

The Essence of Folklore to foster Identity of Rongmei Community

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Abstract

The Rongmei tribe of Manipur has a rich culture, custom and traditions and folklore plays an important role in disseminating various cultural practices, customs, traditions and values. Folklore and storytelling are mostly chosen to reflect the way of living and thinking of the people. The universal, humanistic and values of the Rongmei community are passed on through oral tradition. However, as the generations pass by, folklore seems to have become less relevant, especially within the younger generation. The young generation makes fewer efforts to bring back and preserve these rich local contents. This study analyzes the significance of the folklore in Rongmei community and attempts to identify how folklore accentuated the formation of identity both individually and community as distinct 'Rongmei People'. Narrative analysis has been used for the study and the data has been gathered through primary and secondary sources. For primary data, interview was taken through online mode wherein samples were selected purposively with a criterion of individuals who have the knowledge and experience of Rongmei folklore and the secondary data has been collected from different sources that are through audio-recordings, books, journals and e-sources etc. It was found that only selected persons were well versed with the Rongmei folklore. In addition, it is also seen that a written document on Rongmei folklore is very limited. The results indicated that the Rongmei folklore plays a significant role in developing the identity of Rongmei community and, the history of the past community life is beautifully portrayed through the folklore inculcating good values in community life. The uplifting of the community in the oral tradition makes it an essential study as to how folklores positions themselves in giving identity to a community.

Keywords: Rongmei, Folklore, identity, practices, values.

1.Introduction

Rongmei is an indigenous tribe of Naga, living in the North-Eastern part of India, such as Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. According to Gangmei 1994, the Rongmei community is known for beautiful folksongs, dances, festivals and rich traditions inherited from forefathers. The true culture of a community or a tribe is not created overnight, but it is evolved over the ages and perfected by time through certain practices. Similarly, the customs and cultures of the Rongmei community were also evolved over the ages and perfected by time and were orally handed down from generations to generations mostly and were not recorded in a written form. "In popular usage, the term folklore is sometimes restricted to oral literature tradition" (Deka 2011). The cultural life of Rongmei, who lived in the villages, mostly revolves around the various institutions such as 'Khangchu', 'Luchu', 'KaraapeiKaibang', 'GaanchangKaibang' etc.

Various important tribe's oral literature and folk arts play an essential role in spreading the messages to the mass for its traditional well-known nature and belief, even after the increasing use of modern mass media as it is the heart of communities. "Every ethnic community has its own vibrant art and culture including folk performing arts consists of folk music, dance and drama" (Goswami 2017). The Rongmei community, too is endowed with ample oral literature and folk arts, and cultural heritage like the other tribes as the culture has been enriched by religious ceremonies, beautiful dances, lavish festivals and diversely classified folklore. All these copious customs and traditional practices mark the Rongmei community as a distinctive tribe.

In the olden day, cultural activities, feasts and festivals, rites and ritual ceremonies were the social priorities above all things. "In the early centuries of human evolution, the information to express cultures, social contents, ideas, values, and the society itself were primarily developed by means of expression. This information was represented in the form of classical, signs, figures, traditional manuscripts and performing arts but it becomes less important or is even forgotten, especially by the younger generation, to understand the origin and the significance of this rich local content" (Mohd&Razak, 2003). However, with the advent of the modern age traditional cultural activities, rites and ritual ceremonies are left behind in the hands of a few elder folks alone. Practically, in this present day not many people know the traditional folksongs and the oral recitals.). Therefore, the priority lying before the younger generation of today is to document and preserve the traditional customs and culture of the tribal people and to promote and disseminate them to the people of the community. Folk songs, dances and oral recitals form vital parts of the Rongmei culture and primal religion. The Rongmei folk life - may it be of social custom and culture, of worship and sacrifice, of feast and festival, of birth and death, love and marriage, of sickness and suffering, time and season, and many more other important practices are mostly verbally transmitted. Vansina (1985) defined oral tradition as 'verbal testimony transmitted from one generation to the next or a later one'. Therefore, Folklore occupies the most vital place in the social, customary and religious culture of the Rongmei, and it can give life lessons, values, histories, traditions etc. to the people and the society at large. "Folklore and folktales teach young

children about the values, celebrations, histories, traditions, and art forms of cultural groups" (McLean 1997).

