

Values in Karbi Folk Tales and Songs: An Evaluation

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In an indigenous environment the Karbis have framed certain traditional rules and regulations, set their goals and aspirations, evolved certain norms and codes, morals and disciplines. This environment embedded in diverse ways of folk life sustains the collective life of the community and their folk values. Here values, relying on a state beyond the question of being moral or immoral, may be individual or social, cultural or religious, environmental or material standards used to judge or compare, approve or disapprove things in relative terms as desirable or undesirable, correct or wrong, useful or harmful, necessary or not. The values remind them their duties, liabilities, responsibilities as individual and as a member of the community and provide uniformity to their behaviour in their everyday life. A study of the Karbi folk tales and folk songs, accessible in primary and secondary sources, shows that it is well integrated with their folk values and have been providing exposure to those values in working situations for their younger generations and inculcation of the same in them irrespective of time and space. It does not mean that these values when pursued will keep them primitive and away from modern knowledge. Folk values let them live as the Karbis committed to their culture and tradition and indigenous environment and identity.

One of the values advocated by their mythical social organisers like Hemphu and Harbamon (Longkam Teron, 1998:1-23) is that mere political right cannot serve the Karbi community as expected if the leaders ignore equal development of all. What is alarming is the emergence of an opportunist middle class that does not feel attached to their folk values, accountable to community and nature, human and non-human others. They are interested in mere celebration of their festival and commercialization of their culture and search for personal gain at the cost of the rural Karbi folk. Thus, orchestration of folk values can inspire a society in its way to a new worldview and socio-economic realities. The folk life of any human community is never a distant outpost of the past. It has greater relevance to the present, and its values can motivate the younger generations, the future leaders and citizens of their land. In changing circumstances the folk literature, the working constitution of values not only record and transmit but also play an educative role, inculcate their folk values in the minds of the members of the community right from the early part of their lives and even in a modern milieu make them proud of their values and heritage.

Oeness with Nature and Environmental Values:

Karbi folklife cannot be separated from nature, the most comfortable zone for the Karbi folk. They love nature, live with nature and learn from nature the best tricks to address their problems and thus the best way to live on. If the “Legend of Creation” (Sir Charles Lyall,1997:70-72) and ‘KarbiKeplang’ (Jorsing Bey,2004:84-89)stress on the importance of plantation and non-human beings for sustainability of human life, ‘Lo Keplang’ (Dharamsingh Teron,2011:27) refers to the importance of bio-diversity. Similarly the myth of Be Langbe and HarLangbe (L. Teron& D. Gogoi,2004:36-41) raises a voice against pollution of drinking water and advocates for cultural assimilation, and the legends of Rongpherpi and Thong Nokbe(Longkam Teron,1998:51-61) reflect a sense of love for their land and community and a revolt against any form of exploitation and marginalization. If these properties of their heritage, portraying the total environment at the centre loaded with environmental ethics, are read or told from environmental viewpoints (perspective), will foster a sense of belonging to their land with its beauty and richness, its relation to their life, language and culture.

The greatest challenge before the human race in the new millennium has been to pass on a safe and healthy earth for the human generations to come. Mere formal environmental education will not work much if the young generations are not made to feel the sense belonging and also inheritance. For promoting environmental education, selected Karbi folktales will be a handy and effective tool. In changing scenario the story-teller needs to be an environmentalist who listens to the undelying voice of the environment and communicate the same to the listeners in a systematic and scientific way with a view to socializing and assimilating them with their own land and its features, their folklore, their socio-cultural, political and linguistic identities, making them aware of the environmental issues and its effects. Retelling folktales or story telling ay focuss on bringing about necessary changes in their attitude towards human and non-human aspects of their environment and thereby inculcating in them acceptable behavior and environmental values. For example, the tale ‘An Orphan and a Vulture’ (DharamsinghTeron and Sikari Tisso,2012:307-310) can be retold to give exposure and commitment to its indigenous non-human environment and a ‘give and take’ way of life which makes the total environment congenial to live in. The tale ‘Vokronso’ (Ibid:167-169)shows how sustainability of human life depends on existence of non-human beings and coordination between the human and non-human environments. The tales like ‘The Tiger’s Revenge’, ‘Mangbon the Brute’, ‘The Tiger and His Human Twin’ (Ibid:239:296) are reflective of a Karbi

