



The Tangkhul Folk Songs: A unique epitome of Preserving its Culture and History.

About the Authors

1. Dr.RINGKAHAO HORAM

Dr.Ringkahao Horam is the second son of Mrs. Lateola & Thikatai Horam of Tusom Christian village, Ukhrul District Manipur state. He has done B.A (H) in political science from Delhi University and M.A. Political Science from JNU New Delhi. In 1993 he finished M.Phil from Manipur University. In 2012 he was awarded Doctor of Philosophy (Ph:D) from the Manipur University (Department of Political Science) for the research work 'The Naga Political Movement: 1946-1964'. He has to his credit several articles and has participated and paper presented in many seminars and conferences. Beside published several chapters in books He has published book on 1. *"The Genesis of the Naga political Movement"* 2. *"Customary Laws of the Nagas of Manipur."* 3. *"Undeclared War: The Naga Political Movement.* 4. *The Tangkhul Folk Poetry in Song.* 5. *Naga Festivals.* 6. *My Roots.* 7. *Ideology: Influences and Trends of Naga Political Movements.* 8. *Random Thoughts.* 9. *Through my Prism.*

He joined government service in the college in 1990. After serving several years as Associate Professor and HOD. Department of Political Science, Modern College, Imphal, now he is serving as Regular Principal of Pettigrew College, Ukhrul. His area of specialization is Regional Politics and Tribal studies. He is also a Human Rights activist who has participated in trainer training course on "Fact finding and Documentation of Human Rights violation" held in Manila, Philippines in 1994. He is also a founder president of 'Naga Cultural Development Society' since 1992.

2. RINYAPHY HORAM

Rinyaphy Horam is a research scholar from Tusom C.V. Manipur, currently pursuing a PhD in English Literature and Cultural Studies at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jodhpur (School of Liberal Arts) since 2025. She earned an M.A. in English Literature and Cultural Studies from Amity University, Noida, Delhi (2021-2023) and a B.A. in English Literature from St. Xavier's University, Kolkata (2018-2021). Her research centers on the traditional Tangkhul-Naga warrior culture. She has an article accepted for a special issue of the Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Taylor and Francis, titled "The Vernacular Turn: Lura Festival and Tangkhul Folksongs in Postcolonial Ukhrul," and has presented papers at two International conferences in 2025 on "Gender and Performativity: An Analysis of Shumang Leela of Manipur" and "Wounds of the Motherland: Women's Bodies, a Site for Violence in Conflict Zones" respectively. Her academic projects have included studies of liminality and diaspora in Rohinton Mistry and Jhumpa Lahiri and an investigation of folktales as a gateway to understanding Naga culture. In addition to her research, she has volunteered with Karuna The Compassion NGO in New Delhi and with Xavierians in Action in Kolkata, where she drafted student progress reports and assisted

students in accessing government schemes. She holds UGC-NET qualifications for December 2023 and December 2024. She has published many articles in International Journals.

3. YURNGAYUNG HORAM

Yurngayung Horam is a research scholar hailing from Tusom C.V., Ukhrul District, Manipur. He completed B.A. in English (Honours) from Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, University of Delhi in 2019 and M.A. in Sociology from the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi in 2025. He is currently pursuing Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Delhi, with a general area of study in Tribal and Cultural studies. He has presented paper in National seminar and also published various articles in International Journal.

Abstract:

The Tangkhul Naga who predominantly settled in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts of Manipur, is one of the major tribes of Manipur state. It has unique rich cultural heritage. Interestingly, the Tangkhul which has about 300 villages has nearly 200 local dialects, speaking in its own villages. In the pre-British era in India, the traditional Tangkhul lives in the world of their own which was isolated from the rest of the world. Interestingly they do not have written document of their history and culture. All their ways of life and history are passed on through oral tradition mainly through folk songs. Hence, all citizens are expected to be a singer as well. Folk songs are sung in solo and in groups which is poetic in nature as they are sung in heart soothing melody. Today, as the oral tradition is no longer in practice and folk songs are ignored by younger generation; we can see the sign of the rich culture vanishing along with its history and identity. For they rightly said, "folk song is history and history is song". As folk song is one of the authentic documents of the past, it would be precious to preserve it. The author intends to assert the significance of folk song as one of the main mediums of communication of feelings, thoughts, faith and also a means to preserve history and culture.

Key words: **song is history and history is song.**

Introduction.

The Tangkhul is one of the major tribe of Manipur, which has more than two lakhs population which predominantly settled in Ukhrul and Kamjong District of Manipur State. They are indigenous and original early settler of the State. It has rich cultural heritage. Interestingly the Tangkhul which has about 300 villages there are nearly 200 local dialects spoken by different villages which itself is unique and rare in the world. Traditional Tangkhuls who lives in the world of its own was isolated from the rest of the world and they do not have written documents of their history and culture in the earlier period. All their past culture history, belief system and way of life were passed on through oral tradition mainly through Folk song. Hence, they used to say "*Laa hi channa, chan hi laana*" which means Song is history and history is song. Therefore, the most authentic source of information of the Nagas of the past particularly the Tangkhuls is "Folk song". Interestingly most of the Folk songs are in poetry form.

