

Cultural Diversity of Nagaland

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ABSTRACT

Nagaland, a North Eastern State of India, is a land of rich cultural diversity. There are five major tribal communities Garo, Kachari, Kuki, Mikir and Naga in Nagaland. Each of these tribes living in Nagaland has ancient customs, rich traditional culture including marriage culture, food habit, dress code, linguistic varieties and life styles. These all are unique in size and dimension, quantity and quality and in heterogeneity. Influential impact of scientific and technological development has been affecting the cultural diversity of the tribal communities of Nagaland. The aftermath result of the impact has appeared to be positive as well as negative. Modernization which is manifested in almost every field of human life has touched the very core of the cultural diversity of the tribal communities of Nagaland. The tribal customs, traditional rituals have been put under a tremendous threat for the causes of urbanization, industrialization and blind imitation of western culture. This paper is an attempt to interpret and anatomize the impact of the scientific and technological development on the cultural diversity in Nagaland.

KEYWORDS: *Traditional Culture, Heterogeneity, Influential, Threat, Urbanization*

INTRODUCTION

Nagaland, the Switzerland of the East, is one of the smallest states of northeast India. It covers Myanmar in the east, Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Assam in the west, and Manipur in the south. Nagaland is a land of tribal communities and is designed with hills and beautiful brooks. It is adorned with stellar are landscapes, beautiful tea garden high mountains, and distinguish cultures. Nagaland is an abode of rich flora and fauna and is a place of the dandiest plants and animals. It is also a shelter of the beautiful birds and colorful insects. In connection with the diversity of birds, Nagaland is widely, known as the Falcon Capital of the world. Nagaland is a place of flamboyant tribal culture which attracts visitors, from different parts of the globe and leaves them amazed and mesmerized Nagaland has a glorious history of tribes and there cultural diversity. There are 66 tribes in total including the sub tribes in Nagaland and amongst them 16 are considered/ looked upon as major tribes. Out of there 16 major community five communities- Garo, Kachari, Kuki, Mikir, and Naga are widely known and exposed to the univers. The major 16 communities are Angami, Chakhesang, chang, dimasa kachasi, Khiamuiungan, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, phom, pochury, rengma, sangtam, sumi,

yimchunger and Zeliang. However the majority of population in Nagaland is associated with agriculture and their craftsmanship plays a vital role in strengthening their economy. Tourism in Nagaland on the other hand attracts visitors from different parts of the Globe. It has also a remarkable contribution in the economy growth of Nagaland. Moreover the cultural diversity of the land has added something special to its tourism. My study in this paper adheres to the diverse cultures of different communities mentioned above. I until go with their language, Religion, food culture, fair and festival, art and craft marriage culture, dress and costume and dance and music.

Language culture:

A great variety of languages are there in Nagaland. These languages are geographic and ethnic grouping of languages under the Kuki-Chin-Naga Languages used by the Naga peoples. The languages used in the Northern part of Nagaland do not belong to this group, in spite of being spoken by Naga groups, indeed these form the integral part of the Sal languages within Sino-Tibetan, on the other hand southern Naga languages constituted a branch within Kuki-Chin languages. It is not denying the fact that Nagaland is a land of language-diversity which is

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hardly found in any other part of India. The people of Nagaland speak about 36 different languages and dialect. The large- scale languages remarkably used in Nagaland are- Angami, Ao, Chang, Konyak, Lotha, Sangmat and Sema. It is very important to be noted

that the maximum number of Naga people use Indian English which is given the status of official language in the state. The following chart is giving a conspicuous idea of total 36 major languages of the land.

