CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conceptualizing Folklore

Folklore is the reflection of folk life and traditions. It is a medium through which ideas, moralities and aspirations of the people in a society are conveyed. At the same time, it also portrays the conflicts, dilemmas and struggles prevalent in the society. Alan Dundes proposed, “We know that folklore is a primary vehicle for the communication and continuation of attitudes and values…It is well to remember that folklore reflects society” (Dundes 1980: 174). Various art forms practised by folk groups have been serving the purpose of an artistic expression throughout the ages. Although, “Folk literature as well as folk-music may not soar high in their imaginative flights. They may not have the ostentation of classical music with its flourish and elaboration. But deep in their heart, there is a melody of pure joy. Besides, the poet who is able to make a song of the everyday life of the village endowing it with rhyme and rhythm–gives voice to the inarticulate soul of the masses” (Tagore 1967: 2). These are the reflections of moments of strong collective or individual emotion.

There are numerous occasions in any folk life to manifest these artistic creations. Whether it is the unknown folk performer or a modern minstrel, the wisdom expressed in their cultural artifacts are always sufficient for them to get themselves attached to their roots. Therefore, “folklore comes early and stays late in the lives of all of us. In spite of the combined forces of technology, science, television, religion, urbanization, and creeping literacy, we prefer our close personal associations as the basis for learning about life and transmitting important observations and expressions” (Toelken 1979: 25). The life and struggle of various ethnic communities
reflected in their culture are the central point of focus in modern man’s endeavour to understand his root and the continuing traditions.

The term ‘folklore’ was introduced by British antiquarian William J. Thoms in a letter published in the London Journal *The Athenaeum* in 1846 to replace the existing phrase ‘popular antiquities’ (Dorson 1982:1). Since then folklorists and scholars have been interpreting ‘folklore’ in different terms. Archer Tylor says, “Folklore is the material handed down traditionally either by word of mouth or by custom and practice” (Dundes 1965: 34). This definition reveals folklore as an oral expression and something which is carried forth as cultural traits in different customary practices. Another noted folklorist W. R. Bascom defines folklore more elaborately,

> Folklore comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation and example as well as the product of such crafts. As such, it comprehends a whole range of material which includes folk art, folk craft, folk tools, folk costumes, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk speech as well as those verbally formed of expressions which have been called folk literature (Bascom 1972: 496).

Thus, folklore encompasses different elements picked up from all aspects of life, and it is this folk reality which sustains the manifold activities of the people. The continuity of folklore traditions reassures a community of its own identity. The present study attempts at locating folklore in the past and contemporary context in its wide expanse and range in regard to the use of it. It was observed that certain areas of folklore like oral renditions and other fields of performing arts had also been employed to depict social realities by different nations.
In Germany, the philosopher and a nationalist poet Johann Gottfried Von Herder (1744-1803) and philologists Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm did pioneering work on folklore. Particularly, it is generally agreed that with the publication of the Grimm Brother’s first volume (1812) of ‘Kinder Und Hausmarchen’ (Children and Household Tales), the scholarly scientific study on folklore was initiated (Datta 2002: 16). The Mythological school of folklore study was founded by the Grimm Brothers. Dorson pointed out, “The example and concepts of the Grimms’ inspired nascent folklorists in one European country after another to emulate their mode of collecting and interpreting folk traditions as emblems of people’s proud antiquities” (Dorson 1978: 12). They carried out the resurgence of folklore by collecting folklore materials. This conviction stemmed from a belief that a national identity could be instituted in popular culture and rested with the common folk. And national harmony and self-determination of a nation depends on complete familiarity with the cultural past of a nation. The past, as the Grimm brothers saw, got reflected in folklore. They, in fact, originated a methodology to promote research oriented collection and recording of folklore material. As such the contribution of the Grimm brothers in the field of folklore in academic sphere has to be considered prior to any such study. As folklore is viewed by different folklorists as a traditionally transferred knowledge in different forms and this may bring up a question whether modern or contemporary has a place within the periphery of folklore. From the discussion that succeeds, it will emerge that both the terms ‘folklore’ and ‘modern’ correspond to each other and do not seem to have a dichotomy.
1.2 Romanticism, Nationalism and Folklore

One of the basic factors for the further course of interest in folklore was the emergence of Romanticism and Nationalism. In close conformity with the currents of these two developments, folklore began to attract a number of enthusiasts. They felt nostalgia for the bygone days driven by the spirit of nationalism. With the advent of Romanticism came the inclination for going back to nature. It revived pantheism and said that nature is divine. It revealed the process of changing the unconscious into the conscious. Another important trait of Romanticism was subjectivity, which led to realization of the ‘self’, which again linked up to collective consciousness. This collective consciousness gave rise to nationalistic feelings. ‘Nationality’ is defined by J. H. Hayes Carlton as “a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related to dialects, who cherish common historical tradition, and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society” (Carlton 1926: 5). All the aforesaid factors and features inspired people to take interest in folk life and its ways and expressions. This ultimately paved the way for different manifestations of nationalism. Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) however was critical about national culture. He said,

The elements of democratic and socialist culture are present, if only in rudimentary form, in every national culture, since in every nation there are toiling and exploited masses, whose conditions of life inevitably give rise to the ideology of democracy and socialism…In advancing the slogan of ‘the international culture of democracy and the world of working-class movement’, we take from each national culture only its democratic and socialist elements… (Lenin 1967: 84).
At this point, it is worthwhile to distinguish between Liberal and Romantic Nationalism. While Liberal Romanticism emphasized reason and political realities of the present; passion and instinct were central to Romantic Nationalism. Customs and myths of the past provided the edifice of building nationhood, superceding mere political realities.

Tradition came to be associated in the 18th century more intimately with folklore material like songs, ballads, tales, proverbs, and customs and so on, when romantic nationalism prompted societies to look back with nostalgia at their respective national heritages (Datta 2002: 66).

Herder was instrumental in introducing another form of Romantic Nationalism in Central and Western Europe. Romantic Nationalism here underlined the imperatives of fixing the contours of ethnic bodies rather than redrawing national boundaries. To be sure, the adherents to this nationalism took over Rousseau’s concept of popular sovereignty, but to it they wedded the notion that each nationality is a distinct organic entity different from all other nations and that the individual can fulfill himself only to the degree that he is true to that national whole of which he is merely a part. Thus, personal wish became secondary to national will, and service to the nation-state became the highest endeavour of man (Wilson 1973: 820).

Initially, through the notion of Romantic Nationalism, scholars and poets tried to propagate education and spread the propaganda of ‘self-determination’. Infusing national consciousness in the hearts of their apathetic countrymen was another agenda. Consequently, Herder’s perspective of history not only inspired the German nationalistic movement but it seemed to have served as the groundwork for most such movements since his time. “By showing the German people why their building of
national culture on native foundations was not only desirable but absolutely necessary, Herder formulated a set of principles of nationalism that have generally been held applicable to all nations struggling for independent existence” (Carlton 1926: 821).

In Russia, humanist traditions found new expression in the folkloristic concepts of the 19th century revolutionary democrats. The study of folk art in Russia was also kindled by the development of Romanticism of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As mentioned in The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, the greatest Russian folklorists included A. N. Afanas’ev, F. I. Buslaev, Aleksander N. Veselovskii, P. V. Kireevskii, and A. N. Pypin. In the 20th century a sociological interpretation of folklore gained in importance; in Russia this approach became the historical school of V. F. Miller. Soviet Marxist folklorists in the USSR and in the other socialist countries view folklore as a socially conditioned and continuously developing form of folk creativity. Special attention is devoted to folklore traditions that have persisted in modern times (Gusev 2010).

1.3 Folklore in the modern context

Folklore has assumed new meanings in contemporary world. The notion about the nature and scope of folklore has undergone significant changes over the years. Earlier folklore was thought to be the territory of a hidden, forgotten and backward culture of primitive people. But the contemporary concept does not restrict its scope or nature. Folklore is no more visualized as left over and relics of a departed age. Rather it is seen as a retrospective construct, because “folklore is keyed to here and now, to the urban centers, to the industrial revolution, to the issues and philosophies of the day. In this conception, folklore is where the action is, not in some idyllic back water” (Dorson 1978: 23). So, folklore is not static, rather it moves along incorporating new elements and subjects because folklore is not a text, it is
a process. With the passage of time different aspects of folk life get a place in the repertoire of folklore. Thus, folklore is seen not merely as remnants and heritage, but is a living reality. Folkloric contents of the past interact with the contents of the present. As Sokolov rightly pointed out,

One of the peculiarities of folklore is seen to be the presence within it the aspects of syncretism, that is, the inevitable connection between oral works and elements of other arts. Folklore falls within the realm of scenic arts (mimetic, pantomime, dramatic art), not only in the presentation of the so called ‘popular drama’ and dramatized ceremonies - the wedding, funeral, agricultural, choral, and other performances - but also in the narration of byliny, the telling of tales, and the rendition of songs: it also falls within the realm of the choreographic art (popular dances, folk dances, choral dances) and of musical arts (the tunes of the songs) (Sokolov 1950: 7).

All these artifacts are preserved in popular memory and are alive in different manifestations around the world. The expressive forms of culture are thus revealed through folklore,

...the expressive forms of a culture, forms of art, play, display, and performance, offer an especially productive vantage point on culture, society, and communication. Such forms are shaped and crafted to heighten experience, comment upon it, open it up to intensified engagement and contemplation...these forms are especially reflexive instruments, social forms about society, cultural forms about culture, communicative forms about communication...The essential point is that the communicative forms and practices
of a society—its ways of speaking, dressing, playing music, and so on—are social means that are available to members for the accomplishment of social ends (Bauman 1992: xiv).

So, he saw the unrestrained forms of folklore as processes of communication and as performances which are to be observed in context *i.e.* time, season and other details if these forms of folklore are to be conceived in the true sense since Bauman calls them as reflexive devices which cannot be separated from social activity.