2.The Folklore

Folklore has been defined as traditional beliefs and tales. Olajide (2006) defined it as a "...collection of chants, mnemonics, incantation, songs, music, and stories derived from lullabies legends myths, proverbs, taboos and totems". It is an oral history that has been preserved by the people of the culture, which comprises traditions belonging to a specific culture. Music, stories, history, legends, and myths are some of these traditions. In folklore, the principles of morality and ethics are discreetly indicated. "All the moral teaching, morality, ethics, and religious values are inferred in the story" (Warta 2012). According to Leach & Mac Edward (1984), folklore is the generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs, etc. in short, the accumulated knowledge of a homogeneous unsophisticated people tied together not only by common physical bonds but also by emotional ones which color their every expression, giving it unity and individual distinction. It is the expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people; it encompasses the traditions common to that culture, subculture or group and that will be understood by listeners and readers. Most folklore consists of values that will be understood by listeners and readers of folklore (Rahim, Affendi&Awang 2017). Folklore, in the general sense, is the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people which have been disseminated in an informal manner– usually via word of mouth, although in modern times, the Internet has become a pivotal source for folklore. It can be interpreted as a cultural expression of a community through speech language that is directly related to various aspects of the culture and social structure of the society (Supriyanto&Wahyudi 2018). According to Taylor Swift Folklore portrays "a collection of songs and stories that flowed like a stream of consciousness, rising out of her imagination, manifesting vivid storytelling from largely third-person narratives that detail heartbreak and retrospection". Folklore is passed down from one generation to another and is kept alive by the people in the culture and can be considered an integral part of any culture. Folklore is an integral part of any culture (Olajide& Billy 2010). It gives meaning to people lives and their surroundings. As every culture has different historical backgrounds and traditions, folklore has a different meaning to each culture.

The Rongmei tribe of north-east India, like the other tribes, carried down the ages their rich cultural heritage to this day. Ancestors passed on these facts orally/verbally to this age with great care on the sense of time. The oral recitals and stories were assets. Famous folktales, folksongs and music, folk dances, folk custom, folk speeches, folk mythology, traditional religion or folk worship and folk social norms are plentiful, but the young generations have less interest to learn the rich cultural legacy. The identity of a tribe depends much on the distinct color of cultural folklore being displayed to the taste of universal platform. Some of the most spectacles are folksongs and music, folkdance, folktales etc. However, folklore has not been the favorites among the younger generation since the booming of technology (Rahim, 2014a, 2014b). Thus,

the study also intended to revisit the richness of folklore within the Rongmei community and analyze how it is related to identity development.

The objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are: -

- i. To find out the prevalence of folklore among the Rongmei community.
- ii. To study how Rongmei folklore influence the identity.

Questions of the Study:

The research questions of the study are:

- i. What, according to you, is the folklore of the Rongmei community?
- ii. What is the medium, and where does the learning take place?
- iii. What are the significances of folklore in the identity development of the Rongmei community in terms of; (a) Personal. (b) Family. (c) Community

3.Methodology

The necessary data on which the study rests has been collected from primary and secondary sources and also from selected well-informed informants of the Rongmei community.

- i. **Design of the Study:** The present study is a Narrative Analysis wherein the stories that were told within the context of the research were collected through the tool used and interpreted and conclusion drawn on the focus of the study. The respondent's narration of stories in an unstructured interview was analyzed and transcript.
- ii. **Sample of the Study:** Through Purposive Sampling 30 sample were selected. Wherein the sample selection was based on the criteria of people who has the knowledge and experiences of Rongmei Folklore.
- iii. **Tools of the Study: -**

For the purpose of data collection, the unstructured interview is used as a tool to collect information or data.

4.Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data collected from the unstructured interview were analyzed and transcript as per the objectives of the study.

