

## CHAPTER VI

### Summary of Findings and Conclusion

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At the very start it is pertinent to acknowledge that the toughest element of thesis writing is to letter the conclusion. It is an outcome of the research apprehension that no important information/argument should be omitted. Despite following a structured course in conducting the study with definitive objectives and research questions and subsequent findings; it is a challenging task to draw concise conclusions. The researcher's voracity to put forth as much information in a conclusion helps in writing a conclusion that is substantially rounded. Notwithstanding this acknowledgment, nonetheless, there is an opportunity of summarising a few ideas from the total work and contribute to the preexistent compendium of knowledge.

#### **Milieu of the Study**

This thesis is an attempt to contextualise the arguments of symbolic interactionist perspective, by examining a micro structure folk media to comprehend the macro set-up i.e. matriliney. Matriliney and matrilineal societies have always drawn the attention of scholars from all sections. A magnanimous body of work has been done on matrilineal communities across the globe. But nonetheless even in the contemporary times, the interest has not died down and continues to attract scholars to examine such communities. Likewise, Khasi matriliney has been a subject of interest for many scholars who over the years have contributed immensely in the knowledge pool about Khasi matriliney. However, given the fact that Khasi matriliney still holds ground despite facing the challenges posed by winds of change for several decades now, makes it an alluring field of study.

It is important to reiterate that the present study, out and out, was an attempt to trace the linkages between Khasi matriliney and folk media. Folk media being the lens

that was used to examine matriliney, whereby folk media and matriliney as subjects of study are accompaniment of each other.

The Khasis are an important community to study for they have sustained matriliney, regardless of the fact that many communities over a period of time have moved from mother's right to father's right. Standing in the modern day the question thus arises - what has helped Khasi matriliney to sustain and what are the foundations on which it stands? This redirects focus on the fact that, the Khasis largely rely on oral narratives to comprehend their worldview and traditions. These oral traditions are a storehouse of knowledge that acts as a window for understanding the social, religious and political underpinnings of a community. Hence, the central focus of the study has been to understand the Khasi matrilineal social structure in conjunction with the varied folk media forms.

The study was set on course with the following objectives:

- a) Understand the different folk forms and decipher traces of matriliney.
- b) Analyse and examine the role of folk media in transmitting Khasi customs and traditions through generations.
- c) Comprehend the changes and continuity that folk media has experienced post the advent of Christianity.
- d) Get an insight on the gender equation as perpetuated through folk media and subsequently to locate the position of women.
- e) Find out the relevance of folk media and matriliney in the present Khasi society.

Arguments burgeoning from the field narratives are spread-out in the assertions compiled in chapters 2 to 5 of the thesis. Broadly, the study has been able to point out the different Khasi folk forms and decipher traces of matriliney in them in a broad context. Reinstating the fact that Khasi folk media has been an effective in communicating Khasi customs and traditions through generations. Likewise the impact of Christianity and other factors on Khasi folk life and matriliney has been

deliberated upon. Furthermore, the gender continuum of the Khasi society has been examined via the lens of folk media.

However, one study cannot incorporate all elements and perspectives. There is always the scope improvement and exploration of new perspectives.

## **Recapitulation**

### **I**

In case of India, the Khasis of Meghalaya are one of the remaining communities that follow matriliney, others being Jaintia and Garo tribes of the same state. Thereby many cogitate Meghalaya to be the cynosure of matrilineal societies in India and Asia. Societies since time immemorial have espoused one or the other family system - patriliney/matriliny. It has been seen that there have been transferals in the family structure where matrilineal societies have transformed into patrilineal structures. Such changes have taken place owing to a number of factors like hetaerism making way for monogamy, expansion of economic environments, increase in population and the like. Even in the modern era, matrilineal societies have experienced change and adopted patriliney and it is said that “all cultures are in a constant state of change” (Raha, 1989, 8).

History is testimony to the changes taking place from matriliney to patriliney, despite such changes the Khasi matriliney stands its ground. Schneider and Gough in their book *Matrilineal Kinship* stated that, “a system which includes the matrilineal principle but does not include the patrilineal principle will be called a matrilineal system” (1962, 3). They also reiterate that matrilineal societies are delineated by rudiments like a) woman look after the children b) the men have right over womenfolk and their offspring and c) matrilineal communities follow exogamy. A community in which the kinship system traces its family lineage via the mother’s line is called a matrilineal society or matriliney. Along similar lines the Khasis are categorised as matrilineal based on rules of descent, inheritance, residence and authority. Among the Khasis lineage, is marked out from the mother line and not

the woman. The youngest daughter *Khadduh* is the guardian of family property, and further it is handed on to her youngest daughter and so on. Matrilocal residence is the traditional norm among the Khasis. In terms of authority, the 'man' as the maternal uncle, *Kni* has accountabilities towards his natal home in all issues associated to marriage, religious rites and property. Maternal uncle in the Khasi society is accredited as the administrator of the family property.

