Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Cultural practices of tribal societies have undergone tremendous transformation, mainly through the encounters with other cultures. These encounters show certain transformation occur when two different types of societies or civilizations come into contact. What actually happens to a community that were once considered not just 'isolated' but leading the life of 'savagery' when they come into a contact with people from other parts of the world? There has been one fundamental approach of the colonialist and Christian missionaries that is to 'transform' the cultural practices of the community which were living as 'isolates' and leading a life different from the western world. The establishment of new administrative systems with 'rational authority' and different legal systems seeped into the structure of the tribal societies. We see the tribal community trying to come to terms with the new cultural practices and forms of political systems and also trying to maintain the past traditions and customs which have been the backbone of their society. In the process, what has emerged is a situation where there is continuing effort to adapt to the changing systems of society, attempting to develop like other communities, and the unflinching desire to be rooted to the traditional past (Saberwal, 1995; Oommen, 1997).

The Tangkhuls' encounters with the colonial power and Christian missions have largely shaped most of the cultural practices and social changes. The impacts of the interventions from the two external forces, 'state' and 'non-state', was not confined to the realms of administrations and governing systems. It was reflected in the practices of everyday life as well as in different aspects of their society. The influence of religious conversion on the cultural practices of the Tangkhuls has emerged as one of the most distinctive signs of transformation and changes that have taken place in Tangkhul society. The incongruity of old folk practices with the newly adopted beliefs and practices has emerged as one of the main factors for the cultural changes that have taken place in Tangkhul society.
Meanwhile, the role of the Christian missionaries and their perspectives towards the tribals have put into question in various circumstances, when it comes to the social and cultural practice of the tribal converts. Whether the Missionaries were actually guided by the doctrines of Christianity or their prejudices against the tribal cultural ethos have been proved by their teachings and impositions on the church congregations. Using religion as the unquestionable tool and church as the institution, the Missionaries tried to weed out 'heathen' practices of the tribals. However, the tribal societies have succeeded in practicing their religion with utmost faith and also have incorporated their traditional festivals like *Luira* as a part of Christian rituals and festivals. There is 'syncretism' of Christian beliefs and traditional practices like festivals and rituals; but the same form of integration has not taken place in cultural practice like music and literature. In artistic works and lifestyles, the influence of the western culture has largely been overshadowed by the folk practices of Tangkhuls.

The advent of modernity and acceleration of Westernization has largely reduced the significance of age old practices in arts as well as in customs and traditions. The folk practices, which were a part of everyday life in the past, have been reduced to occasional practices. Folksongs and folkdances are still performed during traditional festivities in the villages and major public events in towns. Such re-enactments have become even more important for their symbolic significance, rather than the actual practices in everyday life. The stage performance and exhibition of cultural attires has turned out to be an exercise that deals significantly with the assertion of the community's cultural identity. In the midst of modernity and westernization, folk practices give the community the place where they can define their identity and reconnect with the past. On the other hand, the folk practices have has been transformed to suit the taste and changing practices of the community. The fusion music, creating shirts and coats with traditional attires, heavy incorporation of traditional designs in the popular practices and public events have made the 'past' as much relevant and useful for the present. Therefore, with the changing cultural practices the folk practices have also undergone transformation, which have emerged in tandem with the adoption of Western cultural practices and modes of lifestyle. Purist laments that in the attempt to adopt other cultures and cope-up with cultures of neighboring communities and cultural practices around the world, there is 'loss of culture'. The purist, most of them
being the most senior in community, often complains that the transformations that have been made on old cultural practices, like folksongs have distorted the genuine culture of the community. Whereas, for the youngsters the old folk practices have become incomprehensible, the importance and meanings of various cultural symbols, like seikai (buffalos head), are just images. The youngsters have difficulty in understanding the lyrics of folksongs, as the languages and implicit meanings of such songs remain far from their times. However, they are more interested in the new way of blending the folk tradition with the Western cultural patterns. The youngsters adored the fusion of folk and rock music; they enjoy flaunting the coats, neckties and shirts made from Tangkhul shawls. Thus, past practices and the contemporary taste of the people have been blended and accommodated at various levels. However, the remains of the 'true folk' of the past have become miniscule with the ever increasing exposure to other cultures and practices.