By the discussion that has been put into the previous paragraph, it can be assumed that the dialogue and discourse with folklore continues carrying ahead its legacy. Russian folklorist Y. M. Sokolov’s remark in this regard is equally significant when he said “Folklore is an echo of the past, but at the same time it is also the vigorous voice of the present” (Sokolov 1950: 15).

Dunja Rightman-Augustin writes, “We conceive of a culture as a product of historical events, but we also wish to underline the process of adaptation of yesterday’s cultural patterns to those of today and tomorrow, as well as the adaptation of present culture to a historical pattern” (Dorson 1978: 162). This attribute of adaptability assigns folklore to be a dynamic activity. New lore has always enhanced the repertoire of folklore. This dimension and recognition have given folklore a new lease of life. C. F. Poter says in this regard “folklore is a lively fossil which refuses to die” (Chattopadhyay 2004: 19). Folklore therefore is a living entity and the dynamic nature of folklore cannot be overlooked. Folklore and its different genres have secured its place in different movements around the world, be it cultural or political. All these developments prompted Dorson to remark that in spite of the obvious connections with tradition, “folklore is keyed to here and now, to the urban centers, to the industrial revolution, to the issues
and philosophies of today” (Dorson 1978: 23). There are historical evidences to it. The coupling of politicization and popularization of folklore in modern times has been a universally experienced phenomenon. Folktales, folk drama and songs had been employed to take forward the idea of class struggle in America, Soviet Union, Cuba, China, India and in other places.

1.4 The Communists’ Approach towards Art and Traditional Culture

The consciousness of the cultural workers around the world can be seen under the backdrop of more general trends in the Communists’ approach towards culture. This was obviously the result of the post-revolutionary Russian pattern of discourse which aimed in projecting Socialist Realism in every art form. Defining Socialist Realism in the First Congress of the Union of Soviet writers in 1934, Andrei Zhdanov, a founder of Soviet Writer’s Union, said that the method of Socialist Realism “must depict reality in its revolutionary development.” He also said that in Socialist Realism “truth and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction must be combined with the task of the ideological transformation and education of the working people in the spirit of socialism” (Zhdanov 1998: 524-26).

Before approaching further on the Communists’ viewpoint on culture, one has to consider the key words of the Communist line of thought, viz. bourgeois and proletariat. In a note to the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Engels defined both the terms; by bourgeois he described the Modern Capitalist class who had the means of social production and could employ wage labour and by proletariat, he meant the modern wage labourers who, in order to survive, had to market their labour power as they did not have the financial capability of production of their own (Marx and Engels 1977: 35).
Communists hold the view that art and culture may be used as a weapon against all kinds of oppression and that art and culture is not devoid of certain functions in society. They were not in favor of the idea of ‘Art for Art’s Sake’ and they considered the functional aspect of art. Regarding the subject matter of art and literature, Mao clearly remarked while reacting to the politically indifferent artists that, in the present world, “all cultures, all literature, and art belong to definite classes and adhere to definite political lines. There is, in fact, no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes, and art that is detached from or independent of politics. Proletarian art and literatures are part of the whole Proletarian Revolutionary cause” (Tse-Tung 1977: 25). According to him, democratic culture belongs to the broad masses of workers and therefore, it should serve the toiling workers and peasants who make up a much larger portion of a nation’s population. He further said that the writers and artists have their literary and art work to practice, but their primary task is to understand people and to know them well. This understanding and realization will endow their creations with a revolutionary spirit. Revolutionary literature and art should create a variety of characters out of real life and help the masses to propel history forward (ibid: 19). This kind of approach to art and literature engulf common people in all kinds of creative activities considering the life of the common masses as the fundamental source of creation. Conceding people’s creative exertion, Maxim Gorky also maintained that the life of mankind is full of creative endeavour, of striving towards victory over the resistance offered by lifeless matter, of an urge to learn all the secrets of that matter, and make its forces serve the will of men and bring happiness (Gorky 1965: 136).

In this regard, Adelphe Apia, an artist and philosopher considered art as an attitude which ought to be humanity’s collective heritage. He added that
some people have tried to restrict the broad domain of art in an attempt to make it a personal attribute of the ‘artist’ alone. He further conceived,

A time will come when professionals in the theatre and the plays written for them will be a theme of the past, never to return. When mankind, free now, will sing in living symbols, more or less dramatic, and adopted by all, their joys and sorrows, their harvest, their labours, their struggles, their defeats and their triumphs, and they alone will be spectators whom age or infirmity will gather round us in common, living sympathy. The time when we shall be artists, living artists- because we willed so. With all my heart I pray for that time to come (Apia 1993: 117).

This concern obviously evolved from a tendency to have an access to the lived experience of common people by which an artist can contrive his work of art. The attitudes of the communists’ towards art reveal itself in the following simple narration,

The aim of art is not to bewilder the people as the Futurists do, or to amaze them as the acrobat does. It should portray the real, not just as it is, but in its revolutionary significance, that is, as it is developing and will develop if only the people do their duty. It must create the taste for healthy pleasures and pleasantly teach them their duties. It must forge the will of the people, who will sustain him and improve his art, which in turn will improve the people (Pradhan 1985: 194).

The communists’ standpoint on culture is that it moves in an unending line and it is a natural development of previous culture, which is reshaped again and again by the class who is historical
leader of the epoch. Culture reshapes past heritage and by reshaping it and carrying it to its logical conclusion can culture come in the service of working class. Accordingly Lenin remarked, “Proletarian culture must be the logical development of the stores of knowledge, mankind has accumulated under the yoke of Capitalist, landowner and bureaucratic society” (Lenin 1967:141). He further assumed, “art belongs to the people. Its roots should be deeply implanted in the very thick of the laboring masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings, thoughts and will. It must stir to activity and develop the art instincts within them (ibid: 251). Awakening the masses against oppression and harnessing their aspiration to culture remained the most essential requisites for Cultural Revolution. Culture as a tool and a medium of communication to express and convey the awareness of the toilers perhaps could be appropriated through Marxist perspectives. Marxist cultural perspectives have generally followed two approaches: instrumentalist and transformatory. The former is primarily influenced by immediate political needs, particularly its mobilizational strategies. In this perspective, culture is a vehicle to communicate political message. The cultural fronts organized by the Communist Movement in the 1930s and 1940s unambiguously expressed this political intent. This aim is indeed unexceptionable from a radical point of view but it tends to define the relationship between politics and culture in a way that obscures their mutuality and privileges the former. Y. M. Sokolov comments,

The proletariat did not at once take form either as a class ‘in itself’ or, what is more, as a class ‘for itself’. In the everyday life, in the attitude towards the world, in the creative art of the labouring masses…all are closely dependent upon the existence in the past, of social strata within the proletarian class.
Accordingly, the history of folklore of the labouring man, naturally, stands in closest connection with the history of the formation and the development of the proletariats and its relations with other classes and groups (Sokolov 1950: 575).

As Mao Tse-Tung’s theory proclaims, “Revolutionary culture is a powerful revolutionary weapon for the broad masses of the people. It prepares the ground ideologically before the revolution comes and is an important, indeed essential, fighting front in the general revolutionary front during the revolution” (Tse-Tung 1977: 76). He further said, “Cultural force is needed like an armed band in a revolution…The Revolutionary war is a war of the masses, it can wage only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them” (Biswas 1990:80).

Artists having the communist ideology carried along their artistic endowment and performed so as to enthuse, motivate, unite, and mobilize. They carried out experimentations with art forms and developed a new modus operandi in order to enlighten the common people. Artists and writers, namely, Bertolt Brecht, Mayakovsky, Paul Robeson, greatest Russian musician Glinka, Maxim Gorky, Pete Seeger, and many others have singled out a purpose behind the art forms that they practiced in their respective spheres. In his own sphere of theatre, Brecht tried to drive home the point that the people is the architect of history. Regarding experimentation of realism in theatre, Brecht viewed that the theatre has to become geared into reality if it is to be in a position to turn out effective representations of realism, and to be allowed to do so. He further said, “We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transforming the field itself” (Willet 1964: 186-200).
This may be seen as a reflection of Karl Marx’s theory of art as he had seen it as an end in Mayakovsky, an outright revolutionary, a poet and a theatre personnel who quested for a new form and pattern to push forward revolutionary content. In his speech at the club of the workers of the First Obraztsovaya Tipografia (Model Printshop) in Moscow on October 30th, he said, “First of all I must state, that I never consider anything I have done as a finished work… I firmly believe in the creative energy of the working class, and I always apply to them for help…I value all comments and try to use them” (Dangulov 1983: 31). In a programmatic long poem written in four parts, ‘Cloud in Pants’, he challenged the whole structure of the Bourgeois society and his humanitarian ideas for the liberation and elevation of the working class finds an embodiment in this composition. He later summed up the ideas of the four parts of the poem as follows:

Down with your love!
Down with your art!
Down with your system!
Down with your religion…

Glorifying the struggle of life, he discerns –

Its hardships
That really gives taste to our life
This song, then
Will be a song
Of our worries triumphs
And everyday strife

The impact of Mayakovsky on progressive writers and poets around the world along with India has been immeasurable. Varyam Singh, a poet and a translator of Russian literature while admitting Mayakovsky’s influence
said that his works helped many to surmount the influence of the decadent-modernist poetry of the west, in particular English poetry. In his opinion, the basis for the ideological and artistic structure of Mayakovsky’s pre-revolutionary poetry was the young poet’s firm and unshakable belief that man would free himself from a social and political structure based on exploitation and inequality, and that man is capable of building a life in keeping with truly human nature (Singh 1983: 128).

