whatever who share at least one common factor. It belongs to the group, traditions which help the group to have a sense of group identity. Folklore means folk learning. It comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation, or example, as well as the products of these crafts. Folklore is the lore of the people. (Dandis, A 1996, 1-4)

R.M. Dorson quoted that Folklore reveals people’s ideas and ideals, hopes, fears, aspirations and superstitions. It is the evolution of people’s social, emotional and cultural life, an index to their ethnical, aesthetic norms and sense of value (Dorson, R.M. 1972).

Folklore is perhaps as old as mankind. It is a reliable and trust worthy index to know the background of the people as it fostered cultural unity and national integration despite its diverse languages,
religions, regions and times. in the colonial nations, each folk traditions serves to reinforce the group, identity of its members in a pluralistic culture. Syncretism, acculturation or the fusion of different traditions is a process especially characteristics of new world of folklore. The traditional love physically attached to the original of its items cease to exist within the memory of man. It is completely last however, its dying process is actually very slow. Tribal peoples scattered across different continents need their myths to safeguard their identity. Therefore in the electronic age, according to Marshall Mcleoun, the literate word is reverting to an oral-aural community. (Jadav, Krishan, 1998, 12).

There are four broad sectors of folklore according to R.M. Dorson. These are –

1. Verbal arts or oral literature,
2. Social Folk Customs,
3. Material culture or Physical folk life,
4. Performing arts (Dorson, R.M. 1972, 2)

Assam has a fair proportion of tribes in the hills as well as in parts of the Valley who speak dialects or languages belongs to the Tibeto
Burman family. The general Assamese people uses Indo Aryan language.

There is a certain distinctiveness attach to each tradition, in relation to the tribes inhabiting the region, which in here in their particular language, religion, custom or ethnicity. (Barua, Lali Kumar, 1999, 1)

3.2. Verbal arts:

Verbal arts or oral literature or expressive literature are spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterance, the verbal arts have subdivide into several groups, e.g. myth, fairly tale, arecedote genre, oral poetry of folk poetry, proverbs, riddles, Folk speech etc. (Sen, Soumen, 1995,916),

Lalit Kumar Barua stated that verbal arts handed down primarily by word of mouth rather than in the written form. No one learns his native language in a formal school. He learns by a kind of linguistic osmosis, absorbing vocabulary and language patterns from his family, his friends, and his associates who, in turn, are conditioned by their own cultural milieu. Formal schooling, if it is a part of one’s environment, then modifies this already absorbed material, not only in classes devoted to the study of language but also by familiarizing the speaker with a kind of ideal and standardized language deemed especially appropriate of
expression within his particular speech community. This standardized form is usually conservative, often rigidly restrictive, and frequently highly artificial. The word dialect is used to refer to a specific form of an accepted language- of the Tele mark dialect of Norwegian, the Neapolitan dialect of Italian, the Cockney dialect of British English, and the New England dialect of American English, for example. One dialect may differ from other dialects within a given language in its vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. This difference is most often brought about by geographical peculiarities, though it is sometimes affected by social conditions as well. Folk Speech and Cultivated/Common Speech appear primarily in the area of word form and to some slight degree in idiom (which is frequently more closely related to vocabulary than it is grammar). Folk Speech also employs a number of grammatical constructions frowned upon by cultivated speakers. Some of these, such as the use of the double negative as in “he ain’t got none,” the use of prepositions to end sentences with, and the use of them as a demonstrative adjective as in “them books”, have a long history in the English language. Folk speech may also be contrasted with contrasted with Cultivated and common speech in its pronunciation. Folk Speech is the foundation on which all language is based. Speakers of cultivated and even of common, speech are inhibited by rules frequently based more on
misconception than actuality, though often the rules of prescriptive grammarians are justified in terms of logic. But living languages are seldom what comes naturally. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the processes commonly known as “folk” or “popular etymology”. This process, which is the result of applying false logic to puzzling linguistic situations, has contributed greatly to the vocabulary of the English language. (Publication of the American Dialect society, PADS, 1932)

Folk (or oral) epic songs are narrative poems in formulaic and ornamental style dealing with the adventures of extraordinary people. They are traditional, that is, handed down by word of mouth as distinguished from literary epics, attributed to definite authors. (Entwistle, W. J., 1939, 98)

The folk epic can be divided into the following categories: shamanistic, heroic, romantic. The shamanistic epic deals with deeds that are not heroic in the real sense, but are accomplished by magical, non-human means. (Hodgart, M.J.C., 1950, 69)
Riddles has tended to emphasize questions of origins, diffusion, and form. Riddles are questions that are frame with the purpose of confusing or testing the wits of those who do not know the answer. They are commonly called forth during "riddling sessions"-special occasions during which such witty devices may be used in a properly playful contest situation. (Taylor, Archer, 1954, 403)

Tribal folk tales deeply concentrated with the myths and beliefs. Folk tale bears the example of ancient origin and has deep psychic roots in the life of the community. There are various popular Folk tales among all the communities of Assam. These Folk tales bears few general features. They are oral narrative. Myth and Folk belief have a great role in narrative tradition of folk tales, popular among the tribal communities. The rituals, fertility symbols, chants or incantations, description about the certain phenomenon, like sun or moon, the eclipse etc. are abound in the tribal folk tales. The Assamese folk tales are known as Sadhu Katha. These above mentioned features generally not found among the Sadhu katha or Assamese tales. The influence of neo vaisnavism, Jtaka tales, Panchatantra, tales of central India found in Sadhu Katha. Supernatural motif, e.g. Ban devata, the Snake husband motif (Champa Vati), Romantic motif (Panesoi), Step mother motif

(88)
(Tejimola), Jealousness of rivalry woman motif (The kite’s daughter), humorous or trickster motif (Tatun Tamuli, Tikhar) etc. often intervenes the Assamese folk tales. (Bhattacharjee, Promod Chandra, ed, 1999, 44).