The present study finds, that owing to factors like evangelisation, modern education, and globalisation, varied changes have seeped into the Khasi society. It is an accepted fact that a society is not stagnant; it is dynamic, progressing and shifting owing to varied challenges it faces. For the Khasi society, the beginning of colonialism and Christianity triggered the course of social change which began with "the subjugation of Khasi chiefs to the British rule has had its consequences on the traditional political system while Christianity on its part brought in tremendous changes through evangelisation and all activities associated with this" (Mawrie, 2009, 176). Field narratives are suggestive of the fact over a course of, time Khasi society undoubtedly has experienced transformation. In the case of the matrilineal set-up, the squalls of change have been irrepressible.

It is challenging to map all the changes and continuity of Khasi matrilineality in one study but an endeavour has been made to present a comprehensive assessment. In terms of lineage, Khasi matrilineality still continues to trace the lineage through the mother, but the influences like religious conversion, urbanisation and economy have disrupted the concept of the *Kpoh* (womb) and the *Iing* which is the matrilineal unit. In case of authority, there is fracas concerning possession and authority. Till day the possession of land and other property are with the females. But the decision making power over the use and sale of the property continues to be vested in the man (maternal uncle and in the new circumstances, the father). Only symbolically the *Khadduh* preserves the religion *Ka Bat La Ka Niam* but it is the oldest maternal uncle, *Kni Rangbah* who implements the rites and rituals more in households following traditional faith *Niam Khasi*.

The role of the maternal uncle was conventionally more noteworthy, but increasingly along with being the *Kni*, a man's function as the father *Kpa* in a household is being upheld. It is a possible influence of Christianity wherein biblical edifications stress on the role of the father as the head of the family. The father has an honourable position in the family. The Khasis believe in the saying - *U Kpa Uba Lah Ban Iai, U Kni Uba Tang Ha Ka Iap Ka Im* which may be interpreted as the father supports everything and the maternal uncle is approached in times of life and death. Owing to cultural modification the role of *Kni* is being outshined by the *Kpa*, steadfastly like never before.

When it comes to, residence more people are opting for nuclear family thus, affecting the traditional matrilineal system of residence, which many opine is precarious for the matrilineal structure. Here, the emphasis also shifts to a man's scrimmage to balance his life post-marriage. Since in present times, the role of man as a husband and father is gaining prominence; he has authority over his matrimonial family. Christianity accentuates the idea that marriage is a sacrosanct institution, and since majority of the Khasis follow Christianity, the system of the visiting husband has faded away. This has also heightened the need for a man to ascertain his role as the father and head of the family.

It is reasoned that in the Khasi society, the position of the *Khadduh* is sanctified to an extent but a wave of disgruntlement is omnipresent. The *Khadduh* is the custodian of property and not the owner and till day the opinion of the maternal uncle is essential in making any property related decisions. While some argue that because traditionally men have no access to resources the economic activity suffers. Because women are custodians of property, non-tribal men lure them to marriage and take over the economy is a burgeoning sentiment among a faction of the Khasis. These are considered to be the key drivers for the assertion for patriliney in the Khasi society; the movements are led by two groups *Mait Shaphrang* and *Syngkhong Rympei Thymmai* (SRT).

Scholars have recurrently expressed doubts over the stability of a matrilineal system owing to economic factors, bond between father and children as opposed to his

duties towards his nieces and nephews, role of a husband as opposed to the role of a maternal uncle. As Audrey Richards' (1950) had put forth the idea of the 'matrilineal puzzle,' reasoning that matrilineal societies are characteristically unsteady. Conversely, in course of, time researchers have overruled the concept that matrilineality is prone to fragmentation. "Important exponents of this viewpoint are Elizabeth Colson (1980), who carried out intensive research in the Plateau Tonga, Karla Poewe (1981), who worked on the Luapula of Zambia, and Leela Dube (1996) whose research was conducted on the Lakshadweep Island. These scholars maintain that stability of the family and the kinship domain is associated with women, not with men who are primarily dictated by the economic motive" (cited in Nongbri, 2000, 363). The Khasi society from time to time has shown that the strong clan structure, family association has helped matrilineality to hold its ground despite facing resilient challenges.

