



Growth and development of Tangkhul dialect newspaper in Manipur: 'The Aja' (2011- 2018)''

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Abstract

The proper dissemination of information in the society holds the people together. Tribal newspapers in Manipur are facing problems regarding readership and circulation due to lack of interest from the people. Many prefer English paper rather than own dialectical newspaper. But all along there are handful of people who wants to hold in their culture, language and identity. *The Aja* paper aimed at the unreached section of the society, where people longs to be informed about their neighbor and happenings. The editor and team are striving to bring on new changes and development on the proper flow of information to all the Tangkhul community. This study will help in the better understanding of the growth and development of the Tangkhul paper from 2011 till date.

Keywords: Manipur, Ukhrul, Tangkhuls, Tangkhul Newspaper, rural dwellers, the Aja

Introduction

Communication has a very crucial role to play in bringing about positive attitudinal change. The proper and continuous flow of information and communication shapes the society in every level of human development. Mass Media both print and electronic media have become a powerful tool for giving information, education and entertainment to the masses since time immemorial. "More information, more power" as the saying goes on, it is inevitable that Communication plays a very significant role in helping the villagers to live a worthwhile life. Most of the rural dwellers can't afford costly electronics like TV or Radio or Set up Box, they depend on the cheapest mode of communication flow i.e. dialectical daily newspaper. Thus, they need accurate information that will enable them to live and be updated about the activities of the government of the day. The rural dwellers need information on several issues including information on health, education, farming, new schemes, projects and loan opportunities offered by the government irrespective of their educational or social background. As society change, nation grows and we need to grow and developed in societal, moral, spiritual and environmental too. We can use the media to develop our innate intellectual.

The four types of media are

1. Traditional media which include music, dances, puppetry, theatre, painting, sculpture and literature.
2. Electronic media include radio & television.
3. Print media include newspaper, magazine and journals etc.
4. New media i.e. internet.

Newspaper in Manipur

Newspapers in Manipur are the democratic instrument that echoes the views and opinion of the people of the state and are

appropriate reflection of the political system and socio-economic relation of the people of the residing in the valley of Manipur. Presently there are 34 newspapers that are published in the state. These provide news of local, national and international importance. There are a number of newspapers, which are quite popular among the people who stay in this part of the Indian state of Manipur. The newspapers of Imphal are a significant part of the sources of media available in the city. The names of a few well-known newspapers at Imphal are The Aja, The Sangai Express. Imphal Free Press, Manipur Mail, Poknapham, Naharolgi Thoudang, Ereipak, Lamka Post, Hueiyen-Lanpao, Sumkawn, Hills Hornbill Express, Zogam Today (Zou), Herald Today (Eng.), and The Cham (Kabui) etc.

Media in the hills of Manipur

Tribal media are that publications/broadcast in tribal dialect. They are mostly community-based mouthpiece and have targeted readers who read/speak a particular dialect. Tribal newspapers/journals in good numbers started to appear in the State from 1980 onwards. The circulation of the paper and its survival depends to a large extent on the population of the tribe. For instance, a Tangkhul newspaper will depend on the number of readership, i.e., populations who speak a Tangkhul dialect. Indeed, it is Christianity that mother's education in the tribal belt of the state. Of the many legacies brought about by Christianity in the hills of Manipur, journalism becomes one among them. If Gutenberg's Bible was the beginning of press publication in the world, the history of mass communication through print medium among the tribal of Manipur began with the Gospel. The awareness on communication through media like books has begun with the publication of many Christian literatures like tracts, Bibles, etc. in the early part of the 20th Century. Most of the literatures were printed outside the region in the absence of printing machine. As such, the local

publications were mostly of handwritten or done with typewriter. The practice of communication through journals was felt as late in the early part of the 1940s. It is believed that a Hmar dialect magazine, '*Hmasawmna*' which appeared in 1941 was the first journal in tribal dialect of Manipur. The journal was edited by Zathuoi, a Hmar literary giant. The journal was published from Mission Compound in Churachandpur.

Tribal newspapers: past and present

'*Thuthang*.' The practice of daily newspaper publication among the tribal of Manipur started with the publication of '*Thuthang*,' a daily newspaper in Zou dialect in 1971. This is said to be the oldest registered tribal newspaper. The paper was edited by T Gougin and was published from Churachandpur.

