Chapter-II

Chapte-I

a. A short survey of the Socio-Cultural life of Assam.

The socio-cultural life of a region can be studied through various ingredients. Every component has its own distinctiveness, without which the entire social structure remains incomplete. Different inscriptions and the works of the contemporary writers throw much light on the society and social structure of Assam and Orrisa. Some of them are discussed below in nutshell.

1) Society and Culture : i. Economic Condition and Educational life.

Economic condition : Economic activities is concerned with all such activities of man as are designed to secure him physical survival. It plays an important role in the formation of the cultural and social structure of society. Ralph Piddington rightly observes :

.........Economic system is designated to satisfy material wants of the people to organize production, to control distribution and to determine the right and claims of ownership within the community.1

The economy of Assamese people is mainly based on agriculture. The people are primarily agriculturists. All the people,

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irrespective of caste and creed, are engaged in agriculture. Besides agriculture, some people are also engaged in other occupations like weaving, fishing, pottery making, ornament making and so on. But it appears that due to various factors people engaged in these occupations cannot make themselves economically self-sufficient. Thus such people are always compelled to turn to agriculture as a subsidiary means of livelihood.

Though agriculture is the main occupation, but it is hardly a profitable business because not many of the villages themselves owned any land. To some extent Zamidary system still prevails in the Goalpara region of the state. As a result majority of the cultivators simply work as ryots or share-croppers retaining a small portion of the produced product, where as the lion's share go to the landowners.

Since rice being the staple food of Assamese people, so its cultivation occupies the most important place in the sphere of farming. The other important food crops traditionally grown are millet, pulses, mustard, wheat, sugarcane, jute and so on. The day-to-day money requirements are met by selling cash crops surplus paddy and various kinds of seasonal vegetables.

Both tribal and non-tribal Assamese women are expert in weaving. Weaving different kinds of cloths for day to day use are

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weaved in their traditional looms. It is in fact a kind of small household industry.

Besides these the people have strengthened the individual as well as state's economy through their engagement in different kinds of crafts viz, carpentry, bamboo work, cane works, mat making, ivory work, pottery, working on metals etc.

But as a whole the economic system of Assam is not sound. Of late economic condition has compelled many villages to leave their traditional occupations and engage themselves in day-to-day labour work.

**EDUCATION**: In the past the education was confined within the caste Hindus. But the common people were also not wholly illiterate. Education was centred round the *guru griha*, i.e., the houses of *Brāhmin* teachers were the main centre of education. Other than this Sanskrit *tolas* and village schools provided by *Agraharas* were there. The rulers of early Assam created and patronized such *Agraharas* for maintenance of *Brāhmans*. The *Brāhmans* who were provided with *Agraharas* maintained village schools and were interested in discharging their six fold duties, one of which is *Adhyāpanā*.3

From the references in inscription, it is clear that the *Brāhmans* were responsible for teaching of Sanskrit, where the

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3 Choudhury, P. C. : *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam*, Gauhati, 1959, PP. 104-105
Vedas; the system of philosophy and various other branches of learning were taught in those schools. The great Vaisnavite apostle, Śaṅkaradeva received his education at a tola or chatraśālā maintained by a Brāhmana Guru Mahendra Kandali by name. This shows that even non-Brāhmins were also admitted into these schools.\(^4\)

The Vaisnavite epoch brought about a tremendous intellectual awakening in the state. The preachers were responsible for educating the masses. It was regular feature of the major Satra institutions to maintain tolas under reputed scholars to impart education to students. The students from different parts of the state flocked around the states for education.

During the Ahom rule there was no organized system of primary or higher education. A system of domestic instruction was prevalent. Beside this Assam also had indigenous educational institutions like the Pāthsālās for the Hindus and Maktöbs for the Muslims and the Tolas for higher caste Hindus. Over and above these three types of institutions, Assam had another type, namely the Satras for the Vaishnavas.\(^5\)

After Britishias came to India a great change came in the field of education through Missionary. There is no doubt that the early Missionary played an important role in the spread of education

in 19th century in Assam and other parts of the country. It is sometimes stated that modern system of education was started in India by the schools established by the Missionaries. They made a good deal of attempt for the spread of education in India with the primary objective of spreading Christianity. These institutions imparted European as well as Indian education. Those who followed Christianity were given free education.\(^6\)

The East India Company, which came for trade first, gradually became the administrator of the country. They therefore required maintaining offices for the purpose. The company therefore had to make provision for the education of the children of the officers of the East India Company. For these English children, schools were opened where some Indian children from the enlightened families were allowed to attend. This is the earliest educational activity of the East India Company. The company was more interested in making profits than in spreading education. Therefore the company left it to the Christian Missionaries to educate the people and encourage them in every possible manner.\(^7\)

But whatever it may be, the role of Missionaries and the East India Company in growth and development of modern education cannot be ignored.


\(^7\) Saikia, S. : *op-cit*, P. 7.
Language: Assamese, a language originally Aryan in its basic grammatical structure but heavily influenced by the surrounding extra-Aryan languages and dialects in all departments—phonology, morphology, and vocabulary—so as to present it in a unique shape and form quite distinctive of all other sister languages of the country.8

Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language. This Language is mainly spoken in the Brahmaputra valley with the Lakhimpur district in the extreme east while Goalpara district in the extreme west. It is spoken in Meghalya, Nagaland and Arunachal pradesh. Till recent time Assamese was the only language for mutual communication among different tribes in Arunachal pradesh. It is still used as the only language for mutual communication among the different tribes in Nagaland. This language is developed out of Sanskrit language as early as in the 7th century A.D. Its direct ancestor is Magadhi apabhramśa.9 In fact it may be considered as spreading out eastward and southward in three directions. To the northeast it developed into North Bengali and Assamese, into the south Oriya and between the two into Bangali.10 According to Grierson, each of the three descendants of Magadhi apabhramśa, Oriya, Modern Bengali and Assamese equally connected with the common immediate parents.11

Though Assamese is a branch of Indo-Aryan language, so far as its origin is concerned the influence of the non-Aryan

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9 Barua, B. K. : op-cit, P. 1.
elements cannot be denied. The influence of non-Aryan elements is of manifold, such as Phonological, morphological and glossarial.\textsuperscript{12} Like the composite character of Assamese culture, the language has also absorbed various non-Aryan elements.\textsuperscript{13} Banikanta Kakati has clearly shown the influence of non-Aryan elements such as Austric, Kolarian, Malayan, and Boro. Its vocabularies largely derived from that of Sanskrit and its morphological structures is also based on Sanskrit grammar. But as being a living and growing language it has borrowed; large number of vocabularies, idioms and phrases from other Neo-Aryan languages. Among whom special mention may be made of Marathi, Gujrati, Sindhi, Kasmiri, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Oriya, and Bengali etc. All these have enriched Assamese language into a recognizable extent.\textsuperscript{14}

**Literature:** Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it, which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally expression of life through the medium of language.\textsuperscript{15} In broad sense, literature can be classified into two parts.

(a) Oral literature.

(b) Written literature.

\textsuperscript{12} Rajuru, S. : *op-cit*, P. 368.
\textsuperscript{13} Choudhury, P. C. : *op-cit*, P.390.
\textsuperscript{14} *Ibid.* : P. 90.
(a) Oral literature: Oral literature has always served as a source of interesting insight in the lives of the people. The oral literature of Assam is extremely rich and varied. The classification of Assamese folk literature is given below.

(1) Songs of Religious and Devotional Content:

The songs of this category are in praise of gods and goddesses. It includes following types of songs.

(i) Songs of *Vaishnava* association in praise of Vishnu.

(ii) Non-*Vaishnava* association, in praise of Lord Śiva, Goddess Durga, Lakshmi and so on.

(iii) Songs sung to propitiate the pox goddess.

(iv) Songs associated with ritualistic fasts, e.g., *Ukuni-burhi pujā, Sarebarat pujā, Subachani pujā* etc.

(v) *Lokagit* (clothed in a religious or devotional garb).

(2) Songs of Ceremonies and Festivals: A number of ceremonies, involving singing and dancing and often mimetic acting. As they are associated with some *pujā* or ritual, they are in a way religious or ritualistic performances, but it is not the religiosity or the ritualism but the festivity, which is the essence of such performances.\(^{16}\) The songs of this group includes:

(i) Songs associated with *Ojā-pāli*.

(ii) *Bhekuli biyār git* (frog marriage songs).

(iii) *Hudum-deo* songs (the rain god).

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(iii) Songs associated with *annaprasanna* (the first eating of rice by the child).

(iv) Marriage songs.

(3) Songs of seasonal and agricultural festivals: There are number of seasonal and agricultural festivals observed in Assam. But the songs associated with such festivals are:

(i) Of three *Bihus* celebrated in the state, the *Bohāg Bihu* is most important so far songs are concerned.

(ii) Songs associated with *Mo-ho-ho*, *Mahkheda* (driving away buffalo) and *Bholuk khetā*.

(4) Lullabies, Nursery Rhymes and Children’s Game songs – In Assamese language the term *nisukani git* is used to suggest the meaning of lullabies and nursery songs. There are number of songs associated with children for their various activities.

(5) Ballads and other Narrative songs: Ballads or songs with elements of history seem to have once formed an important genre of Assamese oral folklore. Of old traditional ballads, so far collected, of which some are historical e.g *Barphukanar Git*, *Manirōm Dewōnar Git*, *Haradatta- Biradattar Git*. Some relate tales of wonder, e.g *Janōgbharur Git*, *Manikowar- Phulkowarar Git*, while some have romantic themes e.g *Dubata Sanir Git*. Some of the *Bērāmōhir Git*, also could be placed in this category. Quite a number of songs are components of narratives of the Cante fable type, e.g *Kamalō Kuwarir Git*, *Tejimalōr Git* and so on.
Written literature: The Assamese literature came to exist in its written form though Hema Saraswati in 13th century. He started his career in the pre-vaiṣṇava period with Prahlāda Carita. Thus this book opened an era of recorded history in Assamese literature. Other writers of the age are Harivar Vipra, who translated Asvamedha parva of Mahābhārata and Lava-Kursar Yuddha. Kaviratna Saraswati is the author of Jayadratha Vadha. Rudrakandali translated into Assamese the Drona parva of the Mahābhārata. Other than these writers, Madhavkandali is the most prominent one. He has displayed wonderous music and varied diction in his version of Rāmāyana. His other work is Devajit, where he has described of a war between Arjuna and Indra.\(^\text{17}\)

The two best-known Saints-poets, scholars, religious reformers of Vaishnava period are Sankardeva and Madhavdeva of 16th century. Both of them have greatly enriched Assamese literature by their translation of Purānas, composed several Kāvyas, Ankiṅāts and Bargitas. The important works of Sankardeva are Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Bhakti Ratnākara, Dasama, Kirtanghosā and so on. His poetic excellence is revealed through his Bargitas and Ankiṅāts. The notable works of Madhavdeva are Nāmghosā, Bhakti Ratnāvali, Ādikanda Rāmāyana, Nām-Mallikā, number of Bargitas, Ankiṅāts, and so on. Ramsarṣswatī rendered Sanskrit Mahābhārata into

Assamese. Ananta Kandali is another noteworthy member of *Vaishnava* group. His notable works are *Sahasranāma vrittānta*, *Dasam Bhāgavata*, *Rāmāyana* etc.

The prosaic literature begins in Assam through the works of Baikunthanatha Bhattadeva in later part of 16\(^{th}\) century. His notable works are *Katha Bhāgavata*, *Katha Gītā* and *Katha Ratnāvali*. In 17\(^{th}\) century a group of poets from different places of the state translated different episodes of *Bhagavata*. In the same way different *Purānas* were also translated by Gopalcharan Dwija, Bhagavata Mishra, Ratnakar Mishra, Ramchāran Barpatra. Different episodes of *Mahābhārata* were translated to Assamese by Ramsaraswati, Gopinath Dwija, Srinath, Damodar Das and so on. Following the path of *Ankiōnāt* shown by Śaṅkaradeva, many dramatists wrote many *nāts*.

In 18\(^{th}\) century, different parts of *Brahmabhāivarta Purāṇa* were being translated by some renowned writers. In this century also, some writers again translated different parts of *Mahābhārata*. *Dharmapurāṇa* was translated from Sanskrit to Assamese by Kabichanda Dwija. *Brihannoradīya Purāṇa* was translated by Bhubaneswar Basaspati Dwija. Narayana translated *Nārādīya Purāṇa* in to Assamese.

In 19\(^{th}\) century *Vishnu-Purāṇa* was translated by Parasuram Dwija. Part of *Kālikā-Purāṇa* was translated by Dwija
Baidyanāth. *Padma-Purāṇa* was translated by Bishnudeva Goswami. Though the writing of history begins from the middle of 17th century, but it attains the maturity in 19th century in the hands of some historians viz, Kashinath Tamuliphukan, Harakananda Sadarmanin, Biseweswar Baidyadhip, Dutiram Hazarika and Maniram Barbhandar Barua. Writing of Grammar and Dictionary was done by Jaduram Deka Barua, Miles Bransan, Hem Barua and Robinson.18

The formation and development of modern Assamese literature started from this time through writers like Hemchandra Barua, Gunabhiram Barua, Lambodhar Bora, Ratneswar Mahanta and so on. The writing of novels also came up through novelists like Padmabati Devi, Lakshminath Bezbaruah, Rajanikanta Bardaloi, Padmanath Gohainbarua. Some modern dramatists of this time are – Gunabhiram Barua, Hemchandra Barua, Ramakanta Choudhury, Padmanath Barua, Lakshminath Bezbarua, Benudhar Rajkhowa etc.19

In 20th century Assamese literature developed rapidly. Some of the well known literary figures are – Hemchandra Goswami, Satyanath Bora, Padmanath Gohainbarua, Kamalakanta Bhattacharya, Banikanta Kakoti, Surya kumar Bhuyan, Dimeswar Neog, Birinchi kumar Barua, Hem Barua, Benudhar Sarma, Tirthanath Sarma, Praphulladatta Goswami, Satyendranath Sharma, Maheswar Neog, and so on.

In short it can be said that Assamese literature in written form is very flourishing. It is much superior than many other Modern Indian Language, of other states.

