

Chapter 5

Chapter-5

The Colour Terms in Khurkhul

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5.0 Introduction

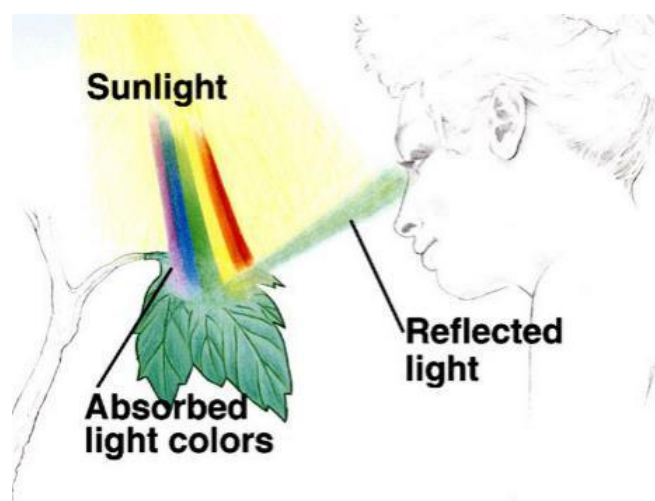
In the current chapter, we focus on colour terms in Khurkhul and social meanings associated with them. Colour is a basic human experience so that every language has colour vocabulary. However, the exact number of colour terms may vary from language to language. If we consider basic colour terms, then a language like English has eleven such terms whereas a language like Dani, a New Guinea tribe, has only two, i.e. black and white. A pertinent question here is if this means that Dani speakers cannot recognize other colours. It is also often claim that communities that show little technological development employ the fewest colour terms; on the other hand, technologically advanced societies have the maximum number of basic colour terms. Again, colours have social meanings and they

may vary from culture to culture. It is thus often claimed that colour systems are social constructions rather than biologically determined ones. Again, males, as often reported, usually display less ability than females in dealing with matters having to do with colour, including the actual use of colour terminology. Sociolinguists thus take interest in colour terms or colour systems in languages. As is put by Wardhaugh (2006, 233): “The terms people use to describe colour give us [a] means of exploring the relationships between different languages and cultures.”

5.1 Colour and basic colour terms

Light can be both absorbed and reflected. In the Image 1 below, the white light from the sun is dispersed into waves of visible light; except green all the other primary colours (i.e., red, and blue) is absorbed by the leaf.

Image 1: How eyes absorb the reflected light



The unabsorbed green light is reflected back to our eyes, from where it is transferred to our human brain who interprets it as green. Unlike Mantis-shrimp which has 12 colour receptors, human and most of the animals use three colour receptors. Thus, human eyes can see only a tiny part of the spectrum. The scientific explanation of colour is universal, since every human shares the same world through the same frame work i.e. the senses of human body.

However, how one terms a particular light into lexical terminologies and how one categorizes the space of colour in one's society may differ. For instance, a biologist and a common man share the same world, but, their labeling of terms of this same world differs. The biologist labels carpals, metacarpals, phalanges, ligaments, synovial lining, tendon sheath, etc of a hand in addition to general terms like fingers, palm, fist etc. whereas, the common man has only the general terms. As is succinctly put in Wardhaugh (2006, 235):

The colour spectrum is a physical continuum showing no breaks at all. Yet we parcel it out in bits and pieces and assign names to the various component parts: *green*, *blue*, *yellow*, *red*, and so on. We also find that we sometimes cannot directly translate colour words from one language to another without introducing subtle changes in meaning, e.g., English *brown* and French *brun*. An interesting issue is how colours are referred to in different languages. Are colour terms arbitrary, or is there a general pattern? If there is a pattern, what are its characteristics and why might it exist? Berlin and Kay (1969) tried to answer questions such as these, drawing on data from a wide variety of languages.

