The title of this research work is "FOLKLORE AND NATIONALISM with special reference to ASSAM". In this research work, an effort has been made to explore the relationship between folklore and nationalism in Assam.

In this introductory chapter, Conceptual formulations of Folklore and Nationalism have been cited in the light of ample quotations of eminent scholars. On the eve of the discussion of the term "Nationalism", related terms like tribe, caste, ethnicity, nations and nationality have been distinguished and also interpreted in an evolutionary way. Moreover, Folklore and Nationalism in both the world and Indian perspective have been illuminated in chronological order. Socio-cultural setup and History of nationalism in Assam has been mentioned briefly. It also contains the Aims and Objectives of the research work, research methodology, limitations and the legacy of the topic referring research activities in the concerned field in distant countries are.

The basic objective of this research programme is to study the exploration and revitalization of folklore materials in the need of nationalistic movements and ethnic assertions of Assam. Moreover, this study is supposed to encompass the universal appeal of folklore items irrespective of caste, class, community and religion. The oral and written continuum is a frequently observed phenomenon here. The concepts, folklorismus and folklore are also visualized during the course of our study.

For studying the relationship between Folklore and Nationalism in Assam, a few genres of folklore like folksongs, ballads, folktales, legends, myths folk costume, festivals etc have been taken into account. Since Assam is a melting pot of a large number of communities with distinct languages and cultures, it is practically impossible to cover the genres of each community. So, a few genres with nationalistic fragrance of a few dominant communities of Assam.
have been drawn to corpus. Again, the history of nationalism in Assam can be traced back after the advent of the British people only.

For having a theoretical background and also for validation of the research topic, a few books like FOLKLORE AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN FINLAND(1976) of William A Wilson, PRINT, FOLKLORE, AND NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL SOUTH INDIA(2003) of Stuart Blackburn, a few research papers and a few reviews on the intimation between folklore and nationalism have been followed. Namely (a) FOLKLORE AND BASQUE NATIONALISM, (b) Narratives of nationalism: Constructing Irish National Identity during the land war, 1879-82, (c) HERDER, FOLKLORE AND ROMANTIC NATIONALISM, (d) The uses of Folklore in Revitalization movement (e) Using Literature as a Strategy for Nation Building: A Case Study from Nigeria - by Csilla Czimbalmos (f) Komi Nationalism and Orthodox Christianity in the 19th and early 20th centuries- by Indrek Jaats (g) You don’t understand, we are at war! Refashioning Durga in the service of Hindu nationalism - by Anja Kovacs and many papers have been downloaded from the internet.

Out of twelve chapters, two stand as Introductory and Concluding chapters, while the remaining ten involve in acquiring instances and evidences in support of the research topic. These ten chapters from 2nd to 11th are held in chronological order right from the British subjugation in 1826 till today. They contain a brief introduction of the genre, historical background of the events, role of the genre in national upheaval, or, role of nationalism in exploring or reviving the particular genre (duplication or second edition of the genre may be) and ends up with a brief conclusion. Sources of quotations, borrowed ideas and informants are duly acknowledged in the Endnote and Reference section of each chapter.

In 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th chapters; events are strictly distributed in colonial and pre-colonial Assam and glittered during the freedom movement.
Most chapters are started with a theoretical section and is endeavoured to link it with the Assamese material.

In chapter 2, "Fragrance of nationalism in the folksongs of Assam", folksongs from communities like the Bodos, the tea garden workers in Assam, the Santhals, the Morans and the karbis are cited whose backgrounds were the British and the pre-British era. The Bodo folksongs were composed both in their monarchical and in the British administration where the heroic sacrifice of their legendary figures was venerated. The Santhal folksongs were composed on the plot when they congregated themselves feeling hatred towards the British. The Moran and the karbi songs were totally a portrayal of their kingdoms remembering the heroic outfits of their legendary figures.

In Chapter 3, "A Few Assamese Historical ballads of colonial India- A Nationalistic interpretation", a few Assamese historical ballads were taken whose plots were created during the British regime. The three ballads of the historical events, namely, the hanging of Maniram Dewan in 1858, the battle of Patharughat and the peasant movement of Rangia in 1894 were driving spirits for the later mutineers of the freedom struggle. But ballads of Maniram Dewan were both in his praise and criticism. Yet his hanging drew extraordinary sympathy from the patriotic brand avoiding his aristocracy and personal interest. These three ballads paved ways for mass participation in the anti British campaign because nationalism before those events was confined in papers and petitions especially in the upper middle class.

The 4th chapter, “Seeds of nationalism in the literature of Lakshminath Bezbaroa,” highlights the literature of Lakshminath Bezbaroa (1864-1938), a romantic nationalist, as this personality endeavored extremely to augment patriotic zeal by borrowing and restructuring folk-elements into his creations. The discourse of oral-written continuum obviously comes to the foreground for academicians’ pursuits.

The 5th chapter “Fabricating Myth in National upheaval – Assam in context” has been taken into account to visualize the process of fabrication or
creation of myth and mythic metaphors during the national emergency of a
country and also in the assertion of ethnic identity of a community.

The 6th chapter entitled “Legends and Nationality questions---A review
on Assam” draws our attention to interpret the mutual alteration of legends
and history, and to emphasize the role of legendary figures (some are
historical) in the nationality question or ethnic assertion.

The 7th chapter “Gandhi, Spinning and India’s Independence in the
folksongs of Assam” reflects the impact of Gandhian ideology on the
revolutionary spirit of the people of Assam and on the Assamese folk art and
crafts, especially on weaving. Assamese folksongs elevated Gandhi from
human to superman and some lore established him as the folk king (Gandhi
Raja) and messiah of the downtrodden.

The 8th chapter, “The Quit India Movement of 1942 in Assamese
folksongs,” depicts a few massacres of 1942 in Sonitpur, Golaghat, Nagaon
districts in terms of folksongs which in turn became a source of inspiration for
the freedom fighters of the later ages.

The 9th chapter entitled “Folktales and Nationalism in Assam” does not
obey any time frame, as the creation and diffusion of folktales are always
uncertain. Here three folktales are cited where the most dominant and tyrant
one suppresses the huge congregation by tricks and injustice. But after over
coming a few chapters of grievances and troubles, they find out a way of
salvation, unify them, kill the tyrant and get rid of the problem.

The chapter 10th (Festivals and Nationalism with special reference to the
spring festival of Assam) and 11th (Exploitation of folklore in Bodo national
emergence) are basically included to legitimize the current ethno-cultural and
socio-political issues in the light of folklore and nationalism. Here ethnic
assertion and sub-nationalism are illuminated side by side with nationalism.
Likewise, folklorismus (commercialization of folklore) and fake lore (second
edition of folklore) also receive a parallel significance with folklore.
Revitalization of Folklore and politics among the Bodo people of Assam covers the 11th chapter, a single chapter entirely on a single dominant community.

In the chapter Conclusion, the overall findings of all the ten chapters tracing the phenomenon 'folklore and nationalism' in the state Assam till this day since the British regime have been taken down in chronological order. Dilution and vulgarization of folklore materials in national emergency, the oral-written nexus etc also receives much significance in the discussion.

While collecting data in the fieldwork, the usual folkloric methods namely- Interview method, Observation method and Participation method are accepted to make the data unbiased and authentic. It becomes too much fruitful in hostile and strange situation.

For the historical and nationalistic phenomena, a few freedom fighters of the Independent movement of India, a few age-old performers and informants were interviewed. Reputed scholars of the neighboring universities were also inexhaustible sources of my interview.

Various performing folk arts and material culture frequently used in protestation and mass mobilization were observed. Text, texture and context have been thoroughly observed and studied to uncover the seeds of nationalism.

