

Protection and Continuity of Tangible and Intangibles Heritage and Cultural Expression

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Abstract:

Culture is an integral part of every society. The present paper aims to highlights on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the tribes of Tirap District, Arunachal Pradesh. Tirap District is a rich zone of traditional culture. It is being represented through festivals, music, dance, songs, textile & handicrafts, games & sport etc. It also attempts to recommend some methods to preserve & protect these rich cultural aspects of the tribes.

Introduction:

The District Tirap is bounded by the state of Assam in the north. Myanmar (Burman) in the south, Longding district in the west and Changlang district forms the eastern boundary. The District is home to three major tribes namely Nocte, Tutsa and Olo or Lazu.

Their languages are classified under Tibeto-Burman group of Languages. The dialects vary from village to village but they may be classified broadly into 10 dialects namely *Hawajap*, *Phongsungjap*, *Khapajap*, *Tangjap*, *Lazujap*, *Hakhunjap*, *Koutejap*, *Chanyakjap*, *Tutjap* and *Damlakjap*. These dialects have a little variation between them.

They are animism, they believed in an existence of a higher super natural being called 'Joban' or 'Teso' in Nocte. It is their belief that the 'Joban' is the supreme God who has created the world and all human beings including themselves. They performed different rituals to appease their God *Joban*. During rituals they pour rice beer on the ground and pray *Joban* for their wellbeing.

The societies of these tribes are patrilineal; descent line is trace through father side. Generally the eldest son of the family inherits the family properties, daughters have no claim over it; however, the eldest daughter inherits her mother ornaments and beads. Monogamy is the most ideal and general rule practiced by them. A man generally keeps a single wife in his lifetime. However, there is no restriction on the part of a man to marry more than one wife. Polygyny is greatly practiced by the Chiefs. They being the superior and wealthy people marry more than one wife.

They traditionally live in villages known as *Hadang* in Nocte. The village is a well-defined entity with distinct land demarcation from neighboring villages. All the villages of them are multi clan and all these clans are exogamous, marriage between the same clan is strictly prohibited. Each village of them has a village chief called *Lowang*. The chief is the head of the village administration and other social and religious activities. The status of the chief is hereditary; it passes on from father to the eldest son. Under no condition women are allowed to inherit chieftainship.

The *Pang* or the male dormitory is an age old institution which has been in existence since time immemorial among the tribes. It is a well organized institution for men that impart knowledge on socio-cultural, political and other rules and regulation of their society. Announcements of meetings, warnings of impending dangers, etc., are made from the *Pang* with the beating of log drums known as *Tham*.

One of the most striking features of their societies was the practice of headhunting in the past. Bringing severed head of an enemy from the battle was a symbolic of courage for the warriors. However, this practice is now entirely eradicated from their society with the spread of modern education.

The tribes of Tirap District are agriculturist, they mostly practice shifting or *Jhum* cultivation, however wet rice cultivation is also vogue among them. They keep livestock for use during ceremonies and consumption.

Tangible Cultural Heritage:

'Tangible Cultural Heritage' refers to physical artifacts produced, maintained and transmitted inter-generationally in a society. It includes artistic creations, built heritage such as buildings and monuments, and other physical or tangible products of human creativity that are invested with cultural significance in a society.

The societies of the tribal of Tirap are rich repository of Tangible Cultural Heritages which were handed over by their ancestors to them. Here we will discuss all the tangible items of them like their houses, dresses & ornaments, household articles, tools and weapons as aspects of Tangible Cultural Heritage.

The dwelling house is one of the main tangible cultural heritages; it is referred as *Hum* in Nocte language. It is about 18 to 20 meters in length and 8 to 10 meter in breath. The length of the house is divided into five major parts namely *Waka* the space for men and guest, *Thamthong* here Pestle *Tham* is placed, *Kakho* the main hearth of the family, *Hatap* space for old ladies of the family, and *Haso* it is the latrine. All parts of the house except the *Haso* have small partition like room and consist of hearth called *Tap*.