Berlin and Kay's work (1969), as is now universally recognized, is the first most significant work in the field of colour categorization. Many of the languages categorize their colour terms either by fitting into their theory or disagreeing with it. In both the cases, their theory is used as the foundation of their studies. Their two most basic and important findings about colour categorization in language are the following:

- (i) They established eleven basic colours terms. Each language categorizes the colour space depending on these eleven basic colour terms. In other words, each language will consist basic colour terms out of these eleven basic colours [WHITE, BLACK, RED, GREEN, YELLOW, BLUE, BROWN, PURPLE, PINK, ORANGE, and GREY] (Berlin and Kay, 1969, 2).
- (ii) Thus, they established the universal regularity of colour categorization:
 - All languages contain terms for WHITE and BLACK.
 - If any language contains three terms, then it contains a term for RED.
 - If a language contains four terms, then it contains a term for either GREEN or YELLOW (but not both).

- If a language contains five terms, then it contains terms for both GREEN and YELLOW.
- If a language contains six terms, then it contains a term for BLUE.
- If a language contains seven terms, then it contains a term for BROWN.
- If a language contains eight or more terms, then it contains a term for PURPLE, PINK, ORANGE, GREY, or some combination of these. (Berlin and Kay, 1969, 2-3).

The authors proposed the following features for defining a basic colour term.

- It is *monolexemic*; that is, its meaning is not predictable from the meaning of its parts, e.g. unlike *bluish*.
- Its significance is not included in that of any other colour term, e.g. unlike *scarlet*.
- Its application must not be restricted to a narrow class of objects, e.g. unlike *blond*.
- It must be psychologically salient for informants. It means (1) a tendency to occur at the beginning of elicited lists of colour terms, (2) stability of reference across informants and across occasions of use, and (3) occurrence in the idiolects of all informants, e.g. unlike *crimson* (Berlin and Kay, 1969, 6).

The idea propagated by Berlin and Kay (1969) was a kind of provocation to Sapir Whorf's 'complete linguistic relativity' i.e. the strong version of the so-called Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis which claims that language determines our thought. But as different language dissects the same world in different ways, different languages give their respective native speakers different world views, i.e. the same world is understood in different ways by different linguistic communities.

The Shona language in Zimbabwe and the Boas language in Liberia lack words that can distinguish between red and orange. Now, given that the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is valid, then the speakers of these languages should fail to perceive different colours.

According to the weak version of the hypothesis language does not completely determine thought although it plays an important role in creating the world view. Some language like

Dani, a New Guinea tribe, has only two colour terms i.e. black and white, or more accurately, dark and light. Despite the language limitation, they can recognize the distinction between subtle shades of colours that their language had no names for (e.g. pale *blue vs turquoise*). Thus, many scholars agree to only the weak version of the hypothesis.

The biologist, as noted above, has more terms than the common man. But this does not indicate any superiority of one over the other. The biologist has more terms than the common man because it is necessary in his/her environment i.e. profession. Thus, when one community has less colour terms than the other, it does not mean that the community is inferior. Wierzbicka (2006) rightly argues that the absence of a word doesn't prove the absence of a concept.

Thus, what is also important to note at the same time, is that the basic colour terms are not the only colour terms in a language. A language with only two basic colour terms may have many non-basic colour terms, which are “combinations like *grayish-brown*, variations like *scarlet*, modifications like *fire-engine red*, and finally the kinds of designations favoured by paint and cosmetic manufacturers.” It may be rewarding to study them, their social meanings, from a sociolinguistic point of view

In the following sections, we discuss the colour terms (both basic and non basic) available in Khurkhul and also try to see if Khurkhul neatly display the basic colour pattern as established by Berlin and Kay. Next we focus on the social meanings associated with the colour terms in Khurkhul. As is put by Lucy (1997, 341): “colour is not “out there” in the light but in our perceptual interpretation of light, . . . communicatively relevant encodings of visual experience do not lie “in there” in the biology but in socially anchored linguistic systems.’ Thus, in this view, colour systems are *social* constructions rather than biologically determined ones.

5.2 Basic and other colour terms in Khurkhul

Interestingly, Khurkhul has a term *machu makok*, which means ‘head colour’ (*machu* = colour; *makok* = head). According to them Khurkhul has six *machu makoks* and they are: *ANGOUBA* (WHITE), *AMUBA* (BLACK), *ANGANGBA* (RED), *ASANGBA* (GREEN), *HANGKAMPAN* (YELLOW), and *HIGOKOK* (BLUE).

