PREFACE

When I look back, I realise that my journey towards this thesis and topic had started long ago, in my childhood. My first touch with life was the lullaby sung to put me to sleep. As my cognitive faculties developed I learnt to speak my first language and gradually I found myself believing in the values of honesty, integrity of Ram, Krishna and Guru Nanak. Similarly, I found myself believing in the value of truth as the ultimate aim worthy of realisation and then I got sent to a formal school.

The one most significant difference I noticed was the different cultural backgrounds of peers' inter-se and the teachers. The impact that had on their approach to teaching and relating not only to the group as a whole but also with each student at the individual level was discernible. I found myself wondering and questioning that why teaching of the same subject by same set of teachers from the same books have different impacts on each student in learning and responding beyond a point? However, I could never understand the why aspect.

After my professional training in Education from Panjab University, I moved from my native place Ludhiana to Delhi for pursuing Masters in Social Work. The University of Delhi gave me ample opportunities to interact on national and also international level. Cultural Plurality was seen within the Capital of India in general and in the Department of Social Work in particular, which helped me to understand and gauge diverse cultures. As I continued with my educational process and came across different set of learner groups I observed the same pattern at all levels of teaching and learning.

After marriage, being a member of the armed forces family, it further helped me to explore more into culturally diverse environments. Packing
and unpacking after every two years and widely traveling from U.P., Assam, West Bengal, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Jammu, Ladakh gave me innumerable occasions and chances to get to know the multicultural environment. Interactions with our friends and kids’ friends and their parents also provided a view to different customs, food, festivals and other culture specific behaviour.

Along with taking care of my two daughters and also fulfilling the responsibilities as a member of a family in the armed forces, I made use of my interest while interacting and organising social activities and found a lot of diversity in recipes, folk songs, dances and also celebrated many rituals and festivals together. I also gained academically during this period and completed my Masters in Literature from Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar University, Agra.

In January 2008, my husband got posted to Tezpur and we moved to Tezpur on a three year plus posting unlike the normal one and half to two year tenure. In an informal discussion with my husband’s friend, Dr. Rajiv Doley I got introduced to Department of Cultural Studies, Tezpur University. This was an absolute God sent opportunity in terms of availability of a Department of Cultural Studies in one of the top universities of the country, a reputed faculty and an ever so encouraging Vice Chancellor. Finally, I got myself admitted as a Ph.D student in August 2008.

With my previous education and experience as a teacher and as a member of armed forces, my responses to the diversity of cultures and its impact on the teaching learning process, at the individual level as well as a group helped in the formulation of my initial hypothesis. This understanding was further cemented during my course work in the discipline of cultural studies. Through various out station field work trips into the interior and far flung areas of Assam and Arunachal
Pradesh, interactions and discussions with faculty members and through the formal course study, I was initiated into the methodological intricacies of my area of interest. The opportunity to explore the Role of Folklore in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, topic for my thesis, came as an opportunity that has helped me explore the domain of folklore in my quest to find an answer to questions that had been formulated over the years.

My research experience is presented in this thesis which has been structured into five chapters:

Chapter I Introduction: The introductory chapter reviews available literature in the area and generates a theoretical paradigm against which the research work was carried forward. It states the aim and the scope of the work.

Chapter II Folklore and Pedagogy: The second chapter explores the relationship of folklore with pedagogy as it has evolved across time in diverse locales of the world against the background of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Chapter III Folklore and Pedagogy: The Indian Traditions: The third chapter is a study of the role and status of folklore in the Indian pedagogic tradition and how it has evolved over the years. It focuses attention on Gandhi and Tagore's models of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Chapter IV Theory and Practice: An Interface: The fourth chapter is an interface with the theoretical paradigm evolved from the study with field experience and is an exploration of the possible contours that pedagogic strategies can take in a real life situation.

Chapter V Conclusion: The final chapter concludes the study by reviewing the trajectory that the research had taken and by relating the findings of the research with the initial objectives.
In conclusion, I would share that the results of my research have left me excited and there are many findings and data which could not be accommodated within the premises of this work, but, which I hope will point out to a continuous engagement with the domain of culture and pedagogy.