The American artist and activist Paul Robeson (1898-1976), who conformed to political ideology in his creative work was in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War and he sang to the members of the International Brigade at the front lines. He said, “The artists must elect to fight for freedom or slavery. I have made my choice. I have no alternative” (Robeson 1981: 60). Politics is a very important dimension of human society. Folk responds to political situation, inspire them to create folklore having political ideas. Folklore has also been utilized in the promotion of various political ideals because it does not remain an individual product and becomes a carrier of thought of a community. As has been pointed out by Richard M. Dorson,

Far from being an antiquarian hobby, folklore has throughout the history of its study, being connected with national issues and concerns, the appearance of folkloristic as a discipline coincided, not by chance, with the heightening of nationalism in a number of countries, since folklore traditions could help reinforce the sense of national identity, once the intellectuals and policy makers were aware of its existence (Dorson 1978: 33).

In the Soviet Union of 1936, the Communist Party sstrategically utilised folklore as a political weapon. Folktales and songs had been
used to advance the theme of class struggle in the Soviet Union, Cuba and elsewhere. The prominent socialist writers all over the world created fictions, poetry and other literary genres which seem to be borrowed from oral literary genres. Goethe said “Folktale is the father of all fiction and folk song is the mother of all poetry” (Cesaresco 1967: ix). “The special value,” wrote Goethe, “of what we call national songs and ballads, is that their inspiration comes fresh from nature: they are never brought up, they flow from azure spring.” He further added “the unsophisticated man is more the master of direct, effective expression in few words than he who has received a regular literary education” (ibid: i). Hence, oral literature has influenced sophisticated literature on many occasions. Folklore played an important role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people in Communist Russia. The study of the “hopes and expectation of the people”, expressed in folklore, is one of the fundamental tasks of Soviet folkloristics (Sokolov 1950: 38).

The study of folklore of all nationalities in the Soviet Union is perpetuated by the theoretical doctrine of proletarian culture which was clearly outlined by J. V. Stalin. He spoke on Proletarian culture as socialistic in its content, manifested in different forms and different modes of expression among a number of people who have been drawn into the socialist organization, depending on their differences in language, mode of life, and so forth. According to him, such content propelled by a nationalist form is that universal human culture toward which Socialism is advancing and Proletarian Culture does not replace nationalist culture, but gives it content. And on the other hand, Stalin believed that nationalist culture does not replace proletarian culture, but gives it form (ibid: 38-39).

Recognition of the vitality of the youth and its enthusiasm in creating Socialist Culture of the people was much valued in Soviet Russia. It was
observed that consistent indulgence of youthful forces was a prior prerequisite for the development of folklore. The genuine science of folklore – again speaking in the words of Stalin,

Is that which does not permit its old and acknowledged directors, in self-satisfaction, to shut themselves up in the shell of priests of science, in the shell of monopolists of science; ...but which voluntarily and willingly opens all the doors to the youthful forces of our country, and gives them the opportunity to conquer the heights of science. Genuine folkloristic can only be that science...which has the boldness, and the resolution to break the old traditions, standards, and tendencies, when they become obsolete, when they become a brake that hinders the movement forward (ibid: 152-153).

He did not want people to be enslaved by tradition; rather he conformed to the idea that folklore could be an instrument to take forward the movement. This supposition that out of the past, new traditions, new standards and new orientations could be shaped, called for the youth to carry out the movement.

In a report at the first All Union Congress of Soviet Writers, in 1934, A. M. Gorky devoted a great deal of attention to folklore. He maintained,

... I would again draw your attention to the fact, that the most profound, striking and artistically perfect types of heroes have been created by folklore, the oral creation of the working people.... There was a time in antiquity when the toilers’ oral lore was the sole organizer of their experience, the translator of ideas into terms of images
and stimulator of the collective labour energy. That is something we must realize.... We must realize that it is the masses’ labour that is the chief organizer of culture and creator of all ideas (Gorky 1965: 236-253).

Folkloric form and content, thereafter, attributed a new dimension to the cause of creating people’s culture in the socialist countries keeping in view the Soviet paradigm. Mao Tse-Tung’s remark in this regard is significant. He said, “The new culture created in the Soviet Union should be a model for us in building our people’s culture. Similarly, ancient Chinese culture should neither be totally rejected nor blindly copied, but should be accepted discriminately so as to help the progress of China’s new culture” (Tse-Tung 1977: 121).

In China also, folk songs played a leading role in the administration of the empire. One such example is ‘Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August’, a Red Army Folk Song from the Sichuan province. Revolutionary songs of the Communist China often served to glorify the 1949 Revolution and to present an image of unity amongst China’s 56 ethnic groups and its various regions (Revolutionary Song: n.d.).

The value of folklore in mass mobilization is assessed by many,

Folk Poetry, the production of the masses, arises from the very mode of life of the popular masses; the people sing its songs under the immediate and direct impression of the passion which it is experiencing .... Owing to this exactness and truthfulness, oral literature possesses a greater historical value than any production of an isolated individual; therefore one many make use of it with confidence, without the danger of being led astray of it (Lafargue 1926: 51-54).
Lenin termed the writers and artists as ‘Engineers of human soul’ and opined that the role of artists and writers in building a new society is same as that of an engineer in building a new house. He further said,

The teaching, training and education of the youth must proceed from the material that has been left to us by the old society. We can build communism only on the basis of totality of knowledge, organization and institutions, only by using the stock of human forces and means that has been left to us by the old society. Only by radically remoulding the teaching, organization and training of the youth shall we be able to assure that the efforts of the younger generation will result in creation of a society that will be unlike the old society, i.e. in the creation of a Communist society (Lenin 1967: 138).

Back home, Hemanga Biswas, a pioneer of people’s culture from Assam, cited Paul Robeson as an evidence of an artist’s realization towards humanity. He quotes Robeson in this regard,

One perhaps forgets my own career and that for five years I would sing nothing but the music of my people. Later when it was established as a fine folk music I began to learn of the folk music of other peoples. This has been one of the bonds that have drawn me so close to the peoples of the world, bonds through this likeness in music that made me understand the political growth of many peoples, the struggles of many peoples and brought me back to you to fight here in this land as I shall continue to do (Biswas 1998: 15-16).
Thus, through folk music, Robeson formed a natural alliance with the oppressed people the world over and became a world citizen. That is why he stated,

> When I sang my American folk melodies in Budapest, Prague, Tiflis, Moscow, Oslo, or the Hebrides or on the Spanish front, the people understood and wept or rejoiced with the spirit of the songs. I found that where the forces have been the same, whether people weave, build, pick cotton, or dig in the mines, they understand each other in the common language of work, suffering and protest (Robeson 1981: 120).

In the Introduction to the Indian Edition of *Peekskill: USA*, Paul Robeson and Howard Fast stated, “The face of Fascism is same in every land. We learned that the Negro people and the working class, firm and united can defeat and smash the forces of fascism. And we learned, above all, that no artist today can create honestly or function wholly apart from the people’s movement” (Fast 1951). Communist activists and artists seem to have the same conviction throughout the world. They identify themselves with the people’s cause and subsequently raise their voice against the contenders of people’s culture by means of devices like art, music, drama, sculpture and other cultural artifacts. They had taken into account local histories, legends and other folklore genres for this purpose to mingle with the common mass. These folklore genres carried along by the common people forms a pattern of discourse as discussed earlier, surpassing particular time and space. Most of the forms of folklore are not devoid of realities of existence, rather they permeate all lived experiences. All the items of folklore are like the hallmarks of a nation because they are characterized by regional, geographical or environmental influence of a particular locality.
The pre-discussed Nationalist movements of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century art and music drew on folk tunes and their styles, as well as folk dances and themes from folklore and pastoral life, to develop distinctive repertories. Leaders in these movements included Bedrich Smetana (1824-1884)\textsuperscript{1}, and Dvorak (1841-1904)\textsuperscript{2} for Czech music, Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)\textsuperscript{3} for Norwegian, Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)\textsuperscript{4} and Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)\textsuperscript{5} for Russian, George Enesco (1881-1955)\textsuperscript{6} for Romanian, and Aaron Copland (1900-1990)\textsuperscript{7} and Roy Harris (1898-1979)\textsuperscript{8} for American cultures. As nationalism developed, contemporaneous folk songs often found their way into the repertoires of militant student organizations (e.g. in Germany) and soldiers, and they sometimes (e.g. in the Habsburg empire) found their place on the shows put on by travelling officers to recruit villagers in the provinces. The Nazi and fascist movements of the 1920s to 1940s in Germany and Italy introduced folk songs into the canons of their military ceremonies. In the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Eastern Europe after 1945, the folk music of ethnic groups was institutionalized, taught in special music schools, and performed by professionals, symbolizing the

\textsuperscript{1} He was a Bohemian composer of operas and symphonic poems, founder of the Czech National School of Music.

\textsuperscript{2} First Bohemian composer to achieve worldwide recognition, noted for turning folk material into the language of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century Romantic music.

\textsuperscript{3} He was a founder of the Norwegian Nationalist School of Music.

\textsuperscript{4} He was the first Russian composer to win international recognition, and the acknowledged founder of the Russian Nationalist School.

\textsuperscript{5} He was a Russian composer and one of the founder members of the Nationalist School of Russian Music.

\textsuperscript{6} George Enesco was a violinist and a composer, known for his interpretations of Bach and his works in the Romanian style.

\textsuperscript{7} Harris was an American composer who achieved a distinctive musical characterization of American themes in an expressive modern style.

\textsuperscript{8} He was a wellknown American composer and a prominent representative of nationalism in American music and he came to be regarded as the musical spokesman for the American landscape.
equality of folk and classical traditions. In North-America, folk music featured as a primary vehicle of expression and upholding of group identity for urban ethnic groups, such as Polish Americans and Austrian Americans and their Canadian counterparts. Use of folk music with the theme of protest was chiefly popularized in the United States by Woody Guthrie (1912-1967). He was said to have composed more than 1,000 songs. They are identified as folk songs because they voice the concerns of the rural and working-class ‘folk’. The best known figure in the post 2nd World War US folk music culture is Pete Seeger. He helped to revive many traditional folk songs, performing them together with songs of liberal advocacy that he reworked or composed, including the anti-segregation ‘We Shall Overcome’ and the anti-war song ‘Where Have All the Flowers Gone?’ (Nettl 2014).