In order to find out if these colour terms are universally recognized as basic colour terms in the Khurkhul society, I tried to use colour chips for my investigation according to the standard way here. However, the informants (they constituted a group of 12 men and women of the age group between 30 to 85; the sex ratio was 1:1) wanted me to use here the colours in the *phanek* instead. The term *phanek* refers to the traditional ethnic wear of Khurkhul women, which is known especially for its extensive use of different shades of colours. They come in five major types to be used in different occasions in different ways and thereby mean different things. (See Appendix for details). Any single *phanek* comes in a good number of at different colour shades (at least 10 to 12). So, for my study, I replaced my colour chips with 60-70 *phaneks* of different types and of different colours. In the test, all 12 informants identified the same shades in the *phaneks* as *machu makoks*, which had established that *ANGOUBA* (WHITE), *AMUBA* (BLACK), *ANGANGBA* (RED), *ASANGBA* (GREEN), *HANGKAMPAN* (YELLOW), and *HIGOKOK* (BLUE) are the basic colours in Khurkhul.

Thus, Khurkhul seems to neatly demonstrate the basic colour pattern in world languages as established by Berlin and Kay (as noted, according to their claim, when a language has five basic colour terms, then they are: WHITE, BLACK, RED, GREEN, YELLOW and BLUE).

But note that according to the authors a basic colour term is always *monolexemic*. To quote here them once again, “its meaning is not predictable from the meaning of its parts, e.g. unlike *bluish*” (Berlin and Kay 1969: 6).

But as we had observed the Khurkhul head colour *HANGKAMPAN* (YELLOW) is *not* monolexic. It is clearly a compound of *hangkam* and *mapan* (*həŋkam* = mustard; *məpan* = flower). Yet it seems to be a basic colour term, for many non-basic colour terms are created in Khurkhul taking it as the base (see Table 5 below).

In this context we may refer to Soselia (2008) who has argued that *gavisperi* (brown) a basic colour of Georgian though it is not a *monolexemic*. The last two of the basic colour terms of English (i.e. *pink* and *orange*) are encoded, however, they are considered to be basic colour terms since they justify the remaining features of a basic colour terms.

A pertinent question here is why *HANGKAMPAN* (YELLOW) is encoded, i.e. based on the colour of something, i.e. mustard flower. Perhaps the answer is that mustard has a very

unique place in the life and culture of the Khurkhuls. Thus, one of the informants commented: “Mustard is not only a plant; it is an integral part of our life and culture. It is so important in most rituals of ours, in our folk medicines and what not. So, it means to us life, joy and wealth as you can see it in many Khurkhul expressions. We can live without gold, but not a moment without mustard”.

Ureng (green) is another colour term which shows the lack of consensus with the features of a basic colour term given by Berlin and Kay. The two colour terms of ‘blue’ i.e. *sinij* (dark blue) and *goluboj* (light blue) seem to satisfy the criteria of basicness. Thus, Berlin and Kay noticed them as two different colour terms of ‘blue’ for some Russian speakers (Berlin and Kay, 1969, 99). In case, if these terms can be treated as different two basic colour terms, the colour terms *asangba* (green) and *ureng* (green) might be treated as two different basic colour terms since they satisfy the features of a basic colour term given by the authors.

Although both the terms *asangba* and *ureng* denote green, *asangba* stands for the green of mature leaves, whereas *ureng* stands for the green of baby leave. When the informants were asked which one was the *machu makok* the answer was *asangba* and *ureng* a shade of it.

5.2.1 Basic and related colour terms in Khurkhul

In the test, the 12 informants also universally agreed upon the shades around a *machu-makok*. Thus, we collected from them the non basic colour terms available in Khurkhul. They are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 below.

In the case of these terms we have found that the term referring to head colour does not constitute a part of them, unlike the case in English (e.g. WHITE: off white, whitish, milky white). Thus, for instance, the Khurkhul term *chanton machu* refers to a particular shade of ANGOUBA (WHITE), a basic colour, but ANGOUBA is missing in the term. Here, Khurkhul relies on a thing (e.g. *chanton* is sandal wood). In the case like *milky white*, English too rely on a thing, i.e. milk, but yet the basic colour term, i.e. white occurs in the expression.

In the following six tables are presented the non basic colour terms which we extracted from the informants.

