

## Chapter-4

### Transmission and Preservation of folksongs

#### 4.1 Oral tradition of the Angami Nagas

Orality and oral tradition continue and constitute primary resource of all aspects of Naga life and culture among the Naga communities in general and the Angamis in particular in the context of the present study.

The concept of oral tradition presupposes time tested and culturally recognized lores and traditions that are socially sanctioned and accepted by the group. (Aier 1)

Walter J. Ong has divided orality into two kinds, namely primary orality and secondary orality. In this fast changing world, primary orality has disappeared from almost every culture as they have been introduced to writing, printing and texts. According to Ong, writing has changed human consciousness.

Writing , in the strict sense of the word, the technology which has shaped and powered the intellectual activity of modern man, was a very late development in human history. Homo sapiens has been on earth perhaps some 50,000 years. The first script, or true writing, that we know, was developed among the Sumerians in Mesopotamia only around the year 3500 BC. Human beings had been drawing pictures for countless millennia before this. (82)

Due to the invention of writing the reliance on memory for transmitting knowledge decreased. Oral culture depends on memory for its survival. Memory is fragile and what is not repeated ends up disappearing. Repetition enhances the preservation of knowledge in any oral culture. In a society where writing is absent, memory becomes the only storehouse for preserving knowledge. There is no written text in any form to help people remember what they have forgotten.

In the total absence of any writing, there is nothing outside the thinker, no text, to enable him, or her to produce the same line of thought again or even to verify whether he or she has done so or not.(34)

The very fact that the Angami Nagas in the olden days chose people with the best memory power to preserve every piece of poetry or songs that were composed gives credence to why such importance was given to its preservation in the absence of writing. With the development of writing over the years human consciousness have also been changed along with it.

Writing, in this ordinary sense, was and is the most momentous of all human technological inventions. It is not a mere appendage to speech. Because it moves speech from the oral-aural to anew sensory world, that of vision, it transforms speech and thought as well. (83)

When we delve into the subject of folklore, the definition of it still remains problematic. Dan Ben Amos states that the difficulties in defining folklore results from the nature of folklore itself and the basic conceptions underlying the many definitions of folklore abundantly makes it clear that it refers “to a body of knowledge; a mode of thought as well as a kind of art.” (17)

The various categories of folklore does not exclude each other and most of the time the only thing which seperates them is based on the emphasis given rather than of essence. Experience of events in the past preserved in oral texts in the form of myths, legends and transmitted orally as cultural items from one member to another and from generation to generation falls under the amorphous field of ‘folklore’ studies. The term folklore therefore is inclusive of the various genres of oral texts and folk traditions which are the literary manifestations of the people’s creativity such as tales, poems, sayings and such oral texts that

reflect the cultural ethos of the society. It includes material culture, indigenous knowledge and traditional practices that define folk group, and it is sometimes used interchangeably or together with the term oral tradition.

The process of creation and transmission of folklore relies on two things- the existence of a folk group and the other is the need for continuity. Franz Boaz a German-born American anthropologist observed that folklore is a mirror of the culture and represents that people's ethnography. This means that although folklore might be a key to the past, it likewise reflects the present and thus is also a key to the future. This kind of observation is very crucial and relevant for the study of traditional societies such as the Naga society.

Bauman's formulation of folklore as the functioning of shared identity is explained even more lucidly with the definition given by Alan Dundes. According to him,

The term 'folk' refers to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is- it could be a common occupation language or religion- but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own. (Dundes 46)

This group consists of not just two or four people but it is much larger. An individual or an individual member in a group may lack the knowledge of the whole tradition of the group or might not be well-versed in the knowledge of the customs and traditions of the group but he is expected to know at least the general tradition which acts as a uniting force rendering or giving them a sense of identity.