'*Sikni-eng*' is the oldest existing tribal newspaper. CS Sitkill started it from Saikot in Churachandpur. This Mizo newspaper began to hit the stands on September 2, 1975. Kapthianga also edited the paper for one year during 1977-78. Its present editor, Lalhmingliana Torell edited and owned the newspaper from February 11, 1978. It enjoys readership among the Mizo-speaking community of Manipur and Mizoram. Another Mizo daily '*Chhantu*' was also started in 1976 by F Hrangzuala.

'*Sumkawn*,' another newspaper of the tribal in Thadou-Kuki dialect was started in 1980 from Churachandpur. Its first editor was Mangjangam Touthang. A year or later, the base of the newspaper was shifted at Imphal and was brought out from Tongvom Memorial Printing Press, New Lambulane, Imphal.

A Paite dialect newspaper, '*Manipur Express*' was started in 1981 as a weekly journal. The periodicity of the journal was later changed into daily in 1983. L Chinkhanlian is its editor since its inception. It still survives with large command of readership among the tribal people of Manipur.

A Thadou-Kuki journal "*Thinglhang Post*" was started on October 1, 1982. It was started as a weekly journal by TN Haokip (Now Minister) from Churachandpur. The paper became a daily newspaper in the nineties. With the credo, 'come and go,' time saw the in and out of Thinglhang Post in the tribal media arena. An abortive attempt was made in 2005 for its revival.

'*Hmasawmna Thar*' a Hmar daily newspaper was launched on October 1, 1987 in Churachandpur by Lalmalsawm Sellate. The newspaper caters to the reading needs of the Hmar speaking populace. The paper continues to hit the stands till date. The paper achieved a feat when the editor of the paper was conferred the Manipur State Journalist Award in 2008.

In 1999, another tribal newspaper was launched in Tamenglong. A Rongmei-Naga newspaper, '*Dihcham*' was started by Ramkung Pamei. The newspaper serves the reading needs of the Rongmei speaking community of Tamenglong.

Other tribal newspapers that sprang up after 2000 are Paite-dialect '*Lamka Post*' (started on September 1, 2002), and a Vaiphei-dialect newspaper '*Nisin Thuhiltu*' (2004). '*Lamka Post*' is edited by Thangzalian Thomte while '*Nisin Thuhiltu*' is edited by Benlian Khaute.

Tribal newspapers which survive to hit the stands till date are *Sikni-Eng*, *Manipur Express*, *Lamka Post*, *Thuhiltu*, *Hmasawmna Thar*, *Aja*, and *Dihcham*. Encouragingly, the

launched of a multi-lingual colour daily newspaper, '*Gosem*' from Imphal, the state capital in December 2009 sets a watermark in the annals of tribal media-industry's history. With its entire professional editorial staff and the committed trust-members of the *Gosem Lawm*, the Gosem is reckoned to revolutionize media industry among the tribal people. In 1992, a Tangkhul-Naga daily newspaper, '*Aja*' was launched from Imphal. The paper, since its inception, is edited by Valleyrose Hungyo.

Methodology

The study is conducted on the "*Growth And Development Of Tangkhul Dialect Newspaper In Manipur: 'The Aja' (2011-2018)*". The reason for selecting The Aja Daily is that it is the only Tangkhul bilingual newspaper surviving and it is circulated to all Tangkhul regions in the state. Both primary and secondary data is used to conduct the study. For primary source, the data is collected through interview method by interviewing the Editor of The Aja Daily newspaper. For secondary source, the data is collected from books, journals, government related documents, internet and from The Aja Daily newspaper.

History of the Aja

The Tangkhuls were settled in hilly region where the flow of information is not smooth. Accessing of print media to the hilly region was a "Gordian knot" for the people. Only few can afford radio, television or other medium for interacting with the world, but many suffered. People carved for news and information but none can take an initiative to it, as financial problem was there. In the state, none of the tribal group except the Kuki, does not have their own dialectical newspaper. During the 90s, Tangkhul newspaper was published with some support but it cannot go on after the second publication. So Mrs Valleyrose Hungyo, a social worker then with the support of Mr. Ramnganing Muivah Ukhrol DC, a formal inauguration of the first Tangkhul-Naga newspaper The Aja Daily was held at Tangkhul Baptist Church Checkon with former agriculture minister Mr. Somi A Shimray as chief guest and Mr P. Bharat former director DIPR as the function president on 3rd December 1992. Aja, with the motto of "*reach the unreached*" was finally born to bridge the media divide. So, the publication goes on temporary with the permission of the Ukhrol DC without its RNI number but after a long struggle, in November 1994 The Aja Daily was registered with its RNI number, 53884/94. Thus, the legal aspect was completed. The first office was at the old building of Tangkhul Baptist Church Imphal and later shifted to Dewlahland (the present office). Printing is done at Linthoi Printing Press.