When it comes to Khasi matrilineality, the rudiments till date remain the same, but changes are seeping in and people recognise this. Researchers are also of the view that there are organisational flaws in matrilineality; likewise in the Khasi matrilineal system. Nakane states that, "the complexity of the matrilineal system is a decided handicap when it comes to resisting radical economic changes. This may be the reasons for the rapid disintegration or instability of social organisation of matrilineal peoples in the world" (cited in War, 1998, 26). In case of the Khasis too, economy seems to be one of the key challengers to matrilineality, and the society is progressively becoming predisposed to social changes. Thus, it is reasoned that the Khasi society, which till date is sustaining its matrilineal culture, is combating with numerous challenges that has necessitated a process of self-evaluation and to revisit the traditions, decrees and customary laws.

## II

Folk in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was defined in comparison to or in antipathy with some other group. Folk has been seen as recessive and in opposition of science, comprising of ordinary fantasies, myth, etc. But with the works of scholars like Alan Dundes, William Bascom, and Richard Bauman among others, folk came to

be seen in a different light. Their contribution ensured that folk studies was done in a new light and that folk knowledge did not perish in oblivion.

Dundes defined folk as “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 for whatever reasons will have some traditions which it calls its own...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 to have a sense of group identity” (Dundes, 1978, 7).

With renewal taking place in folk studies, scholars intensely restated that folk culture in its entirety is not merely literature communicated orally. But it is a comprehensive ensemble of performances, arts and crafts, beliefs and rituals all of which is ingrained in the social organisation. Consequently, a new idea ‘folklife’ has been presented by the folklorists to brand folk culture in its totality.

Richard M. Dorson, an American folklorist has categorised four broad categories of folklife: oral literature also called verbal art or expressive literature are orated, chanted and spoken forms of traditional utterances. According to Dorson, material culture is emblematic of methods, skills, formulas and procedures of various things that are communicated across the generations. Social folk custom places emphasis on group communiqué instead of individual capabilities and presentations. Performing folk art predominantly is associated to traditional dance, music and theatre.

In this milieu, the study also found that Khasi folk media can be categorised into oral literature like *Jingsneng Tymmen* (a set of maxims that has been orally passed on through generations), *Phawar*, *Khanatang* (sanctified stories), *Khana Pateng* (legends), *Purinam* (fairy tales), *Puriskam* (fables) and *Khana Pharshi* (parables). The material culture of the Khasis is inclusive of handicraft skills, architecture, food and the like. For example, the Khasis are dexterous in making musical instruments like the drums.

Social folk custom are an all-encompassing element of Khasi life, and they have intricate ceremonies related to birth, death, marriage and festivals. For instance, the naming ceremony (*Jerkhun*); *Tang Jait* ceremony is performed when men marry outside Khasi community through which the family is assimilated back to the society; customs related to construction of megaliths and more. It is hereby reasoned that in relation to social folk custom, the group is of importance rather than the individual, attention is on family and community ceremonies. Therefore, the Khasi social folk customs are also an echo of the process of alteration and persistence of the culture of a community.

Khasi performing folk arts also is associated to music, dance and drama. Khasi performing art is in oral form and only in recent times efforts have been made to put in notation form. Performing art has been considered as a means of entertainment since ancient times, but in this day and age, it is a discipline of study. Khasi folk music and song, dances like *Shad Nongkrem*, *Shad Kiew Iing*, *Jingrwai Iawbei* all come under the rubric of performing folk art.

The study also reiterates that since folk culture or folk knowledge is passed across generations, folk media acts as a channel of communication for a community. Here, media denotes the medium or path of communication. Communication as a system is centered on the cultural interactions in a society. Folk is rooted with information about rites, customs, norms and way of life. It surfaces as a rich cultural reservoir that amasses traditional information. Folk media or indigenous media is considered to be the most cogent methods of communication operational in a society. Since it comes directly from the people (folk), grows in the society itself and is a facilitator for identity creation of a group. Correspondingly, it is being reaffirmed that Khasi folk media as a communication network is a behavioural science through which laws are interpreted; it is a formal science via which structures can be construed and finally it is a cultural science that enables the elucidation of meanings.