indigenous environment with its folk way of life propagating environmental values like importance of tiger and maintenance of bio-diversity in sustenance of human life on earth. The tale 'The Hog-deer of Pantisang' (Ibid:10-11) with an exposure to the conflict between human and non-human environment is meant to promote the idea that in a Karbi folk society none but the ecosystem is at the centre; the human is not meant to finish the other species nor to exploit the natural resources but to live in harmony with nature, help the needy and save the bio-diversity for sustainability of their bigger home. These tales can effectively reorient the children to build an emotional bond between human and nature, to understand and get them involved in their environment around and make them learn the skills to act responsibly for a protective environment. It will surely make them come forward to feel, understand and preserve and fall in love with their own land, soil, air, river and water, wet lands and agricultural fields, forest and hills, indigenous species and its varieties, the beauty of their own language, culture and folklore and be proud of their own identity. Karbi folk tales and their textuality construct such great ideas as conservation of wetland and hazards of human activities detrimental to environment. Modern readers of this type of literature can share their concerns with the unfortunate environmental issues – the endangered species of our flora and fauna, man-animal conflicts, loss of habitat and so on. The man within is so trained and nurtured by folk culture that it can feel the agonies of marginalized sections, consequences of unequal and unsustainable developments. Such values through their orchestration creating a genuine sense of eco-consciousness, respect for their total environment with their language and culture, folklore and identity will be safe. Folk values can contribute to the global objective of keeping the 'earth' a sustainable home for the existing lives and the generations to come.

Articulation of Sub-alternity:

The term 'subalternity' here consciously avoids the critical notions associated with and simply refers to the underprivileged Karbis subdued and marginalized by internal or external forces or living at the bottom layer of their society. Two types of subalternity are articulated in Karbi folk literature - the sufferings of the Karbis as a community and the poor and powerless, rural and illiterate Karbis as individuals. The migration song 'MucheraKehir' (JorsingBey, 2004: 84-89), the legends of Thong Nokbe, RongpherpiRongbe (Longkam Teron, 1998:51-61), Larbin and Lirbon (PadumiGogoi, 2011:49) etc. portray the subaltern Karbis the as a community and record the plight of the community in the hands of their strong political neighbours like Ahoms, Jayantias etc. The tales of Dengrali, Larta, Didi, Dimmir etc. (Longkam Teron, 1998:74-89) reflect the plight of the marginalized Karbis in patriarchal social

structure and in the names of tradition and social norms. Didi and Larta are compelled to lead a humiliated life and marginalized by the male-friendly strict rules of 'Jirsong' and society. Dengrali gets herself reduced to a tree out of shame caused by her (socio-culturally strong) maternal uncle and raises a voice against any sort of exploitation either of human or non-human environment. Dimmir spitting at the mouth of economically and socially strong village head protests against a strong male's conspiracy and marginalization of women. The tales of Hi-mu (BonglongTerang: 1937), Kave and Kadom (DharamsinghTeron and Sikari Tisso,2012:92-94) etc. are the tales of pain and suffering of women at the hands of socio-culturally strong males and the Karbi women, obsessed with hesitation, a sense of loss and tragic consciousness, can be read as the unfortunate victim of patriarchal authority. They are the means or objects of sustenance of the anti-women patriarchal norms and ironically the subjects of execution.

The tale 'How the Monkeys were born' (Rongbong Terang,1976:31-33) is reflective of the atrocities done to the members of bachelors' dormitory by heartless leaders in the name of providing training or work culture which took away the pleasure of life from them. The tale 'A frog and a Tiger' (DharamsinghTeron and Sikari Tisso,2012:207-209) is meant to inculcate such values of their folk society that none is born to be marginalized and even the weakest with self confidence, boldness, cleverness and intelligence can raise his or her voice against the exploitative forces. The trickster tales like 'Tenton and the Ploughman' (Informant:BinaTokbipi) show cheating of the powerful by the powerless and inculcates sympathy towards the poor and needy and develops a platform for them to raise a voice against the powerful. The tale 'The Crow and the Snake' (Informant: RumilaBeypi) is meant to inculcate in the young minds of the community that no one is born to be subordinated forever, rather the marginalized ones should fight for their right and establishment of their identity.

