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Harekrishna Talukdar

Preservation of Environmental Folklore of Deepor Beel

(A study cum Activity Project)

1. Brief introduction of the project

The project titled 'Preservation of Environmental Folklore of Deepor beel' is a study cum activity project based on environmental preservation. The main element of the proposed project is 'Environmental Folklore' that simply refers to the lore or knowledge transmission related to nature and environment among group of people who believe it. Environment here is meant what is described in oral traditional practices either in the form of songs and narratives or ritual performance in local language. To preserve Environmental Folklore is a contemporary issue also to protect environment and nature. As such, preserving Environmental Folklore is not simply preserve lore but also inclusively protect nature.

As per the title, the project will document narratives and folk songs of the people around the wetland Deepor beel. This area is concentrating indigenous Karbi, migrated inhabitants and mixed Assamese population. The main dominant population is Karbi who have their own livelihood and culture. Their Folklore is close to nature for ex. wild leaves, plants, fruits, trees, stones are used either as offerings to ancestors or herbs to cure disease. The main focus is to collect Folklore references to plants, rain, fire, crops, stone, water and animals. Also plants used for rituals and a few for medicinal purposes will be documented. The connection of the Deepor beel to this Folklore is also noteworthy.

Plain Karbi group of people of Deepor beel area use to speak Assamese language as a medium of general communication with the inhabitants of Assam. But oral practices have been found in vernacular Karbi language in the form of songs and chants. Because of the lack of practice of their dialect in daily life, memory of those is limited only with the songs and sayings. Elders of the community want to encourage to learn and practice more about the songs specially the young generation. They are close to nature because of these orality and folklore practise. As such nature is prosperous to them and they always try to protect their environment from all hazards. Hence, preserving this lore is not only to know the environment, but also make alive their own culture.

2. Objectives of the research, data creation or documentation of the project

The main objectives of the project are:

- 1. To preserve the dying practice and culture.
- 2. To protect the environment through folklore.
- 3. To collect and understand the traditional indigenous knowledge, rituals and beliefs.

3. Implementation of the project:

The project will be implemented and completed by following three stages:

- i. Collection and classification of data on Environment.
- ii. Activity work.
- iii. Documentation

The data collected in field will be classified based on environment such as water, plants, fire, animals etc. Next, the classified data will be shared with school children of that locality through workshop. The tentative structure of the workshop is to conduct story telling session with identification and traditionl knowledge of local plants and herbs.

4. <u>Time frame of the project:</u>

The project requires 12 months to complete. This can be sectioned as:

i. January 2016-May 2016 : Secondary Data collection and classification.

ii. June 2016-September 2016 : Documentation in field.

iii. October 2016-December 2016: Workshop, Documentation.

5. Specific areas of the respective state in which the art form(s) is practiced-Geographical, typographical and other related aspects that the project may cover

Deepor Beel is located 13 km South West of Guwahati on the National Highway (NH 31), on the Jalukbari-Khanapara bypass, alongside its North Western boundary. PWD road skirts the northern fringe of the Rani and Garbhanga Reserve Forests on the South. The selected villages to be visited for documentation and activity are Pamohi and

Chakardeo. These areas are comprised of Karbi tribes (plains) and mixed population of other communities.

6. Photos (preliminary level) related to the project/art form (for the intended website)

The photos related to the project before conduct the field visit and rapport.

Source: Both Primary & Secondary

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7. Conclusion of the project as have envisioned

The project will be completed with the following:

- i. A report based on Field work contains the interviews and the workshop sessions.
- ii. A detailed documentation of the field work and activity session.
- iii. A short film based on Data collection at Deepor beel.

This project will further help to all activists associated with environmental awareness, the student of social science and provide a scope for student of art and culture.

Final project report on

Preservation of Environment Folklore of Deepor Beel



Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India, 2015-16.

HAREKRISHNA TALUKDAR

File No. 28-6/ICH-Scheme/2015-16/6

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With regards

Harekrishna Talukdar

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Final Report

Preservation of Environmental Folklore of Deepor Beel

(A study cum Activity Project)

1. Preface:

The project is intended to preserve Folklore or Traditional Environmental Knowledge related to Environment by documenting, promoting traditional knowledge through education and by innovative intervention. Preserving environment, which is an established dictum across the globe today, is trying to connect the terms with the help of both folklore and traditional knowledge. The project is accomplished with the awareness of art activities and by passing the indigenous knowledge related to environment to the new generation. *Deepor Beel*, a wet land area of west Guwahati has been taken to conduct research, for execution and documentation. Folklore has been collected and documented by the medium of art to create awareness among the people. This further included the genres of expressions, for example, a children workshop, a documentary, an interaction followed by art activities. The project outcome has concentrated on how the folklore-specially a belief- helps to protect the environment.