In India too, the dialogue with the realities of life had been given a different impetus by socio-cultural and progressive institutions like the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) with a definitive pro-people ideology. The IPTA stated categorically that it seeks "to make our arts the expression and the organiser of our people's struggle for freedom, economic justice and democratic culture" (Pradhan 1985: 151). This dialogue emanated from folkloric tradition which was artfully disseminated in myriad forms by the cultural front since its inception. The aims and objectives foregrounded by the association discussed in the succeeding sections of this work will bring home the above mentioned statement. Subsequently, it will validate the proposal that pre-existing artistic elements were assigned a degree and that in turn had given a momentum to the progressive movement. Hence, the IPTA comes under the purview of folklore study seen from the historical perspective.

---

9 American folksinger and song composer whose songs, many of which are now classics, chronicled the plight of common people, especially during the Great Depression.
1.5 Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA): Genesis and Development

IPTA is the short form for Indian People’s Theatre Association. In the Hindi belt it is called Bhartiya Jan Natya Sangh, in Assam and West Bengal, Bhartiya Gana Natya Sangh (Gana Sanskriti Sangh) and in Andhra Pradesh, Praja Natya Mandal. The Mission Statement of the IPTA is ‘People’s Theatre Stars the People’. The famous painter Chitta Prasad designed the logo of the IPTA featuring a drummer, which is a reminder of one of the oldest medium of communication. The first provincial unit of the IPTA was established in Bangalore in 1941. The name Indian People’s Theatre Association had been suggested by renowned scientist Homi Jahangir Bhabha on the basis of Roman Rolland’s famous book ‘People’s Theatre’. Miss De’Silva of Srilanka (then known as Singhal) helped to form the Bombay (now Mumbai) branch of IPTA in 1942. A drama Ye Kiska Khoon written by Ali Sardar Jaffri, an anti-Fascist poet, was staged by Bombay IPTA in the same year. This laid the foundation of the Bombay unit of the IPTA. The association was established at the national level on May 25, 1943 in Bombay. The Government of India issued a commemorative stamp in 1993 on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee (IPTA, National Committee: n.d.). (see plate – 1)

To understand about the genesis of the IPTA, it is worthwhile to look into the concurrent events happening around the world which laid a strong foundation upon which the IPTA stood and grew.

The French Revolution, the War for freedom of America, the Industrial Revolution inspired people around the world to think of equality and safeguarding the existence of man as man. The world could see a conflict between two different social orders throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.
Soviet Russia was rapidly progressing towards socialism on one hand, capitalist countries had a tremendous economic crisis on the other and fascism created by bourgeois autocracy in Italy and Germany at the same time was becoming influential. The International Fascist uprising and the Civil War in Spain were other notable events which posed a threat to the democratic world fraternity. The Republican Government became the victim of International Fascism. Some of the noted artists and writers like Ralph Fox (1900-1937) and Christopher Caudwell (1907-1937) having solidarity with the people of Spain joined the war as soldiers and sacrificed their lives (Pradhan 1985: 21). This act of sacrifice of the world renowned intellectuals acted as an eye-opener for the people around the world against the menace of Fascism. Because of the extraordinary depth of Caudwell’s intelligence, that was exhibited, in a short span of time, he had accomplished an exceptional perception. During this period of most dynamic political activity, he wrote diligently, with all his creative energy, and produced serious Marxist theoretical works. The impact of these works can be understood by referring to what George Thompson has to say about him in his biographical note in the posthumously published book by Caudwell ‘Illusion and Reality’– “It marked a new departure in literary criticism, being the first attempt to work out a comprehensive solution to the fundamental problems of aesthetics by investigating them systematically on the basis of a Marxist critique of bourgeois psychology” (Thompson 1991: vii). Activism corresponding with intellectual pursuit was the call of the time which these erudite avant-gardes so well reciprocated.

At this juncture, the artists and writers could not remain indifferent and silent to this wave of change. An offensive and united struggle against repressive Fascism and Imperialism was growing all over the world and various organizations under the leadership of humanist writers and
intellectuals were formed. A conference of world writers was held in Paris under the tutelage of Maxim Gorky, Andre Gide, E. M. Forster, André Malraux, and others on 21st June in 1935 and led to the formation of the International Association of Writers for the Defense of Culture against Fascism. The special conference of this association was held in Madrid in 1937. Following this, humanist Roman Rolland appealed to the people by forming a committee for the ‘Defense of the Victims of Fascism and White Terror’. Literature and performing art was chosen as an approach to reach the masses. All these parallel events kindled the Indian writers and artists and led to the formation of the All India Progressive Writers’ and Artists’ Association (AIPWA) in 1936 on 10th April under the presidency of Munshi Premchand. In the Presidential address delivered by him at the First All India Progressive Writers’ Conference, held at Lucknow, he pointed out that their aim was to help all such progressive tendencies in the literary world. He added,

We writers suffer from one great defect, and that is the absence of action in our lives. It is a bitter reality; we cannot shut our eyes to it…So long as the object of literature was mere entertainment, so long as it was a means of escape from life, when it demanded a mere shedding of tears over life and its sorrows, an active participation in the social struggles was not required. We, however, have a different conception of literature and the duties of a writer. We shall consider only that literature as progressive which is thoughtful, which awakens in us the spirit of freedom and of beauty; which is creative; which is luminous with the realities of life; which moves us; which leads us to action (Premchand 2011: 86).

This was the time when the national freedom movement had reached its peak and had drawn people en masse to join the movement. On the other
hand, the communist party, banned since 1934, had been continuing its activities by floating a number of mass organizations. The Students’ Federation (SF; the students’ wing of CPI), was formed in 1936 and quickly emerged as an important platform in the arena of student’s political and cultural activism. There were other left oriented organizations like ‘Friends of the Soviet Union’ and ‘Anti Fascist Writers and Artistes’Association’. But none of these were capable to create an all-encompassing effect on the contemporary cultural scenario. A group of progressive writers recognized the potential of popular theatre as an effective weapon in the fight for national liberation from British Imperialism and Fascism. They also considered it as an alternative end in the struggles of peasants, workers, and other oppressed classes. That is how the birth of the IPTA was gradually conceived. In the meanwhile, the ban on CPI was lifted on 1943 as recognition to their initial support in the British war effort (Bhattacharya 2013: 180-181). Various bodies like trade unions, student communities and many other sections of society started to communicate their views through one such form of performing art, viz. theatre. Modern theatre embraced various folk performing art forms to make it more acceptable to the masses. Theatre artists started identifying their own cultural roots and used them for a social change.

… In the Soviet Union, in China, where the theatre has been accepted by the people, used by the people and has inspired the people. The theatres in the Soviet Union have broken away from old ideas, and have grown into something that is alive- that is great. In China, too, people’s theatres have also broken away from the stagnation of old lifeless mimicry. Even a conservative country like England has the Unity Theatre to prove that the so-called stage has got to be remodelled to suit the times and serve the people (Acharyya 1985: 226). Eventually, cultural organisations like Red Theatre (China), Berliner Ensemble (Germany) established by Bertolt
Brecht and his wife in 1949, Guerrilla Theatre of Green peace (Belgium), and many such organisations came into existence in different parts of the world. These were greatly influenced by Marxist ideology. All these movements tried to uncover the sufferings and struggle of the working class by means of various theatrical performances. Theatre of the third world countries used their characteristic cultural traits, language, and genres. The IPTA undoubtedly was formed as one such organization in compliance with the aforementioned standards. The cultural movement of IPTA depicted contemporary social reality through visual art, traditional art forms with progressive outlook. It aimed at creating awareness for socio-political change. The Association established a new definition of the relationship between art, the artists and the audience. The IPTA absorbed the live elements of Indian culture, established relationship with the progressive assets of world culture and itself contributed to the world of art by formulating a progressive nationalist agenda in culture.

1.6 Influence of the Freedom Movement in the Formation of IPTA

After passing the ‘Quit India Resolution’ in August 1942 at the AICC session in Mumbai, Gandhi and all the members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested. This enraged the people so much that they reacted immediately by holding public demonstrations and raising slogans against this act across the length and breadth of the country. The public retaliation of such a magnitude stirred the imperial rulers and they went for merciless killings at various places of public protests. In Delhi alone, seventy six persons were killed and more than hundred people were injured during 11th and 12th August. The repressive measures adopted by the police, however, could not stop the common people. Rather, it further inflamed the feelings of the people. What followed in a sequence of events later, turned the individual acts of angry defiance scattered in the cities and towns into a mass movement of the country, which further intensified into
a revolt. The students, workers and the peasants were at the forefront of this revolt. Noteworthy here, is that many of the political workers who were engaged in mobilizing the rural peasantry were strongly motivated by Marxist ideology put forward by Communists and Congress socialists. The agitation was marked by non-cooperation in factories, schools and colleges. Later, the movement no longer remained a peaceful one, as the people attacked and set on fire, or wrecked various places of British authority like police stations, railway stations and the like. There were also incidents of numerous attempts to derail trains (Chandra et al. 2005: 212).

Peasants refused to pay taxes at some places. This revolt gave a vent to the fury of the common man which was long suppressed under British rule. Thus, incidents of widespread violence occurred on a large scale. The British government reacted sharply to this turmoil and they tried to spread a wave of terror by resorting to lathi-charges, firing and mass arrests. All these means to arrest the violence became a common scene and punitive fines and summary sentences became the order of the day. Thousands of people died in police and military firings in many places. Finally the Government succeeded in putting down the revolt which was very intense, even though short-lived. Such a widespread and intense rebellion had not been seen in India since the military revolt of 1857.