Thus the word 'folk' refers to a group of people having common language or religion and the study of 'folk' people, their cultures, traditions, life etc is known as folkloristics or folk study. The body of folk materials and the technique of study using scientific conclusion, is referred to as folklore. On 22 August 1846, William John Thompson proposed the word

‘folklore’ to the Athenaeum magazine. He was an English antiquary who suggested the use of the word ‘folklore’ instead of ‘popular antiquities’. According to Ralph Steele Boggs,

Folklore materials thrive in a society in which there are people of considerable native intelligence, artistic appreciation, memory, imagination and creative urge, who can comprehend, value, remember and recreate their native folklore and thus propagate it as a living tradition. Folklore lives its fullest, purest and most natural life away from learned culture. (Dundes 5)

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the learned culture is dominating over the folk culture. At this juncture, folklore is at the peril of extinction. In an attempt to preserve the remains of culture and traditions of a folk community, efforts are being made to record traditional and cultural knowledge in printed forms. The modernization of the contemporary society has led many to believe that the oral traditions and knowledge have become almost extinct. It is true that most of the folktales and folksongs have disappeared entirely from the memory of the folks but it cannot be denied that some has thrived and continued to live on in other forms.

the elemental essence of folklore and oral traditions are its acquiescent qualities to the changing social and cultural landscape. It is because of such qualities and also because oral transmission is the elemental basis of folklore, it is always faced with the risk of alteration and modification as the lore travels over time and space. (Aier 2)

The idea of folklore relies on change and continuity. The acquiescent qualities of oral traditions and folklores enable it to survive through the test of time. After Christianity was introduced in Nagaland, traditional folksongs were replaced by western gospel music. Along with it most of the rituals and festivals were also abandoned. Among the Angamis, the some of the festivals which are still being celebrated nowadays are the *Sekrenyi* festival, *Chadanyi* festival and *Khoupfunyi* festival.

*Chadanyi* festival and *Khoupfunyi* festival is celebrated without singing or performing any folksong. Only during the *Sekrenyi* festival, one can witness the performance of folksongs and folk dance. This disappearance or abandoning of festival can also be a major drawback in the preservation of folksongs. The folksongs preserved in text have proved to be of little help as the songs are not learned or sung by majority in the society. Beside this problem of not being able to sing, the majority of the people in the society can barely manage to interpret the meaning of the words in the lyrics.

Folksongs are sung in a very different manner from western gospel songs. For an individual who has not picked up the knowledge or the art of singing a folksong, it becomes a challenge to learn the song later on as the tune in the song takes unexpected high and low notes. Despite this existing problem, one can see the adaptation of folk tune even in Christian hymn book. It is not a difficult task to identify a folksong by just listening to it as the tune carries distinct notes from the western gospel hymns. Since any oral tradition relies on change and continuity, an example of it can be seen in the modification of a folksong by changing the content of the lyrics.

The folksong given below in fig 4.1 and 4.2 is taken from the Angami Catholic hymn book *Tenyi Thouko*. This song is clearly an indication of how a folksong has been used as a gospel song in Christian worship by changing the content of the lyrics. Similar to this, there are other songs in gospel hymn book which are sung in the manner of a folksong. The lyrics as shown in fig 4.2 contains “*O ho oh, o ho oh...*” at the end of every stanza which is an indication of the popular use of such meaningless syllables in a folksong. They are common indicators of a folksong and an individual possessing little or no knowledge of folksongs can immediately understand that a song being sung falls under the category of a folksong using the help of such indicators.

**388. RÜKHRO MEZÜ**  
(By the sweat of the cross)

key - Eb (4/4) VLM/RRC

	s : m . m   d : -	s : s : m . m   d . s : m . m   d : -	d . d : m . m   d . d : m . m   d : -
1.	Rü - khru mezü	Krus zha - zie puo pie, rü - khie rü - wi	Mia kre -
2.	Te - tsu - shü ro	bie chü - pie nie vü, No thie rhei vo	Lu Cal -
3.	Lie thienyü mo	mia te nie va - li, the - nu - pfü - ko	Kra nie -
4.	Nie ya - nyü rei	ngu - mvü - mia rei prei, n - du - nhie rei	Ke - me -
5.	Thie rei the - nga	se chü hi tuo me? A thuo a pie	lhou - ke -
6.	N bu a la	Zie hi - lho - ci - ü, a phouma - ko	N thuo
7.	A rei tsiewe	lhou - me - cie - me - zhü N the - ja se	lhou zha -
8.	Die - lie - mia mu	ke - me - sa - mia - ko Nie - pu - u tshe	Ho - sa -
9.	Ke - ba - ra sü	me - ngu ke - lho di, vo - r' tuo ho	va - phi

s : l . l | s : - s . se : l . l | s . t : l . l | s : - | s . se  
d : l . l | d : - d . d : l . l | d . d : l . l | d : - | d . d

Fig. 4.1 A gospel song in Traditional Angami folk tune (photo by Neizovou)