2. Introduction:

Belief systems have a considerable effect on environmental attitudes of the people and can therefore play a major role in the ecological conservation practices. Looking into the belief systems is instrumental in discovering the collective unconscious of a group, that is, the underlying values of a culture: their uncertainties, fears, ambitions, motivations and morals.

It has been said in the epics that there is a connection among all beings including the human and the environment. In other words, the epic say that we all are connected. That means, we all are some way or other benefited by others and or by ourselves. We sow sapling and nurture them and one day it will give us either food, or medicinal resources or wood to make a house, or fire to protect from cold or at least give shadow against a wild summer.

Thus, it can be stated that the prosperity of nature won't happen unless the human beings does not stop destroying nature. Folklore or a belief, which is an acceptance by a group that something exists or truth that is the basis of knowledge and values, are handed down from the past to the present generation. In many cases, people accept things on the basis of the lore or knowledge which is stored in either songs or tales. It is believed that the concept of god, whether he exists or not, also creates fear in our mind for which a spontaneous flow of faith is recurrent in our mind. Courage and at the same time, the contrary word—fear, are always pushing the mind to choose a right way. Hence, this fear may be the reason to protect or preserve something. For instance, old practices such as the worshipping of trees such as Bael tree (Aegel Marmelos), Tulshi (Ocimum tenuiflorum) express a deep connection between human beings and nature. For other instances, the people in Meghalaya, India believe that their forests (Sacred Grooves) are filled with deities and if any trees, fruits or flowers are cut or plucked, the deities would be offended and wreak havoc in their villages. As a result of this folkloric content, traditional environmental practices perpetuate the conservation and biodiversity of the forests.

In Arunachal Pradesh, India, different tribes have varying beliefs about the plants and animals around them. But, underlying each story is the presence of deities or powerful spiritual forces manifested as plants and animals. For example, in Hill Miri areas, certain plants are actively preserved and spitting, urinating or throwing stones in the area is prohibited as a means of paying respect to the sacred plants and deities.² The Aka of West Kameng believes that the destruction (even by accident) of certain ponds and lakes will result in the loss of life, and extraction of any resources from Woko, a sacred mountain, is prohibited as that will cause bleeding from the mouth and nose, eventually leading to death. xvii Within the Mishmis and the Galos, tigers are never hunted and many rigorous rituals are performed if a tiger is killed by accident as a means of correcting the mistake.³

Destroying a forest for comfort or requirement may not be positive for human life as well as for their healthy survival. Today's environmental impact or challenges such as Green house effect,

¹Jeeva, S., BP Mishra, N Venugopal, L Kharlukhi and RC Laloo. "Traditional Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation in the Sacred Groves of Meghalaya." Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge. 5:4, 2006

²Saikia, Arupjyoti, ed. "Folk Belief and Resource Conservation: Reflections from Arunachal Pradesh." Indian Folklife. No. 28, 2008.

³ Saikia

deforestation etc. are the cause to breathless suffering and unhealthy physical life. So, in these circumstances, retelling or reviving folklore connecting to the environment can help to protect environment.

The project site is *Deepor Beel*, a wetland situated in Assam inhabited mostly tribal people along with their distinct Folklore and practices. One thousand and two hundred families of 14 indigenous villages around *Deepor Beel* depend directly or indirectly on the wetland's natural resources for their livelihood. The main inhabitants around the *Deepor Beel* site are the Karbi communities whose only hope is the natural environment because of their economic condition and belief associated with the later. Various customs and rituals such as Johong puja etc. and various other musical lore of the people always help in recollecting the beauty and importance of the environment including the wetland. In addition to fishing, the major economic activity, other traditional activities like grazing, farming, gathering of various minor products generate some income to sustain their livelihood. Community fishing is an important characteristic of folk-life of people around *Deepor Beel*. A research report says that fishes are also used in Religious ceremony. There are almost 70 species of fishes that are available in *Deepor Beel* such as Sol, Sal, Goroi, Rou, Āri, Chital, Mirika. As such, it has been also said that there is a folk-cultural dimension of religion in this area.