The Revolt of 1942 could not immediately lead to India’s independence and thus failed in reaching its ultimate goal; the unarmed people without a leader and proper organization could not obviously win against the mighty strength of an imperial government in power. But the revolt achieved two things, first, it had given the much needed utterance to India’s anguish against imperialism and her determination to be free and that the people were prepared to suffer and sacrifice in exercise of their right to be free; Secondly, after the revolt of 1942, the British rulers became conscious that the days of imperialist domination of India were strictly numbered (ibid:
Thus, the spirit drawn from a united struggle against the combined aggression of Fascism and Imperialism was the foreground of the IPTA.

### 1.7 Subsequent Developments

An adequate understanding of the IPTA entails us to locate it against the backdrop of historical occurrences in Indian society during the 1940s and 1950s. Against the milieu of the National Freedom Movement, the passing of the Pakistan Resolution by the Muslim League, the devastating and man-made Bengal Famine of 1943, the Peasants’ Movement of Telengana\(^{10}\), the need for a cultural movement among writers, theatre activists, singers, and painters was felt by the Communist Party of India (CPI). These kinds of severe social turbulences necessitated such an organized cultural mass movement.

Owing to an intense scarcity of food in the rural areas of Bengal, millions of farmers and labourers in rural Bengal died of starvation. The famine also brought many thousand hundreds of hungry folk from rural areas to big cities such as Calcutta. In October, 1943 alone, 3,363 corpses had to be disposed of in Calcutta. Such widespread devastation and man-made calamity shocked and enraged intellectuals and artists within and beyond Bengal (Downing 2011: 246).

The rage and the protest against the colonial authorities began to be enacted through theatre, music, poetry and dance. The Telengana Peasants

---

\(^{10}\) The Telengana Peasants’ Movement was a communist led peasants’ revolt that took place in the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh and later against the princely states of Hyderabad between 1946 to 1951. They revolted against the Nizam and the local feudal landlords who were loyal to the Nizam and who imposed excessive debts on the poor peasants. The agitation was successful in liberating over 3000 villages from the feudal lords and 10,000 acres of agriculture land was distributed to landless peasants. Around 4000 peasants lost their lives in the struggle fighting feudal private armies (Sundarayya 1985: 4-5).
Struggle equally contributed to this enterprise. “The historic Telengana Peasants’ Struggle (1946-1951) brought the Indian Communist Movement on to the political stage and map of India as a formidable force with which the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes had to reckon” (Sundarayya 1985: vi). Culture as a tool for reaching out to the masses was felt for the first time by the CPI when P. C. Joshi was the General Secretary. There was a concerted effort by the party to develop a cultural front for the political awakening of the people. Different squads were formed under the ‘Red Flag Division’, which produced a number of songs, and staged various plays in different states including Assam, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. A progressive movement sprang out of the commitment of such political and cultural activists leading to the birth of a progressive cultural movement in India in the form of the IPTA. Thus, the Quit India Movement of 1942 set the ground for this association. It was founded by stalwarts like K. A. Abbas, Homi Jahangir Bhabha, Anil de Silva, Ali Sardar Jafri and Dada Sharmalkar (Chakravarty 2005: 28).

Upon its formal inauguration in 1943, the IPTA took upon itself the challenge to bring theatre to the people with the objective of building awareness about social responsibility and national integration. It soon became a movement and swept the length and breadth of India with its socialistic and nationalistic fervors. Born as a result of a long-felt need among writers and artists, the IPTA brought about a sea change in the prevalent concepts about Indian theatre. It was formed to co-ordinate and to strengthen all progressive tendencies that had so far manifested themselves in the form of drama, songs and dances. Its roots lay in the cultural awakening of the masses of India, seeking to revive the cultural heritage of the country. Its initial impact was so powerful that a new form of expression took shape. It was to leave a lasting impression, making
art an expression of the people's yearning for freedom, economic and social justice and a democratic culture.

The IPTA’s perspective was people oriented to and fro and its aim was socio-cultural emancipation of the common masses including peasants and workers. It aimed at upholding national culture in all its richness and to constantly raise its artistic levels. The IPTA believed that an artist cannot remain blind towards social reality. The aim of the movement was not to restrict itself within the narrow walls of city theatres and it believed that it must not lose contact with the broadest section of the people. Its target was to bring also the folk artists in its domain. According to K. A. Abbas, one of the original playwrights; the enterprise was, inspired by the popular, active Little Theatre groups in England, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Theatre in the United States, parallel projects in Russia, and chiefly, by Theatre in Communist China, where wandering players ‘educated’ the peasants. Abbas further viewed,

Although the IPTA was led by intellectuals, it was intended to serve the uneducated masses. Hence, it relied on age-old indigenous institutions, including religious and mythological plays, wandering bards, folk dances, and village mimes and clowns, used in a direct, simple approach intended to propagate anti-fascist ideology and espouse the cause of world democracy (Waltz 1977: 32).

Hence, realistic representation demanded a new approach intelligible to the broad spectrum of society. The most important and pathbreaking drama of this mode was *Nabanna* (New harvest) enacted by the IPTA (see plate - 2). The title *Nabanna* is drawn from the folk-cultural festival of Bengal of the same name which celebrates the harvest. This Bengali drama, written by Bijon Bhattacharya and directed by Shambhu Mitra, portrayed the evils of
the 1943 Bengal famine and the alleged indifferences of the British rulers, as also of the richer strata of Indian society towards the plight of the millions dying from the famine. It was first produced in October, 1944. Radical in form and content, sincere portrayal of suffering, innovative use of language and stagecraft, *Nabanna* featured as a milestone in the Bengali theatre. The subject of the play was nothing less devastating than the deaths of five million peasants during the Bengal famine. So, the title of the play is symbolic of the new crop that was expected to generate peasant’s consciousness. By 1944, IPTA expanded to a movement that included a Central Cultural Troupe, which organized dances and ballets on political issues in provincial and regional units in Malabar, Andhra Pradesh, United Provinces, Assam, Punjab, and Delhi (Bhatia 1997: 435).

The IPTA started off its journey by presenting few other path-breaking dramas like ‘Roar China’ followed by ‘Four Comrades’; the aforementioned *Nabanna* and many more from various provinces; however the Bengal province dominated the scene. Set in the context of war and imperialism the first two plays explain the phenomenon of Fascism and its peril to the marginalized masses of India. The first conference of the CPI was held in Bombay from 23rd May to 2nd June, 1943, whereby the IPTA was framed as an all Indian organization which marked the beginning of a glorious era and subsequently the all India organization was formed in 1943 (*ibid*: 432).

In the constitution of Indian People’s Theatre Association adopted in the Conference held in Bombay in 1945, the following aims and objectives were set,

- To foster the development of the theatre, music, dancing and other fine arts… as an authentic expression of the social realities of our epoch…and cultural progress;
• To provide healthy and educative entertainments... through all available forms of art;

• To organize schools, lectures...print and publish magazines, pamphlets...for the purpose of training artists and imparting education to the public on all matters pertaining to Indian culture (Pradhan 1982: 253).

Thus, the above objectives may be encapsulated into two main objectives—one was to energize traditional, rural and folk art forms; secondly, through those art forms, mirror the contemporary social realities and promote awareness of their rights. Again, through the same art forms, to spread national consciousness and patriotic fervor. In the Amendment to the Manifesto submitted by Sudhi Pradhan he writes,

The IPTA was born in a crisis of our history. For about two hundred years foreign imperialism had not only extended its political and economic domination over our country, but penetrated devastatingly into the art and culture of our ancient land. …. The very basis of our art and culture has throughout history been more or less rural …that teeming millions of our country had developed their way of life, their attitude towards problems confronting them in a pastoral and rural setting (ibid: 263).

In the Manifesto and the Constitution adopted after amendments at the Eighth National Conference held in Delhi in 1957, various aims and objectives were undertaken (ibid: 69-270). Some of them are,-

• The IPTA, in its work, respects the rich cultural heritage and national tradition in theatre arts carrying forward its best and healthy elements, giving expressions to the aspirations of the people.
• The IPTA dedicates itself to the creation of an art portraying the lives, struggles, and dreams of our people.

• The IPTA works for full and equal opportunity for the development of languages, culture, stage, folk art, and literatures of various regions of India.

• The IPTA in its work tries to develop Indian forms in the theatre art, specially the folk forms and tribal forms…

• The IPTA in all its work strives to achieve the highest standard of production and the proper fusing of form and content.

• The IPTA strives constantly to improve the living conditions of writers and technicians so that our arts may flourish.

The aforementioned objectives seem to be an elaboration of the aims and objectives undertaken earlier during its initiation. The radical moment in culture that the IPTA created in its heydays continued with no lesser proportion during later times. It was probably because of the fact that the goals that it had put down visibly outlined the cultural policies that the IPTA had undertaken. In this regard, Bhupen Hazarika, an active member of the IPTA commented on the influence of folk songs on mass movements by citing an incident of Bihar that occurred in 1962. A villager was arrested by a C.I.D. officer named Gopichand alleging the said person to be conspiring against the British. As a consequence he was exiled. There was a massive upsurge among the villagers protesting against this act. The people spontaneously sang in satiric tone:

\[\text{Pakol pakol panoa khiaole} \]
\[\text{Gopi Chanoa} \]
\[\text{Korejaoke bheje kalapaniya} \]
\[\text{Patina sohor jaake} \]
\[\text{Korbu hum ‘appealwa’} \]
This song could be termed as a song of protest which traversed across the village and was heard even in the mouth of city tangawalas (cart-driver). This proved the fact that people since ages have been expressing their sentiments, through folk songs and folk literature which had also been chosen as a vehicle of protest. Our country has a golden history of employing folk songs in mass mobilization initiated by the IPTA since 1943. They used it as an instrument for social change (Hazarika 2008: 1875).

