

Vitality of Folk Literature in Preserving Oral Traditions and Culture: Diving into the Ethnomusicological Corner of the Deoris Residing in Assam

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Abstract: Folk literature is important because it preserves cultural heritage, provides insights into history and beliefs, fosters social connection, and serves as a form of education and entertainment. It's a living tradition passed down through generations, reflecting a community's values, wisdom and unique experiences. Literature has a profound impact on individual and cultural identity. Literature plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity. Music has long been a powerful force in expressing cultural identities and traditions. Folk and traditional music, often deeply rooted in oral traditions, are central to the identities of communities and have been passed down through generations. Ethnomusicology and folk literature both explore the ways in which cultural knowledge and expression are transmitted and maintained with communities. In essence, ethnomusicology and folk literature offer complementary perspectives on understanding the rich tapestry of human culture and the ways in which communities express themselves through music and narrative. This paper mainly focuses on the vitality of folk literature in preserving the oral traditions or folk musical tradition in shaping the cultural identity of Deori community of Assam under the broader context of cultural heritage. Culture is the creative expression of a particular society through its symbols, stories, ballads, myths, literature, art, music and for some its institution. Music is one of the most important elements in the transferring of cultural heritage. Traditional forms of music are considered to be the chief carriers of cultural heritage. A tradition is a belief or behaviour passed down within a group or society with symbolic meanings or special significance with origins in the past. The folk musical tradition of the Deoris of Assam will be studied from the perspective of ethnomusicology. This falls under the area of folk performing arts in the broader context of folklore. The Deoris belong to the Sino-Tibetan family of Mongoloid stock. They are considered to be one of the communities found in Assam and some parts of Arunachal Pradesh in North- East India. The word Deori means the offspring of Gods and Goddesses. The Deori culture is facing danger from the clutches of globalization and striving hard to flourish. Such endangered culture so sprung -up by the nature thousand years past now deserve preservation and propagation by the government itself from being extinct.

Keywords: Oral Tradition, Ethnomusicology, Folk literature, Culture, Identity, Deoris

1. Introduction

The word tradition-a handing over, is used in a more limited way to cover the literary tradition or its oral counterpart consisting of the folktale, legend, song, riddle, and proverb or myths.ⁱ The Deoris or the Deuris are one of the distinct Tribal Communities of undivided Assam ethnically affiliated to the great Tibeto-Burman group. The meaning of the word Deori is, a person abides by high customary rule and having virtuous life, for worshipping God. The Deoris are one of an important minority communities having significant contribution towards the greater Assamese culture.ⁱⁱ Music is an art which uses the medium of sound to express different emotions and sentiment (1980:1). Traditional forms of music are considered to be the chief carriers of cultural heritage because folk music is a sub-division and feature of culture. The study of music is broadly classified into folk, classical, modern and contemporary genres. The term Folk Music originated in the 19th century, but folk music was popular and used even before the 19th century. Traditional folk music has been defined in several ways as: music transmitted orally, music with unknown composers or music performed as part of the custom over a long period of time (2005:1-2). One widely used definition on folk music is simply 'folk music is what the people sing' (2005: 2). The study of the music and musical instruments of particular people or

community also reflects a lot about their culture, society and history as a whole (2007:19). In the field of ethnomusicology, tradition refers to the belief systems, repertoire techniques, style and culture that is passed down through subsequent generations (1997: 800). The folk musical tradition of the Deoris of Assam is studied from the perspective of ethnomusicology. The term ethnomusicology is said to have been first coined by Jaap Kunst from two Greek words *ethnos* (nation) and *mousike* (music) (1983:25). Jeff Todd Titon described it as the study of 'people making music' (1984:21). Ethnomusicology may be described as a holistic investigation of music in its cultural contexts. It is the study of music in relation to the society and culture in which it was created. It is basically the study of music of a particular region or people from the viewpoint of its social and cultural implications (1969: 144).

Aims and Objectives

The study mainly aims to examine the folk musical tradition of the Deoris of Assam under the broader context of folklore. In view of this broad aim, the major objectives of the study are:

- To delve into the historical background of the Deoris.
- To know about the vitality of the folk music in the Deori society.

Volume 14 Issue 5, May 2025

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

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- c) To discern and know the musical instruments of the Deoris.

2. Methodology

The study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. In this study, data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. With regard to primary sources, the data is collected using the interview methods and non-participant observation. Interview guide, focused group interviews is used to gather information regarding the origin stories and the folk musical tradition of the Deoris from the local music performers and craftsmen. Personal interviews are also done with the informants and especially the elderly people who have knowledge on the musical aspects of the tradition. Non-participant observation is done during the performances in order to observe how the musical instruments are played, how the dances are performed and how the songs are sung and also to observe the crafting process of musical instruments and the type of materials used. Photography and audio visual recording is included. Audio visual recordings such as taking audio bytes of the resource persons are done.

