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TOPIC:

FOLKLORISMUS IN THE CONTEXT OF KHASI *PHAWAR*, MEDIA MATERIALS, DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS

BY:

G. BADAIASUKLANG LYNGDOH NONGLAIT

SUPERVISOR

DESMOND L. KHARMAWPHLANG

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INTRODUCTION

Introduced into German folklore discourse in 1962 by Hans Moser, who published his seminal paper *Folklorismus in Our Time*, the term "Folklorismus (English, folklorism; Russian fol'klorizm), has been applied to visually and aurally striking or aesthetically pleasing folk materials, such as costume, festive performance, music art and foods that lend themselves to being extracted from their initial contexts and put to the new uses for different, often larger audiences. The term surfaced at the turn of the 20th century as an analogy to primitivism when *avant-garde* circle took interest in the expressive visual and musical forms of both primitive and modern folk culture. Before the 1960s, the term appeared as *neofolklorism* in French and Russian discussions referring particularly to the adaptation of folkloric materials in the high cultural contexts of music, art, and literature" (Bendix 1988: 5). In short, folklorismus refers to folklore outside its primary context, or commercialized folklore.

According to Moser, it was the upper classes who were the first to cultivate folklorismus, for educational, political, as well as fashionable and romantic reasons. Examples were the 17th century Bavarian aristocracy playing at 'peasant weddings' and the Elector Max of Bavaria, who encouraged the performance of folk music, and always wore national dress when travelling. In due course the processes of democracy, aided by the media, the entertainment and the tourist industries, brought it to the whole community. Moser saw folklorismus in the West as the result of expanding industrial markets, in Eastern Europe as performing a politico - cultural function, and in the developing countries as a reaction to progress, which swept away old beliefs and customs, but made possible the posthumous conservation of folklore. Using the first Bavarian

tourist areas for many of his examples, he pointed out that modern mass culture, in the course of cultural leveling, is increasingly interested in regions where life appears to have retained a distinctive, original character that finds its expression in folklore (Newall 1987: 131).

Folklorismus is also known as 'Mass Culture' in India and was defined by Handoo as "the modern mass produced artefacts, a kind of industrial renewal of old traditions shared and circulated in an industrialized society by written, oral or other means of mass communication" (Handoo 2000: 212).

Folklorismus may also be defined as the professional artistic creation of folklore in all its forms: in science and in pedagogy, on the stage, at festivals and during holidays, in the mass media, in recordings and advertisements, in tourism, in crafts, and in everyday life.

It is therefore, this process of modernization and industrialization that has made folklore undergo great change and at the same time faces the threat of disappearance from its use. The researcher's intention of working on Khasi Folklorismus is therefore, influenced by certain pertinent factors. The face of folk culture in respect of the Khasis has undergone great change under the influence of certain forces, which may be categorized as economic-technique, political-legal and cultural- religious. The oral tradition, one of the strongest discourses among the Khasis, has experienced this change in certain ways. The process of transmission, the form, the structure and the lore of the tradition have been re-shaped and re-molded. In fact, some genres have disappeared from the oral tradition due to the impact of modernization but they continued to live on in other forms of modern media.

It may be mentioned that a good number of works, writings and compositions on Khasi folklore have been produced by local writers, composers, and producers in recent times and

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It may be mentioned that a good number of works, writings and compositions on Khasi folklore have been produced by local writers, composers, and producers in recent times and transmit their works in the form of modern media communication. Out of them, one of the important Khasi Folklore collections is the *phawar*. According to Juanita War, "*Phawar* is a traditional Khasi poetic which is composed spontaneously in couplets for special occasions with a peculiar musical quality which is between a chant and a song" (War 1994: 24). However, Kynpham Sing Nonkynrih argues against the contention that holds the Khasi *phawar* to be a set of couplets, " despite the short and terse lines, it is neither composed in the English iambic pentameter nor in the rhyme scheme of *aabb* which is normally associated with rhyming couplets." Instead, according to Nongkynrih "The *phawar* is a six-line traditional Khasi verse form. It is referred to in the singular as *ka phawar* and in the plural as *ki phawar*. It can be described in three ways: as a limerick because, although it is not –liner, it is often a humorous poem; as a verse epigram expressing an ingenious thought with point, usually satirical; and as a gnomic verse because it comprises pithy and sententious sayings, embodying some moral principle or precept, some of which can be quite witty" (Nongkynrih 2008: 1).

Some collections of Khasi *phawar* are '*Ki Phawar Khasi*' 1994 in *Lest We Forget* by Juanita War, *Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang* 1937 by P.G. Gatphoh, *Ka Pariah Ka Kot Jingphawar* by D. L. Nongbri, *Ka Ryngkap ne Ki Poetry Khasi* [1966(1978)] by

Morkha Joseph, *Ha Ka Bom* 2003, an audio cassette of the United Democratic Party, *Ka Jer Ka Thoh* (n.d), an audio cassette of Pynshailang L. Mawphlang and partners on behalf of the Seng Khasi, 'The poetics of the Khasi *Phawar'* 2008 by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih. Other collections on Khasi folklore are *Ka Tynrai Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong* 1996 and *Ka Lasubon* 1987 by D.T. Laloo, *Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi* 1997 by H.O. Mawrie, *Ka Riti Jong Ka Ri Laiphew Syiem* 1999 by G. Gosta, *Ki Khanatang U Barim* 1937 by H. Elias, *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem Ki Mawbynna* 1995 by H. Lyngdoh, *Radio and Folklore: Broadcast in India* by Basilica Nongpluh, *Ngi Rwai Lang bad Phi* 1998 by Powell Shullai, *Khasi and Jaintia Tales and Beliefs* 1996 by I.M Simon, *Kitab Niam Khein Ki Khasi* (n.d) by Rabon Singh, *Ki Poetry U P.G. Gatphoh* 1978 by H.W Sten, *Ka Duitara Ksiar* [1972(1936)], and *Ki Phawer U Aesop* 1937 by Soso Tham, *The History and Culture of Khasi People* [1967(1985)] by H Bareh, *U Syngkhni* 2004 by Lostin Lawrence Kharbani, *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legend* 2007 by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, 'Social and Cultural Mores of Ki Lyngngam' 2003 by W Mawsor, *Ki Matti Byrshem* 2000 by Desmond. L. Kharmawphlang, *Ki Dienjat Jong Ki Longshuwa* 1995 by Fr. J. Bacchiarello, S.D.B.

To the best of her knowledge, the scholar has not come across references to the study of folklorismus in any of the above mentioned works, and the task that this study proposes to take up is to make a detailed investigation on the changing roles of the oral discourse of the Khasis in the spheres of *phawar* singing, the radio, television, documentaries and films.

The Methodology applied in the pursuance of the research involves the collection of data and materials through primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources have been generated from written documents, and *phawar* compositions. From the variety of methods available, the scholar has particularly applied the non-participant observation method and interview method to elicit the required data. Questionnaires have also been served to selected individual *phawar* composers and persons representing the media institutions particularly the All India Radio, Doordarshan Kendra Shillong Station and Media plus.

The scholar has also visited several villages of the Khasi Hills to interview the village folk and she gathered information from the villages like Umroi, Umtrai, in the Ri Bhoi District Smit, Thangsning, Nongkynrih, in the East Khasi Hills District, Lawbyrtun, Tiehnongbah, Pariong, and Nongstoin in the West Khasi Hills District. While in Shillong, the scholar met Station Directors, programme organizers and other staff of the All India Radio and Doordarshan and Media Plus. Besides, she also met some retired Station Directors from where she obtained the relevant data.

Secondary sources have been generated from published books, tapes, spools and compact discs. Other sources are articles, journals, newspapers, magazines, visuals, websites, seminar papers, weeklies, dailies.

Regarding library work the scholar has visited and collected materials from NEHU Library, State Central Library, All India Radio Shillong Library, North Eastern Council Library, Anthropological Survey of India Library Shillong, and Don Bosco

Centre for Indigenous Cultures. Other libraries visited are the Department of Folklore Research Library Guahati University, Film Studies Departmental Library of Jadavpur University, Satyajit Ray's Film and Television Institute Library, Roopkala Kendro Film and Social Communication Institution Library, and Sahitya Akademi Library Kolkata.

The study is being organized in five chapters.

Chapter – 1: Tracking folklorismus in the *Phawar*

This chapter is devoted to the study of *phawar* as a traditional discourse and its evolution into a genre type which functions beyond the parameters of traditional usage. As a poetic genre, the *phawar* is, perhaps, unique to the Khasis and hence no precise translation is available to offer a definition for the word. Though the *phawar* as a pure form of traditional utterance was used for certain sacerdotal purposes and in association with archery, yet today they are being used by people during public events, students during various academic events, and by government departments for intervention programmes. Even political parties during election time, employ *phawar* singers in trying to woo voters. These *phawar* are different from the traditional ones, in many ways. The mode of presentation, language, contents and events are some of the features that differentiate a traditional from a modern *phawar*. For instance, in the traditional archery *phawar* of the Hima Khyrim and some villages of Hima Mawiang (West Khasi Hills), the leader would begin with a 'choral invocation' which is of the form of two types of sounds:

Leader: *'E...e...e...e...'*

Group members reply: *O...o...o...o...o...*

Then again the leader keens out: *A...h...h...h...h...*, followed by the *phawar* as,

U tai ba kum u tai, u tai ba kum u tai,

U ba shiri kum u myrsiang;

Hangta te hai li hai

Lah ma ii mo ia u iong.

Translation:

A...h...h...h...h...

There he is, there he is,

Wrinkled like a fox;

There we shall dance nicely

Because we had beaten the black marked.

Then the group members shake their bows to produce a rhythmic sound and simultaneously join him in the chorus of *hoi kiw*. However, in *phawar* other than archery *phawar*, the leader would begin the chant which is Ooooo.... or Ahhhh... followed by the *phawar* and conclude by the chorus *hoi kiw* as in the above.

In earlier days almost every man knew the art of singing a *phawar* and they taught their children to follow them. *Phawar* that were used during those times are different from today's *phawar* because in earlier times as mentioned, they were used only for sacerdotal purposes and in association with archery. Hence it is always applied in a religious context, such as *phawar* during the ceremonial dance for the dead (*ka phur*),

phawar that contains moral instruction and social codes of conduct, or, offerings of prayers to *Ka lei Hukum* (Goddess who gives Orders) such as *phawar* to celebrate a successful hunt, *phawar* celebrating victory in battles, *phawar* sung during the sport of archery and so on. Other types include *phawar* while working together, such as erecting a memorial stone, or a house pillar, *phawar* during community dances etc.

As time went by, new changes were ushered in alongside advancement of science and technology and evolution of culture and society. With the development of mass communication particularly the media (both print and electronic media and their combinations) a new way of life was introduced to the people. Thus the tradition of *phawar* also underwent transformation. And instead of losing its purity of form and content, the changing role of *phawar* has in turn, given it a new lease of life. This is clearly seen through the modern use of the ancient art of the *phawar.*

However, it is important to note that the process of reworking and modifying of folklore for modern tastes is not 'fakelore' or the spurious production of folklore. Fakelore according to R.M. Dorson "is inauthentic, manufactured folkore presented as if it were genuinely traditional. The element of misinterpretation is central; artist who draw on traditional stories in their work are not producing fakelore unless they claim their creations as real folklore. In fact, they are producing folklorismus. It is also to be mentioned here that unlike fakelore, folklorismus however, is not necessarily misleading; it includes any use of a tradition outside the cultural context in which it was created. Professional art based on folklore, TV and film commercials with fairy characters, other

mass products that are traditional based and even academic studies of folklore are all forms of folklorismus" (Dorson 1963: 101).

Similarly, when we consider the above discussion, we can say that the *phawar* though now in its new form is devoid of the ingredients which can be called traditional elements, yet they continue to be created and used in ways and occasions more varied than before. These *phawar* are still taken and accepted as part of Khasi life and indeed, folklore by the present generation. Many of the *phawar* composers compose *phawar* not for their own interest and benefits, but for reviving the tradition of *phawar* singing and sometimes, overtly for use in specific events such as political campaigns, annual visit to certain remarkable place by an organization such as Seng Khasi, etc. This is an obvious reaffirmation of the integral role that the tradition of *phawar* composition and singing to the Khasi community and culture. Thus, it may be maintained that the new evolving *phawar* are examples of the way in which ancient artistic creations of a community transform and manifest themselves as forms of folklorismus in order to prove their worth and usability.

Today, the traditional use of *phawar* is disappearing from the practice of the modern Khasis except in some villages where we can still witness its use, as in archery, but even here the tradition has been diluted. This may be due to lack of the original and expert *phawar* singers, trained in the tradition of its old usage alongside the uninterested attitude of the people who, it has been observed, display lack of curiosity for it. As said before that the traditional use and practice of *phawar* is a state of evolution, and the

phawar today is being practiced with zeal and enthusiasm in contexts that are suitable to the urban lifestyle of today. Few samples will be reproduced below from the study with translation and interpretation in English.

NEHU Varsity week celebration: *Tang Ban Byrngia,* an Entertainment *Phawar*

Shynrang: *Lyngdkhur bad I sikei'*
Jabyrthieh ha ka weitdem:
Ka dur jong phi te thei,
Ha ka lieh ha ka syndem.
Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Male: Wild pigeon and the deer
Small fish in the whirl pool
Your face young woman
Quite fair but your nose quite flat.
Hoi... kiw...

This verse talks about the facial appearance of a young lady who is fair in complexion but who has a flat nose. Here, the girl is being compared to a pigeon, a deer and even small fish in a pool. Fish here is a symbolic representation for grown up girls who have attained marriageable age. *Leit khwai* or to go fishing is one of the popular sayings amongst the Khasis; fish here stands for the girls. Once the fish is caught in a fishing rod it is difficult for it to free itself. So the same applies to girls; once they got into the net of love they cannot free themselves from it.

Shynrang: *Shyllang phyrnai khriak khriak,*

I didi na byrnihat;

Nga tang shu iohi liak,

Ia I nga la iapmat.

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Male: Forehead that shines so bright

Didi from byrnihat

When I had a glimpse

At once I fell for her.

Hoi... kiw...

Shynrang: *U mama ba bam sohkhia,*

U jyndem h'u khiew ranei;

Shisha jingishongkhia,

Ka jainsem jong I kongthei.

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Mama who eats cucumber

Fermented rice in the earthern pot

Really! How great it looks

The Jainsem of that young lady.

Hoi... kiw...

The concept of beauty does not lie only with the looks of one's face but it also is in the other parts of the body such as the hair, legs, hands, fingers and even a garment. Here, the singer also narrates to us how he fell in love the moment he saw '*didi*' (word used to address to a non Khasi lady) at Byrnihat. But, when he saw *kongthei* (young Khasi girl) with her *jainsem* he at once forgets the *didi* he first liked.

Kynthei: *Putbikur h'u makashang,*
Ban pynhun ia u Baichung:
Ka dur jong phi te rang,
Shu pyllun la kum u pdung.
Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Female: Blow a trumpet at the Himalayas
To pacify the Baichung
Your face oh young man
Is just round like a winnowing shield
Hoi... kiw...

Here, the lines tell about male youths. To blow a trumpet at the Himalayas means to praise the males by raising their status as high as the height of the highest peak in the world so that everyone would know of them. Again, Bhaichung, the Indian football team captain is admired by the football-crazed young people and he has become a household name in Shillong. In a similar manner, skill is admired and this composition goes as an exhortation to youth to make use of their talents. It also implies that appearance here does

not matter, even if the person mentioned in the *phawar* has a face resembling the *pdung* or the sieve.

Kynthei: *Lyngngong u tyrkhang,*

U kiseh bad u sitong;

Ki ong hyndai u rang,

Lyngngeh la ka jainspong.

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Female: Stump of a fern

Pine tree and a turf

Long ago, a man they said

Used to dress nicely with his turban.

Hoi... kiw...

Kynthei: *U Sla kum u slasha,*

U tyrso kum u jatira;

Mynta te la kylla,

Shano u 'nai khatsawsynia?

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Female: A leaf like tea leaves

Mustard leaf like *jatira* (wild vegetable)

Now everything has changed

Where now the full moon is?

Hoi... kiw...

Kongthei also reminds him that he should not forget his own traditional dress code that is a dhoti and a turban. She now regrets to see that all these are no more in use by the modern Khasi men whom women used to refer to *'U Nai Khadsawsynia'* (a full moon). *U 'Nai* is a short form for Bnai, the moon, and *khadsawsynia* means the fourteen nights when the moon takes its full shape, which is also referred as full moon. The darkness of the night will be brightened by the light of the full moon. It is during these nights that the moon shines brightly in the midst of other celestial bodies bringing the attraction and satisfaction of the feelings of those who are struggling to pass the loneliness at the dead hour. It is therefore, this beauty of the full moon that reflects the concept of beauty for a manly and a person with good character. Whatever it is, this *kongthei* agrees and accepts the changes and development in the society, but she warns the male youths not to get them drawn totally in to these changes.

Political *Phawar*

A...h...h...h...

Hikai te la hikai – 2 times

Ba kin nang ka khalai wait

Ban talain te la tbit

Dang jakle pat de ban mait.

Hoi....kiw....

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

To teach we have taught- 2 times
For them to wield a sword
Expert whirling they are
Yet still dull they are in striking.
Hoi..... kiw....



To wield a sword, one has to be properly trained so that he will be skilful at wielding it. But since it takes a lot of time, some people are still lacking the skill of wielding, though they may be expert in whirling the sword. This art is also a kind of training the youths of olden days who were preparing for a battle, when the use of firearm was not known to the Khasis. A sword, a shield, a bow and arrow were used as weapons in a battlefield by the Khasis. Here, the singer does not really mean to give training for whirling or striking a real sword when he sings, but he indirectly tries to refer to political leaders who are trying to woo the voters by their sweet promises during campaigning. Every politician, before the election tries to convince the voters to vote for him/her as the representative of their constituencies. Different types of developments, eradication of unemployment, poverty and corruption are some of the issues that every politician uses to lure voters. Their promise is like whirling a sword in every direction. But what surprises and annoys the public is that, when the election is over, promises fade like a dream one has at night. Majority of these politicians woo the voters for their own benefits and forget what they had once promised to the public. A few of them only would fulfill their promises. This is how many of the politicians still do not know to strike their own sword.

A...h...h...h...

Pukni ba kham pei phang- 2times

U 'langkhun u rah shuwa
Tyngab ba shu kwah rhah
Shi syndon da u 'langkpa.
Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

A more confident vulture- 2 times
Carried the lamb first
But a greedy crow
Took the breeding goat at once.
Hoi.... kiw....

In this quatrain, the singer extracts the fable from Aesop's tales entitled *U Pukni bad Ka Tyngab* (a vulture and a crow) (Tham 1937: 2). In the story, in search of food, the vulture is stronger than the crow and he carries away only the lamb. The weaker yet proud crow trying to compete with the vulture tries to carry the he-goat only to find trouble in getting its claws stuck in the knotted goat's wool. The singer here likens the wise vulture with the UDP having the hope of getting only a few numbers of seats as the new party, but what they get is beyond their expectation. On the other hand, the Congress as a dominant party was referred to as a greedy crow for its high expectation yet small achievements.

A...h...h...h...

Dohkha ha Nanpalok- 2times

Ki la ngiah ka bam shana

Ba la bun eh ka thok

Bad la bun nongshet kylla.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

Fishes at Nanpalok – 2 times

Are fed up of eating grams

Too many cheats

And too many traitors.

Hoi.... kiw....

At the present day society, very few people that we could find are free from being involving in corruption be it in an obvious or covert manner. Corruption has now become one of the main hindrances to development. This is why many are suffering from unemployment, and lack of when statistics in paper show numbers which indicate self-sufficiency. In Meghalaya too the situation is the same; innocent people are fed up of the cheating and thieving nature of bureaucratic and government officials. This sentiment is echoed even by the fishes at Wards Lake who are fed up of eating the grams fed to them; they never get a chance to taste different food but only to wait for a time to be caught and served as food for others.

Social issue *Phawar*: Seng Khasi *Phawar*

A...h...h...h...

Para kur para kha – 2 times

Wat leit bud dustur thymmai

To ale noh mynta

Sha la ka nongrim tynrai

Hoi..... kiw

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

Clansman and kinsman- 2 times

Do not imitate other's custom

So come now together

Come back to our own traditional life.

Hoi...kiw...

A...h...h...h...

Ryngkat ka boh ka spong – 2 times

Ia pyrthei ngin ia pyni

Katno ngi sngew sarong

Ba la buh da ki longkni

Hoi ....kiw

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

Along with a dhoti and a turban – 2 times

We will display to the world

How much we are proud of these dresses

Because these were given to us by the maternal uncles.

Hoi...kiw...

The evolution of culture and society brings along with it the inevitable change which decides which customs remain and which become redundant. Khasi society is no different to other societies and it is not new to accepting these changes and developments. Everything is changing, to name a few from food to dress and even the way of life. Yet, with the changing world, the Khasi culture still remains – evolving, adapting to suit the needs of society. Education is another cause of these changes, ushering in new perspectives in ideas and thought. The singer here, fearing the loss of his culture in totality, calls for his compatriot to turn back to their own traditions reiterating his pride in what is their own. He also warns them against imitating other cultures which lead to a loss of the old ways of convention and practices. By taking the traditional dress of the Khasis, the singer hopes it will be the best way to remind modern day youths of their own culture.

A...h...h...h...

U rang binong bishon - 2 times
Ha shap u khun Khasi
U dei u saw shyrtong
Ha lama ka seng Khasi
Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

A...h...h...h...

Good and noble rooster - 2 times
In the emblem of the Khasis

He is the rooster with red crest
In the flag of the Seng Khasi.
Hoi...kiw...

Rang binong bishon in the Khasi context signifies a man who comes from a well to do family. In the Khasi dances such as Shad Suk Mynsiem and Nongkrem, we witness such type of male dancers through their dance attire. Their economic status does not only reflect through dances but in the society as well through their daily life. Practically, every Khasi male is responsible to act as the protector for his clan, the society and the country. Rooster here represents *U rang binong bishon* for its close attachment to the Khasi religion and hence it is symbolically used as the emblem in the flag of the Seng Khasi. According to the Khasi belief, the rooster is the one who paved the way (*nongprat lynti*) for them. It represents the mediator between god and man since the beginning of time. According to the myth, it is the rooster that amongst other animals including man succeeded in bringing the sun back to the world from her hiding place which was a cave called *Ka Krem Lamet Latang*. In the story, the sun went to hide her face from the world to escape from the insults passed on to her by animals in the dancing arena while she was dancing with her brother moon, thus bringing darkness to the world.

The hiding sun here refers to the Supreme God who turns away with agony from the world for the sins that man has committed. *Ka Krem Lamet Latang* refers to the place far beyond the human reach. The darkness covers the entire world not because the sun was inside the cave, but because of the sin that has entered into man and rule over his life.

When man realized his own guilt, he began thinking of himself as a helpless being without God, i.e. he understood that he should seek God's forgiveness for his sins. For this, he has to search for a negotiator which he found in the being of the cock. A cock thus, has to sacrifice his own life for man so that man can communicate with God through the signs that can be seen in its intestines (Mawrie 1997: 11). From that time till these days the red crested cock plays a vital role in the Khasi religion (Ka Niam Khasi) and is symbolically been used as the emblem in the flag of the Seng Khasi.

Chapter- 2: The Radio as Narrative

This chapter deals with a study on the radio as one of the media, which has consciously used folklore material for its broadcasting purposes. In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the folklore materials as broadcast by the AIR, Shillong Station, the roles and purpose of using folklore in radio.

Media and communication received a new impetus with the discovery of the radio. Simultaneously broadcasting of the spoken, taped word and music to millions of people in remote places became a reality and the seed for the establishment of a global village was sown. Because of its broadcasting potentiality the radio also helped news, information and education to a distant audience. Historically, the phenomenon of the radio was the result of many scientific endeavours. In 1895, Marconi perfected wireless telegraphy, working on principles developed over the preceding decades. Twelve years later, Lee De Forest in USA invented the vacuum tube which made sustained radio transmission possible. Wireless telegraphy and the radio telephone made rapid strides in

maritime and other uses and received great impetus as a means of military communication and propaganda during the First World War (Malhan 1985: 59-60).

It was this invention (in 1906) by Lee De Forest of an improved vacuum tube for amplifying the incoming signals which enabled the human voice to be first heard over the radio. Within a short time radio technology developed so that in 1922 regular broadcasting began in the United States, Great Britain and other Western countries (Kuppuswamy 1976: 190). Such a broadcast enabled the people to hear news as they happen, instead of having to wait for the newspaper which came eight to ten hours later.

Radio was the only medium which performers were invisible to their audience. It is also popularly known to the public as the' blind medium'. The popular radio talk (a form of spoken journalism or essay, often excellently composed and delivered) was shorter and more informal in style than that of the "serious" or purely educational talk. Broadcasting offered unique opportunities for bringing the nation's highest intelligence into the living room of so-called minority audiences who were prepared to listen to concentrate exposition and argument (Benton 1974: 123).

India was among the earliest countries in the world to adopt broadcasting. Its manifestation was first in the form of an experimental broadcast of a special programme of music put out by the Bombay office of the Times of India in collaboration with the Posts and Telegraphs Department on 1 August 1921 (Malhan 1985: 60).

In 1926 a company was floated by private enterprise which obtained a licence for the construction of two radio stations, one in Bombay and the other in Calcutta. In 1927,

when the regular broadcasting began in India there were less than 1,000 receiving sets in the country but in the following three years there were nearly 7,000 radio receiving sets, still the private company (floated and licensed by private enterprise) was not able to meet the mounting expenditure of broadcasting and it went into liquidation in 1930. In response to the popular demand and the pressure of the trade interests the government of India immediately acquired the two stations one in Bombay and the other in Calcutta and started "The Indian State Broadcasting Service". By 1937, the now familiar name "All India Radio" was given. Further, the broadcasting department was transferred from the Ministry of industries to the newly constituted ministry of Broadcasting and Information in 1941. Soon new stations were opened in Delhi, Lucknow, Madras and Tiruchi. Stations were also opened in Lahore, Peshawar and Dacca which are now located in Pakistan. Another development in this period was the setting up of the short wave transmitters in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (AIR Manual) (Kuppuswamy 1976: 190-191).

The AIR Shillong was inaugurated by the then Governor of Assam Sir Akbar Hydari on the 1st of July 1948 in the presence of the Chief Minister Shri. Gopinath Bordoloi, the Officials of the Government of Assam, prominent citizens of Shillong, the Director General of All India Radio New Delhi Shri Laxman Narayan and other Senior Engineers from Delhi (Nongpluh 2005: 1). On that memorable day, the first Khasi song sung was *U Sier Lapalang*, a group song rendered by both male and female members and the accompaniment of musical instruments played by many renowned musicians of that time.

From the beginning, the programmes of AIR Shillong were well arranged and scheduled by experienced programme officers like Shri Parimal Choudhury and Shri Bhupen Hazarika who were both famous artists and composers. Their main contributions to the Station were the light and classical music of Bengal and Assam. The Shillong Station aired programmes as scheduled in other stations too which includes Assamese, Bengali, Hindi light Music known as *Adhunic Geet,* Hindi Classical Music and talks by Government officials, Educational programmes and etc (*ibid*: 2). Initially Khasi and Jaintia programmes were aired as composite programmes only and broadcast only three times a week, but as time passed many changes have been made from time to time to suit the audiences. At the start, all the programmes from the station were broadcast live with small studios and small transmitters and that too only in the evening till 1974.

AIR Shillong function under Guwahati station till 1969 when it became an independent station. During this time, efforts were made by the Station to cover programmes related to Khasi culture by collecting whatever it get ranging from traditional tunes to songs. The Station sent its staffs to collect materials from the field for its programmes, and it was on one such tour that a group of the staffs were able to collect and record songs like *Ka Iam Meikha* in relation to *Ka Thep Mawbah* (the last ritual for the dead while depositing bones at *Mawbah*). This ritual was performed at Krang village around the seventies when P.R. Rangan was the station Director of AIR Shillong. The station has also been able to record and broadcast other composed songs which were based on folktales, myths, legends and short stories. To name a few, folktales about –*Ka Sohlyngngem, Ka Langwyrku Sang khyndew, Ka Tiewlalyngi pep shad, Ka Panshandi*

dem lorkhah, *Ka Sngi bad U Klew*, *Ka Nam*, etc are being kept alive by songs rendered by the melodious voices of old and young artists of AIR Shillong. Similarly, songs based on myths and legends such as *U Khraw Jutang* (the cock, the redeemer), *Jinkieng Ksiar* (golden bridge), *Kshaid Dainthlen*, *Kshaid Noh Ka Likai*, *Lum Diengiei*, *Lum Shillong*, *Ka Shad Ki Laiphew Mrad* etc are now being archived at the AIR Shillong Station *Ki Sur Tynrai* is a programme through which all these folk songs and folk based music are broadcast. Whereas all the Khasi modern songs are aired through a programme called *Ki Sur Bathiang*.

The 'spoken word' programme which includes drama, story-telling, poetry recitation, and novel reading are also used by the Radio Shillong Station for its broadcasting programmes. *U Ngat Puri* and *Ki Ummat ha ka Sner* by Webster Devis Jyrwa are the two Khasi novels based on folktales and folksongs to be aired through radio. Translated into Hindi by Alma Sohliya, these novels were broadcast both in Khasi and Hindi programmes from the Station and shared with other AIR Stations as well. The drama on *U Manik Raitong* scripted by Bashan Rai Dohling was aired from the station and it was also translated into Hindi based on the English translation by (L) H.W. Sten. This translated drama was broadcast through many Stations in the country. Radio has been highly creative in the fields of film and documentary broadcast too. *Ka Nong,* produced by Webster Devis Jyrwa for instance, was the first Khasi feature film to be broadcast through the AIR Shillong.

Radio today is considered by media authorities and researchers to have proven its worth and utility both as an informational channel and a development and cultural

activist. Still more it has provided healthy entertainment through its various light and humorous programmes. Its contribution in the form of transmitting useful and timely information, motivation and suggestions for rural development is conceded. One can safely presume that along with TV, documentaries and films, Radio will provide an adequate communication umbrella to the integrated rural programme. This it can do through its rural broadcasts feed back interviews, 'meet the activists and innovators' and critics' series, impacts studies, etc (Malhan 1985: 137). Thus, AIR has an activating role in furthering Khasi's culture, education, music and other practicing arts. The increasing number of walkman transistors and the growing popularity of listeners are obvious indications, though one may concede that improvements and innovations know no bounds in this very challenging spoken word medium.

The effort made by the Radio Shillong Station in developing Khasi folklore and culture is worth mentioning. For instance, students need not consult story books which are not part of their school curriculum to read a folk story, but can simply listen to radio to narrate it either in the form of songs or story reading programme. In a developed world of today and living in a developed society, the Khasis also are not left behind when compared to other groups. Many families are trying hard to adapt with the developed society and cope with modernity. Life has become so fast paced that even parents are so engaged with their duties that they do not find the time for their children at home. Students spent their nights doing their schoolwork while parents would either help their children in reading or watching television or discuss about the day-to-day life activities to be done. Gone are the nights where the family will gather together after meal to listen to

folk story telling or singing a song to be performed by the parents. Radio has in turn, filled up the empty space in the family, taking the role of the third parent in imparting education to the children and in doing this it has proved itself as one of the most powerful electronic 'narrative' in today's world.

The scholar has conducted a survey in Shillong city and its suburbs on the impact of radio on the people's life. The study revealed that most of the people today and especially the students think that the music and songs (e.g. *U Sier Lapalang)* aired through AIR are the original versions of the song without realizing that most of these songs are the product of the anonymous origin and very few of them take the interest of finding out the originality of a song that was heard from the radio. The reason for this may be that since the radio is the only blind medium of communication with its audiences as compared to other electronic media communication, therefore, the radio artist enjoys the advantage of the unseen factor and thus people are inclined to presume that the work is original or at least not far removed from the original.

The radio enjoys the position of antiquity because it has the advantage of being in existence much before than the television. Since the operational transmission is also longer than the television and its portability makes it the only media communication that can reach out to a wider audience. The radio is less intimidating and a person is more user friendly for the reason that since the performer is unseen to the audience while singing a song or giving a talk in the programme, it makes them feels safer than facing the camera in front of them. For this reason the radio has been able to create innovative use of programmes by involving the listeners. The introduction of the Live- phone- programme,

for instance, has enriched the narrative value more than before. Today, listeners can choose their favourite song to listen to through a direct talk with the programme announcer, parents would prefer to know better what are the symptoms of a certain disease and preventive measures for that, farmers would like to know about the new technological methods of irrigation, farming, poultry and so on. Another reason of the radio to be considered as a narrative is that it facilitates multi-tasking job in that it does not take us away from what we are doing. While performing our household works we can at the same time listen to it without needing to present before it in person as it is in the case of television and film.

Chapter- 3: Television as a Narrative

This chapter is an attempt to study television, a comparatively new entrant in the Khasi Hills, which like the radio, uses folklore for its many productions. Most of the Doordarshan Kendra's (DDK) programmes are folk derived. It was found in the study that in the transmission of its programmes the DDK has effected the transformation in the rendering and perception of the oral tradition. In the light of this study, it is seen as taking up the role of renewing folklore and other forms or oral tradition in today's society.

Television is one of the most significant inventions of man. It has an edge over other forms of mass media, viz. radio, and newspapers etc. it has overcome the barrier put up by literacy, which is the main hurdle with the print media. It provides a unique communication process in a way helping mass communication becoming simple and speedy. It is a multi-media system predominated by the visual medium. It is recognized

that there is an urgent need for mass education and communication media for accelerating social change, creating awareness and inculcating scientific temper among the masses. It will also inculcate desired attributes and attitudes among the masses necessary for national development (Acharya 1987: 5).

Television, the powerful medium of communication, is a product of the ongoing modern communication revolution. It commands bigger influence on the perceptions, emotions and the outlook of the masses than any other media. The impact of television on the society is often compared with the effect of "water dripping on a stone, steadily, imperceptibly eroding old values and attitudes in favour of new ones" (Doshi 1983: 20). Television is superior to the print media as it reaches both the literate and the illiterate audience. Also it has definite over radio because of its visual content which provides a great help in the trial period during the adoption of a new technique or an idea and can reduce the adoption time to a considerable extent. It combines both visual presentation and sound and therefore becomes very relevant for education (Acharya 1987: 6). McLuhan holds that television is the most appropriate medium for mass communication especially for the developing countries because of its involving and absorbing nature. Marshall McLuhan also noted the difference a world experience through television as opposed to print media, and while critics took McLuhan to task for such unscientific concepts as "cool" and "hot" media, he was on the right track.

Invented by John Baird, Television is associated with the second Industrial revolution of advanced Western countries. Being an expensive tool, mainly of entertainment (as it began), it became part of the affluent lifestyle and culture of the post-

industrial society. In 1936 the first regular public transmission of television started in England. This was closely followed by France in 1938 and the United States of America in 1941. The first regular colour television transmission began in the U.S.A. in 1953. The 'Eurovision networks' were set up to link the West European countries by the year 1955. The exchange of television programmes between Europe and America became possible in 1962 (*ibid*: 7).

Highly influenced by the tremendous potential of television, which was already seen in the advanced countries, the developing and the underdeveloped countries also showed keen interest in television.

In India, television made a humble debut on an experimental basis in the form of a UNESCO's pilot project on 15 September 1959. Its object was to study the use of TV as a medium of education, rural upliftment and community development. A regular TV service of one-hour duration was started on 15th August 1965. Since that day TV has come to stay in India (Malhan 1985: 139-140). The programmes were telecast twice a week for an hour a day. Twenty-one community TV sets were installed in different parts of Delhi. It started catering to a wide audience although teleclub programmes continued to form a core activity. Keeping in view the interest of the general type of viewers, the programmes were diversified to include news, commentary, music and dance as also programmes for special audiences like children, youth and women. In 1961, with the assistance of the Ford Foundation an educational TV programme was telecast for the children of Delhi schools. The programmes were on Physics, Chemistry, General Science

and English. Teacher training programmes were also telecast on Science and English (Acharya 1987: 17).

Since television has the advantages of the film as well as the radio, it has turned out to be the most powerful medium to dissseminate information, educate the people to think and act constructively for the benefit of the society as a whole, and, even more important, to bring about changes in their attitudes to suit the modern conditions of life.

Headed by Ashok Ogra the Doordarshan Kendra started in Shillong in April 1993 under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Programmes, Government of India. When the DDK was first started here in Shillong, there were around 50 (approx.) staff members. It should be mentioned that the service of the DDK Shillong does not have a separate independent channel of its own for operation, it has to share with the same channel from Delhi as the other Kendras do. The DDK Delhi has two channels for transmission of programmes, namely the DD-I and DD-2. The DD-I is a channel where all types of programmes are telecasts while the DD-2 is meant only for telecasting the news bulletin. The DDK Shillong therefore comes under the DD- I channel 12. Since the same channel has to be shared between the National Programmes from Delhi and other Regional Kendras, the time duration also has to be divided accordingly so that each of the station would be given place for transmitting their programmes. The DDK Shillong started its transmission service only in the evening hours i.e. from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm on weekdays and from 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm on weekends.

From the beginning, the DDK Shillong has been able to transmit its programmes successfully although most of the programmes were pre-recorded for telecasting. However, later the station with technological improvements was able to transmit live telecast also. The primary aim of the Television programme is to disseminate information on specific aspects of science and technology, agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, forestry, cottage and small-scale industries, health, hygiene, family planning, sanitation, environment, etc. The aim of the television programme is to encourage and help the people to develop new attitudes and skills which will enable them to play their part in National development.

Entertainment, mostly on Cultural shows is another programme telecasted by the Shillong Kendra. Among cultural programmes, music is a big chunk. Apart from telecasting of known artistes, Shillong TV stations is striving to dig out new musical talents in these hills, audition them and provide them opportunities to give performances. But mostly, folk performers particularly singers were those brought from the AIR Shillong. The dances of the Khasis (eg. *Ka Nongkrem*, *Ka Sajer*, *Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem*, *Ka Lakympong*, *Ka Rongkhli* etc) also find a place of pride in the cultural programmes. All the folk dances that are telecast from the Doordarshan are field-based programmes. Other types of cultural programmes include regular production and telecasting of story-telling under Commissioned Programmes on various themes, mostly on folklore themes which is telecasted on Monday and Tuesday evening from 6.30 pm to 7.00 pm under the Commissioned Programmes. Most of these folk stories were recorded and documented in the form of modern and sophisticated tape library. Examples of such folk stories are *Ka*

Apot, a tale that tells about the origin of *U Kwai, Tympew, bad Dumasla, Ka Dur Maia U Thlen*" a story about the gigantic serpent that fed itself on human flesh and when killed and hacked by man, swore to take a revenge on man. Others are *Ka Khlieh U Syiem Syad Lukhmi, U Marphalangki, Ka Lawei Ki Kamar*, etc to name a few. Well established playwrights were also approached to write for Doordarshan. Besides, novels, stories and plays of famous authors are suitably adapted for use over television. The different Kendras exchange their productions among themselves for providing a varied fare to viewers as also to reduce production expenses.

Telecasting of the story-telling is in the form of docu-drama i.e. the intermixture of enactment and reality when original and real data were not available and when there is a need for shifting of the places for action. The story that was used for discussion in this chapter is the documentary on the myth of *U Thlen* i.e. *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen* produced by Raphael Warjri and presented by Doordarshan Kendra Shillong.

The enigmatic and the mysterious always give rise to a progression of fancy, suspicion, fear and hatred. This is particularly true in the case of the serpent whose strange form and unexplained habits have both intrigued and frightened man since the beginning of recorded history. Even today, we are still not completely familiar with its habits and functions. According to Kaufield, herpetologist wrote, "While we have learned a great deal about snakes during the past century, there is much that is unknown" (Kauffield 1937: xvi). It is, therefore, not surprising that through the ages a mass of folklore material has developed about this creature.

The myth of *U Thlen* is one such material in Khasi folklore study and the core of most folk stories among the Khasi beliefs. The belief is that the *Thlen* correlates with sorcery in the Khasi society. It has to be reared by someone, to be fed with human blood which in return it will make the keeper prosper in wealth. Furthermore, the *Thlen* was considered by its keepers as the god of effortless wealth which is obviously unjust wealth. There are a number of versions with regard to the *Thlen* myth and the origin of sorcery among the Khasis as recorded by writers.

Chapter-4: Films and Folklore

This chapter dwells on the aspect of folklore being incorporated in films and documentaries as an important factor of mass culture. Although, the production of films and documentaries in the Khasi Hills has a relatively recent history, yet the trend here too is no different from the other film producing areas and these films play an important role in the society. It has been recorded in the study that most of the Khasi films follow the same structural features of fairy tales, folktales, legend and myths. In fact, some of these films and documentaries are the direct spin-offs of certain legends and myths of the Khasis.

Before a further discussion, just pause for a moment and let us think for the answers of: (i) what is cinema? (ii) What is film?

For the first part, answers that readily come to our minds are cinema is as what Roberge called "an art form", "a means of telling stories", "a business", "an entertainment", "a powerful medium", and possibly several other similar phrases

(Roberge 1992: 4). Alongside these definitions of the cinema there is also the sense that there are that cinema is something at once very personal and very social. That is when we think of the cinema we cannot but be reminded of very deep, personal, moments of love, joy, fear, for instance, which we experienced in the dark of the cinema hall. These experiences often assume a fantasy-like quality of some of our dreams. However, in the cinema hall we are allowed to share in someone else's dream- a privilege, indeed- and we remain fully awake to the fact that what we are watching is, after all, "only a movie". Thus, the simple evocation of the cinema arouses deeply personal resonances in us. But that is not all, there is also a feeling that cinema must be quite important in our social life too. It would not be wrong to say that the instrument of the cinema is 'art' which as Aristotle has defined as being "an imitation of life", because a movie does represent life as we want to see it – a beautiful rendition of it or a realistic one.

Now, coming to the second part i.e. the answer to what is film. Roberge writes- "A film is a commodity produced by an industry and circulated among consumers by a trade which itself enjoys the support of public business. Movies are made for the largest possible audiences, as a means of mass communication, the film medium has to compete and collaborate with other media, especially television. Films occupy such an important place in our lives that they are believed to fulfill important social functions, like providing recreation, information and education that is why films are kept under control during and after their making by those who direct it and those who have a say in the evolution of social life, like politicians among others" (*ibid*: 8).

Films can be regarded as the living embodiment of folk tales of the world held by a particular society at one time. They represent a collective memory in which are sorted out experiences of the past, perception of the present and anticipation of the future. For most people, watching a film is mainly an entertainment giving them intense pleasure. Fortunately, the spread of film culture instills in people an appreciation of films which is conducive to a more responsible use of them.

Although, the making and production of films and documentaries in Meghalaya has a relatively recent history, yet the trend here too is not different from other parts of the country. Prior to the advent of film making, public staging of enactments of plays was produced by the Khasi Cultural Society. The Society in fact started its activities by organizing and staging the first play *U Tirot Sing* at Mawlai and State Auditorium Shillong during the months of February and March 1974. It again staged the play of *U Sngap Syiem* in Shillong in March 1975. Both of these plays are the enactment of the real life story of the two great Syiems of the Khasis famous for freedom fighting against the Colonial powers.

From 1975-79, sets of transparency slides were evolved and made which suited with many themes on the historical and cultural setting - transcribed to the background music and commentary on cassette tape recorder, when shown on screen, and displayed at the large gatherings organized for the shows at Sohiong, Balat, Markasa, Mawkyrwat, Pariong, Umsyiem, Dawki, Jowai, Nongstoin, Mawngap and many places in Shillong (Bareh 1998: 13). These have helped to expose the tremendous potentials in the social and economic systems of creativity of our forefathers.

The first public exhibition of Khasi film was in 1982 with the production of the film *Synjuk Ri Laiphew Syiem* (*ibid*: 13) directed by Hamlet Bareh - Ngapkynta, produced by the Khasi Cultural Society. The film was first shot in 16mm then blown up 35mm and properly re-edited. Talkies and musical effects were hence integrated in a sound studio, Calcutta during the 1981-82, to fall in with the movie format. In 1987 the film was revised at Chittraban Studio Guwahati to normalize the speed and the blurred portions were removed. The succeeding years show the rapid growth of interests of film making among the Khasis. *I Mei Jong Nga, Ka Nong, Manik Raitong* to name a few were produced during the 80s-90s. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw the proliferation of film making in the Khasi Hills. Today, directors and producers came up with new ideas of film making following the Bollywood and Hollywood style. i.e. besides romance, stunts, horror and humorous situations were introduced adding colour to the pictures, which calls for the attention of the cinema goers particularly the youths.

In this chapter, an attempt was made to interpret the one Khasi film which enjoys the status of a full feature film, with a full cast made professionally and which ran for months altogether to full house capacity at Anjalee cinema in the mid - nineteen eighties. This film was also featured on Doordarshan Kendra, New Delhi at least a couple of times. The film is *U Manik Raitong*, based, as had been mentioned earlier on a popular legend which typifies the undying love shared between two lovers in the face of opposition and love which proves to be fatal to both. Despite being a highly egalitarian society, some Khasi narratives reflect a peculiar sensitivity to disparity created by economic circumstances. This is evident in both tales as well as songs. The legend of *U*

Manik Raitong is just another example of the community's responsiveness to life's realities and in the legend the situation is made more acute due to the deprivation and loss that the hero undergoes.

In this chapter, the scholar has also made an attempt to study the influence of folklore in documentary film-makers as depicted in *Ka Phor Sorat,* which is the documentation on the unique and dying cremation ceremony of the Lyngngams. This film has also been nominated for few prestigious festivals abroad. The intention here is to study and analyze the death custom of the Lyngngams which is distinct from that of the other sub-tribes of the Khasis.

Chapter- 5: Conclusion

This chapter specifies the findings that evolved from the previous chapters of the study.

The preceding four chapters have been concerned with showing the Khasi folklore undergoing a change which the scholar has described as folklorismus. Though there are many factors responsible for this change, the major one is due to rapid development and modernization in the society. With the advent of science and technology, there has been a rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization too and different forms of new and powerful technology emerged as tools of mass communication. One such medium is the media both print and electronic. Media is one of the significant influences of our age. Everyone understands that modern urban society turns on mass-mediated information and yet we continually decry its omnipresence,

pretensions and outright excesses. Like the lover, one cannot live with or without; so also mass media is integrated into our activity to the point that it or not modern life without some forms of mass media is impossible. Media also acts as a neutral agent in transmitting information and as a mirror that reflects culture.

Oral tradition and oral transmission have been conventionally accepted as forming the essence of the folklore phenomenon and were also considered as the folk or traditional media. Traditional media of the Khasis was as a result categorized as ritual and traditional. The ritual forms of traditional media are the community dances and other religious acts, while the traditional forms are folk songs, folk poetry or *phawar*, storytelling and flexible characters like jester and narrative manager etc. which could be used judiciously to absorb and convey contemporary messages. Though the impact of modern media in the Khasi society was seen to be very effective, yet it was also found that the traditional media has not died out totally. They continue to live on albeit in a second existence. It is also natural that there comes about a number of transformations when folklore items are taken over by the modern mass media. For instance, folklore items once confined to particular groups or areas have now been familiarized and popularized beyond the confines of such groups or areas, thanks to the mass media which have absorbed and disseminated them to a much larger audience- often covering the whole nation.

The study reveals that while mass media is good in quickly transmitting farm technology, information and news, the traditional media can supplement these effects by having a comparatively better impact on the motivational, behavioural or attitudinal

aspects of the rural or illiterate people. It was also found that *phawar*, storytelling, folk songs, folk proverbs, sayings, etc can admirably suit the needs of contemporary communication. It can also be said that comparatively these traditional media can more effectively stir the feelings and affect the attitude of illiterate masses. This is so because they reflect the cultural ethos and are closer to the hearts of the common man in rural areas.

In this study, the scholar has also observed that both the mass media and folk media have developed their own style and forms of communication and that the former could extend the size of audience of the folk artist while the latter had the great advantage of enriching and diversifying the content of the mass media. Obviously radio can translate the message of traditional media into auditory experiences, TV and films can multiply them, camera can add a fourth dimension to their contents. On the other hand, the traditional performing arts can increase the impact because of greater acceptability and credibility of message directed through them and especially through live programmes.

All these brings us to the core of the argument that we can no longer live unaware of the influence of the mass media and mass culture. As parents, teachers and educators we need to react to the role of the media in our lives and acquaint ourselves with the mass culture or the industrialized culture. We no longer believe that industrialization necessarily implies the end of a specific folk culture, but rather we attempt to trace the modifications and mutations undergone by folk culture in the industrialized and urbanized world. Besides, it is well understood that with urbanization and

industrialization folklore changed but it did not die out, in fact it is getting a new lease of life of its existence. With all these developments involving the publicizing and commercializing of folklore, folk culture has been gradually merging into mass culture or folklorismus, or to put it the other way round, mass culture/ folklorismus has been absorbing folk culture.

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FOLKLORISMUS IN THE CONTEXT OF KHASI *PHAWAR*, MEDIA MATERIALS, DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS

BY

G. Badaiasuklang Lyngdoh Nonglait

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE STUDIES

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SEPTEMBER 2009

I, **G. Badaiasuklang Lyngdoh Nonglait** hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university/institute.

This is being submitted to North-Eastern Hill University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **Folkloristics**.

(Candidate)

(Head)

(Supervisor)

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PREFACE

This research work "Folklorismus in the Context of Khasi *Phawar*, Media materials, Documentaries and Films is a humble attempt to examine, evaluate and make critical assessment of the influence of 'folklorismus or mass culture' in the form of modern mass media vis-à-vis traditional media in the socio cultural life of the Khasis.

Folklorismus sees folklore as a cultural value from the past that is subject to perennially evolving perceptions in the cultural life of a society, enriching and developing its spiritual world. It is not only a matter of simply ascertaining the existence of various folklore forms in modern society, but of continually creating new folklore; it is, in other words, a particular folklore perspective.

The human condition, with its angst of existence struggles to find meaning in life; the quest for identity in the present environment of technology has led to a renewed interest and desire to go back to where one comes from, in this case, the culture and race one belongs to, not in an attempt to segregate but in efforts to assimilate.

The need was felt thus, to study the modified and second existence of folklore in comparison to that of the original or primary existence of folklore along with the intercultural comparison. In the Khasi context as in other parts of the world, the performance of folklore had been drifted away from its original texture and context due to variety of modern developments; the praise of the original and primary had

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become part of a secondary system closely connected with commercializing and public-relations activities, with economic and political interests.

Through this, it has come to light that the case of the Khasi folklore, as said before, has also faced the threats and dangers of its survival among the cities and urban dwellers had it not been that the cities themselves are a new phenomenon in the people's cultural life where people could create new tradition and folklore of their own. On the other hand, one would find that even now the majority of the Khasis native inhabitants continue to live in rural areas. Popular performers and composers of certain folklore materials especially of *phawar,* and folksongs were therefore able to adapt the familiar atmosphere of traditional popular music from their native villages to the new situations in which they found themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Before I extend my gratitude to all those who have enabled me to complete this work, it must be mentioned that it was the process, the going-through, not the beginning, nor the end which has been life-shaping in that, it has influenced my perspectives and enabled me to participate in an experience that would otherwise have passed me by.

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Dr. Prabodh Jhingan, Head of the Department of Cultural and Creative Studies has helped me in the writing of my thesis through his advice and his support. For this, I am sincerely thankful to him. Further, I would like to offer my gratitude to Dr. Kishore Kumar Bhattacharjee, Head, Folklore Research Department, Gauhati University for his kind and invaluable help for me.

Next, I would like to thank the *phawar* composers Banniewkor L. Nongbri, Kong Silbi Passah. Bah Dhonsing L Nongbri whose compositions and feedback, I have made use in this study. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Bah Pynshailang L. Mawphlang and Bah Joe Joe, whose *phawar* compositions rendered on cassette enabled me to form an understanding of the co-relation between modern communication tools and traditional folklore.

on cassette enabled me to form an understanding of the co-relation between modern communication tools and traditional folklore.

Further, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of all the Staff and Director of All India Radio and Doordarshan Kendra, Shillong Station who granted me access to their archives and studio. My gratitude also goes to Bah Raphael Warjri, who granted me permission to view and make use of his award-winning, *Ka Phor Sorat* along with his documentary, *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen.* Also, my sincere thanks goes to Bah Powell Shullai whose dedicated and earnest compilation of all the folksongs performed on AIR has proved to be inestimable.

It would be remiss of me if I neglect to mention the assistance rendered to me by Bah E.P.Syiem, former acting chief of Hima Nongstoin in helping me with my data collection. I would also like to thank the staff of North-Eastern Hill University Library, North-Eastern Council Library, State Central Library, Anthropological Survey of India, Shillong, the Don Bosco Centre of Indigenous Culture, Roopkala Kendro Film and Social Communication Institution Library, Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, and the Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University Calcutta.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my husband, Marbhador M. Khymdeit for his support and infinite patience; to my parents for their kindness, concern and unconditional love which helped me make it through the difficult time and with love and prayers for my son, Hame.

Warm thanks to sweet and helpful Maggie, to Bah Fabian Dkhar, Bah Nongrum and Kong Sarv for their invaluable help.

I would also say thank you to all the Staff, Research Scholars and Faculty of the Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, NEHU.

And finally, my inexpressible gratitude goes to all my informants, resource persons, friends and others whose names have not been mentioned here due to constraints of space but are, nevertheless, close to my heart.

Thank you,

G. Badaiasuklang L. Nonglait

INTRODUCTION

In the older theory of folklore, Mother Earth and the peasant and pastoral life cradled the seasonal rituals and traditional culture that folkloristics studied, not only in oral but also in physical forms. Craftsmen of village and farm, along with oral narrators and bards, transmitted folk skills and products. The industrial revolution silted up the wells of folk energy, so ran the theory, both in terminating the rural rhythms so conducive to storytelling, folk singing, and the persistence of folk belief and in replacing the craftsman by the machine. In common usage "folklore" has meant preindustrial traditions and artifacts. The machine, the factory, the assembly-line method of mass production, and the wholesale distribution and consumption of goods supposedly mark an end to folklore and folk-life patterns in the steadily expanding domain of the world they occupy.

A body of counter-evidence and counter-theory is beginning to appear. Hermann Bausinger in *Volkskultur in der technischen welt* (1961) challenged the traditional view of tradition. He speaks of a "fundamental new approach in folklore studies"[1]:

> For about a century, the field of German Volkskunde studies had seen its principal objective in the attempts to grope back to the era of Germanic antiquities, using clues provided by still living folk traditions. Today, this study of survivals, predominantly mythological in orientation, has by and large been transformed into historically oriented investigation of

[1] Richard. M Dorson, (ed) 1978: 'Folklore and industrialization and technology' in *Folklore in Modern World.* p. 32.

> contemporary patterns. We no longer believe that industrialization necessarily implies the end of a specific folk culture, but rather we attempt to trace the modifications and mutations undergone by folk culture in the industrialized and urbanized world[2].

Bausinger adds that this changed perspective requires a shift in methodology, which has not yet been satisfactorily accomplished, but recent projects clearly demonstrated that the "folklorist brings to the job a set of tools" quite distinct from the tools of the sociologist. Some inquiries in his institute at Tubingen deal with the relation of the tourist industry to folk culture. Examining tourist centres in the 'Black Forest and the Tyrol', the investigators concluded that the vast influx of visitors into villages catering to tourists did not destroy the old traditions, although the intrusion of alien ways did alter the existing social and economic institutions. Rather the Tubingen folklorists perceived a complex phenomenon involving processes both of integration and disintegration. This whole question of the conscious commercialization of folk festivals, dances, costumes, and crafts has led to the neologism "Folklorismus" to which the *Zeitschrift fur Volkskunde* devoted an issue in 1969. Not only the villages but the whole countryside has responded to the forces of industrialization represented by increased mobility, resulting from the advent of the automobile, the mechanization of agriculture, policies of land reclamation and resettlement and the spread of small-scale industry into the countryside. Industrialization is seen as a rural as well as an urban development affecting folk

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[2] Hermann Bausinger, 1968: 'Folklore research at the University of Tubingen'. *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 5. p.127.

traditions. An example Bausinger offers concerns a broadened concept of folk drama to include Christmas plays, local historical performances celebrating anniversaries of an event or a birth or death-day, and the open-air theater "treating romantic-patriotic themes — which in recent decades has established itself in market squares, parks, stone quarries, and on romantic sites strewn with ruins"[3].

Introduced into German folklore discourse in 1962 by Hans Moser[4], who published his seminal paper 'Folklorismus in Our Time', the term "Folklorismus (English, Folklorism, Russian fol'klorizm), has been applied to visually and aurally striking or aesthetically pleasing folk materials, such as costume, festive performance, music and art, foods that lend themselves to being extracted from their initial contexts and put to the new uses for different, often larger audiences. The term surfaced at the turn of the 20th century as an analogy to primitivism when '*avant-garde*' circle took interest in the expressive visual and musical forms of both primitive and modern folk culture. Before the 1960s, the term appeared as '*neofolkklorism*' in French and Russian discussions referring particularly to the adaptation of folkloric materials in the high cultural contexts of music, art, and literature[5]. In short Folklorismus is used to refer to folklore outside its primary context, or commercialized folklore.

Moser in his first paper distinguished three forms of folklorismus:

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3 Richard M. Dorson, (ed) 1978: 'Folklore and industrialization and technology' in *Folklore in Modern World.* p. 32-33.

4 Hans Moser. 1962: *Folorismus in our time.* p. 177 referred from Bendix 1998

5 Regina Bendix, 1988: 'Folklorism: The Challenge of a concept'. *International Folklore Review.* 6: p. 5.

1. The performance of traditionally and functionally determined elements of folk culture outside that culture's communal context;

2. The performance of folk motifs in another social stratum; and

3. The purposeful imitations and creation of folklife elements outside any tradition.

According to Moser, it was the upper classes who were the first to cultivate folklorismus, for educational, and political, as well as fashionable and romantic reasons. Examples were the 17th century Bavarian aristocracy playing at 'peasant weddings'[6], and the Elector Max of Bavaria, who encouraged the performance of folk music, and always wore national dress when travelling. In due course 'the processes of democracy, aided by the media, the entertainment and the tourist industries, brought it to the whole community'[7]. Moser saw folklorismus in the West as the result of expanding industrial markets, in Eastern Europe as performing a politico- cultural function, and in the Developing Countries as a reaction to progress, which swept away old beliefs and customs, but made possible the posthumous conservation of folklore[8]. Using the first Bavarian tourist areas for many of his examples, he pointed out that modern mass culture, in the course of cultural leveling, is increasingly interested in regions where life appears to have retained a distinctive, original character that finds its expression in folklore[9].

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[6] Hans Moser, 1962. *Folorismus in our time.* p. 190-195.
[7] *Ibid.* p. 196-97.
[8] Moser 1962: 185, Bendix 1988: 5.
[9] Hans Moser, 1962. *Folorismus in our time.* p. 199-200.

Two years later, in a second important paper, 'Folklorismus as a Problem of Folklore Research', Moser focused on the concept of *Rücklauf*, or 'feedback,' whereby scientific or pseudo-scientific insights are incorporated into the tradition-bearer's conscious knowledge; in other words, folklore is returned to the folk[10].

Folklorismus may be also defined as the professional artistic creation of folklore in all its forms: in science and in pedagogy, on the stage, at festivals and during holidays (including ceremonies), in the mass media, in recordings and advertisements, in tourism, in crafts, and in everyday life.

Hans Moser (1969)[11] encouraged scholars to study the seemingly fake in addition to "real" folklore and folk cultures. Over the course of nearly three decades and against much initial resistance, the discourse about the study of folklorismus contributed to a thorough revision of *Volkskunde's* canon, and it broadened the interdisciplinary scope and relevance of the discipline. Although the term itself is now rarely used, the issues originally addressed under the label have become major focus of research. For instance, the staging of folk dance or festivals for tourists, previously shunned as commercial and hence spurious, is now an important area of study. The same holds true for political applications of folklore, be this in historical eras, such as romantic nationalism or Stalinist communism, or in contemporaneous settings, such as ethnic territories struggling for political independence. Less contested but equally vigorous was the folklorismus discourse in the Soviet Union and the former Eastern Bloc countries. Communist cultural policy openly valued the

[10] Venetia J. Newall, 'The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus)'. *Folklore*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (1987). p. 131.

[11] Hans Moser, 1969:"Folklorismus" in zeitschrift volkskunde. As quoted in Bendix. 1988.

use of folk materials for altering societal patterns, and depending on the particular situation of academe in a given state, applied folkloristics and sophisticated analyses of folklorismus -related processes occurred side by side[12].

The German folklorismus discourse unraveled the dichotomous promise underlying the definition of folklore that hold confined true folklore to communal, preferably peasant settings and excluded materials and groups infected by the forces of modernity, such as industry or media. This eventually led to a differentiated view of cultural processes, involving folklore in modernity. Moser suggested folkkorismus as a term for the journalistic promotion of culture and the propagandistic use of folklore in branches of economy. The term was purposely conceived broadly: on the other hand, it addressed the interest in the nostalgia for things folk in an age in which mass communication and industrialization seemed to lead to a loss of cultural distinctiveness; and on the other hand, it encompassed the ways in which the need for distinctiveness was satisfied, strengthened, or awakened.

Moser also acknowledged differences in folklorismus arising from political economies. In the Western capitalist nations, he saw a preponderance of folklorismus due to the expansion of industrial markets, ranging from tourism to commodity goods. In communist states, the cultural-political mission of folklorismus was emphasized. And in developing, postcolonial nations, folklorismus seemed to be used as a shield against radical progress.