1.8 Influences on Cinema

As understood, the IPTA had created a history in the cultural front throughout the country. It jerked the vast cultural field at one point of time and had imprinted an everlasting countrywide impact on the cultural sensibility of the people of India. The imprint was evident in the Indian film industry too, since “a large number of the IPTA members and AIPWA are entering into the film world, due to the increasing demand of the people for healthy and realistic films” (Pradhan 1982: 106). The members of the two groups had seen much potential in cinema as a medium as a space for intervention. The mood of the nation allowed members of the Association to make inroads into the film industry and leftist writers were soon writing scripts and stories for large film studios, exposing the large movie-going audience to socially conscious ideas (Mir 2007: 209). The IPTA was never an individual product- it was a collective effort inspired by common ideals.

Indian cinema, performing arts like music and theatre and now even television have drawn many personalities from the the IPTA. Hindi cinema in the 1950s was influenced by a variety of factors. The IPTA undoubtedly was one among them. Directors, actors, scriptwriters, lyricists, music directors and dance directors, a large spectrum of the talent that went
into filmmaking, came from the the IPTA, moulding the vision of the world that the film presented (Doraiswami 2005).

Many prominent actors, composers, directors, lyricists, and writers from Bombay film industry had been involved in this movement prior to their work in cinema. From this involvement came a concern and depict the lives and troubles of the downtrodden, marginalized segments of society, to point out exploitive nature of capitalism... (Ganti 2004: 28).

Over the last six decades many prominent artists, writers, musicians, directors, dancers and singers have been a part of the IPTA. The biggest contribution of the cultural movement was the creation of a huge corpus of trained, energetic and dedicated actors and writers like Omar Sheikh, Shambhu Mitra, Homi Bhabha, Krishanchander, Kaifi Azmi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Sahir Ludhianvi, Balraj Sahni, Mohan Segal, Mulkraj Anand, Romesh Thapar, Hima Devi, Annabhau Sathe, Shailendra, Prem Dhawan, Ismat Chungtai, Kanu Ghosh, Chetan Anand, Dina Pathak, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Sachin Shankar, Bahadur Khan, A. K. Hangal, Habib Tanvir, Abrar Alvi, Hemant Kumar, Adi Marzban, Salil Chaudhari, Tarla Mehta, Khayyam, Phani Mazumdar, Dev Anand, Shanti Bardhan, Chittoprasad, Harindranath Chattopadhyay, VP Sathe, Durga Khote, Keshavrao Date, Upal Dutt, Ritwik Ghatak, Satyen Kappu, Sanjeev Kumar, Zul Vellani, Shaukat Kaifi, Manmohan Krishna, Basu Bhattacharya, Abid Razvi, M. S. Sathyu, Kuldeep Singh, Ramesh Talwar, Sulabha Arya, Shabana Azmi, Farooque Sheikh, Kader Khan, Yunus Parvez, Mac Mohan, Javed Siddiqi, Sudhir Pande, Aanjjan Srivastava, Bharat Kapoor, Rakesh Bedi and many others (Akhtar n.d.).

The association’s contribution towards Indian new wave cinema needs to be evaluated as it assigned a new definition to art and aesthetics by
depicting contemporary reality through visual art like cinema. “The meaning of aesthetics must be broadened. It should not be reduced to artistic form. It is much broader than art proper and embraces labour, everyday life and culture” (Borev cited by Sen: 2004:100). It placed a model before the Indian audience by producing a film *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) “…it was a departure from the current films produced in this country” (Pradhan 1985: 325) (see plate - 3). This film was based on Bijan Bhattacharya’s play *Nabanna* that has been discussed earlier. Zohra Segal, a veteran IPTA artist and film personal recalls in this regard,

To my mind, the two outstanding achievements of the Indian Peoples’ Theatre Association of that period were the cultural squad and a film *Dharti Ke Lal* (children of the Earth). It dealt with the Bengal famine, and was written and directed by K. A. Abbas with a stupendous cast and technicians composed entirely of IPTA members (Segal 1997: 33).

This was the first realistic film on displaced peasantry shown in the context of the Bengal famine. This paved the way to realism in films as well as instilled courage in filmmakers to experiment with innovative ideas. Samik Bandopadhyay writes, “It showed a group of peasants who leave their famine stricken village and makes the long journey to the city only to find themselves beggars, facing the indifference of the metropolis. Their stay in the city politicizes them and they decide to return to the village with their new awareness” (Richmond 1973: 323).

The IPTA influence could also be felt in the works of filmmakers who were not members but were associated professionally with the IPTA activists, such as Raj Kapoor who worked with K. A. Abbas, V. P. Sathe
and Shailendra; Guru Dutt who had studied dance under Uday Sankar\textsuperscript{11}, whose first film 
Baazi (1951) had script and dialogues by Balraj Sahni and who had Majrooh Sultanpuri, Sahir Ludhianvi and Kaifi Azmi 
write the lyrics of his films (Doraiswami 2005). While most of the artists associated with it had a Marxist disposition lending 
colonial realism to their art forms, others too were strongly influenced by the Left cultural traditions which were all pervasive in 
the Post-Depression world. Incidentally, the most reputed writers like Munshi Premchand and Mulk Raj Anand come from 
this lineage. Similarly, some of the biggest actors on the stage and on celluloid of the 1940s and 1950s, like Balraj Sahni and Damayanti Sahni, 
were from the progressive cultural movement (Mahaprapshasta 2011: 73).

Few other films were based on stories scripted by stalwarts of AIPWA like Premchand and others. One such was Mohan 
Bhavnani’s *Mazdoor* (Labourer, 1934) inspired by a play ‘The Factory’ based on a story by Premchand. It was one of 
the first of its kind, and offered a realistic portrayal of the plight of the industrial workers. Chandulal Shah’s *Achut* 
(Untouchable, 1940) was a film focusing on the theme of untouchability; Mehboob Khan’s *Mannmohan* (1936) critiqued 
the patriarchal order; *Jagirdar* (Feudal Landlord, 1937) questioned the issue of land ownership; and *Hum Tum aur Woh* 
(I, You and the Other, 1938) was about a woman who seeks sexual and emotional comfort through an extramarital 
relationship. All these films challenged existing social norms in a probing fashion (Mir 2007: 209).

\textsuperscript{11} A dance exponent, who went to England to study and was chosen by the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova to be her partner in the ballet *Radha and Krishna*. Modern Indian ballet was initiated by him.
Following the same footsteps, another film *Do Bigha Zameen* (Two Acres of Land, 1953) directed by Bimal Roy remains an important landmark and considered a trendsetter in the celluloid depicting social themes. Balraj Sahni’s acting in this movie is unforgettable. The film was based on the story written by Salil Choudhury who himself was a distinguished personality of the IPTA. He gave a new approach to music in movies (Biswas 2002: 61). The biggest contribution of the IPTA was the creation of a huge corpus of trained, energetic, and dedicated actors and writers who worked in collaboration to get a desired product. Those days, apart from the script what gained prominence were the songs. The Hindi film lyrics as a means of articulating a progressive sentiment were interwined with the freedom struggle. One lyricist who consistently wrote patriotic songs for films was Ramchandra Narainji Dwivedi, better known simply as Pradeep, whose most famous song is probably the following one from the film *Jagriti* (1954),

\[
\text{Aao baccho tumhe dikhayein jhanki Hindustan ki} \\
\text{Iss mitti se tilak karo, ye dharti hai balidaan ki} \\
\text{Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram...}
\]

(Come children let me show you a glimpse of Hindustan
Adorn your foreheads with its soil, for this is the land of martyrdom
Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram...)

Initially, Pradeep wrote for ‘Bombay Talkies’ and then he joined the newly created ‘Filmistan’ whose first film *Chal Chal Re Naujawan* (1944) scripted by PWA writer Sadat Hasan Manto, included a song telling the unity of Hindus and Muslims. In the 1940 film *Aaj Ka Hindustani* has the following song,

\[
\text{Charkha chalao behno, kaaton ye kacche dhaage} \\
\text{Dhaage yeh keh rahein hain,}
\]
Bharat ke bhaag jage
(Spin the spinning wheel, O sisters, and as you cut these threads,
Listen as they say as Indias’s destiny has awakened!)

Some of the songs that were written during the Quit India movement consciously pushed the censor-imposed bounds of acceptability. The opening song in the film Kismat (1943) written by Pradeep and composed by Anil Biswas had the following chorus,

Ab Himalay ki choti se phir humne lalkara hain
Dur haton ei duniya waalon, Hindustan hamara hain!
(From the peak of the Himalayas, we defiantly announce
Get off you foreigners, for India is ours!)

Independence unleashed filmmakers from the restrictions placed by the censors on patriotic songs. But this liberty was short-lived. After the formation of the first independent Government, friends turned to foes when power was transferred from colonial to native hands. Sahir Ludhianvi wrote a song as asked by Guru Dutt where he lampooned Jawaharlal Nehru for expressing his complacency over India’s fate. It was as follows,

Ye kucche, ye nilam ghar dilkasi ke,
Ye lutte hue karvan zindagi ke
Kahan hain, kahan hain, muhafiz khudi ke?
Jinhen naz hain Hind par, woh kahan hain?
(These streets, these auction houses of pleasure
These looted caravans of life,
Where are they, the guardians of selfhood?
Those who are proud of India, where are they?)

Such attempts soon ran into problems even after India winning her long desired independence. The censor board, now under the control of the
Indian government, kicked into gear, reflecting the government’s hypersensitivity towards any reference to people’s struggles, particularly in the cause of socialism (Mir 2007: 207-209). Many of the movie songs of those days were inspired by folk songs. One such is the following from ‘Mother India’ (released in 1957),

\[
\begin{align*}
Dukh Bhare Din Beete Re Bhaiya \\
Ab Sukh Aayo Re \\
Rang Jeevan Mein Naya Laayo Re
\end{align*}
\]
(The days of sadness have gone
It’s the time to rejoice
It has brought new colour in life)

However, the IPTA worked towards the development of an ‘avant-garde’ in the cultural aesthetics of India. This was done not only in theatre, which was its key area of concern, but also in the sphere of cinema. Though, it has lost its impetus as a movement of late, the legacy that the IPTA had created has lived on in its own way. Being one of the oldest performing art groups to generate progressive sentiment in the country, it still acclaims admiration for giving a new orientation to drama and revitalizing Indian cinematic activity with new vigour and spirit.

