CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

Oral narratives encompass a large number of folkloric genres or features. Folk genres like the folktale, folk song or oral poems, proverbs, riddles, tongue-twisters, word games and others make up the gamut to the study of oral tradition of a community. Simply put oral narratives are genres of verbal art which is transmitted orally by word of mouth. Oral narratives are transmitted from one generation to the next which is at the heart of a community’s cultural practice. This form of knowledge dissemination stems from the need of a community who aspire to keep alive their oral history, their age old tradition, the knowledge of the community for future generations to relive them in their time.

Folk songs are the elements that later came to be known as oral poetry. For at one point of time folk songs and folk tales exist and what we today called oral poetry or poetry came later, at least as far as the terminologies are concerned. What was called poetry was sung once upon a time, they were either sung individually or in group. Singing is then perhaps as old as mankind, often it has been linked to rituals, works and celebration of life’s events that surrounds man. Thus it is possible that man sang and expressed himself and his emotions much before he could make speeches and statements. Perhaps singing of songs that are close to one’s heart makes man to forget or allowed him to forget the harsh economic reality in many cases and give him an anchorage to go on with
the vagaries in life. Thus singing was in fact central to the entire business of living. Folk song singing or simply singing is something that came naturally to the Mao people. The subject of this study on the folk songs of the Mao community was thus a worthwhile task. The aim of the study was to unravel the lore of the community. Different genres of the folk songs offered different challenges. In the second chapter, the different categories of the folk songs brought out the full range of the oral history of the Mao people of the past. The different facets of their livelihood in times of peace and war were displayed aplenty in the song texts and which was further substantiated in the analysis of the song texts in the chapter. It also goes to acknowledge that the oral narratives of the community are valuable ethnological source-materials that open up traits of individuals and the value-system of the community. They reveal a compact nature of the mysteries of life and death, of love and anger, of hope and despair, of dreams and frustration. These song-poems speak honestly, silently and unassumingly. And they are deeply rooted in the emotions and the social-cultural milieu of the community. The language of the oral poems takes on the flavor of the soil, that is the simple expressive vocabulary of the simple folks, but often in those words lies the gems of wisdom that have been accumulated over hundreds of years in their memory. The song-poems are thus difficult to translate and often the essence of the content of the oral text is diluted or lost. The songs are laced with levels of meanings which we may term it as the surface level and the deep level meaning to the songs. Often taking into account of the surface level meaning the deep level meaning is not culled out thereby missing out the rightful
meaning of the folk songs. This was taken care with utmost respect and
diligence in this study.

The third chapter offers three different kinds of folk songs. *Odolo*; consisting
of two varieties categorized as *Odolo* and *Do kochu lo*. *Odolo* is songs of
pleasantries, whereas *Do kochu lo* is songs of choice. The beauty of these
songs lies in the themes on which these songs are based. The two most
common themes are recapitulation of the past and imagining of the present or
future, which are based upon the life of people. Often the past is relived in the
form of those songs. The second category brings out the best of song dueling.
In fact this category of folk songs take us back to the days of the dormitory
system where song dueling takes place in the girl’s dormitory when the boys
comes on visitation. The beauty of this category of folk songs form is the
absence of pre set lyrics. It is the wit and spur of the moment to retort or
reprove the opponent that is displayed in the duels. The skill, the aptitude and
the attitude of the singers are tested all through. The singers’ verbal repertoire
of rustic intelligence and wit appears in its purest form in these song dueling.
*Shangailo* is the other variety of the Mao folk songs in this chapter. Songs are
based on people and their surroundings, animals, places and happenings or
calamities caused by nature. The tune employed in this song is completely
different from other folk songs. The tune rises and falls instantly and
consistently. It requires a high degree of expertise to render these songs. The
next genre of folk song in the chapter is the *Okro kolu* or the dirge. This genre
of song is sung during funerals only. There are no set lyrics attributed to the
Mao dirge. The lyrics are spontaneous inner feelings, reflections, composed at the moment by the singer. It is the highest and deepest expression of one’s feeling for a deceased person. The lyrics are impromptu expression of inner feelings, reflections that are stirred within the cognitive process of the person in relevance to the deceased.

The fourth and the fifth chapters offer work songs as well as a non-verbal phonetic rendering of song like performance which does not have set lyrics. These performances are either work songs or performed while engaged in some form of work. Onhũ konhũ and Mada kave are genres of song like performance based on ‘on the spot compositions’. They are performed to enliven the work force and to create a bond of camaraderie and a sense of collective feeling in the work force. The non-verbal Onhũ konhũ or oral aural non-verbal phonetic rendering is onomatopoeic in nature and performed during the course of the work.

Makai and Movu are oral non-verbal phonetic renderings. Their significance and appeal is in the expressive nature of the performance without lyrics. The absence of lyrics bemuses an observer. No words are expressed in Makai and Movu performance and so, syntactically it is void. Yet the exhilarating expression of self and a necessity in the sphere of cultural activity and social milieu for the Maos is where the importance of this performance lies. Therefore when viewed from the perspective of semantics at a deeper level,
the importance of *Makai* and *Movu* performances is deduced in terms of its usages and context.