Table 1: ANGOUBA (WHITE) and its non-basic colour terms

ANGOUBA (WHITE)	the thing	the colour
<i>sangkom mapram macho</i>	the upper the layer of boiled milk	slightly reddish white
<i>wa pongshang mapram macho</i>	the thin layer inside the bamboo	transparent white
<i>chanton macho</i>	sandalwood	very white
<i>laphuleiyon macho</i>	the tenderes banana leaf	slightly greenish white

Table 2: AMUBA (BLACK) and its non-basic colour terms

AMUBA (BLACK)	the thing	the colour
<i>lakang machu</i>	dirt gathered near the cooking hearth	slightly reddish black
<i>kangchet machu</i>	European rhinoceros beetle	slightly more reddish than <i>lakang machu</i>
<i>heikha appatpa machu</i>	rotten plum	light blue
<i>ut macho</i>	ash	Grey
<i>timunapun machun</i>	blind snake	slightly reddish blackish

Table 3: ANGANGBA (RED) and its non-basic colour terms

NGANGBA (Red)	the thing	the colour
<i>kurao mapan machu</i>	red coral flower	deep red
<i>salu angangba macho</i>	salu	blackish deep red
<i>soukri mapan machu</i>	roselle flower	close to blackish deep red
<i>kabirei macho</i>	oleander flower	near pink
<i>kaphoi mapan macho</i>	pomegranate flower	close to near pink
<i>kodang macho</i>	the liquid from chewing betel leaf with areca nut	reddish pink
<i>mithai macho</i>	a particular kind of popular sweet	close to above
<i>ureirom machu</i>	<i>bixa oxellana</i>	close to above
<i>thangching mapan macho</i>	<i>euryle ferox</i> flower	blackish pink

Table 4: ASANGBA (GREEN) and its non-basic colour terms

ASANGBA (GREEN)	the thing	the colour
<i>khongtrummak machu</i>	bottle gourd skin	light green
<i>pangkhokla machu</i>	taro leaf	blackish green
<i>wana machu</i>	bamboo leaf	more blackish green
<i>tingkhak mathibong macho</i>	caterpillar intestine r	very dark green
<i>hichang machu</i>	moss	dark green
<i>Ureng</i>	baby leaf	green
<i>naspati machu</i>	pears	faded green
<i>chorphon machu</i>	olive fruit	dull faded green
<i>santhi machu</i>	cow dung	close to above

Table 5: HANGKAMPAN (YELLOW) and its non-basic colour terms

HANGKAMPAN (YELLOW)	the thing	the colour
<i>hangkam maru machu</i>	mustard flower before it blooms	light yellow
<i>komlarong macho</i>	orange	reddish yellow
<i>sana macho</i>	gold	gold colour
<i>mei macho</i>	fire	blackish yellow
<i>meiri macho</i>	flame	reddish blackish yellow
<i>yaingang macho</i>	Turmeric	deep reddish yellow

Table 6: HIKOK (BLUE) and its non basic colour terms

HIKOK (BLUE)	the thing	the colour
<i>khoimu machu</i>	Bee	blackish blue
<i>ising macho</i>	water	light blue
<i>sorraren machu</i>	the sky	close to above
<i>atiya macho</i>	the sky	close to above
<i>meikhet machu</i>	match stick	reddish blue
<i>pitruklei machu</i>	globe amaranth (a kind of flower)	pinkish blue
<i>centre phres machu</i>	wrapper of 'centre fresh' (a popular sweing gum)	deep blue
<i>pangg/kan khamen machu</i>	egg plant	very dark blue
<i>kabokang mapan machu</i>	water hyacinth flower	close to above
<i>samballei macho</i>	duranta (golden dewdrop flower)	close to above
<i>leitan macho</i>	a type soil used for plastering wall	close to above

5.2.2 Grouping colour terms around a type of thing

Our investigation also revealed that since Khurkhul always relies on something for colours (e.g. sandal wood, banana leaf), the speakers of Khurkhul group these colour terms again on the type of thing involved. Thus, there are ‘insect colours’; ‘vegetable colours’ in Khurkhul. We extracted the following such groups from the informants. The non basic colour terms listed in the tables below are no doubt finally related to the basic colour terms, but our focus here is on how the Khurkhuls go for a second level of grouping non-basic colour terms.

