

The Conceptual Transformation of Folklore with Special Reference to Bihu of Assam

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Abstract: The scholarship of Folklore, being a part or whole of a culture, has witnessed several phases of transformation in its conceptual framework since the neologism of 'Folklore' of 1846. Scholarship based on Romantic enthusiasm has shifted its emphasis to the collection of antique survival. With time a paradigm shift took place in Folklore studies, a change in focus from item centered to a process centered approach. The modern approach had extended its scope by incorporating the concept of 'Folklife' in its scholarship. With the impact of modernisation and globalisation, the mediated form of Folklore appeared as Folklorism mingled with commercial and political interests in European and American literature. Although the composite cultural component in Assamese society is still very much attached with the aura of its historicity, yet it is severely affected by the process of globalisation and modernisation. As in other parts of the globe, the Assamese society has witnessed a radical change in the social and cultural sphere. Under these circumstances, it is imperative to assess the conceptual and definitional transformation of Folklore scholarship in the context of Assamese society in its contemporary form. In this study, I intend to examine the transformation of *Bihu*, the national festival of Assam, in the light of the existing conceptual and definitional framework of Folklore. My study reveals that *Bihu*, the lifeline of Assamese peasantry, has also witnessed radical changes in its basic identity and other spheres with the advent of modernity. Based on my findings, I propose a definitional framework of Folklore, by incorporating the social reality in its present form, where Folklorism has been treated as an integral part of modern Folklore scholarship.

Key words : Folklore, Concept, Transformation, Folklorism, *Bihu*, Assam.