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[12] Regina Bendix. 1988: 'Folklorism: The Challenge of a concept'. *International Folklore Review* 6: p. 6.

Although a majority of scholars throughout the 1960s and 1970s preferred to use folklorismus as a descriptive label for everything not included in their discipline, a vigorous minority pressed for a complete revision of *Volkskunde*'s canon. Hermann Bausinger argued that "contrasting folklorismus with genuine folk culture drew the latter into a closed circle in which it inevitably transformed toward folklorismus, that so-called first and second hand traditions merged in many respects, and that, by excluding one realm from research, scholarly results were inevitably falsified"[13].

In 1978 Konrad Kostlin[14] considered folklorismus as a form of escapist therapy. His contribution to the debate is both thoughtful and creative. For instance, we celebrate ourselves and make our present existence brighter by reference to a better past. By using folklorismus we are able to treat the past in such a way that it can be fitted into the present. Another example, while trying to reconstruct the past history, we select certain significant areas and use them to our advantage of study. However, in doing this, we must be aware of certain questions that may arise and that needs to be clarify such as - Why do we use the past to extend present possibilities? In Germany and Austria- writes Newall, "There are hundreds of courses in weaving, spinning, pottery, 'peasant painting,' and dialect. One can even buy newspaper supplements in dialect, but does all this overemphasis of the homeland provide a stabilising cultural phenomenon for those who are not mobile and must stay where

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[13] Regina Bendix. 1988. 'Folklorism: The Challenge of a concept'. *International Folklore Review* 6: pp. 5-15.

[14] Konrad Kostlin, 'Folklorismus als Therapie? Volkskultur als Therapie?' in eds. Edith Horandner and Hans Lunzer, *Folklorismus* (1982) pp.130, 134-6. Referred from Venetia J. Newall. 1987.

they are? Why do certain people need the concept of homeland, national dress, folk songs and folk dancing?"[15]

She further added that 'homeland is equated with security –the recognized, the known, the familiar, mutual trust, the sense of belonging to an actual family. But the security of the past is a cliché, a deception; it never existed. Folklorismus provides escapist therapy, because it holds out the promise of the simple life, genuineness, an atmosphere of anti-world. Our salvation, so it is supposed, lies in our past, which is offered as the better possibility. It provides an alternative to our own culture, which we criticize. Kostlin sees all this as peculiarly relevant to regions. His essay is wise and profound, but such insights should not be limited to the regions. They are applicable to the nation as a whole'.[16]

Konrad Kostlin and Bausinger linked folklorismus to processes of modernization and globalization that increasingly rendered identity into a consciously molded rather than a traditionally provided set of practices and symbols, a dynamic that has been closely documented for ethnic groups in the United States. Furthermore, industrialization had made possible the mechanical reproduction of what had formerly been unique items of expressive culture embedded in communal contexts. Rather than confirming themselves to vanishing cultural enclaves untouched by modernity, German scholars recognized the need to study folklore's altering roles through time in settings such as political displays, tourism, arts, crafts, and music.

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[15] Venetia J Newall: 'The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus)'. *Folklore*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (1987). p.133.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

The relationship between tourism and folklorismus writes Bausinger 'can be deduced from a few steps of theoretical reflection. Tourism has a long prehistory, ranging from the knightly voyages of adventure in the Middle Ages to the obligatory gentlemanly tours of the nobility. However, its development is most closely related to industrialization. The nation that was first and most thoroughly industrialized also led in the development of tourism; not only were Englishmen the discoverers of the subsequent centers of tourism, but the first agency for organized group travel was established about a hundred years ago in England by Thomas Cook'.[17] Tourism, as we all know involves journeying to other places, apart from one's own homeland, either for leisure or for business. However, it should be borne in mind that tourism and travel are not synonymous. All tourism involves travel but all travel is not tourism. According to Shashi Prabha Sharma, tourism is unique as 'it involves industry without smoke, education without classroom, integration without legislation and diplomacy without formality'.[18] With the development of industrialization and tourism industry, many of us may consider tourism to be a one-way modern development which threatens to destroy native customs, by bringing about many changes in one's own culture such as distortion of indigenous cultural expression, exploitation of natural landscape and others.

However, the frequently criticized tourism industry has been winning recognition for its role in saving many of the world's cultural treasures. Our history is our big attraction. Tourism not only justifies the preservation of antiquities, but pays the bills as well. It also justifies all we spend on maintaining our local historic

[17] Hermann Bausinger. 1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, p. 128-29.
[18] Shashi Prabha Sharma, (n.d): *Tourism and Environment*, p. 3.

landmarks such as *Noh Ka Likai*, *Khoh Ramhah*, *Thangkharang* etc. While travelling to Sohra (where these places are located) one witnesses the change that has resulted in the opening of several fine hotels and restaurants along with stores and handicraft shops. Countless thousands of local people have been benefitted. Along with a reason to preserve local traditions and historic landmarks, tourists also get credit for keeping local craft industries alive. Tourism development also stimulates the revitalization of traditional art and gives impetus to new creations. It has provided a market that has helped to preserve traditional art forms thus keeping culture alive. Arts and crafts have been the part and parcel of culture. Tourism increases the demand for arts and crafts and as a result there is an abundance of production of jewellery, baskets, handicrafts, pottery etc. in these regions. As a result, the tourism industries have lead to the development, helped in stimulating the revitalization of traditional art forms and keep culture in general, alive. However, "for a folklorist who is confronted with a relic in an area of tourism has a choice of interpretations: he is taken in, really believes it to be relic, and if the fake is revealed to him, he still has the chance to refer to the antiquated type of the construction. Or, he is not taken in, but distinguishes rigorous between the genuine evidence of old folk culture and the crude imitation merely produced with the tourist in mind. He then might talk of folklorismus and use the concept derogatorily for anything that diverges from what is truly genuine and original. Perhaps the real old and original craft/art work would not have been preserved if tourists and folklorists – had not admired and appreciated such pieces of furnitures. It is precisely this appreciation which leads to the production of fakes which, however, are not fakes, for in this case the old is not taken to be historically correct but assumes the much more general

claim or 'original' and beautiful. Therefore, the difference between 'genuine' and 'fake' should be relativised. Functions adapt, from both the perspective of the foreign visitor and the perspective on him. Thus folklorismus does not present a limited arrangement, a particular performance for tourists; instead folklorismus belongs to the comprehensive horizon of tourism as a whole."[19]

Besides this, there is a positive side to tourist folklorismus. In two excellent articles, the doyen of Greek folklore, Demetrios Loukatos, discusses tourism, a phenomenon familiar to his countrymen since ancient times, and he coins a new term, 'archeofolklore'. Newall writes: 'There has always been a very natural Greek tendency to recall the events and characters of the great classical era, especially since independence. When archeological excavations began in the 19th century, mythological motifs and themes were copied onto weaving, embroidery, pottery and new art forms were created. The tendency to use names and titles from antiquity for boats, industrial enterprises and so on, the great folklore festivals staged in different cities, the active use of the past in the present finds a welcome phenomenon: 'all this is very pleasant... to see .. the young coming out into the fresh air of the Greek antiquity and looking for source of pleasure in its culture and lifestyle.[20] The past does not excuse us from living, breathing and believing in what the present holds; rather, it asserts its influence as a source of revitalization and rejuvenation:

> This phenomenon of retrospective borrowing, stimulated by tourism, is motivated by elements that are as much historical and cultural as they are

[19] Hermann Bausinger. 1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, p. 128.
[20] Venetia, J. Newall. 'The adaptation of folklore and Tradition (folklorismus)'. *Folklore*, Vol.98, No.2 (1987), p. 136.

social... We are gratified to look for 'new' ideas in the lives of our ancestors. This attention to ancient life... seems to lead to a more natural and freer vision of life, a return to a world of artistic and spiritual equilibrium, well suited to alleviating the anxieties of modern society.[21]

Loukatos' view of tourists is also positive. Early travelers left important ethnographic description that are greatly valued today.[22]And the staged presentations of modern folk dance groups have preserved tunes, and traditional costumes from oblivion. They have also 'rekindled the love of the people for their native lands'.[23] Young Greeks despised the traditions of their grandparents until: 'they saw to their astonishment that young tourists liked to watch traditional fishing boats, listened to the melodies of ballads and laments, and even joined in popular dances. Hotels and restaurants quickly cashed in on the cultural preferences of their customers, decorating their premises with pictures, furniture, and objects full of local colour' All this 'became an important factor in the increasing appreciation of our national heritage'.[24]

Further, across Europe, scholars have also involved themselves in folklorismus. To begin with, in Hungary, a great deal of work has been done by leading folklorists, particularly Vilmos Voigt, who has, perhaps, written more on the subject than anyone else. Much concerned with art, he makes a distinction between

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[21] Demetrios, Loukatos. 'Tourist Archeofolklore in Greece', *Folklore in the Modern World*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (The Hague, 1978), p.181.

[22] Demetrios, Loukatos, 'Folklore and Tourism in Greece', *International Folklore Review*, ed. Venetia Newall (1982), Vol. 2, p. 65.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

'old folklorismus,' by which he means, for example, the early 19th- century romantics, and 'new folklorismus' which he refers to the 20th-century art. Voigt, who shows how the folklorist may enrich the study of fine art with his insights, also considers symbolism to be a form of folklorismus. By penetrating literature and fine art, folklore becomes part of culture in the form of folklorismus. Voigt edits the Folklorismus Bulletin[25], which has appeared spasmodically since 1979, and his approach shows the influence of the Russian folklorist Gusev, whose writings are published in it. The Hungarian scholar disputes the German origin of the term folklorismus, which he says originated with the French folklorist, Paul Sébillot[26].

His colleague, Tamás Hofer, uses English research to make the point that traditions are continually created and recreated in modern society:

> The Victorian decades around the turn of the century appear to be an age of 'mass-production of traditions' in Europe. States and governments, local communities, conservative and revolutionary political bodies, clubs, associations, and all kinds of social groups created their emblems, flags, anthems and uniforms, rituals and festivities. (It was partly a compensation for the fading away of many unconsciously practiced former customs). In the same period, in central and eastern Europe, ethnographic and folklore research became institutionalized through the establishment of museums, scientific associations and journals, and university chairs. This upswing in

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[25] V.E.Gusev, 'Principal Types of Present-Day Folklorism,' *Folklorismus Bulletin* (April, 1979), pp. 13-14.

[26] Vilmos Voigt, 1984: 'Folklore and Folklorismus:' Floor Discussion. *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol.21, pp. 208-209.

folklore research seems closely related to the 'mass-production of tradition' and the main task of folklorists was the codification and display of the national 'folk' heritage, the creation of tradition-awareness[27].

Regina Bendix shows how, in Eastern Europe as a whole, after World War II, folklore was called upon to assist in the restructuring of society according to Marxist-Leninist cultural principles. The governments of these countries: 'encourage folklorists to deal with folklorismus and its impact'. Unlike their colleagues in the West, who for the most part shied away from discussing a phenomenon entangled in the market economy and politics, Eastern Europeans... began to build theoretical models which would accommodate folklorismus[28].' One can mention in this connection the work of Jozef Burszta in Poland,[29] Dunja Rihtman-Augustin[30] and Dragoslav Antonijević in Yugoslavia,[31] and Vassili Hadgenikov in Bulgaria, who suggested the term 'ethnographism' to replace 'folklorismus.' Academician Hadgenikov had in mind the magnificent full-scale restoration of traditional buildings in towns and villages like Veliko Trnovo, Melnik, and Koprivtishza[32].

Moser's work did initiate lengthy discussions of folklorismus among folklorists from the East and the West, but international conferences soon revealed

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[27] Tamás Hofer, 1984: 'The Perception of Tradition in European Ethnology,' *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 21, pp. 135-36.

[28] Regina Bendix,. 1988: 'Folklorism: The Challenge of a concept'. *International Folklore Review* 6: p. 13.

[29] Józef Burszta: 'Folklorismus in Polen,' Zeitschrift fur Volkskunde (1969), Vo.65, pp. 9-20.

[30] Rihtman-Augusltin Dunja, 1978: 'Traditional Culture, Folklore and Mass Culture in Contemporary Yugloslavia,' ed. Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore in the Modern World*, pp. 163-172.

[31] Antonijević Dragoslav, 'Folklorismus in Jugoslawien,' *Zeitschrift fir Volkskunde* (1969), Vol.65 pp. 29-39. Referred from Newall, 1987, p. 136.

[32] Vassili Hadgenikov, 'Traditional Culture in Contemporary Culture' Plenary Address to the 2nd Congress of Bulgarian Studies, Sofia, June 1986; in press.



that Soviet bloc scholars came from an earlier tradition of folklorismus studies. The alternative definition that developed in Russian folkloristics placed folklorismus together with folklore in a broad view of cultural development. In response to what Moser called "narrow" definitions, Russian scholar Viktor Gusev proposed a broad view of folklorismus as a "process of adaptation, reproduction, and transformation of folklore"[33], he added:

> Folklore is understood, not as a conservative element of spiritual culture which survives during the progressive development of society, but rather, as a dynamic structure in which relics coexist with innovations. Under the influence of the new conditions of the people's everyday life ... relics assume a new meaning, acquiring pertinence to contemporary life. As a result of this capability of folklore to develop independently, folklore is not a conservative or foreign part of the culture of the class society, but rather, it adapts, and is reworked to aid in the progressive development of this culture[34].

This Russian definition of folklorismus emerged from a different scholarly tradition, that of Soviet folkloristics. By government decree, Marxist ideology and the related belief in the evolution of society and culture guided Soviet research and theoretical debates about folklore as summarized by Oinas. [35] This discussion began with the term "Folklorismus" as a term and as a concept that was known in Russia since the 1930s. But before the 1970s, when new folklorismus studies were inspired

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[33] Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 52.

[34] V. E. Gusev, 1978: "Fol'klor v sisteme sovremennoi kul'tury slavianskikh narodov." In Istoriia, kul'tura, etnografiia ifol'klor slavianskikh narodov, ed. V.A. D'iakov et al., 283-84 Moskva: Nauka. Referred from Šmidchens p. 53.

[35] Felix Oinas, 1984: Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology.p. 160-79.

by colleagues in West Germany, Russian and Soviet folklorists favored the terms "folk creativity" (*narodnoe tvorchestvo*) or "contemporary folklore" (*sovremennyi fol'klor*) over fol'klorismus[36].

Another early usage of Russian "folklorismus" was found to have appeared in the publications of Mark Azadovsky, who during the 1930s was also the first folklorist to use the term extensively in his writings. Throughout his career Azadovsky was occupied with the relationship between written and oral literature; "folklorismus" for him denoted the study and use of oral literature (folklore) by literary authors in their creative work. For Azadovsky, a discussion of folklorismus required placing authors in their historical epoch, in contrast to the "anti- historical" studies satisfied merely with the identification of folklore sources for motifs found in literature. He demonstrated that the folklorismus of the nineteenth century had to be studied in the context of national movements emerging throughout Europe at those times. Azadovsky introduced a discussion of Pushkin's folklorismus (a poet), for example, with this argument:[37]

> Pushkin lived and created in an epoch when the problems of folk poetry were at the forefront of the cultural world, when the science of folklore was born, and when the problem of folk poetry was tightly bound to the problem of national self-representation, and to the nation's path of historical development. The extent to which Pushkin was associated and whether or not

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[36] Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 52.

[37] *Ibid.* p. 55.

he was associated at all with this movement: Such a question has not been asked in our scholarship.[38]

Azadovsky did not provide an explicit definition for "folklorismus," a word he used quite often. Gusev[39] reports that Azadovsky borrowed it from the writings of the French folklorist Paul Sébillot, who used it in reference to non-academic study and use of folklore collected from "primitive" foreigners or native peasants. Other Russian folklorists of the 1930s distinguished "folkloristics"- the academic study of folklore from "folklorismus"- or non-academic publications by journalists, authors, and amateur folklore enthusiasts. Zhirmunsky writes that Azadovsky aimed to describe "a broad social phenomenon": "Different interpretations of folk creativity and of the nature of the folk, appearing in different stages of the development of Russian literature and society," as well as "the social controversy surrounding the interpretation and use of folklore in Russian literature and culture"[40]

In the context of Azadovsky's writings, "folklorismus" had an even broader meaning. He used it alongside such improvised words as "Shakespearism," "historism," and "exotism" (shekspirizm, historizm, ekzotism), the conscious study, selection, and use (by an artist) of themes and ideas from Shakespeare's writings, from history, or from some exotic culture of the world (1938:9, 23, 29). If the same

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[38] Mark Azadovsky,. 1938: Literatura ifol'klor: Ocherki i etiudy. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literature. P.7, as quoted from *ibid.*

[39] V. E. Gusev, 1978: "Fol'klor v sisteme sovremennoi kul'tury slavianskikh narodov." In Istoriia, kul'tura, etnografiia ifol'klor slavianskikh narodov, ed. V.A. D'iakov et al., 283-98. Moskva: Nauka 1978:284; referred ibid.

[40] V. M. Zhirmunsky, 1958 "M. K Azadovskii: Biograficheskii ocherk." In M. K Azadovskii, *Istoriia russkoifol'lkloristiki,* 3-18. Vol. 1. Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno- pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva prosveshcheniia SSSR. 1958:14. Referred from ibid.

way is used in the Khasi context, "folklorismus" implies an awareness on the part of authors or folklore performers (be it singer, dancer, or actor) that they are dealing with people called the "folk" and a thing called "folklore," words which did not gain their present meanings before the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The term also encompasses the performers' knowledge that folklore is related to activities that celebrate ethnic, regional, or national culture.

The definitions of folklorismus formulated by Moser and Bausinger on the one hand and Gusev on the other are representative of West German and Soviet scholarship, respectively. In theory, both German and Russian definitions apply to all forms of folklore in all contexts. In practice, however, scholars tend to use the word only with reference to the applications of folk literature, folk music, folklife, and material culture in the "culture industry" or in cultural programs related to political activities. Scholars west of the Iron Curtain usually identified folklorismus in a commercial context, while those to the east identified folklorismus in government-sponsored cultural programs. Differences between the two definitions are significant: Bausinger assumes that modernity has extracted folklore from its "original" state and placed it into a "foreign" context. Gusev, on the other hand, postulates that the social structure of the world is changing and identifies folklorismus as the process that adapts folklore to the new social context. Both Bausinger and Gusev agree that folklore has changed in some basic way after it leaves "primary traditions" (Bausinger) or "feudal society" (Gusev).

In both Soviet and Western folkloristics, the terms "primary tradition" or "authentic folklore" usually refer to a process which is thought to have continued

over many generations with few intrusions of technological, commercial, political, or otherwise from outside the traditional community. In secondary tradition or folklorismus, the break with pre-modern folklore traditions is thought to be irreversible. Folklorismus, writes Izaly Zemtsovsky, may resemble folklore in style and content, and it may influence living folklore traditions, but it has itself forever lost the spontaneous (stikhiinoe) nature of authentic folklore (Izaly Zemtsovsky, 1989:11-13).[41]

Definitions of folklorismus, whether formulated in the East or West, assume that a radical change took place in folklore with the advent of modernity. It was believed that primary or "original" musical, material, and customary traditions once survived for ages in a pristine state before the intrusion of technological development and mass communication. Folklorismus sprang forth from these new phenomena. But the distinction "primary tradition vs. folklorismus" is based more on the beliefs of folklorists than the European folklore traditions to which it is usually applied. The processes and conduits of transmission, reception, and variation in so-called folklore and folklorismus are in fact too similar to warrant separate terminology on this basis. The East German scholar Hermann Strobach[42] points out that conditions of pristine "primary tradition" never existed, and the identification of "secondary" traditions is therefore flawed. One must then consider "third- hand" traditions when folklorismus folklorizes, and "fourth-hand" traditions when folklorized folklorismus is recollected, and so on, when one is simply talking about "tradition." Nor does the identification

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[41] Referred from Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited': *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 53.

[42] Hermann Strobach.1982:'Folklore-Folklorepflege-Folklorismus." *Jahrbuch fur Volkskunde und Kulturgeschichte*. p. 41-43.

of "original context" and "authenticity" have a solid theoretical foundation: If similar logic were applied to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, for example, the absurd Guntis Šmidchens conclusion would be that all performances of Bach's music outside the context of religious services are "unauthentic" [43]

The fundamental feature of folklore is not proximity to some imagined primary tradition or medium of communication, be it oral, written, or broadcast[44]. It is the variant- the repeated use of an item of folklore in multiple situations and forms which is the best indicator that folklore processes are at work and that humans are fulfilling a traditional need by performing folklore[45]. Because folklorismus as conceptualized above produces new variants, it is a part of the folklore process. The issue of authenticity is irrelevant to the ethnographic description of these processes. In fact, there is good reason to assert, as Bausinger does, that all folklore today has been affected to some degree by secondary tradition: "folklore today cannot appear but in the mutative form of folklorismus"[46]. Modern technology speeds up and expands the processes of folklore communication, but does not change the needs of the people using folklore as a part of their lives. The term "folklorismus" as heretofore defined is difficult to distinguish from "folklore" and has little practical use in folklore theory. Folk culture is folk culture, regardless of the fact that it exists in a world of technology (Bausinger [1971]1990) or in a preindustrial peasant village. The term as currently defined is of no use at all in ethnography. Who would

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[43] Guntis Šmidchens: 'Folklorism Revisited': *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), pp. 53.

[44] Hermann Strobach .1982: 'Folklore-Folklorepflege-Folklorismus. *Jahrbuch fur Volkskunde und Kulturgeschichte*. p. 37.

[45] Linda Dégh, 1994: *American Folklore and the Mass Media*. p. 32-33.

[46] Hermann Bausinger, [1971]1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*. p. 152.

want to tell their singing informants that the songs they love and sing daily are not in a "primary context," or that they are practicing what Bendix called "spurious" (i.e., unauthentic) folklore?

Folklorismus refers to a subcategory of folklore, one with specific meaning and function in the lives of the performers and audience. Folklorismus is the conscious recognition and repetition of folk tradition as a symbol of ethnic, regional, or national culture. This repetition may have economic or political consequences, or both, but it responds to the needs of the people who embrace folklorismus. There is a human need, heightened in the modern world, for the knowledge of history. There also exists a nostalgic need to imagine a simpler "counterworld" to the hectic, chaotic life of the modern world[47]. Folklorismus fills that need, representing folklore self-consciously; accepting it as a carrier of the past and the pre-modern world, and bringing an impression of unchanging, stable tradition into the present. The ideas upon which folklorismus is based emerged in the modern world[48]

Regina Bendix writes on folklorismus that she is "less concerned with the thing itself than with the positions expressed by those who discuss it"[49]. She later advances a similar argument regarding authenticity, namely, that authenticity cannot be defined and identified, but that the definitions used by previous generations of scholars reveal the concepts that formed the basis of their theories (1992, 1997). In this vein, debates over folklorismus are in fact debates over historical continuity and

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

[48] Hermann Bausinger, 1992: 'Tradition und Modernisierung." In *Tradition and Modernisation*: Plenary papers read at the 4th International Congress of the Societe d 'Ethnologie et de Folklore. p.12.

[49] Regina Bendix. 1988: "Folklorism: The Challenge of a Concept." *International Folklore Review* 6: p. 5.

an imagined counter world. Scholars and folk alike participate in these debates, arguing about the world around them[50]. Folklorismus has therefore become a recurrent traditional theme in the work of culture builders (such as writers, composers, other folklore performers and etc), a word defined and evaluated differently by people in different situations.

The scholar discovered in her field observations, that there exist, not a faceless mass of consumers or a group of businessmen profiting from the marketing of some folklore materials, but rather charismatic, creative artists performing and thriving in small, face-to face zonal communities as well as in the mass-mediated national community. For the consumers, to buy folk objects (say any traditional musical instrument) is simply buying for the sake of showcasing it at their decorated drawing rooms; while for businessmen, their job is strictly money-making and still further, for the folk and creative artists marketing of folklore would give a different meaning. For them, folklorismus or marketing of a number of folklore items is the only way to treasure folklore.

In rereading the history of folklorismus in different parts of the world, the scholar would like to quote Šmidchens's view that - the idea of cultural pluralism is the most important strand in the web of the folklorismus traditions which grew out of Romanticism. Herder's *Volkslieder*, the flagship publication of European folklorismus (folksongism? Volks- liedismus?), sailed into the world with songs of nineteen nations, declaring the cultural equality and worth of all peoples, civilized

[50] Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited': *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 56.

and literate or not, and, among other things, also attacking the tyranny of Herder's own Germans over weaker nations[51]. Edited, renamed, and published after Herder's death as *Stimmen der Völkerin Liedern*, the collection has remained in print from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present." In the history of this book, one can certainly find folklorismus for the financial gain of publishers. Political manipulations certainly abound in the European nationalisms that Herder and his book inspired. But these financial and political considerations pale alongside the enthusiasm for unique forms of poetry and the human ideals that guided Herder, the father of European folklorismus. Repeated publication indicates that many German folksong enthusiasts shared this Herderian love for all human nations, a love inspired by the spirit of nations as expressed in their folksongs[52].

During the nineteenth century, folklorismus flourished in Europe. *Volkskunde*- the knowledge or study of the nation-occupied intellectuals and activists in pursuit of heretofore unwritten native histories and undocumented cultures, aiming to build the self-esteem and national pride of people dominated by empires and serfdom. Their source of inspiration was folklore. As they scoured centuries old chronicles and oral traditions, allowing their imagination to fill the many gaps of information, these first folklorists constructed complex pictures of an ancient heritage. In folklore, they looked for and found traces of the historical epochs that every nation required in order to be seen as an equal among other nations: the origins

[51] Guntis Šmidchens 1996: "A Baltic Music: The Folklore Movement in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, 1968-1991." Ph. D. diss., Indiana University. pp. 80-88.

[52] Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited': *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 60.

of the national community, ancient national heroes, and the flourishing "golden age" to be reconstructed in the present.

Colorful, folklore inspired stories of national history and identity became modern-day myths, sacred narratives used as models to be followed in contemporary times[53]. Revived memories of glorious cultural achievements in the golden age preceded accounts of the nation's decline and of its imminent rebirth ("awakening"). Actions of heroes, epitomizing the values of the nation, demonstrated how this regeneration would come about[54]. In the work of the nation-builders, folklore served two functions. It provided both historical information and models for future actions. Folklore itself became a symbol of national wealth, a treasure house of history and culture. These ideas nurtured folklorismus and incited scholars to enter the field and collect, study, interpret, and publish the traditions they found there.

Folklore research and folklorismus are national traditions created by the nation-builders of the past two centuries. As a result of this national activism, not only folklore texts, but also folklore theories and methods were quickly disseminated among the folk, to become part of folklore traditions. The folk today, for example, continue as well as revive folklore traditions to maintain ethnic identity[55] or to bring an imagined historical continuity into a "museumized"[56] present. Although such processes were usually ignored or concealed by folklorists as "contaminations" of

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[53] Lauri Honko. 1987: 'The Kalevala Process." *Folklife Annual* 1986:66-79.

[54] Anthony D Smith. 1986: *Ethnic Origins of Nations*. pp. 192-200.

[55] Linda Dégh 1977: "Grape-Harvest Festival of Strawberry Farmers: Folklore or Fake?" *Ethnologia Europaea* 10: 114-131.

[56] As quoted by Šmidchens (1999) in Assion Peter 1986; *"Historismus, Traditionalismus, Folklorismus: Zur musealisierenden Tendenz der Gegenwartskultur." In Volkskultur in der Modeme: Probleme und Perspektiven empirischer Kulturforschung* p.62

folk tradition, folklorized folkloristics was approached during the self-reflexive German debates over folklorismus. '*Röcklauf*', the return of scholarly or pseudo scholarly ideas to the folk, was first noted by Moser as a process worthy of study[57]; Bausinger identified '*Röcklauf*' with the applied folklore of yesterday, or simply-folklorism[58] as he prefer to call.

New forms of mass communication have led to the nationalization of culture, the actual sharing of culture on the national level[59]. In the "biology"[60] of national folklore traditions, the traditional community has expanded to millions in size. The speed and breadth of folklore transmission has likewise grown exponentially.[61] But a key component the individual creator and re-creator of folklore remains the same. Individuals seek out others to affirm the bonds they feel with the national community. National traditions are created, accepted, and maintained by the individual members of living nations, who do so with the expressed purpose of maintaining their national identity. Düding has noted the importance of mass transportation networks, which enabled crowds of many thousands to assemble at nineteenth-century national festivals of German gymnasts, singers, and marksmen[62]. Here, as they sang "folksongs" in four-part harmony, they could experience what Anderson calls "unisonance," an experienced ritual communion which solidifies the

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[57] Hans Moser. 1964: "Der Folklorismus als Forschungsproblem der Volkskunde." Hessische Blitter fur Volkskunde 55. P.10 referred from Šmidchens, Guntis: Folklorism Revisited: *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 62.

[58] Hermann Bausinger. [1971]1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*. p. 114.

[59] Orvar Löfgren. 1989: "The Nationalization of Culture." *Ethnologia Europaea* 19/1:5-24.

[60] Carl Wilhelm von Sydow. 1948: "On the Spread of Tradition." In *Selected Papers on Folklore*, pp.11-43.

[61] Hermann Bausinger. [1971]1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*. p. 63.

[62] Dieter Düding. 1987: "The Nineteenth-Century German Nationalist Movement as a Movement of Societies." In *Nation Building in Central Europe*, ed. Hagen Schulze, pp. 19-49

identification of individuals with the nation[63]. Such feelings of national "unisonance" are not limited to mass gatherings of thousands, but also may emerge on a much smaller scale, in the activities of local, face-to-face voluntary organizations[64]. As individuals take part in these national traditions, they experience moments of revelation in which they accept the rhetoric of nationalism as their own, deeply felt personal conviction[65]. Ever present in these many negotiations of national identity is the process of folklorismus, which can successfully serve a plethora of ideologies-from nationalist to imperialist to socialist-within a single nation (Hofer 1991; Sinkó 1989).

Now, it is perhaps time to shift focus to India to see what scholars in this country have done with folklorismus. In India, according to Handoo, Folklorismus is also known as mass culture which he defines as "the modern mass produced artefacts, a kind of industrial renewal of old traditions shared and circulated in an industrialized society by written, oral or other means of mass communication"[66].

He further added that it is important to be noted; however, that 'mass culture' a word he chooses to replace folklorismus can be confused with urban folklore, which, however, is not correct. This confusion can be attributed to two factors, namely:

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[63] Benedict Anderson. 1991: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. p. 133.

[64] Guntis Šmidchens. 1996: *A Baltic Music: The Folklore Movement in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia*, 1968-1991. pp. 182-200.

[65] Margaretha Balle-Peterson. 1988:'Everyday Rainbows: On Social Movements and Cultural Identity'. In *Tradition and Cultural Identity*, ed. Lauri Honko, pp. 28-46.

[66] J. Handoo. 2000: *Theoritical Essays in Indian Folklore*. P. 212.

1) The past-oriented definition of folklore theory which fails to distinguish urban folklore from mass culture, and

2) Since mass culture is generated and perpetuated largely by urban folklore, both in terms of form and content, there exist, naturally, many similarities between the two due to shared characteristics.

These in turn are misunderstood and both phenomena treated as one. In his essay on Folklorismus, Handoo gave a detailed account on the differences of and shared characteristics of folklore, urban folklore and mass culture in the Indian conditions for a better understanding of the readers. Let us have a cursory look for this,

	Folklore	Urban (Modern) Folklore	Mass Culture
1	Oral (Written)	Oral and Written	Oral and Written
2	Traditional	Traditional and contemporary	Traditional and contemporary
3	Groupy (folk)	Groupy (folk)	Groupy (folk)
4	Anonymous	Anonymous and known author	known author
5	Multiple existence (versions)	Multiple existence (versions)	Fixed form

The above comparison clearly shows that the only difference, if that can be called a difference; between the traditional folklore and modern (urban) folklore is

that of anonymity. Due to the advancements made in the technology of dissemination (printing, Xeroxing, photography, etc.) it is possible now to know about the authorship of certain folklore items such as a chain letter, a folk design or a folk cartoon etc.. However, the processes of dissemination of folklore items are so complex that anonymity seems by and large, one of the main characteristics of even modern folklore. Mass culture, on the other hand, shares almost all characteristics with folklore- both traditional and modern folklore -except the aspects of anonymity and multiple existence; both being crucial characteristics for differentiation. it is precisely because of these two important characteristics, more particularly the latter, that mass culture has to be treated separately- a phenomenon which strictly speaking is not folklore but resembles folklore and shares its all characteristics excerpt two, e.g., anonymity and multiple existence both in time and space. Mass culture or Folklorismus is therefore "the industrial renewal of folklore. It is the process of channeling the traditional folk themes, metaphors, motifs, ideas and beliefs into the mass produced industrial–commercial products, mass media and other forms of modern communication"[67].

Handoo in his study is more concern about the dissemination of folklore by various electronic media ranging from print to cinema. In his article on "Folklorismus: Indian Folklore and Mass Culture", he gave a detailed account of how the urban Indian society have faced a drastic change with the growth and progress of the coming of industrialization on the one hand and along with it, the growth of metropolis culture on the other. However, he discovered that the majority

[67] *Ibid.*

of Indians living in the rural countryside have not faced as many changes as the urban populace. The growth and progress of industrialization and metropolis culture have provided India with a two-fold contradiction : one of the villages of India- of filth, poverty, of droughts, floods, of crowds, castes and religions- and the other of big cities, sky-scrapers, big business, T.V. and commercial culture. Mass culture, as should be clear now, belongs to this second face of modern Indian society.

Handoo's study on the Indian folklorismus is seen to have focused mainly on the relationship of folklore and mass culture. The study shows how the popular Indian films have become an important part of mass culture everywhere and more so; these films play a very important role in the Indian society. Most of the popular Indian films that are produced in are more or less like "modern fairy tales".[68]The scholars, writes Handoo, have recognized that popular Indian films follow the same structural patterns as one notices in fairy tales and folktales[69]. In his study of the popular Indian films Handoo found out that the magic of the myth and the fairy tale has not died out completely, but survives in the changed forms in the Indian popular cinema. He further divided the popular Indian cinema which seems to operate on folklore into four broad categories as follows:

i) *Full Myth Films*: in which traditional myths or folktales or their national or regional versions are incorporated without changing the basic plot structure.

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[68] See, Richard M. Dorson (ed), Folklore in the Modern World (Paris, 1978); Raphal Patai, Myth and Modern Man (New Jersey, 1972)and V.Sudarshan, Reddy et al, "Telegu Film: A Thematic Analysis" Folklore (Calcutta) Vol. 19 (1978). pp. 11-18, 27 referred from Handoo's Theoretical Essays in Indian Folklore, 2000.

[69] J. Handoo, 2000: *Thoeritical Essays in Indian Folklore*. P. 213

ii) *Half Myth Films*: in which the myth or the traditional narrative is imposed on a non-traditional plot-structure or vice-versa. This trend, besides films, is very strong in modern Indian literature and contemporary painting. This form is also more appealing both to the city and the village people as it appropriately establishes the relevance of the mythic metaphor in modern Indian society.

iii) *Mythic Theme Films*: represent such films which borrow one or many mythic motifs and use them according to the needs of the plot-structure, which otherwise is completely non-mythic and modern. This form sometimes resembles the Half Mythic form. However, the difference between the two is that in the former the mythic theme hangs on like a shadow from the beginning to the end, while as in the latter form the theme or the motifs occur occasionally in inverted forms. For example, a modern plot-structure of a Mythic Theme film may use the *Mahabharata* theme of Gandhari's forced blindness as an example of a "devoted wife" to direct the modern plot-structure towards its forceful idealized conclusion.

iv) *Fairy Tale Patterns Film*: are those popular films which exhibit a deep structure pattern comparable to fairy tales. For example, the hero in such films, just like the fairy tale has to pass numerous tests before being able to trace his heroine, liquidate the villain, win the heroine and marry her. The donor's hand and villain's

> actions, just like the fairy tales are crucial in such films. The logic of the fairy tale pattern: from disequilibrium to equilibrium is an essential feature of such films. Thus the fairy tale, if not in its entirely, but in terms of structural frame and action patterns seems alive and thriving in one form or the other in modern Indian celluloid phenomenon. That these patterns and structure are still meaningful and relevant to Indian mind and society, and in fact form an important aspect of Indian mass culture is further supported by the recent phenomenon in the real political life of the same society which has accepted many celluloid heroes as political destiny of the land.[70]

Other than cinema, television and radio also have made a strong impact on Indian society and mass culture. For instance, quiz programmes on TV, the atmosphere of popular riddles and games is renewed. Children and adults repeat advertising jingles. One other kind of television programme that attracts massive audiences is a show written and performed in local language. It makes no difference whether the dialect originates from a small community or from a broad region: such serials or programmes are welcomed in all parts of the country. It seems that the new heterogeneity resulting from the great rural-urban migrations makes for a better understanding of various culture patterns. Moreover, there are folkloristic characters with whom one easily identifies.

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[70] *Ibid.* p. 214.

In the meantime, in the Khasi and Jaintias hills too, we are witnessing a rapid change of the society and its culture as seen in the Pan- Indian society wherein one meets the structure of folk narratives in films, documentary films, comics and other products in the entertainment industry. The impact of folklorismus or mass culture has not left out this region too.

The above examples show the presence of traditional folklore which operates as a selector in various situations of contemporary mass culture. They also prove the existence of a firm relationship between folklore and folklorismus. This is proved by the fact that the emergence of the process of transformation of genuine or authentic folklore into what Moser called the "second-hand mediation and presentation of folk culture"[71] (folklorismus) is taking place all over the world. The riddle of what is meant by "second hand" tradition is illuminated by Hermann Bausinger as "The use of material or stylistic elements of folklore in a context which is foreign to the original tradition"[72]. The different levels of transformation of folklore could be presented as a continuum. Rihtman-Augustin[73] gave a tentative classification of transformation levels of folklore as follows:

1. Folklore living in its original expressions,

2. Folklore living its second existence-folklorismus-and changing in several ways until finally transformed into and adopted by mass culture on several levels.

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[71] Hans Moser.1962: *Folorismus in our time.* p. 180.
[72] Hermann Bausinger. 1984: "Folklorismus." In Enzyklopädie des Mdrchens IV: 1405-10.
[73] Dunja Rithman Augustine: 'Traditional Culture, Folklore, and Mass Culture in Contemporary Yugoslavia' in *Folklore in the Modern World* (ed) by Dorson 1978. p. 168.

a. Traditional forms adapting themselves to modern media without losing their original artistic integrity.

b. Traditional folkloristic expressions losing many, if not all, of their original traits, and then, as "new folk", appearing on the market of modern mass culture.

3. Folklore as an inspiration of all kinds of cultural activity offering to modern art its motives, rhythms, contents, and ideas.

He added that in Yugoslavia, many modern publications, as well as unpublished research material with contemporary oral prose, poetry, music and dance, testify to the contemporary existence of authentic peasant folk art created according to the rules and structures of older folk production. In small and rather closed communities where such production is going on, mass culture has not yet penetrated[74] and thus many of their folk art still lives in its original form.

The process of creating and transmitting folklore with their primitive innovation including, the technology of musical instruments and the technology of communication (which is mainly oral-aural), are fast disappearing from the modern world. Today, radio, television, films, and records are used to distribute messages. As those processes disappear, folklore is evolving into a mass culture/folklorismus which has to satisfy new requirements of technology and the moment of direct transformation is achieved by the public in various ways.

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[74] *Ibid.* p. 169.

The traditional folkloristic expressions lose many, if not all, of their original traits in its process of transmission in the modern world. This is demonstrated by "new folk" music which consists of a series of newly composed songs. The folk-based composers are more or less skilled and qualified people. Some are urban, others are rural, but the more successful ones are urban or semi-urban with folk background. Such is the case of the Khasi folk songs, folk poetry, tales and etc. The composers wrote songs mostly based on folk stories describing sometimes the various activities of the primitive folk, or the misery of someone having to carry the pangs of the greatest loss of life as the song *U Sier Lapalang, Ka Noh Ka-Likai, Ka Sohlyngngem* and many more, while still others are composed purely for entertainment as the *phawar* singing; for example, describes the happiness of someone getting a chance to entertain people in a face-to-face performance.

It is difficult to term these performances as "spurious" or "invented traditions" in the vein of those practices deconstructed by British historians[75]. The "authenticity" of these performances were unquestionable: for instance, in one of the field investigations conducted at Smit village on the 14th of June 2009, the scholar was able to witness and prove the 'authenticity' of these *phawar* performances, that when *phawar* singers performed, large crowds of people are unable to stop their feet from moving in tune with the rhythms and in joining the chorus '*Hoi Kiw*'; and the scholar feels it would be best to document what Bendix wrote "chills running down one's spine during musical performances," a prerequisite of authenticity[76]. Again,

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[75] Guntis Šmidchens,: 'Folklorism Revisited': *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. - Apr., 1999), p. 59.

[76] Regina Bendix. 1997: *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. p.13.

the scholar while witnessing the *Phawar* performance found herself celebrating the best characteristics of folklore as a discipline and folklorismus as a process.

New folksongs are extremely popular. Recorded material in the form of cassettes, compact discs are sold in hundreds of thousands and are far more popular than commercial music. The performers of new folk artist are leading personalities in commercial entertainment and mass culture. They have clubs and fans. Even skilled and professional jazz and other popular musicians are unable to compete with new folk performers. When a folksong is sung, it always provokes sighs, and nostalgia of a more intense feeling songs have several functions, they were a vehicle for discovering the worldviews of nations "from inside, through their own soul"[77] and a means of comparing and interpreting national differences. In general, folksongs demonstrate to both insiders and outsiders the cultural wealth of every nation. Folklorismus has retained these functions effectively.

This discussion of the relationship between folklore, and mass culture in the Khasi Hills has pointed to the complexity of forms and structures. Many of those forms, structures, and relationships have not been studied yet. Structures of new folk are unknown and remain a challenge for the modern folklorist. The cultural and folkloristic laboratory in these regions particularly of the Khasis is very rich, containing specimens at each level of the continuum and many changing forms and phenomena in between that needed to be recorded and documented so as to keep and preserve the Khasi folklore from the process of oblivion.

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[77] Herder 1967-68, vol. ix: 532 as quoted from Šmidchens, 1999. p. 60.

Taking into consideration all the above discussions, the term "folklorismus" therefore is best defined functionally, denoting the conscious use of folklore as a symbol of ethnic, regional, or national culture. The history of folklorismus begins at the very roots of folklore scholarship, and for this reason the term is indispensable to the discipline's core lexicon. Folklorismus can be a fine starting point for international discourse, debate, and delightful exchange of ideas. "The concept of folklorismus is recent and the debate over it is not finished," writes Bendix[78], and one can only agree with this view.

In conclusion, the implications of folklorismus and its significance have to be kept in mind. It is a phenomenon - a complex phenomenon that cannot be ignored, for its uniqueness to our time. Instead of dismissing it, we should try to discover the psychological function that it serves for those involved, not only for the performers and their audience, but for the initiators and organizers also. Folklorismus and folklore are complementary and overlap; it is not always easy to separate them. What do we mean by the 'genuine' and does it really exist in folklore? If it is true, to say that one age's folklorismus is the next age's folklore, then the reverse is also the case.[79] Bausinger says that what we believe to be continuity is mostly a deliberate awakening of the past in the course of history, a deliberately inserted renaissance. Again, Linda Dégh made a firm statement at the American Folklore Society Conference, in an informal speech, she said that 'folklore was always manipulated; that folklorismus is folklore. Those taking part in it do not see folklorismus as such.

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[78] Regina Bendix.1988: "Folklorism: The Challenge of a Concept." *International Folklore Review* 6: p. 5.

[79] Franz Lipp, : 'Folklorismus-Aspects: The Meaning of Folklorismus in Contemporary Folk Culture' *Folklorismus,* eds. Edith Hirandner and Hans Lunzer, (n.d.) pp. 149-165.

As soon as you have published a book of folklore, you yourself have taken part in the process. Folklore indeed carries within itself the seeds of folklorismus'[80] and one can agree with both of them.

[80] Linda Dégh, speaking informally at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting; Cincinnati, Ohio, 1985. See also, Dégh Journal of Folklore Research, p. 206. As quoted from Venetia J. Newall 'The Adaptation of Folklore and Tradition (Folklorismus)'. p. 147.

CHAPTER- I

Tracking Folklorismus in the *Phawar*

The Khasis are a music loving people and in almost in their each and every special occasion they celebrate, the *phawar* is sung. *Phawar* is traditional folk poetry unique to the Khasis. It consists of four lines with a two rhyming couplet. In most of the *phawar*, the first two lines are meaningless whereas the third and the fourth line contain the meaning of the song. *Phawar* singers in the first two lines can take the names of animals, birds, vegetables, trees etc, freely just to make a rhyme with the last second lines. To sing a *phawar*, a group of singers of at least four members minimum are needed. The leader of the group will lead the song while the rest will join him in shouting the chorus *Hoi kiw*. Traditionally, *phawar* were used only for some sacerdotal purposes and in connection with the traditional sport of the Khasis i.e. archery.

According to Juanita War, a "*Phawar* is a traditional Khasi poetic creation which is composed spontaneously in couplets for special occasions with a peculiar musical quality which is between a chant and a song"[1]. However, Kynpham Sing Nonkynrih argues against the contention that holds the Khasi *phawar* to be merely a set of couplets, "despite the short and terse lines, it is neither composed in the English iambic pentameter nor in the rhyme scheme of *aabb* which is normally associated with rhyming couplets." Instead, according to Nongkynrih "The *phawar* is a six-line traditional Khasi verse form. It is referred to in the singular as *ka phawar*

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[1] Juanita War, 1994: 'Khasi Phawar' in *Lest We Forget*, p. 24.

and in the plural as *ki phawar*. It can be described in three ways: as a limerick because, although it is not – linear, it is often a humorous poem; a verse epigram expressing an ingenious thought with point, usually satirical; and as a gnomic verse because it comprises pithy and sententious sayings, embodying some moral principle or precept, some one which can be quite witty" [2].

In earlier days almost every man knew the art of singing a *phawar* and they taught their children to follow them. However, it may be noted here that in the traditional *phawar* singing, female singers never take active roles in either composing or singing and hence the *phawar* was sung and composed only by male members particularly in archery games. Females may in some cases be permitted to join hands with the male singers in supporting them while singing the phawar. But this practice has now changed, as women and girls of today not only sing the phawar but even compose them. One cannot stop women folk particularly girls from singing or composing *phawar* during public events. Today, there are no prohibitions against females from participating in the *phawar* singing. This means that *phawar* singing today becomes more participatory and its frontiers are more open compared with the traditional style. What we witness now is reflection of the diffusion of the *phawar* from traditional to modern. The occasions for *phawar* singing have become more diversified and increasingly secular thus providing scope for it to imbibe newer elements especially in the composition and in the use. Therefore, nowadays, it is not strange to see the inclusion of women in *phawar* singing as women, as much as men,

[2] K.S. Nongkynrih, 2008: *The poetics of the Khasi Phawar*, p. 1.

take part in social gatherings. Thus, we can say that the *phawar* is adapting itself to suit the tastes of modern youths and the society as well.

Another interesting aspect of the *phawar* is the frequent use of a verse which actually is an affirmation of the part that women play in the dynamics of *phawar* creation:

Trak! Tak! Tak! Kumba phah i Mei na ing

Oh ha ita i sur ngin ia iuh baroh baroh.

Translation:

Trak! Tak! Tak! As mother has instructed us from home

Oh to that same voice we shall all dance with joy.

This *phawar* talks about a group of youth who were set to go and perform some task assigned to them by their mothers away from their respective homes. When they complete their work successfully, they return home happily. On the way back home they would sing this *phawar* acknowledging their mother that it was her blessings that made them successful. However, the word *i Mei* (mother) here may be presumed to have two meanings. On the one hand, the mother may refer to the 'Mother Goddess of Orders' or *Ka Mei Hukum* who was believed to be the goddess who presides over the sport of archery. It can therefore be safely assumed that if the *phawar* was sung during the time of archery competition, then the mother here would mean to refer to the mother goddess of orders. While on the other hand, the same

phawar, if, sung at any occasion other than archery say, a picnic, pleasure trip, or any public event, then the word mother would obviously refer to the mother at home.

This implies that despite the absence of a strong presence of women in the *phawar* performance, the *phawar* becomes complete with the tacit approval of womenfolk. *Phawar* that were used during those times are different from today's *phawar* because in earlier times, as mentioned earlier, they were used only for sacerdotal purposes and in association with archery. Hence, it was invariably made use in a religious context, such as during the performance of the ceremonial dance for the dead (*ka phur*), *phawar* as moral instruction and social codes of conduct to the young, or, offerings of prayers to *Ka lei Hukum* (Goddess who gives Orders) such as *phawar* to celebrate a successful hunt, *phawar* celebrating victory in battles, *phawar* sung during the sport of archery and so on. Other types include *phawar* while working together, such as erecting a memorial stone, or a foundation pillar of a house or *phawar* during community dances.

The scholar's intention here is to make a study of the new evolving *phawar* that is used in modern context by the present generation. These *phawar* are different from the traditional ones especially in regards to the mode of presentation. Youth of today, although acutely aware of the important role of the *phawar* in Khasi society, can no longer follow the conventional methods of singing traditional *phawar* nor are there occasions that permits them to do so. Therefore, the *phawar* has to be re-created and presented in a different way in various occasions without havig to change its style in order to retain the tradition.

With the changing times, new innovations are ushered in alongside advancement of science and technology and evolution of culture and society. With the development of mass communication particularly the media (both print and electronic and their combinations) a new way of life was introduced to the people. Thus the tradition of *phawar* singing also underwent dramatic transformation which has been responsible for shaping it and making it presentable to newer environs and importantly users and consumers. This is not to say that the *phawar* lost its purity of form and content; rather, the changing role of *phawar* has in turn, given it a new lease of life. This is clearly seen through the modern use of the ancient art of the *phawar*.

In the conventional sense, folk literature refers to those writings and collections which are of anonymous origin. But questions here arise as: how does modern *phawar* evolve in present day use? Who composed it and to what purpose? Who are its users and so on. As it is, any piece of literature, either folk or modern, has to have an author, who later may become anonymous, if that piece of literature is used by others. Similarly even the *phawar*, whose mode changes with the passage of time, but whose style of presentation is largely retained as in the traditional mode undergo experiences of critiquing and review as does any literary piece or genre. Today the modern *phawar* too are composed by different composers (most of them who received good levels of formal education) with the intention of continuing the tradition of *phawar* performance. The existence of a known composer gives rise to an important issue i.e. the issue of composition and anonymity.

The *phawars* that will be used for discussion are those collected from known composers. When a piece of literature either a song or a prose piece is composed or written it implies and affirms the existence of authorship. However, in the case of folk literature, when its contents are written, that piece of work loses its authenticity because of the imposition of the author's sensibilities upon that piece of writing. This happens not through the willful altering of facts by the author, but because as the particular written version of the folk literature, it gains authority over an unwritten version of the same.

Roland Barthes writes that writing is destruction of every voice, of every point of origin ... writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. When such kind of work is used by the readers, then the authorship is lost as the fact when narrated, its voice loses its origin. For the reader, the writing is a text made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, and there is a place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader himself not the author[3]. *Phawar* is thus no different to such type of writings, as the composers will not use it for themselves but for others.

According to Barthes in his essay 'The Death of the Author', the author enters into his own death when writing begins. He strongly contends that the author can no longer be regarded as the omniscient and all-pervading presence and

[3] Roland Barthes, 1968: 'The death of the Author' in *Modern Literary Theory*: A Reader, p. 118.

influence in a work of literature: indeed, he implies that the reader takes over as the prime source of power in a text. At the end of the essay Barthes suggests that 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author'.

Barthes explains the idea of 'the death of the author' via a specific French literary tradition - that of Mallarme and Valery. Mallarme's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interest of writing. Valery, encumbered by a psychology of the ego, considerably diluted Mallarme's theory but, his taste for classicism lead him to turn to the lessons of rhetoric, and he never stopped calling into question and deriding the Author; he stressed the linguistic and, as it were, 'hazardous' nature of his activity, and throughout his prose works he militated in favour of the essentially verbal condition of literature, in the face of which all recourse to the writer's interiority seemed to him pure superstition.[4]

In the conventional sense, folk literature is synonymous with anonymity. Folklore as phenomena of cultural production is developed by the community which has and is understood to have group characteristics. For the sake of convenience, this group can be labeled as folk group. Here, the term 'folk group' does not refer to the illiterate, rural, backward people or the European peasants were considered as fitting the definition and description of the nineteenth-century as offered by William Thoms and his followers. But any group consisting of two or three or more people who share among themselves some similar traditions constitute a folk group. These shared traditions may either be jokes, speech, songs etc, which makes the group consider them to be their own traditions, and the groups may constitute of college

[4] *Ibid.*

and university students, office workers, footballers, sportsmen, etc. Dundes defined a folk group in the following way-

> "The term 'folk' can refer 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. In theory a group must consist of at least two persons, but generally most groups consist of many individuals. A member of the group may not know all other members, but he will probably know the common core of traditions belonging to the group, traditions which help the group have a sense of group identity". With this flexible definition of folk, a group could be as large as a nation or as small as a family.[5]

He further classify the folk groups as those of an ethnic, racial, religious, or occupational character, baseball players, coal miners, cowboys, fishermen, lumberjacks and railroadmen all of which have their own folklore such as lingo, legends and in-group jokes. With this new concept of the folk, new groups emerge and new folklore is thus created.

Dan Ben Amos defined folk group as follow:

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[5] Alan Dundes, 1980: *Interpreting Folklore*, p. 7.

> The concept of "folk" has become almost synonymous with the group concept. A group is " a number of persons who communicate with one another, often over a span of time, and who are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all others, not at a second- hand through other people, but face-to-face." A group could be a family, a street-corner gang, a roomful of factory workers, a village, or even a tribe.[6]

Looking at these two concepts of the 'folk group', we can now safely assume that each of these groups has at least one tradition which they can call it as their own, and every member of the group can easily communicate with one another face to face. Similarly, the *phawar* singers too consist of a group of at least a minimum of two individuals and without a group there can be no *phawar* singing. Presumably most of the Khasis know what a *phawar* is, can sing it, though not very many possess the skill to compose one.

It would be interesting to study the *phawar*, the traditional and the ones which are newly evolving each day, as items of folklore which are being created and produced by a collective effort and requirement and to examine these traits in the light of the question of anonymity. This point is not new as many folklorists have focused their attention on it, notably Richard Dorson who coined the term 'Fakelore' when he denigrated the presentation of spurious and synthetic writings under the claim that they are genuine folklore. These productions are not collected in the field

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[6] Dan Ben Amos, 1982: *Folklore in Context and Essays*, p. 13.

but are rewritten from earlier literary and journalistic sources in an endless chain of regurgitation, or they may be made out of whole cloth. Dorson strongly criticized various writers, auditors, and publishers for their modified and misrepresentations of folklore. According to Dorson, advertisers and popularisers turned Paul Bunyan into a "pseudo folk hero of twentieth-century mass culture"[7] who bears little resemblance to the original. He even charged that these authors, editors and publishers have misled and gulled the public. Another frequent object of Dorson's scorn was the series of "treasuries" of folklore compiled by Benjamin Botkin entitled *Treasury of American Folklore* where Botkin had rewrite the materials to his will for wider audience[8].

It should be made clear that Dorson was not criticizing poets and men of letters who used genuine folklore as the source or inspiration for literary prose and poetry. For, there is a long and honored tradition of literature based upon or derived from oral tradition. What Dorson was objecting to be the distortion of pure and original form of folklore into a fake one which occurs when an individual first fabricates material and then claims it to be pure, unadulterated oral folklore. Dorson had dichotomized the pure and good works as folklore and those fake or what he calls evil as fakelore.

Dorson's statement was challenged by his own student Alan Dundes, who after his thorough study and research on folklore found that fakelore, does not exist at all. He was of the view that modification of folklore forms comes about as a means

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[7] Richard M. Dorson, 1997: *American Folklore*. Chicago: University of Chicago press, p. 4.
[8] Alan Dundes, 1989: 'The Fabrication of Fakelore' in *Folklore Matters*, pp. 40-53.

of its survival or revival. Dundes has taken the example from the Grimm brother's work to justify his statement: the Grimm brothers were credited as the pioneering figures in the study of folklore. Their collections and publication of German folklore in their *kinder-und Hausmärchen* was done long before the word folklore was coined. They had given specific suggestions as to how to collect oral narratives. According to the two great brothers- one should, above all, be concerned with conceiving these items faithfully and correctly from the mouth of the narrators, without make-up and additions, where possible and with their original words. In the preface of the first volume of their collections, the Grimms Brothers had declared to have presented the fairy tales as true to their sources as possible without adding, embellishing or changing any of the circumstances in the tales. Yet Dundes discovered that the Grimms Brothers themselves were the first to break their own promises by not practicing what they preached. After an in-depth study of the hallowed Grimm folktale, Dundes found out the evidences that the Grimms Brothers had not only doctored the tales they collected from the mouths of the peasants, but they also falsified information data. Besides, they disguised their actual sources and even destroyed all of their original field notes.[9]

Dundes concludes his discussion about the Grimms fairytales by saying that - they wanted to create a German national monument while pretending that they had merely discovered it; and later on, no one wanted to seem to tear it down. This statement is true as the folklorists have tended to gloss over these facts, preferring instead to continue to extol the Grimms Brothers as shining exemplars of folklore

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[9] *Op.cit*

scholarship. In fact folklorists cannot prevent either themselves or the people from believing that fakelore is folklore.

This is true even to the general folk as well who knowingly and unknowingly have accepted these scholarly ideas. For them a tale or a song after an extensive elaboration, rewritten or recomposed, changing form and content by way of modification are still consider as part of folklore if some of the traditional elements still remain in them. We can also consider such kind of works as to have entered into the second existence of their life rather than being washed away from the treasure of traditional knowledge.

It is therefore important to note that the process of reworking and modifying of folklore for modern tastes is not fakelore. The elements of mass edification and misrepresentation of folklore is central; artists who draw on traditional stories in their work are not producing fakelore unless they claim their creations as real folklore. In fact, they are producing folklorismus[10]. Folklorismus as said in the introductory note also refers to the invention or adaptation of folklore. Unlike fakelore, however, folklorismus is not necessarily misleading; it includes any use of a tradition outside the cultural context in which it was created. German scholars who are interested in the use of folklore by the tourism industry[11] first used the term. However, professional art based on folklore, TV and film commercials with fairy characters and other mass products that are tradition-based are all forms of folklorismus.

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[10] http:/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fakelore.

[11] Hermann Bausinger, 1990: *Folk Culture in a World of Technology*, p. 151.

Similarly, when we consider the above discussion, the *phawar* though now in its modified form and content still contains what can be called traditional elements; continue to be created and used in ways and occasions more varied than before. These *phawar* are still taken and accepted as part of Khasi life and indeed, folklore by the present generation. Many of the *phawar* composers compose *phawar* not for their own interest and benefits, but for reviving the tradition of *phawar* singing and sometimes, overtly for use in specific events such as political campaigns, annual visits to certain remarkable places by organizations like the Seng Khasi, etc. This is being done obviously to reiterate the fact that the tradition of *phawar* composition and singing is still an integral part of the Khasi community and its culture. Thus, it can be maintained that these new evolving *phawar* are examples of the way in which artistic creations of a community take birth and manifest themselves as forms of folklorismus.

In order to examine the ways in which the modern day *phawar* are being created and sustained, this scholar conducted a series of interviews with established *phawar* composers and also devoted detailed studies on the compositions in terms of lyrics, rhyme scheme, meaning and relevance. One such composer is, Banniewkor L. Nongbri, a post-graduate student who is fairly well known as a *phawar* composer and whose work has found its way into magazines and other medium sized publications. To the question as to why he composes the *phawar*, his answer was to attempt to revive it, as it appears to be on the verge of extinction. He further said it also acts as a means of awaking the youth of today for helping it survive as a traditional form of utterance.

There are certain *phawar*-singers who not only compose *phawar* impromptu for any occasion, but who also publish them in printed format as articles and even as books. One such work is the book '*ka Pariah ka Kot Jingphawar*' in two volumes written and published by Dhonsing Lyngdoh Nongbri. In the first volume of this book, there are about 36 *phawar* on subjects like fortune, traveling, elections, the political leader, public gatherings, the environment, iron smelting, rice threshing, and others.

For a few composers, the art of the *phawar* is an attempt to re-instill pride among the Khasis in their heritage. Dhonsing writes: composing a *phawar* is very difficult, since it is a deliberate form of song that connects the meaning of the first stanza with the rest.[12](Translated by the scholar). Again, in his book, he clearly isolates two main types of *phawar* and these are:

1. *Ka Phawar* Bashisha (real or serious),
2. *Ka Phawar* Biria (for entertainment).

These real or serious *phawar* are those that carry the meaning from the beginning of the first line or *Ka lamphang* (sentence that shows the meaning of the next line that follows) to the end or *Ka Pynkop* (last sentence giving support to prove the first line). For instance,

Lam: *Hala ing i Mei i pa, ki iathuh ban mih shabar;*

Pynkop: Akor kaba bha, te ha ki ka ieng synshar.

[12] Dhonsing L. Nongbri, (n.d.): *Ka Pariah ka Kot Jingphawar*, p. ix.

Translation:

Lam: At home to their parents, they inform before going out;

Pynkop: Good conduct stands out to rule them.

The singer here informs us about the Khasi concept of etiquette, good manners and behaviour as taught by the elders. This *phawar* moralises that no one should leave the house without informing their parents or even the siblings. This again, shows that one should know to respect other members both young and old not only inside the family but in the society also.