Secondary sources includes published and unpublished works, journals, magazines, newspapers, articles and websites on the Deoris to highlight the works done in the past as well as present about the people and in the musical field of the Deoris. As regards library work, libraries in Shillong as well as in Assam is visited and materials are collected as required.

Why folk literature is significant?

- 1) **Cultural preservation:** folk literature, including myths, legends, folk songs, dances, folktales, acts as a repository of cultural knowledge and beliefs. It helps maintain and transmit traditional values, customs and ways of life to future generations.
- 2) **Historical insights:** by studying folk narratives, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of past societies, their beliefs and the experiences of their people. Folk literature provides a window to the social, political and cultural contexts of the past.
- 3) **Social connection and understanding:** Folk literature is way for people to connect with each other and share their stories, ideas, and traditions. It can help bridge cultural divides and foster understanding between different communities.
- 4) **Moral and ethical education:** Folk literature often contains moral lessons and values that can shape behaviour and guide decision-making. They can be used to teach children about kindness, compassion, resilience, and other important character traits.
- 5) **Entertainment and Creativity:** Folk literature can be a source of entertainment and inspiration for individuals of all ages. The stories, songs, and other forms of folk art can spark creativity and imagination.
- 6) **Nation building:** folk literature can play a crucial role in fostering national identity and unity, it can help people develop a sense of belonging to a larger community and share common cultural heritage.

Folk literature is a valuable resource that helps us understand ourselves, our history and our world. It is a living

tradition that continues to evolve and adapt, reflecting the changing needs and aspirations of communities around the globe. Folk literature is important because it preserves cultural heritage, provides insights into history and beliefs, fosters social connection, and serves as a form of education and entertainment. It's a living tradition passed down through generations, reflecting a community's values, wisdom and unique experiences.

Folk Literature and its Importance:

- 1) To preserve Oral Traditions.
- 2) Characteristics of Folk Literature include; dissemination through generations-fluidity-sociality –orality.
- 3) Development of Cultural Identities.

The Impact of Literature on Culture and Society:

- 1) Literature has always played a significant role in shaping culture and society.
- 2) It serves as a reflection of society, influencing our identities, preserving history and tradition, facilitating communication and expression, fostering critical thinking, and driving social changes.
- 3) Ethnomusicology offers a profound understanding of the rich connections between music, culture, and society, shedding light on the diverse expressions of folk and traditional music across the world.

The Impact of Folk Literature on Culture and Society:

Folk Literature has always played a significant role in shaping culture and society. It serves as a reflection of society, influencing our identities, preserving history and tradition, facilitating communication and expression, fostering critical thinking, and driving social change. This article, explores the profound impact of Folk Literature on culture and society of the Deoris of Assam.

Folk Literature as a Reflection of Society: One of the primary ways folk literature impacts culture and society is by acting as a mirror of our collective experiences. Through various literary forms such as novels, poems, and plays, authors depict the realities, values, and beliefs of their time. Literature captures the essence of a particular era, providing insights into the social, political, and cultural contexts in which it was created.

Role of Folk Literature in Preserving History and Tradition: Literature serves as a powerful tool for preserving history and tradition. Historical fiction and non-fiction books provide insights into past events, allowing readers to learn from the mistakes and triumphs of previous generations. These literary works bring history to life, making it more accessible and engaging for readers. In addition to historical literature, folklore and oral tradition play a significant role in preserving cultural heritage. These stories, passed down through generations, carry the wisdom, beliefs, and values of a community. By reading and studying folklore, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of their cultural roots and the traditions that shape their society.

Literature has a profound impact on culture and society. It serves as a reflection of our collective experiences, influencing our identities, preserving history and tradition, facilitating communication and expression, fostering critical

thinking, and driving social change. By engaging with literature, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their communities, and the world around them. Literature has the power to shape minds, challenge norms, and inspire action, making it an essential component of any culture and society.