Love and sympathy for the needy, subdued, exploited and marginalized ones characterizes the Karbi folk society seen in their tale-world. Jangrecho, the orphan, the dominant character of the Karbi folk tales is loved, taken care of and rewarded with beautiful heroine's hand and kingdom. Jangrecho, the orphan in different roles is always approved, appreciated and rewarded. Even the deity who betrayed the orphan after getting married is never excused by their society in the tale 'Orphan and King of Vices'(S.N.Barkataki, 1970:105-107). The society is very much critical towards those who do wrong to the needy people and go against the values of the society. Karbi folk literature with such expression owns ability to make the younger generation understand the causes of sufferings of the community and of the marginalized groups within and feel oneness with the plight of the community and of the Karbis living at the bottom layer of the society. Thus the subalternity articulated in their folk literature

as referent to the wronged community and the underprivileged ones may reorient the target groups towards a better understanding of the right and equality, justice and identity of all irrespective of gender, socio-religious position and status, economic condition etc. and may contribute to the reconstruction of the value-based cultural selves of the young ones through their folk literature who will not be merely sympathetic towards but fight for the underprivileged Karbis in true spirit.

Representation of Women and the Values associated:

Karbi folk literature is reflective of how the women self is constructed and voiced in their narratives, society's attitude towards and her socio-culturally structured roles, her reaction to those roles etc. The women-oriented Karbi folk tales, myths, legends, love songs, ballads, proverbs etc. are meant to socialize the girls, make them disciplined and complete adult women, to mould their behavior in the expected way to suit the patriarchal society, to teach them how to live for others, to make them bearer of tradition and culture. The woman world seen in the Karbi ballads and woman-centered tales is essentially a tragic one. These narrate the tales of unending woes and sufferings, pain and agony, anger and anguish of Karbi women and are reflective of the Karbi folk society's perception of and attitude towards women. The society has no objection if the strong male having a wife at home goes in search of a beautiful lady (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso:228-230), but punishes the faithless wife to roam forever with the cloud in the sky (S.N.Barkataki,op.cit.). The husband is not sympathetic towards the pains of the over-worked woman but physically assaults her for being pitiless towards the males wasting time in idle (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso:107-112). Looking through a vulture feather the husband discovers animal spirit in mother and wife and considers them the real source of familial and domestic disorder. He never looks at himself through the feather believing in the society's conviction that the male is always right, and finally restores his life getting rid of the old one and married to a new one (Ibid:259-260). The maternal uncle who made Dengrali pregnant and left her to a state of committing suicide goes unpunished (Basanta Das,2010:252). The beautiful girls without a brother or brother-in-law are bound to suffer whose parents are poor and ignorant and the male leaders of 'Jirsong' are not considered the guilty who even sexually seduce the beautiful girl members and compel them to commit suicide or make their life pathetic (Dharamsingh Teron and Sikari Tisso:92-94, 289). In spite of taking separation from the careless husband the wife cannot get herself fully free from the so called emotional-sexual bond of marital relationship and makes her husband happy assuring that he

would be the first to suck her nectar in her next life (Ibid:274-275). The society is indifferent towards the pains of the young mother feeding a baby who is compelled to work harder (Ibid:289). The wise old women of wit and intelligence, practical knowledge and wisdom, secret and special knowledge who can play crucial role in changing other people's lives are marginalized by the society and let to live like beggar women living all alone in a wretched hut in a deep forest. These tales of women's sufferings not merely reflect the loss of womanhood and dishonor to her inner self but mirror the Karbi folk society from sociological perspective. The male chauvinistic Karbi folk society appears biased against women and leads the young girls to read critically the unequal man-woman relationship and their uneven social position and provides them scope to construct their character in their own way.