Table 7: VEGETABLE colours

VEGETABLE	the exact thing	the colour
<i>khontrum maku macho</i>	bottle gourd skin	light green
<i>khanmen mapan macho</i>	eggplant flower	A bit reddish in extreme blue
<i>hangkam maru pokhaibi macho</i>	mustard flower before it blooms	A bit lighter in yellow
<i>muksori machu</i>	red lentil (pulse)	A bit brick colour in yellow
<i>pangkhokla macho</i>	taro leave	A bit darker than green
<i>hichang macho</i>	Moss	A bit dark in green
<i>parmasika khamen macho</i>	japanese eggplant	Blackish in blue
<i>pangkan khamen macho</i>	egg plant	Darker than deep dark blue
<i>soukri mapan macho</i>	roselle flower	Reddish with bit of Euryale ferox colour
<i>thangching mapan macho</i>	euryale ferox flower	A bit black in pink
<i>yaingang macho</i>	Turmeric	With red in yellow

Table 8: FRUIT colours

FRUIT	the exact thing	the colour
<i>chorphon machu</i>	olive fruit	Dull in taro leave
<i>heikha apatpa machu</i>	rotten plum	Lighter in blue
<i>kaphoi mapan machu</i>	pomegranate flower	Less reddish than Roselle flower colour
<i>komlarong machu</i>	Orange	A bit brick colour in yellow
<i>naspati machu</i>	Pears	faded green

Table 9: ANIMAL colours

ANIMAL	the exact thing	the colour
<i>samu machu</i>	Elephant	dark grey
<i>santhi machu</i>	cow dung	the colour between
<i>tenawa machu</i>	Parrot	light green

Table 10: FLOWER colours

FLOWER	the exact thing	the colour
<i>kurao mapan macho</i>	red coral flower	Extreme red
<i>kabirei macho</i>	Oleander	A bit reddish than light pink
<i>kabokang mapan machu</i>	water hyacinth flower	Extreme light in blue
<i>pitruklei machu</i>	globe amaranth	A bit pinkish in blue
<i>samballei mapan machu</i>	duranta flower (golden dew drop)	slightly deep blue
<i>ureirom machu</i>	bixa oxellana	A bit darker in lentil

Table 11: CURRY colours

CURRY	the exact thing	the colour
<i>aloo ironba macho</i>	potato chutney	creamish
<i>nga thongba macho</i>	fish curry	reddish yellowish blackish

Table 12: EDIBLE colour

EDIBLE	the exact thing	the colour
<i>cha macho</i>	tea with milk	cream colour
<i>centre phres machu</i>	wrapper of 'centre fresh' (a popular sweing gum)	deep blue
<i>kophi macho</i>	coffee with milk	creamish
<i>kodang macho</i>	the liquid from chewing beetle nut with areca nut	reddish pink
<i>sangkom mapram macho</i>	the upper layer of boiled milk	slightly reddish white

Table 13: MOVIE colours

MOVIE	the exact thing	the colour
<i>Bichentimala* macho</i> *Indian celebrity, film actress	Bichentimala's dress	deep green

Table 14: INSECT colours

INSECT	the thing	the colour
<i>khoimu macho</i>	Bee	blackish blueish
<i>tandon macho</i>	Firefly	faded <i>ureng</i>
<i>tingkhak mathibok</i>	caterpillar's intestine	Extreme green
<i>timunapun macho</i>	blind snake	A bit reddish and bluish in black

Table 15: FIRE colours

FIRE	the exact thing	the colour
<i>lakang macho</i>	the dirt gathered in the kitchen, near the cooking hearth	slightly reddish black
<i>meikhet macho</i>	match stick	reddish blue
<i>mei macho</i>	Fire	A bit blackish in yellow
<i>meiri macho</i>	Fame	Reddish in yellow

Table 16: Special characters colours

Special character	the exact thing	the colour
<i>kisna* macho</i> <i>*Lord Krishna, whose body colour is deep blue</i>	Krishna	deep blue

5.3. Colour in religion and culture of the Khurkhul society

Colour experiences differ significantly. In early centuries of the medieval period, blue, together with green, was a colour held in low esteem, probably because of the fact that at first it had proved impossible to obtain vivid and brilliant shades of blue, with the result that clothes of this colour looked drab and dull. And it is from the twelfth century onwards, blue became a splendid colour. Blue began to be used in the stained-glass windows of cathedrals which dominate the other colours (Eco, 2004).