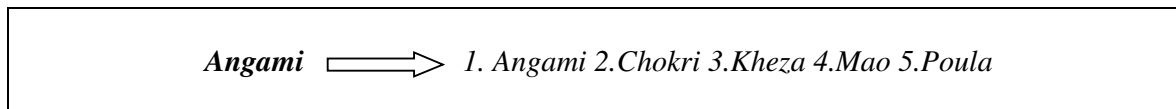


Fig. 1

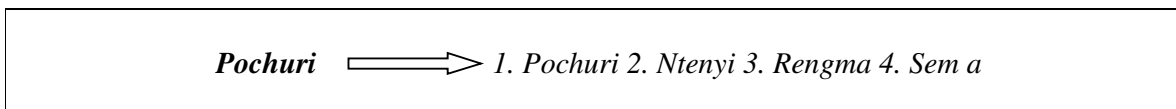


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

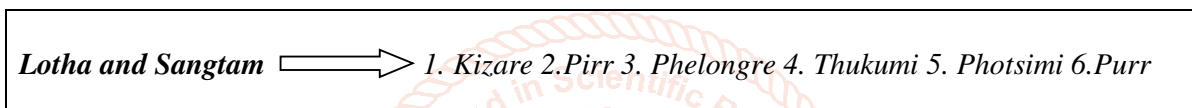


Fig.4



Fig.5

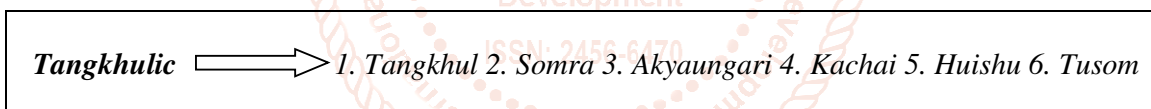


Fig.6

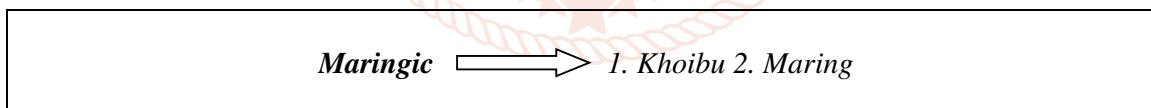


Fig.7

Except these 36 major languages, a good number of other languages namely Zeme proper Maram Inpui etc. are also spoken in Nagaland.

Religion:

Nagaland is predominantly a Baptist state in the world and Christianity is the major religion in the state. Nearly 88 percentage of Naga people are Christian and the rest 12 percentage covered Hindu and Muslim as per 2000 and 2011 census. The Naga's actually belong to the Mangloid race and they have hailed from the eastern part of the world. In view of the oral traditions of the Naga Tribes, it may be said that their ancestors migrated Yunnan in China. A.Z.Phizo says that the burmise are "Naka" was the origin of the world Naga which is constituted by "Na" meaning pierced and "Ka". Actually those who wearing are Naga's. The Naga's had indigenous

religions which were fascinating in nature as they were animistic and revolved around prejudices superstitions logic and the ways of virtuous life. A series of Indigenous religions were being practiced by their fore-runners with a great sincerity and care. The Heraka is one of their indigenous religions it was animistic in nature. But during the British period the Naga's became baptised an they adopted Christianity as their religion it is to be noted that in the year 1851 the first Naga was baptised. In transforming Naga's into Christianity the missionary plays a crucial role. At the very beginning the conversion of the Naga's to Christianity was running slowly with only 20 percentage of population convert in until 1940s. The

spread of Christianity in Nagaland was running faster after independence in 1947. At present more than 90 percentage of the population of Nagaland are Christian and Christianity is being exercised with devotion and dedication.

Food Culture:

There is a great variety of foods amongst the Naga people. They are traditionally accustomed to eat their ancestral food habits. They are very much interested in eating Chili and Semus. Rice ranks the topper in their menu the Naga people prefer boiled vegetables, boiled meat with a chutney which is made using bamboo shoots they choose the meats of almost a huge number of animals and birds namely pork, chicken, cats, dog, birds and many others. Their common food items consist of fish rice, bamboo shoot fry and roasted duck. The Nagas also prefer boiled edible organic leaves they used a variety of local herbs in the preparation of their food. The chilli is remarkably famous for its spicy test all over Nagaland however the Naga food is mostly boiled and they avoid fried foods. It is very interesting to note that the Naga people have dog-meat in their dishes. Presently the Nagaland Govt. has decided to ban consumption of dog-meat in Nagaland. On the other hand a section of the Nagas has opposed the Govt. decision on the grounds that this decision goes against their cultural and traditional values.