Karbi folk literature is also reflective of the fact that the Karbi women, in spite of living in a male chauvinistic and male dominated society, enjoy certain advantages as compared to their counterparts among the non-tribals. After father's death the daughter inherits property but can never be the household. Karbi marriage system is devoid of bride price and dowry system. Divorce is permissible, child marriage has never been a practice and widow marriage is preferred in Karbi society. After marriage the girl does not change her surname though her children take her husband's surname. A married woman in a Karbi tradition maintains the rule 'Kaservi', i. e. while walking she is always in front of her husband. 'NihuSarkan' is one of such rule through which males are compelled to respect the ladies like the wife of maternal uncle. The tale 'Vokronso' (Ibid:167-169) projects woman the protector of husband and 'The Legend of All Women's Village' (Ibid:255-56) projects women the protector of the village. In the tale 'Mangbon the Brute' (Ibid:295-296) the female force in the form of an old tigress makes the end of the life of the strong Brute who brought danger to the lives of the Karbis and their culture. The tales like 'The Sunbird and his Wife', 'Dog, Hyena and She-Elephant' (Ibid:107-275) etc. are reflective of female expressive behavior quite different from that of the males. The tales show that women are capable of leading their life being free from the conventional order, pose a challenge against the patriarchy and male domination and leave their husband's house in search of herself. The 'Tale of a Dove' (Rongbong Terang:34-35) portrays the Karbi woman, represented by the female dove, as the voice raised against colonization, exploitation and humiliation of woman self. The simple and submissive female force in the tale suffers a lot in the hands of her strong male neighbour, the intruder who consumes her children again and again, compels her to shift from one place to another and kills her husband and is finally killed and colonization is overthrown by the so called weak female force and metaphorically raises a voice against marginalisation of woman self and asserts respect and

dignity of women, equal place and position of women in their society. These tales, if retold from women's perspective, may lead the girls to probe into the causes of women's sufferings and finally to locate their place in the male made society and to transgress their situation into a means of 'search for self' for themselves.

Values of Historicity:

Study of Karbi folk literature is the study of the masses of the community, their worldview, migration and their earlier socio-economic cultural religious and political affairs which may reorient the young minds of the community as well as outsiders to understand the history of the community from the below. The Karbi myths and creation songs which are all about gods and goddesses, folk belief, folk religion and origin of objects are also expressive of the earliest worldview of the Karbis. There are folk songs celebrating the existence of their earliest villages like 'Amsikacho', 'Klahupacho' and 'Lamthamkep', Miring Rongchopi, TeronRongchopo, AkliRongchopi, Boroli-e etc. which shaped and organized the earliest forms of the Karbi society. The 'RukasenAlun' (PhulmatiTeronpi:113-118) and the 'SarKebatAlun'(Jorsing Bey:24-29) are reflective of how Grandfather Kashen and Harbamon with gracious presence of Hemphu gave birth to deities, rituals, worship, incantation, ways of purification, ways of life right from birth till death and from their accumulated knowledge, wisdom and imagination formulated rice-beer, bachelors' dormitory, village chief, village administration, tales, songs, dance, rites and rituals etc. and gradually established the Karbi folk society and its sociology. MucheraKehir, sung on the third day of 'Chomangkan', can rightly be called the Oral History of the Karbi community with the sense of historicity prevailed throughout, historical life of the community with reference to their legendary figures, historical characters, events and relation with other communities of the region, their establishment of kingdom and migration, of their battles won and lost, their socio-cultural custom, economic condition, cultural assimilation etc.

The Karbi society is proud to have a good number of legends constituting the oral history of the community. These are the records of reality, expression of woes and sufferings, anger and anguish, exploitation and humiliation, valour and freedom of the community and its members. The characters in Karbi legends like 'Thong Nokbe', 'Waisong', 'RongpherpiRongbe', Larbin and Liorbon instead of hanging after knowledge about the unknown are more concerned with the well being and security of the Karbis, freedom and identity of the community and remain busy in conflict with the oppressive neighbours. These

legendary figures sacrificed their lives in their conflict with outsider oppressors while internal conflict is shown in the legend of Rongkhang. Further the Karbi kings like HarPokkang, KadengChiri, Rongkhang, Rengbonghom, Waisong etc. are seen establishing or ruling liberal Karbi state establishing capital at Socheng, abolishing capital punishment, extending boundary up to KapiliDhonsiri etc. and are concerned with well being, happy and peaceful living of their people (Sharma,2016:80).

