Chapter I

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Statement of the Problem

India is a mosaic of traditions and cultural patterns. Different religions of India, as a part of this mosaic, have long provided fertile ground for traditional media. Dissemination of information, ideas, values and beliefs have been practiced in the villages of India from the ancient times through traditional media suitable to socio-cultural environment. These media have employed various motifs and colour schemes as well as variety of local lore and music. The traditional media still play an important and vital role in the socio-cultural processes of the Indian society.

In the context of a country, so vast and varied like India, modern mass media alone do not constitute the sum total of communication channels. We have radio, television, newspaper, internet, etc. but the millions of people in rural India have no regular access to such mass media due to poverty. Even if they have the access to the mass media it fails to communicate the message to them due to illiteracy and ignorance. With more than 40% of the population living below the poverty line, and illiterate, the majority of the people of India do not have a regular access to the modern mass media. The only meaningful access for such a vast majority of population is traditional folk media, which have been informing, educating and entertaining them for centuries.
and have their roots in wider socio-cultural processes. Traditional media, since time immemorial have been serving the society as indigenous channels of interpersonal, intergroup and intervillage communication. Folk media are close to the hearts and minds of the people so their appeal is at a personal intimate level. (Kumar 1995). They are the heritage of a colorful past, a rich culture and an equally rich literature. Therefore, the study proposes to examine the effectiveness of traditional as well as modern media of communication both in the rural and the urban settings. The literature on the effectiveness of mass media in context of industrialized as well as in connection with developing societies may now be reviewed.

**Review of Literature**

The issues about effects and effectiveness of mass communication have attracted the attention of the social scientists from the very beginning. Communication is a fundamental pre-requisite of all living beings. This urge for communication is primeval and in contemporary civilisation, it is a necessity for survival. The role of the mass media in development activity was very clearly implied in the dominant paradigm of development. But most of the models of development communication were developed in the context of the western countries. The First World War can be considered to be a watershed in mass communication theory and research. Harold Lasswell (1927) came up with an innovative conceptualization of mass media effects. His model of communication was strongly influenced by Freudian theory and was in direct contradiction to liberation philosophy (Davis & Baran; 1981). Denis Macquail (1969) identified three main stages in the history of mass communication research. The initial phase started from the turn of
20th Century to the outbreak of the second world war. During this phase, mass media were attributed with considerable power to shape opinion and beliefs.

In the second phase, from 1940s to early 1960s, mass media were believed to be largely important to initiate opinion and attitude change, although they could relay certain forms of information and reinforce existing beliefs. And in the current stage, the question of media effects is one where new thinking and new evidences are accumulating regarding the influences of mass communication. The second stage, extending from about 1940 to the early 1960s, is strongly shaped by growth of mass communication research in the United States and the application of empirical method to specific questions about the effects and effectiveness of mass communication. The classical studies of how voters make up the mind were conducted by Lazarsfield (1944) in 1940 US Presidential elections. These investigations indicate that only limited change has occurred during the campaign. This works also provide an incomplete picture of the total effects of mass communication because they concentrated only on effects which occur during the campaign itself. (Mc Quail 1969). The earliest studies of Presidential elections in 1940 and 1948 conducted by Lazarsfield (1944) and Berelson (1954) respectively and the programme of research on the use of films for training of American service men undertaken by Carl Hovland (1949) concluded that the exposures to mass media primarily press, radio, film or television were unlikely to be major contributors to direct change of individual opinions attitudes or behaviour or to be a direct cause of crime, aggression or other dis-
approved social phenomenon.

Doob (1961) says that in the examination of the role of mass media in the transition of traditional societies or developing nations to a modern form, the contributions of media can best be seen. Both lerner (1958) and Schram (1964) have espoused the view that mass media prepare, instigate and undergird the development of a modern society. According to Waples, Berelson and Bradshaw (1940), and Davison (1956), the mass media publicity, besides having an effect on the audience, can foster a sense of prestige and importance among the members of a group. Media are helpful in bringing about attitudinal changes. While studying the effectiveness of mass media in stimulating people's interests in various activities, Himmelweit (1962) reported that mass media also stimulated a passive interest in some activity in it rather than direct the interest related to it. Crile (1953) cited similar findings, particularly with respect to the importance of the existence of prior interest and related skills, as the determinants of behavioural effects of media demonstrations.