More over; libraries, museums and archives are in exhaustible secondary sources to know history to carry on the concerned work in a systematic way.
1.1 CONCEPTUAL FORMULATIONS-

(i) FOLKLORE:

Folklore is the material handed down traditionally either by word or mouth or by custom and practice (Taylor in Dundes 1965; p.34). A more elaborate and inclusive definition says that folklore "comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and technique that are learnt by imitation and example as well as the products of such crafts". By such it encompasses a whole range of material which includes "folk arts, folk craft, folk looks, folk costume, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk dance, folk games, folk gestures and folk speech as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called folk literature but which are better described as verbal art." (Bascom).

Debates about how folklore should be defined have been waged continuously ever since the word has coined in 1846 by William Thoms. Most definitions concern the "lore", but some concern the "folk". Lore - the materials of folklore rather than the people who use the materials-has been described in terms of origin, form, transmission and function.

According to the old orthodox view, folklorists were regarded as a band of antiquarians dealing with "survivals" and bygones" that did not fit in with the modern times. And also, folk society and folklore were believed to be confined only to the backward rural area and the unlettered peasantry. There were, according to this view, no "folk" people in the urban and industrial centers and hence there was no folklore in such places.

According to the new, revised concept, the folk society is not necessarily made up of the rural illiterate peasant mass but many signify "anonymous masses of tradition-oriented people" anywhere. According to Alan Dundes-

"The term "folk" can refer to any group of people what so ever who share at least one common factor. It doesn't matter what the linking factor is - it could be a common occupation, language or
religion- but what is important is that a group formed for what ever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own -A member of the group may not know all other members, but he will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group to have a sense of group identity".

(ii) NATIONALISM:-

Before discussion of the term "Nationalism", let us first have some preliminary concepts of its various synonyms or derivatives like Caste, Tribe, Race, Ethnicity, Nations and Nationality etc, absence of which may confuse us to trace back the origin of the core idea.

Caste refers to inequality both in theory and practice. Inequality based on the caste system is a special type of inequality. Ideas and values are considered as basis for knowing actual and observable behaviour of people. Therefore, the idea of the pure and the impure is basic to the understanding of caste. This idea is the basis of hierarchy in Hindu society.

Caste is a resource where the nature of this resource varies from caste to caste depending upon the status of a given caste in a given area. Caste identity has become a liability for upper and middle castes because a certain percentage of jobs, seats in parliament and state legislatures, and admissions in institutions have been reserved for the other Backward Castes(OBCs), Scheduled Castes and Schedued Tribes(SCs and STs). Caste in India is mistakenly projected as a system of harmonic relations. Caste inherits numerous problems related to economic domination and subjugation, privilèges and deprivatuions, and conspicuous waste and bare survival.

The structural aspect of caste is explained by accepting it as a general principle of stratification. Caste as a cultural system is understood in terms of prominence of the ideas of pollution-purity and notions of hierarchy, segregation and corporateness. Caste is also viewed by Bailey as a 'classed system' of stratification, whereas beteille considers caste system as both 'closed' and 'open'. He finds that caste is becoming increasingly 'segmentary'
because of the emergence of differentiated structures in India. These analytic variations hinder a common definition of caste. However, these variations also explain the fact that caste is like all other systems of stratification in some ways while it is quite unique in some other respects. Although caste is not really a very flexible system, yet a caste permits mobility in certain areas to its members. A given caste is guided by the norms of the caste system regarding inter-caste dependence; but a given caste has also its autonomy in regard to observance of its practices, rituals and rites in relation to other castes.  

“Rudolphs observes that caste has responded to changes in its political and economic environment by transforming itself from below and within. Hierarchy, privilege, and moral parochialism no longer exhaust its secular significance. Caste has become a means to level the old order’s inequalities by helping to destroy its moral basis and social structure. Caste attaches its members to the political ideas, processes and institutions”  

‘Tribe’ may be distinguished from ‘caste’, but it is not that tribe is a homogenous entity and caste is characterized by complexity and heterogeneity. There are distinctions within a given tribe and between different tribes. Certainly tribes are considerably distinct from the non-tribes. ....Certainly tribes are not ‘organically’ related to each other as castes are under a common principle. But tribes are also not exclusive systems as they are not small in size and bear a great deal of heterogeneity. Historically, a ‘tribal society’ has not been static, and yet it has retained its exclusivity from a ‘caste society’. There are 427 tribes in India and they can be classified on the basis of language, religion, degree of their isolation, the pattern of livelihood. Some of these attributes of tribes often resemble with the non tribal people in a given region than the tribal people of another region. The tribals are hunters, fishers, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, plantation workers and industrial wage-earners, hence some of them resemble with the non-tribal people. The large tribes such as Bhils, Gonds, Santhals, Oraons and Mundas are not only settled agriculturists, some of them are found in modern occupations in which members of caste Hindus are also found
Tribes are not caste or caste like entities, though some of them have followed the path of sanskritisation and conversion to Christianity and Islam. Tribes are highly differentiated lot both ethnically and culturally. Some adhere to ‘tribalism’, others have converted to Christianity by rejecting tribal pantheon, and some have taken up Hinduism by adopting vegetarianism, teetotalism and other Brahmanic ideals and practice. Tribes are also differentiated based on landholdings, rural-urban background, education, occupation, income and political power. Tribes have been granted special treatment under the Constitution of India. They have also many attributes, practices and ‘styles of life’ that distinguish them from the non-tribal people.

Now let us discuss the term ethnic and ethnicity. By ethnic, most scholars refer to “A social group which consciously shares some aspects of a common culture and is defined primarily by descent”. The element descent is very often assumed, not real and here lies the distinction between race and ethnic. Race refers to biological aspect of group difference whereas ethnic is the combination of the cultural aspect and a putative biological element because of the assumption of common descent. People from unknown past have possessed a tendency to identify themselves with particular cultures through the process of acculturation, integration and assimilation despite of the recent origin of the term “Ethnicity”.

The term “ethnic” does not give a clear cut definition till now. Although the American connotation refers to the minority group by the term, standard dictionaries use a few representatives like “tribal”, “Primitive”, “Pagan or heathen”, “relating to racial group”, “of an exotic esp. peasant culture”, of or relating to races or large groups of people classed according to common traits and customs” etc.

Barth defined ethnic group as a population which:
1. is largely biologically self perpetuating;
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms;
3. make up a field of communication and interaction;
In general sense, a nation means a self-governing nationality. A nation is the home of a nationality. A nation comprises both the state and the nationality. A state in the modern sense is a political organization of a people or peoples occupying permanently a definite portion of territory and having the power of sovereignty. On the other hand, a nationality is a 'primary, a cultural ethnic term,' wherein geographical unity, common racial stock, common culture, common language, common hopes and aspirations etc. are the contributing features to give birth to a nationality. In the seventeenth century the term 'nation' which took the origin from the Latin word 'NATO' (race or birth) was used in respect of racial unity. During the great French Revolution of 1789 the term nation came into great popularity. Patriotism became the integral factor of nationalism. Thereafter, since the nineteenth century nation means the idea of political independence or sovereignty while nationality still remained a non-political concept basing on spiritual and psychological qualities. Thus in a broader sense a nation state is a population of self-governing state, wherein several nationalities may live together. For example the United Kingdom is a nation-state where the different nationalities like English, Scotts, Welsh and North Irish are living together. India is also the best example of a nation-state where different nationalities are living under a single national banner and symbols. When a nationality succeeds in obtaining political sovereignty, it itself becomes a nation-state.