1.9 Folklore in the IPTA Movement

The IPTA movement takes pride in national culture which is noted to be one of its chief priorities. This aspect was so prominent that the following extract from the IPTA bulletin will speak for itself. In the front cover of the Bulletin No.1 of the IPTA, 1943, it has been inscribed,

We in India have a great cultural heritage, of which we are justly proud. Through our classic and folk dances, music, literature, painting, drama, and other arts our forefathers
gave artistic expression of ineffable beauty to the manifold facts about their lives, experiences, aspirations and ideals. This art and literature have been acclaimed all over the world as equal to the best of the cultural achievements of any other peoples at a corresponding stage of civilization (Pradhan 1985: 144).

Art has its roots in life and it is comprehended that folklore is akin to folk life. ‘Folk’, again, is a group of people having common ideals or common way of life. Hence, folklore in the modern context has wide connotations. Folklore has assumed a new meaning in the contemporary world, when one considers regeneration of folklore, and then the use of folklore in politics draws one’s attention. The IPTA is an organization with social commitment. Its inception is motivated by progressive ideas based on Marxist ideology for uplifting the cultural consciousness of the toiling masses, mostly of peasantry for whom folklore is a way of expressing their joys and sorrows. It is a way of life of the common masses. Russian musician Glinka says “It is the people who create music and we only arrange it” (Biswa 1998: 115). They produce songs, sounds, rhythm while working to ease the burden of labour. They share common occupation, same sorrows, and are drawn against the same kind of exploitation which finds expression in the folklore they produce. Therefore this is collectively shared and handed down from generation to generation. The relation between folk-culture in our intellect and our stream of life is inseparable. No movement, no event goes unnoticed by folk artist. These remain secured in their artistic creations.

With the change in the mode of production from agriculture to industry, dimension of folklore and tradition has also acquired a new and wider profile. R. M. Dorson has cited the example of Soviet Union “The redirection of folklore studies in the Soviet Union since 1936 towards
Party ideology has strongly stimulated interest in the folklore of factory and mill, not merely in the contemporary period but from earlier times as well” (Dorson 1978: 33). Even the survivalist Sidney Hartland had expressed, “Tradition is always being created anew, and … traditions of modern origin whenever found are as much within our (i.e. Folkloristic) province as ancient ones” (ibid: 23). The socialist October Revolution of 1917 in Russia opened up a new era in the history of mankind. It brought with it a new type of proletarian culture and redefined culture as a whole. The leaders of the Revolution were of the notion that Cultural Revolution means forming a socialist culture, which far from rejecting the old culture, takes over the development of all that was best in it. “It is essential to understand clearly that only a precise knowledge and transformation of the culture created by the entire development of mankind will enable us to create a proletarian culture” (Lenin 1967: 141). The artists and activists who gathered under the umbrella of the IPTA hold the view that tradition is a free-flowing river and cannot be static. Rigid and stagnant elements of tradition will die out. R. M. Dorson maintained that in spite of the obvious connection with tradition, “Folklore is keyed to here and now, to the urban centers, to the industrial revolution, to the issues and philosophies of today” (Dorson 1978: 23). The IPTA has adhered to this modern concept of folklore, but at the same time has taken much interest in reviving and recollecting folklore of the past. Because of the two world wars, and the imperial hegemony, the rich folk tradition became almost defunct. The IPTA strongly believes that people’s consciousness could be aroused not merely by political sermons and slogans, but by folk culture, something which is inherent in themselves, to which they can identify. Folk culture is a living force which unites the past with the present.
Feeling this pulse of continuity of folk tradition, the IPTA endeavoured to adopt the folk forms as a weapon of prolonged mass revolution. The same was used for the cause of building the IPTA as by the people, for the people, of the people.

In July 1944, the IPTA first formed its ‘Central Cultural Squad’ with a view to study, revive and utilize the folk forms in dance, music and songs….to preserve that heritage by holding it up before our countrymen, and also to utilize folk themes to portray new ideas and present day problems (Pradhan 1985: 333).

Much emphasis was given in the collection of folklore from villages, from industrial workers, tea-garden labourers and so on. But it seems that the concern was more on the ‘folk’ rather than ‘lore’, because ‘lore’ can survive only when the carriers of it lives. The IPTA aimed at the upliftment of folk artists. Political and social emancipation of the peasantry and workers who constitute the vast majority of the country was the basic objective behind the cultural movement. Hence, the IPTA moved along with mass organizations like Trade Unions, Tea-garden Workers Association, Kisan Sabhas, Textile Mill Workers and such other representatives of the toiling and deprived masses. The IPTA’s platform was used to raise issues related to folk’s life and living. People’s culture was forwarded by enacting folk-based performances. The raw material was drawn from the people and was returned back to them as a cultural package; manuhor kotha manuhour vaxare manuhok ghurai dilu, (We give back to the people their own facts in their own language) as briefed by Mukunda Das Bhattacharya, the veteran IPTA activist, when asked about the role of IPTA. At this point, we remember what Mao Tse-Tung said, “the life of the people is always a mine of the raw materials for literature and art…we must take over all the fine things in our literary and artistic heritage, critically assimilate whatever is beneficial, and use them as
examples when we create works out of the literary and artistic raw materials in the life of the people of our own time and place” (Tse-Tung 1977: 18).

The main conviction of the IPTA was that art or literature which does not portray deepest human emotions and aspirations of the contemporary epoch tends to be lifeless and insignificant for the people. “The association drew talents like honey bees and every branch of art was represented by the most honoured in the land” (Segal 1997: 31). Exactly like Segal’s words, the IPTA was like a hive of honey-like talents belonging to all strata of society. Talents were extracted from the deprived and unnoticed, hidden in the mud of paddy fields, in smoke of factories, in looms, amidst green tea gardens. All these talents got illuminated by the light of IPTA and received recognition. Filkin Laloo, the significant Khasi folk artist and IPTA activist said in an interview “If progressive composers compose songs with robust themes of humanism, patriotism, international brotherhood and people’s unity based on our traditional tunes, these will, I am sure, immediately catch the imagination of our people” (Laloo 1967: 126). This exactly happened in IPTA’s platform.

It would not be wrong to say that people learnt to acclaim folk artists like Anna Bhao Sathe, Omar Sheikh, Nibaran Pandit, Moghai Oja and many others due to the expansion of the IPTA’s ideology. The association can claim credence for popularizing our theatre culture and making it mass oriented in the modern backdrop. The IPTA was successful in bringing a revolutionary change by blowing voice to popular expression. It was allotted due recognition and dignity at that point of time when people’s culture was striving for existence under colonial hegemony. The mission was extended further even after independence,
All popular media of instruction and entertainment in India…are being regimented and brought under the control of monopolies which seek to choke the free expression of the feeling of the people. All the cultural media of our country are being used to encourage the basest chauvinism and narrow nationalism. The imperialists are not only controlling our material wealth through their local agents, they are flooding our country with books, films and other propaganda designed to stunt and cripple the minds of our people (Sen 1982: 72).

IPTA strived to fight against all kinds of chauvinism in the field of culture. As it was a cultural movement based on Marxist outlook, so along with artists and cultural activists, leaders of other fraternal organizations like All India Congress Trade Union, Kishan Sabha, Students Federation and Progressive Writer’s Association clubbed together who adhered to the same principle of Socialism,

Those who grouped together in our movement were inspired by a deep and abiding faith that our ancient culture cannot be allowed to die, that it must be used to serve and save our people; that art can soothe flourish not as a weapon of luxury, but as a means of portraying life and reality of our people, of reviving their faith in themselves and in their past … (Joshi and Abbas 1985: 274).

Therefore, the IPTA endeavoured to attain the set task through experimentation of folk forms and to create a new appreciation of the vitality and richness of our folk culture. In retrospect it seems clear that folklore was not a romantic delight for the IPTA, rather it was adopted as a
means to attach the cultural movement with the roots of the toiling and labouring masses.

1.10 Use of Folk Media in Different Provinces

In Bulletin-I of the IPTA, 1943, observations were made on art and culture of the colonial period and some tasks were proposed for reviving folk culture in and around the country. “In recent years, the depth and sweep of the titanic events of contemporary history, the grim brutality of the Fascist attacks on culture and freedom, the grave perils of the present and the prospect of a bright future if reaction is defeated…” (Pradhan 1985: 147).

Popular folk-forms were not given its due place by the so called educated section. The gap between man and man was widened during colonial regime. A crisis in national culture was evident everywhere. The torch bearers of the IPTA took genuine interest in folk culture realizing its unifying force. It aimed at developing folk art, folk and tribal forms of various regions in India (ibid: 269). The IPTA could as well see the functional side of folklore along with its aesthetics,

In the wake of this great struggle for national existence and freedom, for the defeat of Fascism and Imperialism…a great cultural movement has sprung up from among these defiant sons of our soil and factories, which breathe of the new spirit. Old art forms with new and vibrant themes, all that is best in our folk arts are again bursting into life (ibid: 149).

This could be seen in all the provinces of India. The province of Bengal has been the richest in folk music, dance and drama. The familiar folk forms jatra, kabigaan and kirtan were employed for conveying progressive
thought to the masses. The Bombay (now known as Mumbai) branch used folk forms to the fullest. Powerful Marathi folk forms like the *tamashas* (folk opera) and *powadas* (folk ballads) were worked upon. The Theatre Movement in India leaned towards the folk forms and experiments were made using folk forms in modern theatre. In this invigorating quest for rediscovering the centuries old roots, theatre personalities like Habib Tanvir, K. N. Panikkar, Utpal Dutta, Ratan Thiyam, Girish Karnad or Vijay Tendulkar variously experimented with paraphernalia of folk theatre. Andhra Pradesh adopted the traditional popular performing arts like *burakatha* (bardic recital) and *harikatha* (stories of great epics and Puranas) etc. (Mukherjee 2013: 190-191).