Folk communication is dynamic, which implies that it incessantly modifies, develops, and moves on. Congruently, it is being argued that new media forms cannot replace folk media since it originates in the philosophies and cultural locale

of societies, allied to definite fragments of the organisation and characteristics of social life. In case of the Khasis too, till day the folk media is a steady source of knowledge generation and transmission. The Khasi society has experienced numerous alterations owing to the contact to new cultures, religion and people. But irrespective of these vacillations, several of its indigenous attributes like language, clan structure, traditional administrative system, kinship and its folk media has continued to persist. The folk practices of the Khasi have predominantly been an expression of clan, ethnic and religious individualism and of the austerity of the matrilineal order, social structure and political organisation.

A significant particularity of Khasi folk systems is that, it is dominated by oral communication despite the written language coming into presence from 19th century onwards. The study further finds that, although the Khasis follow diverse religious faith, the belief in the core tenets has been maintained steadfastly. In the present-day, people do not have the time to assemble round the hearth and listen to narratives, the practice has died down. But the oral narratives have held ground and is communicated to the younger generation though not in the strictest traditional method. The Khasis for example, accept as true in three indispensable principles, which they abide by passionately for centuries now: *Tip Brew Tip Blei* - Know man (*Brew*) know god (*Blei*), which implies service to mankind is service to god. *Tip Kur Tip Kha* - Know your maternal (*Kur*) and paternal (*Kha*) kins, or in simple words respect both the matri-kin and patri-kin. *Kamai Ya Ka Hok* - Earn (*Kamai*) righteously (*Hok*), the preponderance of an upright life is the essential idea of this tenet.

Khasis understand the relevance of such folk practices in maintaining the Khasi identity and worldview. Thus, new systems of imparting the younger generation with such knowledge has begun. Young children especially from *Niam Khasi* households congregate in special classes held on Sundays under the aegis of Seng Khasi to learn about the Khasi folkways. It is also seen that community festivals are a preferred platform for engaging the children with folk media. Avenues have also opened to learn about Khasi folk media at the academic level in where colleges and university in Shillong have introduced courses. Besides, the study articulates

that the Catholic Church has enabled the intermingling of Khasi folk practices in church functions. An Easter dance is performed in the Church premises which is nothing but the Khasi folk dance; folk instruments are used by the church choir. All these measures have reduced the hostility that people had towards the Church and the converts. Correspondingly, the Church functionaries accept the fact that people cannot be separated from their folk culture, because it is a composite of who they are and what they represent.

### III

The central argument of the study has been that folk media being the communication system of a community cossets traditional knowledge. Alongside, folk media diffuses this traditional knowledge through the social life of a community. Thus, folk media is examined to understand the implication of matriline embedded in it. The study corresponds the discourse that the essential philosophies and worldview believed by members of a given community are ingrained in the folk. Worldview is not purely conjectural or reflective, it is also validated through the actions by which it is communicated. As Marshall McLuhans had expressed, the medium does in effect become the message. For instance, “historically, songs serve a number of purposes, such as disseminating traditional wisdom, commenting on local news, relaying history, instilling pride and solidarity, as well as teaching, testing, and storing information. They critique local action and personages, serve as mnemonic devices, and/or provide mediums for thinking through ideas” (Nicholls, 1997, 54).

Here again, it is imperative to reestablish that, which folk media form is being employed by a group is not so significant. Rather, it is important to differentiate the diverse vital conventions that members of a group believe in. As enunciated previously, all cultures have definitive fundamental dogmas and it is these dogmas or folk ideas which build the worldview. Alongside worldview, folk media also symbolises people’s identity. Time and again, people rely on the folk media for stimulation and understanding of one’s culture, history, origin. “The essential feature of any identity system is an individual’s belief in his personal affiliation

with certain symbols, or, more accurately, with what certain symbols stand for” (Spicer, 1971, 795-796).

In the context of the Khasis, folk media is a harbinger of worldview and identity. Khasi worldview is epitomised in its diverse folk media practices. As mentioned in the course of this study, Khasi oral narratives mark a significant space in Khasi thought. Since they embrace the character of a culture with roots ingrained in oral practices of the ancestors, where the social and the conjectural amalgamate. It is also indicated that folk music or dance are an expression of social stimulus, they are an exemplification of the shared mind, worldview, emotion and identity. Through the Khasi folk media, communication is made about the implications and roles that are assigned to living and non-living components in a world. There is unremitting process of understanding life and such understanding is divulged via the grid of meanings conveyed through the Khasi folk media.