There is a good many number of Naga tribes in Nagaland and the different Naga tribes have their own cocking style and varieties and some time exchange of recipes amongst the tribes is interestingly done. Different Naga food-names are mentioned in the following chart:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bamboo steamed fish. 2. Bitter melon. 3. Rice. 4. Meat curries. 5. Pulses. 6. Bamboo shoot fry. 7. Dog-meat. 8. Smoked pork 9. Benes mix 10. Naga ghost chili sauce. 11. Roasted intestines. 12. Akhuni. 13. Naga crab cakes. 14. Soyabean. 15. Chicken. |
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Fig. 8

Fair and Festival:

Nagaland is a wonderful place for its numerous seasonal fair and festivals. All the Naga tribes celebrate and enjoy their own festivals with dance and

music in their traditional manner. The most remarkable festivals arranged in the state include Sekrenyi, Moatsu Mong, Suhkruhnye, Bushu, Yemshe, Metumniu and many others. All these wonderful festivals are organized by the different tribe of groups in Nagaland. The rites and rituals of the festivals differ from tribe to tribe. Hornbill festival is the top most festival amongst other ones this festival lasts for 7 days it is actually a music festival and it is mostly celebrated in Kohima it is an annual festival organized in the first week of December every year. The Nagaland Govt. launch this festival in the year 2000 to inspire the enter tribal interaction and to upgrade the cultural heritage of the state in an unique platform. The Moatsu festival is celebrated by the tribal community of Ao in the first week of may every year the festival is organised after the sowing of seed is done. It is actually an agriculture festival. The Naga tribes also celebrate Metemneao festival after the harvest of millet crop. Yimchangers tribe organizes this festival with sincerity and the great care. The sangtam tribe celebrates among mong festival at the time of harvesting new crops in the field. The Rwegma tribe of Nagaland observes Kgada festival pompously. It is celebrated after harvest marking the end of agriculture season. The Lotha tribe celebrate Tokhu emong festival after the harvest is over. It is very clear from the study that the festivals of Nagaland are truly related to cultivation where the tribal people of Nagaland assemble and celebrate the festivals with their traditional flamboyancy. Almost all the people of the Naga tribes and communities take part in the festivals with enthusiasm and great interest. A chart of different festivals of Naga tribes are shown below-

Tribe	Festival	Month
Angami	Sekrenyi	February 25
Ao	Moatsu Chakesang	May 1 Week August 1 Week
Chakesang	Sukrunyie Tsakhanyie	January 15 April 24th
Chang	Naknyulem	July 24
Khaimniungan	Tsokm	October 1 Week
Kuki	Aoleana Monvu	April 1 to 3
Kachari	Bushu	January 27th
Lotha	Tokhu Emona	November 7th
Phom	Monyu	April 1" Week
Rengma	Ngada	November last Week
Sumi	Tuluni	July 8
Sangtam	Mongmong	September 1 Week
Yimchunar	Medmneo	August 4th to 8th
Zeliang	Meileingi	March

Fig.9

Art and Craft:

The Naga tribes have a wonderful legacy of glamorous tradition of arts and craft. Their art and craft are deeply rooted in their life style that has a close connection with the environment they living. The art and craft had glorified the Naga culture. Not only that but also the art and craft had played a pivotal role in a strengthen the Naga economy. In their art and craft, the Naga people have shown their excellent skill and their beauty of their minds. A huge number of crafts and art which were intimately associated with the early Nagas are still carried out to the present day. The main occupation of the Nagas is agriculture and irrigation. A close study of Naga economy clarifies that agriculture is the main indicator of their economic growth. Yet the role of art and craft in strengthening the Naga economy is not less important. However, the art and craft of Nagas have a great variety. The wonderful works of their art and craft exist in the form of Basketry, weaving, woodcarving, Pottery, Metal work, Bead work. The different types of handicraft including Bamboo and cane products are unique in form an nature. Uniqueness is found in its and every art and craft of Nagas. The wonderful art and craft of Nagaland attract the visitors from different parts of the Globe and mesmerized them to see the sheer and sheen beauty of the same. Nagaland is a special place in India for its shawls with special pattern and motives the wood carving of Nagaland has a uniqueness which has distinguished it from other forms of art and craft the attraction and universal appeal of the art and craft of Nagaland have upgraded and popularized the tourism of the state.

Various Arts and Crafts

Basket tree, Weaving, Wood carving. Pottery.
Metal work, Jewellery and costume Bead work,
Blacksmithy.

