CHAPTER-III

IDENTITY AND FOLKLORE: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

3.0 Introduction:

Folklore means knowledge of the people, when a change happens to the folk, folklore automatically gets affected. If folk changes lore also changes. The meaning of folklore can be understood from following definitions:

3.1 Folklore:

Exploring folklore Archer Taylor stated that

Folklore consists of materials that are handed on traditionally from generation to generation without a reliable ascription to an inventor or author. Although proverbs, ballads, and other items of folklore are often credited to a particular person, this is itself a stylistic peculiarity of the genre, and the individual's claims are ordinarily dubious in the extreme..............The study of folklore consists in the collection, classification, and interpretation of these traditional materials. Classification involves interpretation to some extent. Interpretation seeks to discover the origin, meaning, use, and history of these materials, to state and explain their dissemination, and to describe their stylistic peculiarities. (Harper: 1059: 263)

Stith Thompson explained that

Although the word folklore is more than a century old, no exact agreement has ever been reached as to its meaning. The common idea present in all folklore is that of tradition, something handed down from one person to another and preserved either by memory or practice rather than written record. It involves the dances, songs, tales, legends, and traditions, the beliefs and superstitions, and the proverbial sayings of peoples everywhere. It also includes studies of customs, of traditional agricultural and domestic practices, types of buildings and utensils, and traditional aspects of the social organization; but for these latter aspects seems to be a general agreement to consider them, when found in a primitive or pre-literate society, as a part of ethnology rather than folklore. This latter division of labor is largely a matter of convenience and is not universally accepted. At least among literate people, all the subjects mentioned above are considered as folklore since all of them are truly traditional. (Harper: 1059: 264)
Folklore is the knowledge of the people whereas folk life is the way of life of the folk, which was known as the regional ethnology in the past. In 1846 when William John Thoms introduced the word folklore, it covered the intangible part of the folk culture and the word folk life meant material folk culture. While we understand the word folklore in context the English word Folklore is little bit different from the German word vollkskunde, Swedish word folk mine and the Indian word lok sahitya, and lok kala.

Folklorists themselves resorted to enumerative, intuitive, and operational definitions; yet, while all these certainly contributed to the clarification of the nature of folklore, at the same time they circumvented the main issue, namely, the isolation of the unifying thread that joins jokes, myths, gestures and legends, costumes and music into a single category of knowledge. (Amos: 2004: 2).

The various scholars started the analysis of folkloric material before the invent of the word folklore. (নর্থা: ২০১৬: ০২). The term folklore was invented later than the physical forms of folk songs, proverbs, riddles, tales, ballads, superstitions, customs which a group of people observed and observing throughout the generations without writing it down or without documenting. These folk forms are running under different umbrella terms. At that time these groups are not recognized as folk and the word folklore was also not invented. But unknowingly or knowingly these materials are using for ages without recognizing their actions, functions or formation. And without the knowledge that these inherited items have to be documented, otherwise, these will be wiped out from the society. During the time of creation, they are made for various reasons such as, for entertaining, for passing the leisure time, for sharing the knowledge and for valuing each other’s emotions of the society. They are happy with each other; there is no requirement of showing their culture to others. But when it comes to identity, this
material becomes heritage; the community needs to scrutinize their important folklore for focusing them in front of other. A folk song or a dance can be performed on a television network or in other visual media with its own style but sometimes it is performed with modified style and form, because it has to compete with others, which is an irrelevant topic in case of folk performances. Competition for folk performances is possible if it is competing with its own folk performances, it is impossible to compete with a folk song of the other community. All folk performances have its own style and charm and manners. A folk performance finds a audience with the help of electronic media, but it will continuously lose its simplicity and anonymity which is quite obvious. For surviving a folk material in the world it cannot be limited to some people only. If a folk material has universal character then it will be recognized by the world and the importance and the function will be admired universally. A folklore material is purposefully considered whether it is for asserting identity or for entertainment or for feeling uniqueness in the world.

The Grimm brothers collections of folk Marchen were not unique to the Germans, but they were part of the heritage of other European people too. From details analysis, it was revealed that these materials were linked to the ethos of peoples which reflect their continuity and national distinctiveness. On the other hand, it can be said that different people have common and similar culture. (Georges: 1995: 41)

Folklore located in several societies can have their origin in their ancestor society from which these societies are evolved. Each societal offshoot had preserved and continued a familiar deposit of ancestral traditions. All had fainted and continued as shared ancestral folklore as a manner that these are related to only one respective community and as they are historically evolved. (Ibid: 42)
Finally, unlike written literature music and fine arts, folklore forms and texts are performed repeatedly by different peoples on various occasions. The performance situation, in the final analysis, is the crucial content of performance can be varied, whether it can be a private party or a public event, whether it is performed for amusement, or for identifying a group amongst the numbers or for sharing knowledge. By considering the functions and context Don Ben Amos stated in his book that “folklore is one of these three: a body of knowledge, a mode of thought or a kind of art.” (Amos: 2004: 4). The existence of folklore depends on its social context, whether it may be a geographic, linguistic, ethnic, or occupational grouping (Ibid: 4). Don Ben Amos argued that for being categorized as folklore it has to be orally transmitted at least partially, the circulation should be verbally at least for once. Any other medium is liable to disqualify the materials from being folklore. In his book, he explained from the two points of view one is from social context and medium of transmission and another one belongs to the body of knowledge, mode of thought and kind of art. He illustrated his thought like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Context</th>
<th>Time depth</th>
<th>Medium of transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Communal possession</td>
<td>Antiquity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought</td>
<td>Collective representation</td>
<td>Survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Communal creation or recreation</td>
<td>Antiquity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the social context, knowledge is possessed in the community from the antique period through verbal transmission. Therefore, folklore is used for collective
representation which is inherited in surviving strategies of a group through verbal transmission.