	Refrain	D.C.	FINE
	s : m . m   d : -	d : m   d : -	d : m   d : -
	d : m . m   d : -	d : m   d : -	d : m   d : -
1.	nyü - o chü	0 - ho - 0	0
2.	va - ry tso	0 - ho - 0	0
3.	sie - me - dzi	0 - ho - 0	0
4.	nga - di lhou	0 - ho - 0	0
5.	lie - o we	0 - ho - 0	0
6.	pfü - lie - te	0 - ho - 0	0
7.	sü - lie di	0 - ho - 0	0
8.	nna - ke - li	0 - ho - 0	0
9.	ba - ya - luo	0 - ho - 0	0

s : - | s : l | s : - | s : l | s : - | s : - | s : -  
d : - | d : l | d : - | d : l | d : - | d : l | d : -

	D.C.	FINE
	d . d : m . m   d : -	d : m   d : -
	d . d : m . m   d : -	d : m   d : -
1.	Mia krenyü - o chü	0 - ho - 0
2.	Lu Cal - va - ry tso	0 - ho - 0
3.	Kra nie sieme - dzi	0 - ho - 0
4.	Ke - me - nga - di lhou	0 - ho - 0
5.	Lhou - ke - lie - o we.	0 - ho - 0
6.	N thuo pfü - lie - te	0 - ho - 0
7.	Lhou zha - sü lie di	0 - ho - 0
8.	ho - sa - nna - ke - li	0 - ho - 0
9.	va - phi ba - ya - luo	0 - ho - 0

s . se : l . l | s : - s : l | s : - | s : l | s : - | s : l | s : -  
d . d : l . l | d : - d : l | d : - | d : l | d : - | d : l | d : -

**Note:** 1. The song is sung in two groups, the first group taking the lead and the other following as indicated, singing the same words.  
2. The song is completed by starting slowly and increasing in speed gradually towards the last verses.

Fig. 4.2 Continuation of the song (Photo by Neizovou)

Folklore mirrors the values, attitudes, customs, social mores and lifestyles reflecting the culture of the owners of folklore and traditions. Folklore instil a sense of belongingness and provides a connection with which people can identify themselves with. Folklore and the oral tradition play a prominent role in structuring a society and establishing identity. Looking upon the Naga society, one can observe the importance of myth and legends as well as folksongs especially those that deal with their village and their identity.

#### **4.2 Transmission and preservation of folksongs**

Folksong comes under folklore along with other materials of culture and traditions. In any community folksongs, folktales and various other cultural expressions are passed on or transmitted through word of mouth. Not every song sung by a folk community can be considered as folksong or folk music unless the origin of the song becomes anonymous.

Music that originally appeared in published form can be considered folk music if it has been passed on by ear and memory until the performer is no longer aware of its origin.

(Dorson 364)

In a human society, singing is universal. Folksongs are manifestation of the various aspects of human life. It is through songs and poems that a human soul is displayed and most importantly the clue to their philosophy of life is given. Singing is not done merely for entertainment purpose but it acts as a medium for expressing their ideas and emotions. Their rich heritage is endowed with cultural traits which can mostly be found in the lyrics of their folksongs. Different songs are sung at different important junctures of festivals, rituals, marriages, harvest etc. Music has a very important role to play in a primitive society. The Nagas sing folksongs in varied dialects depending on the

tribes. Many of the songs are woven in archaic language which is different from ordinary spoken language which leads to the meaning of the song being entirely forgotten.

The Angami Nagas as stated in the first chapter of this research are fond of singing. There is no celebration without singing. The Nagas in general follow the oral tradition and all traditional and cultural knowledge were passed down from one generation to the next through oral transmission with the help of memory. Memory plays a prominent role in any society that practise oral tradition. Memory is used in a wide term defining all kinds of biological or social nature invoking the past, present and the future as well. The memories of the folksongs are passed on through oral transmission which is performed through communicative memory.

The folksongs of the Angami Nagas were passed down through generations orally. However in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, one can already find some of the folksongs in printed form. Though the folksongs are already coming out in print in an attempt to preserve it, the major problem is that not many people can or know how to sing it. One significant problem faced during the course of research in particular to the collection of data was that most of the interviewee had difficulty trying to remember the tune of the song or in which manner the song begins. Despite knowing how to read the lyrics, difficulties in interpreting or understanding words which are not used commonly in usual conversation forms another part of the problem.