1.11 Aim of the Study

The aim of this work is:

- **To study the genesis and the role of the IPTA movement in Assam in proliferating people’s culture.** As discussed earlier, the IPTA is an ensemble of essentially all the artists and intellectuals of the region at one point of time, particularly during the late fifties and sixties. What made them so eager to join the movement is a very vital question. Therefore, the present work has been directed towards going back to its origin.

- **To study the influence of folklore in the IPTA movement.** In this framework, the study attempts to delve into the approach towards traditional culture taken by the communist artists and thinkers around the world. It aims at understanding the ways in which the IPTA theorized issues of culture, language and ethnography in the light of their broader scheme of disseminating people’s culture with a view to raise contemporary issues of fascism, oppression of all kinds and exploitation of socially
disadvantaged group. The study has also taken into account various opinions of the folklorists in this regard.

- **To analyze the expansion of activities in and around Assam keeping in view the span and areas of performances.** To validate the theory of performance, various conventions and conferences were also brought under notice. The work has also tried to probe into the level of representation of the Assam branch of the IPTA in conferences and other events outside the state.

- **To explore the role of leading artists and activists of Assam and their contribution in the movement in creating people’s culture.** The roles of the performers and organizers have been brought under the jurisdiction of the study.

- **To study the folk music forms collected, explored and employed by the IPTA as part of their experimentation in order to regenerate these to mass songs.** The IPTA in Assam has employed folklore in the performing arts like songs, dances, and drama deliberated by the progressive cultural organization. Particularly, the Assam branch of the IPTA contributed more in the field of music. It also attempted to study the context in which the IPTA tried to raise the culture to people’s culture and also the contexts of the performances and its subsequent effects on the masses.

- **To analyze the causes of waning out of the powerful cultural movement.**

1.12 Methodology

The research design framed for the present study was based upon two basic sources, namely, primary and secondary. The primary sources comprised of field study, discussions and interviews. A series of interviews with major artists and activists from both Brahmaputra and Barak valley have
been conducted. It is distressing that many of the veteran artists-activists who had been interviewed have departed. They were: Hem Sharma (1929-2009), Mukunda Das Bhattacharya (1928-2007), Naren Dutta (1926-2011), Dilip Sarma (1926-2008), Anurupa Biswas (1932-2012), Phani Dasgupta (1922-2011), Hena Borah (1925-2013) and Khagen Mahanta (1942-2014).

Others interviewed are: Sudakshina Sarma (1934), Jyotirmoy Biswas (1928), Anil Das (1933), Nikunjalata Mahanta (1937), Ramen Barua (1938), Bibhuranjan Choudhury (1949), Kiransankar Roy (1949), Loknath Goswami (1950) and Subhaprasad Nandi Mazumdar (1962). In the interviews following aspects are covered:

- Their association with the IPTA
- Cultural activities performed by them.
- Conventions and conferences attended by them.
- Frequency and area of performances.
- Their concepts of folklore and how it was being implemented.
- Form and medium of folklore that was employed.
- Collection of songs.
- Acquaintances with the folk artists who were brought under the IPTA’s banner.
- Present status of the IPTA.

Prior study or pre-field preparation was made before actuating for the field. This was done by meeting individuals related to the IPTA in one way or the other and collecting basic and relevant information from them so as to decide on the approach on which the research work was supposed to be made. From the pre-field experience certain aspects came to light. One such feature was that the IPTA in Assam was a combined product of the
people of both the Brahmaputra and the Surma Valley (Presently known as Barak Valley). The study of the Assam branch of IPTA remains incomplete without referring to the Barak valley of the undivided Assam, since the progressive cultural movement was launched in this part of the state. It is worth mentioning here that after collecting the songs of the IPTA from various resources, an effort is being made to translate most of them apart from consulting some other translation works.

1.13 Area of the Study

The area of study was undivided Assam, but the field study was confined to certain limited zones. The areas were chosen keeping foremost personalities of the IPTA in mind which is pertinent to the work.

In the beginning, a field trip was conducted to Silchar where the first conference of Assam, IPTA was held in 1947. Artists and activists of older generation along with contemporaries were interviewed at Silchar. They belonged to two age group categories- the elders being above 75 years and their successors being above 45 years of age. This helped in understanding and comparing previous and present status of the IPTA along with the cultural trend of two generations of artists belonging to a cultural organization which initiated as a movement. The interviews were arranged in two sittings. The initial session helped establishing a rapport which was easily built due to the emotional involvement of the respondents with the IPTA. Mostly a non-directive method of interviewing was followed, though at times, switched over to directive method whenever occasion demanded. Reminiscences and memoirs of the artists and activists were collected which forms a major component of the study. The tools or equipments used for the purpose consisted of still camera and tape recorder. Other important areas of study were Kamrup and Nalbari district of lower Assam which played a definite role in intensifying the
IPTA’s ideology. The age group remained relatively invariable as that of Silchar. In Kamrup many visits were made to the original central office of the IPTA which is situated at Panbazar in Guwahati so as to feel the pulse of the association. The office at Silpukhuri (a group shifted after the split in the IPTA in 1964 as a consequence of the split in the Communist Party of India)\textsuperscript{12} in Guwahati was also visited to get introduced to the present members. Method of directive interview was applied here. The members were divided into two groups for convenience \textit{viz.} performers and organizers.

Nalbari, a district of lower Assam was another area which was taken into account because it is a home to veteran communist leaders and activists associated with several progressive movements in Assam including the IPTA. Moreover, Nalbari has been leading various movements both before and after independence. Hence, it has obvious connections with and contributions towards the revolutionary culture propagated by the IPTA. Even here, the same methods were applied as in Silchar.

The study basically was dependent on secondary sources as it is more of a documentation work which aims at studying the role of Assam the IPTA in resurgence of folklore in its historical perspective. Most of the pioneers of the movement in Assam have passed away. As such the study had to rely more on secondary sources to derive necessary details on the origin and expansion of the IPTA and its activities. The secondary methods included an elaborate literature survey which comprised of study of files, books, biographies, autobiographies, party brochures, articles, memoirs, journals, souvenirs, newspaper clippings, reports, unpublished monologues, photographs and songs preserved in the IPTA.

\textsuperscript{12} In 1964, the CPI split, with the left wing breaking off and forming the CPI (Marxist), also known as CPI(M).
office and other sources like libraries and personnel collections Web based resources have been another important secondary source of data collection during the study.

1.14 Limitations of the study

The most arduous task faced during the span of the study was to search out comprehensive written materials on the history of the IPTA movement in Assam. No systematic record and documentation is available on the subject except a very few articles, published here and there. But that was not sufficient for getting a hold over the subject. Secondly, some of the references, particularly in case of dates, did not match. Thirdly, memory factor created another problem as many of the veteran artists and activists could not remember some of the events. Besides, they could not preserve documents due to technical and other problems. They themselves regretted this fact. Therefore, cross-referencing turned out to be difficult in many cases. The work had to be completed within a limited period of time as it was an academic affair which created another threat keeping in view the immensity of the subject. Moreover some of the respondents of Guwahati had to be met several times as they were engaged in various kinds of cultural tours in and outside the city. Non availability of fund was another major difficulty in this regards which otherwise was an expensive affair, as it involved a vast field study.

1.15 Importance of the Study

The role and importance of the IPTA in the cultural and political history of Assam is enormous. Though the progressive cultural movement in Indian context has been chronicled, no history and systematic documentation in regard to Assam IPTA is available as yet in spite of the fact that the IPTA in Assam had great impact in social, political and cultural life of undivided Assam. The history of the Cultural
Movement has not been put down on paper till date. Moreover most of the resource persons and pioneers in this regard have departed this life due to old age and ailments. As mentioned earlier, many of the reverent respondents who had been interviewed in the course of the work have also expired. There are a few veteran activists of initial times who are becoming physically fragile and whose contribution towards the movement is enormous. But it is noticed that even organizational communication with them is gradually dwindling away for which it has become difficult to trace them. This has been realized during the fieldwork. Therefore, it has become essential to record their experiences. Hence, proper study in this direction will help researchers in carrying out their work; especially those who pursue research work in folklore and its relevance in modern context.

Because folklorists have observed a relation of folklore with politics as it is seen to be an all inclusive discipline. The IPTA have a relation with the socio-political history of India. The pioneers of this cultural movement tried to protect the national culture by elevating its status so as to use it for people’s cause. Because they believed that folk culture leads to self-realization which in turn takes shape of self-realization of a community. This conviction inspired the IPTA to take up folklore as a weapon of bringing about emancipation among common man throughout the country. In Assam, the IPTA had experimented through various media as to how folklore may be rejuvenated by bringing together different elements of varied Assamese culture. Hence, diverse cultures of different ethnic communities got acknowledged which were suffering a dark existence until then. Whatever art forms were practised got reflected in IPTA’s platform and left a perennial imprint in the soil of Assam.

Much folk based performances took place on its platform apart from folklore in its pastoral form. It aimed at upholding national culture in all its richness and to constantly raise its artistic levels. The IPTA believed
that the artists can not be blind towards social reality. The aim of the movement was not to restrict itself within the narrow walls of city theatres and believed that it must not lose contact with the broadest section of the people. Its target was to bring the folk artists in its domain. *Dexei naatghor raaijei bhavoria* (Nation is the Stage, People are the Enactors) was the guiding slogan of the IPTA in Assam.

The present work particularly focuses on the kind of forms that were revitalized and employed by the Association. The study also covers different aspects and cultural activities of the people and of the leaders along with the folk artists associated with the IPTA. Their participation, performance regions and the conferences are also taken into account as the IPTA is a performance oriented organization. The study is important as it attempts in documenting certain events and analyze the activities and performances of the IPTA under the backdrop of socio-political set up.