Unlike the serious *phawar, ka lamphang* and *pynkop* of entertainment *phawar* are different, that it is more indirect in meaning than the first one. For example,

Lam: U shrieh bala ngat, te shaiew u leit die

Pynkop: U ba kyrkieh palat, u ju don ka jingbabe.

Translation:

Lam: A trapped monkey sold at the market,

Pynkop: One who is impatient will regret his ways

Here the singer describes the snare made by man to entrap the monkey. This is done with the intention of earning some money by selling the monkey in the market place; however the monkey does not attract any attention and instead becomes a liability to his owner. This indirectly means doing something unimportant

is useless. Thus, one has to think first whether what he intends to do will benefit him or not so that he will not regret later.

Today the traditional use of *phawar* is increasingly diminishing as a practice of the modern Khasis except in some villages where we can still trace its use as in archery, but even here, with this tradition prevalent, signs of its having been diluted are to be clearly seen. This may be due to the lack of authentic and expert *phawar* singers and the attitude of the people who, it has been observed, display lack of interest in it. Though as said before that the traditional use and practice of *phawar* is in a diminished state, yet we still can find and hear *phawar* that are sung by the people today in different styles and in different contexts. These *phawar* that are in use with some regularity are totally different from the old ones. This means that now *phawar* are used by the people during public events (e.g. general meeting of the Seng Khasi and Seng Khihlang), during academic events used both by college and university's students (e.g. varsity week, college week, teacher's day celebration etc), sports *phawar* (e.g. football match, inter- college meet and others). Besides these, *phawar* are also used by the political parties during during political campaign to woo voters, social issue *phawar* and so on. One such political party (the United Democratic Party) has released a tape recorded cassette during the MLA elections of the year 2003.

Below is given a new category of the newly evolved *phawar* as mentioned:

1. **Academic Events *Phawar*:** These *phawar* are sung by the students during the organization of any functions in the institute be a college or a university.

Such kind of events may be college week, varsity week, inter college meet, teacher's day celebration farewell celebration and many others. These types of entertaining *phawar* are usually created on the spot by the *phawar* singers without a pre-planned intention. But some of them are composed as said by those who are expert in reciting a *phawar*. Below the scholar reproduce *phawar* composed by Banniewkor L. Nongbri sung by both the college students and university students during these academic events.

***Phawar* sung during the Varsity Week Celebrations at North-Eastern Hill University Shillong in the year 2006**

Tang ban byrngia.

Baroh: *U synthap h'u Mawshamok*

U padma ha i tharia

Ha sngap ko paralok,

Para samla ban ngin biria.

Translation:

Together: The *synthap* on a flint stone

The lotus in a shallow stream

Listen oh friends

Oh youth peers we shall entertain

This is a beginning verse where the singers inform the listeners that they are going to start the game song.

Shynrang: *Lyngdkhur bad i sikei'*

Jabyrthieh ha ka weitdem:

Ka dur jong phi te thei,

Ha ka lieh ha ka syndem.

Translation:

Male: Wild pigeon and the deer

Small fish in the whirl pool

Your face young woman

Quite fair but your nose quite flat

This verse talks about the facial appearance of a young lady who is fair in complexion but having a flat nose. Here, the girl is being compared to a pigeon, a deer and even small fish in a pool. Fish here is a symbolic representation for grown up girls who have attained marriageable age. *Leit khwai* or to go fishing is one of the popular saying amongst the Khasis; fish here stands for the girls. Once the fish is caught in a fishing rod it is difficult for it to free itself. So the same is to girls too, once they got into the net of love they cannot free themselves from it.

Kynthei: *Putbikur h'u makashang,*

Ban pynhun ia u Baichung:

Ka dur jong phi te rang,

Shu pyllun la kum u pdung.

Translation:

Female: Blow a trumpet at the Himalayas
To pacify the Baichung
Your face oh young man
Just round like a winnowing shield

Here, the lines tell about male youths. To blow a trumpet at the Himalayas means to praise the males by raising their status as high as the height of the highest peak in the world so that everyone would know them. Again, Bhaichung, the Indian football team captain is admired by the football-crazed young people and he has become a household name in Shillong. In a similar manner, skill is admired and this composition goes as an exhortation to youth to make use of their talents. It also implies that appearance here does not matter, even if the person mentioned in the *phawar* has a face resembling the *pdung* or the sieve.

Shynrang: *Pliangsbai na kolkata,*
Ka kyrnet n'u Lum Shyllong
Hai te i samla
Shu tynnet l'u painkhyllong.

Translation:

Male: Ceramic plate from Kolkata

A trumpet from Shillong peak

Look at that young lady

Is beautiful with plaited hair.

Ceramic plate, here, refers to things brought from outside one's own place. This shows that we do accept the influence of other cultures in our daily lives. *Ka kyrnet* is a kind of trumpet that is used by members of military brass-band in Shillong. Shillong peak has a large concentration of military establishments and it is a common sight to see parades and drill formations accompanied by the blowing of the trumpet. The singer here wants to tell that even if the food we eat, the dress we wear and even the music we listen are not from our own culture, yet we still have the love and loyalty for our culture which is very dear to everyone. This can especially be seen among females. It does not matter how modern they may appear to be, but they still, as far as possible follow their own tradition. This is true not only for the Khasis but for other communities as well.

Kynthei: *Diengduh u bah ryndang*

Die nokot ha u mynthna:

U shniuh jong phi te rang

Soh kyrdot kum saimuna.

Translation:

Female: A wooden staff carried on the shoulder

Is sold in cash to the *Mithun*

Your hair oh young man

Knotted as the old sack's thread.

This verse talks about the weekly local market of the animals called *ka Iew Luri Lura* in Khasi folklore. It is believed that in the remote past, this was the market where all the animals assembled to exchange their produce and wares as also man did. The place where the market was held is at Mawber Village[13]. Again, here we detect not only the practice of barter system but the exchange of trade too as shown in the last line of the stanza. *Sai muna* or sack' thread clearly shows that, as the Khasis do not produce sack since the region itself is not suitable for growing jute, so they have to import it from other regions. This piece is also used to mock the disheveled looks of a young man whose stringy hair is compared to old sack thread.

Shynrang: *Tyngab kum u kisih,*

Langsohmoh i niang rymboin:

Ka ngab pat wow ka plih,

Ani ka tmoh kaba kynjyoin.

Translation:

Male: A crow like the otter

A ram like the niangrymboin (an insect)

Your cheeks are really smooth

With matching shapely chin.

[13] D.T. Laloo, 1993: *Ka Tynrai Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong*, p. 10.

Kynthei: *Jalyngkhat hapoh u shang,*

Shi lympied pat u jada:

Ki khmat jong phi te rang

Ni sawtriej kum labasa.

Translation:

Female: *Jalyngkhat* inside the basket (a kind of wild vegetable)

A bundle of *jada* (vegetable)

Your eyes young man

Blood-shot as that of a leopard.

The above two verses again, are the description of facial appearance of both the male and female singers who are engaged in the exchange of *phawar* which resembles verbal contesting. The names of insects, birds and vegetables are mentioned and these are used as points of comparison in their looks.

Shynrang: *Iong khawrnga i ma bithong,*

I'u tyrso la tah makhon:

Lada sawtriej phi ong,

Tang katno ia ngi phi mon.

Translation:

Male: A charcoaled black hog-deer

With butter smeared mustard leaves

If blood-shot you said

In no time you will like us.

Kynthei: *Jingieit mynta la pdang*

Ka pyrthei ba mangkarong:

Thylliej wat jler ho rang

Ioh I dei I kur lajong.

Translation:

Female: Love is superficial

In this showy world

Do not flirt with words young man

Lest she belong to your clan.

In this verse, the boys flirt with the girls, saying that even if they have the eyes as that of a leopard, one day they (girls) will like them. What we see in the reply made by the girls is that they in turn advice the boys not to hurry for that but to search the girl's lineage thoroughly, lest she may be of his own clan. Marrying within the same clan is an incest relation or *ka shong sang* amongst the Khasis and it is considered a mortal sin that remains unforgiven in God's eyes. People who indulge in this type of relationship are cast out from the *Kur* (clan). When they die even their bones are separated from the ancestral bone depository stone called *Ka Mawshyieng*. This song is thus a parable to the Khasi youths for exercising caution before contemplating marriage.

Shynrang: *U jhur bad tungrymbai,*

U tiluh h'u mawjapha:

Ka kur nga la tip shai

Naduh ba phi dang kha.

Translation:

Male: Vegetables and 'tungrymbai' beans

Bark of a tree on the stone cairn

The clan I know very well

Since the time you were born.

Here, young men advise others to check the clan or *kur* the girl belongs to thoroughly before they proceed with courtship. It is important to inquire about which clan the girl belongs to so that the exogamous nature of marriage system is not broken through ignorance of clan relationship. *Tungrymbai* is a bean which has a very pungent smell and is favourite chutney of the Khasis. *Mawjapha* is a stone kept for offering food to the dead by the Khasis. *Maw* is a stone and '*japha*' refers to food. This food is offered by the clan members to their dead relatives after the deposition of bones inside the *Mawshyieng* (stone cairn). Offering of *Japha* continues for three days and nights, and together with *Ka japha* meat of the sacrificed animal, and betel nut are also placed on the stone believing that the spirit of the dead will come and eat the last food.

Mawjapha is part of the *Mawbynna Niam* or *Mawniam* (Religious monolith) of the Khasis erected by the clan members of the deceased person. This was done so that these stones would stand as symbols, evidences, commemoration or declaration that the existing clan members have completed performing all the necessary rites and rituals to be done during cremation ceremony, and at the time of collecting and depositing the bones of their dead relatives. Like the other memorial stones, these stones erected number not less than three standing stones which are called *Mawshynrang* or male stone, and one flat lying stone called *Mawkynthei* or female stone. The male stones stand for the eldest maternal uncle (in the middle) and the younger maternal uncles on both the sides; while the female stone stands for the grand primitive ancestress of the whole clan. Therefore, the food or *japha* is offered at *Mawkynthei* that symbolizes the root of the ritual within the clan.[14]

The singer here in reply to the girls, therefore tries to clarify their fear by bringing out the relationship of the proposal and *Mawjapha*. The relationship here acts as a pipeline that connects the lifelong settlement of a man and a woman i.e. from engagement till death.

Kynthei: *Ka mieng i thapbalong*
Top shi thop u put shawiang:
Jabieng phi la khongpong,
Ba la ngop ha u khawiang.

Translation:

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[14] H. Lyngdoh, 1995: *Ka Pomblang Nongkrem Ki Mawbynna*, p. 56.

Female: *Mieng* of the large black butterfly

Again and again he twangs

Your mind is muddled now

Betrayed by strong spirits,

Mieng is a Khasi instrument played by the twanging of a string tied to its bamboo frame. But in the song we see that it is owned by a large black butterfly that twangs repeatedly and endlessly. A man who is addicted to liquor is also referred to as the butterfly, because when he is drunk, he keeps on talking endlessly without giving any thought to what he speaks. In short it means blowing one's own trumpet. *Khawiang* is the fermented rice used for preparing rice beer.

Shynrang: *Ha shen i nia sikei,*

Ba kynruh ha i tawa:

Wat kren pynlah ho thei,

Ioh phi duh u khaw muna.

Translation:

Male: On the spot aunty deer

Being shook in a roasting plate

Do not argue young lady

You may lose a sack of rice.

Kynthei: *Lynsher u Labasa,*

Ia i dohkha shu dong lydong:

Kam pher ia khawmuna,.

Tang ba bha pat I jinglong.

Translation:

Female: Hurled the leopard down hard

The fish tumbled head over tail

Sack of rice does not matter

What we want is good conduct.

A sack of rice here refers to a family, and the father who can meet the needs of his family. To meet one's needs one has to be wise in choosing a life partner, so that they will not regret later in life. It means that one has to look for a good natured person, for his or her life and not only to be guided by considerations of wealth or money.

Shynrang: *La kynshew ha u bynhei,*

Kuratia h'u Mawsawa:

Wat sngeweiei ho thei,

Ka biria ban ia sngewbha.

Translation:

Male: Saved for the sacrificial contribution

A crocodile at the echoing stone

Please do not mind young maiden

We tease just to entertain.

Kynthei: *Jamynrei kum u tiluh,*

Jain muka ne ka ryndi:

Khublei ia phi kumjuh,

Tang bakla ngin nym aili.

Translation:

Female: Willow like bark of a tree

Muka or *Ryndia* cloth

Thanks to you too

But if you blunder, you will pay

Baroh lang: *Tingaw shah set patok,*

Ka dikar na nongkyndong:

Kynmaw ho paralok,

Ban phawar hala ki shnong.

Translation:

Together: *Langur* being imprisoned

Turtle from the country side

Remember oh dear friends

To recite a *Phawar* in your own place

To conclude the song both the parties make placatory remarks to each other so as to avoid misunderstandings, and at the same time it is a call to other youths too to participate in singing the *phawar*, if not in the common arena where most public performances take place, then in their own respective villages.

Another *phawar* that was sung during the NEHU Varsity Week in the year 2007 goes like this.

Ka Phawar Biria

1. *U ngap h'u niangryndia,*
   Shalynnai bad ka skei;
   Ha sngap ba ngan biria,
   Ia I tai te I kongthei.

Translation:

A bee to the silkworm
Smallfish and the deer
Listen, now I shall joke
To that young woman.

2. *Lyngdikhur ba dang kynud,*
   U tiluh bad u sohbrai;
   Ka dur kaba jemnud,
   U shniuh haduh syngkai.

Translation:

A wild dove is singing

Bark of a tree and wild fruit

A face with innocent looks

Hair till the waist.

3. *Shipai la kum ka shriew,*

Jamynrei la kum jyrmi;

Kyrhai ki thei bhabriew,

Tang iwei ba dang sotti.

Translation:

Soldiers like the yam

Jamynrei like a tree-bark

Plenty of beautiful girls

But only one is still virgin.

4. *Shyllang phyrnai khriak khriak,*

I didi na byrnihat;

Nga tang shu iohi liak,

Ia I nga la iapmat.

Translation:

Forehead that shines so bright

Didi from byrnihat

When I had a glimpse

At once I fell for her.

5. *U sidap kum u kisih,*

'Langsohmoh kum niangrymboin;

Ka ngab kaba plih,

Ka tmoh kaba kynjyoin.

Translation:

Oxen to the otter

A ram like the *niangrymboin* insect

With a smooth face

And a well formed chin.

6. *U mama ba bam sohkhia,*

U jyndem h'u khiew ranei;

Shisha jingishongkhia,

Ka jainsem jong I kongthei.

Translation:

Uncle who eats cucumber

Fermented rice in the earthen pot

Really! How great it looks

The Jainsem of that young lady.

7. *U ngap ha sla tyrkhang,*

U dikhoh h'u jamynrei;

Ha sngap ma phi ko rang,

Ba pynnoh sa I kongthei.

Translation:

A bee in a fern left

An owl in a *jamynrei*

Listen you all young man

Kongthei will now take her turn.

8. *U jhur kum u tyrkhang,*

Un-syn-un kum 'tiewbapung;

Ka dur jong phi te rang,

Pyllun la kum u pdung.

Translation:

Vegetable like fern

Solemn as the *tiewbapung* (a flower)

Your face oh young man

Is rounded like a sieve.

9. *U tiluh ha wah umkhrah,*

Shi lyngkhot la die nohkot;

U shniuh jong phi te bah,

Sohkyrdot kum ka 'langbrot.

Translation:

A tree-bark at Wah Umkhrah stream

A piece was sold in cash

And your hair oh young man

Knotted like that of a sheep.

10. *Lyngngong u tyrkhang,*

U kiseh bad u sitong;

Ki ong hyndai u rang,

Lyngngeh la ka jainspong.

Translation:

Stump of a fern

Pine tree and a turf

Long ago, a man they said

Nicely dressed with his turban

11. *U Sla kum u slasha,*

U tyrso kum u jatira;

Mynta te la kylla,

Shano u 'nai khatsawsynia?

Translation:

A leave like tea-leaf

Mustard leaf like *jatira* (wild vegetable)

Now everything is changed

Where is the full moon now?

12. *U tngaw kum u khawrnga,*

U skop kum u jamyniang;

Kynmaw ho rang samla,

Wat iangop ha u khawiang.

Translation:

A langur like a charcoal

A husk like *jamyniang* (vegetable)

Remember oh young men

Not to be trapped by liquor.

13. *U 'tiewbapung u jamyniang,*

Ka simpieng kum thapbalong;

La rung te u khawiang,

Ka jabieng kala khongpong.

Translation:

Tiewbapung and *jamyniang*

A *simpieng* like black butterflies

Once the strong spirit gets you

Your brains will turn upside down.

14. *U khaw bad u tyrkhang,*

Ka sikei bad kuratia;

Kynmaw ko thei ko rang,

Kane ka dei tang ka biria.

Translation:

Rice and the fern

A deer and a crocodile

Remember young girls and boys

This is just an entertainment.

This *phawar* is sung just for entertainment as the title itself was named so. Verses 1 up to 7 tell of the creative mind of a man as supposed by the composer, to tease a young and beautiful Khasi lady with long hair dressing the Khasi dress called '*ka jainsem*'. Here, the singer also sings of how he fell in love the moment he saw '*didi*' (word used to address to a non Khasi lady who brightens her complexion by her make-up) at Byrnihat (border of Meghalaya and Assam). But, when he saw *kongthei* with her *jainsem* he at once forgets that *didi* he first liked. The singer in this

song does not only display the creative mind of a man but also the Khasi woman in trying to give an indirect description of a man's appearance through *phawar* as shown in the remaining verses i.e. from verses 8-14.

In the remaining verses, comments were given by a young woman in reply to her partner. This woman whom the singer calls *'kongthei'* would at first tell how her male partner looks like by comparing his face to be as round as that of a winnowing shield, his hair is compared to that of a sheep. She also reminded him that he should not forget his own traditional dress code that is a dhoti and a turban. She is now regrets to see that all these are no more in use by the Modern Khasi man whom women used to refer to *'U Nai Khadsawsynia'* (a full moon). *U 'Nai* is a short form for Bnai, the moon, and *khadsawsynia* means the fourteen nights when the moon takes its full shape, which is also referred as full moon. The darkness of the night will be brightened by the light of the full moon. It is during these nights that the moon shines brightly in the midst of other celestial bodies bringing the attraction and satisfaction of the feelings of those who are struggling to pass the loneliness at the dead hour. It is therefore, this beauty of the full moon that reflects the concept of beauty for a manly and a good character person. Whatever it is, this *kongthei* agrees and accepts the changes and development in the society, but she warns the male youths not to get them drawn totally in to these changes. Though an entertaining song it is, yet we see that it also contains the advice and moral values in it that we as listeners should look carefully into it and see how important this *phawar* is to each one of us.

2. *Phawar* during Political Campaign. These *phawar* are sung by the members of political parties praising their own party as the best, while counting others mistakes. This they do in order to get the interest of the voters. Given below is a *phawar* that was sung by supporters of the United Democratic Party (UDP) released in the audio cassette during the election campaign in the year 2003. The United Democratic Party was formed on the 11th October 1997 with Mr. E.K.Mawlong as the president. At present, it is the only biggest regional party in the state. There are two *phawar* i. e. *Phawar* I and *Phawar* II here. Both of these *phawars* are an allegory song about the weakness of political parties other than the UDP. *'Ka Bom'* (drum) is the symbol of the UDP which at the same time is one of the traditional musical instruments of the Khasis.

Phawar I

1. *Ah.....hikai te la hikai – 2 sien*
   Ba kin nang ka khalai wait
   Ban talain te la tbit
   Dang jakle pat de ban mait.
   Hoi....kiw....

Translation:

Ah.... To teach we have taught – 2 times
For them to wield a sword
Expert whirling they are

Yet dull still in striking.

Hoi..... kiw....

To wield a sword, one has to be properly trained so that he will be good in striking. But since it takes a lot of time, some people are still lacking the skill of striking, though they may be expert in whirling the sword. This art is also a kind of training the youths of olden days who were preparing for a battle, when the use of firearm was not known to the Khasis. A sword, a shield, a bow and arrow were used as weapons in a battlefield by the Khasis. Here, the singer does not really mean to give training for whirling or striking a real sword when he sings, but he indirectly tries to refer to political leaders who are trying to woo the voters by their sweet promises during campaigning. Each political leader, before the election tries to convince the voters of their good future by giving promises of what else and what not. Their promises are like whirling a sword in every direction. Just after the election is over, what one witnesses is nothing but a dream. This is how these politicians still do not know to strike their own sword.

2. *Ah...papor te uba shroin – 2 sien*

Tang beh lyer te ula pait

Hynrei un tang dei um

Phin ym lah satia ban mait.

Hoi....kiw....

Translation:

Ah... *papor* [15]is so brittle – 2 times

It easily breaks when the wind blows

But once it got wet

You can never cut it.

Hoi.... kiw....

Papor is crispy when it is fried, but when dipped in water it becomes soft, losing its crispiness. Sometimes, we come across people who possess a twofold mind and nature i.e. outwardly they seem to be very ignorant, having no personality at all and that they sometime look as if they are of no value in the society, but inwardly they are just opposite to what others think them to be. These kinds of people are always looked down upon by others; they even have to face the insult from other men/women folk. No one appreciates or take interest in what they do. Such men however are like a deep rooted tree; we can cut only its branches but can never uproot it. Soso Tham, a renowned Khasi poet talks about such type of persons in one of his poems entitled *"U Dieng Bilat"*[16]. In this poem, the poet refers such person to u *Dieng Bilat* (a gumtree), that was planted in front of Mawkhar Christian School's Campus. Being the only tree in the campus and the road nearby, passersby never pay attention to the beauty of the tree, neither do they look at nor do they appreciate it for the shade it provides to them during sunny days. Daily labourers and passersby tired of their hard work and a heavy burden finds no place nearby to cool themselves from the scorching heat of the sun except under the bower of *U Dieng Bilat.* The stanza extracted from this poem goes as below:

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[15] A kind of crisp fried eatable.

[16] Soso Tham, [1936(1972)] : *Ka Duitara Ksiar*, p. 11-12.

Dei ha u Rangbah kein,

Ka shong ka mon bajwat

Ia u phi lah ban bein,

Hynrei kumno phin rat.

Translation:

It is on a noble man

That strong determination lies

You may feel contempt for him

But how will you uproot him

The poet feels the pain of his heart when he observes the neglectful act of the people towards *U Dieng Bilat*. He is the only person who sees the importance of the tree in the place where it was planted. Though neither attention nor appreciation that *U Dieng Bilat* receives from man in return to what it was shown to it by man, yet it still served to fulfill man's needs. When *U Dieng Bilat* was cut out from its place for road enlargement, everyone started realizing the emptiness in that area when they can no longer rest in leisure or to shadow them from the heat of the sun. Thus, the poet here, taking the examples of *U Dieng Bilat* tries to bring out the similarities of a silent noble man with *U Dieng Bilat*. Losing this tree is like losing a great man in the society which the poet himself expresses his regrets and sorrow in this poem.

3. *Ah....jainboh-2 jainboh jainboh Khasi – 2 sien*

Ka jainspong jainspong Punjab

Tang riew ka bom jong ngi

Ha madan baroh kin hap.

Hoi....kiw....

Translation:

Ah... a dhoti – 4 of the Khasis – 2 times

And a turban of the Punjabis

Once our drum sounded

In a field they'll all fall.

Hoi.... kiw....

The traditional dress of the Khasi male is *Ka jainboh* (dhoti) and *Ka jainspong* (*jainspong*), but today they are no longer used except in rare occasions, while ceremonial dress is still used and worn by the Khasis (of both the sexes). Here, in this verse, the kind of dress that the singer is discussing gets mixed up with the dress code of not only the Khasis but of the Punjabis as well. This signifies the people of the modern society that easily adopt other community's dress pattern, and even the daily lifestyle as their own without a second thought. It also refers here to those political parties that produce candidates who are not pure tribal and hence these people do not share the same sentiments as the Khasis. This is why when the Khasi drum (which is the traditional musical instrument) sounds, all these will fall down one day.

4. *Ah....peit kitai ki pukni – 2 sien*

Ia dohpyut ba ki iaswait

Sa dang iaknieh maphi

Hynrei ngi te la nang iaid.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah...look at those vultures – 2 times

Looking out for a carrion

You all are still scrambling

While we shall move ahead.

Hoi.... kiw ....

5. *Ah....kitai kitai ki tyngab lieh – 2 sien*

Ba lait thaw n'u khiew ranei

Tang ban ioh jaka rieh

Ha byrni rnga du khatei.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah....those, those white crows – 2 times

Escaping from a black earthen pot

No matter, just to get a hidden place

Even inside a charcoal sack

Hoi.... kiw....

The above two verses talks about the wild birds as vultures and white crows that are busy looking for their food and shelter. These creatures do not care what their food will be or where they will be sheltered, they eat even carrion and make their home even in a sack. This is a parable for those who are greedy for wealth and fame, self interest that is happy at the expense of others as long as they get to benefit themselves. Carrion here means an unrighteous way of living that most of the present day men are living. These people do not care what the world will say for what they do, their only aim is to acquire everything they desire in their life even if they know that will give them bad name in the society. Similarly, the same is for the white crows that are looking for a safe shelter. White crows are found only in the plains not in the Khasi Hills. These white crows refer to the congress party as it is not of tribal origin, though it is run by the tribals (Khasis and Garos) in Meghalaya.

6. *Ah....ha lympung jingialeh – 2 sien*

   Ia la ki reng ki ia shut

   Ba la kwah ban nep eh

   Ki kum shut ha ban da dkut.

   Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah.... in a stage of combat – 2 times

They sharpen their horns

Too eager to win

They sharpen till it breaks.

Hoi.... kiw....

This verse speaks about politicians during election campaigns, who try to attract the attention of the public by every means such as feeding them daily at their residence, show enough hospitality and even give financial support for those who are in need. But, sometimes too eager to win the contest, they use unfair means in trying to convince the voters to elect them and thus not knowing they will end up ruining their own life.

7. *Ah...hakhmat, hakhmat, hakhmat ki thong – 2 sien*

   Ban ia lah beit mynta ka sien

   Tang mar shu riew ka bom

   Ki sdang sa ka artatien.

   Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... ahead, ahead, ahead they bet – 2 times

That this time they'll win

But once the drum sound

They begin to doubt.

Hoi.... kiw ....

8. *Ah...haba la biang matang – 2 sien*

   U risaw ruh la pynbeit

   Tang katta hi ka la biang

U soh jing jop ba ngin kheit.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... when *matang*[17] is perfect – 2 times

Even *risaw*[18] is also perfect

That is more than enough

For us to get the victory

Hoi.... .kiw.....

It is obvious that every candidate or political party will hope for the best i.e. to be the triumphant party at the end. Each one of them will challenge the other party and portray themselves as better to the public that their party is the only one that has the right ideology i.e. to work for the people, the development of the people and the society as a whole.

9. *Ah...i jhur te shi pirit – 2 sien*

I pylleng te shi anna

I dur te la bit thit

Rynieng kat u jyntang kba.

Hoi....kiw...

Translation:

[17] A square tool used for measurement by carpenters.
[18] Small bamboo used for making arrows.

Ah.... A plateful of vegetables – 2 times

An egg of one anna[19]

Face is smeared with bird-lime

Figure as that of a paddy stalk.

Hoi... kiw....

10. *Ah...dohkha ha Nanpalok – 2 sien*

Ki la ngiah ka bam shana

Ba la bun eh ka thok

Bad la bun nongshet kylla.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah.....fishes at Nanpalok[20] – 2 times

Are fed up of eating grams

Due to too much of cheats

And too many traitors.

Hoi.... kiw....

In present day society, very few people are free from corruption be it in an overt or covert manner. Corruption has now become one of the main hindrances in bringing development for the people and the society where they live. This is why many are suffering from unemployment, and lack of everything in their daily life. In

[19] A small rupee denomination.
[20] Popularly known as Ward's lake.

this State too, circumstances are the same. Innocent people are fed up of the cheats and lies they get from the authorities. They are the one who suffer; this sentiment is shown to be echoed even by the fishes at Wards Lake, in Shillong who are fed up of eating the grams fed to them. They never get a chance to taste different foods and their entire lives consist of waiting for a time to be caught and be served as food for others. Feelings of insecurity include the fear among the people that the State will either be sold off to outsiders in exchange to money by their leaders, or its children will become slaves in their own land.

11. *Ah...ka dur ha ka lama – 2 sien*

    I shongkun ka bom Khasi

    Ba la biang pylla bha

    Bad ka seng ka UDP.

    Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... picture in a flag – 2 times

Solemn is the Khasi drum

Perfect in balance with

The U D P.

Hoi .....kiw....

12. *Ah...ban bam dohkha dang slem – 2 sien*

    Ia u shiah ba kin kyntait

Ha sngap pat ki byrngem

Kum u khla ba don dak mait.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... still slow in eating fish – 2 times

To take out the bones from it

But listen to their threats

As that of a wounded tiger.

Hoi.... kiw....

13. *Ah...u thapbasin ha ngap – 2 sien*

Ba ki rang ki ju iapbieit

Kynduh para rangbah

Ngin iamait oh khlem jingriej

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... a mole in a cheek – 2 times

That male always admire

When gentlemen meet

We will fight with courage.

Hoi....kiw...

To take out the bones of a fish during meal time, is really time consuming. The same applies to those who are new in the field of politics; they need time for their exposure as leaders who can stand up for the people. Yet some such persons never look at their own weakness, they instead move ahead daringly, roar like thunder and threaten like the tiger to get their victory, no matter whom they have to face in the game of combat.

14. *Ah...I doh masi kyntang – 2 sien*

Ba la ai ia u khilang

Nierbeit te ka jong phi

Ka nierlang te ka jong nga.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... meat of a cow that was sacrificed – 2 times

Given to a group

Let the big intestine be yours

While small intestines be mine.

Hoi.... kiw.....

15. *Ah....shibun ki tyngab lieh – 2 sien*

Ia kaei ki ap ngam tip

Ha kyndong ki iashong

La ki khmat ki ia khapbrip.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... many of the white crows – 2 times

What for they are waiting, I do not know

Sitting in a corner

With their eyes closed.

Hoi.... kiw...

16. *Ah...ynda kin mih nangta – 2 sien*

Ki plakrung jong ki ki dap

Nga ruh sha ing nga leit

Tang shata hi nga pyrkhat.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... when they come out from the corner – 2 times

Their pockets are also full

I went home too

Thinking deep for that.

Hoi..... kiw.....

Immediately after the declaration of the election results, the successful candidates are busy in trying to get ministerial berths with a generous portfolio which

in the colloquial language of the *phawar* is termed ka *doh kyndang* (a string of meat), the big and the small intestines metaphorically denoting the shares. Many white crows which are sitting in the corner and waiting for unknown things signify the politicians of other smaller parties waiting on the sidelines hoping to be invited to join the government. This is a true scenario as history has shown that coalition politics have been the most common feature of Meghalaya politics. Then the singer asserts that those white crows are the politicians who were intentionally bought for the involvement in corruption. When the white crows come out from the corner, their pockets are full of money. The term corner here refers to the corrupt government with its political leaders involved in their self interest with their pockets full of money. These leaders are like the dog that swallows its own vomit (*ban nguid iala ka prie*); what politicians do after elections is just the opposite of what they promised to do before the election began in a calculated strategy to win votes.

17. *Ah...wat haba klang ka ding – 2 sien*

    Baroh pyllun ki iashong

    Sawa kynsan ka ksing

    Ki kyiuh khriat kum ha por tlang.

    Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... even in a flame of fire – 2 times

Together they all sat

Suddenly the drum sounded

They all shiver as if it's winter.

Hoi.... kiw.....

18. *Ah...hapdeng ka jingialeh – 2 sien*

Baroh lang ia rwai risa

Ka bom ngin tied tyngeh

Ha ka bom ngin iapyrta.

Hoi....kiw

Translation:

Ah... in between a fight – 2 times

All they sing and shout

We'll resoundingly beat the drum

On the drum we will shout.

Hoi.... kiw.....

The Congress party being the leading party in Meghalaya was earlier referred to as a burning flame around which all the other small parties sit around to warm themselves in a coalition government. While they enjoy the heat of the Congress, the UDP suddenly emerged better and shocks everyone (the other parties) that it becomes winter all over again.

Phawar II

1. *Ah...ka bom kat dang tied eh – 2 sien*

Katta ka nang sawa

Paidbah ka juh ka sur

Ha ka bom ki ia pyrta.

Hoi....kiw.

Translation:

Ah ...The more the drum is beaten – 2 times

The more it echoes

The crowd in one voice

To the drum they all shout.

Hoi.... kiw....

2. *Ah ...pukni ba kham pei phang – 2 sien*

U 'langkhun u rah shuwa

Tyngab ba shu kwah rhah

Shi syndon da u 'langkpa.

Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah.... A more perceptive vulture – 2 times

Carried the lamb first

But a greedy crow

Took the breeding goat at once.

Hoi.... kiw....

In this quatrain, the singer extracts elements from the fable of Aesop entitled *U Pukni bad Ka Tyngab* [21](a vulture and a crow). In the story, in search of food, the vulture is seen to be stronger than the crow yet he carries away only the lamb. The weaker yet proud crow trying to compete with the vulture tries to carry the he-goat only to find trouble in getting its claws stuck in the knotted goat's wool. The singer here likens the wise vulture to the UDP having the hope of getting only a few numbers of seats as the new party, but what they get is beyond their expectation. On the other hand, the Congress as a dominant party is referred to a greedy crow for the expectation it nurtures and the ability to achieve in a realistic way.

3. *Ah...ha jingiatan tyllai – 2 sien*
   Da ki tien ieit ki tien khroh
   Ka bom tang da ka sur
   U paidbah u la ianoh.
   Hoi..Kiw...

Translation:

Ah..... In a tug of war – 2 times
With soft sweet words they use
But only the sound of a drum
The crowd will all come.
Hoi.... kiw...

[21] Soso Tham, 1937: *Ki Phawer u Aesop*, p. 2.

During the elections, while most of the politicians lure the voters with kind and sweet promises, the UDP with the Drum as its symbol does not draw out voters with the sound of sweet promises. It takes pride to make use of the drum which resonates loudly and effectively because it uses the language that the people understand.

4. *Ah...phi ong ngan nai nongwei – 2 sien*
   Ban synshar ha ri Khasi
   Wad da ka juh ka sur
   Ban pynneh jingiatylli.
   Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah... you say no to foreigner – 2 times
To rule in Khasi hills
Search for the same voice
To be united together.
Hoi.... kiw....

5. *Ah...tang riew ka bom ding ding – 2 sien*
   U paidbah u ia mastieh
   Nongshun bym nud ialeh
   U ia wad ia jaka rieh.
   Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah...when the drum sounds *ding ding* – 2 times

The crowd jumps

Enemy who dare not fight

Search for a hidden place.

Hoi.... kiw....

6. *Ah...jingiatylli ngi kwah – 2 sien*

U khun hynniew trep 'niewskum

Oh sa shisien mynta

Ha ka bom ba ngin ialum.

Hoi... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah... solidarity we want – 2 times

Children of seven huts

Oh once more now

To the drum we will gather.

Hoi.... kiw....

The Indian National Congress used to be perceived as a non-tribal party for reasons of its origins especially during the early years of its entry into the Khasi and Jaintia Hills (though its candidates usually are Khasis). However, this has not stopped it from capturing power during elections usually because of division in the

ranks of the so-called regional parties. Here the UDP by using *phawar* as its mouthpiece for its election propaganda calls other regional parties to join hands in one voice i.e. solidarity. There is no other way to free themselves from foreign rule (*synshar nongwei*), (here foreign rule implies the Congress Party and its High Command) except to be united with one aim and that is self administration.

7. *Ah... shano ki tyngablieh – 2 sien*

   Bala shah tap khiew ranei

   Ynda la ia wad bha

   Ha byrni rnga du khatei.

   Hoi..kiw.

Translation:

Ah... where are the white crows – 2 times

Those were covered in a black earthen pot

When searched for, properly

We found in a charcoal sack.

Hoi.... kiw....

This *phawar* uses the Khasi oral narrative of how the bull lost its upper teeth and the white crow that turns black, to make a point. The etiological tale is about when the world was young, God the creator sent the bull his messenger to pass a sacred message to human beings that he would cook only one grain of rice for his meals; man would live live peacefully without any illness. But the crow that was

jealous of the bull decoyed the bull by changing the sentence i.e. from a piece of rice to a potfull of rice and that he shall live a miserable life. The bull forgot God's message and remembered only the crow's words. God was so annoyed with the bull and hit its upper teeth with his golden staff, and then he took the crow and put it inside the black earthen pot. From that time the bull lost its upper teeth and the crow became black.

Metaphorically, here the white crow stands the losing Congress candidates that turn their fate upside down because of their unfulfilled promises. The charcoal sack refers to their weakness.

8. *Ah...ka bom tang shu la tied – 2 sien*

   Ding ding ba ka sawa

   Syngkhap ka tangmuri

   Ka kynshaw ban hap tara.

   Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Ah... When the drum is beaten – 2 times

Ding ding it sounds

Accompanied by a flute

And cymbal to make the rhyme.

Hoi... kiw...

Observing the above lines, the term 'metafolklore' (a term coined by Alan Dundes) may be applied i.e. music about musical instruments. The singer having used *phawar* as part of folklore (which is a traditional poetic creation of the Khasis), at the same time tells the significance of the three traditional musical instruments viz. the Drum (*bom*), the Flute (*tangmuri*) and the cymbal (*kynshaw*) in the Khasi context that are used together to match the rhyme.

9. *Ah...Katne ngi iashad lang – 2 sien*
   Ha ryngkat ka rwai Phawar
   Ka bom te tang ka bom
   Ha u paid Khasi baiar.
   Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... We dance together – 2 times
Together with a *phawar* song
A drum is a drum
To the entire Khasis.
Hoi.... kiw....

10. *Ah ... Ka bom te ha ka bom – 2 sien*
    U paidbah u ia risa
    La kum u khiew ba dap
    Ym kum u khiew ba suda

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... The drum! Oh the drum! – 2 times

The crowd shouts

Like a full vessel

Not an empty one.

Hoi.... kiw....

11. *Ah...ka syep ruh la ka mih – 2 sien*

Tangba klet noh jingsngewsih

Ka bom ha ri khasi

Kum tiewkulab sieng iwbih

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... even if sweat drops – 2 times

To forget all the worries

The drum in the Khasi hills

Like a rose it fragrance.

Hoi.... kiw....

The lines above shows the strong attachment of the drum to the Khasi in the sense that it used in almost every traditional occasion, e.g. dances, hunting, village

proclamation and many others. Here, a well known English proverb 'empty vessel sounds more' is also used. The full loaded vessel here refers to the UDP whereas, the empty one refers to its opponents who are always good for nothing.

12. *Ah ...tymmen bym lah iaid shuh – 2 sien*

    Tang shu iohsmgew ia ka bom

    Shu joit la ka iaid kyiuh

    Ban ia shad ban ia kyriuh

    Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... An old man who can walk no more – 2 times

When he hears the drum beats

Up he stands and walks

To dance and stamp his feet

Hoi....kiw....

13. *Ah ...tymmen i ba shyrhaw – 2 sien*

    Ha ka bom te i pyrta

    Tang ban ieng la ka daw

    Ka tyngam ka heh shisha

    Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah...a toothless old man – 2 times

To the drum he shouts

So that luck prevails

His voice is really great.

Hoi...kiw....

For casting the votes there is no age limit for the old to exercise their vote, but campaigning is not an easy task for them to do so due to their physical weakness. However, the sounds of the drum beats arouse even the aged to actively take part in the campaign.

14. *Ah ...samla pat ki sngew khain – 2 sien*

Ba sngewieit eh ia ka bom

O ha ka juh ka sur

Ki ia shad ki ia kyrniom

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah....young men filled with the arrogance of youth – 2 times

Too much love to the drum

Oh to the same voice

They dance and roll up.

Hoi...kiw...

15. *Ah ...longkmie pat bymsngew long – 2 sien*

Ban ia Phawar kum ki rang

Shu thapkti na kyndong

Tang katta hi ka la biang

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah… women who could not compete – 2 times

To sing *phawar* like the youth

Just clap their hands at the corner

And that is more than enough.

Hoi...kiw...

16. *Ah...longkpa ba kham sngewthuh – 2 sien*

Ki shu wiat rymmuin harud

Tang poi pat ha rynsan

Kum u khla ki ia kyrhuh

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah… matured gentlemen – 2 times

Aside they stand and smile

But once they reach to the stage

Like a tiger they will roar.

Hoi... kiw....

17. *Ah ...thei lud ban kham shongshit – 2 sien*

Ha ka bom ki pyrta lang

Shiphang shiphang ki rieh

Sngew lehrain ba peit ki rang

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... enthusiastic young girls – 2 times

To the drum they all shout

But time and again they hide

As they were ashamed of young men.

Hoi.... kiw....



18. *Ah ...longkmie kim lah sngap shuh - 2 sien*

Ha ka bom la sngew shon eh

Shu jrain kynsan kynsan

La ki tapmoh ki kaweh

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... when women can no longer listen – 2 times

For their impression to the drum

Then all of a sudden

They sway their headdress.

Hoi...kiw...

19. *Ah ...tymmen da jingbitar – 2 sien*

Balei tang samla ban shad

Ki rah da diengduh nar

Kum talwar ki talain wait

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... old men were annoyed – 2 times

For only youths were dancing

They took their iron stick

And strike them like a sword.

Hoi...kiw...

20. *A ...khyllung khynnah shitda – 2 sien*

Ha lympung ym don bynta

Tangba shu shongshit lang

Ha ka bom ki ia pyrta

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah ....even small kids and children – 2 times

Though no role in the stage

But to make it more enthusiastic

To the drum they all shout.

Hoi.... Kiw...

Verses 14-20 talks about the enthusiasm of the supporters ranging from children to the aged. Verses 15 and 17 talks traditional gender specification in *phawar* where only male members were allowed to take a lead, while women can only follow them in shouting the chorus which is '*hoi kiw*'. It is evident that even today in any public occasion (sports, picnic etc) it is only the male members who would lead in *phawar* singing. The scholar has witness this in her field investigation during the inter-college sports meet organized by the North-Eastern Hill University in the year 2006.

The *phawar* also tells about the status of men and women in the Khasi society, where despite modernity in the society, Khasi women are still aware of their own status as compared to that of men. This is true in the case of *phawar* as shown in verse 15, that womenfolk find themselves lacking the skill of composing the *phawar*, even in the election where women are officially treated as equal in status with men.

21. *Ah ...kali ruh ka khynniuh - 2 sien*

Ba iashad ba iapyrta

Kam pher watla kan duh

Ha ka bom ngin ym kylla

Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah... even the motor shakes - 2 times

Because of the shouts and dance

No matter if it is damaged

From the drum we'll never turn away.

Hoi ...kiw....

22. *Ah ...man ki jaka baroh - 2 sien*

Ban pynnep ia la ki reng

Kiwei ki dang lyngngoh

Ka bom te ka la pynieng

Hoi...kiw....

Translation:

Ah... in each and every place - 2 times

Every one started sharpening their horns

While others are still unaware

The drum has already stood.

Hoi...kiw...

The last two verses tell about the strong faith of the supporters and members towards their respective party. It does not matter if the party loses or wins in the

contest, their mind will never change from adhering to its ideologies. In a game of bull fighting, the bull owners sharpen the horns before the fight. Likewise, before the election each party has to select their candidates for the contest, but while they are busy in making the selection for the right man, the UDP has already chosen the candidates surprising the other parties.

3. Seng Khasi *Phawar*

Seng Khasi is one of the powerful movements in the Khasi and Jaintia hills that was formed on the 23 of November 1899, for the purpose of reviving and retaining the traditional culture of the Khasis which was at the stage of disappearing due to developments and changes brought by the British administrators. There are four main principles of the organization and these are:

1. *Ka jingialang u kur u Kha uba bad katkum ka jingkhein kur khein kha u khun Khasi Khara, (*an assembly of kith and kin that follows the Khasi clan lineage*)*

2. *Ka jingwan long briew sha pyrthei ban kamai iaka Hok, (*born to earn righteousness in this world)

3. *Ka jinglong tipkur tipkha tipbriew bad tipblei,* (to know clan and family, to respect man and honour God)

4. *Ka jingngeit ha u Blei u Trai kynrad uba lah uba iai,* (the belief in the merciful omnipotence of God)

The Seng Khasi also celebrates its foundation day annually which they call *Ka Seng Kut Snem*. From the beginning, the Seng Khasi started showing its fruitful work, which later on bloomed like a flower in the Khasi Society. Its works were not only confined to its principles, but they even made great contributions in the field of literature so that it became part of curriculum in the educating system for the next generation to learn of their own culture through the teachings of the Seng Khasi. Jeebon Roy Mairom, one of the well known members of the society started the first press named, Ri Khasi Press in 1896 helping the society in printing most of the articles, books, newspapers etc contributed by eminent writers. Besides, the first annual Dance of the Seng Khasi called '*Shad Suk Mynsiem*' was started on the 14th and 15th of April 1911 held at the Weiking field, free morning school was started on the 20th may 1921 by Rash Mohon Roy Nongrum at Mawkhar which was later shifted to the present campus at Jaiaw and upgraded to High School in the year 1964. Again, beside the above activities, the Seng Khasi has also initiated to holding of the competition of archery as an entertainment for its members. This competition was celebrated yearly at Jaiaw, but due to some reasons the game has now stopped and the place was converted to a cremation ground.

The work of the Seng Khasi has spread rapidly reaching to all over the Khasi and Jaintia hills with its branches spread in almost every part of the Khasi Hills and till today there are about 200 branches of the Seng Khasi. Last but not the least, it

must be mentioned that, the Seng Khasi started its first pligrimage to the Sohpetbneng Hill to offer prayers to God the creator on the 20th February 1990[22].

Above all, the Seng Khasi also encourages the youths to participate in dancing the traditional dance and singing, specially the *phawar*, which is part of the traditional practice of the Khasis. The *phawar* given below was sung during the visit to the Sohpetbneng hill which was later recorded in audio cassette entitled *Ka Jer Ka Thoh* by Pynshailang L. Mawphlang and his partners.

Hoi-hoi-hoi-hoi-hoi - 2 sien

Hoi-kiw -4 sien

1) Ah ...*ka rwai bad ka phawar - 2 sien*

Ha u khun khasi khara

Ka dei rukom jong ngi

Ha ka kmen bad ka sngewbha

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah.... A song and a *phawar* - 2 times

To the children of the Khasis

It is used as their practice

In merriment and enjoyment.

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[22] O. P. Swer, (n.d): *Ka Kaiphod of The Seng Khasi.* p. 8.

Hoi... kiw.....

To sing and dance is part of the traditional lifestyle of a Khasi, but a song may be sung even in solemn occasions and hence there are different types of songs. For the Khasis, *phawar* singing important as it is inherent in the traditional culture. *Phawar* was not only sung to express happiness of some successful achievements, but it was also used as a mourning song to express the loss of some dear and near ones.

2) Ah ...*I thei na nongkyndong - 2 sien*

Sem dhara ba I tynnat

U ba bein la ka jong

Dei u ingkhong shyllangmat

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah... a girl from a village - 2 times

Is wearing a nice *dhara*

But the one who curse his own

Is no different than a traitor?

Hoi...kiw...

Dhara is the traditional dress of the Khasi women worn by Khasi women on a special occasion. Unlike the urban areas, rural areas are considered as places where the tradition is still maintained. It does not mean that the tradition is not followed in

the urban areas, but what we find and see in these areas is the existence of acculturation and so pure tradition is not maintain as in rural areas. It is a fact that everyone loves their own culture and tradition whatever it may be in any case. Here the last two lines talk about the love and respect for the culture. However, there are some people who prefer to follow and accept others culture by ignoring their own. Such types of people are referred as *Ingkhong Shyllangmat* and they are no different than a traitor.

3) Ah ...*u rang binong bishon - 2 sien*

Ha shap u khun khasi

U dei u saw shyrtong

Ha lama ka seng khasi

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Ah...a good and noble rooster - 2 times

In the emblem of the Khasis

He is the rooster with crimson crest

In the flag of the Seng Khasi.

Hoi...kiw...

Rang binong bishon in the Khasi context signifies a man who comes from a well to do family. In the Khasi dances such as Shad Suk Mynsiem and Nongkrem, we witness such type of male dancers through their dance attire. Their economic

status does not only reflect through dances but in the society as well through their daily life. Practically, every Khasi male is responsible to act as the protector for his clan, the society and the country. Rooster here represents *U rang binong bishon* for its close attachment to the Khasi religion and hence it is symbolically used as the emblem in the flag of the Seng Khasi. According to the Khasi belief, the rooster is the one who paved the way (*nongprat lynti*) for them. It represents the mediator between god and man since the beginning of time. According to the myth, it is the rooster that amongst other animals including man succeeded in bringing the sun back to the world from her hiding place which was a cave called *Ka Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang*. In one version of the story, in the dancing arena while she (the Sun) was dancing with her brother moon, insults were passed on to her by the other animals presented there and to escape from the shame, the Sun went and hid her face from the world thus bringing darkness to the world. Another version runs that the Sun went away to hide herself in the *Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang*, a place which she could not be followed, and as a result, the earth became shrouded in total darkness. H. O.Mawrie, writes, "it is the evil in the heart of man to see evil when it is not there. It is no wonder that the Sun should fly into a rage and make for *Ka Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang* to be away from U Hynniewtrep U Hynniewskum as it is the animality in him to entertain such a thing as to think that a brother and a sister should harbor such an evil thought"[23]. He further said that with the withdrawal of the Sun to the cave the earth was enveloped with total darkness which signifies man's spiritual crisis in its climax.

[23] Quoted and translated by Saratha Kharbangar in her article 'Dances and Festivals' in *The Seng Khasi*, p. 134.

The darkness of the world, wrote Bacchiarello "was due to the mortal sin committed by the seven families who presently live in this world or it might be a result of mortal sins committed by those nine families living in the sky"[24]. According to him, when man asked God about the darkness of the world, God advised that man must built an altar wherein to sacrifice the blood of animals and that man must respect and honour these animals. Then man called a *durbar* (an assembly) of all the animals to reveal to them this instruction given by the God, but it was found that none of the animals were willing to give up their lives for sacrifice. Finally the naked rooster known as *malymboit malymbiang* agreed to give his life for sacrifice but only after he was given his full dress which included head gear, gold jewellery and silk that will cover his body, tail and a voice that would be able to crow at dawn and dusk herald the arrival and departure of the sun. It was then that the cock became the one who acts as a mediator between man and God by sacrificing his own life and with its crowing brought back light into the world.

According to H.O.Mawrie[25], the reappearing of the Sun to the world means the re-establishment of man's reconciliation with God. One can safely assumed that the parable behind the *Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang* is the reestablishment of peace and harmony between God and man sealed with the covenant (*ka Jutang*). The main idea behind the Khasi religion is that man has to search God and it is for this reason that the *Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang* speaks. The sacrifice that he (man) made at the cave was to uphold the reason and to seek the law of God; the argument for the covenant was that man should bow down and worship God alone and when he placed

[24] J. Bacchiarello, 1995: *Ki Dienjat Jong Ki Longshuwa*, p. 79.
[25] H.O. Mawrie, 1991: *Ka Theology jong ka Niam Khasi*, p. 41.

the cock before the altar, he did that not as an offering but as a cleansing ceremony to rid man of evilness and to uphold truth and righteousness. The returning back of the sun from the *Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang* means the return of God's blessing.

The hiding sun here, therefore, refers to the Supreme God who turns away with agony from the world for the sins that man has committed. *Ka Krem Lamet Ka Krem Latang* refers to the place far beyond the human reach. The darkness covers the entire world not because the sun was inside the cave, but because of the sin that has entered into man and rule over his life. When man realised his own guilt, he began thinking of himself as a helpless being without God, i.e. he understood that he should seek God's forgiveness for his sins. For this, he has to search for a negotiator which he found in the being of the cock. A cock thus, has to sacrifice his own life for man so that man can communicate with God through the signs that can be seen in its intestines.[26] From that time till these days the red crested cock plays a vital role in the Khasi religion (Ka Niam Khasi) and is symbolically been used as the emblem in the flag of the Seng Khasi.

The unclothed cock refers to the emptiness of man's life to appear before God, whereas the fully dressed cock would refers to man wih his full ceremonial dress dancing before God infront of the altar. The headgear symbolises *ka spong* (turban), the tail symbolises *symphiah* (a kind of whisk), gizzard (*khmi*) stands for *ka iarong ka muna* (carier), the feathers stands for *ka stieh ka wait* (a shield and dao), and feathers inside the wings stands for the dress. Symbolically, all these represent the dancing attire of man from head to toe.

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[26] H.O. Mawrie, [1972(1997)]: *Ka Pyrkhat u Khasi*, p. 11.

4) Ah ...*ka ksiar bad ka rupa – 2 sien*

Ha lympung ngi ju pyni

Tangmuri ka nakra

Ha ka shad u khun khasi

Hoi.... Kiw....

Translation:

Ah... gold and silver -2 times

Are displayed while dancing

Together with the *Tangmuri* and the big drum

At the dances of the Khasis.

Hoi... kiw.....

5) Ah ...*waitlam bad u symphiah -2 sien*

La ka khor la ka dahra

Ki riam ba I shongkun

Dei matti jong u long shwa

Hoi... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah... a sword and a whisk- 2 times

Good attire and a *dhara*

They are the solemn dresses

That belongs to our ancestors.

Hoi... kiw...

As an art form, dance can never be divorced from music as these two go hand in hand depending on each other. Similarly, music is always associated with Khasi dances too, and the instruments that are frequently used during dances are *tangmuri* (flute) and *ka nakra* (drum). The attire includes gold and silver, besides the *dhara*, the crown either made of gold or silver and other jewellery for female dancers while for males it includes a dhoti made of silk (*dhara*), a sleeveless coat adorned with silver, a silver quiver, a sword and a whisk. All these dresses are the property of our ancestors which like other cultural items are handed down from generation to generation. Khasi dancers showcase their ceremonial dress by putting as much gold/silver to reflect the richness of their culture.

6) *Ah... U rang binong bishon - 2 sien*

Ha shap u khun khasi

U dei u saw shyrtong

Ha lama ka seng khasi

Hoi...kiw...

Translation:

Ah...a good and noble rooster - 2 times

In the emblem of the Khasis

He is the rooster with purple crest

In the flag of the Seng Khasi.

Hoi ...kiw...

7) *Ah...khohwah jong I kongdeng- 2 sien*

Ka jinglieh la kum ka shun

Ale ko para seng

Ngin Phawar ha ban da hun

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Ah... the legs of kongdeng – 2 times

Are as white as a lime

Come together all traditional organisations

We will sing *phawar* to our content.

Hoi...kiw...

Kongdeng is a pet name given to the daughter who is younger to the eldest daughter in the family. Her legs here are described as white as the lime by the singer who wants to tell that the Khasi girls are beautiful both in face and in structure as well, and with their traditional attire it makes them more beautiful. He also tries to call other traditional organizations to join hands together with the Seng Khasi in fulfilling their mission.

8) *Ah...paieid ba kwah samla - 2 sien*

I khiroh te ia I bih

Jingkmen ba kat kata

Ngin ia shad ngin ia kynthih

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah...a grandfather desiring a lover - 2 times

He coaxes a young girl

So much of happiness

We will jump and dance.

Hoi...kiw....

9) *Ah... u syiar bad ka pylleng - 2 sien*

Ha ka shat ka khein ka khai

Ryngkat u symboh khaw

Ngin da wad ruh ia ka daw

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah.... A rooster and an egg -2 times

In the sacrificial offerings

Together with a grain of rice

We have to find the cause.

Hoi...kiw...

A rooster, an egg and grains of rice are used for divination of illness, asking for the cause of misfortune in a family, business, luck and others. Cock divination is called *shad syiar* and egg divination is called *ka shad pylleng*[27]. *Ka shad syiar* or rooster divination is done for asking queries to God that is most important than others, for example asking the cause of a prolonged illness of a person. It is believed that a rooster plays a major role in the Khasi religion, as a debtor that lays down his own life to mediate with god for men. The diviner keeps repeating the question till he finds the cause of illness. The result is by looking at the *rwieng* (intestines of the rooster).

On the other hand, egg divination or *shad pylleng* though not much different from *ka shad syiar*, is done in a different way. It is used for asking small queries such as frequent illness, luck of an individual or family and the like. A piece of wood called *diengshat pylleng* is used for breaking the egg. This wood is square in shape with a handle and thickness of about 8 inches. During the process, grains of rice are also used to with the egg on the *diengshat.* Then the diviner speaks and ask God to show the cause which he will see when he breaks the egg. The results are read and interpreted through the signs revealed by the broken egg. Like the *shad pylleng*, the diviner keeps repeating asking queries to God by breaking a number of eggs until he finds the cause of the said illness or any misfortune of the person.

10) *Ah...Para kur para kha – 2 sien*

Wat leit bud dustur thymmai

To ale noh mynta

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[27] U Rabon Singh, (n.d.): *Ka Kitab Niam-Khein Ki Khasi*, p. 19.

Sha la ka nongrim tynrai

Hoi... kiw...

Translation:

Ah.... Clansman and kinsman – 2 times

Do not imitate foreign customs

So come now together

Come back to our own traditional life.

Hoi...kiw...

11) *Ah...Ryngkat ka boh ka spong – 2 sien*

Ia pyrthei ngin ia pyni

Katno ngi sngew sarong

Ba la buh da ki longkni

Hoi ....kiw...

Translation:

Ah... along with a dhoti and a turban – 2 times

We will show to the world

How proud we are of our traditional dress

Because these were given by the maternal uncles

Hoi...kiw...

Development and modernity have been regarded as the main reasons responsible for the changes in every society. Khasi society is no different and it is not new to accepting these changes and developments. Because of the rapid nature of these changes, traditions are in a danger of disappearance. Yet, with the changing world, the Khasi culture still maintains its individual identity. The evolving society though has managed to adapt to the influence of modernity. Education, Christianity and Western culture are the main causes of the changes taking place. The singer, in this *phawar*, fearing the loss of his own culture calls to his compatriot to turn back to their own culture reinforcing belief in of the rich culture they are heir to. He also warns them from imitating other cultures which are new to. By taking the traditional dress of the Khasis, the singer hopes it will be the best way to remind modern day youths of their own culture.

12) *Ah... u syiar bad ka pylleng – 2 sien*
Ha ka shat ka khein ka khai
Ryngkat u symboh khaw
Ngin da wad ruh ia ka daw
Hoi... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah.... A rooster and an egg - 2 times
In the sacrificial offerings
Together with a grain of rice
We will also find a cause.

Hoi…kiw…

13) *Ah…Risang kynnied kynnied -2 sien*

Ba halor dieng kseh i kiew

Ngi pat ha sohpetbneng

Ban pynneh ia la ka rngiew

Hoi ….kiw

Translation:

Ah … a restless squirrel- 2 times

Climbing on a pine tree

Whereas we climb the Sohpetbneng peak

To make our spirit strong

Hoi… kiw….

14) *Ah…dienjat jong ki longshwa -2 sien*

Hangne ngi iohi kyndiang

Haduh ka por mynta

Ki,dang sah halor mawsiang

Hoi…. Kiw

Translation:

Ah… The footsteps of our forefathers -2 times

We can see here clearly

Till the present day

They still remain etched on the rocks.

Hoi ....kiw...

The Seng Khasi as mentioned earlier pays an annual visit to the Sohpetbneng Peak which was initiated from the year 1990. In this visit almost all of its small branches from different parts join hands together in offering prayers to God the creator, for blessing them through the whole past year and to bless them for the present year as well. This is done in order to maintain the essence of humanity (*pyneh rngiew*) and individuality amongst them.

With the existence of the footprints on the rocks on top of the hill, this codifies the belief of the Khasis, in their divine origins. They are believed to have come down from heaven to this world through a ladder tree that grew on the top of the Sohpetbneng peak. The tree was believed to serve as the ladder that connected the sky and the earth during the golden era or *Ka Aiom Ksiar*, and ladder is also called the golden ladder or *Ka Jingkieng Ksiar*[28].

15) *Ah..... Para kur para kha – 2 sien*

Ia jutang ho wat leit klet

Ba dei sa tang maphi

Ki ksiew paka u hynniewtrep

Hoi.... Kiw...

[28] H. O. Mawrie, [1972(1997)]: *Ka Pyrkhat U Khasi*, p. 11.

Translation:

Ah...clansman and kinsman – 2 times

Do not forget the covenant

Because we are the only ones left

Children of the seven huts

Hoi...kiw....

16) *Ah...kumjuh khynriam u pnar – 2 sien*

Ha ryngkat u bhoi u war

To ai ba Seng Khasi

Kan nang phuh bad kan nang iar

Hoi ....kiw

Translation:

Ah... the same to the Khynriams and Pnars -2 times

Together the Bhois and Wars

Let the Seng Khasi

Bloom and be widespread.

Hoi...kiw...

According to the origin myth of the Khasis, when the world was young, God the creator sent seven families (*hynniewtrep*) out of the sixteen to live in this world while the remaining nine families stayed back in heaven with Him. God asked man, while he was on earth, to bear in their mind the three principles given to them by

God. – To earn righteousness on earth, to know man and to know God and finally to know one's own clansmen and kinsmen. This is done so in order to keep the relationship between God and man alive. This relationship becomes a bond called '*Ka Jutang*' (covenant), and when man abides himself according to the bond between him and god it becomes an order called '*Ka Hukum*'. The singer, here, is therefore reminding his fellow men not to forget his own bond with god and the order that were agreed and accepted by the ancestors. He further reierates, as the grandchildren of the seven families, we should let others know of this by following our ancestors footprints. He also call forth all the four sub-groups of the Khasis which are the Khynriam, the Pnar, the Bhoi and the War to take the responsibility to helping the Seng Khasi proliferate its branches covering the entire Khasi and Jaintia hills.