Understanding Ethnomusicology: Music has long been a powerful force in expressing cultural identities and traditions. Ethnomusicology, as a field of study, delves into the relationship between music and various cultures, exploring the diverse ways in which folk and traditional music reflects the social and historical contexts in which they originate. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context, encompassing the social, cultural, and historical perspectives of music in societies around the world. It examines the role of music in shaping and reflecting cultural identities, as well as its significance in rituals, ceremonies, and everyday life. It helps in:

- 1) **Exploring Folk & Traditional Music:** Folk and traditional music, often deeply rooted in oral traditions, are central to the identities of communities and have been passed down through generations. They display a remarkable diversity, embodying the unique sounds and styles of different cultures.
- 2) **Cultural and Historical Significance:** The art forms offer valuable insights into the history, beliefs, and experiences of the people who create and perform them. Folk and traditional music serve as vehicles for storytelling, preserving the collective memory of communities and conveying their values and struggles.
- 3) **Regional and Global Influences:** Furthermore, ethnomusicologists explore the regional and global influences on folk and traditional music, tracing the migration and exchange of musical elements and the impact of colonization and globalization on these traditions.
- 4) **Collaborative Nature:** Throughout history, folk and traditional music have been shaped by interaction and exchange between cultures, fostering rich and diverse musical expressions. Ethnomusicologists study the interconnectedness of musical traditions and the ways in which they continue to evolve and adapt.
- 5) **Preservation and Revitalization:** As communities face modern challenges and changes, the preservation and revitalization of folk and traditional music become crucial. Ethnomusicologists are central to these efforts, working with communities to document, preserve, and revitalize their musical heritage.

Ethnomusicology offers a profound understanding of the rich connections between music, culture, and society, shedding light on the diverse expressions of folk and traditional music across the world. By appreciating the complex narratives and values embedded in these musical traditions, we honor the cultural diversity and resilience of communities through the art of music.

Ethnomusicology and Folk Literature: Both the fields explore the ways in which cultural knowledge and expression are transmitted and maintained with communities. Ethnomusicology focuses on the study of music within its social and cultural context, while folk

literature examines the oral and traditional forms of storytelling, poetry, songs, and other narrative traditions. Both fields offer valuable insights into the cultural values, beliefs and history of diverse societies. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context. It considers music not just as a sound phenomenon but as a social and cultural practice. Ethnomusicologists explore how music is used in rituals, ceremonies, storytelling, and other aspects of daily life. They examine the cultural meanings, social functions, and political implications of music in different communities. Folk Literature refers to the oral and traditional forms of literature passed down through generations within a community. This includes stories, myths, legends, songs, poems, riddles, proverbs, and other narrative traditions. Folk literature is often used to teach cultural values, moral lessons, and historical narratives. It can also serve as a form of entertainment, social commentary, and artistic expressions.

Relationship between Ethnomusicology and Folk Literature:

- 1) **Shared focus:** both fields are concerned with understanding cultural expression and the ways in which communities transmit knowledge and values.
- 2) **Interconnectedness:** music and narrative traditions are often intertwined within a culture, with music serving to accompany storytelling, ceremonies and other aspects of folk life.
- 3) **Methodology:** both fields often rely on field work, observation, and collaboration with community members to collect data and interpret meaning.
- 4) **Ethnographic approach:** both ethnomusicology and folklore shares a common ethnographic approach, which emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural practices within their specific social and historical contexts.

A close proximity of the Deori community residing in Assam: The Indian Constitution has regarded the Deoris as a Scheduled Tribe of Assam. The present inhabitations of the Deoris are spread in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Majuli Districts of Assam. Other than the state of Assam, the Deori villages are also found in Lohit and Tirap Districts of Arunachal Pradesh.ⁱⁱⁱ As per semantics the word *Deori* means the offsprings of God and Goddess. According to the Deori language *deu* means great, wise; and *o* and *ri* denotes male and female respectively. On the other hand, the Deoris are believed to be priests or worshippers of Gods and Goddesses. Though the members of the Deori tribe are generally known as 'Deori' amongst the members of the non-Deori communities, they like to proudly introduce themselves as *jimo-chan-ya* amongst themselves.^{iv} The etymological meaning of the Deori word *jimochanya* is- *jimo* means the sperm, semen or virile, *chan* means sun and *ya* means moon. The *jimo* is born from the sweet union of *chan* and *ya*, i.e., *purush* and *prakriti*. The significance of the word *purush-prakriti* is also found to be related to their chief deity *kundimama*. According to the Deori language, the word *kundimama* means *kundi- purush* or *gira* which is lord shiva and *mama- prakriti* or *girachi* which is goddess parvati, (*bura-buri*) in a derivative form.^v The Deoris were the levite or priestly class and functioned as the priests of the Chutiyas of Assam, who established their kingdom at

Sadiya. It has been observed that the original seat of the Deoris was in the region beyond Sadiya. It is only about a century ago that they removed thence to their present settlements; and some of them still occasionally visit Sadiya for religious purposes.^{vi} There are four broad divisions amongst the Deoris. These divisions are- a) Dibangiya, b) Tengapaniya, c) Borgonya, d) Patorgonyas. Each of the division is said to be originated from a particular river's or place's name. The Patorgonya group is not traceable at present and it is presumed that the members of this group might have been amalgamated with the other existing groups of the Deoris or with the other communities.