The village Chakardeo and Pamohi comprise of Karbi people of the Dumurāli clan. They have come from the area Dimoria of Kamrup district and settled in this *Deepor Beel* area. The Karbis residing in the plains of Kamrup and Morigaon district of Assam identify themselves as the Dumrāli or Dumurāli or plain Karbis. They worship their main deity Johong and Bhagawati to protect their nature and environment.

Their literacy rate varies from 20-60%. In the village Chakardeo, it has been found that a teacher is appointed to revive the Karbi language which has been forgotten. Various other steps have been taken in the area to preserve the method of rituals and wordings in the form of book publication. They have also a club where different cultural practices are undertaken to memorise their folk-life.

The site of *Deepor Beel* has been declared as Eco-sensitive zone and strict rules are conducted to protect the environment of *Deepor Beel*. The Karbi people through their animistic beliefs protect their environment and vice-versa.

It is important to mention here that the folklore and the wetland are very much interrelated and hence the community's economic condition is also connected. The current situation of the site is that the main inhabitants—the Karbi people are out of their practices and customs for which the wetland also lost its beauty and healthy condition. People are aware to raise their economic condition but ignore the significance of their folk heritage. The folklore inherited in the community songs of fishing tradition is very important among them.

3. Statement of the Problem:

Traditional culture is in danger. As the effects of globalization extend their reach to the world's far-flung corners, it is putting pressure on the available pockets of cultural diversity that have hitherto resisted change. So, it is very important to preserve our traditional culture and knowledge to keep own identity.

When identifying the number of problems faced by the natural resources and other environmental oriented scarcity in the area, the main problem that strikes our mind is the safety of nature—the abundant of water and crops. People use the natural resources and at the same time are unaware of environmental imbalance caused from it. As mentioned before, there are lots of folkloric connection to human livelihood and environment. From medicinal plants to the shadow of Pippal tree, from herbal Alovera to seeds of mustard as spice etc. all are still present in many villages and sometimes even in the urban areas. Not only these, the Assamese women still believe that a bunch of black mustard seeds keeps away the shadow of ghosts or any supernatural power from a new born baby etc. There are lots of examples which indicate that a belief keeps the things stable. Keeping in view such example, is there any possibility to create a belief or revive a belief that helps to bring a balance into the dried environment around us? Or more precisely, does the belief system help to preserve environment are some of the issues that are undertaken for exploration in this project.

4. Methodology:

- 1. Collection of data (visual, written, oral).
- 2. Documentation (video graph and photograph)
- 3. Preservation with the help of Education and Innovation.

Preservation of traditional knowledge:

The preservation strategy must be in accordance with or consonant with the way in which the traditional knowledge is maintained or transmitted. Again some forms of knowledge do not lend themselves to fixation and documentation and there may be other modes of preservation or means of valuing cultural objects that do not involve objectification and reification for the purposes of collection, observation and display.⁴ "Preservation" may involve:

- (i) The documentation of traditional knowledge via the provision of inventories and databases.
- (ii) The promotion of traditional knowledge through educational initiatives
- (iii) Preservation through innovation.

5. Objectives:

The following objectives are in main focus in the project:

- 1. To preserve the dying traditional indigenous knowledge, rituals and beliefs...
- 2. To protect the environment through folklore.
- 3. To use cultural practice as a tool for preservation.

6. Project undertaken:

The project continued to an Art Camp cum Workshop, entitled 'Imagining *Deepor Beel*' on the preservation of Environmental Folklore of *Deepor Beel* on 4th and 5th March, 2017. The camp cum workshop was meant for preservation of the Environmental Folklore at *Deepor Beel* area through cultural practices. There was an art camp and two children workshops by the community elders. For the art camp, there were 30 artists invited from all over Assam to participate in the two-days of art activities at the bank of the *Deepor Beel*, Pamohi and West Guwahati. The artists

⁴ Christina Kreps, "Indigenous Curation as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Thoughts on the Relevance of the 2003 UNESCO Convention" Vol.1 No.2 Theorising Cultural Heritage, at p.4

depicted their imaginary view about the *Deepor Beel* on their canvasses, and prior to this, they went through community interaction based on traditional knowledge.

The workshop focused on preserving both the Folklore and the environment (*Deepor Beel*) by collecting data and retelling them. Community leaders like LakhanTeron and Dayaram Kathar were the respective informants from the villages Pamohi and Chakardeo located at the bank of the *Deepor Beel* to provide useful information on the local dialect of the folktales, songs and practices.