To be 'modern' has become the trend for the tribal communities that have lost its past traditions as it gives them some direction. Present lifestyles and practices are often equated with 'modernity' and the new social and cultural adoptions gradually become a part of the 'present'. The exposure through mass media and entertainment and the consumption of modern goods turn the tribal societies into basically the 'receiving communities'. The factors that have contributed towards modernity are: intervention from the states, extensive exposure to the West and other through media, development of society, advancement in education and increase in the economy. In terms of infrastructure and development, the tribals and people at the margins are largely dependent on the state. Advancement in education systems have felicitated enhancement of income, thus the consumption capacity of the tribals. Within the tribal society modernity has come to be seen in terms of new 'lifestyle' and consumerism. Most of the modernization theorists have argued that 'empathy' is the driving force in the quest for modernity in developing countries. But, when it comes down to the 'locality', the practice of everyday life determines the changes that are taking place. The ambivalence of embracing modernity in tribal society is manifested in different shades. The urge to keep pace with the rest of the world and enjoy the goods of modern life, at the same time the disparity in economic conditions have left most of the tribals out of the ambit of high living standard. However, the privileged ones within the community often served as the models for others to follow suit and struggle for
better lifestyles. The sense of egalitarianism of the past gives way to the spirit of competition and commercialization of every valuable that are freely available or made with hard labor. The emphasis on the non-agricultural occupations has increased tremendously, so much that those who are engaged in types of agriculture or horticulture are treated as if they belong to lower status in social hierarchy.

In cultural practices, modernity has evolved through the adoption of new technology and innovative ideas. The importations of technology have immensely helped the Tangkhul musicians in creating the new kinds of music to suit the changing trend in the field of music, and compete with the music from other cultures. Technology has also helped the tribal communities like Tangkhus to enjoy modern lifestyles, even if they are geographically located in the remote corner of the country. As opposed to the rigid attitudes and structures of traditional social milieus, the advent of modernity was characterized by openness to different practices and cultures. The transformation in overall perspectives of the people created the environment which is suitable for changes to occur in different aspects of the society. Thus, the Tangkhuls were ready to adorn the latest trends in fashions and enjoy the varied forms of entertainment offered by the mass media. The significant aspects of receptiveness to different cultural practices from various parts of the world lie in emulation of the other.

In the realms of communication and knowledge, the transition from oral based sharing of information and preservation of knowledge to the adoption of written culture have created a situation which necessitates different sets of practices. In the oral culture of the Tangkhuls, the knowledge and cultural text were communally owned: the individuals were not privy to knowledge and particular piece of artistic work. However, with the adoption of 'print culture' the role of the writer or author begins to exist in literature as well as music. Works of literature were produced in 'mass' numbers and read by literate persons from different background and villages, where as the credit of the work goes to the writer and it is identified with the individual. The written literature does not allow the fluidity of the text, as it was with oral literature, which was largely determined by the 'verbal' narration of the text. The cultural text became fixed in printed words and changes could hardly be made
once it is written. The cultural practice of writing has always been a part of the culture of every society, the difference lies with the modes and mediums of writing: whether it is in oral or written scripts. However, the adoption of new forms of writing brings changes in the way the society practices the art of writing, and this transition has an impact upon various aspects, which are not confined to the literary works. Beginning with the basic modes of communication, the changes in social interactions and practices occur substantively. From face to face encounters, with the adoption of new means of writing the written words serves as a medium through which social ‘interactions’ are maintained and sustained. It facilitated the social relationships to be maintained in long distance place and between villages and towns.

The literature that emerged in ‘print culture’ also deviates with the features that were unique to the oral literature which were heavily based on the beliefs and practices of the folk traditions. We find that the style of narratives in modern literature became more realistic, and the context of the literature is focused to the present conditions. The concept of creating a literary work in the line of Western literature had emerged along with the adoption of new forms of writing. Novellas, poetry and autobiographical writings emerged as the new medium which Tangkhul literature came to be defined. In the new social condition, where exposure to literature from different cultures and society became extensive the influence of various forms and genres of writings became more probable.