The Karbifolk tales are reflective of the early socio-cultural history of the community. For example, the tale 'Ghalakghatk' (DharamsinghTeron and Sikari Tisso:35-37) reflects a Karbi land with 'Ronghidi', 'Kowansi' and 'Chukcheng', river 'Lut', folk festival 'Dumahi', community fishing, indigenous fish and fishing instruments like 'polo', 'dupani' etc., indigenous animals and insects, folk deities like 'Mosondhori' and 'Langbar', indigenous musical instruments like 'chen' and 'murut' and their folk wisdom that one is the master of one's own will. The tale 'The Crow and the Snake' (Informant: Rumila Beypi) is metaphorical of the painful historical past of the community and their ever longing for a peaceful life. The historical tales of the community are characterized by local historical elements. The 'Legend of All Women Village'(DharamsinghTeron and Sikari Tisso:255-256) gives exposure to 'ArlosoArong', the village of all women which had its trace in the time of Karbi legendary hero Thong Nokbe. The tale records two neighbouring villages 'Miring-Murong' and 'Arkli-Arklo' and deals with a long-running environmental dispute over the sharing of the water of 'Marle' river. The tale projects Karbi women as expert weaver, protector of village and community and leaves scope for research in relation to the mythical women kingdom at Kondoli of Nagaon District. The 'Legend of Baby Hill' (Ibid:289) narrates the historical background of calling the 'Putsari' range of hills in western Karbi Anglong the 'Baby Hill'. The tale also records factual account of sexual abuse and exploitation of women members in a bachelor's dormitory by the male leaders. Further the names like 'Mikir-Hat', 'Ling-Lang' market; 'Kaziranga' etc. are expressive of the fact that the region from Kaziranga to Puranigudam and from Kathalguri to Kandoli via Chapanalla and Bamuni were initially inhabited by the Karbis. (Sharma, 2016:102-103). A scientific and systematic study of the historical tales and legends will be instrumental in constructing early history of the community.

Moral Values:

Hemphu incarnated among the Karbis as Langmingpo and taught the community certain moral ethics considered necessary for leading a healthy social life and enjoying heavenly blessing. He neither quarreled with any villager nor envied others and inculcated in

the community the values of non-violence. According to him one should always consider one self inferior to others, but perform own duty the best and thus should show instance to others. He stressed on equality of all and purity of body and mind and advised all to live together in peace with love and affection for each other. According to Langmingpo people should always work with patience, self-control, farsightedness and perseverance, faith on god and work with confidence. The principles advocated by Langmingpo or Hemphu for the well being of the Karbi people and their society as well are – purification of body, mind and spirit, purity in whole life, nobility, humble and amiable nature, rejection of ill temper, self dependent, competitive spirit in mind and good sense, obedience, good dealing and self confident (Mondal Sing Bey,2009:11). However in present day context the concept of purification and purity can hardly attract the younger generation and remain relevant basically in ritual and religious activities. No doubt these values constitute the backbone of the Karbi folk mind and Karbi folk society. Most of the Karbi myths, legends and tales appear tradition bearer, didactic and may be used to provide moral lesson. For example, the village head SarMangbi is punished by the villagers for not respecting Karbi tradition ‘Honjengkekok’ and Dengrali suffers for not being moral(Longkam Teron:80-89). The tales are meant to inculcate traditional moral values like innocence, constancy, righteousness, fidelity, honesty, faithfulness, goodness in the young Karbis and establish triumph of goodness over evil forces. The tales reflect that the way of life approved by their folk society is the only road to happiness and violation of which invites only punishment.

Socio-Political Values:

The traditional Karbi society is characterized with good governance, democratic ideals, equality, fellow-feeling and a sense of cooperation. ‘Mei’ the Village Council is the traditional socio-political institution at the ground level in the Karbi state with distribution of works to the portfolios like ‘Sarthe’, the village Headman, ‘Kurusor’, the priest, ‘Richobacha’, the Assistant village chief, ‘Ferangke’, the messenger and ‘Webarim’, the coach. The ‘Mei’ under the leadership of the ‘Sarthe’ performs various functions related to the socio-economic, judicial and religious activities of the villagers. The ‘Sarthe’ not only controls the day to day affairs of the villagers but also the inter-village and intra-village issues. The villagers can remove a ‘Sarthe’ if he is found inefficient. The bachelors’ dormitory of the Karbis ‘Jirkedam’ or ‘Jirsong’ is meant to train up the youths in all aspects of life –socio-cultural, economic, religious and agricultural, handicrafts, community-oriented etc. and to inculcate in them the democratic

values, sense of cooperation, fellow-feeling, work culture, folk art and craft and aesthetic sense. The Karbis strictly follow clan exogamy and consider a marriage between a boy and girl of the same clan a sin. The Karbis worship their respective totem and at no circumstance they kill the bird or the animal or cut the tree if it represents their totem. Karbi Customary Laws are the properties of the community. There are certain Codes of Conduct traditionally followed by the Karbis in their folk society. The Karbi folk society is characterized with equality of all and always longs for equal growth for all and is naturally free from high or low caste politics, exploitation and suppression in the name of caste, colour and race. People especially the elders and office bearers are honoured in a traditional way according to their social designation, role played in the cultural and religious activities (Sharma, 2016:38-43).