The Khasis have been facing challenges postured by numerous factors like evangelisation, economic dispossession, globalisation, and demand for patriliney for decades now. But notwithstanding such trials, the Khasis have been able to preserve their sense of identity as a community. Possibly, identity creation is an unremitting process in the lifespan of a person and a community. Whereby each component of social life language, song, dance, dress, norms, lores, tales, and philosophes are at work in articulating the identity.

Arguably, the processes of social exemplifications through the folk media contour identity. In turn, identity developments are essential in heightening the manifestation of social representations of diverse signs and symbols. Yet another illustration that has been featured in this study is the practice of *Jingrwai Iawbei* (song in honour of root ancestress). Notably, on numerous occasions smaller identities rise within a bigger group and this is the case with the people of Kongthong village, who are believed to be the inventor and custodian of this folk practice. *Jingrwai Iawbei* along with several other folk practices are not practiced in the urban spaces. And though the eminence of *Jingrwai Iawbei* has not gone past Kongthong, yet it has created a distinct identity for the village. This empowers the

residents to assert individuality, pursue cultural revivalism and as such people of Kongthong have sculpted a distinct identity for themselves. Moreover, this folk practice is fundamental, in reverting the attention on *Iawbei* (root ancestress). *Iawbei* for the Khasi matrilineal set-up is the connexion facet of each clan where the origin and foundation of each clan is explained.

“It is pertinent to note that group identity formation is influenced by social representation, since by sharing a social representation, group members come to share a common worldview and a common identity” (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1983, cited in Kharshiing, 2016, 200). The formation of *Seng Khasi* in a bid to sustain and protect the indigenous way of life and traditional faith, *Niam Khasi* is an exemplification of this in the context of the Khasis. Celebration like the *Seng Kut Snem* honour identity and reestablish persistently the life rivulet of a community and gives endorsement to its customs.

Through this study, it is being reaffirmed that identity is not absolute. However, Khasi folk media is seen as a method of manifestation for the people, a vehicle of communication and identity formation. Folk practices help in appreciating the multifarious coatings of identity which is like an onion skin layering.

Further, for the Khasis, matriliney also is a source of carving a distinctive identity and the study finds that folk media is laden with ethos of matrilineality. The singularity of matrilineal societies is noticeable in their social structure, art and workmanship, architecture, religious principles and performances, dances and music, rites and ceremonies, tales and chronicles, political organisation, language and knowledge. In short, it is manifested in all demesnes of tangible and intangible folk practices. With this framework, Khasi matrilineal system and folk media practices has been examined in this study. There are diverse viewpoints on when and how Khasis espoused matriliney. One fact that is indubitable is that the matrilineal organisation has beached itself very steadfastly. Since matriliney is the lifeblood of the Khasi society, a general feeling among the Khasis is that, the matrilineal system makes them different from other communities.

In the context of drawing linkages between folk media and matriliney, the study finds that matrilineal connotations range out in all spheres of Khasi folk life. Remarkably, the essential philosophies a) *Long Jait Na Ka Kynthei* - from the women ascended the clan b) *U Kpa Uba Ai Ka Long Rynieng*- physique and form to the children is given by the father c) *Ka Kmie Kaba Ai Ia Ka Doh Ka Snam* - flesh and blood to the children is bestowed by the mother; which govern the Khasi matrilineal system are infused through oration.

Popular folk tales and legends like the *Tiew Larun* set the discourse about the importance of clan system, the function of men and women in the Khasi society, prominence of family life. The story in its entirety is demonstrative of the matrilineal order, whereby the clan structure unites the Khasi society and till date the sacrosanctity of the clan is preserved.

Further, it is being argued that folk customs like *Tang Jait* had been initiated by the Khasi forefathers to meet the challenges posed to the matrilineal order through intermingling of communities leading to cross-cultural marriages. A ceremony carried out for offspring of a Khasi father and a non-Khasi mother, so that they can be engaged and integrated into the Khasi matrilineal scheme of things.

Along with rituals, Khasi folk performances are also manifested with matrilineal connotations. The study draws on the nuances of *Pomblang* festival and *Nongkrem* dance to unearth the dynamics of matriliney. It is essential to note that abiding by the Khasi matrilineal convention the eldest sister of the king, *Syiem Sad* is the chief priest who oversees the whole ceremony. Though the main implementation of the ceremonies is carried out by the official priest. In conjunction with *Pomblang* festival, *Nongkrem* dance too is an exemplification and reinstatement of the long-standing matrilineal values. The women in the rituals and dancers signify the role of Khasi women as the custodian of Khasi culture, clan structure and family life. Conversely, the role of the men in the matrilineal order is manifested in these performances. The decision making authority is vested on man as the protector of the clan and family. The quiver and the three arrows named as *Nam Blei* - God, *Nam Thawlang* - first paternal progenitor, and *Nam Iawbei* - first maternal ancestor

carried by male dancers is an illustration of the triad of the three most influential powers in a Khasi man's life and matrilineal scheme of things.