2) Social Customs :

i) Beliefs and Religion : Folk beliefs constitute a handy reference book for an unsophisticated rural mind. These contain the collective wisdom and experience, which have been traditionally handed down from generation to generation. It appears that most of the beliefs existing among the Assamese people are associated with conduct of their social life and many of them are associated with religious bearing. While some of them are associated with conduct of their social life and many of them are associated with religious bearing. While some of them are associated with superstition and fear of the unknown forces....... On the otherhand religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., thing set apart and forbidden.

Assam is inhabited by Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain and so on that form a fair propotion of the population. The Hindus are again divided into numerous castes and sub-castes. Hinduism is a combination of hundreds of religious beliefs, sects,

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some are quite important in the all India perspective, but many are significant locally and are not found outside.

The Assamese Hindus believe in supernaturalism. To them the calamities, misfortunes, sickness and so on are nothing but the influence of spirits and ghosts or evils spirits. Assamese people also believe in the immortality of the soul. They firmly believe that the soul of a dead person does not get peace unless the final ritual of the deceased is performed properly. They also believe in re-birth. Heaven and Hell are the two imaginary places. One who does well, his soul goes to heaven after death, while those who works badly takes place in Hell.

The Assamese Hindus believe in the worship of Gods and Goddesses like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Ganeśa, Durgā and so on. They have different names and manifestations at the folk level. They are worshipped on various occasions and times. Among them Śiva is a very popular folk God for all sections of the people. He is worshipped at the beginning of every phase of cultivation. Some other minor deities popular among Assamese people are Manasā, the snake Goddess, Śītalā or Āi-Bhagawati; the pox Goddess, Subāchani or Subhāsani; the Goddess of wealth and prosperity and so on.

The Assamese Hindus worship trees and stones also. Animals and birds are also worshipped in the form of idols. In the Pāurā or Bhatheli and Bās-puja festivals in lower Assam, Bamboo

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poles are worshipped. Birds made of clay are worshipped in a rite known as Care barat prevalent in some areas of Kamrup district. Various magical activities and rituals are performed to control the weather. Bhekulir-biyā or frog marriage is such a mimic act performed by the village women folk when there is no rain for days together during the months of cultivation.23

Besides these Assamese Hindus believe in a number of spirits and household deities like Bāk; a water spirit, Jakh; a terrible spirit, Pret; soul of a dead person, Khetar; a presiding spirit of a field and so on. People also widely believe in the practice of magic and spell.

ii) Games and Recreations: Play is a form of expressive behaviour common among all human beings and manifested overtly in all cultures. It is a complex phenomenon that cannot be defined properly. Several characteristics, however, can readily be isolated. First play is voluntarily in that it does not directly satisfy biological needs associated with survival. In addition, because it does not result in the production of wealth of goods, play can be said to be non productive in any tangible sense, even though it may be contribute substantially to the physical, social and psychological growth and development of the individual. Another characteristics of play is that

23 Ibid. : P. 118.
it is separated from reality in time and space; therefore, its goal and source of motivation are intrinsic.\textsuperscript{24}

Like other people of India, the Assamese people also like to play various games and sports as their recreations. Some of the traditional games and sports played by the common people of Assam are given below:

(a) \textit{Dhop-Khela} : It is a minor game prevalent in the rural areas. It is played by young boys and girls. The \textit{dhop} is a round ball made of rotten cotton cloths. The game is played between two teams bearing equal number of players. The players stand on two different straight lines. One team will throw the \textit{dhop} to the other team. If the other team fails to catch it in the air, the former team will strike the opposite team. If the \textit{dhop} touches any player he is declared out. In this way if all the members of the team are taken captives, the team is declared defeated.\textsuperscript{25}

(b) \textit{Bhātā-guti} or \textit{Tāng-guti} : It is a minor outdoor game mostly favoured by the cowherds. The game is played with two different pieces of bamboo sticks, one is long about two feet and the other one is very small. The long stick is called \textit{dāndā} and the smaller one is called \textit{bhātā} or \textit{guti}. There is also a pole about two feet in


\textsuperscript{25}Sarma, S. N. : \textit{A Socio-Economic And Cultural History of Medieval Assam}, Gauhati, 1989, P. 321.
height called ghāi-khuti. Beating the small one with the big stick in
different calculative way is the process of game.\textsuperscript{26}

(c) \textit{Hāugudu-Hāugudu} : It is a popular outdoor game in rural
areas, something like modern \textit{kābādi}. The game is played by two
teams consisting equal number of players. The members of opposite
team by turns tries to touch the opponent players without changing
his breath. While the opposite team try to catch hold of him within
the stipulated ranges. If he is caught, he is declared death.\textsuperscript{27}

(d) \textit{Beji-sio-sio} : A number of girls and boys make a circle by
holding each others hands. A boy or a girl stands at the centre. The
centre player says \textit{beji-sio-sio}, while speaking thus; he or she tries to
pass out of the circle below the hands of the players. But the players
in the circle go on moving in such way that he or she cannot pass
through. If the encircled player can pass through them then he or she
is considered a winner.

(e) \textit{Bāgh-garu} : It is a game having similarity with chess. Here two
bigger stones are projected on each side of the board as \textit{bāgh} (tiger)
and sixteen smaller stones are projected on the centre of lines on the
board, which are called \textit{garu} (cow). The \textit{bāghs} and the \textit{garus} are to
change position one by one. The tigers cannot kill the cows when
they are in-group. But if a cow comes alone it could be killed by the

\textsuperscript{26} Rajguru, S. : \textit{op-cit}, P. 426.
\textsuperscript{27} Sarma, S. N. : \textit{op-cit}, P. 322.
tiger provided the tiger is at a distance of one home. If the tiger could be gharoed by the cows collectively the tigers are killed.

(f) Tin-thengia dour : In this game one leg of a boy or a girl is entangle to another boy or girl and such pairs make competition of race.

Other than these there are many more indoor and outdoors games for children e.g. Kari Khel, Lukā-bhāku, Dhulir bhāt-ānjā (artificial cooking of food), putulār darā- koinār biyā etc.

Among grown up people pāsā (dice), Pātī, or Mugalpātī, Chaupātī etc are very popular game. Besides these other various pastimes are hawk fight, buffalo-fight, elephant fight, hunting; fishing etc were also favoured by the people. These games are especially played during the Bihu festival.28 Even the royal people are also fond of hunting and fishing.

iii) Traditional Medicine : The Assamese people mostly depend on the traditional medicine and treatment. The medicinal man is locally known as Ojā, bej, kabirāj etc. who generally prescribes and provides the medicine to the affected person after proper diagnosis. The diagnoses are done on the basis of symptoms, such as body pain, cough and cold, temperature, headache, dyspathy towards diet etc. The medicine supplied by the bej or kabirāj are usually prepared from various spices of herbs, different types of fruits, bark of trees, animal, or animal substance and things having mineral origin etc.

On the basis of this, folk medicine may be classified into two groups:

a) Natural folk medicine.
b) Magico religious folk medicine.

Natural Folk Medicine: Various Indian medicine literatures have proved that the use of natural substances like herbs, plants, animal substance is as old as occult folk medicine in India. Ayurved, the modern branch of medicine has developed from this tradition. Therefore these may be treated as folk medicine.

The common Assamese village people by and large learn the medicinal value of various herbs and plants through observation and practice. The list of this indigenous medicine used by Assamese people is a never-ending list. A few of them are mentioned below-

1) Fever With Cold and Cough: In such case the extract of the leaves of bāhāk titā (a kind of bitter plant), ginger, golmorich (black pepper) and a little salt is to be mixed together and taken at least one dose a day. The whole body is to be massaged with warm mustard oil with fried garlic.

2) Fever (Malaria): For this the extract of the bāhāk leaves, sewāli phul (night jasmine) and neem leaves (margosa) (all are having bitter taste) are mixed together with little honey and taken for curative.
3) Cut and Injury: In case of an ordinary wound, the leaves of *gendhāphul* (marigold) *Jarmeni latā* (Eupatorium odoratum) *bisalyakarani* (eupatorium triplinerve) and *kehrāj* (Eclipta alba) are crashed together to make a fine paste. The paste is applied on the affected portion for immediate effect.

4) Burning: In such case:
   
   (a) When limewater mixed with coconut oil properly, a fine layer of creamy substance is formed. This creamy substance immediately relief the burning sensation. (b) The *Khār* (alkali) prepared from the ash of plantain bark is applied soon after burning to get relief and further damage.

5) Indigestion - In such case:
   
   (a) Chewing of garlic proves to be very effective. (b) The lime water mixed with a little sugar in empty stomach relief from such complain.

6) Dysentery - In such case:
   
   (a) A herb called *mesāndāri* (Houttuynia cordata) wrapped up with plantain leaf and baked. Extracting its juice taken with a little salt for good effect. (b) The extract of *mānimuni* herb (Indian pennywort) is taken with cold water and a little salt.

7) Diarrhoea: In such case, the extract of *pātegajā* (a kind of plant) or *chengritengā* (Oxile coraiculate) is taken twice or thrice daily as curative.
8) Body Pain - For such complains:
   (a) Warm water mixed with a little salt is poured on the affected area. The affected portion can also be dipped for sometimes to get early effect.
   (b) A paste prepared out of fresh raw turmeric is applied on the affected place for curative.

9) Skin disease:
   (a) Bathing with warm water boiled with mahāneem (Azadirachta indica) leaves is very much effective for skin disease.
   (b) Bathing with water mixed with sulphur is curative for skin disease.

10) Jaundice:
    (a) Juice of sugarcane is a good medicine for Jaundice. (b) Eating cucumber and watermelon are also effective for such complain.

11) To kill Worm:
    a) The extract of new leaves of pineapple and guava is taken in the morning before meal. (b) Very small size papaya chewed with a little salt at empty stomach is curative.

12) Burning Sensation: During small pox the whole body feels a kind of burning sensation. As curative, the extract of the bark of red or white chandan (sandal tree) is taken with cold water. It keeps the body in cool.
13) Sinus: For this, the smelling of *patatdiśa laijabari* (laijabari is to be covered within a plantain leaf and then the roll is to be baked in fire. This cures the *ewā* i.e. Sinus trouble.

(b) Magico-Religious folk medicine: In Assam *bejāli* is a popular term and the man who deals with it is called *bej* or *ojā*. People have great faith on them. To them disease is nothing but a demonic sent by evil force in a person or animal, so it has to be removed by counter spell.

The tradition of magico religious folk medicine is known as occult folk medicine. The periphery of magico religious folk medicine includes words, charms, amulets and physical manipulation in the attempt to heal a man or a beast. It is based on primitive worldview of all things, heaven; earth, man, animal and nature.  

Assam particularly with its ancient name Kāmarūpa is known throughout India as the land of magic. The culture of witchcraft and magic has existed in Asaam since early times. In this connection it should be noted that the names of Kāmarūpa and Kāmarūpa Kāmakhyā are invariably associated with the *mantras* and magic. According to P.C. Bhattacharyya *the tantra-mantra, jōdu*

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29 Yoder, Don. : “Folk Medicine” in *Folklore and Folklife*, ed., R.M. Dorson, P.203
vidyā, jara-phukā of Assam are originally obtained from tribal people”  

In Assam there are many mantras for curing diseases. Almost for every disease like fever, stomach trouble, aches and pain, sprain and fracture, there are separate mantras. The bej or ojā with the help of medicine and mantras tries to cure the patient. The mode of treatment adopted by him are charmed water, (Pānijārā) or dust (dhlulijārā). Along with this amulet like tābij is also prescribed by him.

There is also the widespread belief that various harms can be wrought upon an intended victim by using bān. Literally, bān means an invisible arrow of charms or spells having the kind of effect on persons or objects or phenomena as desired by the one who casts it. By the effect of bān the victim may even meet his death. An expert ojā is supposed to known not only the bāns but also their antidotes.

3) Material Culture:

1) Craft: From time immemorial ancient Kāmarūpa was famous for its craftsmanship. In the development of various industrial products, the craftsmen of Kāmarūpa played a significant role and occupied an important place in ancient India. She could glorify for her works on

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32 Datta, B.: op-cit, P. 60.
metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo and above all for the art of weaving and sericulture.\textsuperscript{33}

Against this background we intend to describe here the folk craft of Assam.

(a) Weaving: In Assam the spinning yarn and weaving cloths are practiced by all classes of people irrespective of caste and creed. Infact it can be said that every Assamese family is a weaver. Especially in rural areas one or more looms are to be seen in the courtyard of every household. The women folk weave \textit{gamocha} (a kind of napkin), \textit{chadar-mekhela} (women wearing) bed-sheet, woolen shawls, mosquito net etc in their loom. Weaving of \textit{gamocha} is very essential as it is customary to present a gamocha on the occasion of \textit{Rangali Bihu} as a mark of honour, love, and affection. During any auspicious occasions using of \textit{gamocha} is almost compulsory. Hence weaving of \textit{gamocha} has a special importance.

(b) Sericulture: Since from the remote past the silk industries has been continuing in Assam. Silk fabrics produced in Assam have received reputation not only in India but also in abroad. Mainly three kinds of silk worms are found in Assam, viz, \textit{Pātpalu} (the mulberry silk worm), \textit{Mugā palu} (Mugā silk worm; \textit{Antheraea- Assama}) and \textit{Endi palu} (the \textit{Eri}; culture; \textit{Attacus ricini}). The \textit{pōtpalu} are fed with the leaves of mulberry trees and so they are termed as mulberry silk.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid.} : P. 258.
worm (bombyx textor). In Assamese they are called pat *palu*. They are reared within doors. This worm is mainly cultivated at Sualkuchi, Hajo, and Bamundi of Kamrup district.

The *Muga* silk worms are generally fed on the leaves of *chom* trees. These worms are mostly cultivated in the districts of Sonitpur, Nagaon, Sibsagar and other districts of Brahmaputra valley. *Muga* worms can be reared both within and outside the house.

The culture of *endi* is traditional which Assam can only be proud of. The *eri* worms are reared indoors with great care. Since these worms are fed on their leaves of *eri*, so it is called *eri* (*endi*). The worms can be fed on the leaves of *kecheru* trees also. It is widely reared in every parts of Assam.