Creation tales are very popular among all the tribal communities of Assam. Dimasa tribe believe that they are the son and daughters of Bangla (a male) and Arikhidima (a female). Arikhidima laid seven egga at Dilou Sangibra (Bank of Dibu and Sangi River). The forefathers of Dimasa community appeared from six eggs and from the seventh egg few devils spirits, appeared. Bodo people believe that God Anam created one pair of birds. The female bird of the pair laid three eggs, devil, spirits appeared from one egg and from the other two eggs the forefathers of the Bodo community appeared, Pramod Ch. Bhattacharjyee stated that creation tales are also popular among all tribes of Assam. Assames folk tale is distinguish from tribal folk tales. Assamese Folk tales have influenced both in dialects and standard spoken language. But tribal tales has a deep connection with myth which in turn is originally connected with beliefs and practices of the tribal communities. (Bhattacharjee, Promod Chandra, ed, 1999, 4).

(89)
Ballad or folk poetry is also an important part of verbal art. Bihu geet, Husari, Biyageet, Vandana or Stuti, Deh Bisar geet, Jikir and Jari Banamali geet etc. are the example of folk poetry. These are several famous ballds, e.g. Badan Borphukan geet, Jaimotir Geet, Moni kuwar, Phulkowar geet, Jana gabhanur geet, Haradutta Biradutta geet, Kmala Kowari geet, Patharu Ghatar Ranar geet, Sikan Saniohor Geet, Radhika Santir Geet, Moluwar geet, Tamul Chorar Geet, Bhuikar Geet, Bamun Puranar geet etc. Several other folk poetries are Nisukanir geet, Nangeli geet etc. Missing folk poetries are Ai- nitam, Kaban nitam, doing nitam, Midang nitam etc. Dishru, Sentraduri, Amulah-dimalah are popular folk poetry of Dimasas. Bodo Tribes have Boisagu geet, love songs which are popular folk poetry. (Baruah, Lalit. Kumar, 1999, 11-21).

Karbi verbal arts are enriched with various myths, Ballads, riddles, poems, tales etc. Sabin Alun is a popular oral Karbi Ramayana. In Karbi language oral songs are known as lunse. Cacophang songs are very popular among kurbis. Karbis believes that waplacopy bird laid egg under a plum tree. Assamese, Naga and Karbi people came from the eggs laid by the bird. (Bhattacharjee, Promod Chandra, ed, 1999, 119)
Dr. Prafulla Kumar Nath fairly described the characters of folk tales popular among Rabhas had particular name. Rabha folk tales are very long. Bodo verbal arts are enriched by folk tale, myth, proverb, Ballad etc. creation tale of earth are very popular among Bodo tribes. The folk tale Jaulia Dabdan, Bigroshree chekla are very popular folk tales. The characters of Bodo tales are very peculiar, i.e. animal character, e.g. Frog king, Seng Fish, Clever Fox and old man and woman, crane bird king, Phanfawali bird, the fisohowa bird, Tortorise and Hare etc. Superficial character like Alari Dumbro, Gambina, Dimashrean are also found among Bodos. Several other enplanatory tales are creation of sky, earth, birth of Ha fisa howa bird, Kathiya Patula and Chadramali, Lakhishree etc. (Nath Prafulla Kumar, Dr., 2009, 64-147)

W. R. Bascom stated that oral literature considered as verbal art from the form and structure. According to W.R. Baseom Unwritten literature, popular literature, folk literature, primitive literature, oral literature create a bridge between standard literature and verbal art.

The term expressive literature is used on repetitive and oral pattern: The folktales are based on Myth and Beliefs, wider cultural Background, Deep Psychic Root, Animal Character, Ammuusement,
Customs of Religion, Humours, Step mother Motif, Jeliously of a rivalary women, Snake Motif, Trickster, Didactive Fables, Creation Tale, Insecto, Birds, Old man & women, Fox, Trees, Creation tale, Devil spirit, Folk Belief, Custom, Long & Narative. Folk Poetry or Ballads are based on Historical, Legendry, Magical or Wonder Tale, Allied Theme, Interesting long narrative. (Bascom, W.R. , 1981, 47).

3.3 Social Folk Customs:

This category of folklore mostly laid emphasis on group interaction rather than on individual skills and performances. To the verbal and tangible elements are added group behavioural traits of particular importance such as birth, initiation, marriage, death and similar paraphernalia rituals and customs with festivals in our country are sometimes related to agricultural activity following a calendrical cycle. These along with customs associated with religious practices and the concept of Indian world view from an important segment of folklife and they partly function to provide psychic reassurance against external dangers of natural calamities. This religious aspects is multi dimensional encompassing the most complex caste hierarchy. R. M. Dorson supported that besides pan Indian mode of worshipping Hindu Pantheon, there are very ancient and indigenous mode of worship and performance of rites
prevalent in tribal belts placate Gods and demons quite distinguishable from other parts of the country (Dorson, R. M., 1972, 74)