*Jingrwai Iawbei* (song in honour of root ancestress) as discussed is a way of paying reverence to the root ancestress (*Iawbei*) for guarding the clan and seeks her unremitting benedictions. *Iawbei* provides a particularity to every clan and its members. The matri kin and patri kin delineations are located clearly, therefore, in the larger Khasi social life *Iawbei* surfaces as the linkage. Thus, the tradition of *Jingrwai Iawbei* also becomes a source of examining the matrilineal establishment as followed by Khasis in general. Also, it being reverberated that practices similar to *Jingrwai Iawbei* are challenging to trace in other matrilineal societies.

Khasi material culture too is laden with matrilineal philosophies that cannot be overridden. The musical instrument for instance, the *Ksing* (drum) is classified as male and female. There are two male drums which connote the two clans that a Khasi man is a part of his natal home and his wife's home, and the dual role he is expect to play as the *Kpa* (father) and *Kni* (maternal uncle). On the contrary, there is only *Ka Ksing Kynthei* (female drum) signifying the revered position of the women in the Khasi society. There is only one female drum since women have less strength and need protection. The female drum is used prudently only in cultural events. While the male drum is played equally in religious and cultural occasions. Which also stipulates the role of the man in the matrilineal order in terms of authority in the family and clan. The women do not perform any ceremonies but only make the essential arrangements while the actual execution is done by the Khasi men.

It is articulated in the study that, matrilineal undertones have been inculcated in all stratum of Khasi folk life. The monoliths erected as memorial stones, *Ki Mawbynna* are yet another facade of Khasi religious and folk life that is representative of the matrilineal decree. *Mawniam* (religious stones) is the ultimate ossuary for the bones.

*Mawniam* are principally made of four stones, three raised perpendicularly and one horizontally. The perpendicular stones are *Mawshynrang* (male stones), the one in

the centre is symbolic of the *U Suidnia* (maternal uncle of the clan). Whereas other two stones on the left and right called *Ki Maw Pyrsa* are representative of the younger maternal uncles. On the other hand, the horizontal stone or table stone is *Mawkynthei* (female stone) and is emblematic of the *Iawbei Tymmen* (first ancestress) or *Ka Iawbei Tynrai* (great great grandmother).

From the above assertions, it is being argued that since times immemorial, folk media has administered the course of meaning and identity for societies in general. Folk traditions include both tangible and intangible components, where folk practices are a legacy of the past. In all societies, folk media are an indication of life and history and also a distinctive source of inspiration. It is reinstated that the folk media forms are compared to the DNA, which helps in the formation of people's identity, philosophies and helps them value their worldview.

#### IV

Since this study dwells on matrilineal as a subject of examination, it is but palpable that the gender coefficient in the Khasi society is also deliberated upon. Gender is deemed to be one of the stimuluses that aid in the forming of social life. It is a vital regulating principle of contemporary life. In essentially all culture, gender variance is a fundamental way in which individuals identify themselves as persons, consolidate social associations, and represent significant natural and social occasions and developments. Herein it is reasoned, that the insight about gender is austere interlaced with the prudence of finding one's identity and the resultant assertion of that identity. In case of the Khasis too, the gender gamut is entrenched in its social and cultural dominions which are mirrored in their economic, political and religious endeavour. As has been discussed so far, folk media is a cultural source that collects ethnic knowledge and this is used as a focal point for understanding the gender continuum in the Khasi society.

The notion that comes to the forefront is that, meanings connected to gender depend expansively on cultural beliefs and practices. A culture's explanation of masculinity and femininity shapes philosophies about how an individual woman and man should interact and communicate. This process of communiqué between

individuals establishes insinuations of gender which subsequently influence cultural attitudes. This attitude is circulated, designed, and proselytised through the varied folk media forms.

The gender dynamic throws light on the communally moulded gender roles, power disproportions between men and women in both public and private circles. It has been evident through research that like other parts of the globe, “issues of gender permeate the folk traditions of South Asia. Every piece of folklore is gendered by its performers’ identity, while the content of every item reflects, comments on or challenges the gender construction of the community and norms of the performer” (Wadley, 2003, 241).