According to DIPR, the state has 34 registered dailies, where in *The Aja* is the only Tangkhul dialectical newspaper which is published in Tangkhul and English.

Organisational Structure

The Aja Daily paper has got thirteen full time workers. In coming days, the house is planning to have more dedicated workers. Below is the organizational structure of The Aja Daily paper:

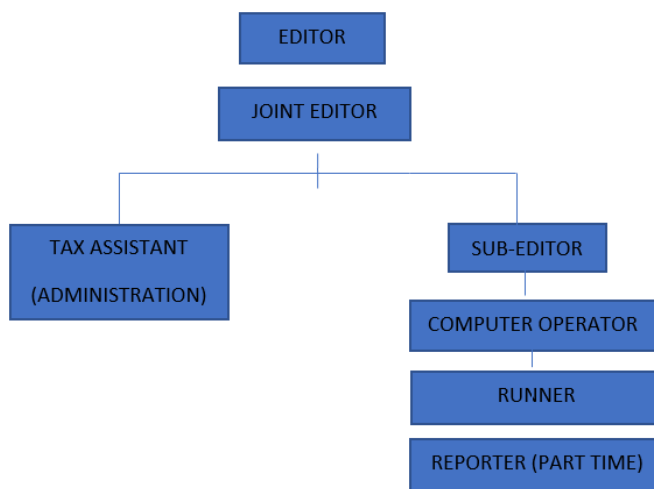


Fig 1: Organisational structure of *The Aja Daily* newspaper

Table 1: The name and designation of the present staff (2018-2019)

Sl. No	Designation	Name
1.	Owner, publisher and editor	Mrs Valleyrose Hungyo
2.	Joint editor	Mr Ashiho Hungyo
3.	Sub-editor	Mr Aaron Keishing
4.	Manager	Mr. Pukan Hungyo
5.	Computer operators	Mr Chuimi Athari
6.	Assistant manager (tech)	Mr. SK. Sethnoy
7.	Assistant manager (office)	Mr. Nganaomi Mungkung
8.	Runner	Mr. Benjamin Chithung
9.	Reporters	Mr Kazip Horam, Mr Shimboy Shimrah, Mr Ungthingpam Shaiza, Mr Thotmaya

Circulation

Circulation is low compared to the population of the tribe. With a population of more than 1 lakh, the readership is only 2000 and it has not changed much. In 2012, Valleyrose said that she is planning to add two more pages in the coming 20th year anniversary. Maybe because of the black and white paper and single page, the readership is low. In 2013, After the addition of two more pages in color the readership has increased one-third. In 2018, the official circulation is 10000 copies per day. About 100 copies of The Aja Daily paper are sent to all the major cities - Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata as a complimentary copy to all the Tangkhuls in those cities. Due to transportation problem they hardly subscribed. The paper is not popular among the elite group but to those who dint know English or Manipuri language the paper is a great help in dissemination of news.

Structure and design of Aja daily paper

The paper is published daily. The front page is about the latest news of local, national or international. On the topmost sides of the paper is occupied by, advertisement or notification. On the right side of the front page is occupied by brief news of local/ national/ international affairs. Sometimes obituaries or facilitation news occupied the last two column of the page. Editorial, “Ningai Mathasa” (humour line) and children’s column have their permanent column in the daily paper. Editorial is about the societal, environmental, political and cultural issues, But on Sundays the editorial column is open

for all to express in Biblical context. The right bottom a space for quotation called ‘Aja wui tuirá’ is there. On the left side of the front page is occupied by news column ‘Shimpao’ for local news. And in the bottom left there is a space for general knowledge or awareness called ‘Did you know, Na hi theisala’.

In the back page, we find editorial and news in English. Here all the important notice about the tangkhuls is advertised or notified. Just below the editorial column there is a space for humour line called ‘Ningai mathasa’. On the right bottom, ‘Children’s column’ is open to all children to share their creativity. Regular advertisements are advertised just above it. The paper has sports column in English in the last page. On the bottom of the back page, the name, address of office and printing place is named.