All known societies, past and present, have possessed religions, and elaborate cave burials made by Neanderthal Man reveal that as long as 150,000 years ago our ancestors may have worshiped the supernatural. During the past century, different groups of scholars have studied religions in different ways. Archeologists and historians have examine the religions of extinct people as manifested in their artifacts an written records. Sociologists have studied organize religious groups-ecclesiae, denominations, and sects-f civilize peoples. , F.C. Anthony had recorded folk or peasant religions and the orally transmitted superstitions or popular beliefs of civilized peoples. Cultural and social anthropologists have studied the religions of primitive peoples. This division of scholarly labor, however, has not been clear-cut, for folklorists have always been interested in certain aspects of civilized sects in primitive religions, while anthropologists in recent decades have increasingly turned their attention to folk religions. Primitive folk and civilized religions number more than 5,000 in the world today, and each is a composite of varying beliefs, behavior, specialists, and groups. Religious beliefs, to be so define, must involve supernatural entities toward which sacred attitudes are directed.
by groups of people. These qualifications rule out as religions all non-
theistic belief systems, such as communism and psychoanalysis, as well
as individual belief systems. Every religion recognizes several or all of
the following entities: one or more deities, spirits and demons, personal
and impersonal power, one or more souls ghosts, fate, luck, magic, and
witches. In addition, each religion attaches religious significance to
certain objects and places, such as the insignia of a priest or the mountain
abode of a deity. (Anthony, F.C., 1966, 52-101) Folk medicine is related
to three other levels or types of medicine practiced in the world. At the
other end of the medical spectrum stands scientific, academic, or
"modern" medicine, with which it has coexisted in increasing uneasy
tension since the eighteenth century. Folk medicine is related derivatively
to the academic medicine of earlier generations.

Certain ideas that were once circulating in academic medical
circles and are now discarded have become part and parcel of the folk-
medical viewpoint. D. Hand Wayland stated that folk medicine there is
essentially two varieties, two branches:

(1) Natural folk medicine,

(2) Magico-religious

folk medicine.
The first of these represents one of man's earliest reactions to his natural environment, and involves the seeking of course for his ills in the herbs, plants, minerals, and animal substances of nature. Natural medicine, which is sometimes called "rational" folk medicine and sometimes "herbal" folk medicine because of the predominance of herbs in its material medical, is shared with primitive cultures, and in some cases some of its many effective cures have made their way into scientific medicine. The second branch of folk medicine is the magico-religious variety, sometimes called "occult" folk medicine, which attempts to use charms, holy words, and holy actions to cure disease. This type commonly involves a complicated, pre scientific worldview that we will describe in detail later. (Wayland, D. Hand. Ed. 1961, 19-32)

The general Assamese people marinating pan Indian social folk customs. They worshiped Hindu God & Goddesses, deities. Some of them came under the influence of vaishnavism too. Dimasa community came under the influence of Hinduism. They workship different deities. Pathri is the priest of Dimasas. Promod Chandra Bhattarcharji stated about different social folk customs of Dimasas. (Bhattarcharjee Promod chandra, 1999, 46)
Bodos like to marry within the same community. They maintain death ceremonies and birth ceremonies. Generally Bodo people are Hindus. But now a days few of them converted to Christianity. They arrange Bathou Puja by worshipping Bathou and Borai. They have belief on animism. In ancient time Bodo society was depend upon several folk customs and customary laws, through which social value had determined. Prafulla Kumar Nath discussed about different social folk customs of tribal groups. Rabha society is monogamy by nature. They not preferred polyandry and group marriage. Cross cousin marriage preferred by them. Rabhas gave a high status to the women folk. They sacrificed animals before deities. Wine is also offered in religious occasion. Rabhas maintained Bathou and Kheri Puja. They keep faith on tantricism too. Birth and Death ceremonies are common among them. Karbi people also have few folk customs and customary laws. Karbis are generally Hindu by religion but few of them have adjusted Christianity. They worshipped Brahma, Siva and other tribal deities like Arnam, Hemphu, Hemari, Porigya, Sinthang, Peng, Mukgram, Dengjaduri etc. The death ceremony was known as chomankan. Tiwa community not worshipped idols, and pay respect to hill, mountains, rivers etc. They sacrificed various animals. The Tiwa deities are Moramusi, Bala Khangar, Hulauma, Padal Mazi, Mahadeo, Khatborel, Hat sana etc. They paid regards to the dead family.
members for the welfare of the living family members. They believed that vulture carries bad sign. They observed birth rites and death rites too. wedness is the pumest day for them. (Nath, Prafulla Kumar, 2009, 89-208).

Hajoi also observed birth ceremonies by worship Sun. They bound a thread to the small finger of dead that devil spirits failed to do harm. Marriage within the same class is not preferred. Hajai generally worship pan Indian God and Goddess along with the few other devil spirits Janades, Mashangdeo, Jukhini, Daini, Moila Bhut etc. They observed Bas Puja, Padma Puja, Kartik Puja too. Chutiyas worship God Kundimama, Siva Parvati, etc. They established Tameswari Temple, Kasai Khati Gosanir Than, Bolia Babar Than, Malini Than, Harhi Dealoi. They also have influenced by vaisnavism. (Khanikar, Sarja Kanta, 1999, 111).

The Folk Traditions of Missing Community are not based on the creation theory but on the evolution theory only. They have no particular religious faith. They not worship particular God or Goddesses or deities. They believe that there are two types of spirits- Benevolent and Malevolent. These spritis determine the bad luck and welfare of human being. Missing folk tradition was not influenced by Hindu traditions.
They were influenced by the Kala Sanhiti (sect) of Vaishnavite cult. After propagation of Kala Samiti, they started to observe Vaeshranvi ceremonies like Tidani, Satjonia, Najania, Ekashjania, Si Sokam, Gopini Sabah etc along with their traditional ceremonies—Uram apin, Dadanga, Uram, Dabir, Talong etc. (Bhattacharjee. Promod, Ch.1999, 91-207).