In terms of folksongs, most of the data that have been collected for this research were passed on orally either by parents or village elders. The need to learn folksongs arises out of situations where an important event is to be held in the village and it is required of them to showcase their tradition and culture. Ever since the *morung* or *thehuba* ceased to exist, the custom of gathering over a place to learn and share cultural



and traditional values and knowledge was disrupted. Due to this, the bearers of traditional and cultural knowledge experience a process of forgetting and this knowledge is only awakened when situation demands for it. Friedrich Nietzsche states that “Forgetting is necessary for memory to operate economically, for it to be able to recognize patterns.” (Erl 8)

The different folksongs that have been collected in the field work are still performed today with a difference. Different folksong serves different purposes and occasions, but with changes being an inevitable force in the society, the specific functions of different folksongs have been marred. Talking about performance, it necessitates an audience. Unlike the olden days when villagers would casually sing a folksong while working in the paddy field, the present era would prefer performing the song in front of an audience. The motive being that, the audience is aware of the message that the performer is trying to impart about his tradition and culture. During the hosting of such events that requires a cultural performance, a village elder or someone who is skilled and knowledgeable in singing folksongs are endowed with the responsibility of teaching the young group of men and women who are supposed to be performing at the important event. In this case, there is interaction between an individual and a group and the knowledge is passed on.

This whole process can be termed as collective memory. Maurice Halbwach was the first to give the name of collective and social memory to the phenomenon of cultural memory. It is difficult to imagine individual memory without collective memory as memories are formed through social interactions.

Collective and individual memory are instead mutually dependent; one may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one

may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories. (16)

The knowledge of folksongs which are transmitted from a generation to the next is preserved through its performances. The underlying assumption of performances is that this field continues to remain open. There is no definite finality to it, whether operationally or theoretically. It considers behaviour as an object of study. When we talk about behaviour, the word 'repertory' is used to indicate what people actually do when they are doing something. It refers to the behaviour of a person while performing something. Any kind of action which is presented, enacted or framed is considered to be performance. Richard Schechner himself speaking on the interview by Joe Galbo in 'Richard Schechner on Applying Performance Theory' states that

Performance is twice behaviour or planned behaviour or restored behaviour onwards.

Whats a performance? A behaviour that is not for the first time, it is for the secondly and the third time. (0:18-0:27 Schechner)

The gathering of a community to celebrate a festival is an example of performance.

Performance is something else, more consciously "chosen" on a case-by-case basis and transmitted culturally not genetically. (Schechner 98)

Performance is the conscious effort of doing something. In most cases performances are inherently dramatic as participants perform acts to display it to the audiences about what they are doing or have done. According to Victor Turner this kind of actions take on a 'performed-for-an audience aspect.' (Schechner 75)

There are various categories of performance like ritual performance, semi religious performance, semiotic performance, gender representation of performance etc., Theatre, music, dance, everyday social community behaviour are taken in the ambit of

cultural performance. Performance is usually taken to be an activity that takes place both in the proscenium and behind the proscenium arch. The performance studies has depended and expanded on this so that we as individuals or group can now see performance as an innate part of customs and rituals and even select domestic activities. Performance is about how we constitute ourselves and how we repeat those adumbrations in everyday life. Thus it can be assumed that one cannot fathom culture without performance.

The exhibitions of everyday common activities such a meal is cooked or clothes are worn, how we behaved with people in different strata of society can be analyzed in terms of performance study. Many public spectacles sharing similarities with the traditional theatre can be a trial in a court room or a soccer or cricket match which can be identified as performance. When we think of performances inside a theatre, the difference between what is performance and what is not a performance may emerge to be discernably clear to our mind. However these things are not as simple as we would assume it to be. Such distinctions become obscure or unclear when a performance takes place not inside the theatre but outside the theatre because performance may or may not always necessarily include traditional characters, a script or acting.

Performance can thus be understood as being related to theatricality, something that can happen anywhere and at anytime concerning a sense of otherness, of non-identical repetition. It may comprise of societal practice or it can also be understood as the deliberate and insensate adoption of roles that we play in real life counting on the companion that we keep or where we are placed at that moment in time. Performance is a performance for somebody else, for an audience who can recognize and verify it as performance. A performer might be tempted to think that there are audiences acknowledging the act as performance when we are only watching ourselves as the

audience is also a self. Also if there is no proscenium arch to separate the actor from the audience then this can mean that the spectators are equally involved as much as the performers. Mostly our understanding of performance is usually based on what we can see and recognise as theatre, however it may be lacking all of the signs that we connects with a theatre production.