(e) Cane, Wood and Bamboo works: Cane is an important raw material from which different kinds of implements and apparatus are made. On the basement of this craftsmanship, now a days many small-scale industries of cane works have come up in different areas of the state. Several kinds of sitting apparatus, decorative materials, day-to-day used implement are made from cane. Various sitting, sleeping, household apparatuses and agricultural implements are made from wood and bamboo.

(f) Metal works: Assamese people use ornament made of gold, silver, brass, etc abundantly. Ornaments of varied attractive designs are made by the jewelers of Assam. In their day-to-day life different kinds of utensils made of bell-metal, cast iron, aluminum,
brass metals etc are used by the people. Now a day many small-scale industries have been set up in the state to make these utensils. Brass metal utensils are also equally popular among the people of the province. Many utensils like glass, bowels are all prepared from Brass metal. Products of iron aluminum and cast iron are used to make different types of cooking utensil, suitcase, trunk etc. Some implements related to cultivation and day-to-day used are made from iron by blacksmith.

(g) Working on ivory and buffalo Horns: At time Assam’s forests were famous for elephant. From the ivory various kinds of beautiful things are made. Some of the common things are- comb, ring, bracelet, small box, holder of Knife, Kharam (chappal made of either wood or ivory) etc. In some areas even to-day wearing of an ivory bracelet by a bride is compulsory.

Like ivory there are some experts who can show efficiency in the artistic work on horns of buffalo. Some of the most common products of this art are comb, pepā (a sort of flute or pipe) rings, holder of knife and so on.

(h) Other works: Besides the above-mentioned crafts, there are some other crafts, which need mention here; viz toy making, works on jute, mat making, palm leaves works and so on.

ii) Art: The artifact is art to the extent that it is an expression of an intention to give and take pleasure and it is folk art to the extend that the intention was esoteric and traditional............ If a pleasure
giving function pre-dominates, the artifact is called art. If a practical function predominates it is called craft.\textsuperscript{34}

Assam has been the centre of artistic works since remote past. Though some of them are now in morbid state, but it needs to be mentioned here. Few of them are briefly discussed below. The art of \textit{Khanikar} artism of the state mostly connected with the \textit{Satra} (\textit{Vaisnava} monasteries) \textit{nāmghar} (prayer hall) and is responsible for wooden figure and carving combined with painting. Colorful masks made of variety of materials- wood, papier-mache, sola pith etc. is also found in different parts of Assam. Some of these have ritualistic association while others are meant for theatrical performance.\textsuperscript{35}

Apart from this, various kinds of toys are made in different part of the state. Basically two types of toys are popular viz toys made of clay and pith toys. The toys made of clay occupy the foremost place from the point of view of number and variety. These are all hand modeled. The most popular figures are human beings, birds, animals and so on. The art of making pith toys is more particularly confined in the district of Goalpara.

The pith is soft and fitsrous and at the same time extremely brittle. The shapes of the pith figures are determined to a large extent by these, qualities of materials. It is difficult to cut pith into curved shapes where as it easily bends itself to straight shapes, and thus we find in the pith figures the conspicuous predominance or

\textsuperscript{35} Dqita, B, et-al : \textit{op-cit}, P. 216
rectilinear and angular composition. The painting is an integral part of making the pith toys.

Assamese art is also characterized by a special type of painting called manuscript paintings. It is based on some local folk tradition. These manuscripts painting attained a considerably high degree of refinement and sophistication.

The materials used for this folk art are those, which are locally available. Even for painting also the colours are prepared by the artist with the locally available substance. For example, the brushes are made of goats' hair. But this practice has long been given up.

iii) Architecture: Folk architecture may be said to be traditional architecture. It is concerned with all traditional aspects of building: the shape, size and layouts of buildings of all kinds, such as dwellings, barns, shed and craft shop. The material used and the tools and technique of building, the sites chosen and the placement of various buildings on the site; and the use to which buildings and various part of building were put. An Assamese house whether of tribal or non-tribal is constructed with two roofs thatched by locally available grass called *Ulu kher* or *Birinā kher*. Other materials used are bamboo, timber, cane etc. The posts of the house are made of wood or *bhalukā bāh* (one kind of bamboo). The beams are either of wood or of bamboo. The walls are made of read and bamboo and are

plastered with mud and cow dung. The doors and windows are also prepared from wood or bamboo; the frame of the roof is made of bamboo of different sizes and is thatched with *Ulu kher*. To fix the *kher* in the frame of roof, *kāmi* (long thin split bamboo pieces) are exclusively used. To keep the *kher* intact *tangāl* (skin of soft bamboo) or cane is used. Varieties of knots are used in constructing a house. The knots differ from one another used in different occasion viz to fix *kher* with *kāmi*, to fix *kāmi* with beam, to fix beam with post and so on. The length and size of the *tangāl* also vary from one another.

Generally an Assamese homestead contains many houses used for different purposes viz *Barghar* (bed room) *Chorāghar* (drawing room), *Bharāl ghar* (granary), *Rāndhani ghar* (kitchen), *Gohāli ghar* (cowshed), *Dheki ghar* (a shed where a peddle is kept for husking) and so on.

The village *Nāmghar* generally consists of two houses viz *Manikuta* and *Nāmghar*. The *Manikuta* is either of two roofs or of four roofs. In front of the *Manikuta* is constructed the big prayer hall known as *Nāmghar*; this is a commodious building constructed upon wooden post and beams. The frame of the roof is made of bamboo and thatched with *Ulu kher*. The ridge of both the *Nāmghar* and the *Manikuta* is invariably finished with a round roofed garret over it called *Tup*.
In short, Manikuta and the Nāmghar resemble the two principal structures of temple architecture. Manikuta resembles the Deul and Nāmghar resembles Maṇḍapa.

iv) Cooking: The medieval Assam acquired and developed its own ethos in respect of food, drink, dress and ornaments. But now as the people of different parts have migrated and have settled down here permanently, so the old ethos have become heterogeneous. With the changing of time people have started adopting different mode of cooking of others. But yet close scrutiny verifies that among the indigenous Hindu the food items and its process is found to be almost similar all over Assam. Discussed below are the cookeries prevalent among the people of Assam.

Rice is still considered to be the principle food of Assamese people. It is not only consumed at two principal meals, but in rural areas, used as breakfast items also. Rice is also used to prepare different types of items like flattened rice (Chirā), puffed rice (Muri) powder rice (gurā) and varieties of cakes.

Although in Assam many verities of rice are grown, but the finer varieties are consumed by richer section of the community while the poorer section are to satisfy with the coarser verities. Rice is either 'parboiled' (ukhowā, rice made from paddy boiled and dried

37 Sarma, S. N. : op-cit, P. 245.
before husking) or ‘unboiled’ (alowā, rice made from paddy simply dried before husking). 38

The cooked rice is taken in different ways:

(a) **Tapat bhat** or **Garam bhat** : The cooked rice when taken in fresh and warm state is called *tapat* or *garam bhat*. Twice a day *tapat bhat* is consumed. These are the principal meals. With these meals people use different kinds of seasonings called *ānjā* (curry) prepared with pulses, such as *Magu, Masur, Māṭī-māh*, Vegetables, Fish, Meat, and Egg etc.

Some of the most popular preparations of *ānjā* (curry) are discussed below-

(i) **Dāli or dāil** : Various kinds of pulses are used by the Assamese people. The most common being, *Masur dāli, Magu dāli, Māhar dāli, Rahar dāli* and so on. Nowadays *dāli* or *dāil* has become a compulsory item with the principal meals.

(ii) **Bhajā or Bhāji** : The leaf vegetables, fish, potato etc when fried with mustard oil, it is called *bhajā* or *bhāji*.

(iii) **Pitikā** : When the vegetables are boiled in water and is mashed it is called *pitikā*. To make it tasty various seasoning like salt, mustard oil, onion, and chillies are used. Mostly potato is used for mashed.

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38 Datta, B. : *op-cit.* P. 30.
(iv) *Pora* or *Pura*: When some vegetables like potato, brinjal, are roasted and are mashed with other seasoning, it is called *pora* or *pura*. Besides vegetables, various kind of small fishes are also roasted. Such roasts go very well with *paitā bhāt* or *Karkariā bhāt* or even with the main meals.

(v) *Khār*: This is the alkaline preparation popular throughout Assam. The people themselves prepare from the dried trunks of the *Āthīś* or *Bhim* banana by an indigenous process. The noteworthy point is that the *Khār* is used by the people of northeast region only.\(^{39}\)

(vi) Fish and Meat: Fish and meat are very popular among all sections of the people of Assam. Fish is prepared in various ways. Some times with seasoning or vegetable or fried or roasted and so on. The most favorite meat of Assamese people are mutton procured from he-goat and castrated goat, chicken, pigeon, duck and if possible venison.

Besides the main meals at noon and in the evening, Assamese people prepare varieties of items for light food, which is called *Jalpōn*. The most common are *chirā* (flattened rice), *gura* powder rice, *Komal- căul* (soft rice) The *jalpōn* is generally taken in accompaniment with curd, molasses, ripe banana etc. *Chīra* is also

served to guest invariably and in ceremonial occasions like marriage and in some religious and social occasions.

*Payasa* or *Paramanna* or *Khir* is one of the most delicious foods preferred by every Assamese people. It is often offered to Gods in religious functions. It is prepared with fine rice preferably *Joha* rice having sweet smell boiled in milk with sugar and other favoured spices.

V) **Costumes**: Dress is not merely an external device for covering the body from heat and cold, it is also deeply rooted in the psychology, culture, tradition, civilization, and social setting of every individual. It is through dress that a nation articulates her nationality and introduces her as a collectivity before the world.

So far the dress of the common male person is concerned, there is a common dress almost throughout the region. They use *Dhoti* or waistcloth, an unstitched or long cloth with one end tucked in front while the other end taken behind between the legs and tucked below the back. The villagers wear *Dhoti* up to the knee when they are at home and busy in household job. The upper part of the body especially during the summer season remains bare. But when they are to go out, they put on a particular shirt called *Piran* (like Kurta). During winter season people put on *banian* and a wrapper of woolen or *Endi*. The rural people remain bare footed at home, but while going out use sandal. Till recent time *Kharama* was also common in the morning and evening in all seasons.
The most common and well-accepted dress for women is Mekhelā and Chādar. It is worn round the waist covering down to the ankle-joints. This garment resembles with the modern petticoat made by stitching the two ends of a piece of cloth. The only difference with the petticoat is that, no ribble or thread is used in Mekhelā to keep it fitting. The word Mekhelā is originated from the Sanskrit word Mekhelā and the idea of Mekhelā also originates from vaidic Mekhalā. This garment is made of cotton, muga, eri and silk. The mekhelās are decorated with various kinds of attractive designs of flowers, birds, etc. The Chādar is 6 to 8 cubits long and 1 1/2 to 2 cubits wide. This piece of cloth is generally wrapped round the body with one end kept suspended after fixing it under the waistcloth called Mekhelā at a naval point. The other part is coiled round the upper part of the body especially covering the breast from the right hand side to the left. The married women use this end as vail. Chādar is also made of muga, silk, cotton, eri etc. The two ends of the Chādar are decorated with various kinds of attractive designs of flowers, birds fishes etc like mekhelā.

All girls above the age of five or six years wear clothing covering them from shoulder to knee. They wear frock. But the marriageable girls at home use salwār kāmiz with dupattā or urnā or sāree or mekhelā chādar. The same kinds of dresses are worn when they go out. During winter season various types of woolen clothes like sweater, blouse, and shawls are used.
Ornaments: As the women of other parts of the country, Assamese women wear various ornaments on neck, ear, wrist and finger. In the neck they use Jon-biri, dhariyā-biri, silikhā-māduli, dhol-biri, Jālphiā, dugdudgi, galpatā, necklace, and so on. Various ear ornaments like lokā pāra, thuriā, keru, bākharuā keru, etc are being used. In the wrist various bracelets, like gāmkharu, muthikharu, bālā etc are also used in the state. The male person also use ornaments like ring on finger and chain on neck. Assamese women used nākphuli (nose ornament) also. Most of the ornaments are made of gold and silver. Different types of stones are used in ring and ear ornaments.

Cosmetics and Toilets: Evidence available through various epigraphic and literary works regarding the use of cosmetics by Assamese people. People believed that use of perfume enhances one's beauty and grace. The kālikā purāna also mentions about the use of perfumes. Normally a men use mustard oil on his body before bath. The use of scented oil by Assamese people before and after both is a common practice. The women folk take special care for keeping long and dark cluster of hair by applying oil mixed with limejuice. Limejuice is also applied on the body to make the skin smooth and lustrous.

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41 Rajguru, S.  :  op-cit, P. 186.
The pasting of mark on the forehead (phot) between the eyebrows is a common practice among Hindu girls and women. An unmarried girl takes a simple phot on the forehead, a paste prepared out of vermilion and mustard oil. While the married women take vermilion phot on forehead and also on the line made by parting the hair on the head. This is the custom of married Hindu women.

4) **Performing Art forms**

i) **Songs** : While oral literature transmits orally from generation to generation, folk music or traditional music passes on by ear and performed by memory rather than by the written or printed musical score. On the basis of this we will try to discuss here the folk music of Assam.

(a) **Bihu Songs** : Songs and dance are the inevitable parts of Bihu festival. The songs are rich in musical aspects. These are all sets to a particular music patterns, which are essential for dance movement. The Bihu songs are more distinctive type of folk songs both for literary contents and for musical mode. The songs are excellent poetry. They describe beauty both of nature and of the love and express adoration of sweet heart, glorify youth and speak of frustration and sorrow.

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42 List, George :‘Folk Music’ in *Folklore and Folk life*, ed, R.M.Dorson, P. 363.
For eg.,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{otikoi senehar mugāre mahurā} \\
\text{tātoki senehar māko /} \\
\text{tātoki senehar bohāgar bihuti} \\
nepāti kenekoi thāko. //
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., the bobbin of mugā silk is so dear, so dear is the shuttle. Dearer still is the Bohag Bihu, what else to do but observe it?

When the singers are singing, the drummers beat the dhol either with very low sound or simply beat on the wooden frame of the drum. The instruments that are being used in Bihu songs are same with that of Bihu dance. Now a day with other instruments, flute is also being used.