3.4. Physical Folk Life:

Physical Folk life or material culture or folk life responds to technique, skills, recipes and formulas transmitted across the generations and, it is subject to the same force of traditions and individual variations as verbal art, which is visual rather than aural. In this category can be placed folk architecture arts and crafts, designs and decorations of the buildings and utensil, and performances to traditional styles and methods. Decorative printings embellishing the walks and entrances of rural/tribal homes having both ritualistic and aesthetic significance is a non-Indian phenomenon. Although the motifs of such paintings of one region or culture zone may vary from that of another, their structural unity remains the same. Assam is enriched by its folk craft e.g. Pottery, Weaving, Bell metal, Wooden, Ivory, Cane and Bamboo etc. these craft reflects the Assamese society. Folk paintings were also prevalent here. Sculpture of different historical period found during the time of different excavation.

(98)
Jay Kanta Gandhia wrote that Assamese people take rice as the major food. Cira-doi, Khar, Pitha Pana are popular folk cookery of Assam. Mekhela-Riha- Sadar, Dhuti, Kamij are the popular dress article of Assamese people. (Gandhia, Jay Kanta, 1989, 74).

Pramod Ch. Bhattacharjee discussed that Dimasa people were efficient in Bamboo and cane craft. Women folk involved with weaving craft. Bodo- Kacharis prepared materials from Bamboo and Cane for their day-today life. Bodos are efficient in cottage industries. They made the instruments needed for forming by themselves. Women folk weave clothes by own selves. Bodo women folk wears Dakhana. The different ethnic tribes of Assam like Karbis, Dimasa, Tiwa, Rabha etc have several similarities in the field of Physical folk life. All of them wear Mekhala type dress, they are efficient in cultivation, animal Husbandry, folk art and craft, architecture etc. Rice bear is a common and popular beverage which is also used in several social and religious occasions sometimes (Bhattacharjee. Promod, ch.1999, 36-46).

Warren E. Roberts described that folk crafts one can only generalize and enumerate the various crafts. The strong traditions element in the crafts is also apparent in the great antiquity of many crafts. The
making of pottery, for example, is immensely old and has changed little over the centuries. Tradition usually has a geographical as well as historical spread; that is, while an element an element of folklore is passed from one generation to the next within any given area, it also usually spreads from one part of the world to another. So it is with the crafts, some of which are of worldwide diffusion. Craft is a folk craft. The element of tradition is more important than the element of age every craft item that is old is not necessarily a product of a folk craft. Craft in which primarily one man creates and designs the finished product have a better claim to consideration as folk crafts than those processes involving mass production, with one man repeating a single operation over and making only one small part, or with machines doing most of the work. (Bascom, W. R. 1981, 234-237)

H.J., Hansen stated that the object of material culture such as the crucifix or plow, simultaneously gives pleasure and serves some practical social or economic end. If a pleasure-giving function predominates, the artifact is called a re; if a practical function predominates, it is called craft. These implications are less important than the complicated truth that all artifacts have more than one function, whether a single function is clearly dominant or not. The interior of a
house is designed primarily to be used, and its function may be classed primarily as economic; its exterior is designed primarily to be seen, and its function may be classed as primarily aesthetic. The artifact is art to the extent that it is an expression of an intention to give and take pleasure, and it is folk art to the extent that the intention was esoteric and traditional. The artistic nature of a folk artifact is generally subordinate to its utilitarian nature so that most folk art exists within the immediate context of folk craft. Folk architecture may be said to be traditional architecture. It is concerned with all traditional aspects of building; the shapes, sizes, and layouts of buildings of all kinds, such as dwellings, barns, sheds, and craft shops; the materials used and the tools and techniques of building; the sites chosen and the placement of various buildings on the site; and the use to which buildings and various parts of buildings were put. There has been a reciprocal influence between folk architecture on the one hand and academic and popular architecture on the other, that traditional elements may be found in academic and popular architecture, and that traditional materials, tools, and techniques may be used in academic and popular architecture, nonetheless this survey will concentrate upon folk architecture, on which there has been relatively little written, and neglect academic and popular architecture on which many books and articles have been written. Folk costume is the visible,
outward badge of folk-group identity, worn consciously to express that
identity. In our age of mass culture, where costume is determined by
international style changes, it is instructive to look at the difference
between traditional peasant costume and present-day dress habits. Dress
is still very much the badge of group identity. (Hansen. H. J., 1968, 7-10)

Don Yoder wrote that Folk cookery can be defined as
traditional domestic cookery marked by regional variation. As every day,
domestic, family cookery based on regional tradition, it is obviously the
opposite of the commercial, institutional, and scientific-nutritional
versions of cookery. Diffused regionally into folk-cultural “provinces,” it
varies from both national and international cuisines. The study of folk
cookery includes the study of the foods themselves, their morphology,
their preparation, their preservation their social and psychological
functions, and their ramifications into all other aspects of folk-culture.
For the total cookery complex, including attitudes, taboos, and meal
system- the whole range of cookery and food habits in a society. Folk
cookery as a element in folk culture, ramifying as it does into many
aspects of the entire structure. The folklorist can join the historian of
religion and the anthropologist in studying the relation of sacred and
secular cookery, the folklore of food taboos, the psychology of foodways,
and, in the wider folk life context, can profitably exchange research data with the other socio historical sciences mentioned above. (Ibid 326-328).