Nationality has been defined as a group of people who are bound together by such common bonds as common race, common language, common religion, common history and even common aspirations, it may sometimes get confused with ethnicity. Nationalism in the modern sense of the term—the individual and group consciousness associated with exclusive political identity.
If nationality implies a sense of unity, its tendency is to seek political manifestation in a nation-state. This one nationality one state ideal led to the emergence of most nation states in Europe. But later on, another development grew on in which the emergence of an independent state with multi-ethnic population leads to the formation of a nation. There are ample evidences in Europe and in the USA where many independent states make attempts to for a single nation out of its diverse populations. By this way an abstract model of national identity is evolved.

It is assumed that nations, nationalism and nationality originated from the feeling of racialism. In ancient Greece there was a feeling of becoming a citizen of an independent city-state. "But the bond of their unity was their pride of becoming a citizen of POLIS, not of a blind racial belief. During the Roman Empire, the emphasis was shifted from the 'Greek Ideals of liberty, democracy and local independence to the roman ideals of unity, order, universal law and cosmopolitism'. Several races of Europe belonging to different stocks, speaking different languages and following different modes of life, were compelled to live under a single royal imperial banner and work under a similar political and administrative pattern with the result that the parochial attitude and narrow outlook of the people remaind suppressed. The existing situation taught them world citizenship and universal brotherhood. The downfall of Roman Empire again gave rise to racial nationalism as well as feudalism. The Teutonic German races had unshakable faith in the purity and superiority of their blood and established their occupation and authorities on the invaded territories.

With the rise of new human concepts and political vision, feudalism was deeply affected and favourable circumstance was created comprising community belonging to common race, faith and behaviour. Meanwhile, the movements for reformation and renaissance prepared fertile ground for the growth of strong nations and nationalism. Scientific approach to study every aspects of human life had drastically changed their traditional modes of knowledge and attitude. Moreover, the Industrial revolution of Europe opened
the flood gate of wealth to give rise to economic nationalism creating wars among ambitious nations.

Thus we have observed that the erosion of feudal system paved the way for a new type of state based on the bond of nationality (Racialism). Thereafter political thinkers and patriotic authors further strengthened the feeling of nationalism by their writings.

But economic liberties and freedom led the people to realize that not the king but the people are the fountain of political powers. With the discovery of the Natural theory of rights and Individualism, people began to lose their faith in the system of monarchy. Rousseau's philosophy of 'General Will' compelled the people to believe equality, liberty and fraternity as the basis of democratic nationalism.

With the rise of independent nationhood in Europe, rivalry had taken place among different nations for economic competition. The industrial sectors required international market to obtain raw materials and sell out their products. As a result, countries like France, England, Portugal, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Persia to discover new continents and connecting sea routes. By this way, Racial and Economic nationalism gave rise to democratic nationalism and as a consequence, colonialism was started as an offshoot.

Nationalism is a term not easily defined. It is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state. It is a fusion of patriotism with a consciousness of nationality. A nationality is a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects, who cherish common historical tradition, and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society. In other words, the nation-state to which the patriot owes his allegiance is defined according to ethnographic principles. Both as an inspiration for the idea of nationalism and as a means of winning the minds of men to that idea, folklore have served well.
“Nationalism is the belief that each nation has both the right and the duty to constitute itself as state. There are many difficulties in specifying what a nation is ---in Europe, for example, the candidates range from the Welsh and the Basques to occitanians and northumbrians but some common culture is indispensable and a shared language highly desirable —Nationalist theory usually attributes conflict to cross national oppression, and thus offers a promise of world peace when self determination has become a global reality.”

Nationalism is a polymorphous concept like ethnicity. It is a conceptual construct and like any other construct it can be put to use as well as abuse. It has played a very important role in integrating diverse and discrete groups thereby accelerating the pace of economic growth and development. The European nation states are standing evidence to it.

India is a plurality of nations, a multinational state. Each ethnic and linguistic community forms a nation or a sub-nation. There is no such thing as Indian nation. The so called Indians are really Indian citizens but at no time they are Indian nationals. For example, a Bihari can rightly be said to have Bihari nationality though he has Indian citizenship.

Nationalism is an artificial and parochial concept. It is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political end and the national unit should be congruent. It is an ideology consisting of values, symbols, norms and expectations, living in a social collectivity (groups) and based on belief in a common descent and as a consequence a common destiny, strong enough to desire to maintain, strengthen or create a formally and legally organized society.

1.2 FOLKLORE AND NATIONALISM: WORLD PERSPECTIVE

“The relationship between folklore and nationalism is both intimate and symbiotic. For James Fernandez this relationship poses serious questions for the ethnographer in search of generalizations about the complexities of folklore dynamics which, all too frequently, have been restricted to the
comparatively recent phenomenon of national boundaries; that is to say, those
borders formed by the constraints of the nation-state, a political community
whose development dates from Napoleonic times. Fernandez views folklore as
a potential source of strength to acquiescent ethno-nationalist movements,
often representatives of communities, which predate nation-states. the
formation of Thus folklorists can act as transmitting agents of the ethno
nationalist cause (1986: 135). Such is the case with Basque nationalism,
which, since the late nineteenth century, has relied heavily on the use of
folklore within its ideology. The origins of Basque nationalism may be traced
to the challenge of modernization within the region. As new industries
emerged and (Spanish) immigrants settled in the Basque Provinces in great
numbers, so there was a sense that traditional Basque society was under threat
(Ben-Ami 1991: 494). As a consequence, there emerged a need to define
precisely what the values of this traditional society were.\textsuperscript{15}

To assert nationalism, historical background of a particular community or
race is a vital ingredient besides the common language, common religion and
common aspiration. But most of the historical documents of the past time got
confused with royal panegyric or chronicles composed under the royal
patronage. As a consequence, modern historians have to depend on folklore to
disclose the socio-political, economic, cultural and material part of history.
Legends become more approachable for historians to find out historical
evolution as well as interpretation. Legendary heroes become the national
heroes in the process of sub-nationalism or in the ethnic assertion movements.

"Indian scholars felt that "nationalism in India could not be made
recognizable only by the deep collective emotions hidden in the hearts
of deprived masses; on the other hand it had to be made manifest in the
national language, national epics, foods, dress, ancient thought and
wisdom, value system, folklore and literature."\textsuperscript{16}

Folklore has been used to focus the national spirit in many countries. The
methodology of judging folklore on national perspective has produced good
results in most of the countries of the world. In Latin American countries, the
Indian culture, specially the dance, music, tales and customs form a living part
of national folk traditions even today, Japan’s Shintoism and Sweden’s rural based culture are considered as their national assets.

Folklore is not only an echo of the past — it is also a vigorous voice of the present. The US scholars eulogize the folk heroes of their own like Paul Banian, Peks Bill, and Stormorlang etc. as the products of their national vigor. After the October Revolution in the Soviet Union, the have-nots have emphasized folklore as the main weapon of protest.

Far from being an antiquarian hobby, folklore has throughout the history of its study been connected with national issues and concerns. Folklore traditions would help reinforce the sense of national identity provided the intellectuals and policy-makers become aware of their existence. Jacob and Wilhem Grimm clearly associated their work in folklore with the reconstruction of a proved Germanic past. In German, party policy produced peasant schools and institutes seeking to revive German folk consciousness through courses on folklore and history and through encouragement of peasant festival, folk music and folk dance. The party’s folk education programme endeavored to instruct the German people in their role as bearers of Germanic culture. Ideology under-scored the special heroic qualities of the fighting German peasants qualities needed to expand Germany’s political boundaries in the drive for “living space”. The folk spirit was constructed as a martial spirit.