Performance is about modern depiction of a drama. It engages almost all the things in life from intellectual to artistic life in a wider sense. It is a combination of both theory and practice. Performance study and practice interculturallly can be center of education and social beaviour. So we can ascertain that performance study is a broader discipline and interdiscipline that develop the scope to move between structures to create connections to speak with instead of simply speaking for others.

Victor Turner, a distinguished critic of performance studies points to a peculiar relationship between the mundane, everyday socio-cultural process (domestic, economic, political, legal, and the like). Found in societies of a given type list tribal, feudal, capitalist, labour, socialist and such other variance in relation to the idea of performance. Another great scholar Milton Singer uses the term 'cultural performance' to denote the spacificities of such groups or communitites.

Singer states that 'cultural media' composed the cultural performances therefore the modes of communication which includes songs, acting, dance, plastic art and graphic. It is not about spoken languages but non-linguistic media are also included in many ways to not only communicate but also to express themselves. Singer argues that a study of cultural media in different forms in the cultural and social context will disclose them to be important connections in the cultural

continuance inclusive of village and towns, connectivity between caste, north and south, the modern mass media and the traditional folk classic and culture.

When we observe and analyse the celebration of the *Sekrenyi* festival by the Angami community in the modern context, we can notice changes or shift in the style of celebration which is so much more different than what used to be followed during the olden days. The rituals which were performed during this festival (as explained in Chapter-2) in the olden days have been abandoned and no longer deemed necessary to accompany the celebration. This *Sekrenyi* festival is celebrated every year at the local ground in Kohima on 27<sup>th</sup> February by the Angami Naga community comprising the Western, Southern, Northern and the Chakhroma region. Every participant in the festival wears the full or atleast one traditional attire. Foods and drinks are also prepared to partake in the festival. There are group performances in which singing and dances are displayed. This style of celebration follows what Richard Schechner terms as 'theatricality'. According to Schechner, "The pattern of gathering, performing, and dispersing is a specifically theatrical pattern. (Schechner 176)

Richard Schechner states that Performance is also a ritual taking into account not just the performers but all the activity that goes into the making of a performance. He calls it 'eruption' which he terms is a kind of theatrical performance, where the audiences or spectators are brought together by the reconstruction or re-enactment of the event or performance. The audience are comprised of mostly integral audience. The space or place of celebration is set up in such a way that the audiences are sitting around the performers and the enactment of songs and dances are displayed in the middle of the ground. The stage is carefully set to give a clear picture of the performance to enable the whole community to experience a union. The cultural performances are delivered on set up stage

depending on the event. This set up stage is just as much important in order to affect the spectators as well as the performers. In the words of Schechner he says that

The spaces are uniquely organized so that a large group can watch a small group and become aware of itself at the same time. These arrangement foster celebratory and ceremonial feelings. In Goffman's words, there is "an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community. (14)

The proper example of 'eruption' in the case of the Angamis or the Nagas is the Hornbill Festival which is celebrated every year in the month of December. It is also known as the festival of festivals. The Hornbill festival is celebrated each year with an aim to protect, preserve and revive the culture and heritage of the Nagas. This is one of the events where many cultural performances take place. Various events of the past are re-enacted and performed to showcase the rich and unique tradition of the Nagas. The performers perform songs and dances to educate the spectators or audience about their culture and tradition. This enhances the preservation of their culture and tradition.

Beside the performances of songs and dances, the space is modified in order to set an effective mood for the spectators to give a time-travelling experience of bringing them back to their roots and a reminder of how each individual in the community belongs to one big family. The set up of morungs and *thehuba* in the site forms an important cultural marker. Different kinds of spectators attends the festival in what may be called as 'integral' and 'accidental' spectators according to Richard Schechner. Though the performances of songs and dances in the Hornbill festival does not directly teach the spectators how to sing a particular folksong or how to do a folkdance but it indirectly helps in educating the spectators about the uniqueness of each tribe. During the performance, they get into a kind of 'trance', leaving the behaviour and character of man

or woman living in a modernized society and assume the role of someone who has lived years before in a traditional society performing not for him or herself but engaging in the celebration. As Victor Turner says, “Cultural performances are reflective in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves.” (42)

Through the partaking of such celebrations the performers become one with the community and it re-establishes their identity. Despite the existence of a variety of folksongs serving varied purposes and reasons, any folksongs are performed during any special event nowadays owing to the disappearance of various festivals and rituals.