Folk costumes is the visible, outward badge of folkgroup identity, worn consciously to express that identity. in our age of mass culture, where costume is determine by international style changes, it is instructive to look at the difference between traditional peasant costume and present day dress habits. Wilhelm, Heinrich Richl stated that dress is still very much the badge of group identity. (Heinrich Richl Wilhelm, 1857, 219).

Dress and ornaments are also important element of physical folk life of a society. Women folk of different tribes of Assam generally wears Mekhela (different types) cadar, Riha and Men Folk Dhuti, Kamij, Kurta, Gamosa, Cheleng, Hasati etc. Here few examples of different types of ornaments popular among different tribes of Assam given bellow:

**Assamese**
- Kharu, Loket, Loka Paro, Pedant Jangphi, Thuria,
- Gam Kharu, Jonbiri, Dhul, Satsari, Golpata etc

(103)
3.5 Performing art Traditions:

This sector of folklore studies concerns primarily with the traditional music, drama and dance passed on the succeeding generations by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written and printed musical score and relevant literature, which usually overcome the generic barriers. The folk music is functional in sense that it is not entertainment or of particular aesthetic interests but is an accompaniment to other activities. It is typically disseminated within families and restricted to social networks. Though rural in nature, it exists in cultures in which there is technically more sophisticated musical tradition and, it is
perpetuated and venerated as a spontaneous creation by ethnic, occupational or religious minorities unencumbered by artistic self consciousness and aesthetic theories. Dr. Jadav Kishor quoted that folk music is an embodiment of the common experience of inhabitants of the local to promote self esteem, self preservation and social solidarity. Though folk music nor an essentials component of the latter, a symbiotic relationship appears to have been established by it to other music forms popular in the larger society of which the folk/tribal tradition, remnants thereof. The partial duplication between the two music forms, and both tended to merge in the twentieth century. Folk music has not only influenced popular music in India, but also some of the classical forms of music due to the fact that it processes hidden potential for the sake of theoretical purpose. At times, a particular bend of folk music is identifiable only by its instruments and is passed from one generation to another. (Jadav, Kishor, Dr., 1999, 102)

Folk music is often loosely applied applied to cover all traditional or aurally transmitted music, music that is passed on by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written or printed musical score. In a specific sense the term refers to aurally transmitted music found within a society that also has art or cultivated music that is
transmitted through the musical score. It is thus differentiated from the music of no literate people where music writing is nonexistent. Like the term folklore, the term folk music was originally applied to the traditions of the rural peasant societies of Europe. It has since been broadened to characterize all types of traditional music found in Western civilization. One criterion frequently applied is that the origin of the melody must be unknown to its performer. Music that originally appeared in published form can be considered folk music if it has been passed on by ear and memory until the performer is no longer aware of its origin. Such music is said to have entered the "oral tradition". A second requirement applied is that the melody exist in variant forms. As it is transmitted from one individual to another and diffused from one locality to another, as performance succeeds performance, both unconscious and conscious modifications of the melody occur. Each such varied performance when captured in a recording or transcribed into musical notation is known as a "variant." Folk melodies form part of the repertory of regional groups, of subcultures, rather than being known by entire populations. Once a traditional melody becomes known over a large area it does its flexibility; it is no longer subject to variation. George List stated that folk music and popular music are not synonymous terms although they share common traits. Popular-music may or may not be transmitted by the
musical score. It is often varied in performance and at times is improvisatory in nature. Popular music, however, is generally an ephemeral commercial product intended for mass consumption rather than a tradition known and practiced in a restricted area or by a subculture. (Dundes Alan, 1965, 364)

The origin of folk dance may be any ancient and they may have grown out of creative aspiration and they continue to sprout from the imagination of individuals and groups, people of all classes who sense the traditions and the aspiration of their environment. The dance form of different ethnic groups have survived, whose origins can be traced back to pre-historic times and places. Folk dances have influenced by sophisticated classical dances, but also nourished each-other. The tribal dances as in the state retain their originality, simplicity and spontaneity. Dances can be considered as a manifestation of rituals and entertainments. "Folk dance is done by the folk" Alan Dundes tells us that "the folk" are any group of people "who share at least one common factor." Immediately we get into trouble if we consider a group whose common denominator is a non-folk dance form. For example, it a classical ballet company comprises a folk, its dance, by this logic, is folk dance. Clearly no folklorist would find that conclusion tenable. Neither
would the ballet company admit, however, that much of their choreography, many of their steps, and several of their story themes are based on or inspired by folk dance. What do they mean by folk dance? They mean "national" dance and/or "racial" (Dundes Allen, 1965, 2).

Dances and they usually mean the "unrefined" dance of European peasants. Primitive dance is not folk dance. Curt Sachs, for example, claimed that folk dance fits on an evolutionary continuum, midway between primitive and civilized dance, and its presence in the contemporary would be a kind of living relic. Arnold Haskell tells us the distinction is that primitive dance is communal and segregated by sex whereas folk dance is characterized by couples dancing with partners of the opposite sex. (Arnold, Haskell, 1960, 50)

Folk dancers are mute in this area of folklife. It is more accurate to say that folk dance also depends upon oral transmission. Seldom does formalized motor behavior occur without being part of some dramatic context, the understanding of which is passed on orally. In other words, participants in folk dance usually talk about everyday gestures that are learned by unconscious mimicry. Whenever folk dance occurs it is
always part of a special occasion insofar as it requires the will to perform. In addition, folk dance standards are maintained and caught through vocal approval and disapproval and disapproval of the visual results. Actual dance movements are indeed usually (but not always) transmitted through a combination of emulation and trial and error. Very often experienced performers will help the novice by physically putting him through the paces. Sometimes the master performer even manipulates the neophyte's body into the right shapes and movements. In any case, the method of transmission for first existence folk dance is comparable to an oral tradition in depending upon a one-to-one relationship between the transmitter and the receiver. Second existence folk dance, as Hoerburger points out, is more fixed or less dynamic. It is usually excerpted from the dramatic context and is not a part of a larger complex that requires oral transmission. But insofar as it is often a recreative process through how-to-do-it manuals. (Hoerburger, Felix, 1955, 7-9).