Emphasizing the significant role of folklore in nationalist movements, Osear J. Falness has shown in National Romanticism is Norway, the movement for Norwegian independence from Denmark that achieved political success in 1814, but strove for culture independence throughout the nineteenth century, depended mostly on folklore.

In Western Europe and America the rise of nationalism in the late eighteenth-century was, at least in the beginning, in line with the liberal and humanitarian philosophies of the enlightenment. It was precipitated in no small degree by Rousseau’s doctrine of popular sovereignty and “by his regard for the
common people as the true depository of civilization"—ideas which found their most powerful manifestations in the French and American Revolutions. Adherents of the new nationalistic philosophy looked forward to the day when the entire human community would share in those rights recently won in America and France.

In Central and Eastern Europe, however, a different kind of movement—romantic nationalism—developed. In these areas, where the people were generally socially and politically less developed than in the West, national boundaries seldom coincided with those of existing states. Hence nationalism here becomes a movement not so much to protect the individual against the injustices of an authoritarian state, but rather an attempt to redraw political boundaries to fit the contours of ethnic bodies. To be sure, the adherents of this nationalism took over Rousseau's concept of popular sovereignty, but to it they wedded the idea that each nationality is a distinct organic entity different from all other nations and that the individual can fulfil himself only to the degree that he is true to that national whole of which he is merely a part. Thus individual will become secondary to national will, and service to the nation-state became the highest endeavor of man. In contradiction to liberal nationalism, romantic nationalism emphasized passion and instinct instead of reason, national differences instead of common aspirations, and above all, the building of nations on the traditions and myths of the past—that is, on folklore—instead of on the political realities of the present.

The man most responsible for the creation of romantic nationalism was the German scholar Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). His philosophy of history not only inspired the German nationalistic movement but also served as the foundation for most such movements since his time. He insisted on building a national culture on native foundations. He formulated a set of principles of nationalism, which are applicable to all nations struggling for independent existence. Herder's philosophy based on two ideas earned from the works of Melchiorre Cesarotti as well as Vico.
The first idea was on the continuity of history i.e. each historic age evolves naturally out of the preceding age. Herder said that the fatherland has descended from our fathers; it arouses the remembrance of all the meritorious who went before us and of all the worthy whose father we shall be. The second concept which Herder took from Vico was that each historical epoch forms an independent cultural entity whose various parts are integrally related to form an organic whole. Applying this Herder argued that each nation being organically different from other nations, is the master of its own destiny. He said, “Every nation contains the center of its happiness within itself”.

Having gone through Herder’s publications and enthusiasm regarding elevation of oral literature mainly of folk poetry Jacob Grimm wrote:

“Having observed that her language, laws and Antiquities were greatly underrated, I was wishful to exalt my native land.”

The followers of Herder tried to create mostly a mythical past of a great and noble nation believing that there had once been such a Germany. Believing so, they made it so. Looking back to these days, T.Benfey fifty years later assessed:

“The recognition of the great value of the German folk song wakened an interest in the other creations and expressions of the German folk soul. With equal zeal, legends, fairy tales, manners and customs began to be investigated, collected, and studied. The influence of the folk soul upon the other fields of human development-law, state, religion, all forms of life-was recognized and traced.”

By this, not only a new concept of the history of civilization arose, but also a reverence and love for the people, a patriotic zeal had been established in Germany. The individual must be rooted in his own people. Each individual nation could contribute to the progress of humanity only by developing on its own cultural foundation – this concept of Herder was accepted by underdeveloped ethnic groups in Central and East Europe.
As soon as the Grimms' tales received proliferation across Europe, Finland got automatically charged with the utility of folklore materials in national upheaval. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Finland was a colony of Sweden which underrated the Finnish culture and literature. The educated Finnish people, who had already been introduced with Herder and Grimms, started their movement around the Finnish literature.

In 1820, Elias Lonnrot, a medical student started collecting old Finnish poetry from the Karelia region. After several trips to that region, he collected enough material and in 1835, he published the text as Kalevala (the land of the heroes). The narrative centered around the hero Vainamoinen, who protected the land from the attack of supernatural powers. The Finnish people were waiting for such a masterpiece to boost their revolutionary agenda. At that time, Finland was handed over to Russia by Sweden, which threw the Finnish people from the frying pan to the fire. After a series of movement, Finland got independence in 1918.

In 1862, Elias Lonnrot published an abridged version of his Kalevala as a school textbook. William A Wilson, an American cultural historian, quotes these events in his work 'Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland'.

Later on, the whole culture of Finland has become a Kalevala culture. Kalevala Day on 28th February is an official flag-raising day with varieties of event. Names of institutions, towns, ships and steamers, tourists' items etc had been given after various characters of the epic Kalevala.

'Finnish nationalism as a purposeful doctrine was formulated largely under the inspiration of folklore studies', that 'the Finnish nation was conceived in and born of folklore, that 'the kalevala has been and still is the abode of the Finnish national spirit', that it can be called 'the independence book of the Finnish nation'20

Unlike Germany and Finland, the textual tool of nationalism in Scotland was historical novel. Scotland was a British colony in the eighteenth century. Ossian, a bard in the third century mourned the passing of oral tradition which praises the heroes of the past. As soon as Scot language was declined with the advent of the English people, the Scot took resort to absorb in the lost story of
their ancient nation. Though Ossian was welcomed whole heartedly in Scotland, a few Englishmen ridiculed the Ossian creation as improbable fiction. Having gone through such insult, the Scot writers arose nationalism centering the bard, whose loss they lamented in historical novels. Like Scotland, Ireland used nationalist tales as steering in the mission.

We have observed that in Germany, Finland and Scotland, language become the victim of colonization. Folk narratives were ridiculed as traditional improbable fiction. In turn, this ridiculed tradition became the vehicle of nationalism. In this connection, the comment of Stuart Blackburn in his book “Print, Folklore and Nationalism in Colonial South India” is worth mentionable

“Trumpener’s analysis of this ‘bardic nationalism’ is valuable because it sheds light on the link between folklore and the nation. ……………………………………………………Bardic nationalism, she argues, presents a more complicated psychology of modernity and loss. In particular, she identifies the psychic trigger that is cocked by the suppression of tradition in the rush to modernity: to the extent that cultural traditions are denied or reviled, to that extent they grow into potent symbols of nationalist identity. Although she does not use these terms, this is the process that links folklore to nationalism. As we have seen in the case of Germany, Finland and Scotland, in contexts of cultural and political domination, language is often the object of derision and suppression; and the narrative forms that are ridiculed because they are traditional, such as folktales and epics, become the natural vehicles for nationalism. Indeed, suppression and derision only enhance their status as stories of a lost national past”

Throughout history, folklore have been closely intertwined with national issues and concerns. Folklore traditions have a tremendous potential in reinforcing the sense of national identity. The appearance of the very discipline of folkloristics coincided with the rising of nationalism in a number of countries. The study of folklore deserved a significant height as a part of Nazi literature under the patronage of Hitlar. Old German tales were included
in the syllabus for school children in a modernized version with emphasis upon the idealization of fighting, glorification of power etc. With their aim to create a pure German race and culture, the Nazi folklorists engaged themselves in the task of weeding out alien elements from the German culture. With this view, emphasis was laid on the renewal of the pure Nordic-Germanic myths, customs, and rituals. In the sphere of politics too, folklore provided practical opportunities. The Nazi ideology underscored the heroic qualities of the fighting German peasants, qualities required to expand Germany’s political boundaries.