People of different stages might have different tastes of colour, but the fact is that every community of every stage has a unique relation with colour since colour plays an important part in religion, culture, age, and gender and so on.

Thus, for instance, red and white are auspicious in Japan so that lots of white and red is seen in birth and wedding, whereas, green is a sacred colour for the Muslim community (Wiegersma and Elst, 1988).

The Khurkhul society is also not an exception. Its culture and religions have a deep relation with colour. For instance, it is believed that the Sun God is created by three *kurus* (spiritual leaders): *Mangang kuru*, *Luwang kuru* and *Khuman kuru*. They symbolize three stages of life. Thus, the movement of the Sun is called the *kuru ahumgi khongchat* (the journey of three *kurus*).

Thus, the rising of the Sun metaphorically represents the phase from birth to childhood of one's life. It is called *Mangang Kuru gee khongchat* (Mangang Kuru's journey). *Mangang Kuru* wears only red. This is easily understood, for the baby is created from red blood.

The Day metaphorically represents the stage of adulthood to the stage before old age of one's life. This is called *Luwang Kuru gee khongchat* (Luwang Kuru's journey). *Luwang Kuru* wears only white. Thus, white stands for vigor of the youth to be used with restraint and calm.

The setting of the Sun metaphorically represents the stage of life from old age to death. It is *Khuman Kuru gee khongchat* (Khuman Kuru's journey). *Khuman Kuru* is to be seen only in black. Thus, black stands for death.

Thus, in praying to the Sun, the Khurkhuls offer him things (especially flower) that come

in red, white and black.

In many cultures of different societies, the black colour stands for something negative. This can be traced back to 2300 BC (Tektronix, 1998). However, as noted above, the Khurkhuls offers black things (e.g. often a black hen) to God or other deities.

But this may not always be the case as is evident from sayings like the following:

lai-əmubə-gə-əḡəwbə-gə *punnə* *u-rədi*

god- black-with -white-with together see-if

lai-əḡəwbə-də *cəḡ-ḡo*

god-white-to enter-IMP

‘If you see both a white and a black Gods, go to the white one.’

Blue is always not considered auspicious. One should not wear blue at the time of elopement as is warned in the following Khurkhul saying:

cenbə-də *hikok* *set-lədi* *punsi* *hikok-tʰoki*

elope-TOP blue wear-if life blue-OUTWARD

‘If one wears blue at the time of elopement, life is going to be hard.’

As blue is considered ominous, it must be avoided in elopement, something that is likely to cause friction between the two families. The Khurkhuls can often be very violent physically as the saying goes:

kʰurkʰul-di *cin-dəgi* *kʰut-nə* *halli*

Khurkhul-TOP mouth-from hand-by first

‘The Khurkhul, hands come before the mouth.’

Often the Khurkhuls tend to get into physical violence rather than solving a conflict by way of language. This explains why blue is to avoided in elopement.

Green, on the other hand, symbolizes a new beginning and so freshness or life. Thus, but green is the colour for elopement. By wearing a green *phanek* (women’s ethnic wear) the elopement can be made completely smooth and safe:

<i>cenbə-də</i>	<i>asəŋbə set-lədi</i>	<i>nuyainə</i>	<i>palli</i>
elopement-TOP	green wear-if	happy	reign

‘Wear green at the time of elopement and remain happy and safe.’

5.3.1 Gender and colour in Khurkhul

Many scholars have studied the relation between gender and colour. Redeloff (1990) has propagated that women are likely to have favourite colours, not men. In a study conducted by Thomas et al (1978) seventy two Nepalese were interview on relation between gender and colour. It was found that women listed more colour names than men. However, one should not ignore the reality that the traditional clothes of Nepalese women are more colourful than men.

In the Khurkhul society when it comes to colour, the sentence that is readily uttered by men is:

<i>məcu-di</i>	<i>nupi-də</i>	<i>həŋ-ŋo</i>
colour-TOP	woman-to	ask-IMP

‘About colour ask the woman.’