Folk Religious Values:

Karbi Religion is animistic in nature characterized with its own philosophical base, purifications, worship of nature and its objects, ancestors' worship, worship of household, varying beliefs and practices, religious experiences and behavior, deities and demons, priests and sermons etc. The Karbis do not believe in the concept of heaven and hell but think that the final destination of the Karbis is their ancestors' land. The souls are considered immortal and can take rebirth to the corresponding clans. They believe in the concept of unity of all things- earth, man, nature and ancestors' land. Within this unity there is a duality between 'demon' and 'deity' well represented by 'Hi-i' and 'Arnam' respectively. The unity and duality of the negative and positive forces and the balance between them are what constitute the philosophical basis of the Karbi folk religion (DharamsinghTeron, 2011:58-77).

Under the strong Assamese ego or Hinduised centre the Karbis with their own religion are compelled to remain in the periphery with suppressed identity. People immediately start to identify the Karbi deities with Hindu gods and read them from the centre. It brings crisis to the deities of the Karbis and makes them suffer from colonial ideology of the centre. Whatever the situation made by the outsiders, the reality is that most of the Karbis are still with their indigenous religion and happy to take part in their religious activities.

Folk Medicinal Values:

Karbi Folk Medicinal values imply their traditional viewpoints about and attitudes towards health and disease and the aspects associated with it. They worship their household deities like Hemphu, Peng and the deity 'Hi-i' for the well being of their family members ensuring a balance between the good and evil forces of nature. They also celebrate the ritual

'Vo Kartap' for curing 'maternal uncle searching disease' of a child. They also worship a few deities taking names from diseases. It is not surprising that folk medicine is still the only answer for a poor Karbi living in a remote village suffering from a killing disease. Karbi folk medicine is not merely a means of curing a patient but a socio-psychological therapy providing health to the entire environment. To what extent worship to a household deity or the ritual 'Vo Kartap' can save the life of a Karbi is doubtful, but one cannot deny the structural unity that it provides to the family or the community. The meaning and significance of Karbi folk medicine cannot be reduced reading it from the desk of modern medical science but lies in own cultural background and its function in its folk society. Waning of popularity of folk medicine among the Karbis in the context of the spread of modern education and dissemination of scientific knowledge is a fact. Plantation and preservation of the medicinal plants will surely contribute to bio-diversity and to have a sustainable home.

Social cohesion and integration:

In present days celebration has become the life force of most of the rituals. The limited participation festivals like marriage, purification or worship of a deity are of immense significance in the sense that these moments are not merely meant to assign new role to the individuals or to ensure welfare of a family member or for abundance of harvest but celebrated with a view to cementing the individual's membership in the society and providing opportunity to develop oneness with culture and community. The general participation festivals like 'Chomangkan', 'Rongker' etc. let the Karbis to take part in large number by virtue of their membership and belongingness to the community and provide them opportunities to associate themselves with their greater socio-cultural occasions and to develop oneness with their folk ways of life. No doubt it promotes social cohesion integrating the individuals to the society and culture. For example, in 'Chomangkan', whether the souls of the dead are safely led to the 'ancestors' land' or they are made free to take rebirth to their respective clans or whether the boys and girls after taking part in 'Nimcho-Kerung' are sexually united to ensure new birth to compensate the loss caused by death etc. are not so relevant as it were before. Its prime significance lies in the fact that it provides opportunity for the individuals to identify and associate themselves with their rites and rituals, folk belief and tradition, art and craft, songs and music etc. and helps them to develop oneness with the community and its culture. Thus 'Chomangkan', a celebration of death and rebirth, fertility and regeneration, appears one of the prime means of social cohesion in a greater Karbi folk society. In the present crucial juncture of time for the community sustaining a struggle for long for right and identity, the real meaning and significance of 'Chomangkan' lies in its sociological function promoting the individuals'

integration to the community, developing a sense of community consciousness and right and identity. Another important feature seen in their social custom is the collective spirit and energy seen on the part of the entire community. Most of the festivals of the Karbis start at family or individual level but ends at the community level transforming a personal matter into a matter of community concern. In the structural line, a proper understanding of the interrelations of the components in relation to the complex whole will certainly lead the young generation of the community to understand the real meaning of their social folk custom, its significance as a living and unifying force and its role in their growth and development as a community.