Even if the newspaper is small but it’s an A-GRADE paper, where it get the highest amount for advertisement or article to be published. Because of space constraint many news are left out.

Development

Aja paper is developing gradually with time. A year wise development is shown below.

- 1992 - Aja is published
- 1994 – Aja gets its RNI number
- 2002 – Computerised offset printer is used
- 2004 – Mrs Valleyrose conferred “State Journalist Award”, Manipur

2012- Aja celebrated its 20th birthday

2017- Aja celebrated its 25th birthday.

2017: Tangkhul Magazine Published '*The Aja Kachang*' in October 2017

Major Problem

Tangkhul language does not have any set up rule of grammar usage like English. And it becomes quite difficult to make readers understandable. Ukhrul dist. has more than 200 hundred inhabited villages and each village has its own accent and flow of the Tangkhul language. So, it's difficult to satisfy all the population with their typical accent. The Tangkhuls should encourage literature and start reading Tangkhul dailies and magazines by increasing subscription instead of criticising articles written by others. Constructive suggestions will sow the seeds of development. Also, inclusion of more informative items like job appointment and interview notices will add on more readership.

Conclusion

A word from The *Aja* editor, Mrs Valleyrose said, "People criticized with the usage of the language. The people should understand and accept the fact that we have different accent but we must try to digest the real piece of information given and not the writing style. Public should cultivate newspaper reading habit and have craving for news and information. An informative person seems wiser than those who neglect news and with this society will change and developed. At least we can have interest in reading newspaper for one's benefits in this digital age. Lack of cooperation and encouragement is a disease in the society. We need constructive criticism to upgrade and built our society. To serve the society is my success." To add up, the magazine *Aja Kachang* is a non-profit venture. The reasons for launching the magazine was because the daily newspaper alone was incomplete to serve the people. She said that important articles or information published in the daily newspaper do not stay long but reading a magazine, readers will feel the articles are "valid" for a month, she added. Valleyrose Hungyo said that this first edition of *Aja Kachang* magazine is dedicated to her late husband Ngathingkhui Hungyo, who was also the Joint Editor of *The Aja Daily*.

It is clear that tribal media in Manipur are not necessarily protesting against those who are in authority. Rather it is the result of the growing mass awareness and the needs felt by them to promote and preserve their respective identities, of which language is one of the most significant factors. However, the hope and aspiration of the people could not live long. All the newspapers and publications were put behind the eight ball. The main factors responsible for the short live of the tribal media are definitely financial shortage and, of course, 'lack of professionalism.' In all impartiality and honesty, the tribal newspapers would run successfully, if the GOI (Government of India) as well as the state government support them financially through agencies and departments like DAVP, PIB, DIPR, etc. It would be wrong to say that sincerity and commitment are absent in tribal society as a whole. It will be practical if tribal media practitioners exert more enthusiasm and do justice to their profession. With this the standard and quality of the publications can be improved.

For this to take place, skills and sincere commitment are required on the part of the professionals. In turn, the government departments concerned should appoint interpreters in order that the news carried by the tribal media reached the ear of the government and policy makers. The *Aja* paper aimed at the unreached section of the society, where people longs to be informed about their neighbor. Even if it's only a single paper the paper is full of important news and updates. Every package of life happenings is not missed. Regardless of criticism, Mrs. Valleyrose Hungyo, editor is rooted deeply in her dreams and success. Her satisfaction is in her struggle and not the financial gains. She is happy with her job in the media house as the editor and publisher of the paper and the monthly magazine.

Compared to other dialectical newspaper, Tangkhul paper *The Aja* has the lowest readership. People are more familiar with *Aja* meaning today, now and present. The name is short and hits the readers with all required news and updates by informing, educating, entertaining and being a mouth piece of and for the masses. Though the Tangkhul people lack interest to read its own dialectical paper the editorial team is pressing and working forward every day with new optimism and new knowledge to promote as well as conserve the Tangkhul legacy, tradition, culture, language and way of life. The paper has gained momentum in spreading developmental awareness to the people. More initiatives are being taken up by the team as well and with the help of the people there is better flow of communication and to bring change and solidarity among the Tangkhuls.