Folk Musical Tradition and the Deori society: Traditional music is like hidden treasure of our culture. Through folk songs the tribal communities perform and fulfil their various ritual functions, birth, marriage etc., songs are a must to observe birth, marriage, death and festivals cultivation. This study highlights the various aspects of the folk musical traditions such as folk songs, ballads, oral literature, folk customs and beliefs related to the musical tradition of the Deoris. Although there has been an existence of the folk musical tradition and also the musical instruments of more than 10 instruments like *Droom (drum)*, *Kokili (air pipe)*, *Gogona (played by plucking)*, *Sengseng (cymbals or tal)*, *Xutuli (instrument played by blowing)*, *Tokari (string instrument)*, *Toka (bamboo hand clappers)*, *Lurung (flute) bin (a string instrument)* etc., yet no proper and detailed work has been done on the folk musical tradition and on the instruments which form a big part of the cultural heritage of the Deoris. The Deori musical flow is found mainly during the celebration of their ethnic festivals. And one important festival of Deoris is the Bisu festival. Another significant point is that *husori* (collective bihu dance in each of the household of the village) is not performed every year. It is performed only after having the general approval of the priestly council of their respective villages. It is done when there is a special need for money, as such some public welfare (2002:42). The bihu-songs relating to love like the *lahariya* songs of *husori* are an indispensable part of the traditional practices of the Deoris. The love songs of the deoris are very pleasant and full of philosophical ideas and musings-

Damai chekuna lebem An na hireiba
Matonnake matoya bana
Chiga chakure angunjuni kundina
Nona an nimajei nina.

(Rendering in English: oh! My love, you love me so much that I cannot forget you though I try to forget. I always pray to God in the morning and evening, to get you). This is an example from many of Deori *lahariya* songs. There are provisions for the siri-bisu (night bihu) amongst their societies. Usually the courtyard of a family preferably chari-deori of the village or center place of the village is selected for making these provisions. In such places, the boys and the girls do not perform bihu jointly by the *tengaponiya* and *borgoyan* sections. But, the *dibangyas* do not adhere to this system. The boys and girls can perform bihu jointly in the *dibangya* society. The themes of *nisha bisu* are generally of amorous subjects of a restrained nature-

Ki yadu korili muke oi nasani ai
Ki yadu korili muk
Dinto bhitrot thakibo nwaro ai
Ebar nedekhile tuk.

(Rendering in English: The dancer must have cast a spell on me and hence I can't bear missing a glimpse of her at least once in a day).

Separate *biyu khula* is arranged for boys and for the girls. They dance and sing in the whole nights. Although this *siri bisu*, which is performed at night, no one could notice the fall of moral character among them. They perform it with pure heart and mind. In Deori language songs are known as *sajeba*^{vii}. The *bisu* songs of Deoris are divided into three kinds: i) Descriptive songs: *aborbo sajeba*, *hoosori sajeba*, ii) Historical songs: *dusiya potiya sajeba*, *lahariya sajeba*, iii) Songs of joy: *hurai ranguli or dedura sajeba*, *singfai begara sajeba*, *bisu sajeba*. These songs are mainly sung in the temple premises of the Deoris but there are no restrictions if it is sung outside temples during *bisu*. The Deori people started singing their songs in Assamese as well as they are a part of the greater Assamese society.

Aborbo sajeba: Popular song of the Deoris which includes the ancient days of Deoris, themes of god goddess, religious beliefs, environmental status, day-to-day lifestyles, etc. One of such song is:

Abu moke nahanga mure gudai
Giu muke nahanga mure gudai
Pidipal pihinga are bohan
Gare sire sironga sere nyan /

Lahariya sajeba: This category of song also includes themes like those of *abarbo* but with little mix of history and origin of their community. And also sometimes it includes themes of repartee, mourning, longing, hopes/aspirations etc. One of such song is:

Loh bai lahariya hai
Aharot xolale pate xomoniya, loh bai lahariya
Bohagot xolale mate xarilore, loh bai lahariya
Oti senehore hator game kharu, loh bai lahariya
Japote xamori thoute xarilore, loh bai lahariya
Uliyai pindhi jam kanere keru, loh bai lahariya /
 (they sing in Assamese and Deori language as well).