17) *Ah...I'u hynniewtrep baieit – 2 sien*

Ba u blei u thaw nyngkong

Ia ki kolshor lajong

Ngi pyni ha seng khihlang.

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah....the dear seven huts – 2 times

That God made first

Our own culture

We will show at the Seng Khihlang.

Hoi...kiw....

18) *Para kur para kha – 2 sien*

Ia jutang ho wat leit klet

Ba dei sa tang maphi

Ki ksiew paka u hynniewtrep

Hoi.... Kiw...

Translation:

Ah...clansman and kinsman – 2 times

Do not forget the covenant

Because it is only you

The children of the seven huts.

Hoi...kiw....

Ka Seng Khihlang is a joint organization of the two traditional organizations i.e. the Seng Khasi and the Sein Raij of the Pnars. It was formed on the 9th of March 1981 with R.T. Rymbai as the president. Its main aim as a coalition organization is to help preserve the customs, practices, ceremonies of the Khynriam and the Pnar. The Seng Khihlang from the time it was formed began its work such as organizing a yearly meeting of the Seng Khasi and Sein Raij, organizing small and different societies called '*Seng Kyrsiew*'. In this annual meet people from different parts of the Khasi Hills come to participate in the meeting and they also display their traditional dresses, customs and practices.

4. Social Issue *Phawar:*

Besides the above categories of new *phawar*, here are also some *phawar* that were sung mostly by the people during their work time. In these types of *phawar* as in the others, two groups of singers compising of males and females will take part in the singing particularly when they take a break from work. These *phawar* are mostly teasing, with humourous banter thrown in, for entertainment. Moreover, the topics of these *phawar* are mostly on social issues regardless of their humourous nature.

Social issues *phawar* are those that deal with problems relating to the people, their lives, and the society. In this type of *phawar*, the bone of contention is discovered by stating complaints against things that are the carriers of destruction in the society. The *phawar* reproduced here, is composed by Silbi Passah. The composer here tries to point out the qualities and behaviour of those who are chronic alcoholics. She also tries to show the miserable life of many individuals and families that are caught in the entrapment of alcohol.

Ka Phawar biria ki Khynnah Samla

Hui...Hui....Hui....Hui....Hui.....

Kynthei: Ngi da iohi

Ngi da iohi ,ngi da iohi, ha iing pata ko Rangsamla,

Ba phi kylla, la kum U khla

Ngi da iohi, ngi da iohi ha iing pata.

Translation:

Female: We see

We see, we see, you young men at the wine stall

(we see) You acting like a tiger

We see, we see, at the wine stall.

Here, girls tease the boys for their drinking and their behaviour after they get drunk in a liquor shop. These girls see the boys who frequent the local stalls which are found at Iewduh (Bara bazaar). Earlier, in these stalls only locally distilled liquor was sold, but these days both country and foreign liquor are kept on sale. The price for these drinks in these shops too is very cheap, that is if one have only ten rupees in his pocket it is enough. This makes alcohol available even to young boys (particularly unemployed). For them, these local liquor shops are the only places where they can hang out and chat with their fellow youths.

Shynrang: *Wat kren seh Thei kumta,*

Wat shu kren sat ianga,

Ngam banse mo ban phla,

Nga leit shim ia I papa.

Hui, hui, hui, hui, hui...

Translation:

Male: Do not speak like that girls

Do not talk too much of me

I have to confess to you

That, I went to fetch my father

Hui, hui, hui, hui, hui...

Then the boys respond, and we see a negative reply in their refusal to accept what the girls said. They find it difficult to accept the wrong deed they do as alleged by the girls. Instead, they try to mislead the girls by giving excuses for their visiting the wine stall; trying to convince by way of confession for their innocent quality thus putting all the blame on their father. In the stanza, we see the condition of the father who according to the boy's confession after he (father) gets drunk cannot even go back to his own home and therefore, requires the help of his grown up son to fetch him home from the liquor den called *ka pata kyiad.* This is a direct song that speaks against what is happening in real life among some of the Khasi males who are addicted to drinking alcohol. Sometimes, such people get so addicted to drinking liquor that they find it hard to live without it even for a day. For such men, liquor becomes the first priority in their life, and his family and their needs and requirements are the last and least of their concerns. The responsibility of the father for his family as the head has to be taken over by the mother (his wife), who besides struggling from the hardship of life, has to also swallow all alcoholic abuse from her husband.

Kynthei: *Kein noh, kein noh, wat wan pynbieij,*

Ngi da iohi phi tan biri,

Phi tang shu i, phi rieh iangi,

Kein noh, kein noh, wat wan pynbieij. (Dei...dei...dei....)

Translation:

Female: Enough, enough, don't befool us
When we saw you smoking biri
You hide, when you saw us,
Enough, enough, don't try to lie. (yes...yes...yes...)

Smoking is one habit that most men like to have, ranging from the age group of young boys to those who are aged. Usually, *biri* is smoked by those with low income and sometimes the school students for its cheap price, whereas others prefer to go for either cigarette or a locally made tobacco called *'duma kyllain'*. This *duma kyllain* is mostly used by the males residing at West Khasi Hills, who duly got their nickname too as *ma kyllain*. This name though was at first shared only among the taxi drivers, but it has now spread to even institutions and offices as well. The city dwellers distinguish themselves from the rural west by this name. In the above stanza, the singer speaks about the male youths who hide themselves the moment they see the girls while enjoying their biri. The reason for this may be because they were embarrassed to let their two bad habits (drinking and smoking) be seen by others, or it may be they were running short of money due to drinking that made them opt to go for *biri.*

Shynrang: *Ka dur jong phi thei,*
La kum ka puri blei,
Haba phi phuh samrkhie,
I kumba phi rkhie iawbei.

Hui, hui,hui,hui,hui,....

Translation:

Male: Your face oh girls,

Is like a fairy goddess

And when you smile,

You smile like a young baby.

Hui, hui, hui, hui, hui...

Kynthei: *Ka dur jongphi te bah,*

Pyllun la kum u pdung,

Ani, wow, wow, wow, wow,

Tang shi klat phi sdang ban thnum.

Hajan phi shu iabud, hajngai phi shu ia siaw,

Ngan nai, ngan nai, ngan nai, ban pynrit la kum I khnai (Dei...dei...dei...)

Translation:

Female: Your face oh young man,

As round as a sieve

Oh! wow, wow, wow, wow,

With just a glass you started grumbling

Near us you follow, from far you whistle,

Never, never, never, will I be frightened like a mouse. (yes...yes...yes...)

It is a natural habit that boys will always flatter girls they meet, initially, in order to lure them. For instance, such admiration would be flattery for having beautiful eyes, smile, face as that of the fairies etc. However, in the response by the girls; we see that they are wise enough in making a choice for their life partner. In real life many of the young and unmarried ladies would prefer to get a good time in making a selection for their would-be husband; the choice they generally make is that a perfect husband is the one who is free from all bad habits, an understanding man, kind and humble; for such type of men only can make a good and happy family. While on the other hand, those who made a wrong choice have to tolerate by carrying on with a miserable life. Their life is no different to that of a terrified mouse living in fear of its biggest enemy, a cat.

Shynrang: Ko thei balei phi shu pasiaw,

Ka dur, ka dar, la shu sapiaw

O wow, wow, wow,

Uba ngat te la jew slew.

Hui, hui, hui, hui, hui,....

Translation:

Male: Why oh girls you whisper,

With eyes that appear like slits (apparently because of their obesity)

Oh wow, wow, wow,

The one who get will repent

Hui, hui, hui, hui, hui,....

Kynthei: *Phi ong iangi, ba ngi sapiaw,*

Hynrei mano shisha kumto kiba iasiaw.

Translation:

Female: You say we have small eyes, like slits

But who is the one who whistles first?

Shynrang: *Wat kren sarong ho thei,*

Wat tang hanga-mei

Namar haba ngi khwai mangi,

Phin ngat kum u dohthli.

Translation:

Male: Do not be proud girls,

Do not be so arrogant

Because when we fished you

You'll be caught like a small fish.

Kynthei: *Dei (hynriew sien) kein (ar sien), ko rang kynsai, namar ngi shu ia biria kai,*

Ban sah khana- ban ia bang ja.

Translation:

Female: Yes (six times) of course (two times), oh true men; we just play with you,

To make it a story - and to make our meal tasty.

SK: *To khie kata da ialeit suk, to khie kata da ia iaid biang*

Ngin sa da iashem biang ban iabteng iaki khana.

Translation:

Together: Alright then, you go home peacefully,

When we meet, we'll continue again.

KS: *Ka sngi ruh ka la sep! ngin leit phai noh sha la trep.*

Dei.....dei...dei...dei...dei...dei...

Translation:

Together: The sun has also set, we will return to our own huts.

Yes...yes...yes...yes...yes...yes...

In the remaining verses, the singer shows the young men as the losers in luring the girls, who they first compared to as fairies have now turned to be very ugly looking with flattened nose and Chinese eyes as if they cannot see things properly. They express themselves in such a way as if they have just had a narrow escape from the grips of ghosts (*lait ksuid*). Whoever is unlucky will within no time find his fate only to end up lamenting his bad luck.

These feelings and reactions of the boys are only after they have been refused by the girls whom they (boys) have once admired. These young men were

therefore very sad, but in order to hide their feelings they passed a derogatory judgment over the girls. These youths are not very different from the hungry fox that craved for a bunch of ripe grape on a tree; tried his level best to get them, but all in vain. At last, the hungry fox find no possible way of getting the grapes left with the attitude that grapes are sour (*Shish kaba jew, ban leh aiu!*)[29]. We also see girls being warned for their arrogant nature.

The song ends with a witty reply from the girls saying what they said was all in jest and that all was just to make fun to pass the day. But before leaving for their own respective homes, they assure the boys that they would meet again to continue with the *phawar* singing.

[29] Soso Tham, 1937, 'U Myrsiang bad u Soh Grape' in *Ki Phawer u Aesop*, p. 24. No. 36.

CHAPTER – II

The Radio as Narrative

Media and communication received a new impetus with the discovery of the radio. Simultaneous broadcasting of the spoken, taped word and music to millions of people in remote places became a reality and the seed for the establishment of a global village was sown. Because of its broadcasting potentiality the radio also helped news, information and education to a distant audience. Historically, the phenomenon of the radio was the result of many scientific endeavours. In 1895, Marconi perfected wireless telegraphy, working on principles developed over the preceding decades. Twelve years later, Lee De Forest in USA invented the vacuum tube which made sustained radio transmission possible. Wireless telegraphy and the radio telephone made rapid strides in maritime and other uses and received great impetus as a means of military communication and propaganda during the First World War.[1]

It was the invention (in1906) by Lee De Forest of an improved vacuum tube for amplifying the incoming signals, which enabled the human voice to be first heard over the radio. Within a short time radio and wireless technology developed so that in 1922 regular broadcasting began in the United States, Great Britain and other

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[1] P.N. Malhan, 1985: *Communication Media Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 59-60.

Western countries.[2] Such a broadcast enabled people to hear news as it happens, instead of having to wait for the printed news which came eight to ten hours later.

Radio is the only medium where performers were invisible to their audience. Radio is also popularly known to the public as the' blind medium'. The art of radio as was mentioned emerged in Britain and other countries adopting the same "public service" approach as a medium nominally addressed to everyone but actually resembling a kind of broad-based national journal with special sections addressed to specific interest and tastes some more demanding on the intelligence than others. The popular radio talk (a form of spoken journalism or essay, often excellently composed and delivered) was shorter and more informal in style than that of the "serious" or purely educational talk. Broadcasting offered unique opportunities for bringing the nation's highest intelligence into the living room of so-called minority audiences who were prepared to listen to concentrate exposition and argument[3].

The development of radio technology as an art form was thus dependent on the way it was organized and finalized. There were rich new fields to be opened up in drama, light entertainment and documentary programming, conceived specially for the medium, while at the same time some traditional art forms (notably stages drama and music) were transmitted with success. Fiction and poetry reading also became a staple part of sound broadcasting.

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2 B. Kuppuswamy, 1976: *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 190.
3 Britanica Encyclopaedia Vol. 18: *The Art of Radio*, p. 123.

Despite the entertainment power of television, radio has not suffered the collapse predicted by so many[4]. In fact radio is more popular today than at any time in its history. Listeners develop loyalties to stations and broadcasters, and it is used routinely to accompany many activities. For instance, we wake up to the clock radio, enjoy its companionship while working, use it as a background for a variety of activities from housework to driving a car in the crowdy road, and we fall asleep to its mellow sound. If radio suddenly disappeared, most people would discover how significant, perhaps even essential, radio is in their daily life.

In the early 1960s Harold Mendelsohn (1964) completed what is considered by some media analyst to be the most important study of how listeners use radio. He found that radio provides listeners with much more than practical information and general entertainment. People use radio as a tension release, an accompaniment for various moods, and as a companion. These points are significant particularly in the light of the fact that many people listen to radio when they are alone. As a companion, radio keeps people in touch with the outside world and brings that world into the listener's realm of activity. As a housewife reported in Mendelsohn's study: "To me when the radio is off, the house is empty. There is no life without radio being on. As soon as I get up at six-thirty, the first thing I do is turn it on".[5]

In this capacity radio provides some of the same satisfactions that people obtain from normal face-to-face conversation. Radio enables a person to be alone

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4 Robert P. Snow, 1983: *Creating Media Culture*, p. 100.

5 H. Mendelsohn, 1964: "Listening to radio" in A. Lewis Dexter and David M. White (eds.): *People, Society, and Mass Communication*, London: Collier-Macmillan. pp. 89-90.

without feeling alone. Unlike most television programs, which are taped, and rerun, or a newspaper, which is history, radio is a 'live' companion and an activity that involves a listener in a present-oriented social endeavor. It is this personal or, more accurately, interpersonal dimension that gives radio its special appeal. While music can be background companion, listeners also know that a broadcaster can augment that music with a personal touch. Advertisements tell prospective listeners that stations and announcers create moods and other experiences just for them, and since radio is communication directed at a specific audience in a similar face-to-face encounters. While Mendelsohn emphasized that radio gratifies certain listener needs, it seems legitimate to consider the extent to which the process of communication through radio is similar to interpersonal interaction. Further, Mendelsohn hinted at the interpersonal dimension of a radio when he remarked that radio serves as a "social lubricant." In making this observation he claimed that radio binds people together through common shared experiences and provides subjects to talk about with others. While he restricts radio to the category of a catalyst for face-to- face interaction, evidence will be presented that demonstrates that listeners actually interact with broadcasters in a fashion very much like interpersonal conversation. Radio may facilitate social activity outside the immediate listening experience, but broadcasters and listeners also create the image of communicating with each other[6].

Since radio functions much like highly specialized, listeners with these interests come to depend on particular stations for the content of their subcultures. As a result, a radio station becomes symbolic of a particular identity for the listener. In

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[6] Robert P. Snow, 1983: *Creating Media Culture*, p. 101.

contrast to television, in which viewers form attachments to particular station, radio listeners are more likely to identify with a particular station. A radio station is much more than a channel communication or a source of information -it is a dimension of self[7].

In rural areas, because the groups are small, communication by word of mouth was enough to keep a person informed of the events in the group. But a modern society needs a more complex communications system that can send messages quickly over long distances. And it was only in the last 120 years that man really began to overcome the problem of communicating quickly over long distances. Before that, long distance communication within a short range was made by visual signals like smoke signals, waving flags, beating of drums etc. While sound has the advantage of attracting attention, immediate visual signaling has an advantage of being fast because the light waves travel a million times faster than the sound waves. The invention of the radio in the last decade of the 19th century changed all this. Radio signals travelled as fast as the light waves and thus instant transmission over the radio was made possible unlike telegraphy and telephone which were limited by the electric wires over which they are transmitted. Marconi received the first trans-Atlantic signals in1901. Since radio waves are of the same nature as the light waves they could be reflected by suitably designed mirrors.[8] The latest development in the new devices for communicating at a distance is the invention of the television which transmits not only the audible signals but also visual signals into short wave radio

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[7] *Ibid*, p. 101-102.

[8] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976: *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 189-190.

signals thus producing 'a talking picture' which shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Entertainment programmes are the main focus of All India Radio (AIR) because of the mass appeal they have for most people. This is especially true from the viewpoint of millions of listeners. The most popular medium of media-communication in remote areas where the majority of the inhabitants are illiterate is the radio. Film music, tribal music, folk music, devotional music and light music are some of the musical programmes, which are regularly broadcast from AIR, besides the narration of short stories and poems. Particularly in areas dominated by ethnic communities, radio is the most successful mass media.

Radio in India -The discovery

Although India was a colony, she was among the earliest countries in the world to adopt broadcasting. Its manifestation was first in the form of an experimental broadcast of a special programme of music put out by the Bombay office of the Times of India in collaboration with the Posts and Telegraphs Department on 1st August 1921[9].

In 1927, when broadcasting began in India there were less than 1,000 receiving sets in the country but in the following three years there were nearly 7,000 radio receiving sets; yet the private company was not able to meet the mounting expenditure of broadcasting and it went into liquidation in 1930. In response to the

[9] P.N. Malhan, 1985: *Communication Media Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 60.

popular demand and the pressure of the trade interests the government of India immediately acquired the (191) two stations one in Bombay and the other in Calcutta and started "The Indian State Broadcasting Service". By 1937, the now familiar name "All India Radio" was given. Further, the broadcasting department was transferred from the Ministry of industries to the newly constituted ministry of Broadcasting and Information in 1941. Soon new stations were opened in Delhi, Lucknow, Madras and Tiruchi. Stations were also opened in Lahore, Peshawar and Dacca which are now located in Pakistan. Another development in this period was the setting up of the short wave transmitters in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (AIR Manual)[10].

Programmes

AIR's programmes have been diversified over the years. Today its Home Service programmes are transmitted for 3.91 lakh hours every year, excluding 1.76 lakh hours of Vividh Bharati programmes. In addition there are also external service transmissions which present programmes in 17 foreign languages and 8 Indian languages for over 56 hours daily to present India's viewpoint on important issues to listeners abroad. Radio is known as a popular music box especially of the common man. Formerly music and particularly classical music was largely the privilege of the princely families or music enthusiasts. Now all kinds of music - classical, traditional, devotional, light, vocal, orchestral and folk and film based can be enjoyed by anybody possessing the set. In all radio stations about forty per cent of the total broadcasting is devoted to music, music appreciation programmes and music lessons.

[10] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976: *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 190-191.

As a result AIR is helping to preserve and develop the musical heritage of the country. Its musical programmes also go a long way in acquainting the younger generation with our classical tradition and help them to learn music through radio. AIR is seeking to scout new talents continually through regular music auditions as well as annual music competitions. Young and promising artists of higher grades are regularly featured in public concerts as well as in zonal hook-up programmes. The recordings of these concerts are broadcast on AIR's network in the country. Eminent artistes as well as the more promising younger talents are presented in these programmes which are beamed on the national network. Since 1973 it also broadcasts a national programme of regional music which brings to the listeners the rich tradition of folk and light music of the various regions. Besides this, AIR stations put out sizable chunks of folk and light music in their programmes[11]. In 1957, The 'Vividh Bharati' programme was started in order to provide light music and film music.

Besides music and songs pogrammes, other programmes such as news, talks and discussion, and drama were aired through the AIR. Music programmes comprise nearly one half of all the programmes broadcast by the AIR. News programmes constitutes nearly 22 percent, talks and discussion 7 percent and drama 5 percent. The special programmes like those for rural people, women and children etc., constituted about one-fifth of the total[12].

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[11] P.N. Malhan, 1985: *Communication Media Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.* p. 130-131.
[12] India 1968 p. 131 as quoted in B. Kuppuswamy 1976, p.192.

Again, in the year 1952 'national programmes' were also included in addition to the above mentioned programmes that the AIR make used for its broadcasting programme. For instance, there is the national programme of talks on Wednesday night when eminent philosophers, scientists, writers etc., are invited to broadcast talks or discuss problems of topical interest. On Saturday night there is the national programme of music when great musicians from various parts of the country following different styles of music are invited to broadcast. These national programmes are relayed by all the stations of the AIR.

Introduction of AIR Shillong

Shillong, the capital of erstwhile Assam featured in the map of All India Radio when it prepared its Eight Year Plan to develop broadcasting in India. When the news spread that the Government would establish an AIR station in Shillong, it brought great joy particularly to the composers and artists because they now had a platform of their own to showcase their talents through this medium. Shillong has no dearth of talent and the Shillong Stations was fortunate enough to find talented singers, composers, script writers and other programme presenters before the inauguration of the station. To name a few, Hem Swett was a composer and artist and even before the inauguration of AIR Shillong. Khasi songs were recorded at HMV Calcutta and AIR Shillong broadcasted his songs produced by HMV and at the same time appointed him as the first Staff Artist cum Music Accompanist.

The AIR Shillong was inaugurated by the then Governor of Assam Sir Akbar Hydari on the 1st of July 1948 in the presence of the Chief Minister Shri. Gopinath

Bordoloi, the High Official of the Government of Assam, prominent citizens of Shillong, the Director General of All India Radio New Delhi, Shri Laxman Narayan and other Senior Engineers from Delhi[13]. On that memorable day, the first Khasi song sung was *U Sier Lapalang*, a group song rendered by both male and female members with the accompaniment of musical instruments played by many renowned musician of that time.

From the beginning, the programmes of AIR Shillong were well arranged and scheduled by experienced programme officers like Parimal Choudhury and Bhupen Hazarika who were both famous artists and composers. Their main contributions to the Station were the light and classical music of Bengal and Assam. The Shillong Station aired programmes as scheduled in other stations too which included Assamese, Bengali, Hindi light Music known as *Adhunic Geet*, Hindi Classical Music and talks by Government Officials, Educational programmes and etc[14].

Initially Khasi and Jaintia programmes were aired as composite programmes only and were broadcast only three times a week. But as time passed many changes were made to suit the audiences. At the start, all the programmes from the station were broadcast live with small studios and small transmitters and that too only in the evening till 1974.

AIR Shillong functioned under Guwahati station till 1969, when it finally gained the status of an independent station. During this time, efforts were made by the Station to cover programmes related to Khasi culture by collecting whatever it

[13] Basilica Nongpluh, 2005: *Radio and Folklore: Broadcast in India*, p. 1.
[14] *Ibid.*

got, ranging from traditional tunes to songs. The Station sent its staff to collect materials from the field for its programmes, and it was on one such tour that groups of the staff were able to collect and record songs like *Ka Iam Meikha* in relation to *ka Thep Mawbah* (the last ritual for the dead while depositing bones at *Ka Mawbah*). This ritual was performed at Krang village around the seventies when P.R. Rangan was the station Director of AIR Shillong.

The second transmission of AIR Shillong was started on November 23rd 1984, AIR Jowai (Local Radio Station) on December 22nd 1995, Nongstoin and Williamnagar (Community Radio Station) on June 2000. On October 2nd 1974, AIR Shillong started its first transmission from 7.30 am to 9.05 am medium wave and from 8.30 am to 9.05 am on short wave and the Regional News Bulletin in English of five minutes duration. Thirty minutes Children's programme was also started to encourage children to participate in songs, poetry recitations, drama, skit etc and this programme was being aired every Sunday morning[15].

AIR Shillong has also successfully been able to open up other new fields also such as entertainment, documentary programmes and even films. *Ka Nong*[16] produced by Webster Devis Jyrwa for instance, was the first Khasi feature film to be reenacted for broadcast through the AIR Shillong. The 'spoken word' programme which includes drama, story-telling, poetry recitation, and novel reading are also used by the Radio Shillong Station for its broadcasting programmes. *U Ngat Puri* and *Ki Ummat ha ka Sner* by Webster Devis Jyrwa are the two Khasi novels based

[15] Information collected from the the programme scheduled through Kordorlin Thangkhiew, in charge of Folk-based music, All India Radio Shillong Station.
[16] As told by Webster during an Interview.

on folktales and folksongs to be aired through radio. Translated into Hindi by Alma Sohliya, these novels were broadcasted both in Khasi and Hindi programmes from the Station and shared with other AIR Stations as well.

The station began enactment of drama by restoring the ancient art of the storyteller. Writers for radio next learned how to suggest place and time by word of mouth, accompanied by the impressionistic use of sound and music. Thus was born radio drama. The radio dramatist must address himself to the imagination of listeners who, like blind men, are unable to see what they are experiencing. For instance, *Manik Raitong* a Khasi drama scripted by Bashan Rai Dohling was aired from the station and it was also translated into Hindi based on the English translation by (L) H.W. Sten. This translated drama was broadcast through many Stations in the country[17] Radio has been highly creative in the fields of drama and documentary.

In addition to the above, AIR Shillong beams programmes for special audiences and occasions. For example there are specific programmes that are relayed for women, youth, students, agricultural workers, and rural people. *Na La Rympei* a programme on family welfare, a very important sector of human progress, is broadcast on every Friday at 7.20 pm particularly for women, while the Programme, *Na Lympung Ki Khynnah Rit* is meant only for children. These programmes are integrated with the general programmes as well as those meant for special audiences like rural folk, women, and youth.

[17] Basilica Nongpluh, 2005: *Radio and Folklore: Broadcast in India*, p. 2.

Governmental programmes like the Health, Family Planning, developmental activities of the Government (such as information about the rights and duties of the citizens) are also aired from the station for public awareness. Other programmes are broadcast specifically for farmers in rural areas only. Such programmes may be either in the field of agriculture, horticulture, pisciculture, cattle rearing, or irrigation and etc. These sub-programmes come under the programme called *Ki Saw Samoi* or Farm and Home programme broadcast everyday at 6.50 pm. These programmes aim at providing educational and informational support to the intensive agricultural and rural development programmes. They also seek to disseminate new agricultural technology to farmers in their local languages or dialects, besides covering other subjects like rural co-operation, animal husbandry, poultry, sericulture, pisciculture, fisheries and cottage industries. The station also presents specially conceived and co-operatively devolved programmes where instructions and guidance on farming is provided to listeners. In this programme lessons on subjects like rice and wheat cultivation, use of fertilizers, dairy, poultry, fisheries and nutrition are given. The evaluations of these programmes have indicated that the audience particularly those in rural areas, find them extremely useful.

The radio is becoming a good aid in school education. Most AIR stations (including Shillong) broadcast programmes based on the school curriculum to reach students in interior areas. Radio support to university correspondence degree courses is also provided by several stations throughout the country.

During 1976 onwards, the station experienced many changes in its programmes. It was at this period that all the staff of AIR Shillong went out to every

parts of the state (mainly Khasi and Jaintia hills) in search of hidden talents who are unexposed and have no idea at all to showcasing their talents through AIR. This was made possible by the hard work of the staffs under the guidance of Webster Davis Jyrwa who took over the post of Station Director of AIR Shillong on August 1st 1976 and became the first Khasi to hold this post. Being a well known musician himself, Webster was involved with the AIR Shillong right from the start. It was this hard work that the station can produce programmes on folk dances like *Ka Shad Thaing*, *Shad Shoh Kba*, to name a few collected from the rural folks who inhabit in the remote places. At this juncture Chosterfield Khongwir along with Webster had an important role to play in arranging these kinds of programmes so as to encourage the youth especially in rural areas. From a handful of artists that the station had at the beginning, the number had increased to such a large extent that it became difficult to locate the exact number of artists who were involved with the Station.

Folksongs through Radio

Since pre historic times, music was known as the universal language, spoken with rhythm and harmony and understood and loved by all. Each culture and nation has its own distinct style, form of music and the singing art. Man sings when he is happy, he sings when he is at work, he even sings when he is in a sad mood. Sometimes, a song is sung without the accompaniment of musical instrument too. This is done depending on the situation on which the music is to be use. Music eased man, stressed out by the burden of life; it lifts his whole being and makes him feel closer to his creator.

Talking about music in today's world we are witnesses to the fast growing advancement of different types of music and songs with the advent of electronic media such as radio, television, films, CDs etc. Similarly in the Khasi and Jaintia hills too, the influence of electronic media has brought about a sea change to not only music and songs but to other forms of folklore as well. But, no matter how advanced and developed the world is, there is one form of music which continues to live in some form or the other and that is folk music and folksong. In the contemporary sense there has been a merging of folk and popular music styles, producing what Dorson called a 'folk styles' that is in wide use in radio, television, and film and forms the basis of thousands of performances offered in commercially issued disks. This in turn, has affected the performance of folk music in rural areas. According to the published statements of performers of present-day folk-popular music, they now apply the term "folk" to any performance that exhibits any element linking it to a traditional folk style or embodying an element of protest[18].

As public interest grew there developed a class of professional performers of folk music, entertainers who earned their living, or a portion thereof, through the performance of folk music. In a few cases these individuals came from an environment in which the music they perform was part of a local tradition. Others, with no roots in folk environment, learned their songs from recordings of traditional performances or from each other. The folk music thus transplanted to a new milieu

[18] R.M. Dorson, 1972: *Folklore and Folklife,* p. 377.

and performed for different audience, is necessarily modified to some degree and loses its full traditional character[19].

Folksong in general, means a song sung by a group of people in archaic language and at the initial stage this proves to be true. The Encyclopedia of American folklore defined folksong as - traditional sung verse that exhibits characteristics shared by other kinds of folklore. Its natural performance settings are customary occasions of group work, leisure, ritual and play; its participants social identities remain overwhelmingly those of neighbour, kin, or workmate and are not displaced by the personae of singer and audience member; it is social rather than personal in meaning and function; it enjoys a strong and direct relevance to "real life"; it displays continuity over time along with adaptability to each context of performance; and it relies only on stylized form and reusable content[20]. But with the passage of time, these songs manifest themselves through composers who opt for the style of the composition of songs with traditional tunes and based on folk narratives so as to make it simple and easy for the audience to listen and understand the way of life of the people through their lyrical contents. There are different genres of folksong which we can broadly divide into: lullaby, nursery rhymes, narrative songs, chants, mourning songs or laments, agricultural songs, love songs, work songs, songs about the environment and etc. During the 19th century in the Anglo American culture, folksong scholars have embraced a number of categorical schemes in their portrayals of folksong genre. The schemes are: by topic (for instance, songs about war, and songs about thwarted lovers), by geography (folksongs of Indiana,

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[19] *Ibid.*

[20] Jan Harold Brunvan, ed. 1996: *American folklore: An Encyclopedia,* p. 292.

folksongs of the South), by origin (imported songs, indigenous songs), and by culture group (songs of cowboys, songs of the lumbermen) among others[21].

As an aspect of culture a song functions in many ways. It is universally an accompaniment and an accessory to a variety of social, political and religious ceremonies. It also often serves as a source of pure pleasure and as a means of achieving emotional release for the performer and audience. It also is an indispensable aspect of most ceremonial and ritual observances. In some societies, the efficacy of music (song) as a means of capturing magical or religious power - to ensure the success of a rain making ritual or to cure an illness - was as important as its aesthetic aspect. Songs are also an index of people's deep seated feelings, their aspirations, their troubles, their style of life and the life issues that are an important vehicle for social pressure and satire as a political statement and ethical pleas related to the most fundamental of human concerns.

Music and song played an indispensable role in the turning points of human life- childhood, marriage, and death. Here elaborate song cycles accompanied the wedding ceremony, and funeral rites involved long and complex dirges sung by professional mourners. Lullabies were and are sung to infants in both Europe and America. In the French Pyrenees there was an abundance of teaching songs that were sung to children to teach them to walk, to eat their meals, and to otherwise adapt themselves to community standards. The maturation of children was also served by play-songs, often imitation of adult activities. Chanteys and other work songs

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[21] *Ibid.*

directed the energies of workers or relieved the tedium of labour[22]. Scholars in the United States and Europe while collecting and studying the functions of folksongs, they found that social function is also evident in industrial folksongs, songs of miners, railwaymen and textile workers. These songs are often songs of protest that have been utilized in the struggles of unions and radical groups, particularly in the United States during the depression of the 1930s[23].

Now, coming to the Khasi context, it is found that music in the Khasi society plays a very important role as it is an inherent part of the Khasi's life that follows him from cradle to his grave. On the sweeping mountain slopes with their fast-rushing streams, the strains of those melodious chords echo onto the clouds and into the hearth of every Khasi home. For instance, *Ka Jer Khun* by (L) Skendrowel Syiemlieh is a song that depicts the traditional rituals followed by the Khasis during the birth ceremony of a child. Again, *U Pujer Puthoh* a song by Tyllising Kynta has an important role to play (besides the arrows, *mohkhiew*, *wait*, *prah* and *ka khoh*) without which the ceremony is incomplete[24].

Music also acts as a tool for imparting education to the children not only amongst the Khasis but almost all the ethnic communities as well. This is witnessed by each and every individual, for all know well that education begins in infancy; so is a song is sung to the ears of a drowsy baby in the safety of its mother's arms. Together with rhythmic beat of the heart, the gentle soothing voice transfers reality into a silent world of peaceful dreams as depicted in the song *En bad thiah noh ko*

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[22] R.M. Dorson, 1972: *Folklore and Folklife*, p. 376.
[23] *Ibid.* p. 377.
[24] Basilica Nongpluh, 2005: *Radio and Folklore: Broadcast in India*, p. 3.

khun composed by Mr. E.B.R. Wanswett and sung by Jurimon Risaw and the song by Helen Giri *Khun thiah shwa* are the songs that a mother sings for her baby while sending it to sleep.

As the infant grows into maturity, and starts socializing with friends, he is no stranger to singing folksongs as music has been in his mind since childhood. While working in the field especially in groups, the *phawar* is sung in good spirits to lessen the burden of the day's toil, teasing one another in a lighter mood, in a form of questions and answers. The lyrical content is always meant for lightening the spirit of working among them and does not cause any ill feelings in between them. As mentioned in the previous chapter, unlike the traditional *phawar,* the *phawar* of today's world is composed mainly for the purpose of entertaining the joyful life of the Khasi youths as depicted in the *Ka Phawar (rukom ia sin rngop ki samla nongkyndong)* composed and sung by (L) Skendrowel & party, *Ka Phawar biria ki khynnah Samla, Ka Phawar biria ki khynnah samla Nongsor bad Nongkyndong,* by Silbi Passah and others.

In addition to *phawar*, narrative songs too have their own value in entertaining and at the same time educating the children. In the past, the only way for the Khasi parents and grandparents to teach their young children was to tell a story or sing a song. This was usually done at night after meals, which was the only leisure time they had after a hard day's work. Family members joined hands together round the hearth listening to the story or the song that their grandparents narrate to them. These songs carry the rich Khasi folklore in them and are today used as mirrors to reflect the past.

Many composers today composed their songs based on folktales, myths, legends and short stories. To name a few, folktales about – *Ka Sohlyngngem, Ka Langwyrku Sang khyndew, Ka Tiewlalyngi pep shad, Ka Panshandi dem lorkhah, Ka Sngi bad U Klew, Ka Nam,* etc are being kept alive by songs rendered by the melodious voices of old and young artists of AIR Shillong. Similarly, songs based on myths and legends such as *U Khraw Jutang* (the cock, the redeemer), *Jinkieng Ksiar* (golden bridge), *Kshaid Dainthlen, Kshaid Noh Ka Likai, Lum Diengiei, Lum Shillong, Ka Shad Ki Laiphew Mrad* etc are now being archived at the AIR Shillong Station. *Ki Sur Tynrai* is a programme though which all these folk songs and folk based music are broadcasted. Whereas all the Khasi modern songs are aired through a programme called *Ki Sur Bathiang*[25].

Radio today is considered by media authorities and researchers to have proved its worth and utility both as an informational channel and a development and cultural activist. Moreover, it has provided healthy entertainment through its various light and humorous programmes. Its contribution in the form of transmitting useful and timely information, motivation and suggestions for rural development is conceded. One can safely presume that along with TV, documentaries and films, radio will provide an adequate communications umbrella to the integrated rural development programme. It can do this through its rural broadcasts feed back interviews, 'meet the activists and innovators' and critics' series, impacts studies, etc[26]. Thus, AIR has an active role in furthering Khasi culture, education, music and other practicing arts. The increasing number of walkman transistors and the growing

[25] Basilica Nongpluh, 2005: *Radio and Folklore: Broadcast in India*, p. 4.
[26] P.N. Malhan,1985: *Communication Media Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 137.

popularity of listeners are obvious indications, though one may concede that improvements and innovations know no boundaries in this challenging spoken-word medium.

The efforts made by the Radio in general and Shillong Station in particular in developing Khasi folklore and culture is worth mentioning. For instance, students need not consult story books which are not part of their school curriculum to read a folk story, but can simply listen to radio to narrate it either in the form of songs or story reading programme. In the developed society of today, the Khasis also are not far behind compared to other groups. Many families are trying hard to get themselves adapted to the modern societal norms. The furious fast-paced life prevents the age old traditions of the bedtime story telling. Students spent their nights doing their schoolwork while parents either help their children in reading or they spend their time watching television. There is no time to listen to grandma's stories or grandfather's teachings. Oral transmission of folklore material has thus almost disappeared from Khasi families. Radio has therefore, filled up the empty space in the family, taking the role of the third parent in imparting education to the children and in doing this it has proved itself as one of the most powerful electronic 'narrative' in today's world.

This will be proven by the songs that the scholar shall be using for the analyses of the radio as a narrative. The songs that have been taken are *Ka Ktien Sepngi, Ban Siew Kylliang, Ka Panshandi Dem Lorkhah, U Sier Lapalang and Ka*

Noh Ka Likai, taken from the book *Ngi Rwai Lang bad Phi*[27]. This book is a compilation of Khasi folk songs that were aired through Radio Shillong Station and collected and compiled by Powell Shullai. The songs that will be reproduced below are with his permission. These songs are purely folk narrative songs or to put it in other words, they are the narratives that are told by singers in the form of songs.

KA KTIEN SEPNGI: By Skendrowel Syiemlieh

Put kynbiein bong bong, ha rei chem. Kyndong
Nan bu leh jawnam yndai chide wein por mynta nai
Mynta lei ka por rem khaw sa bun biem da u sla pathaw,

Cho: Ah moina, ah moina bu chong ha ri bu jngei
(Nang chitom bu phei re mei sa jie lih ki khon) 4
Ka por mynta nai nai ka por dih teit khnai
Dih riem sim ha khlaw ho, bun wan chet sa-jie-pulaw
Phot khlaw ha phot diwah, khei ma dibot I'u bah
Phot khlaw ha phot tengri jii sa ia riem khli.

Ar ngut brew ha dom kynjang, ki ia biem sohphlang
Suki dih longtei ho, bad ka ia snoh ktei ktei
Tem duirtara dong dong khei bu ka juh long
Jii bu im ka bah mohkhew, bad ka biem da jia sohrew
Ha nai wein ha chnong kyndong jii mynta iapuh langstong

[27] Powell Shullai, 1998: *Ngi Rwai Lang bad Phi.*

Repeat chorus

Tem duitara dong dong ha rei cham kyndong

Hai iabot longtei longtei, b'u ia thot ia jaw kyrbei

Chiteng sngei ia biam jia sngei, bu ia dong da jia rew lei

Repeat chorus

Ka por mynta nai nai ka por dih teit khnai

Dih riem sim ha khlaw ho, bun wan chet sa-jie-pulaw

Phot khlaw ha phot diwah, khei ma dibot I'u bah

Phot khlaw ha phot tengri jii sa ia riem khli.

Jii bu duk bu raitong im da u ktung tyrkhong

Jii ha nai bu im miet sngei, bu ia chet da ja khaw khasei

Jii bun biem phareng enrei, lait umchit dohkjet masei.....

Repeat chorus

This is a song composed and sung by (L) Skendrowell Syiemlieh in the dialect of the villages under Mawiang Syiemship which comes under the district of West Khasi Hills. The singer describes here the typical rural life of the people of Lawbyrtun village. After a hard day's work in the fields, they reach home, freshen-up, partake of their evening meal. The whole family would then sit around the hearth and the eldest among them (be the grandfather or the grandmother) would start narrating a story be it a tale, a legend or a myth, accompanied by the harp or a flute

played by a male member. They would start recounting the story from the beginning and try to find out the socio-cultural life of the characters as depicted in the story to relate with theirs. Here, the story was taken from *Ka Nam*, a renowned Khasi folk story that was reproduced by Fr. H. Elias in his collections '*Ki Khanatang U Barim*'[28]. According to the story, Nam was a girl abducted by a tiger to his den in return for the fulfillment of the promises he made with her mother when Nam was not yet born.

In this song, the singer exhorts the virtues of *Ka Nam*, the legendary folk character and invites all the music lovers particularly those from rural areas to follow Nam's footsteps i.e. to play the traditional instrument so to keep the tradition alive for according to traditional belief, Nam used to pass her leisure time in the tiger's den by playing a bamboo wind instrument called *ka kynbiein (Mieng)*. He follows by hinting at the present-day economic situation where the cost of living has become so high that many have to survive on pumpkin leaves for their daily diet. Even in the rural areas where people previously eat only the rich 'red' rice which is grown in these parts, this too has become scarce and they can no longer afford it. Mostly, they have to substitute it with the cheaper 'white' polished rice. During such times, people would go to the forest to catch mice, birds and even eagles so that they can come home to make 'pulaw' out of the bird's meat with rice so as to make their dry meal more palatable.

[28] H.Elias, 1937: *Ki Khanatang U Mynbarim*, p. 9.

But then to lighten up and to show that in spite of so much hardship, people still enjoy life and bear any hardship that comes their way. The singer sings on about the joy of love and sharing.

The chorus of the song talks about *moina,* or the hill mynah which when taught, can imitate the language of man. This bird is popular as a pet and caged at home. Moina is a wild bird with its natural habitat being the forest, which is far away from civilization; even though domesticated, it tries to free itself from the cage so that it can return to its original home.

Ah Moina Ah Moina bu chong ha ri bu jngei
Nang chitom bu phei re Mei, sa jie lih ki khon-2

Translation:

Ah Moina Ah moina that lives in foreign land
How hard you've worked mother, while your children eats the white rice-2

Here, the singer does not refer the word *moina* to mean the bird; but his intent is to metaphorically symbolise the children who have left the village for reasons of occupation or in these days, studies. The reason for sending away their children for work is the diminishing interest in agricultural labour or if it is for study it may be due to lack of good institutions in the village. *Sa jie lih* or 'to eat white rice' means to go away from home in search of wisdom. As said, *'jie lih'* or white rice is not a local product, it therefore, according to the singer, stands for foreign education and he likens the payment of school fees to that of the price of rice. Parents, therefore,

who ever want to educate their children, have to really work hard to be able to let their children eat the 'white rice.'

The glow of education has touched the basic nature of the people in villages and countryside especially the generation. Rural habitants are coming closer to urban life and learning new values, and a sense of awakening or a growing consciousness for semi-urban standard of living is discernible in them.

Ka por mynta nai nai ka por dih teit khnai
Dih riem sim ha khlaw ho, bun wan chet sa- jie-pulaw
Phot khlaw ha phot diwah, khei ma dibot I'u bah
Phot khlaw ha phot tengri, jii sa ia riem khli.

Translation:

Now it is the time for digging hill rats
We'll go and trap jungle birds to make 'pulaw'
We'll follow the elder brother to the jungle side of Diwah
Then at the Jungle side of Tengri we'll trap an eagle.

During holidays, students' return home once again to enjoy their village life besides helping their parents at work. In addition to this, some young boys spend their time in searching and digging hill - rats so that they may get to make special dish called 'pulaw'; while others went following their elder brothers to trap an eagle and others birds. Diwah and Tengri are two well known villages, home to a variety of birds. These are trapped either for fun or for meat by the neighbouring youths.

Digging of hill-rats is one of the most entertaining past time of the cowherds. Digging of such hill-rats may take an hour or two and sometimes it takes half a day time to capture the rats inside the hole. After they captured the rat, they will prepare a fire, kill and peel its skin. To make it tastier, the boys used to marinate the rat with a mixture of salt and chilli then finally roast it till it is ready to eat. To these boys, the roasted meat of the rat is as tasty as the bacon. Sometimes, when they get more rats in a day, they take it to their homes for preparing *Ka Jadoh* at night, special rice of the Khasis.

In this stanza, we also learn that the art of hunting or trapping of animals and birds was taught to the younger members either by the father or the elder brothers as the singer said. Unlike the other tribes like the Garos and the Nagas, the Khasi village does not have a village - youth dormitory of its own; a traditional institution where youths were taught all their traditional arts and practices by the elder members in the village. It is therefore the responsibility of the parents to educate their children at their own homes respectively. Thus the home itsef acts as the institution of learning and elder members in the family are the instructors for the younger ones.

Ar ngut brew ha dom kynjang, ki ia biem sohphlang
Suki dih longtei ho, bad ka ia snoh ktei ktei
Tem duirtara dong dong khei bu ka juh long
Jii bu im ka bah mohkhew, bad ka biem da jia sohrew
Ha nai wein ha chnong kyndong jii mynta iapuh langstong.

Translation:

A couple on the hill top, are eating the 'sohphlang'
They slowly take a walk holding their hands together
We shall play the harp as we usually did
We, who lived in cultivation, shall eat rice made of maize
In the village at present, we are busy peeling the paddy's skin.

In villages, villagers use to cultivate '*sohphlang*' (a kind of edible root) usually is grown on the hill slopes. The practice of cultivating this kind of vegetation is similar to that of potato. Unlike potato, to cultivate *sohphlang* is easier as it needs no manure for its growth till the time of digging which is sometimes in the month of October to November. To plant *sohphlang*, the first work for the people to do is to peel off the skin of the selected area for cultivation called *ka langstong* with a hoe. Though a tiresome work it is, yet in most of the villages many families still prefer to cultivate sohphlang for the reason that it requires the simplest way of cultivation as mentioned above, and this in turn makes the cultivators earn more profit as compared to cultivating other crops. Like the potato, the skin of *u sohphlang* has to be peeled off before eating. *Sohphlang* is usually eaten together with a grounded til-seed called *u nei*, and without *nei* eating *sohphlang* will have no taste at all. One fruit seller woman when asked why she is always selling *nei* with *sohphlang* replied – these two are close companions to each other and one of them cannot go without the other. Metaphorically the saying emerges- *U Sohphlang bad U Nei* which is usually referred to a couple who are close and have contrasting complexions i.e., very dark and very fair.

The singer also speaks of the newly married couple up in the hill while digging *sohphlang* they are, at the same time eating it. The complexion of the couple in question is exactly as that of *u nei* and *u sohphlang*. This is why the singer sings of them eating *sohphlang* while working in their field. When returning to their new home, they hold hands as the area is slippery so that none of them will slide down the hill. This stanza also speaks of the love and respect that the husband and wife have for each other.

Again, in the song it is implied that food is a metaphor for economic status. The singer repeatedly refers to the village food in every stanza, giving almost a detailed account of the kind of rice, curry, and meat that the village folk eat daily. The economic disparity between the village lives to that of the town is also reflected when the singer refers to the town meal as the foreign meal (*biem phareng*). Their simple food is constituted mostly of either local red rice or meal prepared from Job's tears (*ja sohriew*) and dry fish (*ktung tyrkhong*). Nevertheless, these villagers never have reasons to complain, they are satisfied with what they have never expecting to get foreign lives in their poor condition; because they know very well that to get such good and expensive lifestyle they have to really toil the soil double to their usual work.

Tem duitara dong dong ha rei cham kyndong

Hai iabot longtei longtei, b'u ia thot ia jaw kyrbei

Chiteng sngei ia biam jia sngei, bu ia dong da jia rew lei

Translation:

Play the duitara'dong dong', at the rural field
Let us follow and search the footprint of a pangolin
We will then have our lunch prepared of oats.

Jii bu duk bu raitong im da u ktung tyrkhong
Jii ha nai bu im miet sngei, bu ia chet da ja khaw khasei
Jii bun biem phareng enrei, lait umchit dohkjet masei.

Translation:

We the poor, the wretched who survive with only dry fish
And as usual we cooked the local rice daily
No foreign dish we get, only soup of cow's legs.

In the last verse, the singer reiterates the poverty and simple condition of the villagers by stressing on the use of dry fish in their regular diet. They are not used to the variety of dishes of the town's people- their main course being merely rice, dry fish and broth cooked out of beef's legs.

To play a duitara, as said is one of the important pastimes of the village folk besides working in the field. Hunting, trapping birds and even unearthing the pangolin called *ka kyrbei*, are few of the other sports the people love to do.

BAN SIEW KYLLIANG: By Loren Marbaniang

To wad to wad me u sewbeh sewshiang

Ha law kynthong ki mrad ki shong

La kput barim ban siew kylliang

Ryngkat bynriew kynrad jong me

Iano men tieng men smiej men kyiuh

Dusmon iame-me dei ban iuh.

Translation:

Search and search you hunting dog,

Inside the dense jungle where animals live

An old revenge to repay back

Together with man your master

Whom will you be afraid of?

Enemies of yours- you should stamp over.

Tang ba me duk me rit lanot

Balei iame kin thom kin iuh sangsot

Mar para laiphew mrad phew mreng

Ba shong basa ha khrum ka bneng.

Translation:

Just because you are so poor

Why do they have to humiliate you?

Animal like them you are

Living as strangers under the sky.

'Ni 'La ha u, u sngew ka shong ka bor

Tang ba men rem u bat sakhi

Ia nia thok lamler shukor

U lapalang u skei u khiat

Shisur kawei juban thok ki khlei

Ha mamle ia me ban tylliat.

Translation:

A strong and powerful tiger

Proof he asked to condemn you

At the deceptive and words cheating

Of the the stag Lapalang

United as liars they all stand

At the party dispute they will chop you.

Toi me la rem ha bishar pap

Ha ing bynriew iame ka hok ka ap

Ha trep jong u shirta men shong

Sa shisien pat kan khie ka daw ka kpong.

Translation:

Though you were condemned at the sinful judgement

Justice is waiting for you at the man's house

In his hut you'll stay forever

Once more the goddess of luck will come.

Wat ieh kein me kynmaw ia I dien 'napnai

Ba sah raibi ka pap hyndai

Ki laiphew mrad hangno kin ai

Jingmeng sarong haki la biang

Haba ka thok kala wanphai

Da jingher iap kin siewkylliang.

Translation:

Do not leave then even the rat's footprints

For the sin committed long back

Where will the thirty animals go?

Enough is their pride

When their lies will return back

To run for life is their compensation.

Wad wad wad syrwet ban lap

Ka 'tieh 'Nampliang ha it ka ap

Wad thliew lin naduh dyngkhong

Bynriew ha rynsan un ioh rah rong.

Translation:

Search and search till you find their clues
A shield and arrow are waiting at man's kingdom
Search even all the places right from the root
That man will carry it to the platform.

Ban siew kylliang, 'To compensate' is a narrative song which is related to a folk tale "*Ka Iew Luri Lura*". In the olden times, all the animals used to assemble in a place called Mawber[29]. It was said that when the world was young (*mynba dang lung ka pyrthei*), there was only one language for both man and animal. However, these two different creatures shared the same language, yet they are not the same, for the reason that man as a social being has a culture which he calls his own whereas animals do not. These animals like man, did have their own kingdom with a king and a council of ministers. Besides, they also had their own market where they used to sell their goods. According to one version of the tale, it was in one such market day that the female dog was maltreated by the other animals which drove her away from the animal kingdom. The story as retold by D.T.Laloo[30] is as follow:

On the market day as usual the products were brought to the market by the different animals. The garments shop of the stag ran smoothly compared to others, the deer sold areca - nut and leaves and the musk-deer sold medicines. At noon time almost

[29] D.T. Laloo, 1996, *Ka Tynrai Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong*, p. 9.
[30] *Ibid.* p. 9 - 27.

all animals arrived at the market and began to rush about buying their needs, the elephant bought tobacco chafed and inserted beside its tusk; the tiger bought clothes. As the market was going on in a full swing Ka Dom (a bitch) appeared with her ware of Ka *Tung rymbai.* It had quite a bad smell and the animals in the market found it unbearable. They started to scold Ka Dom for what she had brought for sale. The female stag and the deer without a second thought alleged that Ka Dom had brought her own excrement to sell at the market. On hearing this, all the animals started joining hands with the deer and the stag to stand against Ka Dom. To humiliate Ka Dom, the stag stamped on the *Tung rymbai* and this was followed by all the other animals. Poor Dom tried to make the animals understand but everything was in vain. Soon the stink spread all over the market place and the animals dispersed.

That was the end of *Ka Iew Lurilura* but the Khasis still believe that in some deep forest it still exists. Evidences of such are seen by the foot print/marks of the different around certain drinking areas on the same place. Hunting is strongly forbidden in such place because they believe that even the tiger or the wolf never kills any animal in that particular place.

Full of humiliation, ka Dom left the place and decided to take revenge on all those animals that have maltreated her with their deeds and offensive words. The very next day, the dogs' clan assembled at Laitlyngkot[31] to discuss the matter. Ka Dom being a female realized that she could not take revenge against her enemies

[31] Laitlyngkot: This village is at a distance of approximately 25 km from Shillong, it is situated on the Shillong-Dawki road. The village comprises a locality called Chalynteng (this locality was believe that the Iew Lurilura happened).

without help. So she decided to request man to help her, which in turn she would repay back by serving as his servant. However, u Bngem (Dom's husband) disagreed with that because he did not want to live as a slave, but would rather prefer to fight other animals with his own strength. When he failed to convince his wife Ka Dom, he left the meeting and went back to the jungle. It is believed that from that time till today U Bngem's group i.e., "*Ki Ksew beh Mraď*" (hunting dogs) can follow every animal's trail by smelling the stink of the *Tung rymbei* left on the foot prints.

Ka Dom first went to seek help from all the *Longsan* (elders) of the animals who paid no heed to her. In fact, they were in favour of the stag and the deer whose statement was taken to be the consent of all other animals. When ka Dom could not get her justice, she finally went to report the matter to *Ka Pyrtuh, Ka Taben, Ka Rasong* and *Ka Ksaw ka kpong* (the four deity sisters of the Khasis). These four sisters after a patient hearing on ka Dom's tragic situation felt pity for her and agreed to help but for that ka Dom was to get permission from man as he will be the final judge to prove her honesty. Ka Dom then went to man to get the permission. However, man knew that he could not do any thing without the consent of *Ka Synshar* and *Ki Ria Hynthai,* therefore he asked their approval first. He was then ordered to call for the dorbar of all animals to be held in his presence. In the dorbar each and every animal was asked to be look out for their selves as Ka Dom would avenge herself on every animal. Again, in the dorbar, *Ka Ksaw ka kpong* agreed to take part in the ritual of hunting to be performed by man after every successful hunt. From that time, Ka Dom became the servant and close companion of man during hunting.

The above mentioned version of the story is collected from D.T. Laloo, whereas in the following variant from '*Ka Iew luri lura'* as recorded by H.Elias we are told that the main protagonist of the tale was 'U Bngem' the husband of Ka Dom. Again, mention of u Bngem is also found in '*Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang'* by Primrose Gatphoh in a verse form. Loren Marbaniang, in his song also talks of Bngem, the dog, from the beginning of the song till the end without mentioning Ka Dom.

To wad to wad me u sewbeh sewshiang
Ha law kynthong ki mrad ki shong
La kput barim ban siew kyllinag
Ryngkat bynriew kynrad jong me
Iano men tieng men smiej men kyiuh
Dusmon iame-me dei ban iuh.

Tang ba me duk me rit lanot
Balei iame kin thom kin iuh sangsot
Mar para laiphew mrad phew mreng
Ba shong basa ha khrum ka bneng.

This paragraph refers to man, the master of the dog who encourages the dog to take its own revenge on its enemies. Man instructs the dog to keep searching for the enemy's footprints together with him. He knew well that the dog, through its strong sense of smell could help him hunt. He recounted the tragic and shameful incident that the dog met at K*a Iew Luri Lura* as a method of instigation that

emboldened the dog even more to match its own strength with other stronger animals like the tiger and the lion.

'Ni 'La ha u, u sngew ka shong ka bor
Tang ba men rem u bat sakhi
Ia nia thok lamler shukor
U lapalang u skei u khiat
Shisur kawei juban thok ki khlei
Ha mamle ia me ban tylliat.

U Ni 'La is a short form for *Khla* the 'Tiger' who was one of the *Longsan* or the elder members of the animal kingdom. The tiger was supposed to help the needy and the weak in his kingdom, but instead of showing consideration to the dog, he stood against him supporting the false evidences put forward by the stag and a female-deer. The three (the tiger, the stag, and the deer) together strongly upheld the alleged wrongdoing done by the dog and suggested that he should be punished for its actions in return.

Toi me la rem ha bishar pap
Ha ing bynriew iame ka hok ka ap
Ha trep jong u shirta men shong
Sa shisien pat kan khie ka daw ka kpong.

Humiliated by such injustice, the deserted dog stood firm in his own right and kept searching for someone to judge the matter rightly but could find none. Thus the

dog decided to approach man who in his conscience was obliged to help the dog. Though man and animal are created by the same God, a man is different from an animal because he was created in the form and shape of God Himself. In addition to that, man according to the Khasi religion was sent to the world along with three religious principles by God the creator (*U Blei Nongbuh Nongthaw*) following which he has to live his life. 'To earn righteousness' is one of the three principles that man should follow and that was why he agreed to help the dog. The dog was grateful to man for giving him justice and in return for man's kindness, he offered his services to man and he agreed to stay in his (man) house forever.

Wat ieh kein me kynmaw ia I dien 'napnai
Ba sah raibi ka pap hyndai
Ki laiphew mrad hangno kin ai
Jingmeng sarong haki la biang
Haba ka thok kala wanphai
Da jingher iap kin siewkylliang.

Man, thus urged the dog not to spare any of those animals that had humiliated him at the market. He also instructed the dog to trace out their hiding place by following their footprints. The thirty animals (*Ki Laiphew Mrad*) would therefore have no place to run neither would they be able to free themselves from the vengeful trail of the dog. When sin returns, there is no way out for them except to run as fast as they can to save their lives. Sin here refers to the nemesis that follows the animals and which is perpetuated by the dog in his vengeance against the wild animals in general and the stag in particular. This stanza is also a metaphor for the role that man

plays as a social being. Every human being living on this earth was sent with some purpose to be fulfilled by him/her. As long as Man lives in this world, he has to perform his own duties as ordained for him.

Wad wad wad syrwet ban lap
Ka 'tieh 'Nampliang ha it ka ap
Wad thliew lin naduh dyngkhong
Bynriew ha rynsan un ioh rah rong.

'Search, hunt until you find a clue of their whereabouts', man tells the dog. He impresses upon it to hunt its enemies in each and every pit, big and small right to the root. Man also reminds the dog that he is ready with his hunting weapons; a shield and a spearheaded arrow are waiting for the dead animal at the country platform made especially for celebrating victory over the hunted animal. The first ever animal to be hunted and killed by man and dog as a revenge was a stag (*U Sier*) at Shillong peak (*U Lum Shyllong*)[32]. Thus, according to the tale, it was from that time that most of the domestic animals like the pig, cow, goat and others came to man to get protection from the dog's revenge, so that they will be free from the trap and most importantly to be free from their dreadful enemy, the dog.

Notes :

Iew Lurilura: The market of all kinds of animals. This market was at Mawber but some say it was at Mawtyndon near Umthli Laitlyngkot.

[32] D.T. Laloo, 1996: *Ka Tynrai Ka Ksaw Ka Kpong.* p. 29.

Ka Dom: the Female Dog.

Ka Ksaw ka kpong: the Deity of Hunting.

Ka Praisni: the Deity that helps the Khasis in performing the Birth Ceremony.

Ka Pyrtuh: the Deity that accompany to human being in the festive occasion.

Ka Rasong: the Deity that helps in earning wealth.

Ka Synshar: The mother of Synriang, the Pnars called it the 'Lisan'.

Ka Taben: A decorative Deity of the pnars.

Ki Ria Hynthai: *Ria* means four and *Hynthai* means women, so *Ria Hynthai* means the four sisters (*ka Praisni, ka Rasong, ka Pyrtuh* and the *Ka Kpong*).

Panshandi Dem Lorkhah by Teslet Pariat

Hyndai ki ong ka Panshandi,

Ka 'thei tipduk ka 'thei tip-sngi

Watla ka long tang ka rangli,

Jingbhabriew jongka kum ki kjatsngi,

Halor u khah shong ri bajem,

Marwei ka ud ka ap jingtngen,

Ka bta da u jangew jathang,

Jynjar b'ym lah ong haka ki ban

Dei u 'rang du dei u 'rang

Ia dohnud jong ka ula kynrang

'Rang rongphong dohnud ula bthat

Ban pynthoh-bria kai tang shi khyllip 'mat

Ummat khmih lynti naka ki jaw

U 'rang iaka ba ula wanshaw

Hynrei pynban long lehnohei

Panshandi shi-rta ban im marwei.

Translation:

Long ago, they said 'Ka Panshandi'

A poor but well behaved girl

Though wretchedly poor she was,

Yet her beauty shone like the sun's rays,

On top of the soft reed

She sat alone and waited

Countless troubles befell her

It was a man, it was a man

Who had undermined her heart?

A pompous man had broken her heart

Spoiled her innocent heart in just a moment

Tears of hope and sorrow rolled down her cheeks

Hoping he would one day come back to her

But all was in vain, and

Panshandi will forever live all alone.

Ka Panshandi Dem Lorkhah by Fredie Cholas

1. *Ka kong panshandi dem lorkhah*

   Mano seh iaphi ban iap iapli

   Iaka ram u rang ban siew ula lah

   U rang laka lad un wad

   Hangno phin pynkhie iala ka rain kat kata

   Dei h'u rang barabor dei h'u rang

   Leit jingsngewsih wan thied jingsngewbha

   Dei u rang, dei u rang dei u rang

   Haba ula bakla ka pyrthei ka ju map

   Ka bapli kan sah ka khabah jngemsngap

   Hangno phin pynkhie iaka rain kat kata.