(b) Huchuri: Huchuri singing is an important part of Bihu among Assamese people. The term huchuri remains unexplained, though there have been suggestions as regarding its derivation. Some say it is hari ucchari i.e. after taking the name hari (crying hari). While Dimasa Kacharis of Northern Cachar use the term Huchuri and explain it to mean moving overland, ha land char to move. This may be what is known as folk etymology. The term seems to indicate blessings received from the community.\textsuperscript{43}

The huchuri singing starts with religious note mostly taken from Vaisnavite scripture. Sometimes even ballads are made

\textsuperscript{43} Goswami, P.: Bohag Bihu of Assam and Bihu Songs, Publication Board of Assam, Gauhati, 1988, P. 35.
use of. After the namati (main singer) sings the other co-singers repeat the song in the same rhythm or melody. For eg.,

\[
\begin{align*}
krishnāir murate bakul phul epāhi / \\
niyar pāi mukali hol oi govindāi rām. //
\end{align*}
\]

i.e, A bakul (flower) has opened its petals after being soaked in dew on the head of Krishna; Govindai Ram.

The musical instruments used in huchuri songs are slightly different from Bihu songs. Here pepā (horn pipe) and gaganā (Jews harp) are not used. However clapping is essential here also.

(c) **Marriage** : Marriage is an important rite in human life. Every stages of marriage ceremony is associated with marriage songs in Assam. Noted folklorist P. Goswami observes -

\[\text{\ldots\ldots at every stage of the celebration from the early negotiation to the end women sing appropriate songs.}\]

The marriage songs of Assam are composed and sung by the women folk on different occasions appropriately. For every moment there are different songs. At the time of ring ceremony, at the time of joran, at the time of sacred bathing both by bride and bridegroom, at the time of sraddha, when, bridegroom goes to the house of bride with procession, when the bridegroom is greeted at the gate, when bride and bridegroom sit near the alter, when the bride

is offered ritually, when bridegroom returns home with bride and so
on, in all stages the womenfolk sing different meaningful songs. A
specimen of it is cited below:

\[\text{dwārakāte āji telar bhār säji loi āhe kundilok logi}\\
\text{māerār alankār thoā he rukmini deutarār alankār thoā} /\\
\text{dwārakār krishnai alankār pathāise hāt jor kari loā.}^{45} //

i.e., The joran of Dwaraka is brought to Kundil. Keep
aside the ornaments of your father and mother and accept the same
with reverence sent by Krishna.

(d) Lullabies and Nursery Songs: The aim of the lullabies and
nursery rhymes is to give amusement to the children at the time of
bed in the evening. Such songs attract children not for their
composition but for the style of presentation. The things attached to
the daily life of people are also loved by the children. The natural
beauty and things as well as musical tone may lull the children and
therefore the women try to point out all these phenomenal beauty and
things rhymically and musically at the time when the children go to
the bed. Children’s mind is coloured. These songs transport the
children’s mind in to a land of magical dream and fancy. Such songs
are generally fanciful in composition. Tenderness, simplicity and
delicacy are the main features of this genre of songs.........^{46}

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^{45} Informant: Jambabati Bhuyan. (70, M), Sarthebari, Assam. 
Data collected on 14.2,2002

^{46} Leech, Maria.: Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend, 
In Assamese language the term *Nisukani git* is used to suggest the meaning of lullabies and nursery songs. These kinds of songs are sung softly with little expression and are repeated again and again until the baby falls sleep. Few specimen are cited below:

At the time of sleeping -

\[
\text{āmōre moinā suba hōrite bagari ruba/}
\]
\[
paki sari gale, moināi butali khōba/.
\]

i.e., Our dear one will sleep, he will plant berry tree in the garden. When the ripe berry will fall down, dear one will pick them up to eat.

To teach counting –

\[
eti tarā duti tarā, saragat bahi ki karā
\]
\[
ām kathōl letuk-tuk, puwā-uthi bhutuk-tuk.
\]

i.e., One star, two stars, what you do sitting in the heaven. In the morning you become invisible.

(e) *Moishāli* Songs: *Moishāli* songs have a distinguished place in Assam. Majority of these songs are built upon the theme of love and yearning. *Moishāli* songs are usually sung in the Goalpara region of the state. The love of conjugal life, the pain of separation and the indomitable desire for union are very beautifully drawn through these songs. The *moishāl* who is busy in the *bāthān* (dairy farm) do not get time for union with his wife. The songs that center round the
conjugal love of this lonely *maishāl* is known as *maisālī gīta*. The wife on the other hand pining for the company of the *maisāl* who is away leaving behind his beloved at home. For. e.g.

*bāthān sādo, bāthān sādo maishāl, ghuriā āiso bāri /
galār ār har besāyā dim mui, oi chākrir kari. //

i.e., O *moishāl* leave your *bāthān* and come back home: I shall sell my necklace and give you the money.

(f) *Lokagit*: *Lokagit* is an important genre of Assamese folk songs. As an art form two categories of *Lokagit* have come to be designated. They are

(I) *Kāmrupi Lokagit.*

(II) *Goālpariā Lokagit.*

The song of first category is very popular particularly in the Lower Assam area of Kamrup (undivided) and Darrang. While songs of second category is current in Goalpara (undivided) region. But the songs of both the regions share in common to both the communities.

*Kāmrupi lokagit* clothed in a religious or devotional garb, are extremely popular not so much for their religious or sacred character but for their lyrical and musical quality. The themes chosen for the bulk of these songs are woven around popular characters or episodes from the epics and the *Purānas* as well as religious myths
and legends. Beside this, these songs bear a natural embodiment of the life of village people and they depict a vivid picture of human body and life, wealth and property, kiths and kins, friends and foe, husband and wife relationship and so on. A specimen is given below.

Sun hero pagalōr man /
baliōr man bhāi o-ā-re //
kata no bujām moi tok /
bāte-bāte jābā murdāngi nāsābā //
dandūr nahābā sākhi pagāla man /
o, bātar bāturuāk pantha sāri dībā
dāpūr mar yawā rōkhī ...........................//
i.e., O my insane mind, how long, would I explain you. While walking on the road, do not raise your head and do not be witness of a stranger. Give the way to passer by maintaining your dignity.

Goalpariā Lokagit, on the other hand is lyrical in character and full of love and fondness. From the point of view of musical and central theme, the songs are classified into two categories - bhāwaiyā and chatkā.

The sentiment of bhāwaiyā songs are pathos and reflect the unfulfilled desire of women and indomitable desire of passion attached with their beloved. Besides these most of the maisāli songs and māhut songs also belong to this category.
Though the central theme of most of the Chatkā songs are love, attachment and fondness as well as beauty, but the chief characteristics of these songs are unsteadiness, delightfulfulness and pleasure. Specimen of Goalparia Lokagit.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{parāsi āpanār noway bāndhab he} / \\
\text{naler āgun tale} / \\
\text{khāgarār āgun jale} / \\
\text{mor abhāgir maner āgun} / \\
\text{nibāy kon jane re}^{47} / \\
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., O, friend, neighbours are not sympathetic to me. The fire of tiny reed is invisible but of big reed exposes outerly. I am unfortunate one. Who will put out my mind’s fire?

(g) Nāngeli Git: The Nāngeli songs are current in Darrang district, Patidarang, at Laupara of Kamrup district. The primitive people regarded the womb of earth and the womb of the mother alike: they are formed of same thing. The same preconditions, which fertilise a woman, are also presumed to work in the case of the earth. To linguistics the word linga and Nāngal (plough) are evolved from same branch. The one is used to fertilise a woman’s womb while the other to fertilize the womb of the Earth. It was believed by the primitive people that sexual act assists the promotion of abundant harvest. So, the songs based on sexual act also can promote the good

\[\text{Informant : Durgeswar Thakuria, (42, M), Dhupdhara, Goalpara.} \]
\[\text{Data collected on 15.7.2002.}\]
harvest. The Nāngeli songs also developed out of magical ritual practices. To improve the fertility of the Earth Nāngeli songs were sung. But in the later time these songs were sung by the cowboy and wild youth in lonely places. Nāngeli songs are of two kinds. They are good and vulgar.48

(ii) Dance: Folk dance and folk songs are closely related to one another. Most of the time they go together and share many important characteristics. Furthermore, these art forms not only require keen eyes of an expert, as far as the ear and action is concerned, they also need equal attention for the costumes stage, instruments, audience and the overall interaction of all these aspects which are essential for the totality of the performance.49 The folk dance area of Assam is very vast. Some of the important folk dances that prevail in Assam are discussed below.

(a) Bihu Dance: Bihu festival is the most universal one and it can alone claim the status of the national festival of Assamese people. The Bihu festival has closest relation with agriculture. The Bihu song and dance mostly done by the youths and girls and is an integral part of bihu festival.

There was a time when dancing of Bihu was considered as bewilderment for its erotic element and therefore the youths perform Bihu dance in a secluded place at night in-group exclusively

of either men or women. The Bihu dance is characterized by brisk stepping, slinging of hand and vigorous hip movements symbolizing mirth and yearning for union.\textsuperscript{50} Originally the girls and boys used to dance separately. This was due to the social condition of restriction on girls. But towards the end of 20\textsuperscript{th} century the young men and women began to perform Bihu jointly.

In a bihu dance team, there is no fixed number of participants, the prominent member are – one namati (the main singer) one or more dhuliya (drummer) one tāliya (cymbaler). Some other musical instruments used are pepā (horn pipe), gaganā (jew’s harp), bāhi (flute), hutuli (clay – pipe) tokā (bamboo clapper) etc and some singers both male and female. So, in true sense the whole team takes part in dance performance. About the Bihu dance P. Goswami writes –

..... The Bihu dance as seen among Assamese people has a few fixed patterns and seems to have a sexual basis, thus indicating its association with some spring time fertility cult of ancient times. The dancers at first keep their hands on their hips, then swag their trunks gradually opening their arms and vigorously pushing out the pelvic region as well as breast. Even a male dancer exhibits a similar form. The steps are simple and seem to be unstudied; but the movement of the hips, the swaying arms and the protruding breasts easily catch the eyes of the onlookers.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Datta, B. et-al, : op-cit, P. 207.
\textsuperscript{51} Goswami, P. : op-cit, P. 38.
(b) Huchuri Dance: *Huchuri* dance is associated with *Bihu*. It is performed both by young and aged person. The main feature of this is to bless the family where it is performed. P. Goswami speaks thus about the dance—

......*Huchuri is a ring dance, the ring form being a rather primitive and simple dance figure. Further huchuri dance and music with its concern for public welfare seems to emphasize the cooperative characters of early society, a feature that has survived more or less till today.*\(^{52}\)

It is noteworthy that *huchuri* dance starts with religious songs collected from *Namaghosā*. For a *huchuri* performance men of village form into bands, visit households and with dance like movement sing songs, which usually have a religious overtone.\(^{53}\)

Opinion differs regarding the origin of the word *huchuri*. Many believe the name and its pattern come from Burma (Myanmar) where even today groups of people move round the streets singing and dancing during the period of *Bohāg Bihu*. Under the influence of later day Āryan culture and *Vaishnava* religion, *huchuri* attained some discipline and religious implication in its presentation. Inclusion of *Kirtaniya pad* (a typical Assamese verse of two rhyming lines) in *huchuri* presentation is a direct influence of


\(^{53}\) Datta, B., et-al, : *op-cit,* P. 60.
Vaishnavite ideals, while the forms all male characters too can be attributed to that religious sect.\(^{54}\)

(c) Moho-ho:  *Moho-ho* is a seasonal folk festival prevalent only in lower Assam. It is observed in the month of *Āghon* on full-moon evening. It is both tribal and non-tribal festival. The festival is confined within the young boys alone. A band of cowhard or young boys assemble together and move from house to house singing hymns and collecting contributions with which later they enjoy a feast. The interpretation of the festival differs from place to place. In some parts of Kamrup district, the festival is celebrated to drive out mosquitoes. In Belsor area of Kamrup district, it is observed to turn out the tigers from the village. While in Darang district the festival is termed as *Maih-khedā* and it is observed to turn out the buffaloes from the paddy field.

The boys carry the sticks in hands, while singing they strike the ground. It appears as if the lads come out to fight with mosquitoes or buffalos or tigers. But in reality it is not a fight but a fun. After acquiring victory in the war they make a *bhāluk* or bear dance. P. Goswami observes-

"....... there is a bhaluk or bear among the group and he is rigged in dried banana leaves to represent the bear. It is he who dances in shuffling manner while his fellows hit the ground with bamboo sticks."\(^{55}\)

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\(^{54}\) Chayengia, D.: "Bihu As It should be" in *Assam Tribune*, Dated. 13.4.2002.

\(^{55}\) Goswami, P.: *Festival of Assam*, P. 70.
(d) **Kherāi dance**: Kherāi dance performed during Kherāi puja is an important dance of the Boro people, one of the main tribes of Assam. Kherāi puja is generally held on the month of Kāti. The puja is held for the welfare of men, animals and in particular for the growth of paddy. The puja is performed in an open space. Though there are Deuri or ojā (priest) to conduct the puja, but the female dancer (Doudini) represents various stages of ritual.55

(e) **Bagurumbā**: Bagurumbā is another most graceful and captivating dance of the Boro people. The dance revolves around the harvest. The Boro maidens perform this dance in-group with fear and gayer movements. As they become free after harvest, so to relax them the dance is performed. All the functions of sowing and transplantation of paddy are depicted through the maidens hop and swing bend and unbend and at times the impression of fluttering butterflies is given by expanding their hands binding of traditional scarf like the feature of butterflies. Bagurumbā dance is full of vivacity and is a popular dance form in the Boro dominated area of the state.

(g) **Farkānti dance**: Among the folk dances of Rabha community of Assam, the most curious dance is one which takes place on the occasion of the final ritual of the dead. This dance is called Farkānti. In this dance both men and women take part. The men dance with

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55 Goswami, P. : *Folk Literature of Assam*, P. 64.
Manchulenka (aleedo espida, artificial king fisher) while the women dance with sword and shield.

Manchulenka is a musical instrument made up of wood and bamboo. The instrument is union of two parts - manchelenkā and batiktīkā, name of two birds. Probably these two birds are symbol of the departed soul of the dead man.  