There is indeed overwhelming evidence that the measured net changes in attitudes or opinion as a result of persuasive material presented on radio, film, television or the press are likely to be small. Klapper (1960) suggested that people exposed themselves to messages selectively. There was a tendency for individuals to expose themselves relatively more to those items of communication that were consonant with their beliefs, ideas, values, etc. Regardless of exposure to communication, an individual's perception of a certain event, issue, person, or place could be influenced by his/her latent
beliefs, attitudes, wants, need or other factors. Thus, two individuals exposed to the same message could go away with diametrically different perceptions about it. Research showed that even recall of information was influenced by factors such as an individual’s needs, wants, moods, perceptions and so on. However, Klapper (1960:8) argued that “Mass Communication ordinarily do not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather function among and through a nexus of mediating influences.” Although, research had not shown the different media to be without effects, but it had established the primacy of other social facts and showed the power of the media to be located within the existing structure of social relationships and systems of culture and belief. The research evidence of Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) led to the realisation of the facts that social structure and social institutions intervene powerfully in the process of media effects. But a number of social scientists expressed their doubt about it. Lang and Lang (1959); Key (1961), and Halloran (1964). They paid more attention to people in their social context, rather than at their attitudes and opinions. They took account of the uses and motives of the audience members as mediating and effect. They looked at the structure of belief and opinion and social behaviour rather than individual cases. They also took more notice of the content whose effects are being studied.

On the other hand, the propounders of the ‘theory of mass society’ have examined the question of media effects on culture and society by Mills (1956); Kornhauser (1960); and Shils (1957). In their view, mass media encourage and make viable a rootless, alienated form of social organisation in which we are increasingly within the control of powerful and distant institu-
tions. The marxist accounted the effects of mass media as a powerful ideological weapon for holding the mass of people in voluntary submission to capitalism (Marcuse, 1964; Miliband, 1969; Carey 1969). They argued that the mass media are both a force for integration and for dispersion and individualisation of society. It suggests that mass media do have important consequences for individuals for institutions, for society and culture.

The diffusion of innovations theory has important theoretical links with communication effects research. The emphasis was on communication effects: the ability of media messages and opinion leaders to create knowledge of new practices and ideas and persuade the target to adopt the exogenously introduced innovations. As recently as the turn of the present century, there was disagreement on the question of whether ideas were independently developed in different cultures, or whether an idea was invented in one culture and borrowed by or diffused into another. Evidence indicated that in most cultures there was a predominance of borrowed or diffused elements over those that developed from within a particular culture (Linton, 1936, Kroeber 1944). The diffusion of innovations research established the importance of communication in the modernization process at the local level. In the dominant paradigm, communication was visualized as the important link through which exogenous ideas entered the local communities. Daniel Lerner’s *The Passing of the Traditional Society* (1958) illustrates the major ideas under the mass media and modernization approach. In Lerner’s model, the mass media were both an index and agent of modernization. In Lerner’s model, there was a close reciprocal relationship between literacy and mass media exposure. The literate developed the media which in turn accelerated
the spread of literacy.

The research in the field to mass communication has gained momentum in developing countries in the decade of fifties and sixties. Y.B. Damle's article entitled 'Communication of Modern Ideas: Knowledge in Indian Villagers' appeared in the *Public Opinion Quarterly* (1956-57) can be regarded as the first major work in the field of the Sociology of Communication in India. In this research, Damle studied the diffusion of modern ideas and knowledge in seven villages near Pune, Maharashtra. The villages selected for this study differed not only in distance from Pune but also in relative amenability to communication and their degree of isolation. The study showed that it was not merely the distance from the city that facilitated or hindered communication of ideas and knowledge. It was equally affected by the social structure of the community which determined the qualitative and quantitative contents of communications. Information relevant to the needs and interests of the people is more widespread than awareness of less functional matters. Dube (1958) studied the importance of communication in community development programme in India. Wilbur Schramm (1964) emphasised on the role of communication in the process of social change by saying that the development of mass media is one of the requisites for and signs of a modernising society. But at the same time traditional media of social communication - the bazaar, the coffee house, the puppet show, the local meeting and others continue to be influential long after the newspapers and broadcasts are available. Schramm pointed out that interpersonal channels of communication play an important role in mediating the
effects of the mass media even in most advanced societies. In developing countries, the interpersonal channels (i.e. face to face communication) have to carry most of the job. “Communication is not something that has a life of its own, it is something people do. It is the fundamental process of society, the way that people relate to each other” (Schramm 1964: 11). Even in the case of modern industrialised societies, “with the ever increasing case of mechanical communication and physical travel and the increasingly effective organisation of specialisation and discipline, there tends to be paradoxically an increasing reliance upon direct word-of-mouth communication.” (Pye 1963:25).