   Dei h'u rang barabor dei h'u rang

Translation:

Panshandi who lay down on the reed top

Who will sacrifice a life for you?

Your lover has paid all the debts

He will now go his own way

Where will you go in such a shameful life?

It's only because of a man; it's only because of one man

Sadness disappeared, and happiness arrived,

It's only a man; it's only a man

The world forgives when he is wrong

But poor Panshandi will remain like a dying fish

Where will you go in such a shameful life?

It's because of only one man; it's only one man

2. *Don u wei pat uba bah khala*

Uta dei tang u lur Mangkara

Iaki riat un hiar iaki lum un kiew

Ban pynim ia u syntiew

Hangno phin pynshet ia jingkit kiba khia

Dei h'u rang barabor dei h'u rang

Ba kloi ban tip lem ka shitom shijot

Dei u rang dei u rang dei u rang

Haba phi bitar phin kyrhuh phi byrthen

Jingsngewsih ha u kam ju lah neh slem

Hangno sha phin shem ka jaka ba rieh tngen

Dei h'u rang barabor dei h'u rang.

Translation:

There is one ready to expiate

That is 'U Lur Mangkara'

He'll go down the steep slope and climb up the hill

To save the flower's life

Where will you unburden your heavy load of life?

It's only on a man; it's only on a man

The one who will share pains and sorrows

It's only a man; it's only a man

In anger you'll roar, you'll threaten

Never will he remain in sorrow

Where will you find a better sanctuary?

It's one man, always one man.

Teslet Pariat and Fredie Cholas both have composed a narrative song on *Ka Panshandi dem lorkhah.* Though both the singers' song is taken from the folk story, Pariat has simply narrated the tale in a song form, while Cholas was more poetic. He not only tells the tale, but he also talks about the nature and quality of man as a responsible member both at home and in society as well. In both the songs, we see that Ka Panshandi was deserted by her husband Lur Mangkara, (the brightest star) in the sky after discovering her real nature. Lur Mangkara, as a man was not only helpful, but also a good and gentle husband who devoted his love and life for his wife. In contrast, Panshandi was lazy (after marriage) so much so that she found it too heavy to even stand up from her resting place (the reed top) to even cook for her

husband. When Mangkara could bear her laziness no more, Panshandi was left forever and her husband ascended back to the realm of stars up in the sky. Shamed, Panshandi had to carry on all alone in this world and she eventually hid herself beside the reeds never to show her face to the world again.

According to H. Elias account in *Ki Khanatang U Barim*[33], Panshandi was a non-tribal maiden who used to visit a pool in one of the river in the border of the Khasi country. On reaching the pool, she would bathe and dive into the deep blue waters for hours. Though she was a young and healthy maiden, Panshandi was too lazy and never worked nor thought to save for the future. From morning till sunset, she would continuously bask in the sun. Besides her lazy habit, Panshandi was also a dirty woman, stained with mud all over her body from head to toe and also ugly in looks with her face full of pockmarks.

In the darkness of the night, the sky was brightened by the light of stars shining brightly and in the dazzling light of the silver star, Panshandi came out from the grassy reeds looked astonishingly at the reflecting light of the stars on the water surface. The light reflection of the stars was so much attractive in Panshandi's eyes that she would spend the whole night in watching the dazzling pool without taking a nap, and she strongly wished to meet the strange celestial beings. Thinking that they lived inside the water, she submerged deep into the pool but could not find them. The dazzling light of the stars on the water surface is a metaphor to an attractive luxurious lifestyle that every girl wishes for. Mangkara stands for a kind, handsome, wealthy and most of all, a hard working young man who is also humble.

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[33] H. Elias, 1937: *Ki Khanatang U Barim*, p. 73-74.

On watching this lonely maiden, Mangkara thought that she had no companion, so he decided to come down to the earth and marry her. And so he did, bringing together all the wealth that he owned in the sky. Panshandi was overjoyed with her new wealthy life and her gentle husband. She thought herself to be the luckiest woman on earth who had all her wishes granted. It is an unfortunate quality in life that whenever something very good happens, something bad should follow it. The lazy Panshandi in her new and an uncertain journey of married life, found herself to have landed in a different world. She saw the ultimate of a peaceful life on earth, she felt as if she was a queen sitting on a throne of wealth; she started feeling proud and soon forgot her earlier humble life. Having acquired what she wanted, Panshandi became lazier than before. When Mangkara saw this, he explained to her lovingly that she should be active and should conduct herself as a well groomed wife, but the proud and lazy Panshandi did not pay heed to her husband's advice. She even stopped doing the household works and completely neglected to perform her duty as a wife and thus broke the solemn promise she made to her husband, without giving a thought of how hard Mangkara must have worked to make her rich; nor did she even think of how sad he might be to have a wife like her.

However, Mangkara made every effort to change Panshandi's nature; he even threatened to leave her, but this too did not bring Panshandi to her senses. When every effort he tried to change Panshandi's failed, Mangkara got very annoyed that he finally packed all his belongings and ascended back to the sky. From that time Mangkara never came down to the pool again.

When Panshandi saw her husband leaving her alone, she begged him to return back to her but it was too late for her to repent for all she had done. Poor Panshandi could only wail in grief for her lost husband. She now bathed with dust and ate only the wild bitter herbs called *jangew jathang*. Panshandi had to face the saddest moment in her life, with her never ending tears running down her face.

Again, in the song we also learn that it is to a man that woman would unburden her heart to, a person with whom she can make a life with: it is a man who would climb up the rugged and stony way to save the almost withered flower's life, face most of the difficulties in life which a woman cannot. 'It is a man, it is a man', the singer says, the one who will be answerable for the life of his wife, his duty to be by her side that they come across, and most of all, he is like a tree that provides shade to the weary. The blunder that Panshandi committed was so great that she was not to be forgiven even by her own husband, not to talk of the world. It is believed that Panshandi lives till these days wailing for her lost husband.

In reality, Panshandi is believed to be a kind of tortoise that lives in the river and who lies down on the reed by the riverside, whereas Mangkara was believed to be the brightest star above the sky.

Similar versions of this tale were also found to be widely spread around the world particularly in the European countries. One such version is that of the '*Star Husband Tale-Type*', the most interesting of all tales found among the North American Indian tales as collected by Stith Thompson. There is a long tradition of utilizing and analyzing this tale by different scholars around the world. We are

indebted to Stith Thompson for assembling and abstracting the 86[34], known versions of the tale and for his detailed analysis, exemplifying a "historic-geographic" approach. His was the second analysis of this tale; the first was that of Gladys Reichard[35] although she drew on preliminary studies by others. In 1964, Alan Dundes applied his structural approach to the Star Husband Materials[36], and a treatment by Levi-Strauss[37] followed shortly thereafter. The actual number of analyses does not matter; what is important is that this particular corpus of folktales has been the object of analytic attention from several different theoretical perspectives. Not unexpectedly, several analysts have come to different conclusions about the materials, despite the fact that the materials themselves remain the same[38].

Thompson conducted a detailed study on the variation of these collected versions, he assumed that there was a single origin for this tale type and therefore came to the conclusion that in spite of all variations of this tale, its central episode is the same everywhere. One version of the Star-Husband Tale Type runs like this:

> A mortal girl finds herself in the upper world. There she takes the Star as husband. He forbids her to dig in a certain place, and when she disobeys, she sees her old home below and is seized with longing to return. Secretly, often with supernatural help, she prepares a rope and descends on it. This much of

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[34] Robert A. Georges & Micheal Owen Jones. 1995: *Folkloristics: An Introduction*, p. 139.
[35] G. Reichard, 1921, 'Literary Types and Dissemination of Myths'. *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 34: p. 269.
[36] A. Dundes, 1964, 'The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales'. FF Communications No. 195. Helsinki.
[37] Levi Strauss, 1968: 'The Structural Study of Myth'. *Structural Anthropology*, pp. 202-228. Garden City.
[38] Frank W. Young, 1970: 'A Fifth Analysis of the Star Husband Tale': *Ethnology* Vol. 9, No. 4. pp. 389.

the plot shows a unified tradition in all the eighty-five or ninety versions of this story which have been noted. But, within the area of its distribution, the tale has assumed several well-defined types by means of variation in the introduction and in the sequel. In one form or another, the story is known from the Micmacs in Nova Scotia to southern Alaska; it extends on the Pacific Coast as far as central California; it is extraordinarily popular through the Plains; and it even has two versions in the Southern areas[39].

Boas had made the point that a particular version of the Star Husband tale was found both in New England and among the Northwest Coast Indians[40].

Another version narrates:

Two girls are sleeping under the open sky and make wishes that they may marry certain stars. In the morning they find themselves in the upper world. One of the girls is disappointed, and when she breaks the prohibition against digging and sees her old home, she makes a rope and succeeds in returning. In this basic story there are some inconsistencies. Two girls go to the upper world, and only one returns. In about one third of the versions belonging otherwise to this simple form, only one girl is involved[41]. Some versions had a mention of child-birth by the girl/girls and adventures of Sky Boy on the grounds, still others had an account of the death of the girl/girls and etc.

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[39] Stith Thompson, 1946: *The Folktale.* p. 346.
[40] F. Boas, I89I: 'Dissemination of Tales among the Nations of North America'. *Journal of American Folklore* 4: 13.
[41] Stith Thompson, 1946: *The Folktale.* p. 346.

Reichard's analysis of the Star Husband tale was based on 51 versions from 29 tribal units. She addresses the question: Do tales diffuse? If they do, then the separable elements of the stories should appear in more or less the same combinations in different places. If, in fact, each tribe has a different combination of story elements, then independent origin of the elements is more plausible. She first divides the stories into "episodes," defined as "an expression of a single idea, simple in composition, but made up of still simpler incidents"[42]. She claims that the Star Husband story has the following episodes: (i) the wish for a husband, (2) ascent to sky, (3) taboo and its infringement, (4) birth of son, (5) descent to earth, and (6) death of mother. Not every story has all of these elements, nor are they the only ones found, but they suffice for her analysis, which amounts to a listing of the profiles of the stories from the various tribes. It is apparent that most of them have the main elements.

On the other hand, Thompson's analysis of the 86 versions from 46 tribal units is in many ways similar to that of Reichard. There is the same interest in geographic distributions, although Thompson's analysis is much more detailed in that respect. They both use a kind of story profile, and look for subtypes within the general profile, although Thompson is not greatly concerned with proving the fact of diffusion per se. Thompson is much more explicit about his interest in establishing the characteristics of the original form of the tale, and in delineating the variants that grew out of this over time. The difference lies in the explicitness of Thompson's

[42] G. Reichard, 1921: 'Literary Types and Dissemination of Myths'. *Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 34: p. 281.

method, with the most obvious consequence that he deals with each separate trait in detail, a procedure that makes him vulnerable to the charge of atomism[43].

Thompson's analysis is not only more detailed than Reichard's, but it differs in a crucial respect, for example he makes integral use of the precise variations of traits, such as the nature of the taboo that Reichard ignores. On the other hand, Thompson excludes the further adventures of Sky Boy on the grounds they are another tale while Reichard considers them as the same.

While Reichard and Thompson stressed their analysis on the episodes and traits of the tales, Dundes' analysis of the Star Husband Tale marks a radical departure from their work. Dundes is interested in the component parts of the folktale and how they fit together. Building on the work of Propp who isolated 31 functions in a study of Russian fairy tales, Dundes proceeds to isolate the functions, or as he calls them the "motifemes," of the folktales. Examples of such motifemes are Lack, Lack Liquidated, Interdiction, Violation, Consequence, Attempted Escape, Task, and Task Accomplished. In as much as American Indian folktales rarely have more than six motifemes, and there is little variation within a tale type, Dundes does not require a complete sample of variants as did Thompson. The Star Husband tale, for instance, illustrates Lack (of husband), Lack Liquidated, and Consequence, although, as it turns out, it is more complex than that. Indeed, Dundes feels that it might be equally well characterized as an Interdiction/Violation sequence because the wish for a star husband implies an interdiction on marriage with a supernatural being. In this

[43] Frank W. Young: 'A Fifth Analysis of the Star Husband Tale': *Ethnology* Vol. 9, No. 4 (Oct., 1970), p. 403.

interpretation the girl violated the prohibition by wishing for the star husband, and as a consequence goes to the sky with him. However, once in the sky world, there is another interdiction on digging, and this leads to a violation and a consequence in the form of an attempted escape. During the escape, there may be another interdiction with a similar sequence. The Star Husband tale is a six-motifeme tale and thus has more "motifemic depth," or differentiation in structural-symbolic terms, than many American Indian tales, but much less than European tales. This concept of motifemic depth, which Dundes takes over from Propp, is extremely interesting in itself, but it exonerates Dundes from the charge that his approach stops with a typology[44] .

The main intention here is to find out the socio-cultural role and practice of marital relationship between the Khasi society and that of the Native American Indian society as mentioned in their respective tales. When it comes to a question of customs and practices in the society, we may assume that ethnic groups do follow similar though not the same traditional practice. The practice may be part of agricultural work (such as *Jhum* cultivation), it may be part of ritual performance of people's life cycle, or it could be in some form or the other. But this assumption may not always be true because not all traditions are the same among the ethnic communities. For this, the scholar shall try to prove by taking the examples of the practice of marriage system followed by the Khasi tribes and the Native American Indian tribes.

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[44] *Ibid.* p. 405.

In the story of both the tribes as collected, it is found that unlike Panshandi, the girls in the Star husband Tale were seen to have travelled to the upper world for fulfilling their wishes i.e. to marry the celestial being, the stars. While in the Khasi version, it was seen that U Mangkara came down to the earth to marry Panshandi. It should be clearly noted here that since the Khasis in lineage practice follows the matrilineal system and matrilocal when it comes to the question of residence. Therefore it is obvious that the husband will come and stay at the wife's house after marriage. Gurdon writes in this regard- The most remarkable feature of the Khasi marriage is that it is usual for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house, and not for him to take his bride home as in the case of other communities[45] This is also proved by another version of the tale that is *U Klew bad Ka Sngi* (the Peacock and the Sun). In the tale, *Klew* (or peacock) goes to the upper world to live with his wife *Sngi* (sun). On the other hand, the tribes of the Native American Indians may have followed the patrilineal system and thus theirs is patrilocal residence. This is why the girls have to go and live with their husband in their in-laws house.

To avoid any misconception in comparing the tales in question, it is to be clearly noted here that while in the Panshandi-story and the Native American tales, reference is made of the second party as the 'Star Husband', but in the case of *U Klew* we find the celestial being i.e. the sun, playing the role of a wife instead of a husband as it (the sun) is believed to be of female gender amongst the Khasis. In the

[45] P.R. T. Gurdon, 1907: *The Khasis*, p. 76.

realm of the celestial beings, the sun is also included as one star, and this type of tale is with no doubt best to be classified as the 'Star Wife Tale'.

Marrying with the upper world beings (as represented by the moon, sun, or stars) or to put in other words a 'journey to the other world' as called by Thompson, is also found "on the Pacific coast from Southern Alaska too Central California, in the Western Plateau and Plains from the Arizona and New Mexico border north far into Canada, then in the Great Lakes area and east to Nova Scotia". Thompson adds that versions with this plot are also found 'in Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana, but that it has not been reported in the Southwest among Pueblos or the Navaho or Apache'[46] One very interesting feature found in all the above mentioned versions, is the disobedience of either the wives (Panshandi/ the unnamed girls), or the husband (Klew) to their respective husband/wife. In the Star Husband Tale, in both the versions, the girls were forbidden to dig a certain place, but they disobeyed and often secretly with supernatural help, they manage to prepare each a rope and descend through it to reach their own old homes. However, in the Khasi tales, neither Ka Panshandi nor U Klew were warned against any diggings, instead Panshandi was warned for her neglecting of works due to laziness, while Klew was warned not to go down to the earth. Here, we also detect the existence of taboos in the tribal societies. Taboos are meant to impose on certain secret passage in one's life; they have to be strictly followed according to certain traditions and are not expect to be violated. In almost every society, violation of a taboo is equated as a crime and violators will have to face punishment for that as we see in the case of Ka Panshandi,

[46] Robert A. Georges & Micheal Owen Jones: 1995: *Folkloristics: An Introduction.* p. 139.

U Klew, and the girl/girls they all were punished to lose the blissful marital life with their spouses forever.

Married lives of both the parties in these tales seem to have suddenly shifted from a smooth to a staggering journey, due to the discontentment of either of the party. The cause for this discontentment in life could be that there is nothing new left to experience in the conjugal life of the first party in all these four versions which finally made them lose interest in their husband/wife gradually; and impatiently waited for the time to get something better and new. In these tales, it occurred that the wishes thus made were not just simply getting married to heavenly bodies, but to also advent into something new which may be completely alien to the earthly beings. It was also found that neither U Klew nor the Native American girls had ever given a second thought of taking the journey to the other world for permanent settlement, but their only desire was to satisfy their wishes. Accordingly, every wish was granted followed by a deal between the two parties i.e. the wife and husband. This clearly indicates that to get something in life, one has to lose something and this 'losing something' could cost them so dearly so that it becomes incredibly hard to forget as we see in the case of U Klew and the women. The wish thus granted also have its effect on these 'poor foolish' wishers i.e. either a reward or punishment depending on what use one will make out of it. Thompson in his analyses of the Folktales found that 'the details of wise and foolish wishes vary a good deal, but the idea is

always the same, rewards and punishments, based upon magic, for treatment accorded to holy or supernatural persons'[47].

Considering Thompson's statement, we see that in all these four tales, there is no reward as such given to each of the main protagonists, for doing well in their married life. In fact, according to their respective husband/wife they were not worthy of receiving a worthwhile reward, but yes they were certainly rewarded for their evil-doing and that is punishment which was to be sent back to their original homeland forever.

The Star Husband tale may also be interpreted as dealing with the life-cycle of women, beginning with adolescence, and moving on to adult life, symbolized by the sky world, including marriage and child - birth, and ending with death, symbolized by descent from the sky world. This journey through life is beset by many barriers and pitfalls, and is traversed only with difficulty.

Furthermore, in relating to the structure of narrative content, we see a dichotomy between good and bad consequences of taboo violations in the society. In tales with the intermediary Interdiction/Violation motifeme sequences the initial taboo violation results in bad (becoming homesick and unhappy); whereas the second and some subsequent taboo violations result in good (discovery of the skyhole and escape). Where many intermediary taboo violations occur, there is often an alternation between taboo viola- tions beneficial to the girl/girls and taboo violations detrimental to the girl/girls or for that matter U Klew in the Khasi context. Tales with

[47] Stith.Thompson, 1946: *The Folktale.* p. 134.

the intermediary taboo violations might be seen as a symbolic attempt to dramatize conditional violations, or the relative "goodness" or "badness" of violating interdictions, depending on the circumstances. Tales with only the initial taboo violation may be seen as the unconditional danger in disobeying that was being exemplified on the narrative level by abduction to the sky world, homesickness, and unhappiness[48].

KO LAPALANG

Unknown composer

1. *Ko Lapalang phrangsngi jongnga*
   Kumba tyngshain u mangkara
   Khlem sngap ki ktien sangsot I Mei
   Men shem lanot haka pyrthei.
   Na snieh pyrthei shaei me phet
   Sa tang marwei nga sah khunswet
   Haba na nga kynrem me khlad
   Dohnud sngewsih nga im suhsat.

Chorus:-

WOW LA SHET KA TIEH PONGDENG
IAKA RYNIENG U KYNREM RENG

[48] George W. Rich: "Rethinking the Star Husbands", *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 84, No. 334 (Oct. - Dec., 1971), p. 441.

WOW! LA KJIT U NAM SARANG

IA KA MYNSIEM U LAPALANG.

2. *Ko khun nga ong ynnai leit kiew*

Sha ri khasi sha ri ki briew

Shong khop hala ri them ri thor

Bam da u khah bam da u nor.

Ngin im da u jangew jathang

Baroh shi lyiur baroh shi tlang

Pynban kynrem na nga me khlad

Marwei ha kwain nga jaw ummat.

3. *La shet ka shanam shalyngor*

Me pat ha kti u khaddar bor

Na me ki dum ki sngi u bnai

Ha nga kumno pat men wanphai.

'Nampliang dusmon ia me u dung

U 'Nam tabla u ban na krung

Pyllup me pat rangbah ryngkuh

Ummat aiu ngan sait khadduh.

4. *Kynshreng me phuh ha khmat I Mei*

Mynba me ieng hala rympei

Na lyndet khlur mynta me sngap

Jingud ka kmie ba shem ka pap.

LAPALANG OR KHASI LAMENT

Translated by U Oscar M. Wahlang

(a) My Lapalang you shine so far
A blessed hope, a morning star,
Unheeded you passed my tender cries
Thus fate has bid these agonies.

(b) On this wide world where hast thou gone?
Apart from you, I'm all alone,
You turn'd from me my Antlered dear
My heart to bleed the bitter tears.

(c) I've bidden you, son, not to come-
Up Khasi hills – this man's Kingdom,
Far from the valley not to roam
The reed will serve our food at home.

(d) Our *Jangew* shall be ever more
Our food for all the seasons four,
Yet all alone you left me Dear-
There in the plains to weep and fear.

(e) How from your birth you most I care
Wherein you walked and rest and there,

Where should you go- there should I too

Lest the foe's mischief falls on you.

(f) The ball of fate has roll'd your day,

A victim of Man's might to lay

The sun, the moon no more shall be

For you, how then you'll turn to me?

(g) A hooked arrow your body wrongs,

Confirmed without your side which throngs

With all your might, Oh what a fall!

What parting tears my head should call.

(h) In awe I stand I long and watch

Your growth which Night and Day despatch;

What face, what mother- pride surround

When to my eyes you're strong and sound.

(i) Dear Lapalang my only son

Where'er I roam my glory's gone;

But that the woe its deeds has wrought

This much which I have never thought.

(j) Yours what a bloom, what Keen delight

Which at our home have drown'd my sight,-

You'll hear now from beyond the skies

Your wretched mother's woeful cries.

Cho: OH! BETRAYING BENDED BOW
THAT SHARED TO QUENCH MY ANTLERED'S DAY
OH! THE BLUNT RUSTED ARROW
THAT SUCK'D LAPALANG'S BREATH AWAY:

U Lapalang or Khasi Lament is a song composed by an unknown writer that is based on a popular legend of the Khasis called *U Sier Lapalang*. The tale is about a stag coming from the plains to these hills and who was killed by the Khasi hunters. The mother wails at her son's fate at having met his tragic end in other man's kingdom far away from his home. In the song we find the mother and the stag, Lapalang (the son) as the only protagonists. There is no mention of a father in the story, and we can safely assume that Lapalang is illegitimate, or else he has an absentee father. Therefore, it is the mother alone who has to take the sole responsibility of looking after her young ones, searching food for them, sheltering and protecting them from hunters, be it man or other animals and from natural calamities. Normally, non-human /animal mothers could protect and care for their young ones only up to the time when they are grown up and can fend for themselves. They will then separate from their offspring and it may so happen that at times both the mother and her child will not meet each other again. But Lapalang's mother was different from the rest of the non-human mothers as we learn from the song. The Stag Lapalang was her only beloved son and she could not bear to be parted from him. She, as the responsible mother commits herself to nurture her only beloved son

in the best way she can. To her, he was the noblest young animal of his race; a strong and well built stag compared to others and so he was the pride of his mother.

As the stag Lapalang grew older, he began to feel dissatisfied with the narrow confines and the limited scope of the forest where they lived. *U khah u nor,* the only food available in the plain jungles did not satisfy him; he wanted new foods and vegetables to eat for his strong and matchless body. Every day he watched the beautiful green hills of the Khasis; and his stomach craved the taste of the fresh and delicious grasses up in these hills. Besides being young and strong too, Lapalang was restless and he longed to explore the world and to put his mettle to the test. He expressed this desire to his mother his longing i.e. to go up to the Khasi hills to seek the fresh and green leaves and vegetables to eat. His mother tried her best to dissuade him fearing the danger that might befall him. Reeds were more than enough to satisfy their hunger than the fresh and mouth-watering vegetables of other places. She lovingly told Lapalang that the reeds they have may not be as good as the vegetables he saw up in the Khasi hills, but they were sufficient and that they could safely stay in their own land. There was no need for him to go to a foreign land lest he might be enslaved by its people.

Too curious and eager, Lapalang was to discover the Khasi hills, 'the land of the gods, the land that is famous for begonia leaves in the world'[49] and so great was his confidence in his strength that his mother's warnings seemed to have no effect at all. Instead he consoled his poor and lonely mother saying that it was time for him to get his freedom, to discover the world which he had never seen before, and assured

[49] H. Elias, 1937: *Ki Khanatang U Barim*, p.59.

her that he would return to her very soon. So saying, he left his jungle home and his broken-hearted mother for the captivating Khasi Hills. The tasty begonia leaves that the stag Lapalang had so desired is representative of the longing for new trends of life, a life that only the rich could acquire. Lapalang stands for a strong, healthy and handsome but proud young man who is restless to discover the world and the excitement without being aware of his limitations. The mother symbolizes the difficulties and obstacles arising out of poverty which is again exemplified by the reeds. The charming beauty of the Khasi Hills shows the mesmerizing lure of the foreign cultural lifestyle on poor and naïve youths, who are easily influenced by such enchanting beauty. Christina Wanniang in this view writes:

> The 'begonia leaves' is a metaphor for an attractive, an exciting lifestyle free from the limits of 'the forest' where trees draw the boundaries to check the movement of the legs; free from the over-anxious care of the mother which ties down from his emotion and impulsive actions; the 'hills' instead, unlike the forest, would roll on and on and there will be no end and no limits to his movement and it will be only there where he will be the master of himself, breathe the fresh air, look at the newness of nature, listen to the silent breeze whispering, feel the majesty of his own being, and taste the freshness of a new life altogether[50].

On reaching the Khasi Hills, things at first went well for Lapalang; he found plenty of the tasty begonia leaves and other delicious grass to eat which he had never

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[50] Christina Wanniang, 1999: Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation. p. 55.

ever got a chance to taste in his childhood life, the reason simply being the non-availability in his plain jungle's home. Though it was an uncertain journey for the stag Lapalang, his strong determination to fulfill his wishes, makes him careless. In these Hills the stag Lapalang felt as if he had found heaven, placid and refreshing breeze wiped away the sweat on his forehead, he played and leaped on the rolling hills and valleys, lay on the lovely meadows, the cool and refreshing spring of the streams that ran over the rocks and quenched his thirst. The captivating Khasi Hills bewitched him and the begonia leaves that he ate for the first time were so tasty that he gradually forgot his poor mother longingly waiting for him at home. Loneliness did not beset Lapalang in the new world, since his mind was occupied by the enchanting new experience that robbed him of his allegiance to his mother. Selfishness entered his heart and soon forgot about the unbounded love his mother had for him.

This free and peaceful life in the new world for Lapalang did not last long and one day while he was busy searching for food; his cloven horns were sighted by the enemies. The shepherd boys who spotted him took no time in and got ready with their bows and arrows and the hunt began. Poor Lapalang thus had to face the battle of his fate, and being all alone, he had to fend for himself without any help. For days he kept on running from hill to hill, eluding and keeping his pursuer at bay. Hiding under a big banyan tree, like a child he longed for his mother's help and wise advice, and it was then that he realized why his mother forbade him from entering into the Khasi Hills. He had never thought that the promises he gave to his

mother will be his last dialogue with her, and he never dreamt that up in the beautiful Khasi Hills there awaited a strong battle for him to combat.

One fateful day while trying to escape and save himself from the enemies, he came down to the slope of the Shillong mountain, thinking he would be more safe when to his surprise he found himself in the midst of his enemies who surrounded him amidst a lot of noise. The battle Lapalang had to face was very tough, and the poor stag Lapalang could not hold up for long although he fought heroically. After a brave and desperate struggle for his life Lapalang fell on the ground calling for his mother to rescue him-

My dear mother, my enemies have pierced me,
Where shall I find you, when I've fallen here?
My world has ended, and my life too;
Your love oh! Mother, like an unending blooming flower!
While I a full groomed son, in the midst of the battle,
The world was in flame, and my soul was separated from my body[51].

Thus the noble young animal met his end at the prime of his life with a thousand arrows quivering in his body. It is his wish and longing for a better and fuller life that leads him to his death, true to the foreboding of his mother[52].

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[51] Translated by the scholar from Primrose Gatphoh's *Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang*, p.152, lines 360-366.

[52] Christina Wanniang, 1999: Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation. p. 57.

Meanwhile, Lapalang's mother who was left all alone by her son, felt even lonelier with the delay of his return and that made her heart uneasy. Every day she looked up to the Khasi Hills hoping she would see her son coming back home and prayed to the Gods of both the hills and plains to protect her only son as she could sense the dangers that awaited his unsuspicious mind. The delay of her son's return made her mother's heart more restless and anxious. When she could no longer wait for Lapalang's return she set out in search to find her wanderer. After few days, she finally arrived at the place where her son was supposed to be. On one of the hill tops, she heard people shouting joyfully at Shillong Peak, as if they were having a triumphant celebration. She turned her face towards the slope, and to her great shock she saw her only beloved son lying dead in the middle of the rapturous crowd. She now understood the cause of his delay; he was hunted to death by his enemies. On seeing this, her heart broke and grief stricken, she rushed after the crowd that carried her son's dead body to the platform for celebration. The brokenhearted mother cried and mourned for her dead son, who would never hear her cry again. The Khasis, who have never heard such a deep and painful lament, were shocked and to their great astonishment, their feet did not let them march forward but they stopped to listen to the mother of Lapalang. Her continuous cries were so pathetic that everyone who heard it could not control their tears together with her. Wanniang gives us the explanation of the cries of the broken-hearted mother:

> -as she went her loud heartrending cries were heard throughout the country, arresting every ear. This is the cry of the mother who loves her son so deeply in life as in death. To her, her son is as good in death and in life, and being so

special a son, she cannot leave him unexposed to nature without mourning for it. The heart of the mother stag is broken, beyond repair, to bits and pieces by the tragedy that her cries in mourning are so heartrending that every human being who hears it would not fail to be affected by the depth of such a love and everyone stands in awe of it in respect for her. Never before was heard a lamentation so mournful, so plaintive, so full of sorrow and anguish and misery, as the lament of the mother of the stag Lapalang....[53]

In olden times, the Khasi would mourn the dead by crying with tears in their eyes, but not in the emotional way that Lapalang's mother did. This demonstration of deep love and devotion of the Stag Lapalang's mother impressed the Khasis so much that they started comparing the lamentation of the Mother stag with their manners of mourning and discovered that their mournings were meaningless. Henceforth, they resolved to cry for their departed ones in the same way and thus from that time the art of lamentation amongst the Khasis began. The mother of the stag was the only one who mourned at the time of the U Lapalang's death and therefore it is the Khasi women only who would mourn for their dead by recounting about the departed's life, sometimes breaking down and weeping with the pain of loss. In the Khasi folk tradition, just as in the Greek and other folk traditions, there are only women lamenters be they the family members or the relatives of the deceased[54]. Similarly,

[53] Christina Wanniang, 1999: Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, p. 58.
[54] *Ibid.* p. 59.

Laments - or *complaintes*, as many were called in France - were often cast in the voices of women only; which were ubiquitous in sixteenth- century[55].

Lamentation or *Ka Jingiam pangnud* as called in Khasi is an expression of a great sadness performed by the most bereaved persons in general and female in particular in the form of either a song or poetry. Lauri Honko defined lamentation as- "Laments are poetry of final parting"[56]. As poetry is performed at crucial turning points in life, lamentation has been a central element of the culture of women in most societies. For instance, "In Ireland the custom of public improvised poetic lamentation over deceased persons by women is attested from ancient times and persisted into the twentieth century in some parts"[57].

In different parts of the world laments have been included in the rites of departure surrounding crucial turning points in life, such as marriage, death, setting off to war and so on. In most societies ritual lamentation is part of the role performed by women and constitutes a central element of their culture. In Ireland the art of improvised poetic lamentation by women was highly developed and persisted well into the twentieth century. As a poetic and song genre, -it is part of the Irish language tradition and is termed *caoineadh*, the origin of the English word 'keen'[58].

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[55] Kate van Orden, 2001: Female "Complaintes": Laments of Venus, Queens, and City Women in Late Sixteenth-Century France, pp. 801.

[56] Lauri Honko, "Balto-Finnic Lament Poetry." Studia Fennica 17 (1974):9 as quoted in. Patricia Lysaght: *Caoineadh os Cionn Coirp: The Lament for the Dead in Ireland,* Folklore, Vol. 108 (1997), pp. 65.

[57] Patricia Lysaght, 1997: *Caoineadh os Cionn Coirp: The Lament for the Dead in Ireland. Folklore,* Vol. 108, p. 65.

[58] *Ibid.*

In many societies women mourn for the death of their beloved ones by singing about the life of the departed i.e. by recounting every event of his life, and in doing so they sometimes break down and weep bitterly with the great pain of loss in their lives. It is also believed that a lament is the only song genre that has the power to soften every heart and even bring tears in the eyes of whoever hears it. Lamentation therefore requires talent for the lamenters to be able to affect the hearts of the listeners. Earlier, in the Khasi folk tradition just as in the Irish folk tradition, when there is an absence, or, that family members were unable to lament the deceased formally, the passage clearly confirms that semi-professional mourners who had no personal connection with the family might also be hired for a remuneration in cash or kind or both-to perform a formal poetic lament in praise of the deceased and to express grief at his demise.

In *U Sier Lapalang*, we are told that Lapalang did not belong to the Khasi Hills; his home was in the plains. Here again, there are three literary versions that talk of his original homeland. One is that of P.G. Gatphoh in his *Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang*, the other is the analytical work on *Ki poetry U P.G. Gatphoh* by H.W.Sten and the third version is the work of U Rev. Morkha Joseph Chyne in *Ka Ryngkap ne Ki Poetry Khasi.* According to Gatphoh's collection, in his 500 lines *phawar* (as mentioned by the writer) about Lapalang, it was found that he came from the plains of *Ka Ri War* and we can safely assume that this plain area exists somewhere in the present day Bangladesh, though the word Bangladesh was not mentioned in the song. When we refer to the lines from 141-146, we find mention of the Southern Khasi hills called *Ri War* as,

Teng teng ha ki bri ba ieng ki diengkwai,

U bud ki lynti sha sem lyngkha krai:

Na khap ki diengsoh ba saw ka Ri War,

Ka Ri seisoh pyrthei kaba iar:

Suki u wan kiew sha kliar u Rapleng,

Hangta te marwei u shem ia ka bneng![59]

Translation:

Now and then at the betel-nut grove,
He follows the tracts to the millet's plantation field:
From the border of the ripened fruit trees of *Ri War*,
A fertile land a worldwide land:
Slowly he climbs up the Rapleng hill top'
There he found heaven in himself!

When we consider the above lines, we may assume that Lapalang might have come from either Sylhet or other parts of Bangladesh to the Khasi Hills taking its route via *Ka Ri War*. On reaching *Ri War*, Lapalang, spent some time there in search of food and fruits. *Ri War* is known for the best quality of betel nut (*kwai*) and oranges besides the other products that it produces in the Khasi hills. Lapalang then proceeded on his journey upwards till he reached the Rapleng hill, which is near Smit village; there Lapalang found different varieties of green and fresh vegetables and thought to himself that he had found heaven in these hills. However, P.G. Gatphoh in

[59] P.G. Gatphoh, 193,7 *Ki Khanatang bad U Sier Lapalang*, p. 144.

his introductory note said that the stag Lapalang was known to the Bhoi as the *Sier Laparem* or the Stag Laparem[60]. Lapalang as seen in the *phawar* was shown as if he really stood on the hill top and spoke to the youths of the country to be more cautious while seeking a luxurious lifestyle. While from the lamentation of the mother stag one learns that in the midst of a great calamity of life, there is truth or power beyond our sight that regulates wishes and pangs of one's heart[61].

Sten in his *Ki Poetry U P.G. Gatphoh*[62] gives an account of the homeland of the stag Lapalang which is more clear and precise than those of Gatphoh and Chyne. In his record we find that Lapalang was originally from the plains of the present day Bangladesh which was then at that time a district of Sylhet. He then settled in the village Lapalang which is near the outskirts of Dawki which hence derived its second unique name; and from that time he was known to the Khasis as the Stag Lapalang or the stag of Lapalang village. Lapalang then crossed the river Umngot near Dawki and entered first into the Jaintia hills. Then he entered Dawki and Darang and through these villages he made his journey to the Khasi hills beginning from the village of Pynursla to Khadarblang, then moved on to Laitlyngkot village till he arrived at the Rapleng peak.

Another interesting feature in Sten's record is that the Lapalang Stag who came from the plains of the Bhoi area as recorded by Morkha Joseph was none other the same stag of the Lapalang village, as the stag Lapalang according to Sten, proceeded to his unending journey from the Rapleng peak to the Himalayas

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[60] P. G. Gatphoh, Introductory note in '*Ki Khanatang bad u Sier Lapalang*', p. iii.
[61] Ondromoney: Introductory note in Gatphoh's '*Ki Khanatang bad u Sier Lapalang*', p. vii.
[62] H.W. Sten, 1970: *Ki Poetry U P.G. Gatphoh*, p. 60.

(Makashang). This took him years of journey till he reached *Sohphoh Lynrum* the supposedly original place of the Khasis according to traditional accounts. From there, he came back via the Brahmaputra valley, entered the Bhoi country through *Khatarbongthai* (traditional states) and finally reached the Shillong peak. It is there that he ended his journey of life.[63]

On the other hand, in Morkha Joseph's account we found that Lapalang came from the northern parts of the Khasi Hills i.e. the Bhoi region. Unlike the other accounts we find the presence of the mother stag too and that Lapalang did not come to these hills with his own wish though in the later part he refused to go back to his homeland. This evidence is clear enough for us to believe that Lapalang does not only came from, but he was also born at the Bhoi country. In Chyne's account we find that initially the stag Lapalang was brought to these beautiful hills by his mother when he was still very young. The mother and the son Lapalang were fed up of bamboo shoot and plantain flower, the only food they got from the country of the of the twelve Lyngdohs or *Ka Ri Khaddar Lyngdoh* that the mother decided to leave for the Khasi hills in search of good new food. Morkha Joseph writes in his 3rd stanza of his poem as follows;

Na muluk Khadar Lyngdoh
Ki wan ba'n kiew nyngkong,
Ka lung ka pashor ki la ngiah
Ki poi ha lum Shillong.
Ki wad ia u 'langlung 'langni

[63] *Ibid.* p.61.

Ia u jangew jathang.

Ba'n dih um na ki spung Khasi,

Ki umpohliew ba thiang

Ba'n ioh shong ka ri eh paka

Ba'n ioh long sier khynna[64].

Translation:

From the country of the twelve priests

They came first to ascend,

Fed up of bamboo shoot and plantain flower

They reached at Shillong peak.

They searched fresh and green leaves

And the begonia leaves.

To drink water from Khasi land,

Fresh and sweet spring water

To live permanently in these hills

To be a healthy and fit stag.

In the third line we see the poet clearly mentioning the daily food of the people of the Bhoi areas which is mainly bamboo shoot and the plantain flower. Being the only item of food available to the people, it was the only variety available to the mother stag and her son Lapalang who got fed up with it and eventually decided to wander to foreign lands in search of new things in their life. To fulfill her

[64] Morkha Joseph Chyne, 1966(1978): *Ka Ryngkap ne ki Poetry Khasi*, p.45.

wish, the mother took her young son and left home for the Khasi hills. On reaching the hills, the duo were busy searching the young and fresh begonia leaves to fill their empty stomach, and looked for the cold and fresh springs to quench their thirst. The begonia leaves and other vegetables here in the hills were as tasty as was the sheer beauty of the hills that it made the mother and the son to forget their home.

Matters went well for some time as both the mother and the son were welcomed and allowed to live in the Khasi hills blissfully. But sadly so, the happy life they experienced was for a very short period and before the stag Lapalang could get used to his new experience, he was expatriated by the Gods of *Khyndai Umtong* (the nine sources of drinking water) as a punishment for his misbehavior against Ka Dom at *Ka Iew Luri Lura*. On hearing that order from the gods, the mother stag immediately told her son that they both should leave the place and return to their original homeland. As an experienced mother, the mother stag sensed the danger that waits for her son in the hills, so she told her son to leave the place and go back to their home. But the proud Lapalang paid no heed to his mother's advice as his mind was occupied with the enthusiastic discovery of his experience in the new world and so refused to go back. The stag Lapalang's spirit of independence led him to believe that he could face any problems without any help from others.

Confident in his own strength, obstinate and ignorant of the impending dangers, Lapalang did not heed his mother's advice to return back to their homeland. The taste of freedom and the lush green hills had so captivated him that he no longer wanted to return to his erstwhile humble abode.

Witnessing the brutal killing of her only son with her own eyes, the mother stag broke into pieces for the reason that : she could not help him save his life, and that her son was killed in a foreign land far away from home, died a stranger's death. The heart-broken mother however, did not return home after her son's death, instead she decided to follow his dead body to the "rynsan'; a kind of platform made especially for offering sacrifices to 'ka Lei Hukum' (goddess of orders). As she followed her dead son's body, she made a loud heart-rending cry that could be heard throughout the country. Her lament was so full of sorrow, torment and misery, that it touched the hearts of all who were present. The hurt of Lapalang's mother was excruciating, a pain filled with the sense of loss, yet there is no mention of any kind of revenge on her part.

In the Greek folk tradition, women who bewail the dead are frequently more concerned with lamenting their own fate than with that of the deceased and alongside, there is an expression of a desire for revenge. Whereas in the Khasi folk tradition, women who lament the dead who have died an unjust death, do not concern themselves with revenge; but would simply mourn for the deceased as well as their own unfortunate lives. Their dirges often affect the listeners and sometimes bring tears to their eyes. Morkha Joseph in his poem in the stanzas 17-19[65] as given below gives a detailed account of the effect of the lamentation of the mother stag on the enemies' hearts. Her cries emanate from the hurt of the biggest loss a mother can experience, fills the hunters' hearts with grief; their footsteps stall, perforce they look back and beholding the scene, they are frozen so they cannot move forward. The

[65] Morkha Joseph Chyne , 1966 (1978): *Ka Ryngkap ne ki Poetry Khasi*, p.50.

lament of the mother cuts off "their shouts of triumph (which) froze upon their lips, and they broke their arrows in shivers".[66]

Khasi

17. "Ko khun Sirlapalang ka mei,
"Ah ko khun Sirlapalang.
"Ko khun Rangbah jong nga marwei,
"Mynta phi don haei?
"Adur ! ka jingpangnud jong nga
"Ka shu long lehnohei.
"Ba nga'n iohi ngam kyrmen shuh
"Hangne ha ka pyrthei.
"Ah lano ngin dang iashem pat
"Ko khun jong nga haei?"

18. La ieng lyngngoh u pait byllien
Ba sngew iaka ba iam.
Ki'm nang jam shuh, kum kyrtiang dien,
Bynshet ka rynsan kram.
"Ki la sei u 'nam-sarang, khun,
"Synjuk u siem kamar.
"La bam ka pommai jong ka dum,
"Kyllon ha ka bishar.

[66] As quoted from Wanniang: 1999-60.

"Hangta sep soit iaphi ianga

"Ka pyrthei sngi mynta."

19. "Shano mynta phi leit, ko khun?

Hangno phi shem jaka?

"Phi ieh ka mei pukir, phi hun

"Ha ka jinjar suda,

"Ong u la bam u 'namsarang,

"La bam ka 'tihpongdeng,

"Ha ka muluk nongwei shiphang,

"Sep ei la ka rynieng.

"Nga ong katta ka suk kynjai,

"Khat-ei ka jinjar du!"

Translation:

"Son of your mother, Sirlapalang,

"Oh My Sirlapalng.

"Eldest son of my loneliness,

"Where are you now?

"Alas! This heartache of mine

"It seems so useless.

"I don't hope for a glimpse of you anymore

"In this world.

"And where shall we meet again

"Oh! Son of mine, where?

The crowd stood astonished

When they hear her cries

They couldn't move forward, always glancing back

Put down the bier at once

"They took out the rusted arrow, son,

"That arrow forged in pain by the cursed-king of blacksmiths.

"That oath Dom has swallowed,

"Your error in judgement.

"The sun, set on you and me

"This world of light is now gone."

"Where are you now, my son?

Which place are you at?

"You were satisfied to leave your mother,

"In a world filled only with hardship

"Say that the arrow has eaten you,

"Consumed your life-force, your heart,

"For a while in a foreign land,

"Your entire being negated.

"I thought there would be contentment and ease,

"But my inheritance is hardship!."

The lament of the grief-stricken mother not only touches the hearts of the hunters as mentioned above, but it also moves the compassion of *U Lei Shillong* (the Shyllong deity) who granted her entreaties for justice to the chief of the gods *U Syiem jong ki blei.* The God of Shyllong heard the inconsolable mother's entreaties and he undertook to alleviate her pain by transforming both mother and son into the legendary water source of the Gods of Shyllong or *Ka pukri um jong ki blei.* This well-spring of the Gods 'feeds the nine rivers which meanders through the valleys around the peak to fertilise the Khasi land and nourish the nation'.[67] The nine rivers are Umtangsyiem, Umiew, Umngot, Umshyllong or Umdiengpun, Umshyrpi, Umdienglieng, Umkhen, Umjasai and Umrkam.[68]

In laments from all regions of Greece, to die in exile from one's own home territory is regarded as an additional tragedy[69]. Comparing this to Lapalang's death, we can assume that it is in this respect that the stag's mother placed the blame for her son's death on the anonymous bow (*u 'namsarang*) in the slopes of the Khasi Hills. Though there were many bows that pierced the body of the stag Lapalang, but to the sensitive mother there is only one fateful arrow that pierced his heart. A death in a foreign land away from home in the quest of a better life, above all, a death by enemies that goes un-avenged is like a shameful death of a despicable exiled man, which the mother could not accept as her son's fate. However, it is to be clearly noted here that the ill-fated Lapalang was killed not because he listened to the

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[67] H.W. Sten, 1970: *Ki Poetry U P.G. Gatphoh*, p. 79.

[68] Sr. Philomena Kharakor, *The Philosophy behind Khasi myth*, a paper presented at the seminar on Orality and Beyond held on 26th-27th July, 2005, NEHU.

[69] Gail Holst-Warhaft. 1992: *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greekk Literature*, p. 48.

dictates of his comely nature or because he ignored the advice of the mother, but because he humiliated the bitch named 'Ka Dom' in *Ka Iew Luri Lura.*

Thus it is from that time on that many of the dirges used in Khasi lamentations are in the form attributed to the soulful lament of the mother of Lapalang. Till date, these mournful songs of the mother stag hold a special place in the Khasi ritual wailing.

Kshaid NohkaLikai: By Teslet Pariat

'Shaid Nohkalikai, 'Shaid Nohkalikai,
Nalor ki maw-ramsong haduh ki lhuh pha noh rymphai,
'Shaid Nohkalikai, 'Shaid Nohkalikai,
Nalor ki maw-ramsong haduh ki lhuh pha noh rymphai.

Translation:

Nohkalikai falls, Nohkalikai falls,
From top of the rocks down to the ravines you spread,
Nohkalikai falls, Nohkalikai falls,
From top of the rocks down to the ravines you spread,

La ha tlang ne lyiur, pyrem ne synrai
La ha miet ne ha shai pha shu iai phyrnai
'Shaid Nohkalikai kumno ngan batai
Pha shu noh phum-rymphum rymphum khlem don ka sngewsih ne khuslai

'Shaid nohkalikai, 'shaid Nohkalikai,

Nalor ki maw-ramsong haduh ki lhuh pha noh rymphai

Pakha slew sdien lade, kadiang kamon kaweh

Lyer batemon batesi napha ki beh;

Kylleng ka ri ki her ki phriang,

Iapha ban peit marwei mynsiem ka sliang.

Translation:

Either at winter, summer, spring, or autumn,

Either at night or day you shine so bright

Oh! Nohkalikai fall how will I describe?

You roar down in a spray without dread or worry,

Nohkalikai falls, Nohkalikai falls,

From top of the rocks down to the ravines you spread,

Leaves of a palm tree right and left they sway;

With the fresh breeze blows around you,

Around the world they spread

To look at you my heart thirst.

Ko kshaid, A! ko kshaid Nohkalikai,

B'la jer u kulong u kumah naduh hyndai

Ha rong ki puriskam, paw ka dur jong pha,

Ban kieng ki sur jingrwai, ha wahduid shi-rta.

'Shaid Nohkalikai, 'shaid Nohkalikai,

Nalor ki mawramsong shaduh ki lhuh pha noh rymphai.

Translation:

Oh! Falls, Oh! Nohkalikai waterfall

As called by the forefathers

As the folktale your name has appeared,

Carrying with you melodies into the stream forever,

Nohkalikai falls, Nohkalikai falls,

From top of the rocks down to the ravines you spread,

***Kshaid Nohkalikai*: By Fredie Cholas**

1. *Napdeng ki lawbniap marwei phi iaid,*

   Khlem kyrtiang dien phi her shaid shi shaid;

   Ki tiew tyrkhang ia phi ki kaweh,

   Phim sngap phim peit phi her khlem sangeh.

Translation:

In the midst of the jungle you flow alone

No looking back, ahead you run;

Fern leaves are waving at you,

Not listening, nor looking back, you run forward.

Ka Dusmon ba leh u briew,

Ka klylliang phim kwah ban siew;

Ban im khlemrain phim kwah,

Ban rykhie biang phim sngew kwah.

Translation:

What your enemy did,

You do not want to avenge

A shameful life you do not want

Never will you smile again.

2. *U bnai u dum ki khlur kim shai shuh,*

Marwei phi her shano phim sngewthuh;

Phi her lyngba ki khlaw bad ki lhuh,

Phi her shi her marwei khlem kut tduh.

Translation:

The moon is dark, the stars shine no more

Alone you run where you do not know

You run through the jungles and ravines

You keep moving without end.

Phi tyllun nalor mawsiang,

Marwei phi her khlem kyrtiang;

Phim khein ki shiah ki tram,

Marwei lawbah phi ngam.

Translation:

You roll down from the rocks,

Though you run straight, no turning back;

Even in the thorns and briers,

And dense forest you go.

3. *Na lyndet ki lyoh u Bnai U peit,*

U lyoh um tip shano phin leit;

Ki lawbniap baroh arliang ki ker,

Ia ki ruh phi thom marwei phi her.

Translation:

The moon looks from behind the clouds,

It does not know where you will go;

Bushes stand on both sides

Yet you make your way trampling them too.

Na khlieh riat phi ieng marwei,

La jingim phim khein eiei;

Phi noh ruh tang marwei,

Sha ri ki khiat ki skei.

Translation:

Alone you stand from the top of the precipice

Unheeded of your own life

It was a lonely falling-death

To the land of the musk-deer and stags.

KI LUM KI UD KI RIAT KI TWA,

KHYNWIN KA SHNONG KA THAW SOHRA;

KI THEI BHA BRIEW NA JAN NA JNGAI,

SHA PHI KI HER BAN LEIT PEITKAI.

Translation:

HILLS GROAN, LANDSLIDES ROLL,

TURBULENT IS SOHRA;

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS FROM FAR AND NEAR,

THEY CONVERGE TO WATCH YOUR FALL.

4. *Kyrphum phi noh da rong rupa,*

Na shilliang riat nga iohi shynna;

Ia ka dur bhabriew ba janai,

Jong phi ko kshaid Nohkalikai.

Translation:

In silver surfs you fall,

From the other cliff I saw it clearly;

The beauty that is so perfect

Yours only Nohkalikai falls.

KSHAID NOHKALIKAI, KSHAID NOHKALIKAI,

Ia phi ngam lah khlem da rwai;

To nangbsiat la ki sai duitara,

Katba nang iaid ki sngi ki rta.

Translation:

NOHKALIKAI FALLS, NOHKALIKAI FALLS

I can't but sing for you;

Continue to strike the harp's string

While days and years pass by.

NOH-KA –LIKAI

***B*y T.L.Nongbet (1971)**

Noh-ka-likai, Noh-ka-likai

Shaphang jong pha mynta ngan rwai

Khana shaphang jong pha kylleng

Ka par bad kan iai sah pateng.

Translation:

Noh-Ka-Likai, Noh-Ka-Likai,

Now I'll sing for you,

Tale about you around the world

Will spread and live forever.

Hyndai ki opng kpa-nah dusmon

Ia ka likai u shet u phon

Riewpap, riewsniew bad riew-shohnoh

Ia I khun jong ka u shet doh.

Translation:

Long ago, the step-father they said,

Treacherously let ka Likai fall,

Wicked, evil, and a murderous

He even cooked her child.

Ref: *Ka kmie bapli sang-pap-mai blei*

Jyntah ka bang kam tip ei-ei

La shet shukor kpanah nongshun

Ka la bam doh ia la I khun

Ha jinglamwir, ha khmied-long-bneng

Ka shad, lynniar sha rum sha neng

Na kshaid ba triem ba noh rymhai

Nagta la noh-iap ka Likai

Translation:

An unfortunate mother, in sin god-cursed,

She ate the curry unknowingly

Deceived by the wicked step-father

Had eaten her own child.

Maddened with sorrow, she looked up

Cried and ran hither and thither

From the dreadful flowing falls

There, then cast away ka Likai.

***Ref**: Noh-ka-likai, Noh-ka-likai*

Pha tuid pha ud da khlem-suid-khai

Ki sur jong pha ban sngap sngew triem

Ban peit ia pha nga rit mynsiem.

Naduh kata ka por hyndai

Ki jer ka kshaid Noh-ka-likai

Khana jong pha ki par kylleng

Kan iai sah ruh pateng pateng.

Translation:

Noh-ka-likai, Noh-ka-likai
Heedlessly you flow, you groan
Terrified are your sounds to listen to
Horrified I am to look at you.

Since then from that time
They called Noh-Ka-Liaki falls
Tale about you around the world
Will spread and live forever.

The story of the Noh-Ka-Likai falls, tells of a mother who found the fingers of her loving daughter in the *shangkwai* (basket where betel nut and leave are kept). Realizing that the stepfather had murdered her only child, crazed with grief, she leapt into the nearby waterfall, which was since then named, Nohkalikai which literally means 'the leap of Likai'. A brief outline of the tale is given below for a better understanding:

The waterfall of Ka Likai is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the Khasi Hills. Its stream flows from a river named Umiong of Rangjyrteh village near Cherrapunjee, and passes by the village of Nohriat. The waterfall can be seen distinctly from the village of Laitkynsew. The legend associated with this waterfall goes like this:

There was in the olden days in the village of Rangjyrteh a woman called Ka Likai. She was a poor woman who had married to a poor man. After she had given birth to a girl child her husband died. While the child was still a baby, she had experienced much trouble in taking care of it on account of her poverty, and this persuaded Ka Likai to marry again thinking that this would help lighten her burden and to obtain more comforts for her child. But the man she married this time did not like the little child, he was a selfish and somewhat brutal man and he was extremely jealous the affection Likai had for the little girl and many a time he got angry because Likai could not take care of him on account of the child. So he tried to get rid of the child by killing it.

One day, when Likai went to work, carrying iron-ore to Mawmluh village, her husband took the child and killed it. When he had cut up the body into pieces he prepared a curry with it. He threw the head and bones of the child away, but he forgot to throw away the fingers, which he had placed, in a basket where betel-nut and betel-leaves were kept. When the mother returned from her work, she searched for the child first, but because she was very hungry, she thought to look for the child after she had taken food. So she began eating her meal, Ka Likai found the curry very tasty, and she thought to herself that her husband might have got the flesh of a young pig from someone who had performed a sacrifice. When she had finished eating she took the betel nut basket, but to her great horror and shock she found the fingers of her child there. She shrieked and ran out of doors leading to a precipice. On reaching there she cast herself down the falls and down the track. All the villagers wondered but no one ventured to prevent her as she held a big knife in her

hand in order to deter anyone who might try to stop her. Thus from that time the waterfall was named after her.

This story reflects the cultural life of the Khasi women, showing the status of women in the society and their love for their children. As it is a matrilineal society, the role of women in the Khasi society is very important. Thus, when they are defiled or betrayed treacherously by others, they cannot tolerate it. Likai, here had no choice but to hurl herself off the cliff because she found out the murder of her child, only after her (unknowing and consequent) heinous act of eating her own child's flesh (cannibalism). The following analysis of the tale will give us a better understanding of this terrible and fascinating narrative of the Khasis.

Here, we find different aspects of social practices. Firstly, as we see in the story, Ka Likai after her husband's death married another man to support her on account of her poverty. This is illustrative of the existence of widow re-marriage in the Khasi culture as it happens in other cultures also. While certain societies do not encourage it, because of the circumstances in which it is brought about, it is also not openly condemned, as widows are looked upon as helpless where through loss of a spouse are bereft of their support. However, widow re-marriage involves the negation of all the personal and emotional ties that a widow might have with her deceased husband or his family and this means the official annulment of the sanctity of the first marriage. This could be the perception of the parties concerned, be it the family of the deceased husband or the second husband and his family. The implication of the conjugal relationship could be real or imagined. But since a sensible social institution such as marriage is the focal point, the matter becomes

vulnerable to over reactions and the creative minds of the storytellers and writers have exploited this theme and generated narratives that contain tensions related to the practice of widow re-marriage.

Secondly, the story also throws to light the character of a stepfather and ill treatment of the child. Ill-treatment of a stepchild by a stepfather or stepmother happens in all cultures not only amongst the Khasis. This can be proved by comparing this story with the celebrated European folktale like "Cinderella" and "Tejmola" the Assamese folktale, the stories are almost the same, having the difference only in the mould of characters. In this story "Ka Likai", the wicked character is depicted by the stepfather while in "Cinderella" and "Tejmola" the wicked characters are the stepmothers. When we see the cruel characters of the stepfather or stepmother in these stories, we may as well ask as to what made these characters behave cruelly towards their stepchild. This, we can understand by taking the relationship of a stepfather with a stepchild through different stages. We can assume that the first stage is the stage of indifference, where the respective stepparent harbors these feelings towards the stepchild who is not their own child. In other words we can say that as no blood ties exist between them, the relationship is devoid of any closeness and there is no close bond between them.

Again, from the tale we see the indifference stage leading to that of intolerance. We can see that the mother loved the child so much that she even forgets to care for her husband, the stepfather. Here one should notice the feelings of the mother who cannot forget her first husband, and the only thing he left for her after his death is his child. The child always reminds her of her first husband, which

makes her to pay more attention to the child than the second husband. Another person can never give the love and happiness that the first husband gave her. No other man can take his place in her heart for her. The child is the only hope and source of life for the mother. She is the embodiment of the immortal love of her parents. Without the husband to share her young life with, Ka Likai showers her child with all the love of a mother and with all the suppressed love of a wife.

Another aspect is the close attachment the mother had for her child, which in turn led to a feeling of resentment on the part of the stepfather. All the love reserved by the wife for her husband is transformed into the love of the mother for the child and thus Likai has a stronger attachment to her child than anything else in the world[70]. This is why she devotes more attention to her child, and less towards her husband. This lack of consideration for a husband by a wife results in resentment which ultimately leads to the development of hatred towards the child.

The transference of affection and love from one person to another is a perfectly normal feeling that a person is capable of, especially when the object of affection is no longer there physically. This may happen, when the object of affection dies or is absent from the life of the one who experiences the affection. The transference of affection may takes place between two perfect strangers and it is only natural when a mother, who has lost her husband, sees in their issues or child the embodiment of the love they once shared. The transference of love in this case, becomes automatic while this may become ideal in the case of two individuals who share a common denominator in terms of affection. It produces a negative effect on

[70] Christina Wanniang, 1999: Unpublished M Phil Dissertation. p. 44.

the party that is conjoined in this relationship artificially. The tale *Ka Likai* reveals this situation most clearly.

Lastly, the fourth stage is when the murder, cutting into pieces and cooking of the child takes place. The stepfather may not have been a cruel man. He may have possessed a good character, but because he felt deprived of the love and attention from his wife, he is led to behave cruelly. This makes him harbor cruel thoughts. It can be assumed that the man's hatred was pathological and of such intensity that the stepfather could only harbor vile and murderous thoughts as only an insane mind could. Perhaps in his insane logic he sought to settle the problem as he sees it through an action that was drastic, brutal and non-redeeming. The act of cooking the child's flesh and feeding it to his wife, the child's mother, suggest that the man harbored a wish fulfillment of cannibalism which he executes through the unsuspecting wife.

The story of Ka Likai is also evocative of the Khasi belief in *ka pap ka sang* which takes place through the perpetration of the three unforgivable sins – infanticide, cannibalism and suicide. The village of Rangjyrteh today stands abandoned in spite of its rich iron ore reserves probably because of the Khasi belief that a place where such heinous crimes have occurred are cursed by *ka tyrut* and nothing but misfortune and bad luck prevail there.

The tale also dredges up issues that have often been discussed by Freudian's scholars. The intertwining of two strong passions known to man, love and hate, are played out remarkably and the introduction of the curry of infant's flesh into the

story reminds of the association of these passions with the concept of food. Love inspired by food has always been regarded as a primary passion and it is inversely made use for the fulfillment of the purpose inspired by hatred. The existence of betel nut and pan in this story is an important version, leading to the discovery of murder. Betel nut and pan is part of the Khasi custom where they used for all purposes, ranging from the social to the religious. Betel nut and leave have largely produced bloody discourses as many Khasi folktales show. The association with blood is very strong even if the association is symbolic. But, as students of folklore, we have to take cognizance of the significance of symbols as they operate in a narrative. In order to amplify this point, let us consider a story that accounts for the origin of betel nut and leaves.