Not only the sentiment of nationalism but also a particular nationalistic ideology may derive support from the content and interpretation of folklore. In the erstwhile U.S.S.R., Maxim Gorky, in his keynote address of the first All Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, stressed the values of folklore as an expression of the realities and aspirations of the working classes. From then on government policy strongly supported widespread collection and socialist interpretation of folklore. Y.M. Sokolov (1950 quoted in Dorson: ibid) in his standard work on Russian folklore expresses the ideological attitude of the communist party and the then Soviet government toward folklore: 'what a vastly important artistic force this in the propagandizing of the resplendent ideas of Communism, what a great place folklore occupies in the Soviet socialist culture.' And: 'never, in all the history of Russia, has the oral poetic word served the social aims so broadly and powerfully as in the Soviet period. Soviet folkloristics has helped to reveal the agitational and propagandist significance of folklore. And thereby, Soviet folkloristics has firmly allied itself with the practical tasks of our social life.'

In the U.S.S.R., folklore materials are not only reinterpreted, but trade-school students collected a whole new corpus of revolutionary and industrial labour lore on collective farms and machine tractor stations. By the 1930’s such collectors had recorded a new folklore of Soviet Byliny, laments tales, and new songs called noviny, often glorifying Lenin, Stalin, Voroshilov, and other political and military heroes. Similar treatment was accorded to the folk heroes of new democracy like Davy Crocket, Mike Fink, and Mose and
Bowery b’boy in the U.S. half a century after the American Revolution. The same social forces are operating in different countries to produce folklore reflective of the ideology and ethics of the times.

In the United States, the publication of folklore responds not to official ideology so much as to popular taste, which contains its own latent ideology. In the depression decade of the 1930’s leftist folksingers in the U.S. south to arouse the working man to sense of social injustice and a mood of political radicalism through the singing of protest songs. The history of this movement, embracing well-known personalities such as the Almanac Singers, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Eurl Ives, and others, has been very well described by R. Serge Denisoff in *Great day coming; folk music and the American left* and Reuss(1971) in “American folklore and left-wing politics:(1927-1957)”. 23

Folklore has also served as an important agent of African nationalism. Folk traditions furnish pan-Africanists and new-state Africans with an oral history and references for statements of negritude and African personality.

1.3 FOLKLORE AND NATIONALISM: INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

In ancient and medieval India, nationalism was cultural and spiritual rather than political. Nationalism in the modern sense, an individual and group consciousness with extreme political identity, started appearing in India just after the British subjugation. India was fragmented into many small kingdoms where dauntless courage and heroic acts of rulers and soldiers were exhibited in the battle field with a national and spiritual sentiment. But they fought not for national glory and national pride. Most of them fought for personal gain and prestige. “History bears the testimony that it was the Indian rulers who, being blind to their personal gain, glory and rivalry helped the British to establish their foot firmly in the soil of India. It is an open fact that both Nizam of Hyderabad and the Maratha rulers spared nothing to eliminate two great nationalist and patriotic rulers, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, by offering all possible assistance to the East India Company.”24 Again, the defeat of the Nawab of Bengal, Suraj-ud-Daula, in the hand of the company rulers was
possible only for the conspiracy done by his Commander- in -Chief. Again, the Marathas were at draggers drawn with the Rajputs and the Sikhs. The Muslims were involved in fighting among themselves and against the Marathas.

In North East India too, there were kingdoms of the Ahoms, the Chutiyas, the Koches, the Kacharis, the Jaintias, the Garos, the Khasis, the Nagas, the Manipuris, the Barahis existed with dominance in medieval era. Besides, many unknown hilly kingdoms prevailed with distinct boundaries and battle strategies. These N. E. kingdoms were not exceptions from the kingdoms of Central and Western India. There were frequently involved in battles among themselves. So “there was no India at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was mere congeries of states.”

There were no such unifying factors to bring the entire Indians into a common platform with the help of which Indians could assert nationalism in the modern sense. But Indian Classical texts and great tradition of learning could make some sense of “we feeling”, especially in the light of Sanskritisation and Brahmanization. The etymology of the term Bharata (India) tracing back to the King of Bharata is quite noteworthy. Stories from ancient Sanskrit texts like the Vedas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Puranas were in both oral and written continuum, in classical and vernacular dialects and inculcated similar ethics and messages across geographical boundaries. Moreover, great saints and scholars from India and abroad were in incessant mission to decipher knowledge and wisdom of universal brotherhood from Ashramas and universities flourished in Nalanda, Taxashila, Ujjain and Bikramshila. Religion is basically the driving wheel of spiritual and cultural nationalism. Next to the great teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism took active initiative to make an end to the parochial outlook of the kings and subjects by deciphering great teachings of spiritism as well as humanism.

Despite of the brutality and self interest of many kings, the Indian history is also sound with charity, fellow- feelings and humanity of a quite considerable number of kings. Knowledgeable and wise kings often
encouraged and attended religious conferences and felt proud to adorn their courts with scholars and tourists. We may cite the names of Ashoka, Bhaskar Barmana, and Harsa vardhana, Akbar, Samudra Gupta etc who pioneered in the mission to form cultural and spiritual nationalism. In the medieval era, religious preachers like Sankaracharya, Ramanuj, Eknath, Tulsidas, Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Ajan Phakir etc made a herculian effort to bind the Indian mass together.

Nationalism, in the modern sense, started with the establishment of British rule in India. The British administration divided the Indian mass into lots of sub divisions and repressed to the optimum level, made economic drainage to their homeland vacating age old Indian resources, diluted Indian social norms and traditional administration, torn the cultural and spiritual value systems. Yet Indians got a chance to enrich themselves intellectually and India passed from the medieval to modern age within half a century. Exploitation of cultural heritage and contribution of grammars, dictionaries in vernacular languages started heralding a new horizon for the indigenous communities and tribes. But these activities had been carried on by the Indologists or orientologists for their academic pursuits in the initial phase and by the missionaries as a part of their evangelization and by the British officers in India to suit their administrative convenience in the second phase. Local scholars merged in this mission in the third phase when they had become aware of rich Indian heritage of culture and literature. This third phase was the outcome of national consciousness in the later part of nineteenth century. Those Indian intellectuals were generally the administrators who got chance to go and study either in India or abroad and came under the influence of westernization and later on, by the college teachers influenced by modern education. Moreover, a brand from native journalists, pleaders, employees of law courts, readers of newspapers, magazines and periodicals etc also shook their hands in this mission. Folkloric excavation was seemed to be a significant feature in all the above three phases.

The English being the official language in India, Indians were privileged in two major ways. First, it becomes the link language among all Indians to share
their sentiments and common goals. Second, it opens the floodgates of western knowledge to all Indians. The Indian intellectuals in the light of western culture and philosophy saw the deteriorated conditions of Indians who were overwhelmed with evil practices, prejudices and mass illiteracy. They made their minds to enlighten millions of Indians through their writings and to remind about the glorious Indian culture and civilization. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Dayananda Saraswati took bold steps to change the socio-religious outlook of Indian mass by removing the evil practices in the Hindu Society. Women education, widow remarriage were encouraged by discouraging child marriage, bride burning, feticide, casteism, untouchability, Sati dah etc. The Brahmo Samaj created political consciousness, national feelings and sentiments, made the people to understand the true essence of religion and novel ideas of humanism and nationalism. The Arya Samaj of Dayananda Sawarasati tried to bring about a socio-religious revolution all over the country. Rajnarain Bose, another great leader of Brahma Samaj and founder of the “National Promotion Society”, tried to promote the feeling of nationalism by writing national literature. Sound western education and unshakable faith on Hindu religion and culture created a distinguished personality in him. He also founded the “Hindu Mela” which sole purpose was to promote patriotism, nationalism and spirit of self help among the Hindus. “During the Annual gathering of the mela a great number of people used to assemble where songs, poems and lectures of national feeling were recited. The great Indian poet Rabindra Nath Tagor, during his teens, used to recite his poems.”