Hurai ranguli: Joyous and fun song of the Deoris. These songs are sung in *bisu* festival of the Deoris. One of such songs:

Hurai ranguli re hei
Hurai ranguli siddame dangori
Lagdurreiya seure ja /
Lamadurreiya dunumde buji demasi
Kaiyya pasiyagoi /
Jariyya keiba sekuyo kai oi
Bujiya missiore /

Despite of the songs sung in *bisu-puja*^{viii} or *thanghaar*^{ix} of the Deoris, there are songs such as *malitai*, *tokari sajeba*, *biya-nam*, *ai-nam*, *mojaiya sajeba*, which are very rich thematically. There are song such as *malibai geet* which are

very popular. This *malibai-geet* includes stories of love, repartee, mourning, longings of the young lady malibai. One of *malibai* songs:

*Ujai dexot ujan uthe, malibailoi monot pore
Hai oi hai malibai, kinu khai pahorim oi
Ghura nejor suli jene, malibair kokal tene,
Akaxor tora jene, malibair soku tene /
Bhati dexor kanhor luta, malibair kokal guta,
Nodi kaxor birina jupa, malibair sulir khupa /*

Till few centuries ago, there used to be a *malitai* song very much popular in the Deori society. The popular *malitai* song included the love story of *kolong knower and knoweri*. Ballads or *malitai* was very much popular in the Deori society and towards the 20th century composition of *Bhimbor sajeba* came out and was especially popular amongst the Dibangiya clan of the Deoris. *Bhimbor Deori*, was a tribal leader and the founder of Tribal Belt and Block and was an active member of Tribal League in Assam. So, *Bhimbor sajeba*, songs revolves around with his glorious deeds to the tribal society. This song was composed in the year 1984-90 such as:

*Xouba sigaiya sigahaba saiyo king
Xouba siriye daghaba yakaking
Jou dagarona kobe
Kobe jar mira lazu
Kobe jar mirasi lazu
Jou higara kobe, jou dagarakobe /
Jaro Jimmochanya Bhimbor Deoriya
Tribal belt blockon ledam
Ba belt-block o amiri jogaram
Yobi kuya seure jam /*

Towards the mid of 20th century, there was the popularity of *tokaari geet* in the Deori society, but now this song is in the verge of extinction. *Tokaari geet* were mostly sung in the Assamese language. *Tokaari* an instrument (dotara) which is played while singing thus named after it. One of such songs:

*Ye amore samore dukkhoni tokaari
Aahil bharostoloi name oi,
Ye berore julunga nai diya parboti
Ekhoi loi gol mohadev ishare
Ekhoi bharostot role oi /
Kunuwe emuthi kunuwe dumuthi
Kunuwe nologai maat
Kukure kamure sowale doliyai
Kotu moi napalu xukh
Rati dine kori bhikha maagi maagi
Paw dukhore upori dukh /*

There are songs of separation and repartee of love known popularly as *mojaiya sajeba*. This song is sung by the cattle keeper boys in fond memory of their lovers, it is also sung in the *magiyo bisu*^x late night feasts. Earlier it was only sung in the Deori language but nowadays it is also sung in Assamese language. *Mojaiya sajeba* is an important folk song of the Deoris. One of such songs: (The lover yearns for his lady love):

*Diniya niyo sunna aiyo mon hong kundungna
Aiyo monona gijagi oo*

*Burosi mon song nona moton oo
Sayya busomayo aa nana muto mayiom doke
Basi jimong kuri ho nima kun ninah
O kundi gira na angu jungna
Lasiri de hoiba o /*

The Deori folk song is firmly attached to their holy shrines, tales of gods and goddesses right from their compositions. Deori bisu is an important festival of the Deoris. One example of Deori bisu song is the *aborbo geet*:

*Aborbo nahanga abor bose re hei //
Abu moke nahanga mure gudai //
Giu muke nahanga mure gudai //*

The Deoris earlier lived in the place called Kundil Nagar in Sadiya. Thus, they sing in *abarbo geets* earlier, the ruins are still found now. Thus they sing in their song:

*Kundilor agarito gudakoi ximolu
Tate loi kuruwai bahe ki na /
Sadiya rajyate oi sarixal guxani
Talo ke namaskar koru ki na /*

There are god/goddess invocations locally known as *guxai-guxani naam*. One of such naams:

*Amare xarothi amare guxani /
Ga dhui kori jaw xewa ki na /
Sadiyat ase oi sarixal guxani /
Talo mani jaw sage ki na /
Surjyak exewa swa-rajok exewa /
Koru boxumotik xewa ki na /
Ai saraswati devi parvathy /
Tewloi kori jaw xewa ki na //*