Their houses are well furnished with *Khuang* cot, earthen pot called *Tikpoh*, *Tong* (basket mean for men), *Buan* (basket mean for women), *Ding* (basket fro carrying millet), *Dingkhe* (small size *Ding*), and *Kanra* (small size *Buan*) and other articles like *Phachongto* (article to serve food), *Pha* (tray), *Mura* (stool, *Thora* (mat), *Haam* (mat), *Hitho* ladder to climb their house, *Chhathut Tham* pestle, *Khuankho* vessel for frying grains before pounding, *Tham* log drum which is placed inside the dormitory and beaten during festivals and other important occasion. And *Nong* drum for playing during dance.

The dresses and ornaments of them are usually made of beads, ivory, animal tusk, shells, metal, cane and bamboo and using natural dyes. Their main dresses and ornaments are *Khatria* a loin cloth worn around the waist by men, *Longsuam Kaphok* main headgear of men folk, *Miansut* headband for young boys, *Thuakrian* headgear made of conch shells for men folk, *Muta* made of animal hairs and dyed in reddish colour, *Khangtap* another type of men's headgear which is made of cane and hairs of boar and *Womey* feather of hornbill which is fixed on the headgear of the man. The two main headgears of women are *Likkaphok* and *Nyamkaphok*

Some of their necklaces are *Likto*, *Likphiang*, *Memiat*, *Tamphiak*, *Kathungru*. Their earrings are called *Nachong* or *Nate* by the Nocte. Normally, women wore different types of earring which are made of metal mostly with threads like *Lik Natho*, *Jan Nate*, *Waki Melap* and *Ngun Ru Nate*. Their armllets are known as *Poakra*, *Ngu*, *Chhanka*, *Wandaktho* and *Wandakam*. Their waist belt is called *Rinyak*. Another beautiful part of their dress is *Pahsong*.

Another striking feature of tangible cultural heritage of the tribes of Tirap is *Wantho* traditional gun, which is found in most of the family. They have experts who can made gun with materials from market and other available resources from nearby.

At the village Borduria, there is a megalith site called *Solonghong*, where huge stone are erected by their ancestors after successful head hunting. It is told that during head hunting days, the warriors used to bring severed heads of their enemies from the battle and after performing a ritual called *Raam* they used to erect stones equivalent to number of severed heads of enemies.

Another important tangible cultural heritage site is located in village Borduria called *Sumphong*. It is a salt well from where they used to fetch salt water and prepared salt in olden days. After coming up of market they no longer prepare salt from it and now it is kept unused. A beautiful engraved flower on a huge stone is still lying there. It is told that engraved flower stone was brought there from somewhere else and engraving on stone was done by the Ahoms.

Intangible Cultural Heritage:

“The Intangible Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills –as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith- that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Examples of intangible heritage are oral traditions, performing arts, local knowledge, and traditional skills.

This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity." (The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Article 2)

When we talk about the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nocte it will include all their traditions or living expressions inherited from their ancestors and passed on to them, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.

One of the most important aspects of their Intangible Cultural Heritage is the festival called *Loku*. Most of their festivals are celebrated in connection with various stages of agricultural works. Their major festivals are *Chalo Loku*, *Ronghuan*, *Hoju* and *Kaapkhut*. During festivals, both men and women wore colorful dresses and ornaments and performed dance. They exchange gift in the form of meat and rice beer *Kham*. It is a time when new relationships are formed and old ones are renewed by visiting each other.

During the leisure time both adults and children play different types of game in the villages of the Tirap District, though all are not in a well organized manner and some of the games are gender specific and also age specific. In most of their game, there is no official maximum number of players or teams. It can be played where each individual plays for themselves, or between two teams. And their children play games using native materials or instruments and insect due to limited resources of toys. Some of the traditional games & sports played by them since time immemorial are *Welang* (Swing), *Kong-Kong Khep/ Wakap Tuok/ Kong-Kongchap Tuak* (Bamboo Dance), *Wa-Thong Kuat* (Bamboo pole climbing competition), *Waki Khuam* (A balance walk in sitting position on bamboo pole), *Kiko Khuam* or *Da-Kuom* (Balance walk with bamboo sticks).