Dube (1990) discussed at a length the role of traditional mass media in process of social change and development. He argued that, alongside of the inter-personal networks the traditional media occupy an important place in context of Indian Society. They consists of many folk forms of dance, drama, narrations and entertainment which have hitherto performed two important functions: they have been the principal instruments for the transmission of the cultural heritage and also major providers of entertainment. Except for certain classical forms, where maintenance of purity of style has been rigidly insisted upon, there is considerable variability and flexibility in the form and content of the traditional media. They permit scope for comment on the contemporary scene and for transmission of new ideas. In this they often succeed remarkably because of their grasp. Over the mass mind and the use of an idiom that is familiar to the common people. They can be turned into powerful instruments of mass education and of diffusion of development ideas. The Jatra in Bengal, Nautanki and Ras in
Uttar Pradesh, Burakatha in Andhra Pradesh and Harikatha in West India, for example, have all been put to entertainment uses. Experience suggests that if their entertainment function is not seriously impaired they can be used also to reinterpret tradition and to invest new cultural emphases into them. They can also inject developmental ideas in a understandable and acceptable form (Dube, 1990 : 259).

The first conscious effort towards the collection and analysis of traditional folkloristic material in India was made by the British administrators in order to deepen their understanding of the people whom they governed. But the collection was devoid of richness. Towards the end of 19th century, some authentic India folklore material was published by giants like George Grierson in the journals of countries other than United Kingdom, such as Zietschrift der Deuteschen Morgenlandi Sehen Gessellschaft (Grierson 1889). James Tod was among the first writers to make ample use of Indian folkloristic materials in the study of Indian Society, both past and present, in his monumental Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan. Similarly, the work of W. Crooke (1896) and of H. Risley is also highly appreciable. Perhaps the first Indian collection of traditional folk tales was published by Mary Frere (1881). A Cunningham (1871-72) also gives interesting folkloristic material collected during his archaeological explorations (Deva 1972: 198 - 200).

Sociologists and social anthropologists have shown interest in traditional folklore material since the beginning of modern sociology and social anthropology in India. This can easily be illustrated by the early writings of S.C. Roy, (1928) Verrier Elwin (1944), M.N. Srinivas (1942). The Social
Science journals such as, *Eastern Anthropologist* and *Man in India* have often included papers concerning traditional folklore (Indra Deva 1972: 199). With the onset of the Indian renaissance and national resurgence some people were attracted towards the study of traditional folk literature. Generally speaking this attraction was primarily aesthetic (Pye 1963).

Shyam Parmar (1975) analysed the role of traditional folk media in rural and urban audience situations and explained how they can be exploited as communication tools. He pointed out that traditional folk media are the tools of special nature. Their special nature is attributed to the fact that they have no grammar or literature, yet they are nurtured through oral and functional sources. Traditional folk media provide channels for expressing socio-ritual, moral and emotional needs of a ‘society of societies’ to which they especially belong. (Parmar 1975:15). Wang and Dissanayake (1984) in their study defined traditional folk media as communication system embedded in the culture which existed before the arrival of mass media, and still exists as a vital mode of communication in many parts of the world, presenting a certain degree of continuity, despite changes.

Ishwar Modi (1985) studied the inter-relation between leisure, mass media and social structure in an empirical situation of Rajasthan. He provided of comprehensive description of traditional forms, folk motifs and cultural roots of leisure and the new challenges from the electronic revolution of the mass media and its encroachment on leisure, culture and social structure. His work was based on an empirical study of a village Garhi Maamur in Alwar district of Rajasthan and the urban community in Jaipur of Rajasthan. His major finding was that there exists a clear con-comitance
between the social structure and the structure of leisure of a society and change in either of the two influences each other. Thus, Modi establishes that social structure influence the nature and form of leisure and the leisure itself helps in generating newer structure, social norms and culture.