Among the stalwarts of Indian nationalism, Rabindranath Tagore, Natesa Sastri, Swami Vivekananda, Ms Annie Bessant, and Bankim Chandra Chatterji were worth mentioning who emphasized on cultural and literary exposure of ancient India i.e. the wisdom of India, to arise the nationalistic sentiment of India. Those were from the moderate wing in opposition to the extremist brand including Surya Sen, Bhagat Singh, and Subhash Chandra Bose etc.
Among the founders of Indian nationalism the place of Swami Vivekananda, the true disciple of Ramakrishna, is like an immovable star, believed that a nation without a good foundation in cultural behavior and philosophical values couldn’t be strong and durable. The speech, which he delivered in Chicago of America, was so pragmatic with Indian ethos and ethics that it begged admiration from all corners of the world.

The revival of ancient philosophy and culture was a turning point in the history of Indian nationalism. It was, in the real sense, the beginning of India’s renaissance. Ms. Annie Bessant, a renowned theosophist also emphasized on the ancient wisdom and cultural values of India to raise the nationalistic sentiment. “Ms. Annie Bessant, a renowned theosophist was so much interested in the greatness of India’s past that she not only propagated the past Indian wisdom but also decided to help India in achieving its freedom so that it could found ideal principles for peace and prosperity of the world based on it’s ancient philosophies.”

We have noticed that Bengal was the pioneer in the overall contribution to the emergence of Indian nationalism and hence, Calcutta was called the Brain of Colonial India. We have already mentioned above that exploitation and revival of cultural and folk heritage were conducted in three phases in India. The third phase conducted by native Indians also received a fertile ground in Bengal.

“Here, Calcutta being the capital of British India, swadeshi was already in the air in 1860s, Bengali intellectuals and writers could enter into the concept of folklore through the Asiatic Society’s journal through books like Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal (1872) by Dalton. It is not surprising that the first published collection of Indian folktales by an Indian was written by a Bengali (L.B.Day’s Folktales of Bengal, London, 1883). Looking ahead, the first folklore journal run and edited by an Indian began in Calcutta (Folklore, 1956). The linchpin of the connection between the folklore revival and early Indian nationalism, however, was the Tagore family. Throughout the 1870s, they staged melas, which included the display of folk arts and crafts, folk
theatre and popular songs. In Calcutta, as in Europe, folklore was revived and rewritten by intellectuals as an act of restoration, to preserve a national identity in an era of foreign cultural domination.\textsuperscript{28}

In Madras, unlike in Calcutta or Bombay, two separate constructions of folklore and the nation emerged in the late nineteenth century. The first formulation drew heavily on a feeling of cultural subjugation and emphasized the notion of a 'buried Dravidian' culture, attributed not just to British colonialism but to brahminical -Sanskritic domination as well. The Formulation of a folk Dravidian nation, largely built up by British writers over the course of the nineteenth century, resembled the European ideas who resorted to the image of the 'buried Dravidian'. They believed the Dravidian race as pre-Aryan. It was largely articulated by the European who echoed the earliest European writing about Tamil literature and language.

The second formulation of folklore and the nation invoked the image of the 'vanishing village'. This formulation was single handedly mastered by Pandit Natesa Sastri (1859-1906), who advanced folklore as a national literature in Madras.

It is said that the first national movement started right from the Sepoy mutiny of 1857. Mass participation paved its way just after this movement and India was handed over to the direct administration of the queen in Britain in 1858. Following this, a series of peasant movement took place in various corners of the country which have been discussed in chapter II and III.

The 1857 struggle failed primarily because of the weak-kneed effort or treacherous role of the Indian feudal ruling class as a whole. The living national experience of the worth of the Indian feudals in the anti-British freedom struggle became the basis for the coming generation of Indian patriots to formulate the correct strategy for the victory of the Indian revolution, that is, that the Indian freedom struggle has to be not only anti-British but also anti-(Indian) feudal. The 1857 folk songs supply valuable historical documentaries to explain the transition.\textsuperscript{29}
In India the folk art forms have been the traditional media for approaching the masses.

There is evidence to show that the organizers of the 1857 uprising fully and effectively used this method of mass propaganda to stir the people to revolt. Kaye, the British historian of 1857 stated, "There were two subjects which the Kathputleewalas (puppeteers) extremely delighted to illustrate the degradation of the Mughal and the victories of the French over the English, the one intended to excite hatred, the other contempt in the minds of the spectators." Trevelyan, in Kanpur states that festivals and tamashas were used for revolutionary propaganda. "The dolls employed in theatres began to speak a strange language and to dance a dangerous dance. Panwadas (ballads) and Lawamiyas (folk musical art-form that stir softer emotions) were sung near police stations. Ballad Alha Udal (a heroic ballad that stirs the blood) was also employed. From Calcutta to Punjab dangerous Tamashas (folk drama) in the night were exhibited ....Female gypsies were also used. Bhishitis (water carriers) refused water; ayas (maid-servants) left service." This was a hundred years back and ever since these folksongs on 1857 have helped to nurse patriotism among the common people of India. The earlier panic disappeared with the very experience of the British rule. The revolutionary atmosphere of the 1857 days can be gathered from the song below:

Storm in the river
Far off is English tan
Hurry, quit
Perfidious Firingi! 30

Laxmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi, a legendary figure among the leaders of the 1857 uprising, was one of the most popular leaders of the Revolt. A large number of folksongs, ballads, Rasos have been composed in her memory.

How valiantly like a man she fought
The Rani of Jhansi!
On every parapet she set a gun
Raining fire of hell,

How well like a man fought the Rani of Jhansi,
How valiantly and well! 31
These folk songs on 1857 written by the folk poets of the participants in that great national uprising are in more ways than one a part of our rich national heritage. They are all most important source of historical material on the outlook and aspirations of the Indian people during the 1857 struggle and they are also a source material for studying how this tradition has lived and grown on among our people. Secondly, they are a little known part of our patriotic poetical heritage and their popularization would enrich our national literature. Finally they have been composed in a vast variety of musical art-forms in which our folk music abounds. Their heart warming music stirs patriotic blood as nothing else can.

1857 FLAG-SONG

To us belongs our Hindustan
and to none else.
Our sacred motherland
dearer than heaven
The world is aglow
with the light of her soul.
How old, how new
and unique of its kind
To us belongs our Hindustan
and to none else.
Ganga and Jamuna making
our lands fertile
And overhead the snow-clad mountain
our sentry towering.
Beating against the coasts below
the trumpets of the seas.
And gold and diamonds from our mines' overflow.
Our pomp and splendour evoking the envy of the world.

And then came the Firangi
and such magic spell he cast
Pillaging and plundering our motherland he ruled.
The martyrs call you, O countrymen
do you hear?

Smash up the chains of slavery
and pour out fire
Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs—all of us brothers.
Hail and Salute it,
Here is our flag of freedom! 32

This flag-song "Quami Tarana" was published in the contemporary, Payami Azadi, whose original copy is reported to be in the British Museum. This folksong is the best testimony to the patriotic ideas of the insurgents in 1857.

These folksongs are worth a close study to see how patriotism is born and how it develops within a feudal society and its system of thought and ultimately bursts its bonds, both social and ideological. There runs through all these folksongs a burning hatred of the Firingi, the foreign usurper, for his alien rule, for disrupting the traditional way of Indian life, and making daily life a misery for the common people. The hatred of the Firangi is passionate and undying.......Great confidence is derived from the unity of the various castes and communities that came into being during the struggle. This popular unity is also considered necessary for the success of the struggle. The
experience of this national unity in the fire of struggle led India from feudal disunity towards popular unity and made the building of a modern national movement possible.