In the context of Khasi folk media, gender as a genre is not categorical. But the gender allusions are implanted and communicated through the enunciation of folk media in diverse circumstances and platforms. Besides, in Khasis folk practices, the indication of complete segregation of women is not ubiquitous and exclusive space for women is commonly not demarcated in any folk presentations or rituals. Nonetheless, the Khasi men are the leaders in any folk events or observances. The women are expected to accelerate the preparations and observe the real implementation of the rites by dint of being the guardian of the Khasi customs and conducts.

When it comes to oral narratives, contrariwise both men and women are permitted to oration, but the content of the narratives is gendered. It is believed that men have more power and this conviction is infused by doctrines such as *U Rangbah Khadar Bor* (it simply means men have twelve strength), which is communicated orally. A common saying is *Ka Thei Shibor* (woman has one power) which is a technique of authenticating the position of women as feeble and whose responsibility is to remain in the precincts of the home and hearth. Such oral sayings and their inferences is discernable in daily Khasi life, regardless of the religion one may follow.

It is argued that the phrases like *U Rangbah Khadar Bor* (men have twelve strength) and *Ka Thei Shibor* (woman has one power) illustrates how numerous expressions

in the folk media impact the cognitive frame of a person and strengthen the philosophy that women are weak in the body and mind. The study also reiterates that the element of gender or gender roles inconspicuously can be traced in the various folk practices. Whereby in any society the gender paradigm is neither intrinsic nor inexorably constant. It is determined by society and pronounced by individuals as they interact with others in their society. Hence, the function of folk media in constructing gender typecasts through gendered content is essential to recognise. The effect of folk media in the day to day life of a community cannot be overruled, whereby folk media plays a part in gender socialisation, functioning in a socio-cultural ambiance and is a facilitator of gender ghettoisation.

### **Conclusion**

This study is importantly an attempt to comprehend and at the same time contextualise research questions like - Has the folk media played any role in sustaining matriliney or is it merely a means of entertainment? What are the popular folk traditions of Khasi society? Are there any connections between matriliney and folk media? How do the followers of *Niam Khasi* view folk tradition. What are the views of the Khasi Christian convert on the same? Is there any power politics involved in determining the role of woman and man within the folk media?

In studying Khasi folk media and matriliney, four key rudiments are imperative to reiterate (a) people have cognizance and can reason (b) communication is inherent to all human social action (c) all human activity takes place in a context and (d) human ensemble are forms of action. Thus, it is reasoned that humans are continually allied with others, there is nothing called the solitary individual. As a result, engaging in a continuous process of communication either with self or with others. People are able to enter into the process of interaction with others, by using language and substantial symbols in their communiqué and which subsequently leads to interpretation. Consequently, meanings emerge, they are managed and transmitted through this interpretative process that people use to make sense of and manage the objects that form their social worlds. Examination of the symbols facilitates the process of probing the underlying forms or arrangements of social

life. An outcome of the process of interaction is the formation of objects (physical objects, social objects and abstract objects) that determines how people see the object and act towards it.

This process of interaction and interpretation takes place in the framework of communication. In which, communication is not merely spinoff supplementary element of certain action; on the contrary, communication seen as a distinctive form of action in its own right.

Set against this context, the study argues that people cultivate an understanding about matriliney centered on their social interaction. This also aids the process of developing a perceptiveness about one self, one's self identity and the larger social environ. The incessant progression of interaction and analysis, helps in the recognition of purposes each person has in a society. In this case, the recognition of one's role in the matrilineal order as a mother, father, maternal uncle *Kni* or youngest daughter *Khadduh* takes place. On the one hand, this also endows a person to adapt to social norms and codes of conduct. And, on the other via the very same path of interaction and interpretation, people are involved in questioning the conventional philosophies and norms of the society. The internalisation of norms, identities, philosophies and values in turn reproduces society. As the interactionist reason that, both self and society depend on the same process of social interaction by which actualities are formed and constantly negotiated. Additionally, in course of this study, it has been reinstated that folk media is the channel of communication in a society, in this case the Khasi society. The narratives of the Khasi community is transmitted via the folk, matrilineal implications have been communicated through the folk. This has taken place by means of interaction and interpretation in the home and hearth, public places like festivals and clan gatherings, sign and symbols like the megaliths.