7. Environmental Folklore: Collection & Classification

Folklore means the ways of talking, interacting and performing everyday expression such as proverbs, prayers, curses, jokes, riddles, statements of belief (superstitions), tales, songs, anecdotes, testimonies, rites, reminiscences – all of which emerge on both casual and ceremonial occasions.⁵ Folklore, mythology and storytelling speak about the spiritual concepts and values, but they also encompass ideas on contemporary history and localized environments, something that religious texts alone do not.

Traditional Environmental Knowledge is a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission about the relationships of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.⁶

While folklore is the representation of cultural ideas, Traditional Environmental Knowledge can be the scaffolding for which the cultural ideas being transmitted are bolstered, expressly for ecological purposes.

The plain Karbis use plants for Medicinal purposes, Aromatic purposes, ritual purposes and daily needs. They also worship malevolent and benevolent gods and goddesses to protect them from

⁵ Abrahams, Roger D. "Folklore." Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups. Cambridge: Belnap Press, 1980. pp. 370-

⁶ Langley, Josephine. "Vezo Knowledge: Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Andavadoaka, southwest Madagascar" Blue Ventures Conservation Report. 2006.

danger and their offerings are mainly nature or ingredients made up from nature including birds and animals.

After the survey of Environment and Folklore of the *Deepor Beel* area, the following classification on 'Folklore related to Environment' has been made.

A. Ritual value:

i. Its content and purpose:

The Plain Karbi people give importance to environment in every aspects, be it tradition, culture, customs or rituals. They always try to protect their environment from all hazards and because of that they worship their main deity Johong (Lord Shiva) and Goddess Bhagawati (Parvati). Johong Puja and similar other rituals such as Dehal puja, Baat bheta puja etc. are also related to environment in terms of its contents and purpose.

Johong Puja: Johong Pujā is an important ritual of folk-life of the Karbi people. This is a worship of environment welfare including the living beings where Johong along with 33 crore gods are the presiding deities. They are propitiated with the offerings. Johong is the god of nature and can be resembled with Hindu god 'Shiva'. It is held in the Assamese new year i.e. 'Bohag' month. Similar to the Assamese "Rongali Bihu', it is held for seven days. First day is dedicated to cows and other animals. They wash cows and other animals in the morning and in the evening they go for Birkilut (self-purification) on the banks of the narrow water fall. Unlike the 'Rongali Bihu', the second day of Johong Puja is dedicated to human beings. In the morning people make garland out of 'Odal' and 'Nahar' leaves. 'Keteki' flower is very essential in Johong Puja. In the evening they clean the holy place and light the diyas and offer rice, ginger, betel nut and leafs and 'Sansiri, to God.

ii. Offerings:

They use a no. of trees, plants, water, stones, animals-birds etc. as offerings to their ritual. It can be said that due to the ritual value of these offerings, they are always considered sacred. Hence, an essence of preserving nature is always indirectly practised. Few collected offerings are:

- Water is a sacred element and is used for *Birkilut* (self-purification) during Dehal Kasidom or
 Johong puja. The Karbi people float the used items of *Long-e-ari* (death ceremony) in water.
 In the Chakardeo area, the Karbis float the items in the water of *Deepor Beel*. Hence, water is
 essential for their rites.
- The plain Karbi community worship Banayan tree by placing milk and lightening a lamp under it. They belief that Lord Bishnu rests under this tree.
- Ancestor villages comprise of stones where every stone is marked with the names of the dead.
- Mālā (garland) is offered to the almighty during Johong Puja. Ths *Mala* is made up from *Odal* (Sterculia villosa) and *Nahar* (Mesua ferrea).

B. Indigenous Knowledge:

A few collected names of the plants and trees that are used in various purposes in this area are as follows:

i. Medicinal purpose: The plain Karbi people traditionally use plants for the treatment of various diseases. Important among them are

Bon Naharu (Crinum asiaticum)- for throat related problems,

Akon (Colotropis)- for pain,

Bak phool (Allium tuberosum)- for chests and intestine problem

Kunji thekera (Garcinia mrella)- for stomach problem and many more

Satmul (Aspanagus racemosus)

Hati Bhakuri (Solanum torvum)- Hati bhakuriis used by plain karbisto kill various bacteria, and intestinal worms.⁷

ii. Aromatic purpose: Few aromatic plants such as Elashi (Lindernia pusilla) to flavour food), Chitranala gash (Cymbopogam) to clean floor and remove germs, Barhamthuri (to dye colour) are also used.