In the historical conditions of the nineteenth century when the British conquest was proceeding by subjugating Indian kingdoms and principalities, the Indian people did rally behind their traditional rulers to defend and regain national sovereignty. In these conditions, prevailing these deposed rulers alone could serve as symbols of Indian sovereignty. The contemporary British chroniclers and authorities recognized the phenomenon as such and treated the 1857 uprising as a national rebellion. Though the insurgents were out to place the Mughal Bad Shah on the throne at Delhi and Nawab Wajid Ali Shah at Lucknow, they were far from reviving Indian feudalism or medieval autocracy. These traditional rulers were only treated as symbols while real power lay with the armed insurgent sepoys, drawn from the sturdy peasant stock of India.

The example of Birsa Munda, a tribal hero of the Chotanagpur region of Bihar, and the movement led by him against the British in the last decade of 19th century, demonstrate very well how folklore can play the role of motivator par excellence (Singh 1983). The tribal populace of the region had deep resentment against the usurpation of their land and forestry by the colonial administration. Birsa (1874-1901) spread out the rumour that he had been sent by god to save the Munda race. As a consequence, lots of lore was created to highlight the divinity of Birsa Munda and he was called as Birsa Bhagawan. He declared to put an end to the kingdom of Ravana i.e. the British empire and to burn the effigy of Mandodari (Ravana’s wife) i.e. Queen Victoria. Birsa taught his followers a kind of invocation:

Sirmare firun Raja jai
Dhuratire pudwai Raja jai
(Victory to the Pharaoh(?))
In heaven
And to the titled king (Birsa)
On earth)
In 1914-15, the Oraons of Chhotanagpur were enjoined by divine commands to give up superstitious practices and animal sacrifices, to stop eating meat and drinking liquor, to cease ploughing their fields, and to withdraw their field labour from non-ādivasi landowners. Known as Tana Bhagat movement it “spread from village to village till it extended almost all over the Oraon community at one time.” (Roy 1972:251). It took a nationalist turn, with invocations being made to the enemy of the British at that time, the German baba, with obvious reference to Germany.34

Another such movement occurred in 1921 among the Bhumij of Chotanagpur. A rumour was spread that an incarnated king suggested giving up liquor, fish and meat. The Bhimij tried their best to obey His order. Fortunately, there was a bumper crop in the following year. After three or four years of it, they came to know that the incarnated king was Gandhi Mahatma.

Parallels can be drawn from the appearance of the Devi Salabai of Gujrat who in the name of divine utterance tried to give an ideal nationalist thrust from 1921. She was believed to compel the common people to give up meat, fish and liquor, suggested to maintain cleanliness and boycott foreign clothes and weave cotton clothes with Charkha (the spinning wheel).

When peasant movements were in progress, Romantic nationalism crept side by side which contributed many newspapers, magazines, periodicals to the newly educated citizens, made them aware of their rich cultural heritage and filled their minds with national sentiments. These have been discussed in chapter IV and V.

Thereafter, Mahatma Gandhi and his compatriots appeared in the scene who gave India freedom with untold dedication. The Bengal division, The Jaliwanwala bag massacre, the Chauri Chaura incident, the Satyagrah movement, the Non-Co operation movement, and formation of Azad Hind Fauz, Indian National Army, the Quite India Movement etc bear ample testimonies to it. These have been discussed in chapter VII and VIII.
1.4 SOCIO-CULTURAL SET UP OF ASSAM:

The juxtaposition of various communities with their distinctive cultural features along with a bit of historical background has been cited briefly.

In many ways the foremost of the seven unites comprising the N.E India, Assam is also more or less centrally located in the region. Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh bound it on the north, Nagaland and Monipur on the south - west, and Bangladesh and West - Bengal on the west. The total area of the state is 78.52 K.M. sq. The long and narrow Brahmaputra valley, also called the Assam Valley, stretches across the states from east and west while the small Barak valley forms it's southern adjacent the two hills district - North Cachar and Karbi-Anglong laying in between.

Assam had links with Aryan civilization and culture since ancient times. Known by the names Pragjyotisha and Kamrupa, the total land finds frequent mentioned in the ancient literature, particularly in the Epics and Puranas. Narakasura, Bhagadatta and Bhaskaravarma were kings of ancient Assam who are known to have played significant roles in the political and socio-cultural history of India. While there had been migration of hordes of Aryan settlers at different times, the indigenous population had also come under influence of Aryan religio-cultural modes, giving rise in the process to a very interesting synthesis of Aryan and Indigenous strains.

In medieval period, different parts of Assam were under the Chutias, the Barahis, the Bhuyans and other chieftains but later there arose two very strong ruling powers, the Ahoms in the east and the Koches in the west. The Ahoms of Tai-Shan affiliation originally came here as invaders but soon became completely indigenized and their uninterrupted 600 years rule not only gave the land it's present name but also played a significant role in foregoing it's social and cultural unification. The Koches played a similar role in the western
parts of the land helping not only political consolidation but also in socio-religious and artistic efflorescence.

At present the bulk of the indigenous population is made up of Assamese Hindu among whom the Indo-Mongoloid or Kirata elements is visibly strong in terms of both racial strains and cultural traits, although scholars have also discerned certain Austric and Dravidian ingredients. Various tribal communities - now at different levels of Accultulation, Integration, and Assimilation vis-a-vis the Assamese Hindu society - live in the hills and plains, the chief among them being the Karbis, the Dimasa-Kacharis, the Zemi Nagas, and the Kukis in the hills, and the Bodo-Kacharis, the Mishings, the Tiwas (Lalungs), the Deuris, and the Rabhas in the plains.

Although, Saivism and Saktism (and also Tantrism) have had strong roots here, Neo-Vaishnavism with wonderful spirit liberalization and a synthesis was ushered in under the unique leadership of the great Vaishnavite saint Sankardeva (1449-1568), and its influence on the population has since been both pervasive and abiding. The local Muslim population is also sizable in proportion and there place in, and contributing to, the composite socio-cultural milieu is quite significant and considerable. While there is a small but significant Assamese Sikh community, Christianity has been adopted by a section of the local population, particularly among the tribal groups.\[35\]

1.5 POLITICAL HISTORY OF ASSAM:

Assam has a rich legacy of culture and civilization conjured by the name. Assam is in fact peerless judged by the exquisite natural beauty, cultural richness and humane wealth. Being the homeland of various races of men like Austric, Mongolian, Dravidian and Aryan that came to dwell in her hills and valleys at different time since remote antiquity, Assam has developed a composite culture of variegated colour. The word Assam is interpreted by
some scholars as a formation of Sanskrit derivation 'Asama' meaning peerless or unparalleled.

Assam, the sentinel of the north-east India is most strategically situated, close to India’s international borders with as many as four countries i.e. China, Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It is surrounded on all other sides by predominantly hilly or mountainous tract Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the north, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh on the east and Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura on the South. The state’s climate is of humid tropical type in the plains and sub-alpine in the hills.

Advent of the Ahoms across the eastern hills in 1228 A.D. was the turning point in Assam history. They ruled Assam nearly for six centuries. The Burmese entered through eastern borders and overran the territory at time when court intrigues and dissensions were sapping the vitality of the Ahom royalty. The British appeared soon in 1826 and by the treaty of Yandabu, the Burmese ceded Assam to the British. Under the provisions of the Indian Councils Act, 1861, Assam was tagged with Eastern-Bengal in 1905. The name of the institution was “Legislative Council of Eastern-Bengal and Assam”.