Hoosori geets: This category of song includes themes of pastoral life, simple rustic life, paddy field works, weaving, sometimes historical events are also found in the form of songs, specially in this hoosori geets. One of such historical event traced in hoosori geets is the Khamti/Mishimi revolt that took place in and around the Kundil Nagar, where the Deori people resided earlier. Deoris are very peace loving people out of terror they had to flee leaving their properties all behind. Such tragic historical incidents are traced in the hoosori geets:

*Noraiye nomale nora jongfai
Mishimiye nomale jathi
Aii sarixale nami ahile
Xunore jokhola kati /*

There is a true incident of the tengapaniya clan of the Deoris establishing the Baliyababa than in the *Jaidam parbat*^{xi}. Even this incident is remembered and sung in the hoosori geets:

*Erimot erilu kheremot dhorilu,
Joidamot patilu than /
Joidam porbotor pora sai pothiyaw /
Sadiyar putola ghora //
Miri dekhilu, mishimi dekhilu,
Aru dekhilu hura /*

These husori/hoosori geets are sung within the village and with the due permission of the *deudhoni*^{xiii}. These songs are not allowed to sing outside the village boundary. There are rules to be followed while singing husori songs during bisu festival of the Deoris, the folks carry a bamboo (12-16ft) length cut into three pieces and in the courtyard of village people residences they use to make a tri-zone and keeps it open from one end. While performing this hoosori geets, the one who sings (namati) moves within the space of tri-zone and the rest of the performers stand on the other side of the bamboo tri-zone and beats (slight strikes) on the bamboo following a track. This hoosori is performed with the starting of *deudhoni* in *deoshal* and eventually performed in the courtyard of *bordeuri*, *xorudeuri*, *borbharali*, *xorubharali* then in other common people houses. These songs are sung separately by men and women folk.

Bisu geet: Deoris are mad for *bisu* thus they have abundance of *bisu geets*^{xiii} in their disposal. Before the 20th century, the men and women folk separately used to perform *siri bisu* or night bisu for the whole month of April, in the big courtyard of any villagers houses. The boys used to play the *drum*, *kokili*, *senseng* and girls used to play *toka*, *gogona*, *xutuli*, accompanied by claps. The themes of *bisu geets* revolves around love, likings amongst youths. One of such songs:

*Hanhe hoi sorimgoi tumare pukhurit
Paro hoi porimgoi salot /
Ghame hoi ulamgoi tumare xorirot
Makhi hoi suma dim galot /*

The *bisu geets* of women traces the societal norms, codes and lives of women of the Deoris, such as:

*Hate xoru buli kando o mure ai
Bhori xoru buli kando /
Kotiya mugare riha boil obi
Andharot jiliki jabo //
Hatotu jetuka bhoritu jetuka
Jetuka bariloi jaw,
Borti kokaiye bor bou anile
Xolita jolaiye saw //
Railor ali dubori bone oi xoman oi
Railor ali dubori bon,
Ai samor jiyori haijat morile
Bihu khulat gojile bon //*

The above mentioned *bisu geet*, says about the *kotiya muga*^{xiv} silk and the *riha*^{xv} chadar weaved out of it, the silk is strong and it sparkles and shines in the darkness. How the women put *jetuka* (colours of henna in the hands) and how they have a good knowledge of the silk. This *bisu geets* are not allowed to perform outside village.

Biya naam: The Deoris have got *biya naam* to sing in marriages. They sing songs which is more of intonations while giving a bath to the bride and groom aswell. One of such songs sung while the bride and groom were taken out for a bath:

*Ram ram prothome pronamu
Ram ram aii nu saraswati
Ram ram ditiye pronamu hari oi ram ram //*

One another song sung while fetching the water for the bride from river or pond nearby to give her a ritual bath on her marriage day:

*Fuli ase seni sompa
Oi xokhi meli ase togor /
Utha radha gunowoti
Utha oi xokhi nodhoriba jogor //*

The Deoris have big-marriage (adult marriage), mid-marriage (marriage after elopements or small gatherings), small marriage (puberty attaining celebration) and each have separate *biya naams* respectively sung by the women folk of the society. The greater Assamese society believes in chanting intonations (for goddess) while people falls ill of contagious disease like pox, the same implies in the Deori society aswell, those are known as *aai nam*^{xvi} commonly known as *yoyo muxa* by the *girachi* (women) of the village.