Folklore is the action of activities based on what had happened at the time of creation. The artistic action involves creativity and aesthetic response. Folklore in that sense is a social interaction via the art media and differs from other modes of speaking and gesturing. The distinction is based upon sets of cultural conventions, recognized and adhered to by all the members of the group, which separate folklore from non-art communication. In other words, the definition of folklore is not merely an analytical construct, depending upon arbitrary exclusion and inclusion of items. On the contrary, it has a cultural social base. Folklore is not “pretty much what one wants to make out of it.” It is a definite realistic, artistic and communicative process. The locus of the conventions marking the boundaries between folklore and non-folklore is in the text, texture, and context of the forms to apply Dunde’s three levels for the analysis of folklore in somewhat modified form. (Amos: 2004: 12) Although folklore is a distinct category in terms of social interaction patterns and communication media, it is not necessarily recognized by the culture as a separate concept. In fact, within the cognitive system, its forms may be classified into such apparently unrelated categories as history, tradition, dance, music, games, and tales. The reason for this categorization is inherent in the nature of the folkloristic communication itself. Folklore, like any other art, is a symbolic kind of action. Its forms have symbolic significance reaching far beyond the explicit content of the particular text, melody or artifact. The very syntactic and semantic structure of the text, the special recitative rhythm of presentation and the time and locality in which the action happens may have symbolic implications for which the text itself cannot account. Consequently, it quite plausible that in their classification of
these materials, people will use as a criterion not the symbolic mode of the form, but its reference. We make folklore limited to a small group of the people only by using as an identity symbol. Always the context of folklore is a small group. The concept of folk has become almost synonymous with the group. (Amos: 2004: 13).

The Contextual study has and would demonstrate that oral performance does not prevent complex verbal creations. In that sense, the study of folklore in its cultural and situational context does not only broaden the empirical field of research but also provides the basis for explanation and exploration of the diversity of verbal creativity in society. (Amos: 2004: 31).

The ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that members of the community bring with them into a communicative event of folklore are an essential part of the verbal statement that a speaker makes. (ibid: 162).

### 3.2 The Concept of Folk:

The term folk can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is - it could be a common occupation, language or religion- what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own. In their, a group must consist of at least two persons, but generally, most groups consist of many individuals. 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. (Dundes: 1996: 11)

Alan Dundes in his article “who are the folk” defined folk by including following traits into the folk:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Savage or primitive</th>
<th>Folk or peasant</th>
<th>Civilized or elite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre or Non- literate</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Literate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower stratum</td>
<td>Upper stratum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ibid: 4)
In the past time, the folk were recognized as a group of the people who formed the lower layer of the society. They were the uncivilized section in a civilized society. On the contrary, they were opposite to savage or primitive society, which was considered lower on the evolutionary ladder. The marginalized section of the society was recognized as folk in European countries and in Western country peasant society was recognized as folk. Peasant society was recognized as the preserver of the antique culture of the evolutionary stage. The word folk realized as “the illiterate in a literate society” (Dundes: 1996: 4). Primarily folk was understood in comparison to the civilized or elite, where a civilized or elite group existed folk was presumed to exist there.

In modern days the term folk can be referred to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. And the connection may be through an occupation, language or religion. Nowadays, a summer camp can constitute a folk group by creating its own traditions, songs, stories celebrations. So, many of these folk groups may be considered as part-time folk. According to Alan Dundes, the folk of the modern days is literate. There can be two distinctions rural folk and urban folk. Member of the folk is not limited to a family or a religion or a religious occupational or ethnic group (Dundes: 1996:17).

3.3 Expression of identity through folklore:

Folklore both forms and expresses group identity through the interaction of group members and interaction with other groups. Understanding the formation and expressive culture of groups allows us to recognize that folklore is not simply objects, behaviors or stories. It is an active process that allows groups of people to express their values and beliefs, form and convey their values and beliefs, form and convey their identities, and even tests the limits of what a group accepts. Without understanding groups, we can’t interpret folklore-it is groups that bring folklore to life. (Sims: 2005: 63)
3.3.1 Folklore as a way to identify the distinctiveness of a community:

For explaining the topic “folklore and identity” the researcher is trying to show how folklore is used as a way to identify a community as separate from other. In this paper, the researcher is trying to show how folklore is used in the construction of other in respect of constructing selfhood of a Community. Folk expression in the form of art, games, dances, folktales delivers an idea about the worldview of that particular community. These folk expressions make spiritual feeling that the people of that particular community belong to one community. The folklore of a community is sometimes shaped according to the need of the time and designed for getting the expectations of the people. In most cases of local traditions, most often various folk customs are spontaneously renewed at the local level, in village communities. The original functions of former customs are naturally entirely transformed in the course of this “renewal.”

3.3.2 Construction of identity through folklore

The folklorist tries to explore things whatever already know by others and to know which community these folk elements belong to. The folklorist analyze the folk element in order to communicate and to anticipate adequately each other’s action. In a situation like Sarania Kachari, sometime folklore is not traditional; sometimes it is the creation of the moment. Folklore is used to maintain the stability of culture whether it is renewed to have the changes or to go with the changes. Folk culture is a self-subsistent unit; a whole group sharing the same folk culture does not have to prove the authenticity of the culture. When an identity of a tribe rise it express itself with the traits of the particular location of the tribe, for representing its identity the interest factor of
the people of the group should have in mind. So, ethnic identity is socially constructed as a way of representation.