Ritual and ceremonies are integral part of their Society. The prevalence of it is perhaps as old as the tribe itself. They observed many rituals and ceremonies in different stages of their life. The main rituals observed by them are *Nakanjo/Nabanba* birth ceremony, *Chamkaat* a puberty rite to admit young boys to dormitory called *Paang*, *Janchhosi* marriage ceremony and the *Maangru* death ceremony. Besides, they observed numbers of rituals where their God *Jouban* is appeased and prayed to it for wellbeing of mankind. It will be really lengthy enough to discuss each and every aspect of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the people of Tirap District. But the most important is all these traditional ways of their life need to be protected and preserved.

Cultural Expression:

The term traditional cultural expression refers to the work of indigenous people and the traditional communities, but the term has not been precisely defined. The term Traditional Cultural Expressions in the international community is also referred to as “folklore” and some nations prefer using the term “folklore” in their national copyright laws. The term “folklore” means the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a group of people, transmitted orally. The term “folklore” was coined by William Thomas in the year 1846. Mr. Thomas meant to include manners, customs, observations, superstitions, ballads, proverbs and so on, in the term ‘folklore’, which he summarized as the lore of the people.

Under the topic of cultural expression which is also referred as "expressions of folklore" discussion may be made on music, dance, art, designs, names, signs and symbols, performances, ceremonies, architectural forms, handicrafts and narratives, or many other artistic or cultural expressions of the people of the Tirap District.

Folk songs *Seh* and dances *Buang* are essential features of their traditional societies. There are varieties of folk songs like *Loku Seh* (festival song), *Jahi Raak Seh* (love song), *Chhathut Seh* (Pestle song), *Na-Nyuam Seh* (Cradle song), etc. Likewise, there are many types of folk dances like festival dance (*Loku Buang*), war dance (*Raan Buang*), Romantic dance (*Saam Buang*) and death ceremony's dance (*Maang Buang*). These dances are mostly performed in groups in synchronized fashion by both men and women, depending on the type of dance. All dances are accompanied by songs and are usually performed in festivals and socio-religious occasions. They used various indigenous musical instruments like bamboo mouth organs *Bongbe*, musical bell *Changsi*, bamboo flutes *Pilo*, drums made of cattle skin *Nong*.

The tribes of Tirap District are rich in folklores. They have myths, legends, tales, riddles and proverbs etc. which were passed down to them from their forefathers. Myths and legends are called *Ruanpa Ngingkong* in Nocte language. They have very interesting legends about origin of mankind, cause of lunar eclipse, etc. They have stories about how pig was fooled by a dog to get dwelling place with man? (*Wak le Hu Pik Muatkat*), How dog and goat became enemy? (*Hu le Kian Naamjum thut*) How frog got its present body shape and the crab turn red when it is burn? (*Saan le Luk Bili Ming*).

Institutionalizing of the cultural industry:

All the above discussed cultural aspects which were practicing by them from time immemorial are on the verge of change and transformation. In fact in course of time lot of defilement has occurred in their age-old traditions. Many alterations have taken place in their tradition and customs, the reason is numerous. Urbanization, modernization, education, new social outlook, lack of time and change of religion are some of the factors that have compelled them to change the old system.

Now keeping these cultural heritages intact without much influence from all the forces of cultural change can be a difficult task because change is a law of nature. But still some efforts can be made to keep the cultural heritage alive. In the present context, revivals of an age old institution called *Paang* can help to some extent. Each village has a well organized institution called *Paang* or *Morong* for the men that impart knowledge on socio-cultural, political and other rules and regulation of their society. Their culture, customs and traditions which were transmitted from generation to generation through folk tales and oral traditions, are conveyed to the young in the *Paang*. For the young members, *Paang* is a centre for the training in arts and crafts and other socio-cultural norms of their society. It is here, under close supervision of the elders that the young members hone their skills in various activities of their life.

Revival of this institution in the town & in the village with funding from government and allowing the elders from villages to act as tutor and children to participate during vacation can definitely help to keep the old practices alive.