Folk drama has helped the theoretical growth both in anthropology and folkloristics. Folk drama is differs from the written or recorded drama in performance-audience relationship and also in mode of transmission. The most striking and fascinating feature of folk drama is that the music and dance have close affinity with this form and is
associated with rituals and festivals and bear resemblances to the movable village drama. Drama in folk communities has been little discussed in the folklore literature, primarily because it has not often been regarded as a folk genre. Further, even when it has been so designated, it has commonly been discussed as one of a number of performance-types in festivals or rituals. This is where it would remain, were it not for the fact that drama does have certain characteristics that other festival amusements do not, and many of these were developed in sophisticated theatrical forms. Because of this imprecision of generic definition, scholarly treatments of folk drama have generally been carried out as part of some larger argument. Cf. Leonard, Doob stated that drama of any sort calls for the creation of a play world by the players, generally through the use of conventional symbolic objects—masks, costumes, a special area for playing—and conventional stylized actions. Drama, in other words, is primarily recognizable as a play activity, and therefore is closely related to game, dance, and ritual. All of these call for the assumption of roles by players, roles that do not conform to those played in everyday life. All demand the coordination of activities within the play world by the players according to the accepted conventions and symbolic behaviors that the players and the audience to be appropriate to such a traditional activity. Folk drama differs from other dialogue pieces only in
performer audience relationship, in mode of transmission, and most important in vocabulary of dramatic effects. Drama is by its nature essentially a public performance- it must be capable of being understood by the audience with a minimum of reflection. That is, drama must deal in publicly understood motives and symbols. As in other genres of art, we may distinguish, however, between three types of drama- folk, popular, and sophisticated. Folk drama exists on a village or small-group level. The performers are members of the community and therefore known to most of the audience. The dramas are given on special occasions only, most commonly a seasonal festival. Popular theater often arises from folk theater but the players are professional and the audience comes from places other than the community in which the players live. Performances may occur more often. (Doob, Cf. , Leonard, 1961, 77-78)

The Assamese Bihu dance, Bihu songs linking with many tribal communities which performed accompanied with instruments like Drum, Cymbal, Gagana, Bamboo clapper and Horn Pipe. The popular folk song of Assam as stated by Dr. Upendra Nath Goswami are Bihu Song, Loka Geet, Deh Bisarar Geet, Jikir aru Jari, Kahini Geet, Nisukani Geet, Sisu Umala Geet, Sisur Khel- Dhemalir Geet, Gorokhiyar Geet, Nao- Khelar Geet, Hou Khelar Geet, Biya Nam, Si Nam, Tamul Chorar

(111)
Geet, Moh Khedar Geet, Sa ajar Geet etc. (Goswami, Upendranath, Dr., 1986, 84)

Pramod Ch. Bhattacharjee gave a focus on Bugurumba which is the main folkdance of Bodo community. They dance during the time of kherai Puja. Bodos have several popular folk songs eg. Religious songs related with the Bathou Puja, Kherai Puja and Garja Puja, Romantic songs related with Bisagu, Humorous Song, songs related with cultivation, Fishing, Hunting, Nisukani Geet etc. The folk instruments used by the group are Kham, Siphung, Serja, Khoubang, Thorkha etc. Haidang is a popular folk song sung by Sonowal Kacharies during the worship of Bathou or Kherai. Karbis have various popular folk songs. Masire Kohir, Karbi Keplang, Lakhmi Keplang, Has Kekan, Sabin Alun, Rang Kakim, Aso Kebei Alun, Thelu' Alun, Himu Alun etc. Missing performs folk songs, folk dance-ainitam etc (Bhattacharjeee, Promod, ed, 1999, 58-155)

Performing art tradition need to be viewed holistically rather than fixing it in a western genre model. These art are the real picture of tribal life. These reflect the feelings of common people.

(112)
3.6. Present Status and Past History:

Assam is indisputably the richest Indian State in terms of folklore. The traditions, rituals, mythology, customs are more living here than anywhere else. Assam is the homeland of a large number of divine populations that came here from different directions at different periods of time besides her aboriginal inhabitants. They belong to different racial stocks, speak different languages and have different socio-cultural traditions. Besides the aryenised Assamese people, a large number of tribal people, both in hills and plains, such as Bodos, Garo, Rabha, Koch, Missing, Dimasa, Tiwa, Karbis etc live in this region as members of broad cultural group. The folklore of Assam cannot, therefore, be discussed without referring to the other ethnic groups. Dr. Nabin Ch. Sharma stated that Assam's cultural heritage is the outcome of assimilation and harmony which gives the present identity in making her the living symbol of unity in diversity. (Sharma, Nabin,(Dr.),1991,10).