Folklore confirms the social existence of a community. The ethnic communities of Assam are marginalized within the dominant force of Assamese. On the eve of the ethnic resurgence among ethnic communities, oral literature and folk materials emerges as the way of survival. For this study, the researcher has to rely on the various interviews with the old renowned people and the public of the community and people from outside the community.

3.3.3 **Folklore as an instrument for social change:**

Any spontaneous response of the people in physical and social environment that goes into the shaping of the material and non-material aspect of cultural heritage is folklore (Islam: 1985: 322). Folklore is not just a thing of the past; the creation of folklore is a continuous process. Folklore is always lively which provide an instrument for social change. By knowing the folklore of a community, one can understand the changing pattern of the society. The dynamism and power is the universal character of the folklore. A must have character of the folk element is that it is anonymous. But sometimes in the modern context, if it is documented in written form or if the name of the author is known it cannot be anonymous.

3.3.4 **Folklore as the deeper layer of the collective memory:**

The distinguishing feature of folklore is that it illustrates a deeper layer of the collective memory and interprets the happening as a motion of contradictory dualities. Even in complicated society, folklore is always in the making and though folklore is a way of communication it is also a form of spiritual union; it has surrounded in it the
elements of identification and instantiation of acceptance and rejection. In a folk group, people relate to one another as total personalities within a communal context. (Islam: 1985: 323) Traditions, customs, rituals, and beliefs always govern the social life of a folk group. Each member of the community is bonded strongly through traditions and folk customs. Sometime in the same group, there are so many variations of a folk element which does not threatening to its existence whether the existence of variants makes rich the folklore of the society. It becomes more powerful and livable through the generations come.

3.3.5 The modern context of changing folklore is to create an identity:

For creating the identity of a community through folklore, the community focuses on some particular folk elements. Therefore, folklore is recreated or regenerated from past experiences. A crisis of identity forces to change folklore. It is the demand of time that community has to know about their past and try to identify themselves with past. Folklore belong to past, it keeps changing with time.

3.3.6 The whole society is shaped with folklore:

Though tradition is unchanging and static part of the past, they also have a connection to the present. Those who use them by relating to the contemporary social and cultural situation are changing traditions. It is a continuous process that folklore causes changes in the society and as the society make changes in folklore. Folklore is the creation of the society. So the authority of society over folklore is greater than the authority of folklore on the society. Folklore is one of the many forces that are crafted by the society. This force acts powerfully that the whole society is shaped by it. The role of myths, the function of proverb tales, riddles, and the influence of epic in oral
forms is no less important than any written literature in the past. Folklore is not static; it keeps changing with the time getting influenced by other culture. Acknowledgement to the uniqueness of diversity of minority identities can reduce the social conflict. It copes with the new environment of new culture. The transmission of ethnicity into nationalism is partly a matter of converting the cultural traditions of everyday life into more specific historical states.

All give the potential for immediate contact with others whom we recognize as "like ourselves," and a related sense of belonging with those who share our categories and who recognize and respond positively to our immediate intuitive distinctions. But while, in practice, the embodied categories carry this emotional charge, analytically the formation of shared experiences and the "warm" sense of group belonging and solidarity may be explained coolly, in terms of core social variables. (Modood culture and identity: Modood Tariq: 434)

3.3.7 Folklore an active agent of social change:

Disfigurement of the elements of folklore by the folk does not cause death to it; rather it enlivens them to a new bond of life. The dynamic character of folklore makes folklore adaptable during urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. Folklore is the creation of the human mind- society is also the creation of the human being- so if the society changes then it is obvious that folklore also changes. It cannot remain static. Due to the impact of modernization, the element of folk life has taken a new form to cope up with the time.

Folklore is both benefactor and beneficiary- it is an active agent of social change, as well as an excited and lively receptor of the changes taking place in the society. The many-faced role of folklore is its real strength; it is a dynamic force of culture. (Islam: 1985: 353)
Jawaharlal Handoo made his statement regarding urbanization and industrialization was that:

Urbanization and industrialization made old tradition connected with the rural life of the agriculture-based communities, who more often than not, were the actual carriers of the tradition, of less interest to the ever-changing frame of the new society in which the folk as well as their lore as always on the move. In this scenario, the link between the past and the present was not entirely broken and in fact, this phenomenon, on the other hand, created new possibilities of social interaction and the creation of new folklore and oral tradition based on the old tradition. (Handoo: 2000: 221)

3.3.8 Folklore reconstructs the spiritual history of man:

The extent of folklore is to reconstruct the spiritual history of man by analyzing the voices of the folk. In this task, it illustrates the oral history or written documents over the generation to generation. One cannot deny the ability to understand of a folk narrative for a native user which is better than the others. Through folklore, a folk group continues their communications which are still in circulation without knowing the time from when.

3.3.9 Folklore is artistic communication in small groups:

Folklore can be found in any communication process i.e. musical, kinetic or dramatic. It is not necessary for the people themselves make the conceptual connection between their melodies, masks, and tales. From the cultural point of view these are separate phenomenon unrelated to each other or connected to each other, not created together and not available in the similar situation. But they are culturally recognized because of their qualitative uniqueness in relation to other methods of communication
in the respective media of sound, motion, and vision. They are important in making identity because of their artistic communicative qualities. Folklore communicates with members of the group face to face and that makes strong ethnic feeling amongst the people. When a piece of folk material is recognized regionally, nationally or internationally, its actual existence depends upon such small group situations. It may popular among the particular small group but it comes to recognize as an identity marker amongst the other group of people, it has to be improved, stylized though it may lose its folklore character which is inevitable in such chaotic circumstances. (Amos: 2004: 14) Folklore is true to its own nature when it takes place within the group itself. In sum, folklore is artistic communication in small groups.