This process of interaction and interpretation does not take place in vacuum. Through the use of varied signs, symbols and content, interaction and interpretation takes place in varied milieus. It is facilitated by a means of communication that is omnipresent in any given society. Formation of social and political models,

philosophy and structure require some form of communiqué to transpire. Thus, in this study, the relevance of folk media as a communication channel has been established. Following which folk media of the Khasis has been examined to unearth conceivable associations to matrilineal tenets. This further helped in understanding the role of folk media, in propagating matriliney among the Khasis since ancient times. It is a plausible dynamic owing to which matriliney still holds the Khasi community, even in the face of diverse challenges the study argues.

From the commencement of the study, the aim has not been to romanticise matriliney or folk media. But the emphasis has been to understand matrilineal structure in through the prism of folk media that cuts through mass / popular culture. It is reiterated that folk forms continue to be a substantial social force, uplifted by the vigorous process of traditionalisation, philosophy, socialisation and craftiness of everyday life. The fundamentals of Khasi folk cannot be derelict even if transformed, for it functions as ‘the courier of tradition’. The folk media are methods through which messages, opinions and approaches are articulated. In earlier times, folk media were also the agents of change in cultural and social revolution. Viewed thus, folk media operates within a community to insure conformity to the conventional cultural norms, proselytise the beliefs and moral standards among the younger generation, preserve the steadiness of social organisation, and also offer authentications when the structures and conventions are challenged or probed.

A close look at Khasi folk form reveals that it is laden with the ethos of matrilineality, some aspects may be overt while others covert but its manifestation is most certainly evident. Because folk media forms are manifested in matrilineal connotations it is perpetuated across generations. The tenets of matriliney, its beliefs and practices have not been at large but remain in shared collective memory and living through the folk media. Folk media evolves as the society progresses and assists in sustaining the essential concert for a society to function. Thus, the role of folk media in perpetuating matriliney cannot be negated though it is debatable. Researchers across domains have researched about Khasi matriliney and Khasi folk traditions in isolation, though a common argument being both Khasi matriliney and

folk tradition are integral part of who a Khasi is, and what constitutes a Khasi identity. In this light, to draw parallel between Khasi matriliney and folk traditions does make a case.

The study is based on the truncheons of symbolic interactionist perspective where the micro system folk media has been studied to understand Khasi matriliney which is the macro structure. Every component of the folk media be it oral, performance, material or custom is socially shaped in that, the implications are imbibed through the process of interaction. It is an endless process which is the essence of the Khasi society that leads to organised efforts. The winds of change affecting Khasi folk and matriliney cannot be unheeded, but yet the society has been sustaining arguably one helping the sustenance of the other.

Humans are acting beings, intermingling unceasingly with self and others, and reacts based on its own considerations. Such comprehensive communications creates a social network through which information or traditional knowledge is communicated to the next generation, where meaning creation is a lively process. Arguably, folk media is a physical truth that is more than just the creation in peoples mind. It acts as a medium for appreciating, validating and communicating history. Khasi folk media is a source as well as a relic in which the past is used as a foundation for knowing the present. It is an influential untapped source for social healing and civic commitment with the continuing legacies of the past - where the past is used to address the tenacious concerns of the present.

The contemporary discourse on globalisation has many extensive insinuations and nurtures the relevant question of how people associate in a global village and what helps in identity creation. The study finds that it is increasingly being acknowledged that folk media is the foundation of understanding the life and philosophy of a community. And it also revive a common means of communiqué for promulgation of information that is 'person-centered'. Folk ricochets the socio-cultural and metaphysical facades of a group, interwoven inventively and aesthetically into a life experience.

It has been recognised that folk forms have a recognisable oddity, is interconnected to the philosophies of the people and the people themselves use it as a channel of expression. In case of this study, it is resonated that flagrant or surreptitious nuances of matriliney are passed on by means of folk forms like oral narratives, material culture, performances and rituals. Folk media becomes the carrier of matrilineal philosophies and helps in its propagation across time. Also, potentially no folk media form of the Khasi reflects any patrilineal illustrations though it is seen that the society at large is patriarchal in operation.

Thus, this study reinstates the idea that folk media cannot be relegated as a thing of the past, nor can matriliney be undermined though it has certain inherent fluxes. Likewise, Khasi folk media in its entirety calls for in-depth exploration to unearth the varied insinuations about Khasi matriliney and culture that are embedded in it. This would require moving away from the binaries of subject specificities and examine the worldview, social norms, religious ethos and philosophies of community that is infused in the folk media. An attempt in this course has been through this study, which opens up avenues of pursuing further studies in the same direction.

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