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## Folklore - A Source to Promote Tourism in Manipur

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### Abstract

Tourists have looked for and will continue to look for beauty and unique taste of life and to discover it during their holidays and journeys, wishing to know, to explore and to experiment other peoples' culture and way of living. The ranges of blue mountains which surround the green and fertile valley in the centre with poor infrastructures for development so far as overall development is concerned, this little part of the globe-Manipur has been identifying itself to the people living in India as well as abroad through its rich arts and culture. The mosaic of traditions and cultural patterns and love of art and beauty is inherent in the people and it is difficult to find a Manipuri girl who cannot sing or dance. The Manipuri folk or classical dance is devotional in nature. Dance and music have been part and parcel of every ceremonial activities of life. The rich culture and tradition of the Manipuris are also depicted in their handloom clothes and handicrafts. The Manipuri handloom and handicraft are world famous for its craftsmanship as well as ingenuity, colourfulness and usefulness. Manipuri cuisine has the same important role in promoting tourism in Manipur.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Culture, Tourism, Manipur.

### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which folklore is considered in the areas of tourism, and which actions could be implemented to contribute to the transmission of the spirit of the place to residents and to tourists. Surrounded by blue green ranges of hills with poor infrastructures for development so far as overall development is concerned, this little part of the globe-Manipur has been identifying itself to the people living in India as well as abroad through its rich arts and culture. Love of art and beauty is inherent in the people and it is difficult to find a Manipuri girl who cannot sing or dance. Manipur presents a mosaic of traditions and cultural patterns. Particularly, it is world famous for the Manipuri style of classical dance, very much distinct from other Indian dance forms. The Manipuri School of dancing whether folk, classical or modern is devotional in nature. The colourful tribesmen are the dwellers of the Blue Mountains which surround the green and fertile valley in the centre. Each of these tribes has their own distinct culture and tradition which find expression in their dance, music, dress, customary practices and pastimes. A tribesman represents a tradition, a way of life, a cultural heritage and love for life and beauty. The culture of tribesmen is associated with leisure and creation find eloquent expression in their various dances and music. Dance and music have been part and parcel of tribal life. According to the new tendencies of tourism market, cultural tourism appears as an important niche market.

### 2. Classification and analysis

To understand the cultural heritage of folklore, it has been classified into 4 (four) categories : (i) Oral Literature (ii) Material Culture (iii) Social Folk Custom and (iv) Performing folk arts.

#### 2.1. Oral literature

**Khongjom Parva:** Khongjom Parva is a unique musical art form of the Manipuris, gifted by the last war of Manipur's independence. It is a musical narration of Battle of Khongjom fought between Manipuris and the British in April 1891. Dhobi Leinou started singing Khongjom Parva by thumping his hand on the knee and sometimes used an empty tin to thump upon. Thongjom Parva narrators glorify the Manipuri soldiers who had sacrificed their live for the sake of the motherland. Today the theme of singing Khongjom Parva includes the story of Khamba and Thoibi, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the exploits of the kings of Manipur. The singer uses only Dholak while singing.

**Pena:** Pena is a stringed musical instrument of Manipur. Its origin may be traced back to a hoary past. It is made up of two parts viz the Pena Masa and Pena Cheijing. Earlier, Pena was usually played by its player to invoke Gods and Goddesses. In later period pena is also used to

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narrating the episodes of historic, legendary and mythological episodes.

## 2.2. Material Culture

The rich culture and tradition of the Manipuris are also depicted in their handloom and handicrafts. The Manipuri handloom and handicraft are world famous for its craftsmanship as well as ingenuity, colourful, colourfulness and usefulness. The people are artistic and creative in their thinking and outlook. The creativeness in their habit and tradition has found expression in the designing of handloom and handicrafts products. The handloom products are as varied and colourful as the individual needs and tastes. Bed sheets and covers, colourful tribal shawls curtains and screens, sarees and gowns of Manipur find markets throughout India and abroad. Their handloom and handicraft products sold by ladies in Khwairamband bazar, the largest women's market in the country, are favourite pieces of souvenirs for the visiting tourists.

## 2.3. Social Folk Customs (Festivals)

**Cheiraoba- The Manipur New Year:** This festival is Celebrated during the month of April. People clean and decorate their houses and prepare special festive dishes which are first offered to various deities. As a part of the ritual, villagers climb the nearest hill tops in belief that it will enable them to rise to greater heights in their worldly life.

**Yaoshang- The premier festival of Manipur Hindus** Yaosang is celebrated for five days commencing from the full moon day of Phalgun (February/March). The Thabal Chongba - a kind of Manipuri folk dance, where boys and girls hold hands and sing and dance in a circle, is particularly associated with this festival. Boys and girls and old women collect donations from house to house and the money so collected is spent in a number of parties and feast.

**Ningol Chakouba - the social festival of Manipuris:** It is a remarkable social festival of the Meiteis. Married women of the family who were married to distant places come to the parental house along with her children and enjoy delicious feast together. It is a form of family rejoinder to revive familial affection. It is observed on the second day of the new moon in the Manipuri month of Hiyangei (November).