The Tangkhul have varieties of songs of their origin, history, culture, religion nature beauties, love song, song in form of stories lullaby song, rivalry, war, victory song etc. strange but true there are song to be

sung in the morning in the daytime, in the evening and in particular season only. Some of the varieties of songs are

1. Kahilaa = Song of the beginning of the year
2. Luiwutlaa=Jhuming cultivation song
3. Luisomlaa = Paddy planting song
4. Luimaolaa = Song of weeding of the field
5. Luireolaa = Song of weeding or clearing before harvest
6. Mahalaa = Song of harvest
7. Marunglaa = Rice pounding song
8. Leishatlaa = Love song
9. Naokhotlaa = Lullaby song
10. Chapzatlaa = Song of lamentation
11. Thishamlaa = Death ritual song
12. Petlaa = Song of bed time
13. Railaa = Song of war
14. Meisumlaa = Song of dormitory
15. Maranlaa = Song of feast of merit
16. Laa khangauilaa = Song of virgin dance
17. Pheizaklaa = Song of traditional dance
18. Khamahon (Unison sound with different pitch from the mouth)
19. Hokharai = War cry/houling

The Tangkhul folk songs are erudite and melody in nature which tell about their history, immigration wave, culture, faith, nature beauty apart from expression of their feelings about their love one. One of the songs talk about the immigration of the Tangkhul sung as

Oh! Haori haora kachida hanglu

Oh! Haori haora wahung kongda haowa

Oh! Wahung kongda tunga.....

(Oh! Tell to the world

We passed through Hwanghao river

We came up from Hwanghao river)

Another song also sung as

Oh! Kachili tunglo

Awa Samshokli tunga.....

(Where come thou

Came from Samshok of Burma}

Several other important like history, genereology, culture, custom, rites and rituals, their faith including human being relation with God, nature, animals, birds and environment, etc. are incorporated in folk song which are usually sing in their own local dialect in poetry form. The Tangkhuls although there are multiple local dialects there is one common language which is spoken by Hunphun (Ukhrul) village.

Folk songs are sung either in solo or in group. It is heterophony where the voices have low and high pitch known as:

1. Khavao = Soprano,
2. Okra = Alto,
3. Khakrei = Bass.

In group song these three parts uniformly synchronize together in a melodic rhyme producing heart calming sound. Usually, group songs are of memorize common one singing about legion story, nature beauty, environment, festival, etc. On the other hand, in solo singing, it is more of self-expression of varied matters. Although, the Tangkhul folk song normally is not sing in classical vibrato wavering or wiggling of notes it is sung in melody heart soothing voices mesmerizing the audience to hear it more.

Since singing is part of their life usually each and every member in society are expect to be a singer. This becomes easy since they are taught singing in Morung (dormitory system). Singing is also important and mandatory in their life because through this the history, culture, custom, etc. are memorized and preserved for the new generation. Folk songs of such varieties of the past of such valuable and important asset are sadly vanishing due to modernization and westernization. With the advancement of information technology, the traditional culture and ethos are vanishing. This new technology revolution is invading the traditional culture and is destroying it slowly and steadily. The younger generation failed to know the value of traditional practices which is mostly based in practical experiences. Unfortunately, tribal people particularly youngster hardly take interest to safeguard and preserve the traditional culture which is of their identity.

Conclusion.

Today we are in the transitory period where most of us are linkman between traditional and modernity. Unless we play our role to bridge it there will be a chasm separating traditional and modernity which will be beyond our capacity to bridge the gap and lost our traditional culture which is so important in our generation too. The traditional culture particularly folk song since it is one of the authentic sources of information of the past we need to revive and preserve it. Therefore a concerted effort must be made to preserve folk song for the younger generation to know who we are and how we were in the past.

References

1. **Angkang, Stephen.** *Hao Tangkhul Customary Law*. Imphal, 2003.
2. **Elwin, V.** *The Naga in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
3. **Hodson, T. C.** *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*. Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1989.
4. **Horam, M.** *Naga Polity*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1992.
5. —. *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas*. Delhi: B. R. Publications, 1992.
6. **Horam, Ringkahao.** *The Genesis of Naga Political Movement*. Imphal: Singam Horam, 1998.
7. **Hudson, T. C.** *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*. London: Man Milan and Co., 1911.
8. **Johnstone, James.** *Manipur and the Naga Hills*. Delhi: Cultural Publishing House, 1983.
9. **Kabui, Gangmumei.** . *Glimpses of Land and People of Ancient Manipur, Manipur Past and Present*. Edited by Naorem Sanajaoba. Vol. 1. 1988.
10. **Longchar, Wati A.** *The Tribal Religious Traditions in the Northeast India*. Jorhat: ETC, 2000.
11. **Luikham, R.** *Tangkhul Traditional Land Use System and Related Custom*. Ukhrul: UDCRM, 2009.
12. **Luikham, T.** *Wung (Tangkhul) Naga Okthot Mayonza Akai I & II*. 1961.
13. **Maiya, Gachui.** *Hao Miwun Ngashan*. Imphal, 1986.
14. **Makangwo, Hormi.** *Hangva Wungnaobingwui Khamsui (Hao Customary Law)*. Imphal, 2006.
15. **Ruivah, Khashim.** *Social Change Among the Nagas (Tangkhuls)*. Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1993.
16. **Sen, Sipra.** *Tribes and Castes of Manipur*. New Delhi: K. M. Rai Mittal for Mittal Publications, 1992.
17. **Shaiza, Ako.** *Tangkhul Wungram Phanit*. 1985.
18. **Shimray, R. R.** *Origin and Culture of Nagas*. Mrs. Pamreiphy Shimray, 1985.
19. **Shimray, W. A.** Sothing. *The Tangkhul*. Imphal, 2000.
20. **Shimray, Y. K.** *Tangkhul Language and Culture: An Introduction to Tribal Language and Culture of Manipur*. Imphal: Manipur kala Academy, 1976.
21. **"Shiyan Chikan** (Customary Law)." Ukhrul: Tangkhul Naga Long.
22. **"The Customary Laws and Practices of the Tangkhuls of Manipur**. Eastern Region,," Law Research Institute, Gauhati High Court, 19198.
23. **"Tribal Profile of Manipur**. Documented by Mutua Musuem." Imphal, 1998.