(iii) Drama: Assam and the North East India is the paradise of folk culture. Assam may specially be proud of its rich tradition of folk theatres or the quasi-dramatic institution from earliest time of civilization. Pragjyotishpura was the pioneer of music, dance and drama.

(a) Ojāpāli: The Ojāpāli institution of Assam is one of the oldest form of semi-dramatic institutions among the folk dramas. N. C. Sarma points out that the Ojāpāli songs spring from classical tradition of Indian music. This kind of folk theatre is very popular in Kamrup (undivided) and Darrang district. Sankardeva introduced this institution in the Satras and from that time the practice of Ojāpāli has been running on.

The Ojāpāli party is formed by one Ojā, one Dianā-pāli and five to seven pālis. Ojā is the chief narrator or the chief leader of the group. Dianā-pāli is the right hand assistant of Ojā. His status is


next to the Ojā. The principal character of the Ojā is to recite a mythological story begins with a dihā and the entire groups including dīanā-pāli join in the dancing and singing. The pālis use Khuti tōl (small cymbal). The dīanā-pāli not only recites with the companies but also takes part in dialogue with the Ojā. The humorous dialogue between the Ojā and the dīanā-pāli is the centre of main attraction. The dialogues and gestures between Ojā and dīanā-pāli make it a dramatic institution. Though there are two types of Ojā-pāli, N. C. Sarma has classified them to many classes from the thematic as well as structural point of view.58

1. Epic-based Ojāpāli

The first type of Ojāpāli perform is divided into

I. Byāhar Ojā-pāli
II. Rāmāyan goa Ojā-pāli
III. Vāuriā Ojā-pāli
IV. Durgā hāri Ojā-pāli
V. Satriyā Ojā-pāli
VI. Pāncāli Ojā-pāli
VII. Dulāri Ojā-pāli

The second type of Ojā-pāli may be divided into following forms.

a) Sukuṇāl Ojā-pāli
b) Bisahari Ojā-pāli
c) Māre-gān Ojā-pāli
d) Paddā or Padmā purānar gōn

(b) The Puppet Theatre: The putulā nac (puppet dance) is an ancient semi-dramatic form of institution. India has a very long and rich tradition of puppet dance.

Today in many parts of the country like Assam, Orissa, W. Bengal, Rajasthan, Kerela, Tamilnadu, puppet theatre is popular from the view of entertainment. It is difficult to say when and where this form of institution appeared on Assamese scene. In Kālikā purāna the word pancalikā is used for the word putulā (puppet) and perhaps the word pancalikā behēr implies puppet dance.\footnote{Sarma, S. N. : Assam va Neiya Sahitya, Gauhati, 1983, P. 4.}

In a puppet dance party there are four to five men. The chief of the group is called Sutrādhar next to him is called Bāyan and the remaining are known as pālis. The role of Sutrādhar is very significant.

The puppets are manipulated with a string by the Sutrādhar from behind a screen. Bāyan is the main helper of Sutrādhar. He along with his assistants create an atmosphere by using musical instrument like Khol (one kind of drum) and Töl.
(cymbal). Generally the episodes of Rāmāyana are taken as the subject of such plays.  

(c) **Dhuliā Performance**: From the primitive time the Dhuliā performance (drummers) has been playing a significant role on social and religious functions of the people. The Dhuliā party of Kamrupa and Barpeta districts is a semi-dramatic social institution; which give pleasure to the rural people. The Dhuliā party of Assam can be divided into four forms. They are discussed below.

(i) Kāmrupiā dhuliā (II) Bardhuliā (III) Joydhuliā (IV) Dhepā dhuliā.

(d) **Bhāvariā Performance**: The Bhāvariā gives much pleasure to the rural people by creating humorous situation through dialogues and gestures. The dress of the bhāvariā is uncommon multicolour dress. The main scopes of a bhāvariā to excite laughter are song, dialogue, jester etc. But his motto is to hit the truth or to make people conscious. The formal popularity of bhābariā is no more because of social and economical condition of the people.

(e) **Pacati**: Pacati is a dramatic folk performing art where only the women take part. It is a seasonal festival and celebrated on the month of Bhāda. This folk festival is connected with the birth of Lord Krishna. Janmastami is celebrated on the occasion of Krishna’s
Pacati is celebrated on the occasion of the birth of Krishna. This function is called Pacati (Pancha + tithi). Because it is celebrated after five days of the birth. The festival is made more attractive through various songs, dance and acting.

(f) Kushan Gan: Kushan gan is a full fledged folk drama institution of Goalpara region. It is also called Kushan play. Each party of Kushan play consists of fifteen to twenty men. The head of the group is called mul or gitāl. He is the leader of the group having the power to sing, direct and manage the party smoothly. Next to him is dohāri or dowāri. He is the principal assistant of the leader and has to be adept in singing and dancing. The dohāri also helps the leader in conducting dramatic dialogues, which he makes lively with his humour, sequences, and witty dialogues or by buffoonery. Next to dohāri or dowāri, there are a group of assistants called pails. Their function is to provide the choral support to the singing of the mul. Then, there are four to five boys called chengrā. But they are dressed as female. They also take part in singing and acting. There is also a bāin or bōyer who plays khol (a small drum). The themes of Kushan gan are taken from epics and purānas.

(g) Bhāri Gān: Bhāri gān is another popular folk plays of Goalpara region. In the play the leader or the principal singer of the group is called mul gaoniya. He is assisted by a number of assistants.

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61 Datta, B. : op-cit, P. 236.
known as pāilā or pāli or dohāriā. The comic relief is provided by some outlandishly made up characters called ketuas. The performance of Bhāri gān is more inclined towards narrative singing than on acting. Here also the themes of the play are derived from Purānas, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata.

The important feature of Bhāri gān is the use of masks by some characters. Some characters like Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā are customarily not supposed to wear masks. But in case of few other characters like Rāvana, Hanumāna, Jāmbuvāna using of masks is essential. The Ketuas also use masks and they are most odd-looking masks.  


1) Society and Culture:

  1) Economic condition and Educational life.

Economic condition: The people of Orissa basically depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The region is an important centre of agriculture due to network of rivers and forest area extending many hundred miles towards the west as hinterland is fertile and is fit for any agricultural operation. Naturally people of this land depend on agriculture as their main occupation.  

Land is the main and important source of livelihood and is carefully utilized by the people. It is a symbol of material security and good design for the villagers. If a person consists more land his status is increased. The selling of land is a sign of poverty.\textsuperscript{64}

Though agriculture is the main occupation of the people, many of them have very little or no agricultural land of their own. A section of people however have excess land. They are called landlord. There is a contact between landlord and peasant towards the payment of rent before the harvest, which is called \textit{sanjā} system. Besides this, another system also prevails in the state, known as \textit{bhāga} system.

The farmers grow two paddy crops in a year. Besides rice there are other variety of crops such as wheat, barley, sugarcane, jute, millets and so on. They also grow various kinds of seasonal vegetables.

Regarding their agricultural practice it is observed that their technique of cultivation with a pair of bullock and other implements do not basically differ from other parts of the country. Persons of both sexes work in the field. Of course women do not plough.

Besides agriculture, the economy of the state is strengthened by their engagement in different crafts such as textile,

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.} \ : \ PP. 106-107.}
chandua kamo, pottery, wood work, jewellery, ivory, bone and horn currying and so on.

Fishing is also an important occupation in rural life. Lot of lakes, ponds, and vast sea help these people to earn their livelihood through this profession.

But as a whole, the economy of the state is not so sound. Lots of people live below poverty line. People engaged in different crafts find it difficult to maintain their day-to-day expenditure. That is why lot of folk arts and crafts are either languishing or gradually dying out.

Education: In Orissa the education was caste and community oriented. Only the Brāhmins and Kshatriyas were allowed to have their education. The teachers who imparted education or managed the educational institutions were known by different names at different times. They were called Abadhāṇa, Gurus etc. while the students were called Chāttas. The teachers were generally belonged to Brāhmin caste.\(^{65}\)

The elementary education was imparted in indigenous schools like Chatrasālis, Pāthsālās or Private house. The method of teaching in vogue was very simple. A student began his studies with Sripalā. The curriculum of primary education consisted of

alphabets, vowels and consonants, combination of words, spellings, and lessons in reading and elementary arithmetic.66

The learning of Sanskrit language and literature was mostly restricted to Brāhmīns and royal families. For higher education, Mathas, tolas, places of pilgrimage, temple and court of Rājās and Mahārājās were the main centre.67 Vedas, Sāstras, Purānas, Kāvyas, Alankāra, Vyākarana, Jyotisha vidyā, Darsan sāstra were included in curriculum of higher education and learning. There were also centers for parting special education. It was carried out by the subject’s experts by specialist Pandits either in their houses or in the Akhada Gharas or Bhāgabata Gharas. Renowned Āchāryas or scholars used to give education individually and privately in their Āshramas.68

The Muslim students got education in the Maktābs and Mādrāshās. Maktābs were the primary school generally attached to masques. But sometimes Maktābs were situated in the private houses also. The Malik or Maulavi who looked after the mosque was the teacher of this Maktāb. While the Mādrāshās were the institutions for higher learning.

Like the other parts of the country, in Orissa also, there was no separate school for girls. To a stage they studied together

with boys in the same school. After that the girls were educated privately. The education of women, both of Hindu and Muslim communities was mostly confined to princely and well-to-do classes of society.  

The traditional method of education got changed with the arrival of Missionary and East India Company. Whatever may be their intention, but Indian people got acquainted with the education of Western country through Missionary and East India Company.

II. Language and Literature:

Literature: Literature portrays the life of a society and records yearning aspirations and doubts. It is therefore an invaluable record of the changes through which society passes. It is the mirror of culture in society. It is based on language, which plays an important role in man's socialization.

Literature is divided into:

a) Oral literature
b) Written literature.

(a) Oral literature: There has always been a kind of literature before written literature came into being, which may be conveniently termed as oral literature.

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70 Parmar, S. : Folklore of Madhya Pradesh, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1992, P. 84.
Oral literature compared with written literature has many distinct features of its own. Where as written literature is the outcome of the cultivated faculties of the artists, unsophisticated people in essence create oral literature. Infact, it is spontaneous outburst of the innermost fellings, which emerge from the depths of the unconscious mind of the community. It has its roots deep in tradition and is preserved in memory. It is ever fresh and even on the move like a river. Further, it is a forest of wild flowers which have grown untended, but which have a haunting beauty all their own.  

The villagers lead a busy life. They do not compose or sing in their leisure hours. They sing when they plough fields, harvest crops, row boats and drive carts. They also sing at religious festivals and on ceremonial occasions and for the sheer pleasure of singing. They sing to break the monotony of hard work or of a long journey on foot.

Another important point of folk literature is that the names of the composer or singers are not known. The writers do not believe that their compositions have any outstanding value or that they are poets of any merit. Though it is accepted as a creation of many poets, but individual feelings and emotions are clearly felt. The oral literature may be divided in to four classes viz, :

i) Those sung by men exclusively,

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Mahapatra, L.K.
ii) Those sung by women exclusively,

iii) Those sung by men and women jointly,

iv) Those sung by boys and girls.\(^3\)

i) **Sung by men exclusively** : The songs of cultivation, boatman’s songs, cart men’s songs herdsman’s song, snake charmer’s songs, songs of charioters, battle songs, songs of incantation are confined within men section only.

ii) **Sung by women exclusively** : Most of the ballads, weeping songs, *puchi* songs, swing songs, tattooing songs etc are sung by women section alone.

iii) **Sung by men and women** : The prayer songs, Humo songs, *Rōsar Keli, Dālkhāi* songs, songs of spring festival are sung by both men and women.

(iv) **Sung by boys and Girls** : Most of the songs related to play are sung by both boys and girls.

(b) **Written literature** : The story of Oriya literature is primarily a story of literature, a story of producing and sharing in a field of activity which is literary and which is creative. Oriya literature is definitely a part of the great tradition that Indian literature is, and can be treated as a little tradition.\(^4\) The real specimen of Oriya literature begins from the middle of the fifteenth-century when Sarala Dasa wrote *Mahābhārata* in Oriya.\(^5\)

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From about 1450 to about 1550 five personalities dominated the field of Oriya literature. They have come to be known as *Panchasakhās* or the five-fellow saints and writers. They were Balarama Dasa, Jagannatha Dasa, Achyutananda Dasa, Yasovanta Dasa and Ananta Dasa. They followed the path of Sarala Dasa and rendered the sacred books of the Hindus into the people’s language. *Rāmāyana* by Balarama Dasa and *Bhāgabata* by Jagannatha Dasa and *Mahābhārata* of Sarala Das rank as the first three great books in Oriya literature. Achyutananda wrote 36 *Samhitās*, 78 *Gitas*, 27 *Vamsanucharitas* besides the 7 Volumes of *Harivamsa*, 12 *Upavansa*, 100 *Malikās*, and some *Chautisas* etc. Yasovanta’s most important composition is *Prema Bhakti Brahmā Gita*. Arakshita Dasa is famous for *Mahimandala Gita*, *Bōlyabodh Gita*, *Bhakti Tika* and *Saptōnga Abadhuta Samhitā* etc. Upendra Bhanja is called the emperor among the poets. He has to his credit 70 to 80 Books of which few are mentioned here viz *Vaidehisa Vilāsa*, *Koti Brahmānda Sundari*, *Bhababati*, *Chitra Kabya Bandodaya* etc.