Various international and national seminars on communication and traditional media held in the eighties supported the theory that there should be a happy marriage between modern and traditional media in developing countries. They endorsed the proposition that these media interact and enhance the impact of each other. The consensus was that the traditional media support the mass media not only as their extension arms but as heart throbbers. On the other hand, the traditional performing arts can increase the impact because of greater acceptability and credibility of messages directed through them and especially through live programmes.

K.B. Mathur (1994) in his study on communication for development and social change, viewed traditional folk media as culture and community based media. He observed that traditional folk media existed even before the advent of the modern mass media. It was through the utilisation of these media that some of the dynamic religious movements spread for the wide (Mathur 1994: 20).

In a society like India where about 70% of the population live in rural areas, the traditional media continue to provide the main source of entertainment and also of instruction and education in religious, social, economic and political sphere of life. “Traditional community media like folk song, folk dance, folk theatre etc. are the real organs of mass media in India. They are
participatory in nature and communicate much more effectively than that of electronic media at direct and personal level” (Kumar 1981: 17). What are largely called ‘mass media’ in the context of Indian society are in fact ‘class media’ as their reach extends little beyond the big cities and towns (Dube 1990). The folk media have a much wider audience; they are media close to the hearts and minds of the people.

It is now clear that traditional media play an important role not only in traditional society but also in a transitional society and modern society. What is important in this regard is the degree of integration between traditional forms of communication and modern media of mass communication. In modern society, the traditional communication system is well integrated with the modern mass media. But in case of a transitional communication system the two are structurally segmented and bifurcated (Pye 1963). Thus, in context of the proposed study we can examine not only the role played by the traditional media and modern mass media in socio-cultural life of the people but also the extent to which they are integrated/segmented with each other. As Indian society is basically a rural society, the traditional forms of the communication still have significance in the organization of socio-cultural life of the people both in the rural and the urban areas. The Barak Valley in North East is the remotest region of India characterized by particularistic socio-cultural life and it has not been so far explored from the viewpoint of media effectiveness in it. Therefore, the present study is designed to understand the effectiveness of traditional and modern mass media in socio-cultural life in the rural and the urban setting in Barak Valley.
Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To understand the role of traditional media in the socio-cultural life of the people in a village/rural setting of Barak Valley.

2. To understand the role of modern mass media in socio-cultural life of the people in a village/rural setting of Barak Valley.

3. To find out the degree of integration/segmentation of traditional and modern media in a rural setting of Barak Valley.

4. To understand the role of traditional media in socio-cultural life of people of Silchar Town.

5. To understand the role of modern mass media in socio-cultural life of people of Silchar Town.

6. To find out the degree of integration/segmentation of traditional and modern media in an urban setting i.e. Silchar Town.

Methodology

The study was located in the Barak Valley of Assam. As the study is aimed to examine the effectiveness of both the traditional and the modern media of mass communication, it focussed on a town in the Barak Valley, namely Silchar and a traditional typical village in the Valley, namely Kayasthagram located in Karimganj district. The rationale of selecting this village is that the present Karimganj district has been a part of Sylhet district of undivided East Bengal and therefore the chances of the existence of the traditional forms of media are more here in comparison to Cachar and Hailakandi districts.
Techniques of Data Collection

The base data has been collected by administering separate household schedule for the village and the town. The schedule for the village consisted of questions related to general information about the household, land ownership pattern, occupation, consumption pattern, education, health and sanitation, religious life participation in various social and cultural activities, patterns of traditional media used and exposure to modern mass media communication. The study followed a holistic approach and covering all the households (N=216) in the village. An attempt has been made to understand the communication system of the village by focusing on all kinds of communication in the village. In Silchar town the study was located in two localities, namely, Malugram and Rangirkhari area. From each locality a random sample of 100 households was drawn from the voter list of the area. The interview schedule for Silchar covered the questions related to general information about the household, land/property ownership pattern, occupation, consumption pattern, education, health and sanitation, religious life participation in various social and cultural activities, patterns of traditional media used and exposure to modern mass media communication. For collection of the data about the traditional media a survey of various cultural organisations like Puja samitis, Youth clubs etc. has been conducted in the village as well as in the town under study. For qualitative data, about 5 case studies has been conducted in Kayasthagram village and 10 case studies, 5 each from Malugram and Rangirkhari localities of Silchar town. The study covered both the individuals and institutions related to traditional forms of
communication in rural and urban units of study. Secondary data has been collected from the available books, journals and government records.

