ABSTRACT

The social folk customs and economy have always been vital parts of any society for they hold the society in a solid bond of togetherness. The essence of the word ‘custom’ means the way of behaving that can be treated as usual or prevalence in a society. It is intensely associated with people or to the word ‘Folk’. Folk means people in general or a nation. As defined by Alan Dundes, “Folk is a flexible concept which can refer to a nation as in American folklore or to a single family.”

Social folk custom deals with group interaction instead of an individual and is, in fact, an investigative area of folklore as acknowledged by Richard M. Dorson. Dorson mentions different types of social folk customs such as rites de passage as birth, initiation, marriage and death. In social folk customs, he includes the folk beliefs, festivals and celebrations, certain games and recreation or pastime, mode of worship, folk religion and folk medicines etc.

Thus, social folk customs can be found out from the perspective of a community. When talked to the social folk customs of a particular community, it generally takes into account the aspects like festivals and ceremonies, beliefs and practices, games and pastimes, folk religions and folk medicines etc.

An economy covers activities of all those agents like producers, consumers, distributors of goods and services of a community. Overall, an economy expresses the status of affluence or paucity of community from the material belongingness.
Both social folk customs and economy are interrelated to each other. A sound economy of a society always helps in performing folk customs in a privileged way and *vice versa*. Most of the traditional fairs and festivals are seen to have revived from the mouth of extinction because of its economic benefits. Again, the abundance of extraction of economic benefits may lead some customs to deteriorate over time. Economy is, thus, a sword blade with sharpness in both the edges in performing the social folk customs.

The social folk custom and economy of a small ethnic group have immense impact on building the contour stone of a greater community. At the same time folk customs and traditions, to some extent may stand as the domain behind the socio-economic and cultural image of a community. Folk customs and traditions are practiced primarily by small ethnic groups normally living in the remote and isolated areas. The most cultured and civilized society today also carries its current status reflected traits from its root of origin after stages of evolution and transformation.

The Tiwa Tribe, also known as the Lalung is one of the oldest tribes of Assam. It is an ethnic group inhabiting in the states of Assam and Meghalaya in north eastern part of India. They have a brief history of migration. According to a belief among the Tiwas, their forefathers have come down from Tibet region. But according to some of the historians their habitats was somewhere near Allahabad on the bank of the river Yamuna. They were pushed out by the Aryan invasion and forced them to leave Allahabad, and took shelter in the Himalayan passes in the distant past.
The present study is highly confined to the Tiwas living in the Morigaon district of Assam. An attempt has been made in the study to analyse the community from the perspective of the observances of social folk customs and construction of the economy. Hence, study is entitled as, **Social Folk Customs and Economy of the Tiwas of Morigaon District of Assam**.

The study has a very important significance. The great Assamese culture and community has been composed of the contributions of all the small tribes and ethnic groups living in this land since the time immemorial. It would be easy to understand the great Assamese culture, customs and traditions and economy once it is intelligible to access the all underlying vivid and colourful facts, the feelings and emotions, inherited traits, fairs and festivals, rituals etc. of all small communities. Besides this, the advent of the Aryans and how they mingled with the non-Aryan people formed a common society although both of them had completely opposite settings in terms of customs, culture and traditions. This study probably satisfies a bird’s eye view in this regard.

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