According to this paragraph, it is meant that the way of existence in the present situation will decide the folkloristic quality of an element. If a song, tale, or riddle is used successfully for communicating within the group in a particular context or for asserting its identity, it is successful as folklore and appearing in print media it can enhance the identity process in a wide way. If a popular melody or belief or a joke that has been incorporated into the artistic process in a small group situation in folklore, it is not surprising that it can be wiped out from the present context. Or if these particular traits are not accepted for fulfilling the need of the present context then the communication process would fail. (Ibid: 16)

3.3.10 Folklore as reshaping tools:

Folklore as a serious discipline is fast widening its horizons and applying its reshaped tools to such complex phenomena as discourse and ideologies and pain and power, ethnic identity, cultural globalization, narration and communication, the
semiotics of humour and hero, and the tradition of representation of the self and the other. (Handoo: 2000: 219)

As Assam is a multicultural state the distinction of culture, tradition and rituals, belief systems, festivals, customs prevailed in the society make a hazardous situation rather than making the society unite. They are confusing elements rather than making well. With the help of these elements, different groups tried to be separated from other and try to assert their distinctiveness as a separate ethnic group. As the unified state of traditional village society mirrored in it’s believes, customs and rituals so that the breaking up of the society in areas demonstrating unrest is mirrored in the broken rituals, customs, and beliefs of that society. The social disintegration is the result of cultural decomposition. Loss of a dynamic, vital folk tradition and folklore has destabilized the moral ties between individuals. The main function of the folklore is to maintain the stability of the culture. The difference in customs, traditions that are originated from folklore shape the distinct and rich culture of Assam and due to which the formation of disharmony occur. And every ethnic group nowadays trying to enlightens their vibrant culture. Social identity is processed through interaction with others which constitutes symbolic boundary regarding us and other. Social identity defines our present.

Due to the impact of mass media and commercialization of folklore the world has become homogenous, local tradition of a corner of the world can be found in another part. Some folk art has universal appeal whether many folk elements slowly has faded away from the society due to the unusual character. The character of folklore has undergone a change with the mobility of folk within the country though it is learned from generation to generation. Some old traits of folklore have to be made for
adjustment with the change of the society. Social change does not displace folklore but it makes more adjustable.

3.4 Identity:

The term “Identity” first appeared with folklore in the title of an essay in the Journal of American folklore, Richard Bauman’s “Differential identity and the social base of folklore” in 1971. (211: Oring). In the article “Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore” Richard Bauman explained that folklore is recognized as being shared within group boundaries and made distinctive by this esoteric sharing. (Bauman: 32)

Identity-narrative as are the reports of (sometimes the performance of) the arrangement and rearrangement of these blocks of meaning. Identity formation and change is thus a continuous process that involves a considerable degree of intentionality. It takes place by the incorporation of new elements of embodied meaning and value, or the rearrangement of old. New elements may be created, not exnihilò but by the choice to foreground particular practices and relations rather than others, so that over time the meanings embedded in these practices become an integral part of the self, while others fade. (Modood culture and identity: Modood Tariq: 437)

Identity change is motivated when socio-political changes bring the elements of collective identity type into the evident contradiction of whole population. Then individuals tend to alternate the elements of their identity. The choosable identity is depended on the majority of the population. And this is the cause of political effects in case of Sarania kachari. Changes occur due to outside intervention of other groups and some internal intervention due to political reason. Ethnic groups like Boro, Karbi, Dimasa are following the same roots but they consider themselves as separate ethnic groups. Their languages are different from each other but the folk culture has some similarity.
Thus it is seen that in the tribal scene two diametrically opposite processes may operate- one where the tribals are trying to emulate the Hindu way of life and the other when the tribals are making the conscious effort to reinforce their own traditional socio-cultural systems. (Choudhuri: 1943: 435)

If one portion of people feeling deprived and neglected by the other portion of people due to their social upgradation, then it is their right to fight for their right. Identity has many sociological dimensions. Ethnic identity is one of them. Change of social identity is the result of social-transformation. Social transformation is caused by changes in practices. A community chooses identity according to their choices. They know what they want. Meaning of cultural social practices changes for the people with the time. For obtaining social and political aims, differences are created in cultural ways or in livelihood by the people who are in power. Seeking different identity is the result of suppression, Issues of power and isolation. Differences are created on the basis of political and social needs.

The matter of identity is not an attenuate formal realm. On the contrary, the self-image of all social actors is thoroughly elaborated. Identity is also structured. It is clear that identity has many aspects which derive from certain sources and find expression in particular social contexts. Identity is not a single homogenous stock of traits, images, and habits. (Preston: 1997: 4)

The notion of identity can be unpacked in terms of the ideas of local, network and memory and in each of these spheres the establishment of a particular identity flows from the routine dynamic exchanges of persons. Identities are socially made, they are not a private consumer construct from available elements with others, and in the background will stand the collectivity. One could think of identity as a shifting balance
between what is privately remembered and what is currently publicly demanded. Identity is thus always shifting. It is never fixed. (Ibid: 5)

Therefore, identity has a shared character which can be found in people’s common behaviour, common interest and which is derived from common experiences. According to Deepak Chauhan in his article, “The search for ethnic identity and the problem of violence with special reference to Assam” stated that an identity is constructed when a group of people decides to live in one identity, for identity is not a ready-made thing. It is constructed in and through the interaction of the people, in the given socio-economical context, taking into consideration what is preserved in history and tradition in a given culture.