According to Mary Magoulick the study of folklore (and of Native American culture) has moved from an attitude that the subjects (texts or culture) are decaying or disappearing to consideration of them as efficacious and meaningful parts of our present reality. Scholars in these fields – especially those who do fieldwork – are now less likely to use folklore or Native American texts to prove their own theories. (113)
Additionally, they are no longer content with merely documenting, collecting, classifying, and cataloguing information. Instead, folklorists focus upon the present realities of cultural forms and processes, using fieldwork to attempt a perspective based on "insider" discourse and practice, and to provide a more complete context by which to understand the people and their cultural productions equally. Attending to artfulness and greater context based on fieldwork, allows for the blending of social and aesthetic impulses of culture and represents an affirmative understanding of culture. (Mary Magoulick, 1996, 320)

Folklore studies have always focused on interrelationships between language, literature, philosophy, and history (Johann Gottfreid von Herder and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are founders of folklore, which they called philology). Past folklorists focused on salvaging texts (mostly songs and folktales) in order to understand the past and sometimes to shape the present. Nevertheless, Richard Dorson points out that "folklorists, in this country at any rate, are not especially history minded, and prefer to examine folk materials by category, such as folktale and folksong, proverb and riddle, rather than by historical period" (Dorson R.M.1961,12-13).
Aside from the occasional nationalistic impulses to use folklore to buoy a certain historical ideal, folklorists were scholars of categorization. Dorson is referring to literary folklorists like Archer Taylor, Francis James Child, George Lyman Kittredge, Stith Thompson, and so on, who collected and categorized numerous amounts of stories, songs, and "lore." Thompson and his cohort and students produced indices by which to trace a tale's diffusion and possible origin, and by which to identify tales in literary works (he also studied American Indian folktales). Stith Thompson said of his life's work that "he had spent his time working on indexes and classifications in order to facilitate the process of archiving material" (Zumwalt 1988, 59).

Scholars in folklore and anthropology have long had a wealth of empirical data (such as the amazing and voluminous Annual Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology), but they did not generally synthesize or attempt to see the bigger picture, until the 1960's. Even the anthropological folklorists of the early 20th century, namely Franz Boas and his students at Columbia University, focused on collection. Boas was a founding member and important force in the American Folklore Society as well as an anthropologist. Boas and his many famous students such as Benedict, Sapir, Kroeber, Jacobs, Radin, Mead, to name only a few, all considered themselves folklorists, contributing to and editing the Journal (115)
of American Folklore and serving as members and officers of the American Folklore Society. Zumwalt quotes Kroeber’s student George Foster as claiming, "In those days, we all did folklore" (Zumwalt 1988, 68).

These heirs of Boas provided tremendous amounts of empirical data that they saw as reflective of culture. Their great contribution was as fieldworkers trying to present accurate, objective collections of the cultures they observed and lived among. Such experiences allowed them to overcome much of the racism of their predecessors in social theory: "Franz Boas was the first anthropologist to sweep evolutionary reconstructions aside and to assert at least partial custody of the sacred in behalf of all indigenous people. According to Boas, cultures were neither moral examples nor living fossils but simply different and equally valued" (Simmons 1988, 3).

Such understanding comes from close contact with real people through the experience of fieldwork. The Boasians used data they collected to understand given Native American cultures, although in the case of Tsimshian Mythology Boas considered the mythology to be meaningful and reflective of that culture but as it was in the past, so he largely ignored the contemporary culture he saw. This was partly due to
his unwillingness to see cultural expressions as distorted or requiring psychoanalytical interpretation. Such understanding was foregrounded by his student Ruth Benedict (and others). But his attitude also encompassed a feeling of urgency because the culture would change from its pristine state: "Anthropologists also felt a powerful incentive to learn what they could about such cultures . . . pristine microcosms . . . before they succumbed to debilitating change" (Simmons 1988, 3).

When William Thoms coined the term "folk lore" in 1846 in England, "the folk," were considered the illiterate peasantry of a given region: "the term folk in its initial meaning referred to European peasants and to them alone" (Dundes 1980, 4).

This shift reflects a reorientation in thinking that recognizes the universality of the human condition and the vital importance of folklore to all cultures. "Lore" was originally seen as texts of stories and songs, and now encompasses any willed, individual, creative expression. Since the 1960's folklore has been defined as "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos 1972).

Many folklorists focus upon the relationship of individual creativity to the collective order. Folklórists are equally concerned with aesthetic and expressive aspects of culture and the people and societies (117)
that make and respond to creative acts. From early on folklorists sought
to classify the material they collected. In fact, the major shift in
folkloristics (in the 1960's) was a move from collection and
categorization (predominant among both the literary and anthropological
folklorists working early in the century), to a new focus on synthesis. The
new generation of folklorists recognizes the interactions between how an
individual tells a story and how the audiences react and interact, and
interrelationships between art, architecture and other expressive elements
of culture. Folklorists today look at the dynamic relations between the
socially given, the traditional, and the creative individual. The field has
re-calibrated itself from a focus on the traditional and ready-made, to a
focus on the balance of traditional and emergent, socially given and
creative. Such synthetic work seeks to better understand the world by
recognizing the circular system of individual, group, and expression.
Folklorists today have and use theories, but they also strive to maintain an
empirical richness in their study, letting the fieldwork, the data, and the
people involved direct the big picture as much as possible. Today, many
folklorists use the word "consultant" rather than "informant" to refer to
those with whom we work in the field. The word consultant represents a
conceptual shift – giving the folk credit and space as performers and
partners in understanding and analyzing material. They are not just a

(118)
source to use. We work these days not to salvage something about to disappear, but to describe and analyze the present in cooperation with the people with whom we work. Those folklorists attendant to performance theory offer relatively full contextual pictures of the community in which they work. Those contexts aid our understanding of particular narratives or other expressive forms. Remember that folklore embodies a synthesis of the "folk" and the "lore." Ultimately, all of culture and humanity share these foci of folklore – creativity and society.