While textually the oral literature was fluid, in the sense that new additions can be made and the text can be localized, there was no space for creating a new text by the individuals. The whole project of creating a literary work was taken up by the community. With the adoption of new forms of writing, the writers were able take up different subjects and issues that were not part of the old themes in oral literature. In Tangkhul modern literature, the conceptions of the community was given a definitive shaped by defining the cultural and geographical boundaries of the tribe in clear cut terms. The social problems and the phenomenon of inter-community relationships, such as marriage, were presented in lucid manners. Whereas, the political struggle of the Nagas has not been the central theme, the story of Naga revolutionaries has been perpetually presented as the flipside of the
relationships in the family and society. The Tangkhul literature, just like the popular music, has focused mainly on issues like relationships and morality. Patriotism and political struggle are some of the themes that have been continuously asserted in various quarters, in poetry, and in the stories that deal with personal relationships.

The adoption of new forms of writing coupled with the learning of foreign language like English have not only influenced Tangkhul literature, but it has also shaped the way in which Tangkhul language is spoken and written. In the standard literature, as well as in personal communications like letters, the use of English language as a substitute for expressing something that was not found in Tangkhul language have become quite common. Some of the linguists might rue the idea of mixing the language, but the usage of other languages along with one's own mother tongue has become an irreversible phenomenon as most of the literate communities have become multi-lingual.

In the realms of Tangkhul music, the influence of West and adoption of 'recording' music has largely shaped artistic practices of the Tangkhuls. Performance in group and in solo has been the main feature of folksongs and folkdance. But, the adoption of 'recording culture' has made the musical performance confined to certain occasions and led to commercialization of art. Production of music in the form of cassette album have become the main medium through art is circulated and consumed in the society. Recently, production of music videos in the form of CDs have emerged as the popular trend among the music artists. So, instead of old tape recorders, music has been enjoyed through videos. Another popular way of music entertainment is through live performances. Concerts and stage performances have become the main medium through which music live performances are enacted among the Tangkhul musicians. Although, music is rigorously enjoyed in various spheres, in public and private, formal occasions and everyday life, the difference lies in 'participations'. The audience have become more passive while witnessing the performance, which was not so during the folk practices in the past. The non-participation of the audience has been influenced by the record players, where music is just heard and listened to without much accompanying activity.
There were various kinds of musical instruments of the folk tradition, but musical accompaniments to singing were not much. And, in the past, every musical instrument has its own symbolic significance connected with certain cultural and social practice of the Tangkhuls. While performing folksongs, the focus was much on the vocal presentations and singing. Musical accompaniments to singing has emerged as one of the features that distinctively indicates the influence of Western music on the practices of Tangkhul music. Although, guitar has become the most popular instruments among the Tangkhul musicians and music lovers, in music concerts all kinds of musical instruments that are usually employed as accompaniments to vocal presentations have came to be adopted by the Tangkhuls. The adoption of different kinds of musical instruments which were not indigenous to the Tangkhuls has occurred through the adoption of new styles of singing, which were influenced by Western music. Therefore, the adoption of guitar and drums as musical accompaniment to singing is complimentary to each other, and pertains to the source which has influenced Tangkhul music.

In analyzing music, the performance and content of the music have often been construed as separate area of studies. The relationship between the two forms of musical presentations have often been taken as separate. Here, in this work, the performance of music and ‘message’ (content) have been taken as integral part of the cultural practice of a community. The message of the music and the place or occasions where it is performed is linked in a meticulous way. In the religious practices, the message of the music is focused only on the spiritual aspects of the believers and the audience. The presentations of love songs in the church or religious ceremonies would become a sacrilege and breach of the conventional practices of the community. Whereas, on occasions like ‘rock concert’, the presentations of gospel songs would be unacceptable, as the audience have came to enjoy popular music and not for a religious message. Apart from the distinction between the secular and religious domain, during musical performances the themes of songs are deliberately chosen to suit the interest of the audience and it relevance with the occasion.
Performances are largely determined by the factors of time and space, when and where the actual enactment takes place. Whether the spaces are enclosed or open, or it's a sacred or ordinary place, is significant to the very act of performances. Performance inside the church would call for careful and serious performances, focusing more on what is presented than the way people would react. Being a sacred space, inside the church the performer does not expect open display of appreciations or disapproval for the art. In most of the Tangkhul churches, clapping, whistling, or laughing to the performance is considered as a breach of the expected behavior. The same behavior is expected from the performers as well. Performance in church is supposed to be a part of the ritualistic practices inside the church. Even if performances happen in a big hall or in the open, the stage where performances is taking place becomes 'sacred' as most of the important actions are taking place there. But, inside the church, the whole space within the wall is considered as pure and the act of performance is for the veneration of the Almighty, therefore the act of performance became structured within certain conventions and expectations.