During the festivals they perform dances and sing traditional songs. The songs are usually sung by the singers *Sewa* who have knowledge of a certain language called *Khapa Jap*. *Khapa Jap* is a dialect spoken by the people of villages like Tupi, Noksa and Pollung. However, the vocabularies used during singing *Khapa* songs are so old that it cannot be understood even by native speakers of *Khapa* language. Now, singers who can sing *Khapa* songs are declining in each and every village. It may happen one day that there will be no singer left and they will no longer celebrate their festival. It is very serious matter so establishing an institution by the government to promote and provide coaching on *Khapa* songs will certainly help to protect age old folksong from

extinction. Moreover, seminars and symposiums should be organized to highlight the importance of it.

The government should make proposals for propagation and development of tribal culture. Programs should be organized for promotion of traditional fairs and festivals through Government and NGOs to generate awareness among the new generation towards cultural heritage and inviting cultural tourism. The Government should set up a representational centre of traditional art and culture, craft, cuisine and living style, fair and festivals of tribal of Tirap in Khonsa.

In addition to this, suitable locations may be identified for observation and celebration of cultural activities and sport events etc. Traditional art and craft villages can be developed in some of the nearby village. The art villages with tribal arts and handicrafts centers will attract tribal folk and tourists to the area. This will give enough information about their unique lifestyles and culture. When visited, tourists would get a fair idea on various dimensions of traditional tribal culture on a single platform. Tribal folk dance, music, games & sports, traditional folk arts and crafts, delicious cuisines and textiles, all may be documented and displayed for both national and international tourists. Tribal people will also come in contact with the urban folk; publicize their own creations and will also able to improve their quality of life.

Strengthening Bio-cultural heritage:

It is the culture of tribal which tells how man and nature can co-exist in perfect harmony. The tribal has established very cordial relationship with the natural environment since time immemorial, they depends on nature for foods, medicines, materials for constructing their houses and even for cloths, dresses and ornaments. They take lots from nature and in return they worshipped and protect it. They follow various social taboos and restrictions that help the nature to remain intact and protected. For instance, the *Aran* clan in Nocte is believed to be clan of tiger *Sah*, so killing of tiger by them is taboo. Killing of python *Pumat* is also avoided by them as movement taboo has to be observed by all villagers after killing it. Hornbill *Wadong* are also not killed during the breeding season.

When all the urban dwellers are creating problems for plants & animals to exist and polluting the natures, rivers and surroundings, the tribal are protecting the nature. The tribal of Tirap District have vast knowledge of traditional crops, medicinal plants, wild food and crop, methods and techniques to catch fish and trap animals without causing much harm to the nature. Humanity has to rediscover its relationship with the natural world and this can only happen when it has regained its meaningful relationship with nature like the tribal.

Linking Cultural heritage and policy:

Cultural heritage is the identity of every respective society, and the government should put considerable efforts to preserve and protect age old rich heritage of every societies in the country. Tirap District is one of the homes of indigenous people like Nocte, Tutusa and Ollo possessing rich cultural and natural heritage. Though the government has framed various policies and laws for preservation, protection and proper management of the cultural heritage at the state and central level in India, many of us are not aware of the legislation and legal framework. Every state is obliged under Article 49 of the Indian Constitution to protect monuments and places and objects of national importance. It shall be the obligation of the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interests, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be national importance from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be. But the state is failing to abide by the provision. On the other, we as the responsible citizen of the nation unable to attach any sense of belongingness toward our cultural heritage. It is the duty of every citizen of India under Article 59A (f) of Indian Constitution to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture. It is essential to be aware of the international

conventions and the national and with the respective state laws significant to the security and protection and conservation of the art and the cultural heritage of a nation.

The Constitution of India, the basic law of the land, has not directly addressed the issue of protection of the folklore. Article 29 of the Constitution recognizes as a “Fundamental Right” (Part III) the protection of the culture of minorities. According to Article 29, “any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.” It is possible to protect the folklore, ballads, songs, oral traditions etc. of the every society based on this provision.

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