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices they represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematical the very authority and authenticity to which the term, ’cultural identity’, lays claim. (HALL: 1996: 222)

Identity always is in making as it is the production of socio cultural-situation occurs in a community life. Due to this, the problem of identity is long lasting. Cultural identity actually exists in many communities. And people of that community shares it commonly. The influential and resourceful force of cultural identity continues its strength on marginalized people.

Cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return. Of course, it is not a mere phantasm either. It is something - not a mere trick of the imagination. It has its histories - and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past',
since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental 'law of origin'. (HALL: 1996: 226) This second sense of difference challenges the fixed binaries which stabilize meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed but keeps on moving to encompass other, additional or supplementary meanings, which, as Norris puts it elsewhere, 'disturb the classical economy of language and representation'. Without relations of difference, no representation could occur. But what is then constituted within representation is always open to being deferred, staggered, serialized. (229) It is because this New World is constituted for us a place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins', to be one again with the mother, to go back to the beginning. (HALL: 1996: 236)

For understanding the relationship between the folklore and identity the researcher has to discuss the two concepts differently. The meaning of ethnic identity can be understood by following the concept of ethnicity.

3.5 Theory of Ethnic Nationality:

The researcher tries to depict the picture of emerging ethnic nationality in a folk group and how folklore functions in case of generating ethnic feelings and at last the communication between folklore and identity by pointing like following lines-

Folk – ethnic feeling (formation of the concept of other with similarities and differences) -- identity crisis (lack of confidence, increase of self-consciousness) – nationality

Folklore- folk group-ethnic group—shared folklore-shared identity- national identity
When some people live together for a long time, they form a common culture and they live their life together. But, when they feel the disturbances from outside and feel a threat to their political, economic right for living in the greater world. They try to compare themselves with other communities of the world. They try to study other developed communities. The ethnic feeling starts rising in their heart. The matter of shared culture and commonness play an important role to make their ethnic identity. Identity crisis is the result of fear of losing one’s own identity in front of others. When a group of people feels they are one and they have to live united, they search their root in folklore which makes them strong in front of others.

3.6 Definition of Ethnicity:

Identity is related to ethnicity. Different writers and analyzers analyze ethnicity and identity differently. According to Fredrich Barth an ethnic group is largely biologically self-perpetuating, an ethnic group shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms, it makes up a field of communication and interaction and it has a membership which identifies itself and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. (Barth: 2008: 10-11)

Rajat Ganguly quoted about ethnic group in the article “Identity Politics and Statehood Movements in India” like this-

We define an ethnic group as either—a large or small group of people, in either traditional or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress, and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong
psychological sentiment of belonging to the group (Taras and Ganguly 2006:1). Moreover, ethnic groups can be either homelands societies or diaspora communities. Homelands societies usually make territorial claims over the area where they live based on long-term residence. By contrast, Diaspora communities are mostly concerned with protecting and promoting the political, economic and socio-cultural rights and opportunities of their members in a foreign country (Esman 1994). In this study, we are concerned only with homeland societies. (quoted in Ganguly: 1
cfsindia.org.in/.../Identity%20Politics%20Statehood%20Movements%20in%20India....)

Ethnicity is generally defined in terms of shared past, cultural traditions, religion, languages, and identity. Put simply, ethnicity involves the positive feelings of identification with a cultural group or community. (Momin: 2009: 4)

In modern society, the phrase “ethnic groups” is used to describe cultural minorities within a nation-state. (Chryssochoou: 2004: xxiii) Culture flourishes from our recognition that they represent a set of beliefs, modes of thinking and practices that are peculiar to them and different from others. Some cultures are more inclusive (e.g., Western culture), others refer to a small group of people (e.g., Basque culture), but each one of them is important for its members because it represents the way construct their social reality and provides them with action alternatives. (Chryssochoou: 2004: xxii)

“Ethnic groups” describe a particular culture in a nation or region that contains others. Ethnicity is based on cultural similarities (among members of the same ethnic group) and differences (between that group and others). Ethnic distinctions can arise from language, religion, history, geography, kinship or race. A race is an ethnic group assumed to have a biological basis. (Conrad: 2000: 113)
Pamela Paglia commented on ethnic identity by emphasizing on common origin and ancestry like that:

Some ethnic identities share common cultural origins, ancestry, and language, but still, they consider themselves different. The work of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth is essential in explaining ethnicity not as a matter of objective cultural differences, but as a matter of recognition and differentiation among ethnic identities. Barth argues that ethnic groups are separated from each other by ‘boundaries’ which “are drawn by social behavior which is relevant to the recognition of membership, and to the drawing of distinctions; the cultural ‘items’ which are used to make this distinction vary, and may be only a small part of the cultural repertoire (collection) of a particular group.”