⁷ Bordoloi Saswati, "Many Cultures, One Nation- Essay by Tata Fellos in Folklre" National Folklore Support Centre, 2014

iii. Daily needs: Plants that are used in daily needs can be mentioned here such as Odal (Sterculia villosa) is used for making rope from its trunk, Poma (Toona Ciliate) to make furniture, Sotona (Alstonia scholaris) to make musical instruments 'Dotara', Dhupgos (Ficus

drupacea) to use as gum and hunting etc.

C. Songs and Chanting:

Some collected songs and chanting along with their source of collection are as follows:

i. Jhoom cultivation song (source: Dayaram Kathar, Pamahi)

These are songs sung during the time of jhoom cultivating. This is known as *ret kinung alun* and starts from *Phagun-Chot* months of Assamese calendar. They complete this cultivation during April-June

"Nengkan batari chārap

Nengkan batari chārapee

Nang nang āwatar wāngheng"

Which means, 'This is a new year again, its time for jhoom cultivation, its time to go to blacksmith to collect the *da* and clean the forest to cultivate crops'?

Then the Karbi who also worships hill and mountain sing together-

Te hem Te hem...

Nali pe aanglong – Po aanglong

Nengkan aashek – Nengkan aajang

Khiti aayak – Biti aayak

Haalike ho,-

Lowan nangpilo – Bithi nangpilo

Har nangpilo – Lang nangpilo

Te halite minike, -

Wurwa aasho an-shi – Woshang aasho anshi

Boli aangchideng lagi – Bothan aangchideng lagi

Te hem hem hem.. ||

(Oh Mother and Father Hills, bless us, as we pray you before we start our cultivation at the end of the year. We offer you betel nuts, rice beer and water. Now we are going to sacrifice cock. Please accept our offers!)

In the next phase of the ritual priest sing-

Te nang pe aanglong- Po aanglong

Boli damo- Bothan damo

Boli aaphel- Bothan aaphel

Choche para- Junje para

Bhog nangpilo- Piya nangpilo

Nalita hou-

Bhog aangdeng dun lagi,

Piya aangdeng dun lagi.

Minon ke hou-

Khiti aalong- Biti aalong

Perok doman-Pesham doman

Ingket doman-Pholong doman

Nalishi hou,-

Aari kalpan aahemphu

Aalon kalpan aahemphu

Te hem te hem ||

(Oh God and Goddess of Hills! We offer you cock before we eat it. Please accept it. Today there are lots of insects to harm our crops. You are the only to solve all these. So we pray to you!)

ii. **Chanting** (source: Shaswati Bordoloi, Guwahati)

Nangpo namseng/

Nangpo namseng/

Arji phim yeak/

Horbong kimayok/

Horbong nang pichi/

Boro beso aso/

Wasong wado/

Bolik chiyonglonge/

Bali aphel/

Batham aphel/Engkep kiwang/

Pholong Kiwang/

Nangpol nange/

Dol nange/

(o' lord, Namseng, bless us and protect these crops from insects and grow the crops soon. Therefore, we offer to you Tulsi leaves, five betel nuts, ten betel leaves, drink, two cocks and rice)

Chanting sloka during Johong puja (source: Dayaram Kathar)

Te hem hem hem...

Tei nang-bor johong-saru jahang

Bor dinngdang-saru dingdang

Pe shatabar-pa satabar

Mini amuk aarbangke-

Dumahi puchi-awahi puchi

Chihap asapen-chibu asapen

Chirung padsi-chibat padsi

Lapat padala-larepadala

Halek ke-pumu padala-parasat padala

Kuwe nangpil-bithi nangpil

Hara nangpil-lang nangpil

Te lachi, nalita

Lapat deng lagi-lare deng lagi ||

(O Jahong Devata and your colleague! today the *amuk* villagers on the occasion of Bihu occasion offer their respect, give offerings in *asana* to you).

8. Activities undertaken so far:

Taking Environmental Folklore of Deepor Beel area as a resource, the method of documenting the originality, then transferring the knowledge of the predecessors through the medium of creative art is further taken as a tool to create awareness about the preservation and protection of nature.

A. The Documentation of Traditional Knowledge

i. Interviews:

Interview has been taken in its basic level with videography and photography. The community elders were approached for interview about their views regarding the environment and nature.