There were two men who were very good friends, one was rich and the other was poor. The rich one always invited his poor friend and used to entertain him lavishly. One day, while they were together, the rich man teased his friend saying that he never invites him to his house and that, the next day whether invited or not he would visit him in his house. The poor man was distraught, but unable to refuse the exchange of hospitality, agreed. When he reached home, he told his wife about his predicament, and enquired if there was any food and drink in the house, that he could give his friend the following day. The wife told him there was nothing. After a long thought on the matter, the poor decided to kill his wife and then himself, rather than face the humiliation of not being able to provide his friend the necessary entertainment. He proceeded to do just that and when the rich man called at the house the next day, he was greeted by the spectacle of his dead friend and his wife.

Realizing the circumstances, which led to the tragedy, he wept so much that '*Ka Blei Synshar*' or the Reigning Female Deity took pity on him and consoled the wretched man. She promised that from now on she would give man something, which would be easily available and acceptable as a proper symbol of social entertainment. It will be common to the rich as well as the poor, saying so; she gave man the betel nut and leaf.

The tale of *Ka Likai waterfall* is the quintessence of the kinds of narratives that have currency in the Cherrapunjee area. The tales emanating from that area have direct bearings to the topography and landscape. While some tales try to explain topographical peculiarities, others substantiate existing ones, while yet others offer accounts of manmade additions to the often spectacular and dramatic outlay of the land. True to form, the *Ka Likai waterfall* tale is completely devoid of any mention of agriculture activities. This might strike to some as strange because folktales routinely talk about people's occupation and in the case of the Khasis, one would expect cultivation operations to be mentioned. In trying to understand this one has to consider a few factors:

One, Cherrapunjee or Sohra is situated at an elevation 4, 200 feet above the level of the sea and the land is composed of mostly rocks and hard subsoil. This fact can be testified by A.J.M. Mills Esq. Oficially judge, Sudder court on deputation his report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills dated 27th September 1853, to the secretary to the Government of Bengal, Judicial Department. He writes, "Cherra is one of the

most barren spots, I have ever seen but the climate is excellent, and the grandeur and variety of the scenery around is sublimely interesting"[71].

Second, 'Sohra' literally means place where nothing grows and this name lucidly suggests that agricultural pursuits would not thrive. In order to support their livelihood, the people would have to turn to other economic activities. The hills and plateaus around Cherrapunjee are composed of limestone and other rocky metal rich in carbon content. Hence, coal, iron-ore and limestone have been quarried in these areas for centuries altogether and today what can be seen strewn all over are iron-slag, residuals and limestone found in abandoned mine shafts. The history of mineral extraction and metallurgy amongst the Khasis is very old, and has occupied a place of significance. The operation of these activities was of a major scale and trading in mineral extracts was carried out even during ancient times.

Rangjyrteh, which is the village of Ka Likai, is near Cherrapunjee or Sohra and here the situation is no different. In this story also Ka Likai is employed in carrying iron-ore from Sohra to Mawmluh, in order to support herself and her family. This shows that even women do not shy away from hard labor. Gurdon wrote this saying, "Khasis carry heavy burdens; it being the custom for the cooly of the country to carry a mound, or 82lbs, weight, or even more occasionally, on his back, the load being fixed by means of a cane band which is worn across the forehead; women carry almost as heavy loads ass the men"[72]. Again he said, "The Khasis are probably

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[71] A.J.M. Mills, 1853 (1901): Report on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, p. 2.
[72] P.R.T. Gurdon, 1907(1987): *The Khasis*, p. 4.

the best porters in the north of India, and have frequently requisitioned for transport purposes on military expeditions"[73].

The story also tells about the practice of animal sacrifices amongst the Khasis. As we see in the story, when Likai ate the tasty curry, she thought that her husband had got a young pig from someone who had offered sacrifices. Animal sacrifices are being practiced not only by the Khasis but by the other tribes as well. Even the non- tribal also does this. Amongst the Khasis, animals like pig, goats, fowls and sometimes pigeons are used for sacrifices as offerings to propitiate the various divinities. Among all these the cock seems to have been the most important sacrificial victim.

From the above discussion, we see that the story of *Nohkalikai* reflects the different elements of culture of the Khasis, including aspects of the lifestyle of the people of Cherrapunjee and its vicinity. In concluding this discussion the scholar would like to quote Desmond. L. Kharmawphlang who wrote: "The *Likai* falls stands today as a telling reminder of the ironies of fate played out in idioms and subtleties that only folklore can reduplicate. The overwhelming tragedies recorded in the haunting landscape evoke much pathos even as the forbidding rocks and clear water stand witness to man and his frailties" [74].

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[73] *Ibid.*

[74] D.L. Kharmawphlang, 1997: Manuscript. p. 36.

Chapter- III

Television as Narrative

> In the West, television is called the chewing gum of the eye. Elsewhere too, it has become the most popular, glamorous and acclaimed medium of communication. Today, it combines the best elements of broadcasting and spoken word communication with the potency of visual communication. No wonder that millions of people of all ages, and belonging to different ethnic group glue to it. For this reason, some Indians call it a 'chipko' medium. The video boom has added further to its craze. Light programmes and news bulletins are other audience hooks[1].

The world was familiar with motion pictures before television arrived. Radio broadcast has become a reality. The problem in the 1920s was the transmission of picture along with speech and music. This became possible when two new electronic devices called the photo electric cell and the thermionic valve were invented. In 1923 Dr. Vladimir Zworykin applied for a patent of the iconoscope, an all electric

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[1] P.N. Malhan, 1985: *Communication Media- Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.* p. 139.

television tube that solved this problem. Two years later, an American, Jenkins Gnese, demonstrate a mechanical TV apparatus. An experimental TV programme was sent by wire between New York and Washington by Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1927. Next year the same laboratories experimentally televised outdoor programmes. Simultaneously speech, music and picture transmission became a reality[2].

After the radio, television became the electronic device for long distance communication. It was developed in the late forties. While the radio converts only audible signals, the television converts the visual as well as the audible signals into short wave radio signals and then reassembles the information into a talking 'picture'. Though the first regular public transmission by television began in the U.K. in 1936, in France in 1938 and in U.S. in 1941, the television services came to an abrupt end during the Second World War. It was only in the late forties that the services were revived[3].

Television is one of the nicest inventions of man. It has an edge over other forms of mass media, viz. radio, and newspapers etc. it has overcome the barrier put up by literacy, which is the main hurdle with the print media. It provides a unique communication process in a way helping mass communication becoming simple and speedy. It is a multi-media system predominated by the visual medium. It is recognized that there is an urgent need for mass education and communication media for accelerating social change, creating awareness and inculcating scientific temper

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[2] *Ibid.*

[3] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976: *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 221.

among the masses. It will also inculcate desired attributes and attitudes among the masses necessary for national development[4].

Television, the powerful medium of communication, is a product of the ongoing modern communication revolution. It commands a bigger influence on the perceptions, emotions and the outlook of the masses than any other media. The impact of television on the society is often compared with the effect of "water dripping on a stone, steadily, imperceptibly eroding old values and attitudes in favour of new ones"[5]. Television is superior to the print media as it reaches both the literate and the illiterate audience. Also it has definite over radio because of its visual content which provides a great help in the trial period during the adoption of a new technique or an idea and can reduce the adoption time to a considerable extent. It combines both visual presentation and sound and therefore becomes very relevant for education.[6] McLuhan[7] holds that television is the most appropriate medium for mass communication especially for the developing countries because of its involving and absorbing nature. Marshall McLuhan also noted the difference a world experience through television as opposed to print media, and while critics took McLuhan to task for such unscientific concepts as "cool" and "hot" media, he was on the right track.

Television, invented by John Baird, is associated with the second Industrial revolution of advanced Western countries. Being an expensive tool, mainly of entertainment (as it began), it became part of the affluent lifestyle and culture of the

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4 R.N. Acharya, 1987: *Television in India*, p. 5.
5 P.C. Joshi, "Television, Culture and Communication", *Mainstream*, June 4, 1983, p. 20.
6 R.N. Acharya, 1987: *Television in India*, p. 6.
7 Marshall McLuhan, 1967, *Understanding Media : The Extension of Man*, Signet Books.

post-industrial society. In 1936 the first regular public transmission of television started in England. This was closely followed by France in 1938 and the United States of America in 1941. The first regular colour television transmission began in the U.S.A. in 1953. The 'Eurovision networks' were set up to link the West European countries by the year 1955. The exchange of television programmes between Europe and America became possible in 1962[8].

Highly influenced by the tremendous potential of television, which was already seen in the advanced countries, the developing and the underdeveloped countries also showed keen interest in television.

Television combines the immediacy of the radio and the mobility of the cinema. As a result the television can transmit events as they happen. Thus the television exceeds the newspaper by capturing and reproducing current events as they happen. It has the advantage over the radio since it can produce not only speech, sound and silence, but it also offers the extra feature of pictures in motion. Thus it is more realistic than all the other media. It enables the viewer to see events as they happen and thus has a tremendous impact.[9]

Since television has the advantages of the film as well as the radio, it has turned out to be the most powerful medium to implant information, educating the people toward a new and constructive thinking for the benefit of the society as a whole, and, even more importantly, to bring about changes in their attitudes to suit the modern conditions of life.

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[8] R.N. Acharya, 1987: *Television in India,* p. 7.
[9] O.E. Dunlop, 1962, *Communication in Space*, Harper, New York.

Before proceeding further, the results of two extensive studies on the impact of television programmes on children, adolescents and adults may be briefly reviewed.

Hilda Himmelweit and her co-workers in U.K. studied 4,500 children of two age groups 10 to 11 and 13 to 14 in four cities. They took a group of viewers with television sets in their homes and another group of non-viewers matched in sex, age intelligence and social class. They found that on an average, children spent about two hours a day watching the television programmes. This was more than any other single leisure time activity. Saturday night was the favourite viewing night since they did not have to prepare their class work for the next morning. The study revealed that the popular image that a child watches whatever programme is on, is not correct. The children were found to be very selective. Many of them consulted 'radio times' or went through the newspaper announcements in order to select the programme. The investigator reports that they did not find any significant difference between the children from the middle class homes and those from the working class homes. There were also no sex differences. However, intelligence seems to have some influence – the higher the intelligence the less the viewing. It was also found that the child with many interest and the child interested in outdoor games viewed the television less than the child with few interests. For all children, it was found that the desire to join outdoor play and social activities was stronger than the desire to watch the television which took only the second place.

It is reported that most of the children watched the adult programmes. They liked thrillers, comedies, variety programmes and family serials meant for the adults.

But they did not like the political programmes and discussions. It was found that this is not a matter of intelligence since even the more intelligent children did not like such adult programmes.

A content analysis was made of randomly selected adult plays on television. This showed that the television dramas tend to be built around the upper middle class society in which the middle class occupations are depicted as being worthwhile and the manual work occupations are presented as being uninteresting. The television dramas emphasized character qualities like self-confidence and toughness as being the basis for achieving success in life. They show that mere goodness is not enough. It was frequently shown that violence is an inevitable part of life and that good people often resort to it.

A study was made to find the effect of television on other mass media. The results revealed that the television did not affect the interests of the adolescents in the cinema. They went to the cinema both for recreation and to meet others of their age group. It was also found that the children spent about an hour a day listening to the radio programmes; particularly they listened to the sports commentaries and musical programmes. They preferred to watch the drama on the television to hearing it over the radio; it was also found that the children were interested in a wider range of books than merely reading fiction. As regards the effect of the television on family life it was found that it keeps the members of the family at home. But it is doubtful whether it binds the family together.

Thus, this study shows that the influence of television on children's leisure, interests, knowledge, outlook and values was much less colourful than what is generally presumed. Television is not as black as it is painted by the pessimists, nor is it a great harbinger of culture and enlightenment as the optimists tend to believe. Its capacity for broadening the children's horizons is no more than that of the other mass media. At best, television can implant information, stimulate interests, improve tastes and widen the range of experience. At the worst, it can restrict the child's knowledge by reducing the times he spends on books. It may also affect the outdoor activities of some. The content of the television may frighten and disturb the children who are already emotionally insecure or those who are pre-occupied with a problem.[10]

The other study was made by Gary Steiner on adults in United States with a grant from the Columbia broadcasting system in 1960. He reports that viewing the television is an integral part of the daily life of an American adult. He spends several hours a day over it. Steiner reports that in general the American adults consider television programmes to be fairly satisfactory; they are neither overwhelmed by what they see nor are they bored by it. The average adult recalls some of the television dramas as well as the television comedy stars. Thus, on the whole, the television is an easy, relaxing entertainment. Though the average adult likes the television to be more informative and educational, he does not want this at the expense of entertainment. He rarely uses television as a deliberate source of information except for hearing the day's news and the weather forecast. According to

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[10] H. Himmelweit, et al. 1958, *Television and the Child*, p. 63.

the average viewer, newspapers provide more thorough report of the important events of the day and the radio is quicker with its frequent capsule summary. Thus the main value of the television is that it provides entertainment. It has brought the theatre to the living-room, practically free of cost.

The study showed that the average American viewer has no more than high school education with the medium annual income. Three quarters of all television viewers come under this category.

The well-educated, the higher income group and big city viewer shares many of the above characteristics. Like the average American viewer the man of the higher class also turns to the television principally for relaxation and entertainment. Though he wants the television to provide more information he is unable to make any specific suggestion. His responses with respect to suggestions for improvement are vague. The investigator concludes that it looks as if the upper class respondent is trying to say what is appropriate and expected of a well educated person.

Thus both the groups, whether less educated or better educated utilize the television for the same purpose, namely, to get entertainment. While the mass viewers are grateful to the television for keeping the family together at home and keeping the children out of mischief, the class viewer is more apt to blame it for keeping the children from their books or out of bed.[11]

[11] Gary Steiner , 1963, *The People look at Television, A Study of Audience Attitudes*, as quoted from Kuppuswamy, B.1976: p. 224-225.

Thus, television has become a reality for many viewers because it is more much more fun than any other media. Television is also considered as a true mass medium in that it presents the commonly held values and norms of modern society

Television in India

In India television made a humble debut on an experimental basis in the form of a UNESCO's pilot project on 15 September 1959. Its object was to study the use of TV as a medium of education, rural upliftment and community development. From 15th August, the Independence Day of India, in 1965 a regular TV service commenced in India of one-hour duration. Since that day TV has come to stay in India.[12] The service started in a small improvised studio. The programmes were telecast twice a week for an hour a day. Twenty-one community TV sets were installed in different parts of Delhi. It started catering to a wide audience although teleclub programmes continued to form a core activity. Keeping in view the interest of the general type of viewers, the programmes were diversified to include news, commentary, music and dance as also programmes for special audiences like children, youth and women. In 1961, with the assistance of the Ford Foundation an educational TV programme was telecast for the children of Delhi schools. The programmes were on Physics, Chemistry, General Science and English. Teacher training programmes were also telecast on Science and English.[13]

Upto 1965, the main purpose of Delhi Television was for community viewing through teleclubs in villages surrounding the capital and for educational programmes

[12] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media- Yerterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 139-140.
[13] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 17.

for school children. In August 1965, the first regular general service began from Delhi, by setting up a modern studio with the assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany. The general programmes telecast in Hindi and English were on folk music and folk dances, news and news reviews, light entertainment, quiz programmes, discussions on topical subjects, interviews with noted personalities and experts.[14]

In October 1972, after the lapse of thirteen years, television service went beyond Delhi with the inauguration of the second television centre in Bombay. In 1973, television Kendras started functioning in Srinagar and Amritsar. Television Kendras came into operation in Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow in 1975.[15] Television functioned as a mass medium as part of the All India Radio and got almost step motherly treatment until March 1976. On April 1, 1976, an independent directorate of Doordarshan was established. The Directorate was entrusted with the function of management of programme activities and planning for its development. The seventies heralded the rapid and major expansion of television in India which is continuing till to- date.[16]

The late seventies saw the expansion of TV facilities in India. A major plan for TV expansion in the north eastern region is also on the anvil.[17] Thus TV has started making a thrust into rural areas in a big way. Particularly every state/union territory capital besides a great number of villages is now covered by Doordarshan's network.

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[14] Government of India, *India 1982*, p.142. Referred from ibid.
[15] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 18.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[17] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media- Yerterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.142.

Introduction to DDK Shillong

The Doordarshan Kendra started in Shillong on April 1993 headed by Mr. Ashok Ogra. There was no inauguration function when the DDK Shillong was first started. The DDK comes under the department of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Programmes, Government of India. When the DDK was first started here in Shillong, there were around 50 (approx.) staff members. It should be mentioned that the service of the DDK Shillong does not have a separate independent channel of its own for operation, it has to share with the same channel from Delhi as the other Kendras do. The DDK Delhi has two channels for transmission of programmes, namely the DD-I and DD-2. The DD-I is a channel where all types of programmes are telecasts while the DD-2 is meant only for telecasting the news bulletin. The DDK Shillong therefore comes under the DD-I, channel 12 and for this it has to share the time for its transmission programmes with other Kendras as well. Its transmission service started from 5.30 pm to 8.00 pm on weekdays and from 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm on weekends.

Initially Khasi and Jaintia programmes were telecasted from Monday to Friday for thirty minutes duration. At the start, there was no live telecast programme and all the programmes telecasted from the station were pre-recorded. But as time passed everything changed and today, live telecast of programmes is taken place in the DDK Shillong. Unlike the Radio station, the DDK Shillong from the beginning functioned independently as new TV centres in the North Eastern states of India. At the start, the programmes that were telecasted by the DDK Shillong were mostly the devotional songs or "*Ki Jingrwai Iaroh*".

Enhancement for the transmission coverage of the DDK Shillong was started in the year 2003 covering the Jaintia and West Khasi Hills districts. The local news and other programmes in the Khasi and Jaintia dialect were telecasted from Monday to Friday for thirty minutes duration. 'City scan'- a news based programme in Khasi is telecast from 7.00 pm – 7.15 pm everyday while the English news is from 7.45 pm-7.59 pm. Separate programmes for children and youth was also began on April 1995 to encourage children and youth to participate in songs, poetry recitations, drama, skit, discussions, quiz show, talk show etc. The children programme called "*Na La Pongshai*" is telecast every Saturday and Sunday from 5.00 to 5.30 pm. The family programme called "*Na Lyngwiar Dpei*" is telecast on every Saturday and Sunday at 4.30 -5.00 pm, while "*Ka Rympei*" a programme particularly for women is telecast from 6.30 pm-7.00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Youth programme is from 5.31 pm- 6.00 pm from Monday to Friday.

Television Programmes:

As mentioned earlier, Television was introduced in India with the definite purpose of improving the quality of life and promoting National Integration. So the primary aim of the programme is to educate and persuade people to change their attitudes, their way of work and their way of living. Like the radio programmes, the television programmes can be viewed and heard simultaneously all over the country. The aim of the television programme is to encourage constructive and rational attitude towards food production and agriculture, industry and family planning, to help the people to develop new attitudes and skills which will enable them to play

their part in National development. Sarabai[18] has urged that - television should be used as a means promote National integration and National development. According to him the primary purpose of the television programmes should be to promote agricultural extension, family planning and National integration.

By developing programmes regarding national heritage in arts, architecture and literature, television can promote National Integration. The programmes should be so designed as to appeal to the various linguistic, religious and cultural groups constituting the country. It is obvious that the programmes should appeal particularly to more than 80 per cent of the people who are poor and who live in the villages. In other words, the television programmes should not be directed to the small, well-educated urban groups. They should appeal to the small farmer, the village craftsman and village schoolmaster so that they could mediate as opinion leaders in transforming the opinions and attitudes of the vast masses of the poor and illiterate people, by discussing the significance and implications of the television programmes to their conditions of working and living. This endeavour will inevitably call for continuous research and experimentation in order to ensure that the programmes have relevance to the cultural conditions of the vast masses of the people and appeal to their interests.

One of the important tasks of the television is to keep alive the sentiment of National unity and strengthen National consciousness by bringing home to the people in a vivid manner the problems of those living in the various parts of the country in order to promote identification with and develop compassion for each individual of

[18] Referred from B. Kuppuswamy, 1976: p. 309.

the Indian nation.[19] For example, by way of illustration, it may be recalled that the suffering of the people in the last Bihar drought, the suffering of people in Shillong city due to frequent landslide, or the suffering of villagers in these hills due to recurrent cyclonic effect was brought home vividly to the people all over the country by the newsreels and sometimes by the documentaries. Live television programmes of such droughts and floods would be even more vivid and the response of the people to come to the relief of the suffering fellow citizens would be even more intense and immediate. Mere verbal appeals made either by lectures or through newspapers about famines, floods and droughts will not evoke either an immediate or an intense response of the people. It will not elicit people's empathy for the suffering of the fellow-citizens. But films and television programmes bring a sense of reality and a sense of immediacy to do one's best for the suffering fellow-citizens.

The challenge before Doordarshan was how to combine "information-development entertainment" and develop a telecast schedule which would be called "Info-tainment" –encompassing within it information and entertainment. It should present the genuine "Indian personality" and to mirror the real 'Indian personality' on television, it should present the reality-based and relevant programmes. In the Communist countries, the creative elements of the programme such a producer, writer, director etc are given second place while the government influence takes the first place in deciding the format of the programme. This results in a kind of situation, where programmes are forced upon them irrespective of their views and interest. In India the objective is to have a people-oriented TV in a society which is

[19] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976, *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 310.

constitutionally committed to equality, freedom, democracy and socialism. Ours is a multilingual society in which there are 14 major languages each one having more than one million people speaking it. Apart from these languages there are a host of dialects in each of these fourteen languages. For instance, Hindi has dialects like Maithili, Brajbhasa, Garhwali, Haryanvi, Rajasthani, Chattisgarhi etc. there exists a sizable number of tribal dialects in India. Because of the language problem, Hindi and English programmes telecast from Delhi and relayed throughout the country have very little effect on rural people.[20] Therefore, the programmes should be in the language of the people. In other words, the programmes should be 'area specific" i.e. dealing with specific problems of the area in contrast with the Delhi-centric programmes.

Through its varied programmes Doordarshan seeks to provide information, education and entertainment. To this end, studio-based and film based programmes are produced. Since 15 August 1952, it also started the national programme basic idea of which is to create awareness about the national problems and solicit people's participation in social changes and economic developments in the country. The emphasis in this programme is on national integration, communal harmony, family welfare programmes, cultural heritage of music and dance, independence struggle and science programmes besides current affairs and news. The objectives of Indian TV were spelt out in a seminar organized by AIR in 1973, it recommended : (i) TV must be utilized as aid in the developmental process as an instrument of social change and national cohesion, (ii) it should cater both to in-school and out of school

[20] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 90-91.

education with priority given for primary education, (iii) TV should disseminate information on specific aspects of science and technology, agriculture, health, family planning, with supporting units in the departments concerned. Special emphasis on using cultural programmes to foster national pride and national integration instead of providing merely popular commercial or revenue earning programmes, they add. [21]

Doordarshan programmes as said aim at integrating the various parts of the country in the national mainstream, at the same time it also aims at ensuring the preservation and expression of diversity. With these objectives, Doordarshan has developed a three-tier programme service- the National, the Regional and the Local.[22]

National Programme

Started on 15 August, 1982 the national programme became available in all parts of the country - programmes originating from Delhi are relayed through the micro-wave and satellite links. National programme apart from giving the News in Hindi and English acquaints the public with the best achievements of the country in the field of Arts and also enlightens people of one area about the culture and life styles of people of the other areas. The programme also discusses the major problems the country is facing and also tells about the methods through which these problems are being solved. The programme has a mix of information, education and

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[21] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media- Yerterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.143.

[22] *Mass Media in India 1994-95*. Compiled and edited by Research, Reference and Training division, Publication Division; Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India. p. 38-39.

entertainment. The entertainment is provided mostly in Hindi and English in the form of serials, feature films, plays, music and dance shows.

Regional service

In the evening there is a regional service. It includes items on agriculture, animal husbandry, health, sanitation, small scale industries for the rural viewers besides other programmes for the specific audience like women, children, youth and ethnic communities from some Kendras. The programmes are telecast largely in the respective regional languages. Rich and entertainment oriented programmes like plays, skits, music and folk art having local relevance are also telecast in the chunk.

Local service

For effective communication, particularly in the field of development the programme have to be locale-specific. With this end in view, Doordarshan has established some Kendras which give purely local programmes. The second channel in the metro cities of Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta act as the local service for the cosmopolitan population of these cities.

Kuppuswamy in his research on the "Television in India" had done a remarkable job i.e to study the role of television and its various programmes in the society. To facilitate his study, he conducted field surveys in various cities in different parts of the country. He began the field survey of his study in 1951 and it took him four years long to complete that is in the year 1954. In this study, he found out that the television programmes in India can be of three broad types:

(a) *Entertainment*- drama, music, films, varieties etc.

(b) *Information* – arts, science, crafts, cooking, shopping, travel, etc.

(c) *Orientation* –public events, public issues, personal relations etc.[23]

Now, out of the above three programmes one may well think of a question as - what are the kind of programmes which people regardless of age and sex like to see on TV. The answer which we can safely assume is 'entertainment' programmes, but this too needs to be clarified as such programmes are of different types. What kind of entertainment should the Doordarshan use for public telecasting? A study conducted by the French National Commission for UNESCO showed that 'fiction-based entertainment' constitute half of actual viewing time of people.[24]

Considering the Indian context, it is quite clear from the programmes of Doordarshan that entertainment means formula feature films and film-based soft-ware. Most of these films generally constitute the elements of sentimentality, sex, violence and melodrama. For example, *Chitrahar,* which features Hindi movie songs show "a man and a woman roll over each other down with grassy slope, or allegedly 'folk' dancers swinging hips and bosom, is one such popular entertainment in Indian Television programmes. But the problem here is that the TV is seen by the entire family which makes such kinds of programmes a source of embarrassment. The viewer retains his anonymity in case of films in cinema hall, whereas in the family,

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[23] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976, *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 47.

[24] Antony Brock, "Telivision: The Square-eyed Leveller", *Social Welfare*, Jan. 1984, p. 37. The name of the study is "Three Weeks of Television".

children, adults and old persons see the same programmes in the same room making the viewing highly awkward and disgusting."[25]

Doordarshan's concept of entertainment seems to match the observation made by Jawaharlal Nehru in the Autobiography, "I am told most of the Indian films, both silent and talkies, do not err on the side of artistry...One discovers with a shock of pleasant surprise how fundamentally and yet unconsciously artistic the mass of the village people are. Not so the middle classes; they seem to have lost their roots and have no aesthetic tradition."[26]

In order to provide meaningful entertainment Doordarshan should combine entertainment with information and education. The programmes should be oriented towards indigenous ethics and aesthetics. Entertainment is a double-edged weapon, unless used properly, it can cause immense damage. Doordarshan has to make a judicious mix "of sound and sense of beauty and truth, of form and context".[27]

Doordarshan should therefore, make few, but good quality films. It should promote production of television films keeping in view the life-enrichment of the audience and social relevance. Doordarshan should act as a "patron, projector and promoter" of tribal and folk art of India. This can be done by preserving and promoting these art forms as precious components of Indian art (authenticity) and by

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[25] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 80.
[26] Jawaharlal Nehru as quoted in ibid., p. 159.
[27] *An Indian Personality for Television*, Vol. 1 p. 160.

promoting and portraying these in compatible forms with the needs of the present-day society.[28]

However, in the Khasi context, the concept of entertainment programmes is different. Entertainment programmes telecast by the Shillong Kendra are mostly themed on the culture of the Khasis and other North-Eastern States as well, in order to foster national pride and national integration among the viewers. Among cultural programmes, music constitutes a big chunk. Apart from the telecast of known artistes, Shillong TV stations is striving to dig out new musical talent in these hills, audition them and provide them with opportunities to display their talent. But mostly, folk performers particularly singers include those brought from AIR Shillong.

The folkdances of the Khasis (eg, *Nongkrem*, *Sajer*, *Shad Suk Mynsiem*, *Lukhmi*, *Rongkhli* etc), which find a place in the cultural programmes broadcast by the Shillong Kendra are field-based. Other types of cultural programmes include the regular production and telecasting of commissioned programmes mostly on folklore themes which is telecast every Monday and Tuesday evening from 6.30 pm to 7.00 pm. Under the commissioned programme based on traditional culture and rituals of the sub-tribes of the Khasis are used for telecasting. Examples are "*Ka Khlieh U Syiem Lukhmi*" of the Bhois, "*U Thlen*", "*Ka Apot*" "*Manik Raitong*" of the Khynriams and "*U Mar Phalangki*" of the Jaintias to name a few. Well established playwrights are approached to write for Doordarshan. Besides, novels, stories and plays of famous authors are suitably adapted for use over television. The different

[28] *Ibid.* p. 167.

Kendras exchange their productions among themselves for providing a varied fare to viewers as also to reduce production expenses.

Separate programmes for children and youth was also started by the DDK Shillong on April 1995 to encourage children and youth to participate in songs, poetry recitations, drama, skit, discussions, quiz show, talk show etc. The children programme called "*Na La Pongshai*" is telecast every Saturday and Sunday from 5.00 to 5.30 pm. The family programme called "*Na Lyngwiar Dpei*" is telecast on every Saturday and Sunday at 4.30 -5.00 pm, while "*Ka Rympei*" a programme particularly for women is telecast from 6.30 pm-7.00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Youth programmes are from 5.31 pm- 6.00 pm from Monday to Friday. The DDK Shillong divided its scheduling programmes into two parts every year i.e., the Summer Fixed Point Chart starting from April to September, and Winter Fixed Point Chart starting from October to March. The following table is a glimpse of the transmission programmes of the DDK Shillong of the Summer Fixed point Chart of the previous year i.e. 2008.

PRASAR BHARATI
BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF INDIA
DOORDARSHAN KENDRA, SHILLONG
SUMMER FIXED POINT CHART TO BE EFFECTIVE FROM 6TH APRIL 2008
(MONDAY TO FRIDAY)

5.30 PM To 5.31 PM	5.31 PM To 5.45 PM	5.45 PM To 6.00 PM	6.00 PM To 6.30 PM	6.30 PM To 7.00 PM	7.00 PM To 7.15 PM	7.15 PM To 7.30PM	7.30 PM To 7.45 PM	7.45 PM To 7.59 PM	7.59 PM To 8.00 PM
Transmission Opening Montage & Programme Highlights	Devotional Music Mixed	Legal Hints	Agriculture (Krishi Darshan)	Women Programme - 1,2,3 & 5 Best Programme of the Month	City Scan (Khasi)	North East News	Jhankar (Non-Local Music)	City Scan (English)	Programme Highlights Over to Delhi Captions
Transmission Opening Montage & Programme Highlights	Devotional Music Mixed	Health Programme	Agriculture (Krishi Darshan)	Commissioned Programme (06 - 07)	City Scan (Khasi)	North East News	Western Music	City Scan (English)	Programme Highlights Over to Delhi Captions
Transmission Opening Montage & Programme Highlights	Devotional Music Mixed	Employment News	Agriculture (Krishi Darshan)	A Day in the Village 1,3. TV Show 2,4&5	City Scan (Khasi)	North East News	Khasi Music	City Scan (English)	Programme Highlights Over to Delhi Captions
Transmission Opening Montage & Programme Highlights	Youth Programme		Agriculture (Krishi Darshan) Phone-in Live Prog: 2	Meghalaya Matters: 1,3 & 5 The Overview: 2, 4.	City Scan (Khasi)	North East News	Jaintia Music	City Scan (English)	Programme Highlights Over to Delhi Captions
Transmission Opening Montage & Programme Highlights	Devotional Music Mixed	Science: 1 & 5, Career Guidance: 2,3 & 4	Agriculture (Krishi Darshan) Phone-in Live Prog: 2	Flagship Programme of Central Government	City Scan (Khasi)	North East News	Instrumental Music	City Scan (English)	Programme Highlights Over to Delhi Captions

PRASAR BHARATI, BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF INDIA, DOORDARSHAN KENDRA, SHILLONG
SUMMER FIXED POINT CHART TO BE EFFECTIVE FROM 6TH APRIL 2008 (SATURDAY & SUNDAY)

TRANSMISSION OPENING MONTAGE		TRANSMISSION OPENING MONTAGE	3.00 PM TO 3.01PM
DEVOTIONAL MUSIC		FOLK MUSIC	3.01 PM TO 3.30 PM
MUSIC PROGRAMME	3.30 PM TO 3.45 PM	CONTRIBUTION FROM OTHER KENDRAS 1 A DAY IN THE VILLAGE 2 TV SHOW 3 THE OVERVIEW 4 & 5	3.30 PM TO 4.00 PM
SPORTS PROG: 1 & 5. PROGRAMME ON DTH: 2 CONSUMER AWARENESS PROG: 3 & 4	3.45 PM TO 4.00 PM	PLAY	4.00 PM TO 4.30 PM
LITERARY PROGRAMME		FAMILY PROGRAMME	4.30 PM TO 5.00 PM
HINDI		COMMISSIONED PROGRAMMES	5.00 PM TO 5.30 PM
COMPOSITE MUSIC PROGRAMME		CHILDREN PROGRAMME3	5.30 PM TO 6.00 PM
QUIZ SHOW 1,3,5 THE READING ROOM 2 PLACES OF TOURIST INTEREST 4	PHONE - IN LIVE 2 & 4	DANCES OF NE 1 & 5 RURAL DEVELOPMENT 3	6.00 PM TO 6.30 PM
PROG ON DISABLED 1 & 5 COMMISSIONED PROGRAMME 2 PROGRAMME ON AIDS AWARENESS 3 ON THE MOVE 4	SELF EMPLOYMENT 3	SENIOR CITIZENS 1 & 5	6.30 PM TO 6.45 PM
SHILLONG THIS WEEK (ROUND UP OF THE MAJOR EVENTS OF THE WEEK)		GLIMPDRD	6.45 PM TO 7.00 PM
			6.45 PM TO 7.00 PM
ISSUES OF THE WEEK		CITY SCAN KHASI	7.00 PM TO 7.15 PM
NE NEWS		NE NEWS	7.15 PM TO 7.30 PM
PLAY 1 & 2 IA TYRKO SHIPOR (CHIT CHAT A WHILE) 3, 4 & 5		SELECTED SONGS OF THE WEEK	7.30 PM TO 7.45 PM
		CITY SCAN ENGLISH	7.45 PM TO 7.59 PM
PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT OVER TO DELHI CAPTION		PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHT OVER TO DELHI CAPTION	7.59 PM TO 8.00 PM

Programmes on legal hints include the information about law and order, the IPC (Indian Penal Code), motor accident, rape case, murder and etc. The narrow casting or Krishi Darshan is a programme that gives information about agriculture,

The information programmes of Dooradrshan include News and current affairs. In the DDK Shillong, news bulletins are telecast in Khasi and English for fifteen minutes duration. Information programmes also include programmes on agriculture, adult education, and employment, health as also programmes for women, children, and youth. DDK Shillong telecasts regular current affairs programme on its regional network. Other regional Kendras also have regular Current programmes in their own languages.

Doordarshan Programmes have a mix of education, information and entertainment. Regular Educational Television (ETV) programmes are telecast in a number of states in different languages giving programmes both for formal and informal education. Formal education is to put education within the reach of students in small villages and towns. School telecasts, began in 1961 in India on a regular basis, and have been further expanded with the passing of time. These programmes are not meant only for imparting education to the students but also aim at supplementing the efforts of teachers in respect of various subjects like physics, chemistry, mathematics, history, English etc. Lessons are telecast as per the curriculum developed by the various States. Educational TV programme transmitting

centers are located at Delhi, Bombay, Srinagar, Madras, Jaipur, Muzaffarpur and Sambalpur.[29]

Programmes on science and career guidance are an example for such type of programmes of the DDK Shillong. Another example is the countrywide education programme provided by the UGC and which is telecast on both the national and regional Networks. Besides this, syllabus based programmes for the students of Indira Gandhi National Open University are being telecast for further information of the students.

On the other hand, informal education that were telecast through TV programme ranges from learning about behavior, managing personal and societal relationships in everyday life, about management of accidents and disasters, about nursing, medicare, hygiene, about managing chronic diseases like diabetes , arthritis and other disabilities, about handicrafts, learning arts and crafts, about appreciation of culture etc.

Apart from the above, advertisement is another tool that the Doordarshan is making use for its broadcast. In Western countries, television largely depends on the money that comes from advertisement because it operates in the private sector while Indian TV operates under full control of the government. Advertisement on television propagates a consumerist culture.[30] The Joshi Committee observes "the advertising on Doordarshan is overwhelmingly of consumer goods and services,

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[29] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media- Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.144.
[30] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 83

which should in the Indian context, be classified as luxuries"[31], unlike the case of newspapers where other types of advertisements including employments, matrimonial, housing etc are there. An important question involved here is, whether a government controlled- medium like TV should promote advertisement of luxury items in the Indian context or not. The promotion of consumerist culture by media is one of the major factors of spreading corruption. This is what the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi believed. She said, "The constant emphasis of the media on material goods, the vision of the comforts enjoyed in advanced societies, proliferation of regulations, the pressure of inflation, the breakdown of religious and ethical constraints, a general rise in permissiveness- all these contribute to increase in corruption"[32]

Therefore, Acharya writes that it is clear since Doordarshan is not for 'business television" but for "education, information and entertainment" medium for the people, it cannot and should not be commercialized. But sometimes because of the financial constraints, they are forced to have advertisements on TV. Then, the Doordarshan should be extra-cautious and its main objective of a people – oriented TV is not forgotten. A better way is to have sponsored programmes of quality. There must be a "proper criteria" for deciding upon what kinds of programmes should be allowed sponsorship.[33] .

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[31] *An Indian Personality for Television*, Vol. 2 p. 47.

[32] As quoted in "An Indian Personality for Television", Vol. 1, p. 177. Indira Gandhi's address to officers of C.B.I. and State Anti-corruption Agencies in New Delhi on 23 March, 1981.

[33] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 84.

Bharat Nirman, a governmental programme is one such programme where the advertisements are used for telecast by the DDK Shillong and other regional Kendras. This programme comprises of seven other heads, viz.

i) *National Rural Health Mission* (NRHM)

ii) *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* (SSA)

iii) *Mid Day Meal* (MDM)

iv) *National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme* (NERGS)

v) *Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission* (JNNURM)

vi) *Right To Information* (RTI), and

vii) *Rajiv Gandhi Drinking Water Mission* (RGDWM)

These advertisements programmes are telecast as per direction from the Directorate of Doordarshan Delhi.

Television and Social Change:

Television has a definitive role in the process of social change. Among the other forms of mass media communication, television has a unique place and has enormous potential for inducing change. In this chapter, the scholar shall try to examine to what extent TV can act as a 'catalyst of social change', she will also examine the impact of television on the society. Before continuing the discussion, the scholar would like to quote from what Acharya found in his study on the role, the advantages and effects of television in India. Television, writes Acharya, has the potential to become a catalyst of social change by:

(a) Becoming a medium of communication for national development;

(b) Sensitizing all sections of the society about the "exploitation of the poor"; and

(c) Educating the masses and developing the human resources.[34]

The process of national development is complicated - it involves long range planning, industrialization, improvement in the agricultural practices and nutrition for all the people, control of population growth, etc. this process also includes exploitation of natural resources, transport planning, raising per capita income, increasing production and productivity, harmonious labour relations and, on the whole, involvement of all the people in the activities of the nation. The role of television is very significant; it can act as a "modern information multiplier" which can help in smoothen the process of national development, economic growth and social development.[35] The television can help in bridging the communication gap that exists in rural societies like Meghalaya. The television can also highlight the problems of the rural people. Further, television has a definite role in providing the farmers with latest scientific and technological innovations in modern agriculture. An eminent agricultural scientist, M.S. Swaminathan, in this connection, rightly points out, "when science and technology become the prime mover in shaping and directing agriculture, its transition from traditional to modern agriculture sets in. The advances made in the field of agriculture throw up new information and knowledge which

[34] *Ibid.* p.107.
[35] *Ibid.* p.108-109.

must be transferred and used on the farms for raising agriculture to a higher plane of productivity and efficiency. At the receiving end are millions of farmer families who are largely illiterate"[36]. TV has the potential of bridging the information gap.

Television can also make the poor aware and it has the capacity to highlight the plight as well as exploitation of the poor people. This will supplement the efforts of the government towards poverty alleviation. Unless there is a large scale spread of awareness among the poverty-stricken people, the anti – poverty schemes of the government cannot yield full results. The television has the potential to generate awareness within the poor masses at the grass –root level about the beneficial anti-poverty programmes of the government such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme, National Rural Employment Programme, and Rural Landless Programme etc.[37] Television has a tremendous potential for mass education and human resource development. In a gigantic country like India providing education to its entire people both in urban and rural areas is a huge problem. The role of mass media communication in general and TV in particular is therefore very significant.

Since Television is primarily a medium of information and entertainment, there are a number of controversies regarding its potentiality.[38] J.K. Doshi raises some issues in connection with this – whether development is basically a communication problem. Farmers know the use of fertilizers, pesticides, high yielding varieties, but the problem is they do not get these items when they need and

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[36] *An Indian Personality for Television*, Vol. 1, p. 5. (As quoted) from Acharya, p. 110.
[37] D. Bandopadhyaya, , "TV and Anti-poverty Programmes". *An Indian Personality for Television*, (Appendix)
[38] R.N. Acharya, 1987, *Television in India*, p. 111.

malpractices are seen. The farmers also do not find enough dividends out of their investment. Thus, though communication is an essential condition, it is not sufficient for development.[39] Considering Doshi's statement we can say that television has still not become a medium of the masses, in the real sense of the term, since most of the people cannot afford this at the prevailing high price. It is therefore mainly reaching the urban audience and a few rurals, thus neglecting the majority of rural population.

Story telling through Television:

Story telling is a solo performance of an oral narrative. The ancient art of storytelling endures as a recreational and educational activity in both rural and urban settings. Earlier, parents told bed-time tales to their children before sending them to sleep. Other tellers share jokes, personal stories, legends, and myths in social and educational contexts. Religious teachers tell stories to transmit spiritual histories and values. Naturalists tell stories to teach about the environment.

A new development since the 1970s has been the mushrooming of "non-traditional", "contemporary", "revivalist", or "professional" storytelling. Unlike a traditional story teller, who typically learns from, and tells stories to, populations who share a cultural heritage, a non-traditional teller may appropriate stories found in published texts from culture with which neither the story teller nor the audience have firsthand experience. Performance oriented, story interpretation is shaped by the individual teller's personal taste. A story heard at a festival even from a traditional story teller, may go through idiosyncratic transformations.

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[39] J.K. Doshi, "Television for Development", *Social Change*, Dec. 1983, Vol. 13(4), p. 23.

Non-traditional story telling was stimulated in the late 19th century when library schools began training librarians to tell stories. "Story hours" were offered in U.S. libraries as early as 1896, and in 1909 the American Library Association sponsored a story hour symposium. The popularity of non-traditional storytelling in 1990s is documented by the hundreds of storytelling festivals, classes, conferences and publications. National and regional storytelling directories list more than 1000 storytellers in the United States performing in schools, libraries, museums, coffeehouses, theatres, and festivals. Magazines and newspapers have further demonstrated public awareness and appreciation of the art of storytelling. It is not uncommon for thousands of people to attend regional storytelling festivals.[40]

It is obvious that modern technology has become progressively impersonal, and the face-to-face and simplicity of storytelling appears to be gaining personal and social appeal. Ironically, sales of storytelling audio cassettes and videotapes are also growing. A newer trend is the telling of traditional oral narratives especially by psychotherapists to help people obtain insights and heal psychological wounds. Therapeutic storytelling has been popularized by storyteller authors like Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly and Jack Zypes. Conversely telling traditional tales obtained from published texts by some nontraditional tellers is decreasing, supplanted by an increasing preference for telling original, personal and family tales.[41]

As narration is ageless, the impulse to tell a story and the need to listen to it have made narrative the natural companion of man throughout the history of

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[40] Ruth Stotter, 'Storytelling' in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, Jan Harold Brunvand (ed.), 1996. p. 690.

[41] *Ibid.*

civilization. Stories are able to adapt themselves to any local and social climate. They are old and vulnerable, but they are also new and up to date. While recognizing that folk narratives contain persistent and yet continually reinterpreted ideas, the student of folklore observes folktales mainly as an art creation shaped and carried by different groups of people. He views the diverse forms of the narratives, including their content elements and structural framework, as complex wholes of an oral art.[42] Folk narrative scholars should stress the following questions: what is the message of folk story? What are the forces that create, launch, disseminate, maintain, vary, and reinforce them? What do they mean to their performers and their audiences?

To continue further, a brief classification of the folk narratives perhaps will give us a better understanding of the discussion. Folk story or a folk narrative is a general name given to all types of folk stories. It encompasses in its group all genres of oral literature in prose, from religious tales (myths), historical (legend); magic (*Märchen*), animal tales, fables, anecdotes, and etc. Each of them has a separate function in the society and culture of the people they are found and told in. Folklorists have also accepted the distinction among these tales, that these forms of tales correspond to primary attitudes in human culture and by their very nature merge and blend into each other; the magic tale (*Märchen*) for instance expresses the escape from reality, and the legend faces the facts of reality, while the myth expresses the facts of the evolution of certain group of people. Still further, the folktales were told with a purpose of entertaining the listeners though sometimes it may serve as a medium for educating the young children.

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[42] Linda Dégh, 1972, 'Oral Folklore. Folk Narrative' in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction,* R.M. Dorson. ed. p. 53-55.

According to the concept of Grimm Brothers and their disciples, folk tales are the late relics of the ancient mythology of the Indo-Germans, and the myths of gods and heroes can be reconstructed from these fragmentary mosaics. According to the "heritage theory" of the Grimms, hero and magic tales were invented by the Indo-Germans, races and borrowed by others through migration and culture contact. Jacob Grimm's Teutonic Mythology (1835) inspired the so-called Mythologists, who saw generic relationship between language and mythology and claimed that the folktale reflected the symbolism of natural phenomena established by the myths. Max Muller (1823-1900), the most original among the Mythologists, traced the paths of the evolution of the ancient Aryan myths to verbal utterances originating in everyday experience of the primitive Aryans.[43]

While Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917), founder of the British school of anthropology, pointed out the survivals of "savage" myths in modern folk society and described their stages of evolution, the study of folktales acquired an ethnological foundation. It was Andrew Lang (1844-1912) who applied Tylor's ideas to narrative research. He compared motifs of European tales with Aryan and classical myth motifs and traced them back to primitive peoples, suggesting that the tales originated in the customs and beliefs of prehistoric man.[44]

The radical changes in folk culture following World War II made it clear to folklorists that most of the genres of folklore too have changed. As industrial expansion and urbanization lessen the disparity between villagers and city dwellers,

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[44] *Ibid.*

non-traditional narratives today, take the place of the folk narratives to be circulated among the audiences even in the remote isolated areas of the country. It is no different even in the Khasi Hills, seldom will one find parents tell bed-time stories to their children at night; after - meal gathering was replaced by television, and other recreational activities. Family members prefer watching TV programmes to listening to old stories, and above all the disappearance of the traditional hearth and a lack of good story-teller is one of the main reasons made the children of today have lost interest in listening to folk story telling.

The influencing power of modern electronic media and television in particular has been so potent that each one of us would switch over to it the moment we are free from our work. Television is used to influence viewer perspectives, sometimes politically, but mostly, commercially and socially. The historical study of television broadcast reveals that it is a powerful media for social integration, entertainment, and even the education of the viewers. The most important feature of television is its ability to bring events, news and entertainment into the intimacy of millions of homes, touching and affecting the lives of the entire family without restricting the age limits of its viewers. For instance, what children see and hear on TV is easily incorporated into their attitudes and behavioural repertory. Even one year old babies are seen to be watching TV for as long as an hour they prefer some performances over others. Before toddlers can string a sentence together they can sing commercial jingles, recite the slogans and even the background sounds. Such is the power of this new media.

Television is primarily a media for information dissemination which has also been used for home entertainment. Occasionally entertainment is 'used' to lure people to accept information, through either the news or a commercial advertisement. There is also a belief that TV entertainment can also be used for education and training.

TV has been called as a 'double edged weapon'. It can be the healing knife of a surgeon or a stabbing weapon of a killer. It can be a tool for building a vibrant nation or it can turn out to be destroyer of family ties and of relationships between the young and the old. It can become a reason for 'cultural degradation' or a catalyst for uniting the nation through bonds of understanding and appreciation amongst the people of various regions created by audio-visual communication. The important advantage of television is that anyone can watch and listen to television without any training. Doordarshan today, gives unmediated access to information to anyone who has an access to the medium. Power of media and its manipulative nature or its inexhaustible appeal to children is so unique that some studies have indignantly labeled it as a 'third parent'. Formerly, priests, teachers or gurus were regarded as a third parent but in the Western world, TV seems to displace them as the most influencing factor in shaping the young lives. In fact today efficacy of conventional teaching itself is being questioned. A teacher is now really a facilitator, a person who puts things down and shows students how exciting and wonderful they are. Anyone who wants to learn will learn. Enforcement or compulsion won't work. TV thus

appears to be insidious teacher.[45] TV has now entered living rooms and bedrooms, has invaded school rooms and the rural homes and watching it, has become almost addictive pastime for young children and the old alike.

The Doordarshan Kendra Shillong has actively made use of the folk stories for its story-telling programme which comes under the Commissioned Programme. Most of these folk stories were recorded and documented in the form of a modern and sophisticated tape library. Examples of such folk stories are "*Ka Apot*", a tale that tells about the origin of the betel leaf and betel nut - '*U Kwai, Tympew, bad Dumasla*', "*Ka Dur Maia U Thlen*" a story about the gigantic serpent that fed itself on human flesh and when killed and hacked by man, sworn to wreck vengeance on man. Besides the recording and telecast of folk stories, Doordarshan has also documented remarkable places such as Nongkhnum, a place famous for the second largest river island in Asia and seven beautiful waterfalls and a, occupation of certain group of people as "*Ka Lawei Ki Kamar*", that talks about the future of the iron smiths in Khasi Hills and many others like "*Tehsong ban Kiew*", "*Ka Ing Tin Saw*", and "*Thoh Shun Ki Blei*".

Telecasting of the folk story in the Doordarshan is in the form of docu-drama i.e. the intermixture of enactment and reality when original and real data were not available and when there is a need for shifting of the places for action. The story that shall be used for the discussion in this chapter is the documentary on the myth of U Thlen i.e. *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen* co-produced by Raphael Warjri and Doordarshan

[45] P.S. Deodhar, 2001, *The Third Parent: Growth and Development of Indian Electronics Media*, p. 23.

Kendra Shillong.

The unexplained and the mysterious always gives rise to a progression of fancy, suspicion, fear and hatred. This is particularly true in the case of a Being whose strange form and mysterious habits have both intrigued and frightened man since the beginning of recorded history. Even today, we are still not completely familiar with its habits and functions. Two noted herpetologists wrote, "While we have learned a great deal about snakes during the past century, there is much that is unknown."[46] It is, therefore, not surprising that through the ages; a mass of folklore material has developed about this creature.

The myth of U Thlen is one such subject in Khasi folklore which constitutes the core of most folk stories among Khasi beliefs. The belief is that the Thlen correlates with sorcery in the Khasi society. It has to be *reared* (emphasis added) by someone, to be fed and nourished with human blood which in return will make its keeper prosper in wealth, luck and good fortune. Furthermore, the Thlen was considered by its keepers as the god of effortless wealth which is obviously unjust wealth. There are a number of versions with regard to the Thlen myth and the origin of sorcery among the Khasis as recorded by writers. One of the versions goes like this:

In olden days there was a market in the village of *Langhiang Kongkhen,* and a bridge sacred to the gods here. All the people frequented that heavenly market. On

[46] C. H. Curran, & C. Kauffield,: *Snakes and Their Ways* (New York 1937), Introduction, xvi.

the way, they passed by *Rangjyrteh* village where there was a cave, wherein dwelt a gigantic Thlen (serpent). When they went to the market at *Rangjyrteh* they were swallowed up by the Thlen. If the people traveled in even numbers, nothing would happen to them, but if they travelled in odd numbers, then one would always be found missing after crossing that spot. Therefore, they wanted rid themselves of the serpent but nobody dared to take the initiative.

One day a man happened to travel alone from that place to the market. The Thlen was about to swallow its victim when the brave and cunning man pleaded and convinced that he be spared for the time being, and promised that he would compensate for its patient waiting, by bringing a lump of pork along with him. True to his promise the man returned from the market along with a lump of pork on one hand and some other things on the other hand. The Thlen was very happy to see the man was coming towards its cave with that pork. But this time the man pleaded that he had brought something from the market for his child, a gift from him before he dies, at the same time he said that he have to take part in eating the sacrificial food in his sister's house and he also promised that the Thlen also is entitled to eat the food he was going to bring.

The Thlen believed the man, because he had kept his promise earlier. After sometime the man returned bringing together with him the food he bought from market, and the special sacrificial food brought from his sister's house. The man then asked the Thlen to close its eyes and keep its mouth open. Then he placed a lump of pork in its mouth. The Thlen found the food very tasty praised the man for his intelligence, promising that he would let the man free if he could give such a

delicious food once a week. But the man replied that as he had promised to be eaten by the Thlen, so he wanted to keep his word. Then the man asked the Thlen to open its mouth widely and straighten its neck, for the next 'food item'. As soon as the Thlen opened its mouth, he threw the 'food' down the serpent's gullet. The Thlen discovered that it was unbearably hot and immediately swallowed it. The man ran away leaving the Thlen to writhe to its death for the 'food' it had just swallowed was non-other but a ball of red-hot iron. The Thlen's innards were on fire and it realized that the end was near. "Treacherous men, I will not let you free after what you have done to me. I swear that I will wreck vengeance on your people if only a piece of my flesh is left"[47] It screamed and writhed in the agony of its death pangs and the people hearing this were stricken with terror at his words.

When the Thlen finally died in convulsions that brought on earthquakes of dangerous proportions, its body was dragged out of the cave and laid on the rock face that was the bank of a nearby river. All races of the world were invited to help the Khasis in disposing the serpent's flesh by eating it up. There was a great feast on that spot where every kind of food and dishes were prepared and served. All had consumed their shares for fear of the curse of the serpent that it will have its revenge even if a single piece of its flesh was left.

However, one Khasi woman hid a piece of its flesh and carried it home with the thought of giving the delicious meat to her daughter who was not present on that day. As ill luck would have it, the meat was left lying forgotten for many days, from which the serpent regained its life in a mysterious way.

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[47] S.K,Majaw, n.d.: *The Thlen* p. 20.

D.T. Laloo in his book '*Ka Lasubon*'[48] emphasized on the myth being the source and core to the prevailing belief on the Thlen sorcery. According to his account, the Thlen was duped by his neighbor *Kajang* through his wife *Ka Hynroh* to devour his own child; it was at that time that he vowed to eliminate mankind after he was summoned by the divine congregation. In the congregation he defies god's decree and took a pledge to devour mankind and earn his wealth, instead of God's covenant which holds that righteousness is what would have to be earned by every living being. From that day God sent the Thlen to the cavern to stay away from human habitation; U Thlen hides in the subterranean in a place that is known as *Dainthlen*, meaning to hack the Thlen into pieces. It is a massive rocky flat land with a sudden perilous ridge where the Dainthlen waterfalls cascades down the dense eerie jungle below. In the precinct of this place is the sacred grove called '*Lawsuidnoh*' in which there was a trap hole for the Thlen to catch the victims.

At the beginning, man was a silent spectator to the Thlen's notorious deeds, but when he could not tolerate any longer, he sought the consent of the *Ka Lei Hukum* mother goddess' decree, which authorized him to terminate the Thlen. Man conspired and a trap was set: one man made friends with the Thlen, who was in the manifestation as the serpent, and then he fed him with pounds of pork for some time and ultimately sprung the trap which was set on the glutton serpent. On the chosen day the Thlen was deceived by man who fed him with a raw marble boulder dipped in extremely hot molten iron ore, instead of pork's fat. Instantly the Thlen shuddered and writhed with the pain, inside the snaked cavern causing great terror which

[48] D.T. Laloo, 1987, *Ka Lasubon*, p. 12-25.

frightened mankind, who ran amok as the tormented serpent, spiraled to Dainthlen till it stay still. After a prolonged commotion everything was quite and calm, but nobody dared to confirm its death. Ultimately, a house fly and a lizard offered to do the job, the fly flew in the air and landed on the anus of the serpent, while the lizard crawl and tickle with its tail in ear but the Thlen lay unmoving. When the Thlen's death was confirmed, men rejoiced, they pulled the body to the stream where the Dainthlen Falls cascades, and they hacked it to pieces. A grand feast was organized to consume the pieces of the Thlen and those portions which were not edible were burnt to ashes to eliminate any lingering traces of this evil being from the earth. The fossil traces of the Thlen and the utensils used for slaughtering and cooking of the Thlen's flesh are still visible, though some others have been defaced. All creatures attended the feast and among the animals, the elephant venture to swallow the Thlen's flesh, despite being herbivorous. Everybody devoured the portions due to them except for one Khasi lady, Ka Ngaid[49] who kept a piece for her son who could not attend the feast. She hid it in her hind hair lock and the moment she reached home she kept it on the shelf above the hearth. However, she forgot all about the piece of meat until one day the piece of flesh resurrected into a tiny snake which disgusted the old woman. Immediately, she wanted to get rid of the abhorrent creature, but it pleaded with the lady by means of a promise to bring wealth, fortune and luck to the lady on the condition that the old lady provide it with human blood. Seduced by the inherent greed of man, she agreed. Thus Thlen-rearing began.

[49] According to oral version as retold by Mr. Jerin Sawian in the film, *Ka Ngaid* was the first woman to rear the Thlen.

As these tales narrate, the Thlen is believed to be a dreaded evil being, which feeds on human blood, symbolic of the life force of man – it represents the sucking of the vital force of man, by an animal bent on destroying him after his supposed betrayal by man. In return, the Thlen brings prosperity to its keepers by providing untold wealth and good fortune. This practice of rearing the Thlen is believed to be followed till today by some families (clans) among the Khasis. However, it must be mentioned that no one has beheld upon the true form of the Thlen, not even its keepers – so many people perceive the Thlen to be only an idea in the minds of people. Our forefathers believed that the death of the giants and monsters means the triumph of man over the natural force like the Thlen, which is one of the protectors of nature. Some giants represent the massive gigantic minerals like limestone rocks, coal fields widely spread in Khasi and Jaintia Hills, which are exploited by people through ages. This may be explained by analyzing this myth.

When we delve deep into the dynamics of the story of U Thlen, we find that it is a narrative of the conflict between man and nature. The tradition of iron-ore extraction and metallurgy amongst the Khasis is an ancient one, and this has been repeatedly proven and documented by folk traditions, contemporary academic studies and scientific research conducted by the Geological Survey of India. The area in question that is present day Cherrapunjee and its adjoining areas have seen iron-ore extraction and also the extraction of other allied minerals such as coal and limestone on a large scale that has completely left the area desolate now. Today what can be seen are only the presence of residual minerals and abandoned iron slags.

Forest cover has been largely denuded and the heavy rainfall that the place is subjected to has compounded the problem making the land barren and sterile.

The existence of metallurgy as an occupation amongst the Khasis during the pre - historic times reveals the technological advancement that was there, and in order to sustain this economic activity man has to search for raw materials which ultimately lead to the destruction of the natural wealth and ecological imbalance. Obviously, the intrusion made into the habitat of wild life, which in this myth is symbolized by the Thlen. This action would indeed spur a reaction and the supposed atrocities committed by the Thlen point to this. The Khasis believe in the supremacy of the soul and therefore even the natural world is attributed a soul. There are specific tutelary deities who are charged with the task of protecting the natural world.

A.W. Buckland made a study on the origin and nature of the serpent in connection with metallurgy and she discovered that a large number of the old serpent-myths representing this reptile as associated in some way with precious metals and precious stones; the serpent constantly appears as the guardian of hidden treasures and the revealer of secret knowledge; whilst the deities, kings and heroes who are either symbolized by the serpent, or supposed to partake of its nature are commonly described as the pioneers of civilization and the instructors of mankind in the arts of agriculture and mining. The ancient Indian Indra, the Chaldæa Hoâ, the

Egyptian Kneph and Osiris and the Mexican Quetzacoatl are examples of such divinities.[50]

In seeking to explain the origin of this widespread veneration for so deadly an animal as the serpent, Buckland argues that the animals which are ancient objects of veneration were generally those which had rendered, or were supposed to have rendered, some original service to man. Hence she is led to believe that the serpent must have played some part in aiding man in the original discovery of metals. It may be supposed that in recognition of this service the serpent was at first assumed as a totem or emblem, and then came to be venerated and even worshipped, as a distinguished benefactor of mankind. According to Buckland, a careful study of the traditional and monumental evidence on this subject tends to show that the early serpent-worshipping Turanian races of the East were the first workers in metal, and that they migrated westwards, probably from India to Egypt and Chaldæa, and thence to Europe and even to America,- bearing the serpent as their totem, carrying with them an acquaintance with the metals and gems, together with the rudiments of agriculture, navigation, and astronomy, a system of megalithic architecture and a peculiar group of sepulture. These Turanian tribes seem, however, to have been acquainted with only three metals- gold, silver, and copper- and unlike the Khasis had no knowledge of the art of smelting metals from their ores.