Identity and ethnic identity, in particular, is self-defined and open to change. Therefore, we should not assume someone else’s ethnicity on the basis of limited information, nor should we assign an ethnicity to someone without asking them how they like to be described. People from minority ethnic background increasingly prefer to describe themselves in terms of their new identities, their mixed identities or their national identity. So terms such as African-Irish, Polish-Northern Irish, Nigerian-British, Indian-Irish, Black-Irish will become more commonly used. This should be encouraged as it denotes a sense of belonging in a community as much as a personal identity. For this reason, we use the term minority ethnic background to acknowledge the changeable but still concrete nature of a person’s ethnic identity. (CHAPTER TWO Working with young people from a minority ethnic background all Ireland .pdf www.youth.ie/.../ Chapter%202%20-%20working%20with%20 young%20. p.4)

Identity Crisis:

The effect of the identity crisis is not limited to India only; the problem of ethnic identity crisis is all over the world. Identity crisis has affected the country like Bangladesh, India, USSR, Somalia, Australia etc. Many countries have to witness
identity disorder. One of the main causes of the destruction of the former USSR is suffering from identity crisis by small nationalities. These identity movements are based on political goals, availability of resources and in other way social conflicts, and its history. The political or economic goal leads social conflicts which are based on its past history. Whatever the activating issue, this identity making is a strategy to attain political and economic goals.

They comment on the established political structures as corrupt or dominated. They need public space for making their association with public and other communities for establishing their indigenous based community, to communicate with other people. Identity movement of a particular community starts in a repressive condition. The activities strategically form an identity, these identities are formed on the public spaces which may be a popular folk ceremony or ritual or festival. The expectation of organizing the ceremonies or public events during the identity crisis is that by observing or participating in these kinds of events people understand their nationality and their insight towards ethnicity will raise. Taking participation in this kind of event they are framing the current situation for their future efforts. These tribal communities feel marginalized in respect of educational, employment, political, economic opportunities. Therefore, various marginalized groups understand their position in the society and start cultural, social and economic revival with the various survival strategies with the help of the different organization. These identity movements are the part of these strategies of development and acquiring their rights as like other developed communities. The common masses develop a collective understanding and common vision towards their goals. The social network of the community will be based on their shared history and culture and belief systems.
The formation of us and them implies the unity in groups people and their similarities and shared characters, whereas it again implies the differences with others or the dominant communities from which they want to be separated.

The identity evolves in surrounding context by competing with others. The identity inherits from the small communities rise when the large identities imagine themselves sovereign, united and integrated. The identity what they make by insecure feeling exist in their blood and consideration. The isolated and marginalized feeling give rise a conscious class who morally explain the consequences of the situation. (Biswas: 2008: 282)

3.6.1 The power factor always works in a powerful manner for determining the identity of a group:

A clear notion of present situation can help to constitute the future agenda in identity formation. The strength of identity involves in its background of feeling and how others take the emotion of that community. The power factor always works in a powerful manner for determining the identity of a group. The power factor includes the elite people or political leaders. The social domination regarding the identity of an ethnic group and fulfillment of some self-determining factor can create problems.

It is a whole agency who arranges the concept of reasserting their identity by articulating their traits which are practiced. The autonomy movements are against the state machinery which involves small identities claiming sovereignty, territory and institutional power for their control over their society. The authenticity of an ethnic community is based on its own vibrant culture. An ethnic community cannot claim
statehood or administrative power in front of the government without proving its distinctiveness.

The need for affirmation of identity in North-East India arose from contesting the culturally dominant identity that came to be imposed upon them through a statist mechanism. The statist concept of Indian nationhood did not have any legitimate grounding within these communities except by the wielding of state power. The percolation of the influence of other dominant ethnic communities in the civic sphere also became a contestable terrain for native communities. So, there was threefold mediation from above by the state: i/ construction of a defined ethnic identity in and through state power. ii/ legitimizing such a state-defined identity by including it within an Indian identity. ii/ percolating dominance of other communities in the ethnic sphere and thereby trying to merge the lines between the ethnic and the civic. (Biswas: 251)

The attempt of the state to construct a defined identity was contested by constructing a self-definition with greater latitude. ‘Nationalism’ in the case of various North-East communities assumed a sovereign and independent homeland, undercutting the threads of Indian statist nationalist definition. So far as legitimization of such well-defined identities within the state was concerned, the identities interrogated the legitimacy of the Indian state itself. (Biswas: 251)

3.7 Folklore as an instrument to Create Nationalism:

Controversy and the identity of Assamese: The indigenous communities are always affecting the notion of being Assamese. The perception of ethnic communities of being local always dominates the Assamese Hindu people. In the present complex situation, identity is nourished among modern versus past, the struggle of ancient community with the new one, the past and the present, tradition, and modernity are
present in the concept of identity. The desire for recognition as a separate group is the cause of ethnic, linguistic and cultural struggle of the groups. When other community or state will recognize them as a separate group, their aims will be fulfilled. In respect of Assam, the ethnic identity movements are the most frequent events which are going on since India’s independence. In this respect, the causes of movements can be analyzed with the help of Nandana Dutta’s explanations about Assamese identity in her book “Questions of identity in Assam” (2012).

In its own way, the Assam movement made a statement about identity. In its articulation, and even in its inability to articulate, it captured several issues about identity crisis in Assam that had their genesis in the region’s distinctive colonial history (Dutta: 2012:145). The movement was a watershed in identity articulation because several themes in Assam identity narrative came to a head with the recognition of the other as a threatening presence in the society. The movement had brought a new awakening in Assam that was responsible for a renewed awareness about identity (Dutta: 2012:146). The issue of identity includes accusations of central indifference and neglect, economic exploitation, and the growing dissatisfaction of tribal groups at the hijacking of the Assamese identity narrative by the dominant Assamese. (Dutta: 2012:148). The violence of all identity movements has cultural, political, economic and demographic explanations. As the guarding and preservation of national and ethnic history, icons, culture, cuisine, and dress become perceived violation call forth violence in the form of forced adherence to a particular behavioural or dress code. As the groups in the region become conscious of their identity and feel the need to assert their distinctiveness. (Dutta: 2012: 149)
**Otherness:** The complex situation between Bodo and Sarania has risen because of the feeling of otherness and their refusal to assimilate into Bodo community. They want to continue their otherness or trying to make the concept of “otherness” strong. The maintenance of such otherness then justifies the hatreds and isolation that is directed as the other.