Fig. 10**Marriage culture:**

The Naga people has a typical tradition of marriage. It is very important to be noted that the Naga people follow their marriage traditions very strictly. In their marriage tradition any relationship between a boy and a girl within the same community is looked upon as a social evil. The Naga people believe in exogamy the Angami tribe has a strict stand point to strangle a fowl and decides the fate of the couple on the basis of the posture which the fowl adopts while dying. The marriage bond is instantly broken if the fowl adopts and inauspicious posture. There are different practices in the marriage culture of Nagas. The practices vary

from tribe to tribe such as, in some communities there is pre-nuptial relation but it is not beyond a certain limit while some look upon it taboo. In some cases the grooms have to pay an amount of money for the girl as a dowry. In connection with this the girls are given special care and honor. In some communities (Sema, Lotha and Changs) a man is allowed to have multiple wives at a time. The marriage system of Nagas has two forms one is ceremonial and the other one is non ceremonial. The ceremonial marriage system is aspired as a sign of status and comprises of an elaborate and gorgeous rituals. On the other hand non ceremonial system of marriage involves the taking of a woman to the house of a man where they remain forbidden for one day. Divorced is a common matter in their marriage system. However, the marriage culture of Naga people is a distinguished and different from other marriage culture of our country.

Dress and Costume:

The traditional dresses and costumes of the people of Nagaland are completely different from the other parts of India. The Naga people give special important to their traditional dressed and costumes. They consider that their dresses and costumes are their identity because their dresses and costumes carry the signature of their identity. The dresses and costumes used by the Naga people are colourful and vibrant. The important items of their dress is their shawl. The Different tribes and communities have separate distinction in their dress and costumes. It is an special point to be noted that the dress and costume of the tribes bear the stamp of certain folklores depicting the gallant acts of their forefathers. Actually the costumes and attires aptly display the ancestral lineage. The decorative dresses and costumes of Nagaland are importantly popular in the state and the point of interest to the people of other parts of the country.

Some special dresses and costumes

Shawl, Kilt, Thadau dress Scirt, Moyer
tusk Vatchi, Neikhro, Pfemhou.

Fig.11**Dance and Music:**

Dance and music are the integral parts of the life of Nagaland. Nagaland is unique for its feast, dancing and gaiety at every festival. The folk songs that sing beauty love and honor have been coming down from age to age. The dance is not far from music incase of their value. Group dance is their uniqueness and distinction. Their group dances are synchronized with music through various musical instrument namely

Asem(Drums), Tati, Mouth Organ, Bamboo Flout. The dance performers wear jewellery and costumes which give a colourful and vibrant look to the dance performers. Indeed the folk songs narrate the tales of bravery, historic events and romance. It is not far from the truth that the drums and music of the Naga people arrest special attention of the tourist to the state.

Birth and death ceremony:

A good many number of religious rites rituals are performed during birth and death amongst the Naga people. Some unique religious-rituals and ceremonies are celebrated after the birth. As there was no doctor or hospital, the delivery of child was completely dependent on the experience woman who played the doctor's role in delivery in the baby it is interesting to note that the tender age boys and girls are not allowed to attend the delivery. The tradition of child delivery is still in practice in the villages. On the second day of birth a traditional birth ceremony is performed and a feast in honor of the child is arranged for small boys and girls. It is very common to give biblical name to the children.

Different communities have different death ceremonies. The Naga tribes like Konyaks and Ao exposed the death on the platform. These tribes do not bury the dead bodies but on the other hand follow the burying system of the dead body. The poumi Naga tribe has a believe in life after death. It is their belief that those who do good while their living on earth will reside in Thaimaingi which is considered as underground abode. The aged woman and man perform washing the dead body finally the near and dear ones pay their last homage to the bodiless soul and sing dirge. A unique rite is performed after someone's death. A crow is killed in honour of the death.

Conclusion:

Nagaland is a holy land of varies ethnic, linguistic, cultural groups and each of which is unique in character and nature with its own distinguished costumes, language, dress and costumes, religion, art and craft, marriage culture, food habit dance and

music, birth and death ceremony, fair and festivals and folklores. Nagaland is a state where agriculture is the main source of income and most of the festivals move round agriculture. With the passage of time everything on earth changes. Following this natural principle, the Naga people also have faced changes in each an every aspect of their life. Though change is a must yet some traditional culture must be kept intact for protection of the root of each an every community of the world. But unfortunately the western influence through Christianity on Naga culture unleashes dire changes in each an every field of Naga culture. By this way the originality of the Naga culture has been marred. It is the light of hope that the Naga people though influenced by the Americans have still deep honor and devotion to their own culture. They have not uprooted themselves from their ethnicity and folkloristic under the all engrossing impact of globalization. It is truth the Naga people have lost many of their own cultural heritage but it is not false that the Naga people have kept the root of their culture as usual.

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