Dinakrishna Dasa was another renowned poet. In his *Rasakallola*, he composed the entire work with initial Oriya letter *Ka*. His *Ārtatrōṇa Chautisa*, which was daily recited by him before Lord

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77 Ibid, P. 74.
78 Sahu, B. : *op-cit*, P. 87.
Jagannatha was a real document of human feelings reflecting poet’s agony.\textsuperscript{79}

Some important writers of different ages are discussed in Nutshell. \textit{Stutichinti\text{"o}mani, Brah\text{"o}nirupana Gita} by Bhima Bhoi. \textit{Abasara Basare, \text{"ut}kala Brah\text{"o}n\text{"o}m, \text{"at}majibanacharita} etc by Fakirimohana Senapati. They belong to the second half of 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Few literary figures of 20\textsuperscript{th} century are Sachi Routory’s \textit{P\text{"o}ndulip\text{"i}, Chitragrib}, Nityananda Mahapatra’s \textit{P\text{"a}nchajanya, P\text{"o}tra O pratim\text{"o}}, Hid\text{"a}m\text{"o}ti etc. Kunjabihari Dash’s \textit{Palligiti Samchayana, Lokagalpa Samchayana}, Harekrushna Mahatab’s, \textit{Parasi Abasane, Pratibh\text{"a}, Odis\text{"a}ra Itih\text{"a}sa}. Baikunthanatha Pattanayaka – \textit{\text{"u}ttarayana Kabyasamchayana, Mruttika Darsana}; Mayadhara Mansingha-Dhupa, Kamalayana, History of Oriya literature. Artaballabha Mohanty-Anantaprasada Panda, Kanhu Charana Mohanty- \text{"o}sti, Bajrabadhu etc., Kunjabihari Dash-Palligiti, Samchayana, Lokagalpa etc.\textsuperscript{80} Besides these writers, there are a lot more. But it is not possible to mention of them all.

2) Social Customs:

1) Beliefs and Religion: The religion of the Oriya people including tribal and non-tribal centre round traditional beliefs. So, religion and beliefs are inseparable from one another. However to define religion–

\textsuperscript{80} Das, C. : \textit{op-cit}, Appendix, PP. 4-8.
it is a belief in a divine being or beings and it recognizes a super human power controlling the Universe. Further, it is propitiatory and persuasive in character and to achieve a certain end it conciliates the super human power by worshipping.

While belief pervades attitude and action to enter the stream of conscious thought. The most widespread manifestation of a mental attitude in the shape of beliefs.

The Oriya people whether Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Tribal, have the common belief of the immortality of the soul. Among the Hindus, the soul is reborn in human or in some other form according to the balance of religious merits earned in previous lives. The disembodied soul may go to heaven or hell in accordance. With one’s Karamaphala or the balance of the fruits of action through a series of former lives. To Muslim and Christian the souls await the final judgment from God at the end of the world. But among the tribal people the soul usually goes to the underground world but always maintain contact with the living descendants, protecting or punishing them if they spiritually go astray.  

Oriya people also believe that Brahma is the creator, Bishnu, the preserver and the Siva as destroyer. Heaven is the place of all beauty. All pious souls live there after death. While Hell is meant for all wicked people. All religious practices of the villages are motivated by the Purānic conception of heaven and hell.  

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Almost all tribal people strangely believed in their Gods and Goddess and steadfastly adhere to the ritual observances. All aspects of their life are affected by their beliefs and practices in the sphere of religion and magic. In other words, it is said that religious and magical rituals and observances pervade almost the whole of their life. It is not only applicable to primitive tribes of the state, but also to a large extent applicable to the general mass in the village. The same taboos, the same inhabitations, and very often-similar rituals characterize the day-to-day life of both the tribal and non-tribal section of the population. Omens, auspicious moments, belief in witches, sorceress and sorceresses; offering of sacrifices, often bloody, for fulfillment of certain desires are commonly shared by them.83

Many different types of Gods and Goddess and spirits are believed in and worshipped by the rural people in the state. Some of these local gods and Goddesses have been assimilated in to the Hindu pantheon as appendices of Shakti, as localized versions of Durgā or Chandi etc.

II) Games and Recreation : The agriculturist of any region are to remain busy with their day-to-day agricultural activities almost throughout the year. So, they can hardly spare any time for enjoyment. But they have got number of festivals, which are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. During these festivals the rustic

people enjoy number of games and sports. The children and the teenagers have got variety of sports and games to play.

The Oriya people have various kinds of recreations to get rid of their monotony and wearisome times. These recreations not only provide them enjoyment but also develop their social relationship, power of self protection, sound health and so on. The conventional recreations are games both indoor and outdoor. Some of the common indoor and outdoor games for children and teenagers are given below.

*Du-du, Bohuchori, Bāgudi, Bahu Bāgudi, Pāhi-Pāhikā, Dāndīā, Bāti, ise-pise, Kiti-Kiti, Chāluniā, kaure, Bāgha-cheli, Lukā-chori, flying of gudi or kites.*

These are very popular among the village boys and girls. In *Du-du* and *Bohuchori* (Stealing the daughter in law), it becomes necessary to divide the boys into two parties. In such case friction may arise from unequal division. The players solve their problem in such a manner that no body has any reason for grumbling. In hide and seek, one boy or girl is to seek the others. His eyes are closed up, while others hide. Then he is to seek and follow the other members. In *Kiti-Kiti*, one of the participants is to touch and return the opposite party back without changing his breath. *Bāti* (marble) is a common game. The little boys and girls in the village do not play any special games. They move round and round till they fall down. They also play with toys.

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84 Informant: Banshidar Sarangi, (M, 60), Puri, Data collected on 14-4-2000.
The grown up men play *Pasā-khela* (dice-playing), Cards, Chess, *Mallayudha* (wrestling) *Khandō-khela* (playing with swords). Getting and training animals to fight is also a means of amusement. Fighting of cock, bull, sheep, are arranged to entertain the people in *melas* or in the place of social gathering.\(^8^5\)

But most of these games are now outdated. But the games of children are still popular in rural areas.

iii) **Traditional Medicine**: The local term for medicinal man in Orissa is *guniū*. The *guniū* prescribes and provides medicine to the affected person after proper examination. The study is done on the basis of symptoms. The medicines supplied by the *guniū* are generally prepared from different kinds of herbs, flowers, fruits, barks of tree, animal or animal abstract etc., the *guniū* is the result of the people’s experience acquired from their day to day contact with the herbs. The folk medicine may be classified into two groups.

(a) Natural folk medicine, and
(b) Magico religious folk medicine.

(a) Natural folk medicine: This category of folk medicine includes the medicine prepared from herbs, animal or animal substances. A few diseases and their medicines are given below as for example.

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\(^8^5\) Ray, B. C. : *op-cit.*, P. 164.
(1) (a) Headache: If the habit of drinking water through nose at every morning is made, headache can be cured permanently. 
(b) The pulve of dry basil leaves could be inhaled, to cure the disease.

(2) Cold: The extract of Onion (Allium cepa) put into nose or fried garlic (Allium Sativum) taken with rice, can relief the patient.

(3) Hooping cough: To cure the disease the extract of basil leaves, jinger (Zingiber Cassumunar), black pipper, black salt mixed with honey, should be taken for few days.

(4) Cough: Jinger, basil leaves. Mixed with honey prove to be an effective medicine.

(5) Malaria: (a) Basil leave 11nos, black pipper 11nos are boiled together and taken with curd, cures the disease.
(b) The pulv of drumstick (Momordica Charantia) mixed with honey is a good medicine.

(6) Pnimoniah: A cloth wet in the water of socked rice and then fomented with warm sand cures the disease.

(7) Migram: The smoke of kink oil seed (centratherum antheminticum), camphor and caraway seeds are inhaled, it gives positive result.

(b) Seven nos, of basil leaf mixed with little salt and then rubbed on the forehead at noontime, it gives positive result.
(8) Acidity, indigestion: (a) Raw turmeric (cuminum longa) should be taken with little salt in empty stomach.

(b) The pulv of (haridā) myrobalam, (bāhārā) tedana grandis soaked in water on the previous night. Next day morning the water should be taken for few days for effective result.

(9) Blood dysentery: (a) Indian spinach and black pipper mixed together and taken twice a day to get relief.

(b) Unriped Beal (Aegle Marmelos) burnt and taken for few days.

(10) Diabetes: (a) Leaf of beal tree 11nos, black pipple 3nos, grinded together and taken for 4-5 weeks to reduce the sugar.

(b) The extract of nurshinga patra (clausena excavate) is a good medicine for diabetes.

(11) Jaundice: (a) Trifala (haridā, bāhārā, awalā), bark of Margosa tree, turmeric grinded together and the pulv should be taken with honey for few days.

(b) Raw turmeric’s juice, ghee, honey, curd and sugar should be taken for few days.

(12) Epilepsy: At first cold water should be sprinkled on face and head. Then the juice of garlic, jinger and ghee should be applied on the head.

Magico religious folk medicine: In Orissa many diseases are treated with spells, incantations, conjuration and amulets. The
person who treats all kinds of illness with spell etc., is called gunia but in tribal society they are known as Ojhās and Jangurus. People believe that death and disease are caused by mysterious acts of malignant spirits. The evil spirits may be made to quit the body of the victim only through superhuman means.

Many folk tales of Orissa relate that magicians can transform men into animals or birds or insects and again bring them back to their original forms. Similarly, the tales current amongst the tribal people of this state tell that the human urine may transform a gourd into a big by magical power.

Some tribal groups like the Santhals in north-Orissa are well known for the practice of sorcery and witchcraft. Through the black magic they can harm any people. The person to be harmed is represented by images made in wax or clay. These are either burnt or pierced through with the magical arrow called bōnamōra. There is a belief that this would make those persons suffer or die in a manner similar to the wax images.

3) Material Culture:

1) Craft: Orissa is well known within the country and abroad for her craftsmanship. It is true that some castes have been traditionally associated with some particular crafts as professions. But gradually it is spreading widely among the people irrespective of caste. Some of the important crafts of the state are discussed below.
(a) Textile: Since remote past, Orissa has been famous for its textile made from silk and cotton yarns. There are large numbers of villages where weavers produce textile with excellent designs made on the pattern by a special technique known as ‘Bandhej’ (tie and dye). 86

Though there is no specific restriction, yet different classes of weavers weave different kinds of cloths. Some are especially renowned for their picturesque designs. They weave silk and cocoon yarn. While the other class is expert in fabrication various types of beautiful designs by means of tie and dye. 87 But the quality is of high standard. R. N. Mitra has rightly remarked that “in neatness, elegance and richness of design and execution, it is no way inferior to the finest production of the ‘Benaras loom’.” 88 Orissa is not only self dependant in case of the production of clothes for their day to day use but also exports to other parts of the country. Almost all types of clothes are fabricated by Oriya weavers. No doubt it is a source of livelihood for a large number of people.

(b) Chānduā Kāmo (Applique work): Applique work in textile is a medium of expression for artistic decoration. This beautiful work is found in many parts of the country. The most important regions are Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan etc. The work with beautiful

colours and of various designs for numerous uses has been adopted by a large number of people in their day-to-day life.

Unlike other places, the Orissa appliqué is connected with religious festivals, royal and religious procession having motifs of geometric actual and stylised from natural and astral fields.\(^{89}\)

In Orissa, Pipili, a small place about 20Kms. from Bhubaneswar is famous for applique work. It is the harmonious product of intermingling of two diverse religions i.e. Hinduism and Islam.

Some of the important items of applique craft are wall hanging, \textit{chāndua} (canopy), garden umbrella, ladies umbrella, letter bag, cushion cover, side bag, ladies bag, \textit{suryamukhi}, door screen etc.\(^{90}\)

\textbf{(c) Pottery :} One of the earliest skill developed by man was in the handling of clay. The soft alluvial clay was kneaded and coiled into containers. Lumps of clay were hand moulded into toys or the deity that was worshipped.\(^{91}\)

Among the Orissan potters, some are highly skilled in the art of manufacturing clay figures, images, utensils for day-to-day use and a large variety of toys. Besides these various deities of

\(^{89}\) Mahanty, B. C. : \textit{op-cit}, P. 78.

\(^{90}\) Informant : Biju, Sahoo. (58, M), Pipili, Orissa. Data collected on 18.4.2000.

Hindu Pantheon religious Preacher, Poet, Philosophers, National Heroes etc. are also prepared. They also manufacture a large varieties of toys consisting of human figures, animals, birds, reptiles, fruits and many other articles which catch their imagination for creation of art.

(d) Wood Work: Orissa, which has extensive forests with a variety of wood available in them has a rich tradition of wood carving. The woodcarving developed in the state under a duel influence; the influence of Bengal and that of South India. This can be seen in temple carvings and in the carvings of rathas for religious processions. The Jagannath figure, the main deity of Puri temple is periodically reproduced is also made from wood. A number of wooden masks, which are used in the traditional Sāhi Jātrā, are also prepared from wood. Besides these a number of wood curved utility goods such as furniture items, dask, table, boxes etc. are the important products of wood.

(e) Jewellery: Orissa is famous for jewellery work. Silver as well as gold ornaments are equally patronized by the people. The dominant technique employed is that of granulation and filigree. The traditional filigree work is robust in character and is quite distinct. Very few head ornaments are worn by Oriya women. Otherwise in other parts of the body like on arm, neck, nose, ear and so on, ornaments with various designs are worn by them.

\[92\text{Ibid.}\] 
\[93\text{Ibid.}\]
The finest designs however are those for nose. A variety of patterns are prepared to be worn on the side of the nose. One of the designs known as *maurpankhi*, is shaped like open feathers of peacock. The jewelery worn by women even today is normally heavy. In Sambalpur area brass ornaments is very common. The delicately worked bangles in different patterns are daily polished and appear to be made of gold.94

(f) Ivory, Bone and Horn curring: In the past the elephants were found in abundance in the forests of Orissa. So, it can be assumed that the place was once the centre of ivory works.95 The old carved ivory posts carrying the stylized form of the *Youli* have been found in old palaces and temples.96 Lot of luxurious articles was made from ivory for the rich family.

The state is also famous for horn curving. Lot of articles for common use is prepared from the bone and horns of the animal like *Mithuna*. Some of the articles are comb, buttons, hairpins and so on.

II) Art: Folk art differs from primitive art in its outlook and character. Primitive art is an early art simple and crude. Folk art is said to be a later development. It comes into being after a culture begins to sophisticate, taking shape in various styles and techniques. Folk art is a higher form of culture in comparison to primitive art.97

94 Ibid. P. 60.
96 Dhamija, J. *op-cit.*, P. 68.
97 Das, K.B & Mahapatra, L.K. *op-cit.*, P. 117.
Folk art is basically produced for the use of artist's own. It is not for commercial purpose. It has its own individuality and character and it exists by its inheritance. The folk art of Orissa is most fascinating; few of them are being discussed below.

The village women decorate the walls and floor with various paintings and drawings particularly on Thursday in the month of Margashira. The material used for the purpose is rice paste. The process is known as Chitā. The floor is painted with the feet of the Goddess Lakshmi and the walls are decorated with paddy plants, birds and beasts, lotus creepers and so on.