In imagination, the concept of Assamese community is a proud race with vibrant languages, and culture. Due to its distinctiveness and unique history of its various ruling kingdoms, the cultures are interrelated and nurtured within some circumstances, no community has cultural boundaries, in reality, and even languages are also dependent. For successfully conducting the identity movements the distinctions between cultures have to be made. The conceptualizations of distinctions are more visualized than similarities.

The very idea of playing host evokes among the Assamese notions of generosity, welcome, and a fresh look at themselves as a proud race. Distinctiveness, a unique history different and separate from the rest of India, a mosaic of cultures- these are the elements that are articulated as a result of the presence of this other, from whom it was necessary and possible to make such distinctions. The movement from assimilation/incorporation to ideas of transcultural relations at the religious, ideological levels, the shift from including the migrant in the “generous” self-image of the Assamese, which included ideas of a people who were laid-back, who were not rapacious, who were satisfied with the little they had to the entry of the “element” of fear –this is a remarkable route taken by the narrative of identity. (Dutta: 2012: 168)

The identity problem here, as in many post-colonial nations where the structure and the imaginative model of the nation-state have been the result of colonialism, lies in the effort to integrate many ethnicities into the homogeneities of the nation-state. This raises identity issues that take different shapes over the years because of the deployment of historical memory, the reading of the past in specific convenient ways in
a particular present and the impact of the results on identity questions. In Assam, because British policies involved the insertion into the regions and importantly to other linguistic and culturally distinct groupings, the question of migration has been part of the imagination of an “identity always in crisis.” That is the formulation or articulation of identity has always been in the struggle; under pressure, under threat either from the Universalist and homogenizing design of the nation-state, or from influx from Bengal/ East Pakistan/Bangladesh. (Dutta: 2012: 142)

Many of these imbalances became evident in the autonomy demands made by several tribal groups in the crucial moments of Assam movement. The memoranda submitted by these groups all through the 1980s repeated the same grievances, about the chauvinism of the Assamese community, the injustices of the language movement, and the attempts to “Assamize” them through linguistic dominance and erase their distinct cultural identities. (Dutta: 2012: 182)

This is a commonly heard resentment in many of these documents, perhaps finding its ultimate expression in the suggestion made by the Bodos that since they were the original rulers of Assam, and their language was “the most aboriginal and widespread, why should the Assamese people not read, speak, and accept Bodo as a link language. This memorandum for a separate state submitted by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) to the president and the home minister on November 10, 1987, articulates not only the grievances common to most of the tribal communities of Assam, but gives shape to a narrative of identity that must also form part of the grand narrative of Assamese identity. In a section titled “the attitude of the Assamese people, the memorandum claims that “the Assamese people have never accepted the tribals as part and parcel of Assamese community and society in a real sense.” The document describes the attitude of the Assamese as anti-tribal, expansionist and politically intolerant. (They cannot tolerate the existence of tribal communities and other democratic organizations who oppose the policies of Assamisation and Assimilation”). The major issue on which autonomy demands rest is land. The documents list forty-five tribal belts and block, but points out those non-tribal and non-indigenous encroachers have illegally occupied lands in these areas and also have land pattas in connivance with government officials. (ibid: 184)

3.7.1 Smaller identities are the result of social dominance:

The identity movements establish some imaginary boundaries for the communities and establish some limitations for others. These movements establish
boundaries regarding what they are, what is not, boundaries regarding their social values, celebrations and beliefs. For focusing their distinctiveness Sarania Kacharis start concentrating on their folk narratives and they concentrate on folk elements which make them different from the other community. To manage the situations state government offered Sarania Kachari development council. Therefore, smaller identities are the result of social dominance; these identities cannot find themselves in equal level in relation to the dominant groups. They involve in making differences with each other without appreciating their similarities. The concept of Assamese identity has its own trouble. Due to its various groups and communities it is difficult to keep in a unitary form.

The disproportionate balance causes grievances, accusation of being dominant community imposition of Assamese language and imposition of Assamese culture at various times by eradicating small culture from the social scenery at a crucial moment of demanding autonomy by a different community. During identity movement, the recreation, fabrication, invention of folklore is most usual happenings. The interest of Identity has become a political weapon for fulfilling claims and from gets rid of grievances.

Identity work within small circles of like-minded people is critical to sustaining “abeyance structures” during periods of limited political opportunities. Identities nurtured within these networks contribute to the spillover effect from one movement to another. Broad identities such as radical or anarchist can be preserved in popular cultural materials rather than an organization, thus becoming available for subsequent waves of protest. (Martin and Spencer: 1994: 547-567)
Collective identity describes imagined as well as concrete communities involve an act of perception and construction as well as the discovery of pre-existing bonds, interests, and boundaries. It is fluid and relational emerging out of interactions with a number of different audiences (by standards, allies opponents, news media, state authorities) rather than fixed. It channels words and actions enabling some claims and deeds but delegitimizing others. It provides categories by which individuals divide up and make sense of the social world.