Socio-Ethical Values:

Karbi folk literature is not merely the source of transmission of their socio-ethical values from one generation to another but also expected to be the prime means of inculcating those values in the young ones of the community. Goodness and honesty, justice and righteousness and triumph of good, moral and honest over the evil, immoral and dishonest are the prime values of life nourished in Karbi folk society is well reflected in the world of Karbi folk tales and songs. Cultivation is the prime recognized profession in their tale-world symbolizing work culture where all even the king with his subjects are involved in the profession. That is why everyone whether the king's son or a common man must work at the paddy field and look for luck, name and fame in the rice produced, not in a world beyond human limitation. Love and sympathy for the poor and the needy characterizes the Karbi folk society as seen in their tale and song world. Betrayal, especially to husband, is never tolerated in Karbi society. The Karbi is a peace loving community and they hate war and believe in living together in peace, equality of all, equal growth for all and stress on acquisition of human qualities like love, affection, fellow-feeling, kindness, help, sympathy and a sense of endurance. Further love for tradition, respect for their glorious past, respect for their historical figures, acknowledge of the contributions of their elders are the loftiest Karbi folk values transmitted through their folk literature (Sharma, 2016:116-120). They need to live with their history, the pleasures of the triumphs and agonies of their painful past.

Way to scientific thinking:

Sustaining Tradition and continuity, pervasiveness and variation and travelling through time and space Karbifolk literature becomes historically resourceful, culturally inter penetrating and socially representative of their local features and national glory. It provides insight into a collective psyche, accumulated thought and wisdom. The human civilization or

its surface growth does not necessarily segregate the people from its root. Viewed historically, the study of folklore presents before us a roadmap of a community's growth from antiquity to modernity, from religious belief to scientific thought. The point is that the so called unscientific past is not at all disposable, rather the legend of creation reflecting their understanding of plantation and other beings before human life on earth, teachings of Hemphu constituting the inner self of a human being, village centered ways of social development undertaken by Harbamon, the tale of WeLongbi and HarLongbi protesting against environmental pollution, teachings of grand mothers like 'Marongpi', the tiger tales metaphorically suggesting the importance of bio-diversity, the folk belief that fowl came into being from serpent, the 'MucheraKehir' preparing for the present through their past etc. are enough to give birth to reasonable, rational or scientific thinking in terms of the present total environment and lead the young generation of the Karbis to look forward and cultivate scientific way of thinking.

A Sense of Duality among the Karbis:

The Karbi folk literature depicting the existence of opposite forces like spiritual and erotic in the socio-cultural, religious folk custom of the Karbis, sense of submission and aggression in their mythical and legendary characters, love for humour and obsession with a sense of tragedy, longing for order and living in chaos, hopes and aspirations for a change with a sense of hesitation, wish to go to the final destination of the ancestors' land only to come back to the same clan for living on earth, death and rebirth, degeneration and regeneration, purity and impurity, 'demon' and 'deity' represented by 'Hi-i' and 'Arnam' respectively, 'Jangrecho' the Orphan the honest and the trickster, the tiger the means of savior or damnation, the grandmother, the wicked and the wise, encouragement of women participation in bachelors' dormitory and their subsequent exploitation, projection of demon's village at the vicinity of that of the Karbis metaphorically suggesting the co-existence of good and evil, positive and negative forces etc. is reflective of a sense of duality inbuilt among the Karbis. Now a days, the manipulation of folkself witnessed in the caretaker of nature destroying a forest, savior of community betraying the race for individual benefit, bearer of tradition becoming instrumental in degenerating the values and indigenous environment has not originated from that sense of duality the philosophical base of the community, but is the result of pollution of folkmind with rootless materialistic zeal.