Tattooing is another folk art in Orissa. Almost all the tribals and hillmen and women tattoo their bodies for decorative purpose. The villagers consider tattooing a mark of beauty and ritualistic act. Some of their marks bear symbolic significance. A woman of the scheduled caste well versed in music and art tattoos lot of figures on arms, on the chin, on the breast, forehead, on fingers and so on in the body of the villages.

Mask making is another folk art of Orissa. The mask required for different art performances. Besides such masks, the full sized masks of various God and Goddesses are coloured and beautifully painted.

Drawing on canvas is still a practice in Orissa. Orissa's Patachitras are famous in India and outside. Bowers of pith flowers
with figures of charming women are made on the occasion of Jhulana (swinging festival of Radha and Krishna) on the full moon day of Shrāvana. Brassfishes, horn toys, filigree ornaments, a painted Faruā (a temple like wooden pot in which vermilion is kept) and so on of Orissa still draw the attention. 99

For the folk art, materials used are locally available and not imported from outside. This art is closely linked with soil. It is anonymous and its origin cannot be traced to any particular period of time.

III) Architecture : The arrangement of an average homestead of Orissa does not differ much from one region to another. The homestead of the rural area is generally separated from the village path by making entire foundation of the houses much higher than the path. It is probably done as a device for protecting the houses from flood. The houses are built around the Anganā (courtyard) and each house is connected to one another. There is only one entrance in to whole homestead compound. This special plan is made for protection against theft. Further there is no separate wall between the two homesteads, but the wall of a house separate the two homesteads. It shows the good relationship maintained with the neighbours.

The houses are thatched with two roofs sloping from a straight ridge. The materials used for constructing a house are, Chanā (straw), Bāusa (bamboo), Kātha (wood), Bāusa rachi (to tie) etc. The

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frame of the roof made of bamboo of different sizes. To fix the Chanā in the frame of roof Batā (long split bamboo pieces) are exclusively used. To tie the Batā with Chanā or Khunta (post), Bāusa rachi prepared from soft bamboo) are used exclusively. The Khunta are generally of wood or bamboo. The walls are made with read and are plastered with clay and cow dung very thickly. Doors and windows are made with woods and are fixed to Chaukōtha (wooden frame)

Generally an Oriya homestead contains many houses used for different purposes. Each house has its own name and serve one particular purpose, viz, Bara ghara (Bed room), Amāra (granary), Baithak ghara (drawing room), Gohāla (cow shed), Rosoi ghara (kitchen), Dhinki kuta ghara (peddle for husking) and finally Choūrā ghara (worshipping place).100

In the heart of every village there is a common house for villagers, which is called Bhōgavata Tungi or Bhōgavata ghara. These houses are also made with the materials locally available like that of a house. Inside the Bhōgavata Tungi there is a well decorated wooden Simhāsana, where no idols but religious book Bhōgavata is kept. The villagers every evening come to the Tungi to discuss about the religious discourses. In many cases, this Tungi serves as public hall, because any problems related to the village are discussed and solved by the villages.

100 Informant : Umesh Kaur, Boko College (45, M), Data collected on 2-7-2001.
IV) Cooking: The Oriya people generally take food four times a day. The food taken in the morning and at sunset are of refreshment nature while at noon and in the evening the principal meals are taken. Among all sections of people chaula (rice), as it called in Oriya is the staple food in Orissa. For the cooking purpose two varieties of chaula (rice) are used. They are usunā chaula (rice made from paddy boiled and dried in the sun before husking) and aruā chaula (rice made from paddy simply dried before husking). People, both of rural and urban area mostly prefers usnā chaula. Aruā chaula is considered pure and is selected for religious functions and festive days.

With their main meals at noon and in the evening the Oriya people take various curries, such as Dōl, Dōlmā (it is a dōl vegetables with spices powder), Tarkāri (curries prepared with green vegetables), Bhajā (vegetables fried in mustard oil), Khattā (sour), Sōga (fried leaves) etc.

The people, who are engaged in hard physical labour, take staple food thrice a day. In the morning they take pakhāla (cooked rice soaked in water overnight and keep for future). Even at sunset also some people take pakhāla as tiffin. It is a special item for Oriya people. People living in urban areas also cannot avoid it. The people who avoid the morning item called pakhāla take light food or Tiffin early in the morning such as chudā (flattened rice). Mudi
(puffed rice), Bhujia etc. Chuda, mixed with milk, coconut, sugar and spices is called Chudagosa is a very nutritious item for everyone.

Oriya people by and large are non-vegetarians. They take meat of different animal such as castrated goat, ship, deers of all spices, cock, hen, duck etc. The lower class people also take pork. People of all caste take fish. Innumerable rivers, tanks, ponds like Chilka and the large sea-coast of the state provide an ample opportunity of fishing to the people. There are a large number of families who maintain their livelihood solely by adopting the profession of fishing. Eggs of duck and hen are also popular items for them.  

On some special occasions, instead of rice people take Khechedi. It is prepared out of rice, cooked with pulses, vegetables and ghee. On some festive days Khiri is also taken. It is prepared out of fine rice cooked with milk, spices, sugar etc.

Almost all the people of Orissa are veteran betel-nut chewers, they call it pāna. Man, women, even children are found chewing pāna. There are many people who would rather do without food than without pāna. It is taken along with its edible combinations like, guā (betel-nut), pāna (betel-leaf), chuna (lime), khaira, and tobacco. The betel leaves are grown abundantly in the coastal regions of the state.

101 Sahu, B : *op-cit.*, P. 14.
V) Costume: Throughout the region men have almost the same kind of dress. They wear white cotton dhoti with one end taken behind between the legs and tucked below the back, while the other end tucked in front. The village people when they are at home and engaged in household job, the dhoti is up to the knee. During summer season the upper part of the body remain bare. But while going out they put on banian and a long shirt called kurtā. The rural people remain barefooted at home, but use sandal when going out on business. The urban people put on sandals and shoes both during summer and winter season. During winter season the people of rural and urban area use wrapper, sweater, muffler etc.

The Muslim people use Lungi at home and trouser and Kurtā while going out. But now a day this dress is seen specially on festive days. Otherwise like the common Hindu people they too widely use pant-shirt. From costume one cannot differentiate the Hindus from Muslim.

The common dress for woman is Sāree, which are about 15 feet long and four feet broad. It is fastened round the waist against the petticoat and then brought over the shoulder to cover the rest of the body. Along with the Sāree petticoat and blouse are compulsory. For the rural married women using of veil is compulsory.

The girls above the age of five or six wear frock at home and also outside. The grown up girls use salwār kāmiz, sāree, and maxi at home. When they go out they wear salwār kāmiz with urna
and sāree. During winter season woolen cloths like sweater, blouse, and shawls are also used.

Ornaments: The ornament worn by Oriya people do not differ much from the people of other parts of the country. But still they are really distinctive. Both men and women use ornaments of various designs and of various metals. The people are as fond of ornaments as the people of anywhere else. It enhances the beauty of the wearer. Especially the women are much conscious of their ornaments. Since the gold ornaments are rather costly, so, it is mainly confined within the rich section of the society.

The rich people use ornaments profusely at the time of marriage. Both the bride and bridegroom wear a variety of ornaments in order to enhance their physical beauty.\textsuperscript{102} People wear number of ornaments in different parts of their bodies. Some of them are discussed below.

(a) For head – *Kīā-patri, Jharā Kānthi, Chandra-jhumpi, Sebāti-phool* and so on.\textsuperscript{103}

(b) For ear – *Jhumpā, Karna phulā, Kundala, Guna* and so forth.

(c) For nose – *Dāndi, Nāka chanā, Nothā, Bhesiri* etc.

(d) For neck – *Ratnahara, Chapasari, Neelamani-hara, Mukta-hara, Kenthi-mālā* etc.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Sahoo, K. C. : *op-cit.*, P. 92.
\textsuperscript{103} Das, S. N. : *op-cit.*, Vol. II. P. 766.
(e) For wrist - Bālō, Khōru, Chudi, Bahuti, Sinkuli etc. Different kinds of Mudis (finger rings) adorned with jewels, pearls and other precious stones. Ivory rings are also used.

(f) Leg - Jhunia, Paunji, Nupura etc.

Male-folk also wear ornaments in their neck and finger.

Cosmetics and Toilets: Oriya people also believe that use of perfume enhances one's beauty. For perfumeries they use chandan mixed with karpur (camphor). Use of turmeric is also done widely by both man and woman folk. Normally both man and woman use mustard or coconut oil on the body before bath. The most important dressing of non-widow female folk is vermilion and collyrium. Particularly married woman regards it auspicious to put vermilion mark and to anoint the parting of the hair on forehead. Ladies to enhance the beauty of their eyes commonly use collyrium. Red liquid called Alatō is used on their feet to make them red and attractive. By chewing betel leaf women redded their lips.

4) Performing art form: Song, dance and drama constitute the common feature of the socio-cultural life of the people of Orissa. In the field of this performing art form the state is distinctly different from either Southern or Northern varieties. The Hindus and Muslims perform different varieties of song dance and drama during different occasions.

(l) Song: The folk song is the spontaneous overflow of the joy of life of the folk. The traditional music born of the village civilization is now known as folk song. A folk song is inherited and perpetuated by oral tradition from one generation to another. In course of transmission the name of the original creator is lost in oblivion. The singer knows nothing about the poet or how the song changes in its course through history or how it branches out into different tunes and melodies. He simply listens to it from his forefathers and learns to love it and sings it usually for his own entertainment. There are many types of folk songs. Some of them are discussed below.

(a) Moisāl Gīta: The man who looks after the buffalo is called moisāl or beherā they are to spend very hard time while looking after buffalos. During rainy season they sleep on scanty bed on damp ground surrounded by buffaloes. Biting of wild mosquitoes, cold wind heavy showers do not allow them to enjoy sound sleep and rest. These victims of Nature’s wrath spend their sleepless nights playing on their pet musical instrument called dhudukā and go on singing there lip compositions. These songs refer to their hard life under the palm leaf umbrella, their dry days and monotonous movements with the herd with no rays of hope or sign of happiness. The following song clearly refers to the pathetic condition of moisāl.

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As the beherā spends his time in the distant field with his herd, so he is deprived from the conjugal life.

(b) Marriage Songs: In Orissa during marriage ceremony no colorful or hilarious songs are sung. When the bride is to take leave of her parents and elders and companion, the sorrowful verses are recited by the bride and sometimes by others of whom she takes leave. These verses, recited while weeping are known as Kāndana-gīta (song of tears). An example is cited below.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mathura desharu asilā tāki mo bōpā} & / \\
\text{sāji āsichanti ratna pālikī mo bōpā} & // \\
\text{ratna pālikire kaṃsa asura mo bōpā} & / \\
\text{āsi jurakalā mathura pura mo bōpā}. & 109//
\end{align*}
\]

i.e., Here the bridegroom is compared with cruel Kaṃsa, who comes to the house of bride in a decorated palanquin to take away the bride.

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109 Ibid., P. 34.
(c) Cartman's song: The life of the Cartman though not so pathetic like that of beherā, yet they are to wander in distance places with loaded cart for a couple of days at a stretch. In his loneliness he recalls his village, sweet home and sing to content his heart. The following song will show the mental condition of the Cartman.

\begin{verbatim}
duraku sundarata parbata mōlā /  
gā — ku sundarata nariyā, guā tāla //  
bandhu ku sundarata disaya dura bōta /  
sindu ku sundarata lahara bhangā ghāta //  
sabōku sundarata pradhāna sāna bhāl /  
gathaku sundarata duhaliyā gōl //  
gharaku sundara jebe lo gharani  
na jiba bōpā ghara lo.\footnote{Ibid., P. 14}
\end{verbatim}

i.e., The distant mountain and friend are always beautiful. The coconut trees, palm tree, arecanut tree of the village are attractive. Above all the younger brother is most affectionate. The milk giver cow too is beautiful. And finally the wife who does not pay frequent visit to her father’s home is most beautiful.

(d) Boatman's Song: The boatmen are to lead a very hard life. They struggle for their day-to-day living. To smite against the wave is not an easy job. But they carry it on with nobility of heart. To ease their hard work and to give pleasure to their passengers, they sing merry songs. While rowing when they see young girl busy with their
works the boatmen sing songs to draw their attention. A specimen of it is given below.

\textit{ki gita gāilu nā sānge basi /}
\textit{kāna parithiba sohala bayasi chāula dhoi āsi ho //}

i.e., What song you have sung o boatmen the young girls coming to the bank would be drowned to your song.

(e) Lullaby song : The children get their primary education at their home. In this case specially the mother plays vital role. The mother sings spontaneously when she fondles her child, puts him to sleep or pours down her hearty blessings on him. The educations are given to child through songs, which are unforgettable and everlasting. The lullaby songs are incoherent and meaningless but enjoyable. That is why the child responds to these songs of joy and affection.

(i) At the time of sleeping –
\textit{dho re bāyā dho}
\textit{jeu kiyāri re gahala māndiā /}
\textit{sei kiyāri re so. //}\textit{\footnote{Ibid. 3 P. 47.}}

(ii) At the time of swing –
\textit{jhulu hāti jhulu hāti}
\textit{jhulile khāibu khandachāti /}
\textit{hāti jhulre bā – pāni khāi phulare. //}\textit{\footnote{\textit{Ibid. 3 P. 47.}}}
(II) Dance: Dance is the most popular form of art. There is a glorious tradition of dance in Orissa. They perform number of folk dance on different occasions. Some of them are discussed below.

(a) Danda Nāta: The word Danda means a pole, nāta means dance. The dance is mixture of both religious and secular values and substances. It aims at arousing religious fervour as well as entertaining aesthetic pleasure to the spectators. There is no caste bar in Danda nāta; irrespective of caste, creed, colour and economic status can participate in this dance. In a Danda party there are thirteen members, they are called Bhoktas, the leader is called Pāḷā Bhoktā. The leader is to lead an ascetic life for twenty-one days before show, avoiding all contact with woman or anything worldly.