There are two possible reasons for this.

- a) The Khurkhul man mostly wear white.
- b) Most non basic colour terms are created for the *phanek* (see section 5.2.3 below for a detailed account).

5.3.2 Age and colour

Age has a definite connection with colour for the Khurkhuls. Colour is one thing with which the Khurkhuls most often express their view about age as stages of life and responsibilities associated with each of the stage. Thus goes the popular Khurkhul saying:

<i>cāhi-gə</i>	<i>cannəbə</i>	<i>məcu</i>	<i>set-ca-o</i>
age-with	suitable	colour	wear-eat-IMP

‘Wear colour according to your age.’

Thus, as the Khurkhul believe, in youth one should wear bright colours, such as red; in old age one should wear dull colours such as grey.

The Khurkhuls show has a negative attitude towards those who do not use colour according to one’s age. Thus they say:

<i>cāhi-gə</i>	<i>cannədəbə</i>	<i>məcu</i>	<i>setpə</i>	<i>məjam</i>	<i>u-rədi</i>	<i>mit-nai</i>
age-with	not suitable	colour	wear	lot	see-if	eye-pain

‘To see a mismatch between colour and age is to get pain in the eyes.’

5.2.3 Women’s beauty and colour

The term *colour* is often synonymous with the beauty of women. Research carried out by teams from L’Oreal and French Museum Research September 1999 has shown the use of colour by women, tracing back those Egyptians four thousand years ago when they used eye make-up. Yue-Sai Kan who successfully introduced cosmetics to China in the 1980’s says that the women in China dressed like men with no colour significance and make up at that time. So, she also acknowledged women’s beauty with colour. In the Khurkhul society too, beauty is often connected with women rather than men, and colour is significant as an element that complements the beauty of women. The attachment of beauty with women can be seen in many of Khurkhul folktales, and also from *phanek*.

The values and the customs of a society are transparently reflected in its folktales. They reveal how a particular society views the world. The following folk tales are narrated here to show how the Khurkhul society views beauty.

Once upon a time there lived a king. He had a beautiful daughter. Her beauty was not a secret to the state. The king decided to marry off his daughter with the wisest man. So, he announced the news, and the task to be carried out by the man who wishes to marry his daughter. The task was 'anyone who can earn a year's need (food) in one day'. Days passed on, no one was able to perform the task. However, one fine morning, a shabby turned up; he claimed that he can perform the task. The king laughed at him, seeing his condition, but permitted to perform the task.

The man asks to provide him a Pongshang wa (a kind of bamboo, the tube of it is specially used for cooking aromatic rice called chahao), thangsangkai (a kind of knife used for smoothing the surface of bamboo), and a thangchao (a big knife used for cutting the bamboo). He cut the bamboo into small pieces and made 365 yathin paya (tooth brush stick). He offered the product of his work to the king. The king reacted furiously and said, "Are you insulting me? Don't you know that you can be punished to death because of this?" The man politely replied "Dear King, please calm yourself, and please punish me if I am wrong, but kindly listen to me for once. Don't we chew yathin paya (tooth brush stick) every morning?" The king realized that the man was correct, so he happily agreed to give his daughter for marriage as he won't get a man who is wiser than him. He thought the wise man is the perfect match for his beautiful daughter.

There was once a beautiful woman by the name Thabaton. She was the youngest sister of seven brothers. One day, her brothers left home in order to earn her marriage gift. They instructed her not to open the door for anyone, unless it is them.

They gave her a code word. She should open the door only after hearing those code words. An old woman who lived near their house heard those code words. One night, Kabukeioiba (half man haft beast) came to their village. He caught the old woman and was about to eat her. She pleaded to spare her life; instead she proposed to help him get a much younger woman. She insisted that the younger woman will taste better than her. Kabukeioiba accepted her suggestion. So, they went to Thabaton. With the help of the old woman, he could make her to open the door. When she opened the door, he was taken away by her beauty. He fell in love and could not eat her. She was brought home as his wife.

Though every Khurkhul folktale does not relate beauty and women, majority of it does,

whereas, men are related with bravery and intellectual.

Phanek is another thing that reveals the relation of women with colour and beauty. As noted, most non-basic colour terms are physically realized in *phanek*.