**Operational Definitions**

**Traditional Media**: The term ‘traditional media” refers to traditional forms of communication such as Bazar (hat), Dhamail, Uthan, Khel/Tamasha. Jadu Ka Khel (magic shows), Mazama, Madari shows, Charak Puja, Jatra/Nautanki (Dance Show), Putul Nach (Kathputli/Puppet Show), Dhap Jatra, Natak etc. Some of the traditional media identified in the field situation of the present study are as follows:

1. **Folk Dances**

The folk lores of Cachar, Karimganj and Sylhet are more or less the same with slight variations. Mukunda Das Bhattacharjee in his ‘Barak Upatyakar Lok Nritya’ (P-9) states that the folk dance & songs of the area is divided into three categories, they are: a) based on the occupation of the community, b) social group dance of the community and c) the professional dance.

**a) Based on occupation of the community**: In a society there are various occupation based communities. Though originally agriculturists, professionally they are various communities. The folk dance and songs they practice are not practised by all. And they perform these songs and dances in various social functions, festivals and gatherings. Some of such dances are Charak dance, Ojha dance, Rakhaler dance, Boat dance etc.

**b) The social group dance**: This dance has no limitations of caste, creed, economic status etc. People from all strata of the society perform this dance in groups. It plays a very important role in strategizing unity and peace. This
group dance is further sub-divided into three categories, they are: 1) Laukika, i.e., relating to various social ceremonies connected with birth, marriage, home coming, launching of a boat etc. Some of such dances are dhamail dance, baunach, etc. 2) Dharmiya or religious dance, this is performed in observances of certain religious ceremonies like Charak festival, Kali puja or dance to appease the evil spirits, and the third category is Vyabaharika, which the rural folk perform during their daily work like paddy thrassing, pounding of rice, winnowing etc.

c) Professional dance: The professional dance are the ones which the rural people performed for earning money or just to have fun. They are the dance of ojha, kathi dance, dance of the drummers etc.

But Dhamail is one of the most popular dance form among the Bengali of the Barak Valley. He salient features of Dhamail are as follows:

**Dhamail Dance**: Dhamail is a distinctive dance and music form of Bengali Hindu women, Sylheti in origin. The dhamail is danced and sung by the women of the community in an around Barak Valley and neighbouring Sylhet, present Bangladesh. The word ‘Dhamail’ is believed to be originated from the term ‘Dhamali’ or ‘Dhumbail’ meaning fun, joke or loaf. Thus it is a dance for fun to relax or to enjoy. It is a dance where steps are a combination of glinding and suffling movement of the feet. The dhamail does not depend upon any musical instruments but is based upon different tala and laya and to the lyric to boot. The dance is a purely group dance of the rural women demonstrating the utility of group labour in an agricultural society. The performance of this dance is the prelude to any ritual or social ceremony of the rural people except, however the funeral. The lyrics of the dance are divided into 3 categories: 1)
Vrata sangeet, 2) Karma sangeet i.e., songs of work and 3) Laukik or Anusthanik sangeet i.e., songs of social functions or rituals.

2. Folk Songs/Lokgeet

Folk music or lokgeet can be said be ‘functional’ in that it is not primarily entertainment or of aesthetic interest but an accompaniment to other activities, particularly, ritual, work, dance etc. In a traditional society folk music is a necessity in almost all rituals and festivals. The words of folk song can serve as chronicle, newspaper and agent of enculturation. Folk music is perpetuated by ethnic, occupational or religious minorities among whom it is thought to promote self-esteem, self-preservation and social solidarity. Folk music being an oral tradition can change the mental set up of the listeners. Folk song has the power to change the value system and outlook of the community people. Alike folk dance, folk songs or lokgeet can be categorized into three distinct categories: 1) Based on the occupation, 2) The social group songs and 3) The professional songs.

1. Based on the occupation: Based on the occupation (Karma Vittik Goshthi Sampradayer Geet) the communities pursue for their living the folk songs have been named. These songs are sung by a special communities like fisherman, farmers, and others and they perform these songs and dances in various social functions and gatherings. Some of such songs are: Rakhaler gan, Ojhar gan, Charaker gan, Bhatiali gan etc.