The Thlen, as was mentioned in the folk stories, hid himself in *Ka 'Law Suidnoh,* a forest full of caves and caverns. The Thlen then can doubtlessly be

[50] A.W. Buckland, 1875, 'The Serpent in connection with Primitive Metallurgy: An Abstract' in *The Journal of the Anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 4, p. 60.

assumed to be the guardian of natural wealth symbolized by the jungle; but unlike the serpent-myths of other regions, the Thlen neither taught any arts of agriculture or mining to the Khasi men, nor did he permit them to destroy his territory. But when man did not respect the value of nature because of his greed and his technological advancement, it finally triggered the warfare between him and the natural world struggling for survival.

Therefore we find that the Thlen myth is a symbolic portrayal of this conflict that took place during pre-historic times and which is presented to us through layers of symbols. The myth offers a crucial narrative with loaded meanings left to those discerning enough to see the significance of a great conflagration or clash of interest in the past. The Thlen assumed a malignant role only later and this view is something perpetuated by man, as the resistance of the natural world to exploitation was unacceptable to him. It was in man's interest, therefore, to create horrific and demonic attributes about the Thlen. This is a universal phenomenon witnessed in many parts of the world in different forms and manners.

In the story, the Thlen was slain by molten iron-ore, which symbolizes the victory of technology over the natural world. The death of the natural world implies man's supremacy, when man has succeeded in killing the steward. There was great joy among the people when the protector of the natural forces was eliminated which ensured man's domination.

There is, however, an attempt of the natural world to regenerate and as the story chronicles the resurrection of the Thlen through the single piece of flesh left

over. By inference then, man cannot master the Being that created him. The belief perpetuated about the Thlen is that when it regained its life, it remained with its keepers, attaching itself to property by bringing prosperity and wealth to them. But the condition that it lays down is awful: the Thlen was to be supplied with human blood. The portion that deals with the Thlen regaining life from the piece of forgotten meat is perhaps a folk metaphor to explain the reanimation of the natural world. However, this is symbolic in that the practice of keeping or harboring the Thlen is attributed only to certain families who reputedly keep the tradition of the Thlen alive in a very esoteric way. It would also be interesting to examine the extension of the Thlen-appeasement tradition to the black magic but, it may be pointed out that we can only refer to this as a latter-day development, which could be seen as an attempt to associate evil practices such as murder, with the Thlen figure.

The Thlen-belief has survived to this day just as metaphors of the natural-world discourse are still alive amongst the Khasis. This survival is largely psychological rather than spatial. A case in point is the belief in the sacred groves in which their exact existence is few and far between in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. But the people still have a strong belief that there exist certain groves, which are sacred. In most of the places, and only few of these groves still exist in certain areas like *Mawphlang*, *Mawsmai* in Cherrapunjee, *Moiang* in Bhoi area etc. The people also perform propitiation rituals in the form of prayers and offering of libation to the deities who are believed to inhabit these groves. The same parallel can be drawn to the Thlen. Not all Khasis believe in the Thlen, yet there those who worship and rear

it by offering prayers and human sacrifices as thanksgiving for the prosperity of the family.

Sacrifices of human blood to the Thlen are superstitions among the Khasis, which is still prevalent till the present day. Gurdon in his book *The Khasis* wrote, "This superstition is deep rooted amongst these people, many families in these hills are known or suspected to be the keepers of a 'Thlen' and are dreaded or avoided in consequence"[51]. The keepers of the Thlen are known as '*Nongri Thlen*' or '*Nongshohnoh*' i.e. one who overpowers the victims for the sacrifice to U Thlen. Gurdon believed that "The Thlen superstition is probably of very ancient origin and it is possible that the Khasi sacrifices to the Thlen demon may be connected with primeval serpent-worship, which characterizes the Cambodians who were undoubtedly the earliest religion of the Mons"[52]. This may be perceived as snake-worship rather than human sacrifice, as there is no documented record of human sacrifice that is practiced by the Khasis or the Pnars of Jaintia Hills.

Serpent worship is prevalent in many ancient religions, and is practiced in many parts of India, and elsewhere in the world where snakes are dangerous. Most forms of snake-worship however, involve blood sacrifices, and they are open rites, performed with the knowledge of others in order to appease the snakes or the gods whom they are supposed to represent. It was worshipped in Egypt, Babylon, Palestine, China, India, America, England, France, Italy, Ireland, Scandinavia, (Sweden and Norway), Greece, Africa, - in a word, all over the world. It was

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[51] P.R.T. Gurdon, 1907(1987), *The Khasis*, p. 101.
[52] *Ibid.*

connected with the principal gods of both East and West, and with the most solemn worship practiced in the countries mentioned above. In Sweden and Norway, and in Macedonia, serpents were kept in the houses as household gods; in Greece and elsewhere, in temples as public ones. They were considered the preservers of Athens, as of Whidah on the coast of Guinea; and the savage of Louisiana carried a serpent and the sun as the symbols of his religion, and tattooed them on his skin. [53]

Evidence of serpent-worship exists even in Christians accounts as well. This can be seen clearly in the Book of Genesis, which describes the creation of the universe, the creation of man and the beginning of the human race, the origin of evil on earth. Eve was seen to have forgotten God's decree of not eating the fruit from the 'tree of knowledge' when she listened to the serpent's deceptive words. Though Eve did not offer any sacrifice to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, yet she revered it in her heart by not only eating the fruit by herself but she also offered even to her husband Adam to have a share of it so that they would gain wisdom as told by the serpent. The "enmity" which God originally put between the man and the serpent[54], is the only reasonable and satisfactory solution of the tremendous conflict which is ploughed so deep into the history of the world - the conflict between good and evil, between the righteous and the wicked.

The book of Genesis accounts for the temptation and fall of the first humans through the guile of the serpent and this attests and confirms the prevalence of serpent-worship. Deified as the serpent has been all over the world, it has always

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[53] W. G. Moorehead, 'Universality of Serpent-Worship': *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (Jan., 1885), p. 206. Published by: The University of Chicago Press.

[54] The Book of Genesis. 3: 15. p. 4.

been the emblem of the evil principle in nature, and its worship was inspired rather to avert evil than to express reverence or gratitude. It becomes a god in some cultures, and the sentiment of antipathy and aversion with which it is regarded still continues. Thus, we are told that while many Hindus pay religious homage to the serpent at the present day, they regard it, notwithstanding, "as a hideous reptile, whose approach inspires them with a secret awe, and insurmountable horror."[55] Though worshipped universally, the serpent was still "cursed above all the live stock and above every beast of the field."

Drawing inference from the above, it is therefore possible that the Khasi Thlen cult, performed in secret, developed out of some forgotten tribal sacrifices in which a human victim was slain. So, the sacrifices to the Thlen may be considered as ritual murder because the people who keep the Thlen sacrifice the victim to the Thlen only at night. As their culture advanced the ritual was given up by the tribesmen as a group, but was continued by a small minority in secret.[56] Not all of the Khasis believe in the snake-worship but a few of them and certain clans are believed to be the snake-worshippers or the Thlen keepers.

The belief of the Khasis on the existence of U Thlen is that it is connected with sorcery and blood sacrifice in order to gain wealth. However, some Khasis believe that the story of the origin of the Thlen or serpent demon is not confined

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[55] W. G. Moorehead, 'Universality of Serpent-Worship': *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (Jan., 1885), p. 206. Published by: The University of Chicago Press

[56] Namrata Shadap-Sen, 1981, *The Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People*, p. 215-216.

within the Khasi milieu. According to B.V. Rymbai,[57] this myth is not confined within Khasi milieu, it relates with Hindu Mythology where myth has it, that one among the seven serpents of the adjacent plains territory intruded into Khasi land after he was exorcised by his own mother due to his notorious character. It was Durga and Kali who ordered a decree to the mother of the notorious serpent to expel him for various crimes he committed. That was how he infiltrates and found solace in the hilly region of the Khasi territory. Therefore the belief about the serpent demon or the Thlen among the Khasis is not substantiated with facts and supported with tangible foundation. Though without concrete evidence, yet the Thlen sorcery is relevant, prevalent and universal in nature.

Among the common attributes of the serpent in Rabbinic literature, it was found that it is jealous, revengeful, and tempter. [58] When we refer this to the Khasi myth we find that the Khasi Thlen (characterized by the serpent) possesses the same attributes as the serpents of the Rabbis. This we can see clearly from the tale itself. The first attribute was seen when God marked with lime or '*thoh shun*' on the forehead of man during the divine congregation '*Ka Dorbar Blei*', a verdict to pronounce man as the greatest of all creatures on earth, the Thlen was jealous of man and that is the reason why he called man as the '*Langthohkhlieh*'. Again, the Thlen's revengeful attribute was seen in the tale when he cursed man before he died and swore to take revenge for what man did to him. "Treacherous men, I shall not leave you unavenged for what you have done to me..." were his last words to men and the

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[57] Referred from Raphael Warjri Manuscript

[58] Samuel Tobias Lachs, 'Serpent Folklore in Rabbinic Literature': *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), p. 169. Published by: Indiana University Press

existence of sorcery proved that the Thlen was true to his words. The Thlen is a *mrad kynsha* (weird or strange animal) and this makes it difficult for the keepers to tame. As seen in the tale, when Ka Ngaid brought a goat with white mark on its forehead instead of human, the Thlen was enraged at her foolishness. The Thlen threatened to swallow her and her family members alive if she could not give him what he wanted i.e. the human blood. This opened the eyes of Ngaid and she started hunting man for blood to feed the Thlen.

Besides the above three attributes of the serpent, the most frequently mentioned of its traits is that it is endued with large share of sagacity.[59] The notion that wisdom was inherent in the serpent, and was to be gained by homage paid to the reptile, was universal.[60]The wisdom of the serpent is assumed on the basis of the Christian biblical record as found in the conversation of the serpent and Eve at the Eden garden put by the Lord God; the serpent said to the woman -"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made"[61] and its association with the "tree of knowledge of good and evil"[62]. Not only is the serpent endowed with wisdom but belief according to the Rabbinic tradition had that eating parts of the snake's flesh gives man knowledge and/or an understanding of the language of animals. With few exceptions this wisdom is used for nefarious purposes.[63]

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[59] *Ibid.*

[60] W. G. Moorehead, 'Universality of Serpent-Worship': *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (Jan., 1885), p. 208.

[61] Book of Genesis 3:1. The Holy Bible: New International Version. p. 4

[62] *Ibid.* 2:17.

[63] Samuel Tobias Lachs, 'Serpent Folklore in Rabbinic Literature': *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), p. 170. Published by: Indiana University Press

However in the Khasi Thlen myth it was found that the keeper (of the Thlen) as well as the hired killer ate the flesh of the serpent Thlen yet there is no mention of their intention to commit crimes. The ignorance of the woman who reared the Thlen, innocent of his real motives, until he demanded human blood proves this point. Ka Ngaid in the story was seen to have misunderstood the concept of '*langthohkhlieh*' as called by the Thlen when he demanded food from her after he had made her flourish in wealth. The Thlen keepers and the hired killer (*menshohnoh*) have to be driven by some unconscious supernatural power to commit murder. For this, the keeper has to collect the liquid sweat from the body of the Thlen so, when he exerts the serpent sweats, and this sweat later is mixed with rice and rice beer. The rice and rice beer when mixed with the Thlen's sweat changes into a hypnotic power potion which is able to cast a spell on the people. If a person is sprinkled with such rice or '*Khaw tyndep*' he or she became stupefied and if the person drinks the rice beer or '*yiad tang snem*' he transforms into a dreaded killer. It is said that he visualizes people as insects ripe for a meal. That is why the person with weak essence/aura/soul or '*jem rngiew*' is more vulnerable than the person with a strong essence /aura/soul or '*ehrngiew*'. Essentially the act of murdering is driven by subconscious while the real human in the alleged culprits is not aware, innocent and ignorant about any incident. They only realize their participation and involvement in the crime at the after effect on their wellbeing.[64] Apparently, the keeper or sorcerer who devotes his life to the Thlen either flourishes or is tormented.

[64] Raphael Warjri: Manuscript

In folklore the distinction among snakes is not one of "poisonous" or "non-poisonous" but "friendly" or "hostile." In Khasi literature just as the rabbinic literature this distinction is reflected in the expressions of the domestic serpent or *U Thlen* and a field or mountain snake called *U 'len lum 'len wah.* The idea of a domestic snake is not restricted to only the Khasi or Jewish sources, but it is a universal one found in Roman antiquity, medieval Germany, and Sweden,[65] to name only a few areas. Several ideas are behind this motif of the house-serpent. First, the serpent was believed to be the guardian of the home. Since it is generally feared by man, it would protect the home by frightening strangers. Second, in many civilizations the serpent is considered as the embodiment or reincarnation of deceased ancestors who inhabit the home in the form of harmless serpents. In the neighborhood of Thebes there are some sacred serpents which are perfectly harmless. They are small size, and have two horns growing out of the top of the head. These snakes when they die are buried in the temple of Zeus, the god to whom they are sacred. [66] The serpent -guardian of the house is reported to be an Egyptian present-day belief. [67]

Not only were snakes kept within temples and private dwellings, they were associated particularly with the door and the entrance. For example, in Sweden snakes were placed under the threshold and, also, whenever a door latch was fitted

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[65] Samuel Tobias Lachs, 'Serpent Folklore in Rabbinic Literature': *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), p. 175. Published by: Indiana University Press

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] W. G. Moorehead: 'Universality of Serpent-Worship': *The Old Testament Student*, Vol. 4, No. 5 (Jan., 1885), pp. 205-210. Published by: The University of Chicago Press

into a door, a snake was first embedded before the latch was inserted.[68] Here we note the presence of the motif of the snake as protector of the house as well as its connection with the door latch. The door latch here metaphorically acts as the controller of the house. When the latch was put out from the door, anyone who wants to visit members of the house can do so, but if it was inserted then this would mean the closing hour for both the family members and the outsiders. As the domestic serpent was considered sacred, harmless and friendly to the members of the household, therefore, it was embedded to protect the entrance of the house first before it could protect the entire household from any dangers and enemies. Similarly, the Khasi serpent also was believed to protect his keepers and their houses but it was never placed under the threshold nor embedded in the door latch as the Sweden serpents. Instead the Khasi serpent as it was told, in order to make visible to the visitors it was sometimes seen to spiral itself in any of the pillar of the house particularly in the kitchen or sitting room. However, this act of the Thlen serpent was not meant to protect the house, but it was an act of embarrassing the owner of the house for their inability to satisfy his appetite.

It is almost a universal belief in folklore that the serpent has a fondness for milk. Some snakes do drink milk if it is provided for them, and it is common practice in India and the rest of the world. However, the case is not the same in the Khasi folklore, as the Thlen serpent here was seen to drink only human blood and that too only in non-metallic tool as it was affected to iron since man killed it with hot iron.

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[68] Samuel Tobias Lachs, 'Serpent Folklore in Rabbinic Literature': *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), p. 175. Published by: Indiana University Press

Further, as milk is clearly not the natural diet of the snake, the question then arises, how does one account for the fact that all over the world snakes are associated with milk, and sacred snakes are given milk to drink daily? This common motif seems to be clearly bound up with the motifs discussed earlier, namely the snake as the symbol of rejuvenation and reincarnation. The development of the notion probably came from a comparison with human life and habits. 'Milk' writes Lachs - is the drink of the newborn and, since the snake is considered to be rejuvenated and/or an incarnation of an ancestor who "starts life anew," the logical food to be given to this "new creature" is the same as is given to a baby, namely milk.[69]

The Khasis believe that the Thlen keeper can give up the practice, if they so desire. But for this they have to strip and surrender all the properties to the royal family including the clothes they wear. Later they can buy back at a token cost after all the properties are cleansed from the possession of the Thlen element. However those who are ashamed to approach the royal family for cleansing process, they would engage a priest secretly after throwing all properties including the clothes they wear. The priest would then perform the purifying rituals.[70]. It is also believed that the Thlen is afraid of the royal clan as they represent god, the god that condemned the Thlen to damnation, when he defy his decree during the divine congregation. The Thlen sorcery is a terrifying, secret and complicated affair that the practitioners of the sorcery also realized, and thus prefer to abstain from the practice. But at times the temptation for effortless prosperity surpasses the agony of the practice. The sorcerer understands that the practice of sorcery is against the society and mankind, a

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[69] *Ibid.* p.180

[70] Raphael Warjri: Manuscript.

vengeance avowed by the Thlen since he was humiliated by man during the divine congregation. The sorcerer is therefore, enslaved by the practice and his desire to be set free from the clutches of this malevolent creature and the lure for effortless wealth because it is difficult to satisfy the demands of the Thlen, which is in truth a vengeance against mankind.

The belief on the Thlen prevails throughout the Khasi populace amidst the progress of civilization, even the section of urban elite are engrossed with the phenomenon. The practice of sorcery amongst the Khasis is consciously confined to a single person or group within the family and if the mortal being of the sorcerer is dying, the Thlen-worship will secede to the most trusted successor identified by the present keeper. The sorcery involves sophisticated rituals and chants depicting the conflict between man and the serpent.

Contemporary intellectuals interpret the phenomenon as the ancient wisdom to contain human greed for unlimited possessions. Another version states that it is the clandestine attempt of the ruling clan to preserve the sanctity of governance from the influence of wealth and power. However, the encounter between man and nature follows human greed as the motivating feature which leads to a ravishing of nature. Man's quest for advanced knowledge leads him to plunder his environment. Deforestation, the emission of noxious fumes into the atmosphere, global warming and the melting polar ice caps including climate change are the actions and reactions of the struggle for power as man seeks to control the elements. Nature is hurt and responds in kind and responds according to the actions of her creatures. Man acts; and tries to conceal his wickedness with cleverness. Man may subvert the truth to

justify his deeds and condemn the nature that is actually represented in the idea of the Thlen.

Therefore, seen in this light, the Thlen is not a monster or demon, but is a Frankenstein created by man himself in his efforts to control and manipulate the mother (nature) that birthed and nourished him. The myth is an example of man's desire to assert control over and rule the natural world and perpetuate his suzerainty by labeling it as something evil. As such, the evil designs of man such as greed, avarice and lust for destruction get personified in the monstrous creation of U Thlen.

Chapter – IV

Films and Folklore

The motion picture originated when Edison invented the kinetoscope in 1899. Combining his kinetoscope with his photographs and recording, he produced the first synchronized sound film in Paris in 1902, when silent movie theatres had become popular in the world. However it should be noted that the first public exhibition of a motion picture was in 1896 in the United States and the first full length picture was exhibited in 1903 again in the United States. In India the first motion picture was shown by Lumiere brothers in Bombay in1896 and the regular feature film show started in Bombay in 1904. Thus the film was introduced to India almost simultaneously as in Europe and America. By the 1910 cinema houses sprang up in all the important cities exhibiting the western films.[1] The story technique in movies was developed by Griffith, while Forest's vacuum tube provided the amplification for the first talking motion picture in 1927. Thus it took more than 30 years for the flat, black and white silent flicks to be transformed into sound films.[2]

Combining story, pictures, motion, drama, emotions, dialogue and voice modulation with the potency of visual presentation, the cinema has become the 'darling' of all communication media. This is evident from the fact that people, despite the physical inconveniences involved in going to a cinema house, throng and jostle in queues for obtaining tickets. Although television, and for that matter video

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1 B. Kuppuswamy, 1976, *Communication and Social Development in India*, p. 71.
2 P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 53.

provide most of the ingredients within the home with all the comforts that it can provide, people still prefer to see pictures on wide screen in crowded halls. In the era of silent movies, spectators involved themselves vocally. Now, in the case of talkies, they are drawn into an emotional relationship with the characters, silently empathizing with them and sharing their anguish and happy moments. By portraying identifiable local environment, local character, local problems and locally tried out solutions, the film can cause more animation and produce viewer's affinity.

Before we move on, there are two questions that necessitate answers: (i) what is cinema? (ii) What is film?

To answer the first question, answers that readily come to our minds are cinema is as what Roberge[3] termed, "an art form", "a means of telling stories", "a business", "an entertainment", "a powerful medium", and possibly several other similar phrases. At the same time as these definitions of the cinema come to mind, there are also arises a feeling that cinema is something at once very personal and very social. That is when we think of the cinema we cannot but be reminded of very deep, personal, moments of love, joy, fear, for instance, emotions experienced in the darkness of the movie theatre. These experiences share the quality of some of our nocturnal dreams with a difference. In sleep for instance, we are totally powerless in front of our own mental screen. But in the cinema hall we are allowed to share someone else's dream,- a privilege, indeed- and we remain fully awake to the fact that what we are watching is, after all, "only a movie". Thus, the simple sentiments

[3] Gaston.Roberge, 1992, The *Ways of Films Studying: Film Theory and The interpretation of Film*, p. 4.

evoked by the cinema have deep personal resonances. But that is not all; cinema plays quite an important role in our social life too.

The cinema, wrote the documentarist Paul Rotha in the 1930s, 'is the great unresolved equation between art and industry'[4]. It was the first and is possibly still the greatest, of all the industrialized art forms which have dominated the cultural life of the twentieth century.

Cinema of course is not a means of live communication like, say, the telephone. Good films are like paintings by the Great Masters; it is a means of expression and that is why it is an art. From the point of view of aesthetics, Malhan writes: 'the art of cinema is called the art of all arts, absorbing other arts ranging from dance and drama to novels and short stories, from art to architecture. Cinema is most persuasive. Seeing provides the most direct communication to the mind and images do not need to be translated to be understood. Hence, a film can be enjoyed despite the viewer's ignorance of the language employed in the dialogue or narration. This, however, could act as a detrimental factor sometimes and adversely affect the people, especially young children and those persons who are innately prone to the influence of evil, sex or violence. For this reason films are censored judiciously and creatively. [5]

Now, to delve into the question of what exactly is film, we may quote Roberge who writes, "A film is a commodity produced by an industry and circulated

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[4] Quoted by Geoffrey, Nowell-Smith (ed.): General introduction note, in 'The Oxford History of World Cinema'. 1996, p. xix.

[5] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 54.

among consumers by a trade which itself enjoys the support of public business. Movies are made for the largest possible audiences, as a means of mass communication, the film medium has to compete and collaborate with other media, especially television. Films occupy such an important place in our lives that they are believed to fulfill important social functions, like providing recreation, information and education that is why films are kept under control during and after their making by those who direct it and those who have a say in the evolution of social life, like politicians among others".[6]

Films can be and have been regarded as the living forms of contemporary folk stories of the world held by a particular society at one time. They are the collected dreams in which are sorted out experiences of the past, perception of the present and anticipation of the future. For most people, watching a film is mainly as entertainment giving them pleasure. Fortunately, the spread of film culture instills in people an appreciation of films which is conducive to a more responsible use of them.

Advent of film making in India

In India immediately after the first film was viewed in Bombay in 1896, film making experiments were started by Harischandra Sawe Bhatvadekar in Bombay and Hiralal Sen in Calcutta. Both imported movie cameras and made films; the former on wrestling matches and the hanging Gardens, Bombay and the latter on theatrical performances. It was in 1913 that Dadasaheb Phalke, the father of Indian cinema,

[6] Gaston Roberge, 1992, The *Ways of Films Studying: Film Theory and The interpretation of Film*, p. 8.

screened his first film, Harishchandra, depicting the story of a great legendary votary of truth. Inspired by a western film, *Love of Christ*, he struck on his Puranic story which had all the elements of a box-office hit. [7]Thenceforth, started a continuous film producing in India and cinema houses sprang up in all the important cities exhibiting both the Western and Indian films.

The twenties saw the all-round proliferation of the Indian cinema. Even during that decade, India was producing more films than Great Britain. In 1971 India overtook Japan to become the world's largest manufacturer of feature films, with a total of 431 titles. In 1975 a UNESCO survey on film audiences showed that it was the only Third World nation to have a larger audience for indigenous cinema than for imported films.[8] Most of the films produced during this era were those related to religious, historical, and social topics. Later stunts, horror and humorous situations were introduced bringing more variety to the pictures.

Today, India produces over 900 films a year, making it the world's largest film-producing nation. These films are viewed not just within the country, where they constitute the most important cultural activity, but in all of South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), Africa (including the Maghreb countries of North Africa), South America, Eastern Europe and Russia. These films are also imported into all

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7 P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 54.

8 Ashish Rajadhyaksa, 1996, 'India: Filming the Nation;' in *The Oxford History of World Cinema* edited by Goeffrey Nowell- Smith, p. 678.

major European cities with a sizeable population of people of Asian and African descent.[9]

The next landmark in the history of Indian cinema was the release of the first Indian talkie on 14 March 1931. This feat was accomplished within two years of the screening of universal pictures talkie film *Melody of Love*. Produced by Ardeshir Irani, this so called 'the living and breathing too' Indian talking film, created a rage. Talkies burgeoned forth in the same year in many languages. This marked the growth of language films in the country and films began to be manufactured in various centres as far away as Lahore (then in India), Chennai, Kolkata and Kolhapur. Exploiting the operative tradition in Indian drama and folk theatre, songs began to dominate Indian films. *Inder Sabha*, a picture of Madan Theatres, included as many as 59 songs. Gradually playback singers emerged and music directors became more important than ever the singer actors.[10] Just as the silent movies, the earliest talkies were either film versions of stage plays or fantasies with mythological background or famous love legends like *Laila Majnu* or *Shirin Farhad* etc, because all these themes were already well known and popular among the masses and with musical embellishments they were bound to be hits.

Advent of film making in Khasi Hills

Although, the making and production of films and documentaries in the Khasi Hills has a relatively recent history, yet the trend here too is not different from

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[9] Asha Kasbekar, 1996, 'An introduction to Indian Cinema' in *An Introduction to Film Studies* edited by Jill Nelmes, Routledge, London New York, p. 366.

[10] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p. 56.

other parts of the country. Prior to the advent of film making, public staging of enactments of plays was produced by the Khasi Cultural Society. The Society in fact started its activities by organizing and staging the first play *U Tirot Sing* at Mawlai and State Auditorium Shillong during the months of February and March 1974. It again staged the play of *U Sngap Syiem* in Shillong in March 1975. Both of these plays are the enactments of the real life story of the two great Syiems (Kings, chiefs) of the Khasis famous for fighting against British rule.

From 1975-79, sets of transparency slides where evolved and made which suited with many themes on the historical and cultural setting- transcribed to the background music and commentary on cassette tape recorder, when shown on screen, and displayed at the large gatherings organized for the shows at Sohiong, Balat, Markasa, Mawkyrwat, Pariong, Umsyiem, Dawki, Jowai, Nongstoin, Mawngap and many places in Shillong. These have helped to expose the tremendous potentials in the social and economic systems of creativity of our forefathers.[11]

The first public exhibition of Khasi film was in 1982 with the production of the film *Synjuk Ri Laiphew Syiem*[12] of Hamlet Bareh-Ngapkynta, produced by the Khasi Cultural Society. The film was first shot in 16mm then blown up 35mm and properly censored. Talkies and musical effects were hence integrated in a sound studio, Calcutta during the 1981-82, to fall in with a movie. In 1987 the film was revised at Chittraban studio Gauhati to normalize the speed and the blurred portion was removed. The succeeding years shows the rapid growth of interests of film

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[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Khasi Cultural Society: Twenty five years Celebrations Souvenir. 1998, p. 13.

making among the Khasis. *I Mei Jong Nga, Ka Nong, Manik Raitong* to name a few were produced during the 80s-90s. The beginning of the twenty-first centuries saw the proliferation of film producing in these hills.

As in Hollywood, and Bollywood, the most favoured theme of the Khasi film is that of romance. Modern day film makers and producers, make films with a narrative structure either drawn from the changing lifestyle of the modern youths (within and outside their land) and their reactions towards it as depicted in *Ka Synjat* (2009), or the main plot is derived from folktales –A handsome man, usually poor, but hard working and honest, accidentally meets a rich and beautiful young woman or vice versa. The two fall in love, but the young woman's father refuses to let them entertain any thoughts of marriage (the man's poverty, a prior marriage arrangement with the father's business partner's son or a feud between the two families being the most common reasons), and the lovers are separated. However, when the young man started growing higher in position with his hard work, and became more wealthy than the greedy father which as a result earns high social status and respect from the public, the father acknowledges his error of judgement and the young man is welcomed into the family fold as depicted in *Ka Mon ba Jwat.*

Functions of films:

Films have an educational value besides their entertainment value. One of the chief aims of the producers in the recent decades is to present current social problems and to promote the attention of the people towards the problems facing them.

One of the main social functions of film is that film is a powerful form of entertainment. It has the power to sway the masses and thus it is 'hot medium' according to Marshall McLuhan, a medium which does not need require sensory perception. People watch feature films mainly for entertainment, and there is little or no education there. However, documentary films and films that are based on folklore themes or what Sharon R. Sherman[13] called the "folkloric films" does not only provide entertainment to the viewers but also serve as means of educating the masses.

According to Sherman the folkloric films focuses primarily on traditional behavior, documenting many of the most fundamental features of our lives and ranging widely from rituals, ceremonies, and folk art, to folk narrative and folksong, to the lore of various peoples bonded by ethnicity, age, gender, family, occupation, recreation, religion, and region. Many folkloric filmmakers have, in deed; examined traditions in their own locales, sometimes even among their own families. Differences of major emphasis and locale set the folkloric film apart from other commercial film traditions, although any film having folklore content might aptly be called a "folkloric film". Just as anthropologists define certain films as "ethnographic" when they successfully elucidate ethnographical approaches, the true folkloric film may be defined as one whose content deals primarily with topics that folklorist study and whose intent is to meet the dictates of folkloristic research and teaching. Such films include ones created by folklorists themselves or by non-

[13] Sharon R. Sherman, 1996, 'Film and Folklore' in *American Folklore an Encyclopedia*, p. 263.

folklorists who are filmmakers or videographers recording folklore. Put simply, the point of these films is to document folklore, no matter who is making them.

An enabling character to the study of folklore is the popular use of folklore as the primary plot line or unifying thread for commercial feature films. To name a few, the film *Manik Raitong* (1984) that plays upon the tragic love between two disparate indivisuals, is the direct outcome of the popular legend of *U Manik Raitong*, the documentary of *Ka Dur Maia u Thlen* (2006), for example exploits the practice of snake-rearing among the Khasis, the folktale of the ill- treatment of step-child by step-parent or to put in other words the fantasy of a step-mother/step-father is the basis for the film *Khunswet Shempap* (2006), *Ka Tyrut Kynsha* (2005) exploits the belief of *Ka Tyrut Ka Smer* (curse) caused by a violent death. Thus, these folkloric films have become one of the major fields of study within the discipline of folklore. According to Sherman many folklorists who study films are tied to the models adopted by their documentary-film forerunners and to the conceptual premises of the past folklore scholars. Thus in folkloric films, the rural often takes precedence over the urban, and the past assumes greater importance than the contemporary. However, film makers have examined contemporary activities and the urban scene as well. Usually they begin with a romantic stereotypic notion of the folk for their initial films and then recognize a need to broaden the definition of their works as their film corpus grew.

We may wonder or even question ourselves as to why film should be studied, how a film functions to narrate a story, how important film study is and what does film study deals with and so on. Film studies address these issues. One of the reason

why films should be studied is that they are considered as the mirrors that reflects the culture of the society that create them, that is, they are themselves the cultivators of culture. Therefore, by studying films, familiarize oneself with some of the norms of the culture portrayed in the film, alien to oneself. Film studies have become popular in American and European colleges and universities from the 1960 onwards as part of the degree courses. One such study was produced as early as 1916, by Hugo Munstenberg, an eminent psychologist (German Philosopher) at Harvard in his 'The Photoplay: a Psychological study'. But a proper way of studying film was made in 1960 through the disciplines of Anthropology, Semiology, Psychoanalysis and other related disciplines.

However, in India, most students and, of course, teachers- misconceive that film studies concern themselves only with learning how to make films. However, it must be understood that film studies rarely include film-making as an integral subject though it was part of the course studied. In fact, films are studied like novels and plays. One who studies literature, for instance, need not become a novelist or a poet, and a class of literature is not a place where one should learns how to write novels, though one learns a lot about how novels get written.

Since the chapter will not concern itself with the ways and methods of studying film, but with the interpretation of film, an attempt will be made to interpret the one Khasi film which enjoys the status of a full feature film, with a full cast made professionally and which ran for months altogether to full house capacity at Anjalee cinema, the largest cinema hall in Shillong in the mid- nineteen eighties. This film was also featured on Doordarshan Kendra, New Delhi at least a couple of times. The

film is *U Manik Raitong*, based, as had been mentioned earlier on a popular legend which typifies the undying love shared between two lovers in the face of opposition and love which proves to be fatal to both. Despite being a highly egalitarian society, some Khasi narratives reflect a peculiar sensitivity to disparity created by economic circumstances. This is evident in both tales as well as songs. The legend of *U Manik Raitong* is just another example of the community's responsiveness to life's realities and in the legend the situation is made more acute due to the deprivation and the tragedies that the hero undergoes.

The story is a moving one which has and still fascinates people who come to hear it and it is not at all difficult to see why and how the producer of the film was tempted to contemplate making a film of this legend. The attempt to make this film is a happy coincidence with the increasing popularity of television in and around Shillong city in the nineteen eighties. The people at this point of time were being fed with visual entertainment through the print media in the form of newspapers, magazines, and the occasional journal. The coming of television during this period did a lot to whet the appetite of the consumers which made them exposed to programmes churned out by Doordarshan Kendra. Thus, the stage for the coming of a truly Khasi film was set and this coupled with the professionalism with which the film was made was responsible for creating a wave of acceptance and appreciation for *Manik Raitong*.

As it usually happens in filmdom, the location, setting, ambiance and other cinematic considerations are away from the place where the action, long ago, was supposed to have taken place and in this case also, the shooting was exclusively done

at Umroi village which is known for its scenic beauty and dramatic landscape. By saying this, the scholar does not mean to infer that originality of the story was thrown to the winds; on the contrary, great efforts were made to retain the originality of the story-line in the film. A point which seeks to be made on the above is the fact that the question of the originality of the story has always been contested as there are multiple versions of the legend in currency in the Ri Bhoi area of the Khasi Hills. The strongest claim to originality is made by the village of *Raitong* also in the Bhoi area of Khasi Hills whose inhabitants were quick to point out the different landmarks, places and sites which were features in the legend. The name of the village itself, *Raitong* means the Wretched One and it is here that Manik, the hero of the legend was supposed to have been born, to have lived and to have died. Very strong evidences of this claim is provided by the paddy fields worked by Manik and his childhood love Ka Lieng, the hill where they used to rendezvous and, the funeral pyre construction on top of a hill where Manik met his death. Another very strong claim is provided by the presence of a bamboo grove near the funeral pyre wherein bamboos with leaves turned upwards grew.

However, what must be stated here is that it is essential to reproduce the broad outline of the story of the film which is accepted in most of the villages which claim to bear a version of the legend.

Manik Raitong, a poor village boy was in love with Lieng Makaw, a girl of the same village. Bound in love since their childhood they grew up together. Manik passion was also in the playing of his flute. The pure sweet notes of the flute could hold the mind captive. Lieng Makaw used to surrender to the delight of the pure

sweet note of the flute in a kind of tender ecstasy. Joy and hope flooded her soul, with tranquil happiness and undying hope that one day both of them would be happily united in marriage. Time went on; Manik lost his father leaving behind a huge burden of debts for Manik to repay and to look after his only sister, Bida. Manik was determined to work hard on the field. But love between Manik and Lieng continued to grow.

And then one day, the train of destiny suddenly rushed in and completely changed their hopes and aspirations. A high stone wall rose between them when the Syiem (Chief) chose Lieng Makaw to be his Mahadei (queen). The news was told to Lieng who heard it in pain disbelief. She cried piteously and protested against the marriage. But this was the wish of the Syiem, there was no choice, and there was no right to disobey the Syiem. Manik persuaded her to accept the marriage concealing his love for her inside him.

Lieng Makaw reached a crisis in her life; beginning her new life of pain, isolation and loneliness in disappointment and desperation she married the Syiem. On the first night of marriage was performed. The first night of marriage, the Syiem upon hearing news of a tiger appearing in the village rushed to the spot along with the villagers in disregard to the solemnity of the first wedding night. Lieng Makaw was naturally felt rejected by her husband on their first night together. She needed human warmth and closeness which so far eluded her. The prospect of happy life seemed to be denied to her. Thereupon Lieng's attitude to her husband changed and she showed nothing but indifference to her husband.

The Syiem was ever arrogant and indifferent. The relation between the Syiem and ka Lieng turned unhappier. The Syiem sent back Lieng to her parents house in the village because he has to go for a long sojourn outside his *Hima* (traditional states) for two years.

Manik lost his dear sister Bida at the time when he needed her most for the consolation of his grief stricken mind. Lieng Makaw arrived in the village to her parents. Time passed and every night Lieng heard sweet soft music came drifting from Manik's hut. The voice of music could hold her captive with the thrill of emotion. Kindred memories came rushing to her and she fell into a fit of deep longing for Manik. She no longer could bear the unhappy exclusion. She laid bare her heart to Manik and advanced the proposal for marriage on return of the Syiem.

Time passed with the promise of happiness. Love and understanding grew deeper and lasting between Manik and Lieng, Lieng Makaw was blessed with a baby (son), through Manik. But the time was drawing near of the return of the Syiem.

The Syiem returned his travels after two years and immediately he went to the village to bring Lieng Makaw to the royal house, and when he came to know about the birth of the baby to Lieng, he was filled with shocked, anguish and surprised. Lieng did not disclose the name or identity of the father of the baby. The Syiem summoned Lieng to come to the palace with the baby, a much quicker revolution had taken place in Syiem's mind and that is an act of adultery and an act of unforgivable sin.

The Syiem decided to punish the person, committing the sin and violating the moral code of the *Hima* with the consent of durbar *Hima* which is the highest seat of justice and truth. The durbar decided that every male person of the *Hima* must assemble in the public ground with a banana in hand and to declare the truth of the identity of the father of the baby, and in default every person would be put to test. In case the baby takes the banana from the person then he was the father of the baby and on account of immorality and adultery he would be severely punished according to the prevalent customs of the *Hima.*

The ordeal was frightening and every person was put to test but identity of the father was still unknown. At last Manik came hurrying to the spot and the offered banana to the baby. The baby cheerfully took it. It was revealed to the public that Manik was the real father of the baby and Manik accepted the truth and the durbar declared punishment: Manik would be punished in public in market place by whipping and beating. But brave and courageous Manik preferred death to humiliation and disgrace as part of his admission of guilt and for offending the moral code of the *Hima.* Manik prayed to Syiem to grant him to end his life on funeral pyre and the Syiem granted the prayer.

Funeral pyre was set. Manik with being composed and calm, said some tranquil prayer- fearless gaze. For the last time then Manik played his favorite flute bringing forth melodies of the saddest notes. Suddenly he stopped and drove the flute inside the ground with a single stroke. Then he jumped on to the funeral pyre. Just at that moment, Lieng Makaw came hurrying from distance crying 'Manik, Manik –

wait, take me with you'. She followed Manik to his death to be with him for all eternity.

The day was mournful and desolate shrouded with mystified silence. Grief stricken people looking on with tears trickled down their cheeks: some people looking on vacantly with unshed tears. Even nature shared the sorrow, bamboo branches hand down in grief. Sun dimmed her brilliance with spreading clouds slipping slowly behind the mountain.

Two monoliths stand high signifying the immortality of the legend. The soft music of the flute still can be heard with a mysterious sweetness drifting far and beyond still lingering.

The film begins typically in an idyllic manner with pan-shots of the village and villagers going about their daily chores. This state of bliss is suddenly shattered by the news of the death in a certain household, that of U Manik Raitong, who suddenly had to endure the loss of his father. Unfortunate turn of events with the burden of supporting his sister and also of paying off debts incurred by his father changed Manik. The happy-go lucky boy who loved his flute and merriment now found himself desperately impoverished, having to give up his careful days in order to scratch a living from the soil of the place. He worked hard day in day out in order to support himself and his sister, and to try to settle loans incurred by his father. His one tiny salvation was the love he shared with Ka Lieng Makaw, and whenever he was with her, he felt his burden lighten.

The film depicts this love showing the couple being together enjoying each other's company and having their meetings in dramatic places, the most significant of which is '*Ka Dwar u Ksuid*' or the devil's doorway. This is an amazing naturally formed cave with a perfectly rectangular doorway rising out of the water by the side of a clear river. The structure is a cavern, which to some extent allows entry. The sound of their laughter reverberating through the *Dwar u Ksuid* makes for excellent cinematic effect. Through this and other devices the innocent and spirited love the two shared was depicted.

However this respite from misfortune was not to last for long. The chief under whose control Manik's village came under felt that it was time him to marry. After holding consultations with his sister' he decided to organize a dance in the village to organize a dance in the village wherein all the young virgins would be invited. This would enable the chief to select a bride for himself as, traditionally, it is believed that virgins who participate in the dance are not only marriage worthy but also possessing of poised and character. Hundreds of maidens participated in the dance and Ka Lieng Makaw was one of them.

As expected the chief was enamored of her. He informed his sister about his choice and the decision was made.

When the decision was conveyed to her, she was heart-broken because she could not think of being separated from Manik. At the same time she realized that she could not refuse the offer because it would amount to defiance. When Manik came to know about it, though equally heart-broken, he tried to persuade Lieng to

accept the Syiem proposal. Inevitably, the marriage took place with traditionally pomp and gaiety.

Cinematically, this could be considered to be the first part of the film with a clearly marked split that delineates it from the subsequent section of the film.

The second part in the film begins on a somber note when we see the film is focused on Manik and his wretched state of affairs. We hardly recognize him when he appears in frame as he is closet and his handsome demeanor is vastly reduced by neglect. He goes about doing his work and avoids people. Then another tragedy struck when he lost his sister. This further drove him into deeper despair. What is seen on film is this desperate young man who has been dealt a very bad hand by faith and who looks as if determined to a life of self ostracism. However, in the confines of his own hut he bathes, put on clean clothes and after feeding himself would play mournful tunes on his flute till late at night. He carried on his life in this manner avoiding people and wallowing in his own self pity. But the tunes continue during the night.

Meanwhile, the Syiem was called upon to inspect some of his territories in the plains. This duty made it necessary for him to be away from home for a long time. Due to obvious reasons, he could not take his wife with him, so Lieng stay back in the village. In the film she is seen as being restless often working on the *tyngkong* trying to while away sleepless nights. One night as she was pacing about in the sleeplessness she caught the sad tunes of a flute and was drawn to it.

The sound of the flute captivated her and she wondered as to the originator of those sounds. In the film, one could see her struggling with herself as she debated whither to leave the comfort of her stately home and go in search of an unknown tune. Giving in the instinct, she followed the invisible trail laid by the flute and came to the hut where Manik live away from the village. Peeping through the bamboo walls, she saw that inside was seated a handsome young man dressed in clean clothes. Immediately she realizes that the man was Manik.

Manik was aghast to see the Syiem's wife standing before him alone. He was terror-stricken because he realizes the gravity of the situation- she was no longer Lieng but Ka Mahadei who he must treat with respect reserved for loyalty. The visit was followed by another the next evening and it went on until the inevitable happened and the reunited lovers consummated their love. The result was a son born to Ka Lieng in due time and the child grew up in the care of his mother. This incident cause great consternation in the village and it was shown that people waited with trepidation the arrival of the Syiem.

In the film the level of anxiety was depicted when the Syiem and his men arrived and the matter of the child was discussed between him and Ka Mahadei. Lieng, the Mahadei refuse to divulge the name of the offender and the Syiem in resignation decided to summon a council of all males living in his chieftain. The males were also instructed to bring bananas with them so that each could pass before the seated Mahadei who had a child in her lap. The men were to offer bananas to the child and if the child accepted banana from any man then he would have to bear responsibility for fathering it. This part of the film introduced some comic relief as

the men filed by and proffered banana to the child. One or two of the men were seen devouring the banana after the child refuse. It was obvious then that even this could not determine the father of the child and the gathering could be seen going into council. It was opined by someone in the crowd that there was an absconder who was Manik the wretched. He was summoned by royal order to appear with banana and when he stood before the child, it responded by taking the offer banana and Manik himself, in a gesture of public acceptance took the child in his arms.

The Syiem was infuriated and commanded that he should be punished in public in a market place by whipping and beating. But Manik preferred death to humiliation, that is by burning himself alive in a pyre and the request was granted. When the pyre was built and Manik was ordered to step into it, he requested that he say his final last words and that he play a tune before dying. In this scene, Manik makes an impassioned speech confessing his lapses and imploring the gathering that nothing of the kind should happen in future. Thereupon he played rending tune and after planting the flute into the soil upside down lept to his death into the flames.

The film also has a scene where Ka Lieng is depicted as leaving her child in the care of a servant and running towards the funeral pyre screaming Manik's name. This scene tries to convey the conclusion of the legend where it is said that she also jump into the pyre in order to die alongside Manik.

The last scene deviates from the story in that it does not reflect the story-line which mentions the sprouting of a bamboo grove from the flute with leaves turned upside down. The grove was destroyed long back and now there is no evidence of

this unique species of bamboo on the site. The deviation is understandable because it would be impossible to present the extinct bamboo through the frame of the camera. Instead two monoliths are shown, which is a cinematic representation of the two lovers and the legend spawned from the love they shared.

The scholar has also come across versions of the legend in other villages of Ri Bhoi area, but for the purpose of the present study, they will be left out for obvious reasons. While acknowledging that the strength of folkloristics is the inquiry of the presence of versions, it would not fit into the scheme of this study. However, the scholar would like to narrate findings of an extensive field work conducted in the area which would help a better understanding of the film.

Before narrating the findings of the field work, the scholar finds it necessary to point out that it has to be kept in mind that the locale of the Manik Raitong story was not this village, but one, some 30 km away in the village of Raitong. The removal and relocation of shooting from the original village of Raitong to Umroi is directly linked to the interest of her research. What was responsible for this and what were its effects?

During a field conducted between May and June 2005 in and around Umroi village, the place where Manik Raitomg was shot the scholar was told by informants that due to extensive shooting requirements, the entire setting had to be constructed artificially. The setting comprises of the *Ing Sad*, huts and dwellings of the character in the movie and assorted structures have to be constructed. Grounds, village lanes and irrigation canals had to be excavated to meet the requirement of the shooting.

It was revealed to me that as much as 50 men and 25 women from the village and its adjoining area were employed as labourers too put up props and work on the set. Some even manage to be hired as extras in the movie. However a clear distinction between the leading characters and the secondary ones was made in that the former were professionals brought from Shillong and the latter were semi-professionals brought from the village. An exception was made in the case of the baby who played the role of the child, who was born as a result of the illicit relationship between U Manik and ka Lieng Makaw. The child (2years of age), whose real name is Dripti Manik Syiem, is the son of Mrs Sara Syiem who was incidentally employed in the film as the baby's nurse mate. The child now a strapping young man of 27 years of age goes to college and is actively involved in the beauty and fashion pageant in the state and has also featured in some music videos. In fact during the scholar's second trip to the village, he led group of fashion contestants from Ri Bhoi districts to Mumbai to reportedly meet Sushmita Sen.

It was very clear to the scholar and this was supplemented by feedback from the village that the fact of Dripti's having start in movie, albeit, a child, has motivated him to take interest in showbiz. The village folk have named him Manik. It is obvious that the child was not Manik but his son, and thus probably earned the name because the Khasis are fond of giving nick names and the other reason is that after 25 years of the film shooting, the people of Umroi still remembers it.

One very interesting fact that has its roots in the traditional institutional system also came into focus during the interview conducted by the scholar. The traditional system of governance is vested in the Syiems or chief who rule over the

Hima or traditional states. The *Hima* is composed of different Raid several villages under a single administrative unit. The film-maker obtained permission for filming from the Syiem of *Raid Mawbuh* who is again under the Syiem of Mylliem. At first the latter objected to the project on ground that the film would adversely affect natural beauty of Umroi area. The proposal had to be postponed due to this. At last the Syiem of Mylliem had to convene a Dorbar or village Council to have a discussion on that matter. It was agreed that the filming be allowed. What is interesting to focus here is that while the film portrays the chieftainship system among the Khasis, it does not account for the discourse of power that is usually associated with chieftainship. The fact that the Syiem sentenced Manik to a shameful punishment[14] does not mean that the power for issuing such a dictate emanated from his office as chieftain. It is more convincing to believe that this authority came from his being the aggrieved party that is the wrong husband.

As mentioned earlier that before the filming, in reality, there was a mild conflagration between the two authorities i.e. the Syiem of Mylliem and the Syiem of Raid Mawbuh. The film was about personal and social tensions prevalent in the state and ironically this tension was reflected in contemporary society when the actual filming of the movie was about to start.

The film has brought about socio-economic consequences which the scholar have recorded collecting statements from individuals who were part of the film. Mr. Olkas Nongkseh said that 15 sites were chosen and developed as sets. On completion

[14] Manik has to carry a tin on his back and go round a local market declaring himself as the adulterer of the wife's Chief so that everyone in the Hima would know his sins.

and during the shooting, the entire village looked like a village suggested by legendary accounts. This obviously produced the nostalgia strongly evoked by folklore.

Coming to another point Mrs. Sara said that the film has brought some resemblance of development such as better road communication which resulted from improvement of village tracks. On a personal level she further said that the film introduced her to a way of life that was faster. Before the film she was a teacher in the village school, but having to act in the film she had to adjust to the school scheduled which was quite alien to her then. Now she understands the pressure of work in a fast paced environment.

Dwar u ksuid, a place of natural scenic beauty is one of the prominent locations of the film. After the film, the place became well known as picnic spot and the name 'Lover's paradise' came to be attached to it. It is in this place that the film shows how U Manik and Ka Lieng Makaw used to meet secretly as lovers before and even after the marriage of Ka Lieng Makaw in the absence of her husband. The lane they use to walk upon was also given the name 'Lover's Lane'. This place is still well known for its beauty, though it is now closed to the public.

Documentaries

Documentary is Britain's outstanding contribution to films. It was first introduced by John Grierson in 1929 when he joined the Empire Marketing Board and produced his film 'Drifters' showing the everyday work of the Scottish herring fleet. This established the principles and set the technical standard for documentary film making. These films are neither made for profit nor for direct publicity. They cover a wide range of subjects including health, education, housing, child welfare etc. Further, they present a cross-section of the contemporary society and thus build up a film record of the country's life, health etc[15].

The word documentary was derived from 'documentaire' a term used by the French for their travel films. Grierson first applied "documentary" to Robert Flaherty's Moana, an account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian boy. Later, he defined it as the "creative treatment of actuality".[16]

Documentary has been variously defined through the years as "a dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life," as "film with a message," as "the communication, not of imagined things, but of real things only," and as "films which give up control of the events being filmed". But the most famous definition, and still one of the most serviceable, is John Grierson's, "the creative treatment of actuality" as stated above. None of these definitions is completely satisfactory. The first excludes character studies and city symphonies; the second includes allegorical

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[15] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976, *Communication & Social Development in India*, p.184.

[16] W. Hugh Baddeley, 1970, *The Technique of Documentary Film Production*, p. 82. Focal Press, London and New York.

fiction films, the third posses the difficult question of what part of a complex documentary is "real" and what part "imagined," and so on. [17]

The toughest problem for commonsense definitions of documentary, like Grierson's "the creative treatment of actuality," is determining just what constitutes "actuality." Every representation of reality is no more than a fiction in the sense that it is an artificial construction, a highly contrived and selective view of the world, produced for some purpose and therefore unavoidably reflecting a given subjectivity or point of view. Even our "brute" perceptions of the world are inescapably tainted by our beliefs, assumptions, goals, and desires. So, even if there is a concrete, material reality upon which our existence depends, we can only apprehend it through mental representations that at best resemble reality and that are in large part socially created. Some film theorists have responded to this dilemma by claiming that documentary is actually no more than a kind of fiction that is constituted to cover over or "disavow" its own fictionality.[18]

This definition of documentary, while it controverts a kind of naive realism, fails to account for the practical, everyday differences between fiction and non-fiction- differences that we experience as real and that can have real consequences for how we get along in the world, even though they may be, in a sense, imaginary. One could use the same line of reasoning to show, for example, that visual perception is no more than a kind of fiction that just seems particularly real.

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[17] Dirk Eitzen, 1995, 'When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception'. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 p. 81.

[18] William Guynn, 1990, 'A Cinema of Nonfiction'. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 81-102. Published by: University of Texas Press

The best way to define documentary, therefore, may be to say simply that it is whatever people commonly mean by the term. That is what Andrew Tudor wrote of genres twenty years ago. "Genre," he wrote, "is what we collectively believe it to be."[19] What saves this argument from circularity, as Tudor pointed out, is that how people use genre terms and what they mean by them is pretty strictly delimited by culture. Thus films made on facts and enactment of facts might or might not be called a documentary, depending upon how one makes sense of it.

Today the term has come to refer to a far wider range of films than its originator intended. The purists rebel and this reminds us of the original definition. But language is a live, changing thing, and when a word becomes popularized and used by all and sundry no power can stop it subtly changing and acquiring, as in this case, a wider meaning. "Factual Film" is a more correct description of many of the films described today "documentary". But the millions have taken over the world and are convinced that they know what a documentary film is. Undoubtedly the word fulfils a need and describes something for which no other term exists.

The motion picture has had three phases in its development. It began as a novelty, it grew into a worldwide medium of entertainment and in its third phase it became a tool- an instrument with a thousand serious jobs to do. This instrument is the factual or documentary film. It is called upon to tell us about the world we live in,

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[19] Andrew Tudor, 'Theories of Film' (New York: Viking Press, 1973), *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 81-102. Published by: University of Texas Press

to present us with its myriad different faces; to show us nature, inanimate and living in all its moods.

It was realized during the Second World War that a documentary film is a very good means to train men in the army, navy, etc. It was not only useful as an adjunct in training but it also helped to reduce the training period by half. This led the Government of India to establish an organization called, 'The Information Films of India' during the Second World War. This organization also produced newsreels and propaganda films to rouse the interest of the people in the War efforts and obtain their support. However, the film exhibitors were not eager to show these short films. This made the Government to pass a law requiring all the theatres to exhibit the documentaries and the newsreels produced by the Films Division. After the war, this department was closed. With independence, realizing the value of documentaries, the Films Division was set up in 1948 in order to make use of visual education to dispel ignorance and to enlighten the people about the potentialities of nation building and to enlist their support. Many films dealing with health, farming, hygiene and literacy that were produced are primarily meant for the agricultural and industrial labour audiences.[20]

India is forging ahead even in the field of documentary films, newsreels, cartoon films and quickies which are all different visual instruments of public information, education and instruction, motivation and attitude changes. Defined originally as creative treatment of actuality, today documentary and information films include those which deal with significant historical, social, scientific or

[20] B. Kuppuswamy, 1976, *Communication & Social Development in India*, p.184-85.

economic subjects, photographed in actual occurrence or reenacted, and the emphasis is more on factual content than on entertainment. These films record contemporary history and present filmic reports on the social and economic progress of a country.[21]

Starting modestly when the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was set up in 1948, India is currently having an annual production of 104 short films. In 1983-84 the films Division produced 143 documentary films including 40 produced by independent producers.[22]

In India, state governments, public undertakings and private enterprises can also produce documentaries. If they are within the maximum length of 2000 feet, these films can be released on theatrical circuits only through the films Division. Reproduction assignments can be also given to independent producers, and annually about 40 to 50 films are produced that way.

India has many well known documentary film makers both in the public and private sectors. They have made both individually and collectively, significant contributions to the development of Indian documentaries and animated films. Produced by Films Division many of these films have received international and national awards. Many independent producers outside Films Division have also made documentary films of merit and received awards for their films.

Documentaries and news reels are exhibited in all cinema houses and at each performance; the ratio is one per cent of the average weekly collections. Every week

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[21] P.N. Malhan, 1985, *Communication Media, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, p.161-62.
[22] *Ibid.*

one news reel and two short films are released at all important centres. The Films Division also supplies prints on loan to Government departments, semi-government educational and charitable institutions, hospitals, social welfare organizations and individuals. This is done through its distribution branch offices as well as through the regional and field publicity units of the Directorate of Field Publicity. For non-commercial shows, films are loaned free of charge. Other than the number of good film makers in the country, there are also sponsoring organizations which realize the importance of documentary films as a powerful and effective visual medium for depicting creative actuality of our changing social scenes and ecology. The government on its own part is looking forward to having more such films on technology, science, environment, ecology, places of pilgrimage, hill stations, sports, folk music, folk dances and other varieties of art and culture from various parts of the country.[23]

By 1930, with the adoption of sound in the cinema and the onset of a global depression, documentary stood recognized as a distinct form of filmmaking. What brought it into being? Bill Nichols wrote- the standard histories assume the existence of a documentary tradition, or impulse, that long precedes the formation of a documentary movement or institutional practice. This ancestral pedigree guarantees documentary's birthright, but, as we shall see, it also poses a problem. If the

[23] *Ibid.* p.163

documentary form was latent in cinema from the outset, why did it take some thirty years before Grierson would bestow the name documentary to it?[24]

He further added that in the familiar story of documentary's ancestral origins, it all begins with cinema's primal love for the surface of things, its uncanny ability to capture life as it is. Documentary represents the maturation of what was already manifest in early cinema with its immense catalog of people, places, and things culled from around the world.[25] British documentary filmmaker and historian Paul Rotha wrote in 1939 that documentary left the confines of fiction for "wider fields of actuality, where the spontaneity of natural behaviour has been recognized as a cinematic quality and sound is used creatively rather than reproductively. This attitude is, of course, the technical basis of the documentary film."[26]

Film historian Jack Ellis followed a similar line some fifty years later: Documentary "could be said to have begun with the birth of film itself. The filmed recordings of actuality in the experiments of technicians at the Edison laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey, might qualify."[27] Erik Barnouw, author of the most widely used history of documentary film, opens his account with a reference to the early pioneers of the 1890s who "felt a compelling need to document some

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[24] Bill Nichols, 'Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde'. *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer, 2001), p. 582

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Paul Rotha, 1935, 'Documentary Film: The Use of the Film Medium to Interpret Creatively and in Social Terms the Life of the People as It Exists in Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer, 2001) p. 79.

[27] Jack C Ellis, 1988, 'The Documentary Idea: A Critical History of English-Language Documentary Film and Video', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Summer, 2001) , p. 9.

phenomenon or action, and contrived a way to do it. In their work the documentary film had prenatal stirrings."[28]

Therefore, the scholar hypothesizes with the assumption that documentaries in general "tell the truth" precede and lie beneath the interpretation of particular documentaries, even though people may make sense of a documentary in altogether different terms-as melodrama, for example.

A distinction is drawn between a documentary and a fiction/feature film. A documentary is a film based on true story about everyday life and existence portraying the problems that confront the society. It is a realistic film based on facts. But a fiction film may be made on any theme and the storyline depends on the creativity of the script-writer. A documentary film is a factual narrative of a particular topic, whereas a feature film is a creative dramatic representation of situations portrayed in a film that is mostly fictional or sometimes based on true incidents.

Now for a better understanding to the problem of how to distinguish a fictional film and a documentary film, let us turn our discussion to the statements made by some scholars who in their research and studies discovered the differences that demarcate a fiction film from a documentary film. One such statement is that of Dirk Eitzen which says, 'an assertive stance is not the exclusive domain of documentaries'. He further adds that fiction can also take an assertive stance toward

[28] Erik Barnouw, 1993, 'Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film', *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 58-60 Published by: University of Texas Press

the state of affairs it projects, as Plantinga[29] points out. Jesus's parables and Aesop's fables are two of the examples he gives. These imply or state outright that they have a point to make - an argument or "moral" that has some bearing on reality. But there is a difference between such assertions, Plantinga claims, and the kind of assertions that characterize documentaries. When fiction makes assertions about reality, it proposes an analogy or similarity between a projected state of affairs and the real world. In contrast, a documentary asserts that a projected state of affairs is true in the real world. Fiction can make assertions of similarity, but documentaries make assertions of truth. Or, as Plantinga puts it, fictional films may assert or imply broad artistic truths. "Documentary films may also assert broad, artistic truths, but they in addition assert that the particular state of affairs represented actually occurred."[30]

Richard Meran Barsam maintains, "All documentaries are nonfiction films, but not all nonfiction films are documentaries," excluding from the category of documentary such things as the evening news.[31]

Roger Odin maintains that what distinguishes documentary is a particular mode of reception. He calls this mode of reception (following the French propensity to invent new jargon) a "documentarizing reading." The essential criterion of such a reading, Odin argues, is "the construction by the reader of an Enunciator which is presupposed to be real." There are two considerations that distinguish a

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[29] Carl Plantinga, 1989, "A Theory of Representation in the Documentary Film," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, pp.25-40. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 81-102. Published by: University of Texas Press

[30] Dirk Eitzen, 1995, 'When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception'. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1. p. 86.

[31] Richard Meran Barsam, 1973, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973) p.1.

documentarizing reading, according to Odin. The first is that the reader must attend to an Enunciator of the film and regard it as significant. The second is that the reader must consider this Enunciator to be "real." If one regards the movie as the story of a particular fictional character, that character may be seen as the Enunciator, but inasmuch as it is supposed to be an imaginary or "unreal" character, one is again not reading the movie as a documentary. But if one watches the movie as an expression of a directorial style, a particular Enunciator is "presupposed" to be both relevant and "real," and therefore the movie is being read as a documentary.[32]

However, Eitzen argues Odin's statement stating that two problems may arise here with the way Odin characterizes the documentary mode of reception. The first problem Eitzen raised is that Odin puts too much emphasis on the supposedly "real" origins of documentary elements. Dramatizations and illustrations for example can therefore be read as documentary moments, irrespective of their "unreal" origins. The second problem is that, a reader can suppose the author of a motion picture to be relevant and real and still regard the movie as a fiction.[33] This is so because the reader or viewer knows that the picture he/she is watching is has fiction-based origins.