'We all are Dumrali Karbi here in this *Deepor Beel* area. There are several villages where in a collective way, Johong puja is organized. However, it may not be arranged annually if financial condition of the people is not sound. Earlier, men and women together went for *jhoom* (cultivation method of hill sight) cultivation and sing *Ret kinung Alun (Ret-jhooming* place *Kinung*-cultivate by axe, *Alun-geet* or song). They cultivated crops as a matter of performance. The young men and women sow the crops along with the axes but in the rhythm of drum beat. This looks very beautiful. These group songs get away their tiredness in the field. The songs are about love or about dangerous war rules which are sought to be preserved. I have tried to

preserve the songs in written form as the new generation has almost forgotten these songs and their importance.'—Dayaram Kathar, Pamohi

"Trees are very important for us. Most of them have symbolic connection to a deity. Besides, it has medicinal value too. For example, the leaves of *Ahat* tree are used in Kali puja, Bhumura is used to cure disease of jaundice etc. We have a botanical garden here where we preserve different species of trees and plants including those related to Karbi Folklore"—Lakshman Teron, Chakardeo village

B. The promotion of traditional knowledge through educational initiatives:

The initiative for the preservation of the folklore and traditional environmental knowledge continued for the two workshops, firstly on 'Indigenous Knowledge' and secondly on 'Medicinal and Aromatic Value of Plants' on 4th and 5th March, 2017. The workshop mainly focused on preserving both the Folklore and the environment of the *Deepor Beel* by collecting data and retelling them among the children. At the 'Workshop on Indigenous Knowledge', the community elders Lakhan Teron and Dayaram Kathar shared their knowledge of their ritual, folktales, songs and practices related to the environment. On the Workshop on Medicinal and Aromatic Value of Plants, the mentor Lakhan Teron gave some basic knowledge of the plants and its values. The students of Chakardeo Deshbhakta Tarunram Phookan M. E. School participated in the Workshops.

C. Preservation through innovation:

Traditional culture will only survive to the extent that it retains meaning and value to the source communities that perpetuate it. This requires the freedom to creatively adapt and hybridize tradition to keep it responsive to current needs. That's why, the preservation through innovation is equally important.

Cultural preservation generally encompasses two subsidiary interests: (1) preventing cultural harm and (2) fostering sustainable development.

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⁸ Sean A. Pager, Folklore 2.0: Preservation Through Innovation, 2012 Utah L. Rev. 1835 (2012).

Harm prevention focuses on warding off sources of cultural contamination that could compromise the integrity of traditional cultural expression. To safeguard this folklore, strict law should facilitate the dynamic development of culture. Copyright is better suited for this purpose because it encourages tradition and innovation to work hand in hand rather than opposing them as antagonists.

But over protecting of cultural harm can do self-inflicted injuries. Such self-inflicted injuries could occur on multiple levels: (a) the process of defining "authentic" subject matter could foster a repressive essentialism, (b) the glorification of tradition could discourage experimentation, and (c) enforcing TCE rights could directly obstruct cultural innovation.56⁹

D. Fostering sustainable development:

Culture has a constantly evolving character. Far from confining traditional culture in a straightjacket of authenticity, Traditional Cultural Expression or Folklore should be compatible with a dynamic concept of culture in which practices and meanings evolve over time.

a) Cultural development:

Traditional Culture should be allowed for "normal use...and development" if that such development takes place "within the traditional and customary context." Such constraints presumably seek to ensure that new uses remain compatible with the existing traditions. Borrowing from environmental policy, the animating concept here appears to be a notion of "sustainable ... development.

b) Economic Development:

Commodification of folklore would contribute to the livelihoods of source communities and thereby underwrite the continued flourishing of the underlying traditions. In this sense, economic development undoubtedly contributes to cultural preservation.

⁹ BROWN, *supra* note 31, at 215-22; Mezey, *supra* note 30, at 2016-20; Sunder, *supra* note 10, at 500-01.

A few art activities had also been designed by involving Artists from various fields, old informants and scholars as a mode of sustainable cultural development.

Activity 1:

The project continued to an Art Camp entitled 'Imagining *Deepor Beel*' on 4th and 5th March, 2017. The camp was for preservation of Environmental Folklore at *Deepor Beel* area through cultural practice. For the art camp, there were 30 artists invited from all over Assam to participate in the two day art activities at the bank of *Deepor Beel*, Pamohi, and West Guwahati. The artists depicted their imaginary view about *Deepor Beel* on their canvasses and prior to this, they went through community interaction based on traditional knowledge.