2. The social group songs: This form of songs are performed by all stratas of the society in groups. It is further divided into 3 (three) categories: 1) Laukik, i.e., relating to various social functions or ceremonies, Biyar geet2)
Dharmiya or religious dance, this is performed in observances of certain religious festivals or ceremonies like Mangal Chandir Vrata, Surya Vrata, Sassthi Vrata etc. These are also called Vrata sangeet. Apart from these there are Ojhar gan/Padma Puraner geet, Tinnather gan etc. and the third category is Vyabaharika, which the rural folk perform during their daily work like paddy thrassing, pounding of rice, winnowing, fetching water from pond, fishing etc., (Mati Kata, Charka Ghurano etc.).

3. The professional songs: The professional songs are the ones which the rural people performed for earning money or just to have fun. They are songs of Ojha, Kathi dance, dance of drummers etc.

Vrata Sangeet: Apart from praising songs of various Gods and Goddesses, songs of Surya Vrata (worship of Sun by the women), Sassthi Vrata (worship of Goddess Sassthi), Mangal Chandir Jagaran (worship of Mangal Chandi) etc., come under this category.

Karma Sangeet: The various songs of work like pounding of rice, winnowing, fetching water from pond and other such songs of work which the rural women generally does.

Laukik or Anusthanik Sangeet: The laukik or anusthanik sangeet are the songs which are sung in various social functions or rituals like marriage, right from engagement, till wedding, during pregnancy, birth of a child, annaprasan or rice feeding ceremony, home coming, holy thread festival, Ras, worship of village God etc.

And with all the above mentioned songs dhamil dance can be performed. This form of dance not only reveals individual talent but also
collective spirit of the performers. It unfolds the characteristics of the community life as a whole. Like other folk dances, the primary appeal of this dance-music is to the emotions and not to the intellect. Hundreds of songs had been composed over a period of time and had been tuned in Dhamail style. This dance-music, as learnt, had been used to educate, stimulate and mobilize the masses during the days of freedom movement in this part of India.

3. **Kirtan**: Kirtan is a wonderful treasure of Bengali culture (Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was the founder of kirtan) and it was expanded in the entire east India and during that period it was spread amongst the common masses as form of folk music. In the later period, the Vaishnava pundits segregated kirtan from folk form to a specialized system or form of music.

Kirtan is generally related to Lord Srikrishna and Lord Gauranga Mahaprabhu. In this part of India Kirtan has been categorized into various types like: 1) Kirtan, 2) Sankirtan, 3) Maha Kirtan, 4) Nagar Kirtan, 5) Astha Prahar Kirtan, 6) Prabhati Kirtan etc. The practice of group kirtan is prevalent mostly in this part of India.

Another form of kirtan is called *That kirtan* 'That' means, in local (Sylheti) language elevated: Thus That Kirtan is an elevated form of Kirtan and it is totally a unique form found only in this part of the valley. It is found in no other place in India. Kirtan and That Kirtan were once very much popular in Silchar town specially in Malugram 10-12 That Kirtan parties existed and these parties were formed by the best Kirtanias of this region. Parties from Karimganj & Hailakandi & other villages used to come to Silchar
to participate in this. Reknowned businessman and social worker Late B.C. Gupta was one of the initiator of ‘That’ later his son Late Bicit Gupta had also earned named and fame as Kirtania or That Kirtania. In the later period some That Kirtania parties were formed in Kayasthagran, Mahakol, Bhanga, Kaliganj, Fakua (Sonbil) villages of this region and they have been trying their best for the survival or to keep alive this form of Kirtan which is on the verge of extinction.

In the year 1994, in the 30th anniversary of Barak Upatyakar Banga Sahitya Sammelon programme organized in Gandhi Bagh ‘That Kirtan’ was performed by a Kirtania party from Fakua village which earned high praise from all classes of audiences and viewers.

4. Monosha Mangal: Barak Valley is mainly dominated by the Hindu and the Muslim population, and among these two communities two Goddesses are equally worshipped, one is Goddess Monosha or Bishahari Goddess and the other is Banbibi. Among the Muslims, the Gaziz worshipped Banbibi and among the Hindus, the Ojha community mainly worshipped Goddess Monosha & propagated the divine name of Goddess Monosha.