Negative Folk Values among the Karbis:

From outsider's point of view Karbi folk literature is also reflective of a certain negative folk values such as ethnocentrism, obsession with a sense of hesitation, fear and timidity, obsession with a sense of tragedy, use of tricks and violence against the wrong-doers,

violation of human rights in the name rules and community works, marginalization of women to a certain extent, anti-environmental jhum-cultivation and forest-fire, deforestation, hunting of wild animals, community fishing pouring poison to river water etc. which appear detrimental to the welfare and development of the individuals and the community as well. The tales and the songs reflect that the Karbis right from their creation seen in 'KarbiKaplant' are obsessed with a sense of hesitation and tragedy, a feeling of unease and uncomfortable, a sense of sadness of being unfortunate which may give rise to a sense of complexity in the minds of the young ones. A sense of hesitation towards something or somebody new is seen in the characters of the tales which is peculiar to the national character of the Karbis. Such negative traits may be beneficial in maintaining their own culture free from any foreign influence but also responsible for developing unfriendly force within.

Conclusion:

Karbi folk literature reflects their worldview, the way of life approved and the values of life fostered by the community. The folk tales and songs are reflective of a value-based Karbi folk society and violation of the rules laid down by society invites only pains and suffering. The real value of the folk tales and songs, as a source of sociological data, lies not in its concern with particular persons or incidents, but in its typical portrayals of situations, relationships and attitudes towards life. These tales and songs are reflective of typical pictures of Karbi familial relationships, social institutions, relation between an individual and society, society and nature etc. and these pictures, when synthesized, provide a more balanced and comprehensive view of the Karbi folk society and its values. Their folk values whether moral, socio-ethical, cultural, aesthetic, religious or environmental ones constitute the backbone of their folk society. Whether their folk values are personal or community concerned, egoistic or universalistic, hedonistic or utilitarian, good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, in present day context these are realized in relative terms and are undoubtedly the properties of the cultural heritage of the community and naturally its future never lies in the attitude of the outsiders.

The values in a Karbi folk society whether familial, social, cultural, religious or environmental are not inborn characteristics of an average Karbi folk but are taught to and acquired by the folk through oral literature, the process of socialization, interaction with nature and others, participation in community activities etc. In a traditional Karbi society the values are significant not simply for shaping the folk's behavior and individuality but for constituting the texture of their folk society and nature of their approved way of life. Some of their traditional values may be no longer relevant in present day society. But those values whether good or evil, relevant or irrelevant, right or wrong, are the properties or cultural heritage of the

community and should be preserved in a scientific way if cannot be practised or inculcated. Now it is the duty of the community and the students of folklore around to ensure sustenance of the indigenous nature of the Karbi folk tales and songs along with its traditional values especially the human, cultural and environmental ones from the influence of the technology and moral depravity of the modern world with a view to reorienting their present generations to their indigenous environment, adjusting them with their own culturally constituted world and thus enabling them to be not the rootless modern but the proud Karbis of the global world living with their own culture, history and identity.

Assamese culture and language belong to none but to all communities who have been living in the region since pre-independence era contributing to the growth and development of Assamese culture and language, formation of Assamese community and identity. No one should ignore the interpenetration of the Karbi elements in formation of cultural and linguistic, anthropological and sociological identity of Assam and the greater Assamese community. This study simply exposes the richness of Karbi folk tales and songs in terms of their folk values and its roles in reorientation of their younger generation towards proper understanding and sustenance of their environment in totality, culture and language, right and identity, but leaves certain questions unanswered - what are the contributions of the Karbis to the Assamese culture and folklore, language and nationality? And the same question needs to be extended and scientifically addressed in the context of global India. What is precisely there in the cultural and political history of Assam and India as well that represents the Karbis and their land? No doubt they like to be a part of Bihu celebration, but when will the beauty and strength of their Chomangkan be realized by others? They strengthen themselves with the teachings of Lachit Borphukan and Shivaji, but is there no lesson from the margin to the centre through Rongpherpi, Thong Nokbe or their tiger tales? The Karbis are not happy with the occasional recognition of their needs and rights and carefully made explanation of their culture and history by the advocates of the elite centre. Rather it should be acknowledged that they are undoubtedly a strong peripheral reality contributing to constitute Assamese and Indian culture and nationality with their own uniqueness, folklore and identity.

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