After the treaty of Yandaboo, Assam came under of imperial colonial power. As a result of imperial colonisation creates an Assamese middle class. This new middle class changed their attitude, together with the changing attitude towards west-oriented culture. This phenomenon create a new environment where Indian art and crafts were shifted, agriculture was neglected. The rural, local language based class converted to English Language based urbanized west oriented group of people. Which influenced the whole socio culture pattern. Folklore is very closely interrelated with culture. It is known that culture is not exclusively an individual traits it has universal implication. Human thoughts, activities, art and craft, morality, religion etc. S. T. Das stated that Folklore are the
expression of culture. Every ethnic group follows some traditions and customs, which comprise the culture of the group. (Das, S. T., 1991, 112).

Assamese society too has its own form of folklore, culture. But it is seen that sometimes ethnic groups go to the extreme in defense of their own culture. They had become conscious to preserve their traditional values. The ethnic groups of Assam belong to different religions. Most of them are Hindus. Some of them belong to Buddhism and Vaisnavism. They speak different languages, dialects. They are in constant contact with aryainised groups. There are features in their intellectual beliefs, traditional beliefs their tacitly which apart from resemblances due to the common elements of the universal pattern- are unmistakably borrowed from their tribal and Hindu neighbours. It must endeavour to know why this feature and not another was selected for adaptation and whether or in what direction the features so selected have been modified and adopted. Assamese society is colourful would of the tribal people in entire the region. The legends, literature, customs and traditions, speak volumes about the wealth splendor and creativity of these people that have, economically, influenced even those in the vicinity who have chosen to don the grab of sophistication. There are apparent cultural differences between the life styles of the tribal people of (120)
Assam, But historically, there is a basic unity in thought and Philosophy among people. Dr. Birendranath Datta stated that the folklore's obvious function is amusement or entertainment. In the earliest times Folktales have provided amusement or entertainment. In the earliest times Folktales have provided amusement or entertainment not only to children, but even to grown up. (Datta, Birechanath, 1989, 4).

All the narrative genres, myths, legends, tales have important roles to play in the society. Folklore does functions as social authority, social control and cultural continuity. It serves as an escape mechanism of revealing man's frustration and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed upon him by society. Various kinds of changes are seen in the field of folklore, e.g. structural, economic, political, ideological and so on are known to have effected even in tradition bound societies. These are also undergone modification and transformations of various kinds. Verbal arts had used as an instrument of social and political changes in the post colonial era in several foreign countries. Myths, legends and songs texts have been used to promote ethnic unity, regionalism, nationalism, anti colonialism etc. After the British annexation of Assam, Assamese language was dislodged from the schools of Assam. After the role played by American Baptist Missionaries there
arose a strong movement working for the assertion of Assamese socio-cultural identity. L.N. Bez Baruah, the most prominent figure in Assamese renaissance movement, published a collection of Assam folk tales called Bure Air Sadhu, which had the clear objective of projecting the independent and distinctive nature of Assamese language and culture. Legends about extra ordinary patriotic deeds of great Ahom general Lacit Barphukan and the celebrated Assames heroic self sacrifice of the celebrated Assamese herein Jaimoti in the cause of the land were successfully played up to boost up Assamese national pride and confidence. A memorable utterance attributed to Lacit Dekhot koi momai danger nahay (the maternal uncle is not greater than the land)- exploited as a handy slogan in support of Assamese sub nationalism:- is associated with the widely popular historical legend that Lachit had beheaded his own maternal uncle, a subordinate officer, for the latter’s laxness in the battle preparations against the Mughal Army Dr. Birendranath Datta stated that the various tribal groups of the region also drown freely from their stocks of traditional narrative lore in fostering their solidarity movements of various natures. Here we can trace the example of Pangsina (the devine singer who taught the arts of poetry and Music to the Karbis) a legendry figure of Karbi group and Basiram of Bodo groups.(ibid, 10).
It is known that due to the development of modern electrical media now-a-days Folklore are not only need as medium of communication in rural areas to express socio-ritual and emotional need. Due to the scientific the traditional forms of art which have been in existence for long, are gradually being replaced by the modern technique. Now Folklore materials are preserved by written form, audio visual form too. So Folk forms become popular and had entertained the people of other regions too. Some people claimed that the original beauty of their preservation. Traditional folk media should not be confused with the technology based mass media to disseminate messages heterogeneous audience, whereas the traditional folk media cater to the ethno-rural communities through the functional role of folklore. The folklore phenomenon represents an act of communication by employing vocal verbal-musical and visual folk art form transmitted to a society or group of societies from one generation to another.

Folklore expresses the  ethers of the people, but it is not stagnant or static. There is no harm in imbibing some customs practiced by other nations. Folk culture is not so brittle as to be destroyed for adopting and absorbing some practices from the west or other groups provided they do not clash with our Values (Ibid-14).

(123)
Today folklorists appreciate collections and methods of previous generations, but the new insights of performance theory have further opened the field. Performance theory remains a valid and useful perspective but it must be attended to more frequently and fully. The more studies we have from a perspective of performance theory the better because culture is various and dynamic and can be almost infinitely described, analyzed, and appreciated (just as a text in literature can be read and understood from various perspectives).