4.1 Prevalence of Rongmei folklore

Table:1

| SL No. | Prevalence of Rongmei folklore | No. of Respondent (30) | Percentage (%) |
|--------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Folktale | 20 | 66.68 |
| 2. | Folksong | 13 | 43.33 |
| 3. | Omen | 1 | 3.33 |
| 4. | Totemism | 1 | 3.33 |
| 5. | Proverb | 2 | 6.67 |
| 6. | Ritual | 1 | 3.33 |
| 7. | Belief in Afterlife | 4 | 13.33 |
| 8. | Dance | 11 | 36.67 |
| 9. | Living history | 1 | 3.33 |
| 10. | Attires | 3 | 10 |

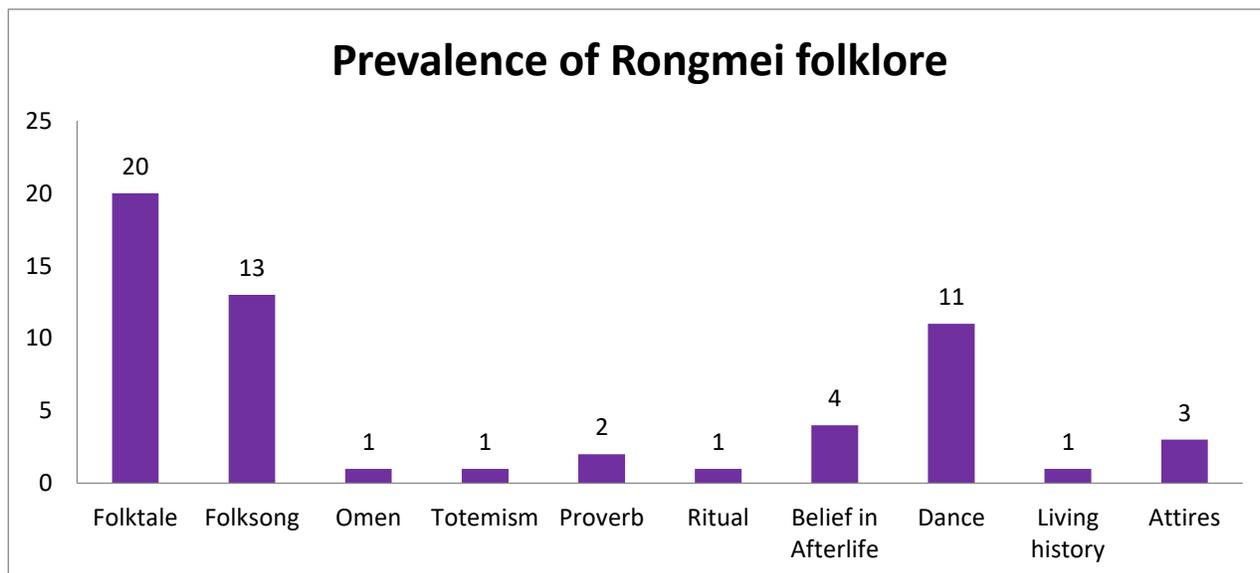
**Fig: 1** Prevalence of Rongmei folklore

Table 1 and Figure no. 1 revealed that 20 (66.68%) respondents said that folktale is very highly prevalent in the social and personal life of the community. Whereas 13 (43.33%) responded for folksong; 1 (3.33%) responded for omen, totemism, ritual, and living history. Likewise, 2 (6.67%) responded for a proverb, and 4 (13.33%) responded for belief in after life. Further, 3 (10%) responded for attires. It is found that the majority of the Rongmei people widely practice the values and ideals learnt from folktale and folksong, which has a substantial impact on the way of living even in the contemporary time. This also gives a possibility to relook at the socially acceptable principles of life through the embedded meaning of folktale and folksong.