Tamuli geet: A fictional tale of love affair for *kolongdoi* a beautiful young lady who charms every youth with her beauty. This song includes every youths desire to have her for life, how everyone stops working as she passes by or how they reluctantly goes back to work if they happens to know if *kolongdoi* comes. This song also includes themes like memories fades and how beauty fades with time and time waits for none. This song is generally sung by the grandchildren who visits their grand mothers home and to pull her leg the youth used to sing such songs. This song is sung addressing the unseen power named as *tamuli* (2017:91-92):

*Amak par kora girjon tamuli oi
Ami xipaarloi jawyenu oi.....
Kahani ahila nati kumoliya
Aha bhitoreloi xumainu oi.....
Kerra bhangi pati kuwana oi
Kolongdoi bulile moribo paru moi
Sitika patile lagimona oi.....
Eri gole era paat nalage kolongdoi
Bela gole nalage bhatona oi....//*

Potan kokai geet: This song is a fictitious tale of two beautiful ladies named *senai* and *modhu* and *potan kokai* is a young man, who has given them a knife made by a coppersmith. The knife was too sharp and cut the fingers of both the girls and blood rolled while they tried to cut bettle nuts. Thus in utter pain tears rolled from their eyes and they sung this song in pain (2017: 93-94). This song is:

*Senai oi bai modhuye binai
Tamul paan ekhoni diya oi potan kokai /
Tamul katiboloi kotari gorhalu
Dhaare soke mokai oi potan kokai /
Xonari xalote kotari gorhalu
Dapot mina kora biri oi potan kokai
Kotari mukholoi saboke nuwari
Souk jol mol kore o potan kokai /
Tumar kotari anguli katile
Rakhibo nuwaru tej oi potan kokai /
Tumar kotariye anguli katile
Bixot binai binai kandu o potan kokai /*

There are other songs such as *suje saka* songs mostly sung by the women while brewing their local rice beer, longing for their parents home, recalling their past gone good days in parents place and also they mourn that they do not hold any firm place or identity thus they have to work to gather identity, they are too tired of household chores out of sheer tiredness they use to take refreshments in the evening hours by making and consuming rice beer, thus they use to sing.

Musical Instruments used by the Deoris: The folk musical instruments forms a big part of the cultural heritage of the Deoris. The boys plays the instruments like: *droom*, *kokili*, *sengseng*, *tokari*, *lurung*, *bin* etc., while the girls used to play the *gogona*, *xutuli*, *toka* etc.

Droom: The percussion instrument in general. It is basically cylindrical instrument with both the ends covered or stitched with the skin of cow or *lepedur* (goat). It is beaten on both the ends with following certain patterns and rhythmic intervals. This is the drum, a musical instrument, sometimes accompanied by a stick sometimes played by both the hands. The rhythms for each songs are different.

Kokili: It is the air pipe, locally known as *kokili*/ *kokiliyai* in Deori language. It is made of buffalo horn and it is concave in shape with one large hole at one end the other with tiny hole through which the player blows air and plays it rhythmically placing the fingers on the hole put on the top of the horn towards the mouth side of the player. The youths play it during the *bisu* festival in the month of April.

Gogona: It is the headgear the girls used to put on their bun while performing *bisu* dance. It is made out of soft bamboo which is played by plucking the steep edge of the instrument. It is played by keeping it between the lips and pressed tight one thumb holding the one edge of the instrument the other thumb constantly striking the other end and it gives a (*zong zong*) sound played with different rhythms.

Sengseng: This is the pair of *taals*/ *cymbals* which is made of bronze. Its size varies there are very big *sengseng* to handy ones. It is played using both the hands in rhythmic orders. The big *sengseng* is used in the *naamghars* or *deoshaals* and generally the handy ones are played while performing *husoori*. The beats for each songs are different.

Xutuli: It is a small musical instrument, a very handy one made of clay. Three holes are made on top of the instrument and it is played whistling on the middle hole while simultaneously fingers from both hands plays the other two holes on both the ends.

Tokari: It is a string instrument, played by strumming the strings, *tokari* is the (*dotara*) which is generally identified in the Indian classical musical instruments. The Deoris have *tokari geets* (songs) which is sung accompanied by *tokari* instrument. It is made of pumpkin dried skull and bamboo attached with strings.

Toka: This instrument is made of bamboo cut into two slice which is hold by an edge it can be hold by both hands and used as clappers. Thus, it is also known as bamboo clappers.

It weighs less easily carried and is mostly played by the girls while performing *bisu* dance, but men can also play this instrument.

Lurung: This is the flute, it is made of bamboo and played by transferring air through mouth, the player holds it in a slanting way putting one edge of the flute on his mouth on one hole while the other edge is left blocked. The player plays it with fingers on the holes made on the flute while simultaneously playing through mouth transferring air.

Bin: A string instrument, played by strumming the strings as well as accompanied by a bow string. It is played in a rhythmic manner; the player strums the strings with one hand and the other hand holds the bow string and draws it over the strings of the *bin* simultaneously. It is played to accompany melodious songs.