Activity 2:

From the genesis Karbi people worship nature. Beside Johong, Bhagawati and other deities of nature, they also believe Bandevi or Aranyani of Hindu belief. Aranyani, is a goddess of forest exist from ancient Hindu mythology. According to belief Aranyani is a goddess of forest who protects the environment and helps humans to get food and water. The prosperity and abundance of food is believed to be a blessing of the forest goddess. And from her, the spirit of the forest continues very mystically. The reference of this goddess has been found in ancient hymn from Rigveda telling her as daughter of lord shiva and whose presence can be understood by her dancing anklets. But on time, due to some unknown reason, the goddess vanished and people started to get sufferings from the environment. The titled performance has been choreographed keeping this in view and keeping the design in such a way that the audience could not only go through it but become courageous to raise their voice. The success of the performance, hence, highly depended on the audience involvement. The work was intended to take folklore as a means of performance not only to preserve indigenous lost knowledge but also to inclusively protect nature.

The narrative:

The myth of Aranyani has been found in *Puran katha*. It explained that one day, Lord Shiva and Parvati had a most beautiful young girl emerged at once from the Kalpavriksha. The child appeared with a snow-white body and clothed with roses and on her head a wreath of flowers

falling from her golden hair. Sweetness was in her lips, life in her mouth and brilliancy in her eyes and face radiating like sun. Her anklets' bells produced musical sounds while moving with pleasure stunningly beautiful creation and laden with vitality charm and love visible. The most joyous Parvati surprised and looked at Lord Shiva in astonishment. Lord Shiva advised, "Oh dear Parvati! What you have wished were of your own nine forms of Goddess Durga. Your most beautiful daughter is here. Enjoy this moment, this moment is your life. Life is only travels once. Today's moments become tomorrow's Memory, Enjoy every moment good or bad because, the gift of life is LIFE itself... That is where the magic is - Right in front of your Eyes...Can we name this Ashok Sundari as Aranyani?' Parvati pleased to hear the name as Aranyani and thus instinctively recited Rig Veda No 146 of tenth Mandala that addressed her as Aranyani, forest goddesses Vanadevi. She described as being elusive, fond of quiet glades in the jungle, and fearless of remote places. In the hymn, the supplicant entreats her to explain how she wanders so far from the fringe of civilization without becoming afraid or lonely. She wears anklets with bells, and though seldom seen, she heard by the tinkling of her anklets. She is a dancer. Her ability to feed both man and animals though she 'tills no lands' is what the supplicant finds most marvellous. The hymn repeated in Taittiriya Brahmana.

The performance

An innovative art practice was designed where at certain point the audiences were put their involvement or unknowingly became a part of the art activity. The genre of the performance has been decided to term as 'art performance' where cluster of art medium such as craft, scroll paint, installation, dance and music, shadow art, video art are used. Keeping the manifestation of the content, there has no particular form of art is used. Rather, a total taste out of all the art medium have tried to close up under the theory of Rasa or taste.

The Performance art hence also intends a nature of survival by the goddess herself where some may victimized or achiever of a boon among the worshippers. The performance is in praise of the spirit of the forest or the goddess *Aranyani* who enrich the nature with her power. The first part of the performance is video art with a shadow, an installation of scroll painting and the dance performance of the goddess to narrate the story in an innovative way. The second part is about an interpretation about the current issues and crisis of the environment where people are

destroying a forest. In this part the audiences were physically involved with art activity, hence expected realization about issues. A discussion session was there after the act.

Total duration of the performance including a speech is 45 minute.



Fig. 1. Deepor Beel lateral view.



Fig. 2. Deepor Beel lateral view



Fig. 3. *Deepor Beel* lateral view.



Fig. 4. *Deepor Beel* lateral view.



Fig. 5. Deepor Beel lateral view



Fig. 6. Watch tower of *Deepor Beel* wildlife sanctuary.



Fig. 7. Railway bridge near *Deepor Beel*.