In 1909, the council had strength of 40 members out of which Assam was allotted 5 seats, which was later increased to 34. At that time, Shillong played a crucial role as the capital of Assam since 1874.

Under the Government of India Act, 1919, the strength of the Legislative Council was raised to 53 members with effect from 1 April, 1921 (41 were distributed community wise, 7 officials and 5 non-officials).

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, provisions were made for Legislative Government of Assembly in each province and Assam Legislative Assembly gained strength of 108 members (all were elected).

After the partition of India in 1947, Sylhet district of Assam was transferred to the East Pakistan by a referendum and the strength of the Assembly members was reduced to 71. Again after independence, it was
raised to 108 (77 for general candidates, 5 for scheduled castes, 7 for Plains Tribals and 19 for Hill Tribals).

Nagaland was carved out of Assam in December 1963. With the creation of Meghalaya as a full-fledged state and Mizoram, a Union Territory in 1972, the strength of Assam Legislative Assembly was reduced to 117 but was again raised to 126 in 1978 on the basis of the 1971 Census. In 1974, the capital of Assam was shifted formally from Shillong to Dispur

1.6 HISTORY OF NATIONALISM IN ASSAM

Nationalism before the amalgamation of Assam with the Indian Union is a controversial matter as most of the events lacked the primary requisites of nationalism. Just after the great Yandabu Treaty of 1826, 14th February, nationalistic upsurges took places in various forms in Assam.

"........... Assamese nationalism was a post-British phenomenon. As an ideology and movement it took shape only during second half of the 19th century, when such questions, as the preservation and promotion of the mother tongue, jobs for the sons of the soil and concern over colonial constraints on development, began to stir Assamese minds. Maniram Dewan, a representative of the gentry, gave vent to this nationalism. However, for a more positive beginning of the sustained national movement that followed, one has to turn to his contemporary representatives of the new, English educated, nascent-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata the middle class that were emerging from Assam’s colonial society. Foremost among them was Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-1859)."

Tea plantation in Assam by the east India Company and importation of cheaper labours from Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was a dominating factor to change the socio-economic domain of Assam. Rising of land revenue in order to bring the Assamese peasants to the tea estates, resulted a series of agrarian revolts from 1861 to the last decade of the 19th century.

The first popular movement of Assam, the battle of Phulaguri of 1861, a peasant movement received statewide support. From the beginning of 1869,
Raij-mels were frequently held at Govindapur, Hadira and Bajali of Kamrup district. There was a popular uprising at Rangia on 24th December 1893. The trouble prone areas were Rangia, Nalbari, Barama and Bajali. The popular movement was rounded off by the Patharughatar Ran (the battle of Patharughat) of Darrang district on 28th January 1894, where more than one hundred and fifty people laid down their lives.

The hanging of Piyali Barphukan and Jiuram Duha Barua in Aug.1830 heralded a new dimension in the mass unrests. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 did tremendous impact in Assam too. The revolt under the leadership of Maniram Dewan and his hanging in 1858 were significant events in the over all scenario of Assamese nationalism.

Replacement of the Assamese language from offices schools and courts with the Bengali in 1836 impulsed a vigorous jerking among the litterateurs and the intelligentsia.

It was due to the effort of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and a group of Baptist missionaries with its mouthpiece Orunodoi that the Assamese could reclaim its rightful placein 1873 a.d. A group of young Assamese students established Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha in 1888. The society's journal Jonaki heralded a new era in the history of Assamese literature. Hemchandra Barua, Gunabhiram Barua and Anandaram Dhekial Phukan were the harbingers of this romantic nationalism. Lakshminath Bezbaroa, who tried for the revival of the Mahapurushia cult and the folk treasures, bore fruits in the nationalistic process towards the early part of the twentieth century. Newspapers like the Assam Bilashini (1871), the Mau (1886) and the Assam Bandhu (1885) played a pioneering role in the field of Assamese nationalism as well as journalism.

In the early part of 20th century, Assam went through a series of movements influenced by the Gandhian thoughts. The Satyagraha, the Non cooperation and the Quit India movement witnessed collaborative effort from this region. The conference of Indian National Congress at Pandu in 1926 and the remarkable four times visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Assam accelerated the participation of people. Kanaklata, Mukunda Kakati, Kumali Devi, Kushal Konwar, Bhogeshari Phukanani and many other patriots embraced immature death in the brutal hands of the British in 1942. The writings and speeches of
Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnu Rabha were quite heart rending and thought provoking.

After the independence also, various ethnic movements have been taking place in Assam in the guise of nationalism. But most of them bear the characters of ethnic assertion and sub-nationalism. The conflict between the peoples of this region and the mainland India divides the whole communities into two major divisions: - indigenous and non-indigenous groups. The tribes of Assam, the Ahoms and the Caste Hindus form the first stratum while the Nepalis, the tea workers, the Bengalis, the Marowaris, the Biharis and the immigrant Muslim peasants fall into the second. The second step of tension is between the tribal and the non-tribal groups. In the next step, the intercommunal disputes and anarchies come to the political history of Assam. Ancestral property right, traditional job crisis and the fear of losing one's culture are the basic issues to augment sub-nationalism in this region. In one word, xenophobia has been creeping into the minds of the natives. Neglect by the economic decision makers; land encroachment by immigrants and the feeling of the natives that their culture and identity are in jeopardy by the controlling economic forces- are the factors responsible for this. "One state one nation" thinking and the dominant tendency in "Mainland" India to take the degree of Aryanisation as the measure of Indianisation"37 . Now, each community is absorbed to reconstruct and fabricate its own history and folklore. Ignored is the fact that a nation and a state are two different entities. The tendency is to view the state as a nation and ignore the fact that some communities, especially tribal, have a culture and religion of their own 38

Reputed sociologist Walter Fernandes observes in his paper "The impact of Globalization on the North-East" as-

Land and Jobs are the thread linking the conflicts that follow. Many communities of the region react to what they consider attacks on their livelihood and rewrite their history in order to declare themselves the original inhabitants of a given area and lay exclusive claims to its resources. For example, both the Dimasa and the Naga claim Dimapur as a land they once ruled. Alienation of land, culture and identity and the resultant indigenous claims are the bases of the Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur (Fernandes and
Bharali2002:52-55), the Bodo-Santhal and Dimasa-Hmar tension in Assam (The Telegraph, 23rd April 2003), the Tripura tribal demand for a homeland (Bhaumik2003:84) and the Assam Movement that was built around the fear of land and job loss to the immigrants (Behal 2002:147-148)
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. ibid, 2


4. ibid, 19

5. ibid, 22-23


7. K.L. Sharma, op.cit, 169

8. ibid, 171-172

9. Birendranath Datta, “Ethnicity, Nationalism and Sub-Nationalism and Sub-Natalism: With Special Reference to North-East India” in Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India, (Guwahati: OMSONS publications, 1990), 35-36

10. B. Pakem, Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India, (Guwahati: OMSONS Publications, 1990), 45

12. ibid, 2


19. ibid, 830


23. ibid, 46.

24. Chandrika Singh, op. cit, 21

25. ibid

26. ibid, 27


28. Blackburn, op.cit, 157-158


30. ibid, 5

31. ibid, 46-47

32. ibid, 15-16

33. Sharma, op.cit,

34. ibid


37. Birendranath Datta, op.cit, 41

38. Chandrika Singh, op.cit, 234

39. Walter Fernandes in his paper, "The impact of globalization on the North-East" presented on 19th May, 2005 at Tezpur