Two important musical instruments of the Deoris which are in the verge of extinction are as: *Cheketrow* and *Dentow Dema*.

Cheketrow: Deoris make their musical instruments from immediate resources available in the nature. This musical instrument was very much popular in the earlier times, but now a days this musical instrument is hardly been played or seen in the Deori society. This instrument is made of bamboo cut into cylindrical shape and one hole is done on top of the bamboo, one lid is made to cover the hole when needed. And two strings are made parallelly on top of the bamboo, the strings are made of bamboo sliced softly so that when strummed it gives the sound of the strings of those like guitar. The lid is made on purpose, the lid when closed gives different sound while the lid is opened gives a different sound. A stick is taken to beat the strings in a rhythmic way. It is hold in one hand placing one edge at the collar bone the othe edge hold by the hands, while the other hand holds the stick that strums the strings. This musical instrument was popular in the old society, it was played while singing songs, different *bihu geets*.

Dentow dema: This Deori musical instrument is in the verge of extinction. This instrument once played a vital role in the every musical performance of the Deori society. This instrument is made of bamboo cut in a cylindrical shape the bamboo is sliced until the upper layer turns soft. It is played in a certain rhythmical pattern by pressing one end of the instrument on the stomach of the player while a stick strikes on top of the instrument. The player holds the cylindrical shape on one hand pressing one end after certain period to his stomach, while striking the instrument with a stick holding in the other hand. In recent days some Deori people who are found in the Majuli District of Assam are trying to assimilate the musical instrument called *Negera* with their folk musical instrument. *Negera* is a folk musical instrument of the Assamese people specially the Gosain-Mahanta people who follows Vaishnavism they use to play it in their musical performances. *Negera* is made up of two same size bowls made of clay covered with cow skin and it is played with sticks rapidly in certain pattern, it is just like the pair of drum set.

3. Conclusion

In essence, ethnomusicology and folk literature offer complementary perspectives on understanding the rich tapestry of human culture and the ways in which communities express themselves through music and narrative which in ways helps in preserving oral traditions and culture of any community. The folk musical tradition of the Deoris traces the simple rustic life of the community. The folk beliefs, the rites and ritualistic beliefs, the daily life struggles, the love stories, youth longings, pastoral lifestyle, farming, woman weaving tales etc., are the themes, that revolves in the songs of the Deori community. Traditional music makes the people conscious of their culture and its value (1991: 37). Despite tremendous challenges the Deoris have been able to maintain their age-old traditions, religious beliefs and practices intact amidst various socio-political trials and tribulations through the centuries. From the above historical observation it is found that the Deoris are completely independent race in the great human society. They possess all sort of required factors like language, religion, culture etc., to become an independent race since time immemorial past. The Deori culture is facing danger from the clutches of globalization and striving hard to flourish. Such endangered culture so sprung -up by the nature thousand years past now deserve preservation and propagation by the government itself from being extinct. Thus, this paper is a humble endeavour to deal with the notions of authenticity, locality, vitality of cultural identity of the Deori Community, in the realm of ethnomusicology.

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ⁱⁱ Sashidhar Deori; *A Handbook on Deori Culture*; North-Lakhimpur: Epitome Offsets; 2007; p. 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Saranan Deori; *Religious Practices of the Deoris: A Book on the Religion and the society of the Deori Community*; Guwahati: Bina Library; 2002; p.3.

^{iv} 'Ibid', p. 11.

^v 'Ibid', p. 13.

^{vi} Edward A. Gait; *AHistory of Assam*; Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co.; 1906; p. 3.

^{vii} The songs in Deori language is known as sajeba.

^{viii} The ritualistic offerings and prayer made to the Gods and Goddesses in the holy temples at first before celebrating the bisu festival of the Deoris.

^{ix} The holy shrines of the Deoris.

^x The bisu celebrated in the month of Magh (January), by the Deoris, and is named after the month.

^{xi} Jaidam parbat (hills) which is in the borderlines of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh of North East India the original habitation place of the Deoris, the homeland of the Deoris.

^{xii} The female holy spirit that appears in every bisu period of the Deoris, who foretells the future.

^{xiii} The songs that are sung during bisu festival of the Deoris are known as bisu geets.

^{xiv} The golden silk is muga and the kotiya muga/silk is the strong silk that shines very much, it is used to weave out igu or mekhela or the skirt which the women folk use to wear in the Deori society.

^{xv} The long shawl which the women use to weave out of golden silk, and use to drape on their body on top of the blouse and mekhela.

^{xvi} The intonations for goddesses locally known as aii naam.