**KUT- the festival of Kuki-Chin-Mizo:** It is an autumn festival of the different tribes of Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups of Manipur. The festival is thanks giving feasts/ceremony with songs and dances in merriment and joviality for all, in honour of the giver of an abundant harvest, it is observed on the 1st of November every year.

**Gaan-Ngai- Festival of Kabui Nagas:** The festival is celebrated for five days in the month of December/January. GAAN-NGAI is an important festival of the Kabui Nagas. The festival opens with the omen taking ceremony on the first day and the rest of the days are associated with common feast, dances of old men and women and of boys and girls, presentation of farewell gifts etc.

**Kang - The RathaJatra of Manipur:** Kang is one of the greatest festivals of the Hindus of Manipur, the festival is celebrated for ten days (July). Lord Jagannath leaves his temple in a car known as 'Kang' in Manipur pulled by pilgrims in a rope with one another for this honour.

**Heikru Hitongba:** Celebrated in the month of September, a festival of joy, with little religious significance along a 16 metre wide boat. Long narrow boats are used to accommodate a large number of rowers. Idol of Shri Bishnu is installed before the commencement of the race.

## 2.4. Performing Art form

**Khamba Thoibi Dance:** Khamba Thoibi dance is a duet of male and female partners, a dance of dedication to the sylvan deity, Thangjing of Moirang, is the depiction of the dance performed by Khamba and Thoibi, the hero and heroine of the Moirang episode. This, with the "Maibi" dance (Priestess dance), the "Leima Jagoi" etc. form the "Laiharaoba" dance. The "Laiharaoba" dance, in many ways, is the fountainhead of the modern Manipuri dance form. This dance is a part and parcel of Moirang Lai-Haraoba. It is believed that the legendary hero - Khamba and heroin - Thoibi danced together before the Lord Thangjing for peace and prosperity of the land.

**Maibi Dance:** During the festival of Lai-Haraoba which is an annual ritual festival of the Meiteis, the inhabitants of the valley of Manipur, the Maibis, the priestesses considered to be spiritual mediums, trace through their dances the whole concept of cosmogony of the Meitei people and describe their way of life. Beginning with the process of creation, they show the construction of houses and various occupations of the people to sustain themselves.

**Nupa Pala:** Nupa Pala which is otherwise known as Kartal Cholom or Cymbal Dance is a characteristic of the Manipuri style of dance and music. The initial movements of this dance are soft and serene, gradually gathering momentum. It is a group performance of male partners, using cymbals and wearing snow white ball-shaped large turbans, who sing and dance to the accompaniment of Mridanga, an ancient classical drum "Pung". The Nupa Pala acts as a prologue to the Ras Lila dances, besides an independent performance too, in connection with religious rites.

**Pung Cholom:** Pung or Manipuri Mridanga is the soul of Manipuri Sankritana music and Classical Manipuri Dance. It assumes an important ritual character, an indispensable part of all social and devotional ceremonies in Manipur, the instrument itself becoming an object of veneration. Pung Cholom is performed as an invocatory number preceding the Sankirtana and Ras Lila. It is highly refined classical dance number characterised by the modulation of sound from soft whisper to a thunderous climax.

**Ras Lila:** The Ras lila, the epitome of Manipuri classical dance is inter-woven through the celestial and eternal love of Radha and Krishna as has been described in the Hindu scriptures and reveals the sublime and transcendental love of Krishna and Radha and the Gopies' devotion to the Lord. It is generally performed in an enclosure in front of the temple throughout the night and watched with a deep sense of devotion. Ras performances are seasonal and varied and performed at the temple of Shree Shree Govindajee in Imphal on the nights of Basanta Purnima, Sarada Purnima and Kartik Purnima and at local temples later.

Not only the Folk Dances the traditional games of Manipur viz Thang Ta (Manipuri martial Arts), Khong Kangjei (Manipuri Hockey), Yubi Lakpi (Manipuri Rugby), Hiyang Tanaba (Boat Race), Mukna (Manipuri Wrestling), Sagol

Kangjei (Polo), Kang etc. are the games associated with cultural heritage of the state Manipur. 'Siroi Lily' which is the only terrestrial lily grown on the hill tops of Siroi hill, Ukhrul, the Hoolock Gibbon, the Sloe Loris, the Clauded Leopard, the Spotted Linshang, Mrs. Hume's Barbacked Pheasant, Blyths Tragopan, Burmese Pea-Fowl, four different species of Hornbills etc. form only a part of the rich natural flora and fauna of Manipur. However, the most unique is the Sangai the dancing deer which live on the floating mass of vegetation of Loktak Lake.

### 3. Conclusion

The rich heritage of Folklore of Manipur is not only a source of Tourism development in Manipur but also is a social changing agent which will bring together the societies in the unity of senses and activities in the contemporary international relations.

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