The celebration of *Sekrenyi* festival has undergone a lot of changes and has completely differed in style from how it was celebrated in the olden times, yet every inclusion of a different act contributes to performances. The tribal world is filled with theatre and likewise, the *Sekrenyi* festival which is considered to be the most important festival of the Angamis fosters unity among the community through performances.

Just as a farm is a field where edible foods are grown, so a theatre is a place where transformations of time, place and persons (human or non-human) are accomplished.

(Schechner 186)

Another interesting event that the research scholar had witnessed on 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 was the celebration of the APO (Angami Public Organization) golden jubilee at the local ground Kohima. The whole region of the Angamis joined in the celebration wearing traditional attires. The chief guest for the occasion was Nephui Rio. Audiences from different Angami villages entered the ground in group singing and ululating. The space for traditional performance was set up at the centre of the ground. It was constructed and modified in such a way that the platform was made to look exactly like a *thehuba*. In the olden Angami traditional society, *thehuba* is a place of gathering constructed by piling

boulders on top of each other. Sitting place is constructed with stones in circle and the men in the village spend their time singing, performing, and exchanging conversation. The setting up of such platform itself carries significant meaning as it is meant to remind the partakers of the celebration that they belong to one community and this was how they gathered, performed and celebrated. This kind of celebration can be categorized as ritual as

Rituals are performative: they are acts done; and performances are ritualized: they are codified, repeatable actions. The functions of theatre identified by Aristotle and Horace entertainment, celebration, enhancement of social solidarity, education (including political education), and healing are also functions of ritual. (Schechner, 613)

A performance can either be a ritual or a theatre depending on the function and the context of it. According to Richard Schechner, theatre is meant to include fun and the performer displays learned skills, encourages individual creativity, the audience watches and appreciates it and criticism flourishes. As for ritual, there is a divine other involved, the performer is caught up in a kind of a trance, there is collective creativity, the audience participates and believes and criticism is discouraged. (622)

So cultural performances are not theatre but it is ritualized. The performer of a traditional folksong or folkdance undergoes learning and rehearsals. This process of training and rehearsal is known as 'liminal' according to Victor Turner.

The period of training and rehearsal is liminal: betwixt and between, belonging neither to ordinary life nor to the finished performance. Old habits, the old body, old ways of thinking and doing are fiercely attacked, deconstructed, and eliminated even as new ways of doing, thinking, and feeling are being built. In many contemporary performing arts not only the performers but also literary or traditional texts often the most



‘honoured’ texts of a culture are deconstructed and reconstructed. (643)

Among the performances, a group of young men from Mezoma village performed a folk song. An introductory note was presented before the performance of the folksong stating that the song which the group will be performing is a song sung during the *Sekrenyi* festival and requested the audiences to get into the ground to join them in dancing as well as singing. When we observe this carefully, we realize that the function of the song have also changed over the years. Even though there are different folksongs for different occasions, some of the functions no longer serve its purposes mainly because most of the festivals are no longer celebrated. It is only during festivals or celebrations that folksongs are revived. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, oral tradition relies on change and continuity. The impact of modernization has led many to believe that the culture and tradition have become almost extinct, yes it is true that many genres of folklore have been erased from memory but we can acknowledge and accept the fact that some have survived and continued to live on in other forms.

The celebration of the APO (Angami Public Organisation) jubilee ended with some slight conflicts among the Christians partaking in the celebration especially the catholics. As the jubilee was celebrated during the month of April which is supposed to be the Lenten season for Christians, many practise or avoid the consumption of meat on Fridays. Lent is considered to begin from Ash Wednesday with a period of about forty days until Easter. It is a season of grief and sorrow commemorating the suffering of Jesus Christ. Now, the different congregations of Christians who attended the jubilee faced criticism from one’s own fellow villagers. The criticism especially came from Catholics, from the ones who refrained from attending the jubilee because it was considered insensible to celebrate and go merry making when Jesus Christ suffered for our sins. Therefore, those specific Catholics who attended the jubilee were lightly insulted

indirectly for partaking in the celebration and consuming meat, breaking all the rules of Lenten season. It is at this kind of situation that the old practices clashes with new ones. Many audiences left the jubilee without sharing in the common meal that was served in the middle of the programme.