As Barak Valley is surrounded by hills on all the three sides and the area comprises of deep forests different types of snakes are found here. Goddess Monosha or Bishahari Goddess is said to be the God of snakes or Serpent Goddess. Thus, it may be because of the geographical condition or because of propagation, Goddess Monosha is loved, respect and worshipped in this region by all communities.
In the later half of the 15th century, in Bengali literature, Monosha Mangal has been written on Goddess Monosha. Later, coming to this geographical circuit, Padma Purana was created based on Monosh Mangal. Gradually, various editions of Monosha Mangal were published by various authors, among them author Bijay Gupta was one. The central theme of Padma Purana is the story of 'Behula' whose husband 'Lakhindar' was bitten by snake on the curse of Goddess Monosha.

The whole Bengali month of 'Sravan', the worshippers of Goddess Monosha perform Monosha Mangal or read Padma Purana and perform Monosha puja. Basically, the women folk of this valley used to perform this Monosha or Bishahari Vrata praying for the well-being of their husband and children. This Vrata was also called 'Darai Vrata or 'Darai Puja'. It is considered among the Hindus all over that after any puja or vrata if the worshipper donates cash or kind to the eunuchs, the wishes of the worshipper shall be fulfilled. So, to fulfil their wishes & prayers the women folk used to donate money to the eunuchs also called 'Gurma-Gurmi' in this valley, who were brought or invited specially for this occasion. The eunuchs or 'Gurma-Gurmi' who mastered the Padma Purana used to perform songs from Padma Purana and dance. Thus, it was called 'Gurma-Gurmi' nach or dance. And since they used to dress like the Ojhas described in Padma Purana, they were also called Ojhas and the dance form was called Ojha dance. Mainly, these ojhas were from the Kaivarta community or Namasudra community. However, even in some cases these Ojhas are also found among the upper castes like Brahmins and the Kayasthas. In fact, it may be noted here that the Ojhas are
not born, it needs training, performance and acceptance by the society to be
a Ojha by waggling their heavy hips and singing during the ‘Daraivrata. It
cannot be transmitted by generation. It is an art form which needs practice
and can be learned by anyone to take up as a profession.

Apart from Sravan month, previously Monosha Mangal or Padma
Purana were read by the worshippers during all functions or rituals like Durga
Puja, Basanti Puja, Kali Puja, Chandi Puja, Boat (Nauka) Puja, Rice-feeding
ceremony etc. Though Padma Purana or Monosha Mangal is not folk songs
in the true sense but it may also be considered as folk tale. It is mainly
comprising of songs which is performed in a style of dance-drama.

However, the dance is rarely performed now; people still worships
Goddess Monosha or Bishahari and read Padma Purana or Monosha Mangal
throughout the Sravan month.

5. Charak Puja: Charak Puja is basically a Tantrik puja performed by the
worshippers of Lord Shiva. It is generally found in different parts of India but
with different names. In Bengal, it is known as ‘Charak Puja’. This puja is
usually performed by the Bengali Hindus. ‘Charak’ is a tree, which they
worship. It is performed on the last day of Chaitra i.e, Bengali year end.
However, the process starts from the first day of the month Chaitra, during
which the worshippers meditate and worship Lord Shiva, Goddess Durga
and Goddess Kali. They fast for the whole month and eat only what they get
begging from door to door. On the last day of the festival, they worship the
‘Charak’ tree and exhibit some tantrik stunts to the people gathered. It is
basically a puja of Shakti by which they gain tantrik powers and takes place in an open field wherein a small fair is held.

**Modern Mass Media**: The term 'modern mass media' refers to the following forms of mass communication:

1. *Print forms of communication* – newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books, novels etc.
2. *Broadcasting Media* – radio, public address systems such as amplifiers, loudspeakers etc.
3. *Audio-visual Media* – television, cinema, video shows etc.
4. *Multimedia* – Computer based media such as VCD player, DVD player, Internet etc.

**Social Structure**: The term ‘social structure’ refers to basic institutions of the society such as family, marriage, kinship, economy, political system and forms of social stratification.

**Cultural Life**: The term ‘cultural life’ refers to cultural activities such as religious life (worship of god and goddesses, rituals of life cycle, festivals and fairs, religion in crisis situations (worship of deities of specific diseases such as Shitala Mata, Ojhas etc.).