Performance in the open space or in the concert hall, the performers are given more options to indulge in whatever they intend to do to please and satisfy the audience. The act of performance is directly targeted towards the audience. Therefore, the artist would crack jokes, laugh and speak to the audience in a free wheeling manner. To create the relevant environment, the stage and surroundings where performances are designed and decorated whenever concerts are organized in a hall or in the open. The ambience of the surroundings felicitates both the performers and the audience by creating the right atmosphere during the time when they are enjoying the show. Performances in everyday life, where there is least pressure and less or no audience, is considered as a preparatory ground for the larger performance on the stage. Thus, in musical performance the space is significant in determining not only the nature of performances, but also the status of the performer.

Performances are structured within certain time, and the acts of performances are supposed to have certain coherence: the beginning of the show, climax, and the end. In musical concerts, time plays a significant role in defining the very meaning of performances. What song the band would open the concert and end the performances have
significant impact on the overall quality of the show. In the church, the musical performance has to be in tune with the rituals and sequence of the worship program. Special numbers are allowed to be performed for a specified period; one cannot rehearse or prolong the performance. Thus, special performances in the church have to be managed according to the specific amount of time being allotted. Otherwise, any deviation from this stipulated time would again be considered as a breach. Thus, sometimes the worship conductors of the service mentioned the title of the song when the special performances are about to begin. In musical concerts, the time of performance is again announced well in advance and the acts of performance usually follow the schedule which have been prepared in advanced.

Even in everyday performances, the time for leisure and relaxation is considered as the best time for musical performance. Whereas, in the case of street singers they have adhered to the time when the crowds would be gathering and performed there. The everyday performances are free from all those pressures and expectations that are usually associated with stage performances and the rituals. Thus, musical performances are in tandem with the social regulation of time and space. And performance became an integral part of the cycles of time and rhythms of social life.

The cultural text has been considered as the ‘material’ representation of the work of art. And in most of the cases the artistic qualities of the artist is judged by the finished products. The creation of cultural text, however, involves various layers: the community, social and political context, and the individual artist. Basically, the work art has been considered in terms of ‘collective action’ of the community. Because, individual artistic works are also built on the technologies and depended on the social relationships that helps to maintain the skill relevant in society. However, the work of art gives voices to the discerning artist to speak for others, for the individuals, and make critical examination of the society. The perplexities and aspirations of the society are often articulated in the works of art initially, before it got wider acceptance in society. The Tangkhul music artists have drawn their inspirations from the actual situation of the Tangkhul society. And, give back to the audience the needed message by highlighting various issues in an artistic way.
Art also provides space for the artist to negotiate the social dynamics through different mediums. A satirical song on any practice of the society makes the people aware of the foulness in the most common practices. An artistic space is one area where the control and role of the state is least, therefore the artist enjoys the liberty to indulge in creative works that suits the taste of society. For the tribal communities like Tangkhuls, the artistic space has provided an opportunity for the articulation of discourses, which is political in nature. The lyrics of poplar music are an indication of a situation where the actual practices of social life and artistic presentations have varied semblance. Besides, working with the medium of ordinary language, the lyrical style of pop music has often influenced the dialogue of courtships and youth life. The reciprocity of art and social life is thus an ongoing process and relies to each other.

No matter how small a community maybe or how big a nation could be the forces of globalization have affected the social, cultural and economic life of the people. Integration and dismembering of time and space have been considered as one of the distinctive feature of globalizations. The local communities, even in remote parts of the world, have not been able to escape the global process of exchange of culture and goods. The local community’s encounters with the rest of the world have been construed as harming the interest of the community at the locale. The impact of globalizations on the local space differs from one situation to another. In the case of the Tangkhuls, the impact of global process has been mainly on the cultural realms. Instead of succumbing to the onslaught of the exogenous forces of change, communities like Tangkhuls have also taken positions which will be beneficial for them. They have initiated a series of steps which will safeguard their interest in the long run. As anthropologists like Malinowski have described about the forms of culture change in Non-Western societies, such societies selectively choose the social practice and institutions which have to be adopted or change pertaining to the suitability and interest of the community. Thus, local communities are not just passive receiver or participants in the global process; they are also making their own decisions about the cultural practices, which are to be implemented at their own locality.