**Fig 4.3** Celebration of Angami Public Organisation jubilee at Local Ground Kohima. (Photo by Neizovou)

Despite this clash, the celebration calls for a union among the community. It is only during celebrations like this that opportunity is provided for people to come back and connect themselves to their roots. The cultural performances during this kind of event not only foster unity but also remind and teach them about their culture and tradition. The folksong transforms into not just a song being sung for entertainment purposes but it can be seen as an intangible cultural heritage of the people because through the performance of such songs, the community is brought together. The folksong contains the ideas, the values, philosophy, dreams and collective consciousness of the people who creates them.

They express consciously or unconsciously the behaviour of the community collectively. It also manifests their mental attitude, their values and mindsets immortalizing those things which are considered to be of importance.

#### **4.3 Variation of dialect in Angami folksongs**

The Nagas are composed of different tribes speaking different languages. Every tribe has its own unique culture and tradition though they all enjoy singing folksongs. The modern generation is at the brink of losing most of the cultural traits in folksongs mainly due to the lack of understanding dialects and also because of the rare practise in singing folksongs. Most of the folksongs are couched in archaic language making it difficult or impossible for understanding or interpretation.

J.H Hutton says,

Where it is remembered the meaning of the song as a whole is often obscure, as the composer of a song uses disconnected words which mean much to him but convey little to those who cannot follow his thoughts and do not know what he is alluding to. Even newly composed songs often need their composer to explain exactly what it is all about, and trying to translate them with the aid of someone who does not happen to know is rather like trying to disentangle a difficult chorus of Aeschylus. (72)

The Angami folksongs are composed of archaic language which is not used in daily conversations rendering it difficult for people without an in-depth knowledge on the dialect of *Tenyidie* to translate or understand it. Folksongs are structured using complex words which can only be interpreted by elders in the village.

*Uramiawe sono rü kegi*

*Reipie liesho hiewe bie phekhwe*

*A hi chüpie thehuluorie nu*

*A neiü no mia ketsu sienu*

*Puo khwe teikhru hiedi pfü mekhe*

*Cüi pfütsu lu rüdi petse*

*Hatsie rüluo chüshü aneiü*

The above folksong when translated into the common usual *Tenyidie* spoken language changes to,

*Hieko ramia mia ze terhü chü keba ki*

*A mhakipuo rei volie kenjü, derei kharu ki tha di hie rüna pfe keba ki*

*A hi pie lie di the hu ba nu ba ru*

*A neipfü mia pete tsu keta shie nu*

*Puo khwe pie puo tiekru chü lie, puo sü pfu lie di*

*Tuo tsu kerü kri pa te*

*Menuo di la vor lie lo, a nei pfu* (Translated by Neizovou)

From the above example we can see some notable changes in the text of the lyrics. The modern Angami society uses dialects which are neither complex nor archaic. The complex, deep meaning words in Angami dialects are found to be used in folkongs, folk poetry or any other formal cultural event. Many Angamis are not equipped with the knowledge of understanding the old *Tenyidie* dialect solely because of not taking *Tenyidie* subject in the academic course. Nevertheless some of the folksongs were also composed using very simple words such as is used in daily conversation. Folksong sung by children

usually contains simple words which are easy to understand even without the help of an interpreter.

*Kibakhwe*

*Apfu-o vorlielo, Apfu-o vorlielo*

*Vorlie kemosie, usü pelipfu, u khutie kapfu*

*U pfutsano thu khwetie toho, olo, olo, olo, olo, olo, olo*

Mother, father come back quickly

If you don't come back, we will prepare our tiffin of rice and wine

And go herding grandfather's cattle. (Translated by Neizovou)

This song is sung by elder children when they are babysitting their younger siblings. When evening comes it is time to bring the herds together and return home. Likewise it is also the time for parents who are working in the field to come back home. By then the young children are tired and agitated from missing their parents and they begin to cry. As for the elder children, they want a break from the job of baby sitting and go out in the evening. The song beautifully captures the desire and emotions of these young children.

*Gamenie the la kesa Nyiepuwe puhu vor*

*Niewe larü lielho lomu*

*Rükra arie kekra yieho*

Trees and plants are giving off new shoots

Flowers are blooming again but you will not return.

My whole being is filled with helpless rage and great sorrow.