By the directorial style of expression of the Enunciator, Odin meant to refer to a subjective approach of the movie than the objective as it was supposed to be, i.e. the need of self-imposition of the author-producer of the Documentary film.

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[32] Odin's essay, "Film documentaire, lecture documentarisante," appears in Cinemas et Realites (CIEREC, University de Saint-Etienne) (1984): 263-278, as quoted from Eitzen, Dirk. 1995. p. 102.

[33] Dirk Eitzen, 1995, 'When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception'. *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1. p.102.

However, generally, "Death of the Author" is applied to many authors/script-writer also while creating a documentary film though at times personal opinions and comments are necessary to provoke the thoughts and responses of the viewers. This would mean that the author or a script -writer is not supposed to speak for his work; rather it should be vice versa i.e. the film should speak for itself except when personal expression is desired.

In the course of a field study, the scholar had a chance to interview Raphael Warjri, a renowned artist, documentary / film maker and producer in Shillong. The films that he made were mostly documentaries. He has produced as many as 16 documentary films from 1991 to 2007. When asked whether a film should be considered subjective or objective? He replied- "Most of the time it is objective; however, on certain occasion where personal opinion and expression is required, it may, or may not, be considered subjective. When popular impression of a particular major segment tends to dominate over the minor segment, a rational reasoning is required to project the strong points of the suppressed and diminish the weak points of the dominant aspects".

Therefore, a documentary film is a non-fiction film that states facts and truth about the content of a subject matter and that making a documentary film is considered as telling a story with historical reality and not as writing a book.

Further, to have a clear perception of what a documentary film is and how it differs from a fiction based film, the following divisions of Documentary films as

pointed by Erik Barnouw[34], are felt worth mentioning. According to Barnouw, there are many types of Documentary Films and they serve different functions:

1. Documentary consisting of 'actuality' film recorded events from everyday life. The documentary film makers simply recorded what was in front of the camera. Actuality footage is the principal raw material of documentaries but can be edited and presented in a variety of ways to serve particular functions (eg. The Lumiere Brothers early works- workers leaving the factory 1895).
2. Documentary on aspects of life with an unusual mix of information, propaganda and entertainment (soviet film maker Dziga Vertov- Man with a Movie Camera, 1929).
3. Documented film of not only information and education but also movement and gripping (eg. Drifters 1929 directed and produced by John Grierson).
4. Film on clever propaganda and effective documentary as for instance the documentary film on 'Triumph of the Will'(1935) which is a record of the Nazi rally- with the purpose of making the heroic and mythologized German people of victorious and great again.
5. Common documentary devices in the film include the use of archive footage and a voice over to provide explanation. (eg. Roberto Rossellini made fictional films about the life in Italy during the Nazi occupation and their defeat in 1945; he supported the Italian partisans during the II World War).

[34] Erik Barnouw; 'Documentary: A History of the non-fiction film' (oxford university press, New York, 1974 revised ed. 1983). *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 58-60.

6. Another typical documentary technique is the combining of actuality footage with interviews. In mid 1950s Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson of the British based Free Cinema Movement, established themselves with films that documented and analyzed contemporary working-class issues, and wanted their documentaries to be informative and provocative analytical and revealing eg. Mama Don't Allow (1955);

Not all documentaries have social or political purposes. However, many have entertainment as their aim. Music documentaries came to prominence in the 1960s and one of the most memorable is 'Don't Look Back' (1966) which documented Bob Dylan's tour. Music documentaries tend to be well planned and are not simply transparent recordings of events.

Unlike a feature film, in a documentary film, a thorough research is to be conducted followed by the filming of places and material, substantiated by relevant interviews, comments etc. to authenticate the documentary. Then the entire episode is arranged to synchronize the narration with the visual content.

When asked why he chose to make documentary films instead of feature films, Warjri replied that he wanted to document works that are related to factual and true incidents and reproduce it in the audio-visual form. He added - "My area of work is primarily ethnography and anthropological in nature. However other aspects of socio-cultural significance are also being made", and one can sum up that this is the reason that makes him incline towards producing documentary films.

The methods of making a Documentary film that Warjri and presumably many other documentary film makers follow are:

> The first step is the identification of a topic of unique significance that can create curiosity among the target audience. Secondly a synopsis or framework in manuscript is written. Then a random investigation is made on the topic, followed by an analytical study of its importance. The relevant materials are then collected and arranged in order. After everything is in place according to the demand of the subject matter, the next step is to identify the location, materials and related persons for filming. Subsequently the filming process is undertaken and finally edited in sequences to narrate the story with authentic support of visual, informative narration and sound bytes. In short, this is called the pre-production, production and post-production processes.

> Not all documentaries are based on facts or actuality of materials that are current in an area where the filming is to be done. Thus, shifting of original landscape/place takes place in some documentary films as it happens in the case of feature films. As far as possible, original materials for the documentary film is worthy for authenticity. However, with the unavailability of original landscapes or places in some documentaries and for historical depiction, a structural display may be arranged to portray the period in time to the nearest accuracy, based on research as *Ki Dak ha ki Sla*, a film that tells about how the Khasi literature came into existence amongst the Khasis when they have once lost their own original script. Furthermore, an intermixture of true and factual information with enactment of the scene

wherever applicable can be made which is termed as docu-feature or docu-drama. *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen, Ka Apot* to name a few are other examples of such documentaries.

In case of a feature film, realistic or fantasy representations may be made to entertain the viewers, while documentary films are made by narration of the real incident and analyses of the subject matter where a thorough research and analysis is being conducted according to the demand of the storyline presented. In both cases, they inform and communicate with the audience; documentaries provide knowledge and education, while feature films entertain and captivate the emotion of the audience. The ideology of a documentary film may or may not be different from that of a feature film. The documentary film can be fully narrative or partly enacted as in the case of historical incidents, where contemporary events are not available

Every documentary film made is supposed to have its own charm and speciality. However, *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen* and *Ka Phor Sorat* which will be discussed later in detail can be considered among the best of Warjri's released documentaries. *Ka Dur Maia U Thlen* is a thorough study and analysis of the myth, reality and the human aspect of the phenomena that is mysteriously relevant and dynamic while *Ka Phor Sorat* is a documentary made on the unique and dying cremation ceremony of the Lyngngams. This film has also been nominated for a few prestigious prizes in film festivals abroad. The intention here is to study and interpret the death customs of the Lyngngams which is distinct from that of the other sub-tribes of the Khasis. For the interpretation of *Ka Phor Sorat*, sources have also been taken from the written records as well as the oral sources available.

To begin with, a brief introduction about the Lyngngams may be given. The Lyngngams, are an ethnic group of the Khasi Hills who inhabit the area extending from Kamrup District of Assam in the north to Bangladesh in the south, western parts of Nongstoin and parts of East Garo Hills.

The area is covered with thick forests and has a sub-tropical climate. It is rich in natural resources especially in coal, limestone, silimanite and corundum. It is considered to be infested with wild animals and compared to the other tribes the people are less advanced. As Everard D. Nongsiang wrote, "The Lyngngams lived among wild animals deprived of educational opportunities and of human contacts with wider world or persons and ideas. Till recently, their only known pursuits was search for food and drink, games and pastures they had none, they were deprived of the facilities of fun and pleasures of the more civilized world. Drinking of country liquor was the only pleasure they had recourse to alter a tiring toil in the jhum field or after a tiring search for roots and fruits in the forest".[35]

The word Lyngngam literally means "split from the *Ngam* tree". The tale follows that a tree called *Diengam* split into two and a woman emerged from its trunk. Her descendants were called Lyngngams. The upland Khasis and the Garos who migrated to the Lyngngam area and intermarried with the Lyngngams and their descendants were also called Lyngngams. The Lyngngams are a peculiar group among the inhabitants of Meghalaya. Although they belong to the Khasi community

[35] Everard D Nongsiang, Manuscript. p. 35.

yet their dress, social customs and economic activities bear great resemblance to the Garos[36] who prefer to call them by the name Megams.

Gurdon in his account about the Lyngngams wrote that "Lyngngam is the Khasi name; the Garo name for the Lyngngams is Megam."[37] He further added- there are several Megam villages in the north-eastern corner of the Garo Hills district, and there is regular communication kept up between these villages and the Lyngngam inhabitants of the Khasi Hills district. The Lyngngams must not be confused with the Hana or Namdaniya Garos who inhabit the low hills to the north of the Khasi Hills district, and are called by the Khasis Dko. All Lyngngams claimed to be Khasis, they dislike being called Garos; but although it is true they speak what may be called a dialect of Khasi, and observe some of the Khasi customs, the Lyngngams are more Garo than Khasi. Before proceeding further, it should be stated that the Assamese Boko call the Lyngngams Nuniya Garos, all hill people being Garos to the Assamese of that region, without distinction or difference. It is owing to these three different names being used for the same people that there has been so much confusion about Lyngngams previously; e.g. at one census they were named Lyngngam, at another they received the appellation of Garo, and at a third enumeration they were called Khasis. It is impossible to define the Lyngngam country exactly, because these people are continually shifting their village sites owing to the exigencies of Jhum cultivation. Some of the Lyngngams preserve a tradition that they originally came from the Kamrup plains. It is interesting that a people, like the Garos in so many respects, should have the same idea as the Garos as to the hills on the south bank of

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[36] *Ibid.*

[37] P.R.T. Gurdon, *The Khasis* 1907[1980], p. 190.

the Brahmaputra not always having been their abode. The Garo legend is that they dwelt for some years in the Goalpara and Kamrup plains after they descended from Tibet, and before they moved to the Garo Hills; and there is unmistakable evidence of their occupation of both districts in the shape of certain Garo villages on both banks of the Brahmaputra for some little distance up the river. If, as I suspect, the Lyngngams are an offshoot of the Garos, it is, perhaps that they entered the Khasi Hills much in the same way as the Garos entered the hill district to which they have given their name. The Lyngngama are much darker than the Khasis, and possess the Tibeto-Burman type of feature often to a marked degree. It is not extraordinary that they should have adopted some of the Khasi customs, for the Khasis being the stronger people, would in course of time be bound to influence them in this respect.[38]

However, in another account it is found that the word Lyngngam was derived from the Maram word *Lahngam* meaning, 'sink'[39]. But the question that derives from this is what or where did they sink into; water or soil? And where? And why did the Maram call them *Lahngam*? The answer to these questions is that these people neither did sink in the water nor in the soil, but into the heart of thick forests where they lived for thousands of years without any connection with other tribes. In course of time they changed their name from *Lahngam* to 'Lyngngam'. Therefore the word Lyngngam invites us to the interpretation of a group of people living in the dense forest and sunken into its darkness for centuries or *Lahngam haka jingdum jong ka 'lawbah 'lawsan.*

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[38] *Ibid.* p.190-191.

[39] W Mawsor, 'Social and cultural mores of Ki Lyngngam': paper presented at Shillong Talent's Club, organized by HESPO on the 8th January 2003.

The Lyngngams have very few festivals and among them the most popular and elaborate are the rites observed on the death of a person called *Bang Sorat*[40] or *Phor Sorat* which shall be used interchangeably throughout the discussion. *Phor* is the cremation ceremony for the dead while *Sorat* refers to the feast meant for the *Phor*. Other festivals which include ceremonies are occasions like birth of a child, marriage, etc.

Ka Phor Sorat/ Bang Sorat is the most unique and spectacular ceremonial practices of the Lyngngams. It may be noted that *Ka Phor Sorat* is performed only in the event of the death of an elderly person. Death at any household calls for preparations of the cremation rites prior to the actual cremation. First and foremost, all the paternal and maternal relatives are informed. The process runs into weeks, months and occasionally even a year due to the inhospitable terrain.

Among the Lyngngams as said, in earlier days the dead body is kept sometimes for months or even years up to the time when a bull can be procured for a feast to the village which is called *Liniang* and today is called *Bang Sorat*. The feast is essential and cattle being scarce in the area, there is always great delay in disposing off the dead body. When the member of a family dies, the dead body is rolled up in a mat and kept near the fireplace supported by bamboo poles (*tympan*). It is kept for months or years, the husband or wife or one closest to the dead person must fan the body to chase away flies and insects that gather on it. It is considered to be *sang* (taboo) or sacrilege to touch the dead or not to look after it. The dead body gradually decomposes, becomes dehydrated and is reduced to a skeleton. During the

[40] Everard D Nongsiang, Manuscript. p. 35.

period of waiting the family must gather enough resources in kind to give a feast to everyone in the village which is called *Liniang*. They believe that the dead person should not be sent away as quickly as his spirit still hovers over the dead body and departs only after a long time. Before eating the first morsel, is put near the corpse. Finally, when everything is ready the cremation takes place usually in the courtyard of the house of the deceased person.

The practice of keeping corpses in houses was forbidden by the British when they took over the administration of Khasi Hills in early 19th century and by Sib Sing Syiem of Nongstoin in the early 20th Century[41]. The corpses in the recent past were instead rolled up in a mat and tied to a tree and the same procedure is followed with regard to the burial ceremony. A recent *Phor Sorat* was performed from the 2nd to the 7th of February 1992 at *Nongshyrkon* village for a local woman named Ka De Nongsiang.[42]

In the traditional Lyngngam practice, immediately after a person dies the *Ka Pahnarlong* (explosive gun) is burnt to signal that someone had expired in the village. *Ka Pahnarlong* is usually practiced only by the rich families.[43] The dead body is then bathed, dressed in rich clothes and kept in the extreme western section of the house near the door called *Jingniar/ Changla* -a space nearest to a fencing of the house. A chicken is tied to the feet of the corpse. This fowl is believed to guide and lead the spirit of the dead to his/her ancestral home.

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41 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

42 As recorded and documented by Raphael Warjri

43 W Mawsor, 'Social and cultural mores of Ki Lyngngam': paper presented at Shillong Talent's Club, organized by HESPO on the 8th January 2003.

U Sangot (village crier) is then asked to inform other people in the village by shouting from every nook and corner of the village. As was the custom, the villagers come to the house of the deceased bringing with them a bundle of firewood, a basket of *Lamet* or oak leaves for packing rice, one kg of rice and a sum of Rs. 50 in cash. Normally, young boys and girls were supposed to help the family members in preparing a feast while elder men get busy making mats to roll the dead body, and making a hut on the top of a tree if necessary.

Every morning and evening, the relatives of the deceased do the *purjanop* i.e. giving food to the spirit of the dead. They cook chicken, pork, and beef for the dead body without salt. When the meat is fully cooked, they pack it into seven or nine packages in the *La Mrian* (meaning wild leaves) and give it to the spirit of the deceased. This process is called *aijaksoid.* A hole was made on the ground near the *jingniar* to keep the food. Offering of food to the ghost is done only by a person who knows the customary rites well. First of all, the packed food is circled thrice around the head of the deceased person and is then thrown into the hole. One very important feature of *Ka Phor Sorat* is that the food cooked for the dead person is not allowed to be eaten by anyone in the family, it is consider as *sang* (taboo) and it is believed that one who eats it will surely get sick. It is the custom of the Lyngngams to keep the dead body for at least 3 to 5 nights at home before they shift it to the *Thylliang.*[44] The practice of keeping the corpse in the house for a longer period was also done by the family of the Syiems of Sohra or Cherra as it was popularly known before the

[44] *Ibid.*

colonial period. Gurdon in this regard writes- in the family of the chiefs of Cherra, the body of the deceased *Siem* is subjected to the following process:-

> It is wrapped in cloth and placed in the hollow-out trunk of a tree, *ka shyngoid*, there being a small hole with a plug at the bottom of this receptacle. Spirit is then poured into the *shyngoid* until the whole body is immersed, the liquor being allowed to stand for three days. After the body has been thus steeped, the liquor is allowed to run out, and the body is washed with warm water, after which it is allowed to dry for a day. Then a quantity of lime-juice is poured in, the latter being obtained from the fresh fruit of lime (*u soh jew*). The body is thus exposed a thoroughly dry and becomes like that of a mummy. It is then placed in a coffin, which is kept in the house of the *Siem* family until it is time to perform the funeral obsequies. These ceremonies entail a very huge amount of expense, and it sometimes happens that they cannot be completed for some years after the death of the *Siem*. The body of the deceased *Siem* according to the Cherra custom should be burnt by his successor: otherwise the latter is not *Siem* according to the Khasi religion. There are at the present time the corpses of two *Siems* of Cherra which have been preserved in the manner described above, awaiting cremation. The first *Siem*, *U Ram Singh* as far back as 1875, and the second, *U Hajon Manik*, died in 1901. [45]

He further added

[45] *Ibid.* p. 139.

'The body of priests in Burmah just as the body of the *Syiems* of Cherra are said to be embalmed in honey. But, he said, the members of the *Siem* family and the old residents deny that honey is used for this purpose nowadays, possibly in the interests of the trade. It is, however, not unlikely that honey was so utilized in days gone by, as it is a well- known agent for embalming'.[46]

It was also found that in the Central part of America the Costa Rica[47] tribes just as the Lyngngams do not bury their dead immediately, but embalm the corpse with special oils, covered with palm leaves and deposit it in a palm-thatched shed (dead-house), where it remains for three years. Every year on the day of the death of the individual, certain festivals are performed, and it was only at the end of the third year that the corpse is buried in the primitive forest.

It should be noted here that while the dead bodies of the Syiems of Cherra, the priests of Burma and of the Costa Rican tribes were mummified before they were cremated or buried; the dead bodies of the Lyngngams were not. The Lyngngams simply cover the corpse with cloth and wrap it with a bamboo mat specially made for this purpose and as a result the corpse decomposes faster. It is therefore necessary for the Lyngngams to attend to the corpse at the '*Thylliang*' day and night regularly so as to chase away the flies that swarm near it.

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[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Hyde Clarke, 1997, 'Note on Serpent and Siva Worship and Mythology in Central America, Africa and Asia'. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 6, pp. 247-260.

In order to pass away the nights while attending to the corpse, the Lyngngams use to play various games like *rein peng mohkhiew* (pulling a tree), *niakhonsor* (imitating a baby deer), niaksoid (devil - like acting), *nia khrumiawdai* (to act like flying birds), *pah hymbei blang* (drinking milk like a goat). These plays are enacted with the accompaniment of drum beat called *tim sein khyrrum* and playing of flute called *put tangsohma.* Rice beer is supplied to these performers for the whole night abundantly so that they will not get tired of their performances.

After this, they will *Rinai* or temporarily shift the corpse to the *Thylliang* or *Kat Thylliang.* The body is then wrapped in a *Thliang,* an elaborately woven bamboo mat and taken in a procession consisting of musicians and relatives, to the outskirts of the village or the courtyard of the house, where a *Thylliang* or a makeshift platform on top of a tree which is conceived as an interim sojourn for the dead bodies, has been built. The period of *Thylliang* or *Rinai* is one year. After the completion of one year, the relatives of the dead person fix a date to perform the real cremation rites for the dead person.

During an interview with Mirina Sangriang, a woman informant and resident of Lang-umshing village, the scholar was told that since the process of *Ka Phor Sorat* is a sophisticated one because the relatives of the dead person have to prepare the home-made rice-beer which is a time consuming procedure; it is therefore obvious for the ceremony to be delayed by weeks, months and occasionally even a year to be performed. Besides, as mentioned earlier, the ceremony also incurs huge expenses which are often a great hindrance to most of the poor families where all the near and far relatives of the dead person have to be invited. As *Ka Phor* is never

complete without *Sorat*, it is therefore not possible for many of the Lyngngams to do it within a day or two of the date when someone dies in a family. She last witnessed the ceremony of her own cousin sister in the same village in the year 1987.

E. P. Syiem[48] former acting – Syiem of Hima Nongstoin corroborated Sangriang's statement by adding that most of the Lyngngams reside in isolated places. They live far from each other amid surroundings of thick forests and rivers and people are often disturbed either by flooded rivers, landslides and storms or by the wild animals of the jungle. Therefore, it often takes days, weeks and months to inform the relatives of the dead. Besides, Syiem added that according to the custom of the Lyngngams it is inauspicious for the ritual to be performed amid natural disturbances. It is therefore a must for them to wait for a convenient time and season for performing the ceremony. Another reason for the delay of the funeral rituals was the existence of '*Ka Beilet*'. *Beilet* is a kind of honorarium that must be given by the wife and her children to the relatives of the husband. It does not matter for the Lyngngams who dies earlier, be the husband or wife, the giving of *Ka Beilet* has to be followed accordingly. The *Burangs* or closest elder uncles of the deceased would put a rate for the amount to be paid by the woman's side and if the amount of the *Beilet* is too high, then the wife and children of the deceased would have to bargain for a reasonable rate which sometimes resulted in hot arguments between the two parties. The debate would continue for long until an agreement is concluded between the two parties.

[48] Told during an interview.

The practice of giving honorarium to the in-laws (Meikha- Pakha) does not prevail only amongst the Lyngngams but, the scholar was told, is also practiced among the Bhois also which was called *Ka Khih.* Although giving of honorarium to the father or in-laws was done by both the Lyngngams and the Bhois, yet the practice of the latter is different from that of the former in that, *Ka Khih* can be given even after the funeral ceremony was over and unlike the Lyngngams there was no such rate put to them for the payment. However, in case the mother dies first and even if the father continues to live with his children but shows no signs of responsibility for bringing them up, then *Ka Khih* would neither be given by the wife's relatives nor accepted by the in- laws.

Now coming back to the Lyngngam custom, as was depicted in the film it was seen that when everything was ready for the celebration, *Ki Burang* would meet together at night to prepare the ceremonial expenses to be incurred and added by a subscription called *Thawla Thawjia.* The following day, the family ritual is performed by the priest who uses a gourd, bamboo basket, *Lamet* or oak leaves. A monolith (*Mawsuidiap*) is erected in the courtyard of the house of the dead person. The monolith is carefully washed and then the relatives offer betel nut, rice, rice beer and an egg. Erection of monoliths or memorial stones to commemorate the dead person is practiced by not only the Lyngngams but by all Khasi sub-tribes and the other tribes living in different parts of the region as well. For example, the Garos or Dkos, who live at the foot of the hills on the Kamrup border, and are called by the Assamese *Hana* (spear-men), erect memorial stones in honour of the deceased, the

lower jaw-bones of sacrificial animals and other articles being hung on the stones. The stones are also swathed in cloths, and turbans are tied round the tops.[49]

A week before the celebration, the drums (*ksing*) were beaten every evening for about half an hour in the house where the ceremony is to take place, and one pot (*kahar*) of rice beer was served every evening, while a group of flute players (*Nongput tangsohma*) and drummers (*Nongtem ksing*) practice every evening at a fixed place. Two days before the actual day, bamboo tents (*dara*) were made and a pig and one bull were killed and prepared for the actual day of the feast. Beating of drums began in the morning and went on till midnight. The villagers gather to help in the preparation. Liquor and meals is served for the whole day to the villagers.

Early in the morning of the feast day, flute players and drummers set to task, and relatives from other villages begin to arrive, each group driving a bull or a cow. At the outskirts of the village they were welcomed by a group of dancers and instrument players who serve them rice beer and they then proceeded to the house accompanied by drummers, flute players and dancers. At the threshold of the house, they are welcomed by the children of the deceased person, and as they meet together they weep and they mourn for the dear ones they had lost. At the time of arrival of each group, a gun is fired to announce their arrival. Cows and bulls are slaughtered and cooked; meals and rice beer/liquor are served to all for the whole day while flute players and drummers accompany the dancers who dance to the beat of the drums.

[49] P.R.T. Gurdon, [1907(1980)], *The Khasis*, p. 138.

Before the cremation was to take place, the relatives along with the eldest daughter of the deceased person pay a visit to their neighbours driving with them a bull or cow. The daughter covers her head with a white cloth and carried with her a small cone which was used for keeping gifts that the neighbours would give as a mark of respect and remembrance for the dead person.[50] Usually, they give either chicken, an egg or rice beer. After the visit they all return to the deceased's house, partake of feast and the last rites for the departed one are performed.

However, the film shows that the visit paid to the neighbour's houses was done at the time in which the corpse, tied on a bier was taken to the cremation ground. The residents in turn made gifts of rice beer and an egg, this practice is called *Kaikhong*. At every house of call the body was tied with sticks which were arranged on the ground in odd numbers. One interesting ritual of the people of Nongshyrkon village as shown in the film was the role of a person who sprinkled rice grains and threw a fowl repeatedly all the way long till they reached the cremation ground. This act was believed to symbolically stand for clearing the way for the soul of the deceased.

Thyrnang or a cremation pyre was prepared out of a special tree called *Dengkhiat* and tied with creepers called *jyrmawnop*. When the *Thyrnang* was ready, the corpse was brought for the cremation. It is a custom that all daughters of the dead person should get cows for *Dainthasnam* (cutting and sprinkling blood). The cows that were brought were then killed by one person only and the blood was sprinkled on the *Thyrnang*. Before lighting the fire on the *Thyrnang*, the drummers and flute

[50] As told by Mrs. Mirina Sangriang.

players with dancers move round the pyre three times which was then followed by lighting of fire. There are two types of the *Thyrnang* or funeral place amongst the Lyngngams. One is just in front of the house or a courtyard and the other is in the outskirts of the village. Selecting of a site for making the funeral pyre depend on the relatives of the dead person and the clan's decisions. [51]

At the cremation site a small hut was built made of inversely implanted bamboo poles and straw signifying the 'spirit's lodge'. Offerings of food and drinks were placed along the occupational accoutrements of the deceased. This was the passage that the soul of Ka De Nongsiang had to take on her way to *Krang Raid,* the eternal abode of spirits.

In the evening after the last and final ritual was done, a table and a chair was set outside the deceased's house where an appointed person sat to record the names and amount of donations that were presented by the relatives and friends to the bereaved family. The celebration lasted till the midnight of the following day.

The next day, the relatives would go to the cremation site to collect the bones. One member would keep five pieces of the bones, place them inside *U Klongrit* (a kind of dried gourd), dig a hole in front of the house and bury the *Klongrit.* The hole was then strongly fenced to prevent animals from disturbing it. On completion of one year, the last and final rite called *Reinmaw* or *Lynniang* was performed. *Reinmaw* means pulling of stones and *Lynniang* refers to the particular rite that was performed. For this final cremation rite, not much preparation is needed as compared to *Ka*

[51] W Mawsor, 'Social and cultural mores of Ki Lyngngam': paper presented at Shillong Talent's Club, organized by HESPO on the 8th January 2003.

Phor. Only the family members and the close relatives of the dead person were invited to this ritual performance. The *Lynniang* rite is also known as the 'final judgment rite'; this is done in order to find out the responsibility, loyalty, sincerity that the surviving wife/husband has towards his/her dead wife/husband.

Before the bones were deposited at the permanent bone depository or *Mawshyieng*, the relatives of both sides of the deceased would once again take out the *Klongrit,* check if the bones remained unchanged as kept at the beginning. If something wrong was found with the bones the relatives of the dead person would postpone the final rite until they found the cause. The scholar was told that there is a warning to a husband /wife of the dead person among the Lyngngams in the form of belief that "if anything happened to the buried bones such as may be eaten up by rats, ants or if there was loss of anyone of the bones, the clan of the deceased would question the surviving wife/husband if he/she had committed adultery when all the cremation rites for the dead person had not been completed that finally lead to the cause of losing the bones". If there was such case, the guilty husband/wife had to apologize to the in-laws in the presence of all the clan members of both sides. Then only the final rites may be completed.

The Lyngngams believe that if the performance of the cremation ceremony of the dead is not complete, the malevolent spirit residing on the tree will hinder the smooth transition of the soul. This place is called *Phok Solai* which signifies an uphill climb for the temporal but for the spirits it is a downhill climb all the way to *Krang raid.*

A remarkable feature of *Ka Phor Sorat* is that it is because of this ceremony that the Lyngngams earn their nickname name as *Ki Lyngngam Bam Doh Briew* (the Lynngams who eat human flesh). Terrifying though the word *bam doh briew* might sound in present day context, yet it was an interesting issue for the scholar because she had grown up hearing stories about this habit and this study provided the opportunity for her to encounter its falsity or the reality. Why the Lyngngams were called so by other Khasi sub-tribes. Did it mean that they really ate human flesh, and what made them eat human flesh? To answer these questions according to Kharbani[52] the early Lyngngam Nongtrai[53] believed that if the corpse was not burnt completely by the fire it would mean that the deceased was not satisfied at the time of death. They would then find out the cause and prayed to the deceased that he/she need not worry about anything that was left undone or incomplete when he/she was still alive. After that, the people who were engaged in cremating the corpse would consume the unburned part of the body along with rice beer.

During field investigation, the scholar was informed that another reason motivating the phrase *bam doh briew* lies in the fact that the Rashir clan of the Lyngngams, also known as Dko (amongst the Khasis) who dwell in the villages of Nongdaju, Nongthawkhong, Riangna, Langumshing performed the 'ritual killing' of people before they observe the *Phor Sorat.* The practice of performing the funerary rites of this clan is different from the other Lyngngams in that during the period of waiting for the time to celebrate *Ka Phor*, they have to perform certain rituals by the

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[52] Lostin Lawrence Kharbani, 2004: *U Syngkhni.* p. 66.

[53] Nongtrai is one out of the three clans from the same ancestral mother. The other two clans are Lyngngam and Muliang

priest called *Nongkhiat Byllei* to conclude if the death was peaceful or not. The priest falls into a trance during the process and he begins to speak with the relatives of the dead person with words which are unintelligible. These words have to be translated by another priest who is the assistant of the main priest. Thus if the person has died peacefully, the spirit would ask no other rituals to be carried out by his relatives before *Ka Phor*. But, if the dead person dies an unsatisfied, unfulfilled death he would ask his relatives to kill somebody and offer the head to his spirit while the rest of the body would either be consumed or buried. Sometimes, the spirit of the dead person would demand only one head, while sometimes more than one was demanded. The number of heads may increase up to even ten at a time depending on the wish of the spirit of the dead person. The belief is that if the relatives of the deceased are able to satisfy the dead person by providing the number of heads he wants, in return they would flourish with good health and prosperity; but if they cannot fulfill the deceased's wishes, then, the whole family would be subject to misfortune and disease. It is also believed that the main purpose of the 'ritual killing' is that the dead person cannot go alone to the place of the death, someone have to accompany him/her on the way. It is therefore, a must for the Rashir clan to murder somebody to be the companion for the deceased.

The Rashir clans have to hunt for human beings from neighbouring, as well as other villages to get the required heads for the sacrificial offerings. It was also revealed to the scholar in an interview that it may happen in some cases that when these head-hunters are unable to get the required number of heads from other places, the only way to get the remaining number of heads was to murder someone from the

village folk or at times even members from their own clan. Though it was not clearly revealed to the scholar whether the body of the victim would be burnt, buried or consumed by the surviving relatives of the deceased, but people of the Lyngngam area and other clans living together in the same village with the Rashir clan believe that most of the time, the body would be consumed by the close relatives of the dead person, while the heads would be offered to the spirit and the skulls were preserved secretly and properly by only the eldest uncles of the clan. This practice continued till the early nineteen seventies though it was stopped by the British colonials and the Syiems of Nongstoin much before that. The reason for this is mainly due to Christianization and the spread of education.

Consuming of the dead body was also found to have been practiced by the Wari (Pakaa Nova)[54] too. Until the 1960s, they disposed of nearly all their dead by consuming substantial amounts of the corpses' body substances. However, unlike the Lyngngam Nongtrai, the Wari practice is to entirely consume the corpse as a means of disposing it off. This according to Conklin was called as 'Mortuary Cannibalism'. The body was first dismembered followed by removing and burning of body parts considered inedible, including the hair, nails, genitals, intestines, and other entrails. After being dismembered and cleansed, the body was then roasted in a fire after which it was consumed and those who consume the body typically included the dead person's spouse's siblings, spouse's parents, spouse's parents' siblings, and the deceased's children's spouses, as well as these individuals' own close consanguine.

[54] Wari[54] (Pakaa Nova) are an indigenous population of about 1,500 people who live in the western Brazilian rain forest, in the state of Rondonia near the Bolivian border.

Unmarried people typically were eaten by their siblings' spouses, siblings' spouses' siblings, their parents' siblings' spouses, and these individuals' close kin.[55]

According to Conklin- The ethnographic and ethno-historical literatures are dominated by accounts of the exo-cannibalism of enemies, which has been reported more frequently, and described in more depth, than endo- or mortuary cannibalism. Concomitant with this predominant focus on enemy-eating, Universalist theories of cannibalism have tended to interpret anthropophagy as a fundamentally antisocial act. Psychogenic theorists from Freud [1981 (1913)] to Sagan (1974) have viewed all forms of people-eating as an expression of individuals' egocentric, oral-aggressive impulses. Recent social anthropological theories also have emphasized themes of anti-sociality and cannibalism is one such theme. Lewis (1986:63-77) subsumed endo and exo-cannibalism alike under a model in which consumption and ingestion reflect oral and genital aggression, and agonistic desires for dominance. Arens (1979) interpreted cannibalism as a universal symbol of barbarism, otherness, and inhumanity. [56]

Comparing the practice of consuming the dead body among the Wari and the Lyngngam Nongtrai, we can safely draw a conclusion that on one hand, the Lyngngam Nongtrai were and are not anthropophagi as often called by other Khasi tribes, because they did not intentionally eat the corpse as the Wari but did that only when some parts of it was left unburned as mentioned earlier. Thus, in contrast to the

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[55] Beth A. Conklin, - "thus are our bodies, thus was our custom: mortuary cannibalism in an Amazonian society". *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Feb., 1995), p. 80. Published by: Blackwell Publishing

[56] *Ibid.* p. 76.

Wari's practice neither *Ka Phor Sorat* is 'endo- or mortuary cannibalism' or consuming the unburned body is an act of cannibalism among the Lyngngam Nongtrai. While on the other hand, in the funerary rites of the Rashir clan, it was seen that the deceased wanted human heads to be burnt together with him/her as sacrifice while the rest of the victim's body would have to be consumed by the relatives. This shows that the Rashir clans were once anthropophagi and that their practice of 'ritual killing and eating' can be called as the 'exo- cannibalism', though this practice was completely stopped today for the reasons mentioned above.

Ka Phor Sorat, the most important ceremonial custom of the Lyngngams at present also serves as reaffirmation and renewal of kinship ties among the Lyngngams, for it is during the *Phor Sorat* that the relatives from other villages get the chance to visit the family related to the dead person in the village. This visit is called *Kekawduk.*[57] One very interesting feature of this celebration is that even the Christian converts too still follow certain practices of *Ka Phor Sorat.* However, it is to be noted here that the Christians observe only *Ka Sorat* or *Ka Lynniang* while *Ka Phor/ Bang* is totally neglected.

At present as most of the Lyngngams have become Christian, the dead body is buried, but after a year or so when they are able to commensurate and honour the dead person *Ka Phor Sorat* is celebrated and the villagers and relatives from far and near are invited by the family of the dead person. The celebration lasts almost for a week where dancing, eating and drinking goes on and cows are killed for feasting,

[57] Everard D. Nongsiang, Manuscript. p. 36.

though no ceremonial rites are performed. Feasting and dancing follows and a bull is offered as sacrifice (*dahsla*) where auguries are taken from the viscera of the animal killed. Dozens of pigs and cows are slaughtered for the week-long celebration.

CHAPTER- V

CONCLUSION

The preceding five chapters have concerned themselves with showing Khasi folklore undergoing a change which has been described as folklorismus. Though there are many factors responsible for this change, the central reason according to the scholar is the threat of acculturation facing the Khasis due to rapid development and modernization in the society. With the advent of science and technology, there has been a rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization too and different forms of new and powerful technology emerged as tools for mass communication. One such medium is the media both print and electronics. Media is one of the significant influences of our age. Everyone understands that modern urban society turns on mass-mediated information and yet we continually decry its omnipresence, pretensions and outright excesses. Like the lover, one cannot live with or without; so also mass media is integrated into our activity to the point that it or not modern life without some forms of mass media is impossible. Media also acts as a neutral agent in transmitting information and as a mirror that reflects culture.

A developing state like Meghalaya is caught in at least three epochs of communication, and tensions that exist in between each one. On the one hand, the vast majority of the population is rural and pre-literate, living in a rich oral-aural culture mediated through song, and dance. A small but increasing minority, however, reaps the benefits of literacy and the power that comes along with it, a power that is still concentrated in the urban metropolis and its ancillary structures such as mass

education, mass manufacture, bureaucracy and trade. And finally, the media environment makes itself felt, not just in the big cities but spread out over the rural surroundings as well through the electronic media of radio, cassettes and TV/video, now assisted by the government's commitment to satellite telecommunications.

The impact of the electronic media has been felt not only amid educated elite group but even among unlettered folk as well. First the press, radio, television and cinema and now increasingly, the video, telephones, computers, satellites and their combinations have given rise to a new kind of perception. A perception not based on reading abstract symbols (literacy), but on "soaking in" sounds, images and tactile impressions and making a completely new Gestalts (configuration) from them. Some of these changes in perception have meant: valuing immediacy, change and relevance over permanence and quality; being even more saturated with information than ever before; preferring sensory and emotional presentations to exclusively abstract messages ("the triumph of television over reading"), or as the current slang has it : Three words describe modern youth- "audio, video, disco".[1]

In the light of the extensive and influence of media culture, it is no exaggeration to say that we live presently in a 'media culture' or 'popular culture'. By media culture here, the scholar mean to refer to the intermingled cultures of the Pan Indian and the Western as well which have made their influences felt and widely accepted amongst the Khasis. It means that nearly every institution including Religion, Government, Criminal Justice, Health care, Education and even the Family

[1] Myron J. Pereira, 1994, Our *Second Skin and Other Essays on Communication and Culture*, p. 61-62.

is influenced by the mass communication process. We know that forms of popular culture are largely created and maintained through mass media. For example, video games are the result of a technology and a visual perspective that emerged from Television. Again, the association of Radio and popular music is so taken for granted that many people define a piece of music's popularity by the fact that it is featured on radio. But what many people do not realize is that cultural norms and values of the educational process, religious ritual and belief, political campaigns, knowledge of health care and so on are increasingly being formed through our experience with mass media.

As the perspectives used by the mass media frame the interaction among media professionals and with the audiences, they influence the general collective consciousness of the people in a society. People in cities and urban areas come to rely on mass media to such an extent that perception and interpretation of, and action on, a great many events and issues occur through communication strategies developed and constantly employed by mass media.

Mass media has spread all over the world not only in cities or towns but even in rural areas too. Education is one of the results of its impact. It is naïve to believe that only educated and elitist youth in the cities are exposed to the electronic media. In the city life, the influence of the music cassettes, satellites, T.V. and video films has been such that young boys and girls everywhere pick up the dominant symbols of the prevailing media culture, no matter how cheap and superficial they might seem.

As such, media education becomes part of development education. If these developments are seen as the process whereby individuals slowly but definitely take control of their own lives, then mass media is one way of coming to term with the cultural environment of media messages around us. For most of the people living in the cities, the media are an all- pervasive environment. One wakes up in the morning to the sound of the commercials on Vividh Bharati; we glance over the headlines of the morning newspapers as we sip a cup of tea. Again, if there is cricket match on, the transistor brings for us the latest score and if we are moody we slip in a cassette to cheer us up or watch a movie to relax with.

The history of the mass media in the west, particularly of the modern electronic media, reveals that from the very beginning folklore has been a constant and unfailing source of material for most of them.[2] The story has been no different in India either. In the heyday of the gramophone disc records, folksongs had been perennial favourites. And today when the audio/video cassettes have taken over the position of the disc, there are spurts of folksong productions everywhere. And the listener knows that while folksongs constitute one of the major staples of the radio-station network spread throughout the country, the radio has always leaned quite heavily on various other kinds of folklore resources as well.

Oral tradition and oral transmission have been conventionally accepted as forming the essence of the folklore phenomenon and were also considered as the folk or traditional media. Traditional media of the Khasis was as a result, categorized as ritual and traditional. The ritual forms of traditional media are the community dances

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[2] Birendranath Datta, 1999, *Folklore Foragings in India's North-East*, p. 234.

and other religious acts, while the traditional forms are folk songs, folk poetry or *phawar*, storytelling and flexible characters like jester and narrative manager etc. which could be used judiciously to absorb and convey contemporary messages. Though the impact of modern media in the Khasi society was seen to be very effective, yet it was also found that the traditional media has not died out completely. They continue to live on albeit in a second existence. It is also natural that there comes about a number of transformations when folklore items are taken over by the modern mass media. For instance, folklore items once confined to particular groups or areas have now been familiarized and popularized beyond the confines of such groups or areas, thanks to the mass media which have absorbed them and disseminated them to a much larger audience- often covering the whole nation.

The study reveals that while mass media is good in the rapid transmission of farm technology, information and news, the traditional media can supplement these effects by having a comparatively better impact on the motivational, behavioural or attitudinal aspects of the rural or illiterate people. It was also found that *phawar*, storytelling, folk songs, folk proverbs, sayings, etc can admirably suit the needs of contemporary communication. It can also be said that comparatively these traditional media can more effectively stir the feelings and affect the attitude of illiterate masses. This is so because they reflect the cultural ethos and are closer to the hearts of the common man in rural areas.

In this study, it was also observed that both the mass media and folk media have developed their own style and forms of communication and that the former could expand the size of the audiences of the folk artist while the latter had the great

advantage of enriching and diversifying the content of the mass media. Obviously radio can translate the message of traditional media into auditory experiences, TV and films can multiply them, camera can add a fourth dimension to their contents. On the other hand, the traditional performing arts can increase the impact because of greater acceptability and credibility of message directed through them and especially through live programmes.

In the introductory note, the scholar have discussed about the emergence of Mass production of folklore elements and the outcome of this type of production. It is true that many people believe that mass production of folklore items which resulted out of industrialization and modernization have supposedly marked the end of folklore and folklife patterns in the steadily expanding domain of the world they occupy. But the truth is not so, as we have seen in the discussion; therefore, the principal objective here is to study the Khasi folklorismus and to attempt to grasp the ancient reality of Khasi antiquities, using clues provided by still-existent folk traditions.

As discussed in the first chapter that the present generation Khasis particularly the youths want to somehow maintain the Khasi identity along with Khasi folklore, and unless this is accepted by the younger generation of the Khasis, it is doubtful that folklorismus will be successful in its task of preserving Khasi folklore. The folklore of the ancient Khasis contains all that was meaningful and valuable for them. The scholar is of the opinion that without a full realization of this fact and without a serious study of Khasi folklore by one and all, Khasi folklorismus will remain confused and misdirected with what Dorson called 'Fakelore' or the

spurious production of authentic folklore. Unlike folklorismus, the term fakelore is authentic, manufactured folkolore presented as if it were genuinely traditional. And if folklorists do not know the old and rural and the preindustrial folklore, how can they judge the changing traditions in the modern society? The term can refer to new stories or songs made up out of whole cloth, or to folklore that is reworked and modified for modern tastes. The element of misinterpretation is central; artists who draw on traditional stories in their work are not producing Fakelore unless they claim that their creations are real folklore.

Two points therefore, regarding folklorismus can be made here:

(a) That folklorimus is not anti-folklore or fakelore, and,

(b) That folklorismus is not anti-progress and development.

In the real sense, folklorismus is a new medium of folklore and not an agency that destroys the purity of folklore as was perceived by many people. It is the invention and adaptation of traditional folklore for mass produced through its various forms of modern mass communication.

In this chapter, the scholar has also tried to show that traditional media adapt themselves without losing integrity when forms of traditional folklore are transmitted by the modern mass media with adaption. Such is the case of Khasi oral poetry singing groups called *phawar*. People who express resentment over the "new look" and the new form of the old and traditional *phawar* forget that had it not been

for modern mass media, most of the modern Khasis would have only memories of such *phawar* singing groups.

In the usage of *phawar* both the form (style or structure) and content are required to have a mutual compromise to make the message transmission effective. But the significance of the musical mode as message carriers is subjected to social conventions. It is primarily the importance which should be felt by the composer-singer. Once the composer, is successful, the 'aptness of his imagery and its intelligibility in its tradition will transmit the feeling to his audience'[3]. In *phawar* singing, it has to be seen well whether the content (or poetry) used in the singing modes is 'official' or private. Social anthropologist Jan Vansina expresses his opinion in these words:

> Official poetry is either propaganda or else awakens feeling which, in the eyes of the community as a whole, ought to be aroused and meditated upon.[4]

At present, the conscious section of Khasi youths and some politicians who confine themselves to political parties seems to make use of modern *phawar* officially for their vote-catching purposes. Political parties make use of these forms on a wide scale and *phawar* singers are also purposely deployed. Regional consciousness may narrow down or split up when political loyalties are betrayed. For example, different political parties during elections take the name of different

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[3] S. Munro Edmonson, 1971, *Lore :An introduction to the science of folklore and literature*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, p.134

[4] Jan Vansina, 1965, *Oral tradition* (Translated by H.M. Wright), Penguin Books, p. 147. The book first appeared as *De La Tradition Orale: Essai de Methode Historique* in 1961.

regional parties for the sake of vote catching. The regional parties throw mud on one another and especially at the National party (Congress I) as seen in the political *phawar* section discussed earlier. But once the elections are over, most of these leaders who had won on the tickets of regional parties from their respective constituencies are ready to change or merge their parties into any majority group even if that be a national party whom they hated most before the elections. Even in the general elections no party can afford to neglect the use of *phawar* singing in the Khasi Hills to influence the voters.

This aspect of *phawar* singing is often aimed at motivated communication. Some of the *phawar* like the *Phawar* of the Seng Khasi were directly composed with lyrics meant to stir loyalties towards Khasi culture and religion or for awakening a sense of adoration amongst the modern Khasi youths for their very own culture.

The AIR and Doordarshan Shillong stations (Chapters 2 and 3) have been effectively using these modern *phawar* for transmitting their programmes successfully. In addition to *phawar*, other forms of traditional media like the folk songs and storytelling were also used by the AIR and Doordarshan. In fact, these organizations have been the pioneering institutions to draw upon folk songs, folk music, folk stories etc. In other story telling broadcasting programmes folktales are narrated in bulk. The Radio and Doordarshan songs have integrated various folk song forms which have been meaningfully utilized for diffusion of messages.

The Song & Drama Division as stated earlier is broadly a 'Live entertainment organization'. Programmes presented by this organization are meant 'to create an

awareness of social, economic and democratic ideals cherished by the nation'. In its music programmes more emphasis is given to folk music and semi-folk music style, perhaps because of easily available professional singers in the area.

The only criticism against the current mode of working for reaching the audiences in the fields is that the government agencies have very little control on the contents and quality of performances and, that no effort have been made so far to measure the effectiveness of the folk musical and the song texts. In the process of exploiting folk music and *phawar* as channels, we come across many new folk songs, new *phawar* devoid of any reference to their authorship. The tunes are handed down to the singers by oral transmission. They are perpetuated through constant use, while the words get changed in course of time to make them meaningful to the contemporary needs. The scholar here makes a reference to an incident witnessed by her: - the scholar happened to listen to one *Phawar*-singing called "*Tang Ban Byrgia*" sung by a group of young boys and girls on the final day of the Varsity week celebration in 2006. When she asked them the name of the composer they said "we don't know. We have learned from other groups". Later she learned that the composer was Banniewkor Lyngdoh Nongbri. Similarly, the first ever Khasi folk song to be aired through AIR Shillong "*U Sier Lapalang*" has no composer. Anonymity of the folk-based composer or writer is true to not only the traditional folklore, but to new composition as well. The composer or for that matter Nongbri, perhaps did not want to impose himself much while composing a *phawar*.

However, this is not the case with all the composed *phawar* and folksongs, though the name of the real composer or writer might not be revealed, yet the singers

know who the composer of the song or *phawar* they sing, is. For example, when the scholar asked the singer (Late) Skendrowel Syiemlieh about the composer of the song "*Ka Ktien Sepngi*", he told her that the main lines of the song were composed by his paternal uncle (late) Stet L. Nonglait and later he improvised upon the song by adding new lyrics in the stanzas. This shows as Y.M. Sokolov believes that- the names of the authors are not revealed, because when they compose the songs, they do it without writing and disseminate them by 'word-of-mouth' only.[5]

Radio and Television can play a very important role to revive folk music, folk dance and folk drama in different regions of not only the Khasi Hills but of the country as a whole. It is true that the traditional means of communication through folk culture flourishes at the grassroots level. Folk music is dying out with modernity and therefore, efforts must be made preserve them.

Today, the AIR Shillong has been able to organize different forms of showcasing the rich folk music amongst the Khasis such as the staged performances. For example programmes like 'Folk Music Concerts', 'Folk Music Competition', Spring festival of 'Regional, Folk and Light Music' etc were organized where renowned folk artists, folk group performers of the region and outside were invited to perform and entertain the audience. This is done as part of its broadcasting programmes in order to stimulate improvement of favourable behavior of the target audience. How to attract audiences for radio programmes is another major issue. In

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[5] Y.M. Sokolov, 1956, Russian Folklore (Translated by Smith), Macmillan & Company, New York, p. 11.

the fast changing media scenario in the country, there is speculation about the survival and credibility of this great institution.

However, the study found that the present level of live-staged performances in the shape of invited audience programmes are not adequate, for the reason that they put too much importance on integrating electronic media with traditional and folk media for maximum efficacy. It would therefore be best for the Station to consider the fact that instead of holding the invited audience programmes in city capitals or districts headquarters, it is more desirable to organize them in villages and in remote areas so that folk artists of these areas would be able to expose themselves through modern media. The present practice is that maximum number of invited audience programmes are staged in urban auditoriums and maximum beneficiaries are urban populace while the majority of the rural Khasis are left uninformed.

Besides transmitting *phawar*, folksongs and folk music through their programmes, Radio and TV in Shillong gave the story-telling forms a new life. In the rural situation, a story-teller in a broadcasting programme would not entertain but also function as a message carrier in his own style. Among the unlettered segments of society a story-teller could motivate a target group simply by injecting the intended message at an appropriate place in a story already popular in the society. Story-telling thus works as a device in his hands, to be used in a society whose ethos and language he knows well.

Sometimes the story-teller assumes the role of a 'living newspaper' for diffusion of information. His traditional role has not been eliminated in the modern

times, but the mass media has on the contrary, made him aware of the timely adjustment with the changing situations. He continues to be an entertainer and also a propagandist in his own way. Therefore with all sorts of embellishments, he, as a performer, uses the story as the tool of his trade and subsequently provides a liaison between the non-literates and the literate elites. The storyteller was once considered to be a professional entertainer. He holds the same position even today in villages. "....He is a master of total communication," writes A.C. Scott, "with nothing more than his voice and compelling gesture"[6]

How should folktales be presented to young readers? One might wonder. When this question was put to Angel Karaltchev, a famous Bulgarian author of several books for children, he said:

> The choice and treatment of folktales is not an easy matter. Not a single can be transcribed straight from a folklore collection and be mechanically presented to young readers. Just as we cannot get ore containing iron, lead or manganese straight from the rock and take it to the blacksmith for him to forge an axe for us.[7]

He advised :

> In the first place the writer must attentively study the content of the tale and decide: where will this tale lead young readers, what lesson will they draw from it, will it clarify or cloud their awareness? Not all folktales are

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[6] A.C. Scott, 1972, *The Theatre in Asia*, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, London p.10

[7] As quoted from Parmer: Traditional Folk Media 1975, p.70.

> alike.... Above all, those folktales must be selected which embody the truth and through which the people's lips speak justice. The tales must be cleansed of age-old errors, of religious mysticism, superstition, unseemingly incidents and episodes, of false constructions.[8]

For the field workers and advertisers,[9] the use of folktales or legends or for that matter other folk stories will always be rewarding in cross-cultural situations, provided the above things are kept in mind, particularly in view of the receptive level of the different types of audiences. The utilization of stories enriches speech communication and helps the communicator to make his points seem convincing to people with whom he or she may be talking. The point of narrating a legend, for instance, is basically not to entertain but to educate people, to inform them about an important fact, to arm them against danger within their own cultural environment. The legend deals with experiences an ordinary man has to face passively. The tale-hero rises above the events he stimulates, the man in the legend remains helpless before the events he encounters. The legend explains an extraordinary phenomenon or a memorable event, it communicates traditional learning and knowledge to the young and the uninitiated, it advises people how to act in critical situations and warns them against doing the wrong thing. This educational essence is dramatized by an example that is the narrative content of the legend.

Legends do not seem to wither under the impact of urban life. On the contrary, they appear to be the hardest of folk narrative forms, not only in adjusting

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[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Binod Rao, 1963, *Folktales of Heroism and Valour, Akashwani*, December 1, p.4

easily to modern conditions but by generating new types based on the most up-to-date issues of contemporary life. The legends of today do not belong solely to the backward, uneducated layers of the population. They capitalize on pervasive beliefs, on the search for the unknown, on the extraordinary and unusual, and hold the interest of men of all classes.

Besides broadcast and telecast of songs and story-telling programmes, Radio and Television can play a very important role to revive folk dance and folk drama in different regions of the country. It is true that the traditional means of communication through folk culture flourish at the grassroots level, yet these two media also, particularly the television have been able to present the different folk performances to a wide range of viewers successfully. For example, one need not go to the hum drum of noisy crowds and distant places to watch the performances of for example, *Ka Nongkrem* Dance, Ka *Behdeinkhlam, and Ka Sajer* or *Ka Rongkhli,* one can just sit in front of the TV to watch the live performers.

Radio and Television as mentioned in the previous chapters, are primarily, media for information dissemination which also have been used for home entertainment. For this reason, both the Radio and TV station are referred as the institutions where informal education is imparted and most of all these two institutions can be considered as the 'great second mother'. Occasionally entertainment is used to lure people to accept information, through either the news or other programmes. The 'spoken word' programme which includes drama, story-telling, poetry recitation, and novel reading are the programmes used by the Radio and DDK Shillong Station for their broadcasting and telecasting programmes to

disseminate information about folk stories, legends, etc to the listeners and viewers. For instance, a daytime story-telling session for children might be fulfilling the same function as a bed- time story-telling session.

However, song programmes have by far been considered to be the most effective of all the programmes of both radio and television. Programmes like *Ki Sur Tynrai* meant for all types of folksongs such as *Ka Sohlyngngem, Ka Langwyrku Sang khyndew, Ka Tiewlalyngi pep shad, Ka Panshandi dem lorkhah, Ka Sngi bad u Klew, Ka Nam* and *Ki Sur Bathiang* a programme for all Khasi modern songs such as *Tang bad Phi, Pyrthei Thala, Jingieid to Pasiaw, Por Synrai, Nai Khadsaw Synnia* etc were effectively and successfully aired and telecasted.

Skilled narrators and folk artists have retold folktales, legends and myths on radio and television programmes in the form of either story-telling or a song, and these tales were found to have re-entered the oral tradition once again. Here, we clearly see the process of transmitting of folklore through media and its interacting effects i.e. media on folklore and folklore on media. It is found in the study that though modern mass media had to a large extent taken the place of the oral transmission of folklore elements on one level of communication, but this complements and supplements the still-continuing oral transmission on another level. As a result of this study, it may be said that in the Khasi context, Folklorismus operated in three different stages of transmission of the folklore elements. These stages are:

1. The stage of beginning where real or authentic folklore is collected, compiled and recorded in a written form.
2. The second is the stage where the written records folklore were renewed, documented and digitized for mass presentation.
3. The third and final is the stage where the mass production of the renewed folklore became the source of oral transmission for the new generation.

Now, coming to documentaries and films division as the powerful means for modern media communication other than radio and television which have been discussed in Chapter 4; it was observed that the films and documentaries, as widely appreciated and democratic form of the arts have a singular impact on every culture. The popularity and accessibility of films and documentaries play a significant role not only in moulding public opinion and knowledge-sharing and understanding of different traditions prevalent in the society. It also makes them important instruments of aesthetic education for a large section of the population.

It was learnt that the film industries like Hollywood and Bollywood have come to rely heavily on folklore genres especially the narrative genres for their film's stories. It was also observed that films and documentaries as part of the media communication - bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the folkloristic tradition has not only steadily supplied grist to the Indian celluloid mill but has practically played a decisive role in moulding the very character of the Indian film.[10] The same is seen in the case of Khasi films too. As is well known, 'the Indian film industry started with a heavy dependence on mythological and other narrative themes of the

[10] Birendranath Datta, 1999, *Folklore Foragings in India's North-East,* p. 234.

folk genre, and in fact the bulk of the avowedly 'social' themes of the run-of the-mill, India films have been built around fairy- tale motifs.'[11] In the case of Khasi films, it was seen that since film-making is comparatively a new invention in the Khasi Hills, production of films is therefore very less as compared with other parts of the country. Though with these few productions, yet the Khasi films too, particularly those with the social theme were seen to have been built around the myth, folktale and fairytale motifs. The film *Manik Raitong* for instance, as discussed in chapter 4 is the direct spin-off of a legend popular amongst the Khasis. This film therefore, will come under the category of what Handoo classed as the *Half Myth Films* as mentioned and explained in the introductory note. On the other hand, new and contemporary produced Khasi films such as *Ka Mon Bajwat, Khunswet Shempap, Ka Synjat, Ngan Wad Ha ban Da shem, Iaishah, Ka Synrai,* etc were such films where the structural patterns of the story are similar or the same as those of the folktales fairy-tale; the hero winning the heroine after prevailing over the mischievous machinations of the villain; the insignificant looking protagonist representing the good triumphant over the redoubtable giant-sized adversary representing the evil; the erring husband reconciled to the wrong but virtuous wife; and so on and so forth. Thus, we can say that the magic of the myth, folktale and the fairy-tale has not died out completely from the minds of the people, but were changed and found news ways of expression in the form of the documentaries and films.

And this brings us to the crux of the argument that we can no longer live unaware of the influence of the mass media and mass culture. As responsible

[11] *Ibid.*

members of the society we need to understand and choose how we allow the media to influence us and especially the youth. We no longer believe that industrialization implies the end of folk culture, but rather we attempt to trace the modifications and evolution undergone by folk culture in the industrialized and urbanized world. It is also well known, that with urbanization and industrialization folklore changed but it did not die out, in fact it is getting a new lease of life of its existence. Therefore, here the scholar would like to conclude the discussion by pointing out that with all these developments which include the publicizing and commercialization of folklore, folk culture has been gradually merging into mass culture, or in other words, mass culture has been absorbing folk culture.

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BIO – DATA

Name ... G. Badaiasuklang Lyngdoh Nonglait

Date of birth ... 05th February 1981

Educational qualification ... MA (Cultural Studies), Tezpur University, Tezpur, Assam

Additional qualification ... Passed National Eligibility Test for Lectureship (NET) and qualified the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF).

Address ... Mawlai Iewrynghep, Block- B (Kpersyiem), Shillong - 793016

Publication ...

1. Globalisation: The Khasi Perspective a joint Seminar paper in *Indian Folklife*, a quarterly newsletter, serial No. 22. July 2006, edited by M.D. Muthukumaraswamy, Chennai.

2. Promises are meant to be Broken: An Oicotype Study of Two Tales, a joint Seminar paper in *Orality and Beyond: A*

North-East Indian Perspective, published by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

3. Chief Becomes the King: Importing the Feudal Paradigm, a joint Seminar paper in *Journal of Indian Folkloristics*, Vol. IX. No. 1/2. 2007 (N.S.), published by Zooni Publications, Mysore.

Other activities:

1. Participated and presented a paper at the UGC sponsored seminar on "The Folklore Study of North Eastern Region with special reference to Garo Hills (Meghalaya)" organized by Mendipathar college in February 2005.
2. Participated and presented a paper in the National Seminar on "Mass Media and Challenges of 21st Century with reference to Northeast India" organized by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languahes (CIEFL), NE Campus, Shillong in February 2005.
3. Participated and presented a paper in the Regional Seminar on "Oral Literature on Meghalaya" organized by the Department of Garo at NEHU, Tura Campus in May 2005.
4. Participated and presented a paper in the Regional Seminar on "Orality and Beyond" organized by Sahitya Akademi Regional Office, Kolkata and the Centre for Cultural and Creative Studies, NEHU Shillong in July 2005.

5. Participated in the National Workshop on "Methodology for Folklore Research" organized by the Folklore Project, Centrte for Folklore Studies, Puthuppanam, Vatakara at Calicut University's Vatakara Campus on September 2005.
6. Participated and presented a paper in 28th Indian Folklore Congress & national Seminar on "Folklore and the Discourse of Marginalised" organized by the Centre for Folklore, Studies Calicut University Kerala on October 2005.
7. Participated and presented a paper in the Regional Seminar on "Discourse of Space and Continuity in Films" organized by the Sahitya Akademi, North East Centre for Oral Literature, Shillong on September 2006.
8. Participated and presented a paper in the 29th Indian Folklore Congress & National Seminar on "Oral Discourse and Ancient Knowledge Systems of North East India" organized by the Centre for Cultural and Creative Studies, NEHU Shillong on September 2006.
9. Participated in the National Seminar on "Tribal Literature with special reference to Languages of North-East India" organized by the Department of Khasi, NEHU, Shillong on February 2008.
10. Participated in the Symposium on "Influence and Assimilation of Folklore and Folk Forms in the context of the Poetry of the North – East" organized by Sahitya Akademi, North East Centre for Oral Literature, Shillong on August 2008.

11. Participated in the Regional Seminar on "Navigating the Urban Jungle" organized by the Sahitya Akademi, North East Centre for Oral Literature, Shillong.

Re: paper for publication

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Dear Badaiasuklang: I have received your paper on Khasi Folklorismus for the *Journal of Indian Folkloristics.* Your paper is accepted for publication in the vol. 10 of the journal.

All the best
Prof. Jawaharlal Handoo
Editor, JIF

Prof. Jawaharlal Handoo
1103 C-D Block. Udaya Ravi Road
Kuvempu Nagar. Mysore 570023
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