4.2 Medium of learning folklore

Table: 2

| SL No. | Medium of Learning | No. of Respondent (30) | Percentage (%) |
|--------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Folksong | 4 | 13.33 |
| 2. | Superstition | 1 | 3.33 |
| 3. | Omen | 1 | 3.33 |
| 4. | Dance | 2 | 6.67 |
| 5. | Folktale | 3 | 10 |
| 6. | Games | 1 | 3.33 |
| 7. | Sports | 1 | 3.33 |
| 8. | Habit | 1 | 3.33 |
| 9. | Storytelling | 6 | 20 |

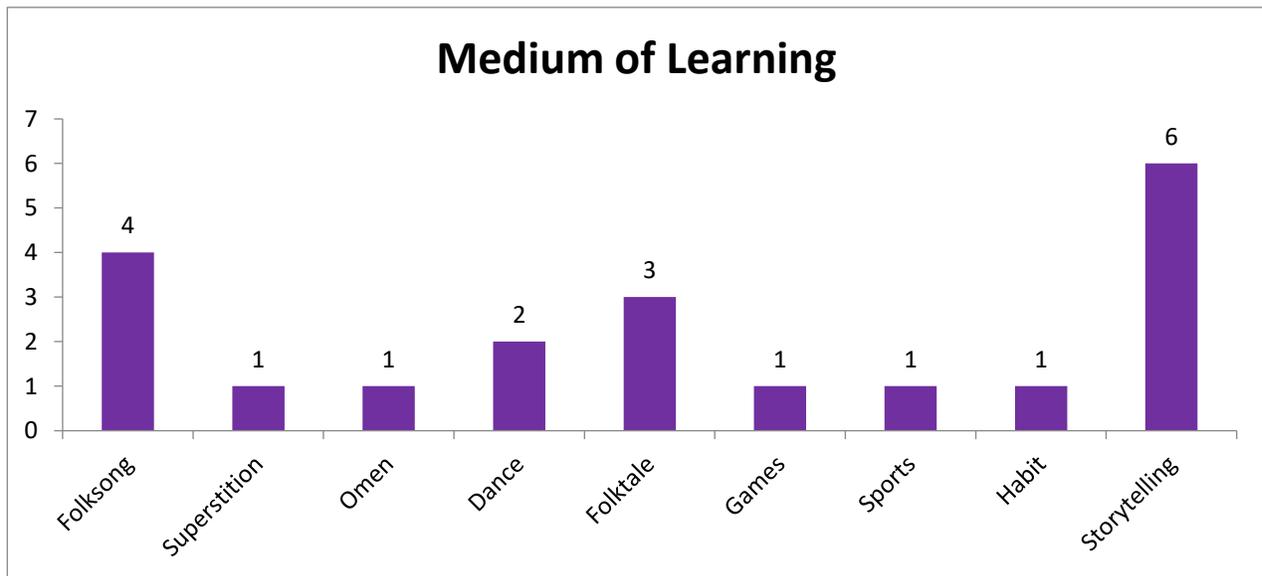


Fig: 2 Medium of Learning

Table 2 and Figure no.2 reflects 4 (13.33%) respondents' cited medium of learning is folksong. Whereas 1 (3.33%) responded for superstition, omen, games, sports, and habits. Likewise, 2 (6.67%) responded for dance, and 3 (10%) responded for folktale. Further, 6 (20%) responded for storytelling. The outcome of the findings shows a medium of learning folklore in the Rongmei community, and it is seen that Storytelling is most commonly used as a medium for learning folklore followed by Folksong and others like Folktale, Dance, Superstition, Omen, Games and Sport are also used.

4.3 Place of Learning Folklore

Table: 3

| SL No. | Place of Learning | No. of Respondent (30) | Percentage (%) |
|--------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Home | 20 | 66.68 |
| 2. | Elder's residence | 15 | 50 |
| 3. | Khangchu | 9 | 30 |
| 4. | Luchu | 9 | 30 |
| 5. | Festivals | 2 | 6.67 |
| 6. | Inter village marriage | 1 | 3.33 |
| 7. | Journey | 1 | 3.33 |
| 8. | Work place | 1 | 3.33 |
| 9. | Paddy field | 2 | 6.67 |
| 10. | Community | 4 | 13.33 |
| 11. | Peih | 1 | 3.33 |