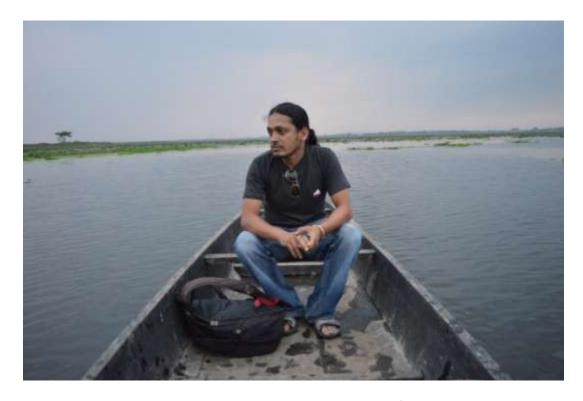


Fig. 8. Project Fellow Harekrishna Talukdar at field work.



Fig. 9. Fishing man at deepor Beel wetland.



Fig. 10. Fishing man at deepor Beel wetland.



Fig. 11. Boatman at Deepor Beel.



Fig. 12. Fisherman with Fish



Fig. 13. Community elder Lakshman Teron



Fig. 14. Wangthe, the village head man



Fig. 15. Pipe used to play at *Johong puja*



Fig. 16. Seng-musical instrument.



Fig. 17. Altar of Johong Puja.



Fig. 18. The priest indicating kāri, a traditional pot to keep wine hārlang, johong puja.



Fig. 19. playing seng drum.



Fig. 20. Cluster of Mala or garland johong puja



Fig. 21. Ancestor village, Pamohi



Fig. 22. Ancestor village, Pamahi



Fig. 23. Ancestor village, Pamahi



Fig. 24. Dhārā, sitting arrangement made up of bamboo at johong puja



Fig. 25.Dehāl thān (temple).



Fig. 26. Dehāl thān inside view.



Fig. 27. Shrines of Dehāl thān.



Fig. 28.Community feast of Johong puja.



Fig. 29. Johong with other deities and various offerings, pamahi village.



Fig. 30. Johong with other deities and various offerings, pamahi village.



Fig. 31. Community feast of Johong puja



Fig. 32.Items served of bhog at Johong puja-rice powder, dryfish curry, rice beer, betel nuts and leaves, mala.



Fig. 33. Community feast, Johong puja.



Fig. 34. Community feast, Johong Puja at Pamohi village.



Fig. 35. Community feast, Pamahi Village.



Fig. 36.Betel nuts and leaves bind together to offer.



Fig. 37. View of banana leaves used in rituals.



Fig. 38. Pots used to store water.



Fig. 39. pieces of bamboo to store water.



Fig. 40. Offerings to deity at Johong puja.



Fig. 41. Local School of Chakardeo village



Fig. 42. Local School of Chakardeo village.



Fig. 43. Local school supported by WWF.



Fig. 44. Participant childrens from the locality.



Fig. 45.. Inauguration ceremony of workshop on Indigenous Knowledge.



Fig. 46.. Inauguration ceremony of workshop on Indigenous Knowledge.



Fig. 47. Felicitating Collaborator Dayaram Kathar.



Fig. 48. Sharing Indigenous Knowlwdge with children.



Fig. 49. Dayaram Kathar Sharing Indigenous Knowlwdge with children.



Fig. 50. Collaborator Lakhan Teron Sharing Traditional environmental knowledge.



Fig. 51. The workshop on Indigenous Knowledge.



Fig. 52. Participant childrens from the locality.



Fig. 53. Community Elders.



Fig. 54. Kalia Ingti, Mukhia of Chakardeo Village.



Fig. 55. Organiser team with USA delegates.



Fig. 56. Organiser team with USA delegates.



Fig. 57. The Workshop on Medicinal and Aromatic Value of Plants.



Fig. 58. Collaborator Lakshman Teron knowledge of Medicinal and Aromatic values of plant.



Fig. 59. The Workshop on Medicinal and Aromatic Value of Plants.



Fig. 60. Research Fellow with Resource Person and Collaborator.

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Fig. 61. List of locan name and botanical name of plants.



Fig. 62. List of local name and botanical name of plants.



Fig. 63. List of local name and botanical name of plants.



Fig. 64. List of local name and botanical name of plants.



Fig. 65. Poster of the art camp at Deepor Beel venue.



Fig. 66. Artist creating art piece.



Fig. 67. Painting by artist at the bank of Deepor Beel.



Fig. 68. Eminent artist Noni Borpujari at the art camp.



Fig. 69. Artist with her painting.



Fig. 70. Artist Utpal Talukdar with his painting.



Fig. 71. Participant artists at the bank of Deepor Beel.



Fig. 72. Distributing participant certificate.



Fig. 73. Distributing participant certificate.



Fig. 74. 113. All Participant artists of art camp.