The above lyrics when translated into common tenyidie will read as,

*Ga kemene the ke par mu Neipu pu se keta ki*

*Nuo we la vorlie lho te mu*

*A nu sho mu a ro le* (Translated by Neizovou)

Though both the lyrics are in *Tenyidie*, the first song is structured using deep archaic words whereas the translated song is written in common *Tenyidie*. The use of common *Tenyidie* dialect for daily conversation has made it difficult for most of the Angamis to interpret or understand the lyrics of folksongs. Only the old people in the village who are also regarded as the storekeeper of traditional knowledge and wisdom can comprehend the lyrics of traditional folksongs. They are the backbone in preserving the culture and tradition of each community.

The advent of Christianity and modernism changed the face of the society all over the world including that of the Nagas. Western music is taking over folk music. Most of the old traditional festivals have been either on the wane or abandoned and the ones existing are not celebrated with as much vigour as it used to be celebrated in the olden days. People nowadays are not much aware or knowledgeable about their tradition since most have opted to shift towards cities. As stated in the earlier chapter, the festival of *Sekrenyi* has also abandoned a lot of rituals which accompanied the celebration. In every village, there are particular places also known as *thehuba* where people gather together in the evening to sing, but the change in society with the onset of Christianity and modernization resulted in the problem of time-management, busy schedule, migration of people to towns and cities abandoning the old practice of gathering and singing together.

When we look at folksongs and social structure, they are inseparable and act as a mirror for each other. As long as a folksong is repeated or recreated, it will continue to live on.

Though many folksongs have been forgotten, many are preserved through the passage of time and some have successfully come out in print. Since most of the festivals are not in practise, an important occasion or program provides a platform for these cultural performances. In this manner, folksongs are still being preserved through the memory of people and transmission of it from an individual to a group. The performances are also recorded and stored carefully for future references. The modes of preservation have also changed owing to the change introduced by modernity.

#### **4.4 Gender roles in the performance of folksongs**

Back in the old traditional Angami society, there were specific roles assigned for women as well as men in regard to the performance of household chores, rituals, dances etc. The Angami society is patriarchal in nature and as such the man in the family is considered to be the sole bread winner of the family. Most of the decisions in the family are taken by him with or without the consent of the women in the house. In relation to the divisions of property, women were not entitled to own any ancestral property. In regard to the celebration of festivals, most of the rituals were forbidden for women. During the *Sekrenyi* festival, all the men in the village go to the ponds and wells to clean themselves off but for women it is forbidden. They are also not allowed to fetch water from the well until all the necessary rituals have been completed by men. Once the rituals are completed, the women can take part in the festival.

An important festival of the Angamis, known as *Tekranyi* festival includes a lot of singing and dancing. In this festival, only unmarried youths perform the singing and dancing but married men were also allowed to take part in it excluding married women.

In this festival, women are allowed to perform all the *gennas* along with men except for the first ritual. In the first ritual, women were expected to fix their eyes on the ground and not to look up. They are considered immodest if they break the rule and look up.

Also there are songs performed only by men excluding women especially when singing songs to court women. These kinds of songs are known as *Kichakhwe*.

*Thie kekrimia ze nie heru yale;*

*Nie zhu zenyu rei sier kikha khrii*

*Hieko tsüya thie sio a neio*

We have come with friends to court you

You are tired but kindly open the door

Dear beloved ones. (Translated by Neizovou)

The song is sung by young men visiting the house of the women they love in order to court her. During the olden days, separate dormitories were set up for men and women. The young women were kept under the care and supervision of a female matured woman. There were strict rules on behaviour to be followed in the dormitory. One of the social mannerisms requires the women to open the door if anyone seeks for permission to enter the house.

This unique method of courtship is no longer in practice. Men no longer visit the house or dormitory of women they love to woo her through songs. These songs are specifically meant for men to sing it and therefore men still performs the song when staging cultural plays. The other traditional folksongs are performed by both men and women and no restrictions are given based on gender. In singing folksongs, men usually



end the song with a loud ululating or multiple ululating. Women are not allowed to ululate unlike men and to this day, the role has not been changed.

During the celebration of any big festivals such as *Sekrenyi festival*, both men and women sing songs together, each taking their own parts. Women take different parts when singing a folksong. The male members are endowed with the task of taking the bass part of a song. There are no strict or rigid rules of assigning women or men to sing particular folksongs. Most of the folksongs serving different purpose can be sung by both men and women.

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