The aesthetics of the Mao songs is the ability of the composers to put different events and history, war and duels, the total social-cultural milieu, or their very life into the songs that makes them special. The usage of folk metaphors and symbolism in the folk songs and understanding of them makes it a worthwhile challenge while undertaking this study. It is to be seen that there is no consciousness or design to weave symbols or metaphors into the text of the songs but the life-experience of several centuries crystallize into symbols. Thus refinement of massive experiential contexts adds up to metaphors. So they are thus genuine terms of life’s experiences without any attempt either to be cleaver or embellish to the song texts.

One may ask why the communities need to conserve or preserve their oral narratives in today’s fast changing world. One need not look beyond their surroundings to know or answer to the question. For many communities around the world globalisation and socio-economic compulsion have eroded the memory culture or expressive verbal arts because of their assimilation to more dominant ways of life or community. The transmission of cultural knowledge encoded largely in the human minds becomes threatened when knowledgeable elders perished with the knowledge without disseminating it or not been able to disseminate their knowledge to the disenchanted youngsters who are disinclined to acquire the oral narratives of the community.
This study is a small beginning in trying to help document the song texts in particular and the oral narratives in general of the Mao community. As the pace of modernization gears up, there are bound to be changes in every sphere. So we should do our parts in conserving our oral narrative from going into oblivion in the foreseeable future. It is important, therefore, that our oral traditions are documented for posterity so that at least in the years to come we know their contours through records.

Endnotes

1 Tracking up the Khüdzü mountain
2 Persons who are more elderly than himself
3 Return without wedging war on the Memai clans
4 Meaning his two wives
5 Refers to the Memai’s large population
6 Meaning weak and cowardly as a female is considered to be the weaker sex in the Mahra patriarchal society
7 The vernacular months spring
8 A sickle like knife
9 The parents of Akajü referred to him as ‘thin and bony’ which in the tribal world is a term of endearment and not the literal sense of the word.
10 The morung where the youngsters of the village go and sleep
11 Manners here cannnotes sexual activity, an euphemism for sex
12 Dirt here cannnotes menstrual cycle of the female
13 The village of Arüjü and Kapaini
14 The first Poumai village
15 The four clans of the Memai of those days were represented
16 Male-gun – it is believed that no men could defeat the Memai while they possessed this gun
17 These were the days of head-hunting
18 This is so for the ladies as Memai is a patrilineal society
19 Literally means the central or main pillar of a house
20 A type of sea-shell necklace
21 A euphemicstic use of the term ‘sprout’ in reference to the female genitalia
22 The local term for the Barak river
23 The bamboo divination
24 Another divination by killing a cock and observing the leg of the cock
25 The shortedned form of Athili
26 A war game where the opponents try to spear each other with a liribi which is a slim slender plant that substitute the spear in the game
27 A particular holler performed only during war, when one is victorious
28 Warrior’s meat gift
The term bachelor is randomly or humorously used to address even a married man or elders to compliment them in good humor.

The central pillar of a house

In the far past the Mao community were known to practice slavery. There has been mentioned of slaves been owned in different folk songs and folk stories.

Sky – the upward power that is upright. Earth or ground – the lesser power that would tend to fall

The Mao’s acknowledge the sky as the father and the earth as the mother

A traditional attire

A decorative plume that is used by man to hoist it into the head-gear as a traditional material

The precious human assets – wisdom of the elderly

A non-verbal phonetic rendering of a work song

Believed to be the first Tenymia village located in the Mao area

The village from where the Tenymia people dispersed and where the great ‘wild pear tree’ stand to these day

The Tenymia people

Migration

The Maram people

Storm and thunder are said to be the guardian deity of the Charanho village

Today the Charanho people has amassed fields and lands far beyond their boundaries into the land of the Mahra and Namai -Poumai

The local term for Mao

A mythical gun that is said to fire and always hit its target and the bullet always returns to the master

Denoting the unceasing fearsome continuity of the attack of the Mao warriors

A neighbouring Poumai village

Implying the god, tiger and man brotherhood myth

The children of Shipfu-u, a forefather of the Maos

The Mao village know today as Makhel, believed to be the first village of the Tenymia people

Name of a folk jewelry

A folk attire made of hair

Name of a folk jewelry

Immigration

Tenymia Nagas

Literally means the ‘tree of the barn filled of paddy’. Here it is referred to the Wild Pear Tree

A fibrose plant

Name of a Mao shawl

Presently the Angami people

In today’s context it is the same as winning a beauty contest

The festival Chüjüni is celebrated by the Mao community on the onset of the paddy plantation in the summer

Mara shawl was considered to be more prestigious than khelo shawl

The vernacular term for the Angamis

A ritually restrictive day

The wild pear tree revered by the Tenymai people and commonly known as the dispersal tree by the Nagas

Supposed to be a wild beast

An outsider

An hundred legged animal

Supposed to be a wild beast

A family member or best friend

Between couples or friends

Often friends and peer circle

Under these sub-titles are said to consists of thirty (30) or more songs each
Unlike the other category of folksongs – Lochu which are full of archaic words Chopfuza

Referring to themselves

The lunar month of Mao, Pfüzü = June
The Mao lunar month of Sale = July

The dry season
The wet season

It is associated with the start of a new spell of life in a year, not necessarily the rain

Warriors who roam the village to safeguard it from external attack

Wikipedia.org

Similar to Mobo an attention caller used by the Maos

In an orderly set pattern
Ululation

The Angami people
The two persons - Leaders

Usually creeper plants are used
The lunar calendar

A folk game

A dance form that is competed in the ratio of 1:1 or 2:2