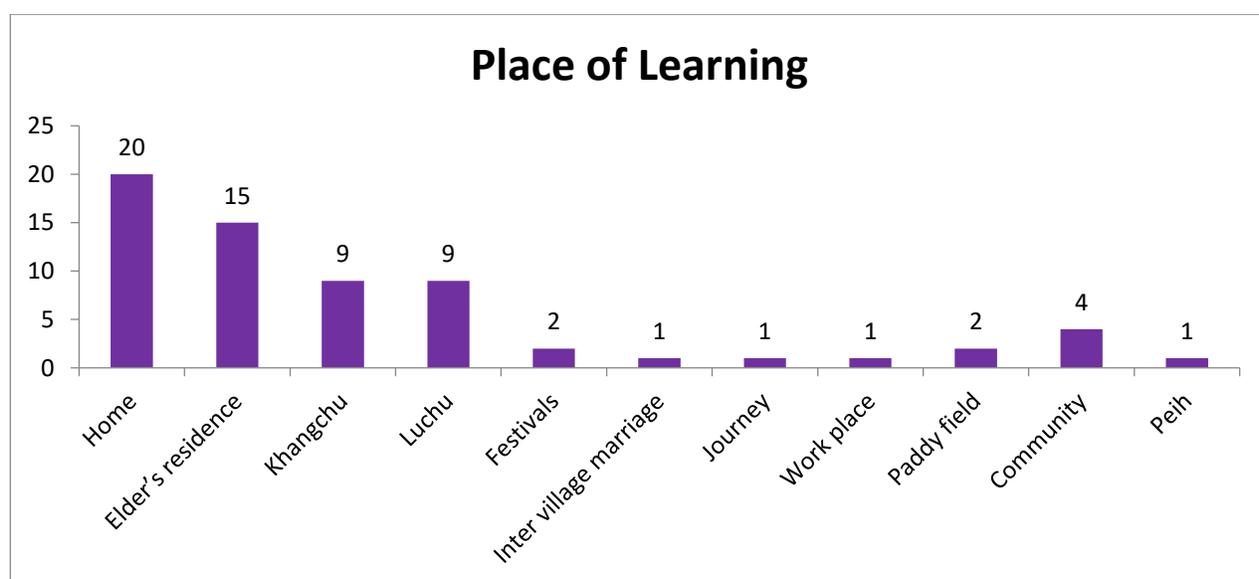


Fig:3Place of Learning

Table3 and Figure no.3 Indicates 20 (66.68%) respondents' cited place of learning is home. Whereas, 15 (50%) responded for Elder's residence, 9 (30%) responded for *Kangchu* and *Luchu*. Likewise, 2 (6.67%) responded for festivals and Paddy field. Further, 1 (3.33%) responded for inter-village marriage, journey, workplace, and *Peih*. Moreover, 4 (13.33%) responded for the community. The outcome shows that most of the learning Folklore in the Rongmei community takes place at Home and Elders residence followed by '*Khangchu*' and '*Luchu*' (Dormitory for both male and female respectively), and the other places of learning are such as Community, Paddy field, Festivals, Work place, Inter village marriage, Journey, '*Peih*'.

4.4 Folklore and Identity Development

(*Fictitious names are used for the narration to conceal the identity of the sample)

With reference to the significant role played by folklore in identity development in terms of the individual, family and community, the transcription of responses are as follows:

The practices of our festivities, religious ritual, certain norms and values etc., being learnt and passed down through the medium of folksongs and folktales are mostly in a verbal narrative as written record or document are very rare. Nevertheless, folklore plays a crucial role in our community, where we learn different things of our traditional practices, beliefs, and cultural practices (Murphy (1978). The folklore was seen as the repository of the old customs and manners of an earlier stage in the

nation's history, reflecting the unique spirit and genius of the nation (Penjore 2005). It is very significant for individual, family, and community level as it assists

"The folklore taught us to keep the tradition of letting the head of the family to the eldest son who will give advice and hold the authority to judge the good and bad in every aspect of family's matters and has the responsibility to protect the family"- quote from Meiring.

us to learn and know about the ancestral history and daily lives, including the seasonal practices. It is through folklore that individual, family and community are influenced by customs and traditional practices and beliefs. It helps in understanding the values of the old teachings and develops the sense of belongingness.