Udayan Misra writes in the book “Challenges of development in North East India” said that “it is disturbing that the focus of several ethnic struggles seemed to have shifted from an anti-state position to one directed again neighbouring communities. The Indian state is trying to negotiate the problems of demanding territory by trying to provide autonomous political structure and geographical space by re-drawing boundaries. In this process, the interest of certain communities has suffered and ethnic clashes, attempts at ethnic cleansing, cross-border attacks, road blockades have occurred. When boundaries have been re-drawn with a view to accommodating the wishes of the majority community in an area inhabited by heterogeneous groups, it is often seen that large sections of people. Outside particular linguistic or ethnic parameters have been marginalized and their democratic rights jeopardized. In this connection, one may refer to the apprehensions of the plains tribals of Assam following the Assam Accord and the strong reservations that the Koch-Rajbanshis have been having over the creation of a separate homeland for the Bodos. This exclusionist politics of ethnic identity, often marked by obscurantism and regression is bound to adversely affect the development process which is being increasingly tied up with the global economy.
Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidye discuss in the book “Ethnic life worlds in North-East India” that “the dominant social group satisfies its political access and power at the cost of other social groups by playing a politics of marginalizing them and keeping them out of equal access to power and resources.” (Biswas: 2008: 293). The frustrated other communities feel marginalized and excluded from social economic and political participation. In this context, such regretted groups feel their rights in danger. The political activity of self-determination means state power and full decision-making capacities in social economic and cultural sides of life. The political groups find its strength by countering the interventionist strategies of the state and articulating a way of development open to needs of the community.

3.8 Ethnic Feeling and Nationality:

The ethnic feeling is common for every society in the world peacefully or aggressively maintaining with other society. Some are capable of maintaining a balanced relationship with others. They feel their distinctiveness after having contact with other groups. Group identities are developed by emphasizing on what they are in relation to other groups. Ethnic relations can be identified in virtually every society in the world and contrary to much popular opinion; they may just as well be balanced and peaceful as they may be violent and volatile.

Ethnic groups remain more or less discrete, but they are aware of and in contact with members of other ethnic groups. Moreover, these groups or categories are in a sense created through that varies contact. Group identities must always be defined in relation to what they are not- in other words, in relation to non-members of the group. (Eriksen: 2010:14)

The writer Thomas Hylland Eriksen in the book “Ethnicity and nationalism” is trying to argue that in this modern period very fewer numbers of communities are
isolated. Developing technology does not allow any ethnic group to be remained isolated for a long time in this modern era. The ethnic groups of a particular location have interconnection although they demand themselves independent from each other. The social impact of building identity is social relationship within the members of the community and social interaction with other members of the other community. During the social interactions, they are conscious about their distinctiveness.

When cultural differences regularly make a difference in interaction between members of groups, the social relationship has an ethnic element. Ethnicity refers both to aspects of gain and loss in interaction and to aspects of meaning in the creation of identity. The social imaginary boundaries are bounding them unite. (Eriksen: 2010: 17)

Imaginary boundary or territorial boundary differ one community to others. But as it is a social product it may change with the time. Cultural differences are manipulated for dragging the boundaries. The attachment with ethnicity is rooted in cultural practices always effects identity events. The relational and situational position of ethnicity sometimes causes social conflict during identity assertion.

Ethnic identity becomes crucially important the moment it is perceived as being under threat. Since ethnicity is an aspect of the relationship, the importance of boundaries may thus be said to be conditional on the pressure exerted on them. On the other hand, we have seen that expressions of ethnic identity may also be regarded, not as psychological responses to threats from the outside or attempts to create order in the social universe, but rather as symbolic tools in political struggles. The social importance of ethnic identities is greatest when the two conditions are fulfilled simultaneously in enacted ethnic ideologies. (Eriksen: 2010: 92)

Using of myths, cultural symbols and kinship terminology in dealing with their supporters in public meetings is a way to promote of identity politics. Promoters try to minimize the difference between personal experiences by highlighting the group
history with the help of folk materials. The experiences associated with local culture generate their picture in national stage.

3.9 Conclusion:

First thing is that members of the group have to be aware of their distinctiveness, and then they can pay attention to other to make feel about their distinctiveness. If differences get attention during social interaction with members of the other group the growing ethnic feeling is noticeable. Describing the word ethnicity the two positive and negative sides have to be discussed. The excessive ethnic feeling may cause social conflicts with others and it can destroy a multicultural unique community. In Assam, the situation is that maximum ethnic communities are using their distinctive characters for being separate from other and for having a separate establishment. In order to avoid the spilt amongst the multi-ethnic group, shared rules and behaviours are important which bound them into one. Otherwise, the strongest group will dominate the other minorities. This is the fact of Assamese community. Minorities should be encouraged by valuing their culture. The identities of Saranias are not stable it is changing because they are not satisfied with the situation as being Bodo, Being Assamese or being Sarania.
Reference:


CHAPTER TWO Working with young people from a minority ethnic background all Ireland.pdf www.youth.ie/.../Chapter%202%20-%20working%20with%20young%20people... NYCI youthnet 2012 accessed time: 31-10-16


Dutta Kailash. Ethnicity and Folklore A Study among the Thengal Kacharis of Assam, Phd Thesis, Folklore Research Department, Gauhati University, 2010.


Ganguly, Rajat. “Identity Politics and Statehood Movements in India”, Identity Politics and Statehood Movements in India - Centre for Federal ...

jiarm www.jiarm.com/April2015/paper21792

Hall, Stuart. Cultural Identity and Diaspora- University of warwick.


Islam, Mazharul. *Folklore the pulse of the people*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1985


Singh, Joy Kumar, Ethnic Relations among the people of North-East India, Akangsha Publishing house, New Delhi, 2006