The dance is held in four phases. The first phase starts with prayer in the morning by the Bhoktas. The second phase takes place at noon called Dhuli Danda. In this phase the Bhoktas torture themselves. The third phase is called Jala Danda or playing with water. The last stage is called Agni danda or playing with fire which takes place at midnight. After the phases are over, the participants take bath and pray to God for fulfilling the wishes of the devotees.

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112 Ibid., P. 47.
114 Sahu, B.: op-cit., P. 53.
115 Ibid., P. 67.
116 Sahu, L.N. Danda Nāta, PP. 5-6.
(b) **Dāskāthia** : The word *Dāskāthia* is derived from the word *Dāsa* which means devotee and *kāthi* means wooden pieces.\(^{117}\) The party consists of only two persons. The main singer is called *Gāyaka* while the other person is called *pāliā* who helps the *Gāyak* in all respects. The two persons stage a whole drama like *Chandrābali*, *Sitāharan*, and *Kāṃsa-badha* etc. They change their tones hour after hour. To break the monotony, they introduce humorous stories also.\(^{118}\)

(c) **Ghumrā Dance** : The dance is named after a kind of earthen drum of a pitcher size called *Ghumrā*. It produces deep musical sound when played on it.\(^{119}\) Each party of *Ghumrā* dance consists of 15 to 21 male members. They dress themselves in coloured clothes and jackets. The turbans they use bear peacock feathers for decoration. For musical sound, they tie *ghunguras* on their feet.\(^{120}\) The songs are mainly from *Puaranas*. To release the spectators from monotony, humorous songs are also included.

(d) **Chāṭṭighoda Nāta** : The dance is originated from the fishermen communities of Orissa. It is held in the month of *Chaitrā* and continues to the beginning of *Baisāk*. The dance is held to worship Goddess *Bāsuli*. The representation of Goddess *Bāsuli* is a well decorated ‘horse head’ made of wood. A trunk built of bamboo

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\(^{118}\) Dash, K. B. : *op-cit.*, P. 130.


\(^{120}\) Sahu, B. : *op-cit.*, P. 55.
pieces, is coloured brown and is decorated with red flower attached to the head.\textsuperscript{121} A man enters through the hole kept for the purpose behind its neck. The horse moves forward and backward along with the man, and goes on dancing to the music of the drum, sing songs composed by the village poets and explain the meaning to the audiences.\textsuperscript{122}

(e) \textit{Gotipo} dance: A \textit{Gotipo} dance party is formed of a group of handsome boys put on saris and ornaments and paint their faces like girls. They dance and sing in accompaniment of some musical instruments like \textit{dubi}, \textit{tablā}, violin, harmonium etc. Now a day the dance is introduced by village \textit{Jātrās}. The \textit{Jātrā} starts with the dance.\textsuperscript{123}

(III) Drama: In folk drama there is more dance and less acting, more song and less dialogue. Here almost every one dances, the joker, the queen, her attendants, the drummer, the singer. But the dance has little peculiarity, and is monotonous. Some folk dramas are discussed below.

(a) The puppet play: This is one of the most ancient forms of folk art. The skillful movement of the inanimate puppets in the hands of the artists holds the audience’s attention.\textsuperscript{124} To stage a puppet play four persons are required, namely: \textit{Sutradhara}, two singers and the drummer.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.}, P. 56.
\textsuperscript{122} Dash, K. B.: \textit{op-cit.}, PP. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}, P. 131.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, P. 131.
As there is no special play befitting the puppet stage, so the puppet artists make use of the opera plays. Besides popular songs and charming dialogues befitting the time and the place are added. Similarly old and antiquated portions are also included.\textsuperscript{125}

At the beginning of the show the drummer sits in front of the stage and beats it to draw the attention of the people. After this the performance begins. The lady recites the dialogue of the Queen, the Messenger or the attendant. The male dialoguer recites for the King, Minister, Police or the Messenger. Each of them sings about twenty five to thirty songs a night. Puppet play is full of songs.

(b) \textit{Pālā} : \textit{Pālā} is an important cultural performance responsible for the popularization of ancient Oriya literature. Each party consists of five to six persons. \textit{Gāyak} or the chief singer is also the leader of the group. The drummer plays on \textit{Murdaiṅga} while other members dance, play on the cymbals and help the leader to sing and explain the meaning of the song to the audience. The \textit{Gāyak}'s chief helper is called \textit{Sirapaliṅa} who assists him in singing and reminding of lines forgotten.\textsuperscript{126} The episode from \textit{Rāmāyana}, \textit{Mahābhārata}, folk tales or Oriya literature, \textit{Purāṇa}s etc. are taken as themes for the show.

(c) \textit{Yātrā} : \textit{Yātrā} is another popular form of folk art. It is held in a broad field. It still belongs to the middle age and deals with Gods,
Goddesses, Sages, Kings and Courtiers and has no reference to real life and the problem of life.\(^{127}\)

Before the beginning of the real drama, different kinds of musical instruments are played by the experts of the party. The opera starts with dancing and singing by a group of young boys in female dress.

(d) *Karma*: *Karma* is an autumn festival which starts from the eleventh day of the month of *Bhādṛab*, and continues for some days in the month of *Āświn*. The *karma* is the name of a tree, which represents the God of Fate. Its trunk is worshipped by the devotees.\(^{128}\)

The *Karma* dancers and singers have their professional party. The songs are like those of *Pāṭuā* and *Dandanāta*. They deal with *Purānic* events or events from folk tale. The festival is celebrated in most of the villages of Sambalpur and Phulabani districts.

(e) *Mughal Tāmāsā*: *Mughal Tāmāsā* is an opera form prevalent in Bhadrak of Balasore district. It developed during the Mughal period in Orissa. It was patronized by the Nawab and performed near the Hindu temples. The songs of the *Tāmāsā* are composed in both Persian and Oriya language. The dialogue is quite amusing. It was performed not only to get rid of the monotony of life but also for


enjoyment and to maintain good relationship between the Hindus and Muslims.\textsuperscript{129}

c. Socio-Cultural Realition between Assam and Orissa.

There is a close socio-cultural affinity between Assam and Orissa. Though, geographically the two states are set quite apart, yet their relationship with one another will compel one to assume that in the remote past the people of two regions lived together. Starting from social condition to cultural norms, one is indispensable from other yet one has its own distinctiveness.

Irrespective of sex engage in agricultural work. But unfortunately, a section of landlords, dominate the entire agricultural activities. Majority of the peasants either have very little or no agricultural land of their own. These unfortunate people are forced to work under the landlords in the system of \textit{ādhi} or \textit{Bhāga}. So these wretch people are to lead a life of poverty forever. Lot of common food crops viz Rice, Wheat, Mustard seeds, various Pulses, Sugarcane, Jute, different kinds of seasonal vegetables are the main products of agriculture. Besides agriculture, some people are also engaged in other occupations like weaving, fishing, and other crafts. But due to various factors people engaged in these occupations cannot make themselves economically self-sufficient.

\textsuperscript{129} Sahu, B. \textit{: op-cit.}, PP. 57-58.
The education in the past was confined with Brahmin and members of Royal families. Of course common people were also not wholly illiterate. The Guru Gīhas were the main centre of learning. Vedas, system of philosophy and various other branches of learning were taught in those institutions. It was only Brahmin who imparted education to the students. The Muslim students had separate institutions for leaning. The lower section was taught in Masktabs while the upper section was in Madrashas. But with the coming of East-India Company and Missionaries the traditional subjects were badly shattered. But blessing in disguise, the Assamese and Oriya people came in contact with modern education through them.

The language of Assam and Orissa are derived from the Magadhi Prakrit of Eastern India. Both these language are very closely related to each other. Several hundred years ago they were just like close dialects of the same speech. In the case of literature, similarities are noticed. Lot of songs belong to oral literature seem to have been related to one another. For example, the subject matter of Maishāl song, Naoriyā song, cart man’s songs, etc describe the hard life leaded by these people. Songs of Bihu, Huchari, and Raja Doli are romantic and ritualistic. The written literature of Assam and Orissa has certain common features with other literatures of India in modern Indo-Aryan languages. As the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, Bhāgavata – Purāṇa are regarded as greatest and earliest classics of Oriya, so also the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, Kirtan Goshā & Namghosā can be called the greatest classics of Assam. These are still very much popular among all sections of the people of respective state. The written literature came to its form by 13th century in Assam and Orissa.
From the point of view of Religion and Belief it is noticed that like the people of any other region of the country, the Assamese and Oriya people also believe in re-birth. Heaven and Hell are the two imaginary places. The disembodied soul many go to heaven or hell in accordance with one's *Karmaphala*. The Hindu people believe in worshipping of many Gods and goddess. Among them Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar or Siva are more popular. The common people also believe in witches, sorcerers. Assames and Oriya people commonly share offering of sacrifices for fulfillment of desires.

The people of both the states are equally fond of games and recreations, which are the media of pleasure and entertainment. The pastimes of the village folk include games sports, hunting of animals, fishing and so on. The games and sports of teenagers are more or less similar in Assam and Orissa. The division of players in two groups, method of playing are also same.

Since remote past the folk medicine has been playing a significant role among the people of Assam and Orissa. The medicinal man is locally known as *Ojā, Bej, Kabirāj, Guniō* and so on. They provide medicine to the effected person after proper diagnosis. The medicines are prepared from different types of herbs, fruits, bark of trees, and so on. For almost every disease, they have different medicines. *Mantra* (chanting of spell) plays a vital role in rural societies. People believe that diseases are nothing but demonic sent by evil force in a person or animal. So it is tried to cure by counter spell. Use of amulet is a common scene. *Banmārō* is a common term among the people of both the societies.
Both Assam and Orissa have been famous for their craftsmanships. They could glorify for their works on textile, woodwork, ivory, pottery, jewellery and so on. In Assam, the weaving is done particularly by all sections of people. But in Orissa, there are few special classes who do the weaving. Almost all types of clothes are fabricated by Assamese and Oriya weavers. They are not only self-dependent in this field but also export to other parts of the country. Besides this, the artistic skill is shown in other crafts also. Different instruments, utensils, artistic works are made by the carpenters, pottey, jewelers, artisans etc.

From art and architectural point of view, Assam does not differ much from Orissa. The houses are made with two roofs sloping from a straight ridge. The materials used are also same and are locally available. In an average homestead of the two regions, numbers of houses are being used and each house has its own name. Besides this as in Assam there is a local *Namghar* in every village, so also, in Orissa, there is *Bhāgavata Tungi* in the heart of every village. The functions of these two religious institutions are also more or less same.

In case of the art, the artistic work is noticed in the construction of different masks used for *Bhāona* and *Sāhi Jātrā* dance of Orissa in the two states respectively. Varieties of the toys of clay are available in both the states. Apart from these, the *Simhāsana* used in the local *Namghar* and *Bhāgavata Tungi* are also worth mentioning from artistic point of view.

The food habit of Assamese and Oriya people is almost same. Rice is the staple food for them. In rural areas, the rice is taken four times
a day. In the morning they take *Paitā bhat* or *Pakhāla*. *Ukhowā/usuna* and *aruā* are equally popular among the people. Of course in Orissa, whether rural or urban people prefer parboiled than unboiled. In Assam only rural people prefer parboiled rice. With main meals, *dāli, tarkāri, bhājī/ bhajā, pitikā/sokorā, tengā/khatta, sāk/sāga* are common curries shared by the people of two regions. Fish, egg, meat of different animals, birds are popular items for almost every sections of people. Nearly all the people of Assam and Orissa are veteran betel nut chewers.

So, far the dresses of Assamese and Oriya people are concerned, there is much affinity between them. The male people use *Dhoti*, whether at home or for going out. The upper part of the body, especially during summer season, remains bare or uses a *banian*. While going out they put on *piran/kurtā*. During winter season wrapper, sweater, muffler are used. The Assamese women use *mekhelā* and *chādar*, whether at home or when to go out, while in Orissa they use *sāri*. But now a day’s *sāri* has become common women dress for Assamese women also. Along with *sāri* or *mekhelā, chādar*, the blouse, petticoats are compulsory. The marriageable girls wear *sāri, mekhelā chādar*, and now a day’s salwar kamiz is also used. During winter season, womenfolk use woolen cloth like sweater, blouse, shawls etc. the Assamese and Oriya women are very much fond of ornaments. They use it on head, neck, ear, nose, wrist finger and so on. The name of these ornaments may very from place to place, but from the point of view of their designs, they are almost same in both the regions.

Assam and Orissa are very much rich in the field of folk songs. It appears as if there is song for every one of the societies. There is song to
depict the pathetic life of moishāl who is busy with the herds of buffalo and does not have time for union with his wife. There are also songs to show the pathetic departure of the bride to the bridegroom’s house. She is worried of her new life amid the new people in a strange situation. There are lots of songs for childrens. The children do not understand the composition or meaning of the songs, but they love the style of presentation. The songs transport children’s mind into the land of magical dream and fancy. The songs are not only to make him sleep but also to educate him.

The folk dance of Assam and Orissa is very vast. It is most popular form of art. On different occasions throughout the year different folk dances are performed by the people to two religions. Though the folk songs of two states do not resemble much, but they are mostly performed for the welfare of the men, animals, growth of paddy and so on. They are also performed to propitiate gods and goddess for human interest. The songs that are associated with these dances are mostly taken from religious scriptures like Rāmāyana, Purāṇa, Nāṃghosā and so on.

The folk drama is another important field of performing art form. Both the regions are proud of their rich tradition of folk theatre or quasi-dramatic institution. The Ojā pāli of Assam has close affinity with pāla of Orrisa. The way of presentation of these two institutions are almost same. The episodes taken for Ojā pāli and Pāla are taken from Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata and Purāṇa. The Putulā nāc (puppet play) is also a very ancient form of folk art. Though there is no language and life force in the puppet, yet there is a heart effigy sight. The role of Sutradhara is very significant. Since there is no special play befitting the puppet play, so the
themes are taken from epics and other religious books. The यात्रा is another popular form of folk art. It is similar to that of Gōn party or theatre or यात्रा party of Assam. In both the cases before the beginning of the real drama, different kinds of musical instruments are played by the experts of the party. The opera starts with dancing and singing by a group of young boys and girls’ dancer called Nrtayanātikā. The themes of the plays are taken from epics, Purāṇa and social novels.