"It is traditional practices which enable us to values our very existence and taught us various life lessons through our traditional songs, dances and stories"- by Ngambi.

It enables us to develop our identity byways of our attires and costumes; for instance, the story of "Liangdaiguantatmeikaipari" talks about how 7 (seven) brothers transform into Liangdai (Hornbill), and from then on till today, we have been using the tail and feather of hornbill as traditional attire especially during dancing and above all the values that we acquired from the story. In Rongmei society, the socialization process of an individual is mostly beginning from the family. Then, children are taught how to behave and to practice good manners among the people when socializing.

"For Rongmei community folklore is very significant as it is where we learn our own history, the very beginning of our existence and it inculcates values and disciplines and the richness of the cultural activities"- Mahou.

Through such folklore, a person is trained and motivated to become a full-fledged person (*Gairiamnang, Tukdiak are some historical figures through which an individual can be inspired to be strong and healthy lifestyle*). Thus, folklore plays a very significant role in family identity and community development.

"Through the influence of totemism there is some sort of fear in me to cut and use "Thengbang" (a particular kind of tree believed to be the ancestor of Meiringmei clan).

These beliefs and certain behavior learned from folklore has made me unique from other groups of people” - Jangdih.

Personal: Folklore helps us to understand the value of old teachings and develop the sense of belongingness. As related to “*AlunanakaiPari*”, “*Sa le MikcharungPari*”, “*Langsai and LangamPari*” (Pari means Story), through such stories, individuals are inspired or motivated and help in building trust, stability, reliability, honesty with oneself and towards other. Some folksongs like *Mazaa-Lu*, *Luruang*, *Kabaomei* help to build emotional attachment and emotional development and empathy. *Khangchu and Luchu* (Dormitory for both males and females i.e. unmarried youth reside) teach individuals voluntary services, disciplines, values, norms and community practices and helps develop one's own identity. Even though dormitories are not prevalent in the contemporary time, but the values of looking up to elders for advice, suggestions and respect for elders is learnt from the practice of dormitory. Similarly, *Matuilu* (song of youth feast of merit), *laophunlu* (song of seed sowing) teach individual to maintain healthy living and hard work.

“It is still relevance to uphold all the values to act and then assist the growth of personal character to broaden and reconnect the past into our present era” - Daigong.

Family: Through Folklore, there is a very significant Marriage system that is generally governed by the concept of 'totem' among different clans in the Rongmei Community. Marriage within the same clan is a taboo in the Rongmei community. Certain proverb learned from folklore has increase family bond and clan relationship. For the family, it enables us to obey the elders and to enjoy the bonding of a family. Folklore also helps us to live better and co-operate with one another in the community. Some relevant stories like; *PuinaoPuidaPari*, *GanglienlukaiPari*, *BubangkaiPari* have influenced even in the contemporary time as parents and grandparents narrate the stories from time to time.

Folklore is used as examples and lessons for personality development; they teach us how family is a well knitted unit- Langtuam.

Community: In the context of Rongmei community, folklore has been an impactful factor in promoting cultural attires, custom dances and songs and even attempt for political unification among the Zeliangrongs are the result of common ancestors, customs and traditions learned from folklore. Folkdances gives an opportunity for socialization, merrymaking, relaxation, cooperation, team spirit, unity and sense of belongingness, etc. For instance, *Hoi-Kaomei* (Hoeing), *Kailuanruan-Lu*, *Pajeimei*, and some other cultural practices through festivals like *Gaan-Ngai*, *Mariang-Ngai/Gudui-Ngai*, *Nanhu-Ngai*, *Tian-Ngai*, *Chaga-Ngai/Rih-Ngai*, *Ginki-Ngai* (which brings about a sense of belongingness wherein community shares an utmost hospitality towards one another). Most of the folksongs and dances have obvious and subtle messages in developing the identity of the community as a whole. *Kailuangruanlu* (caroling

song), *Luruang* (a song glorifying hard work), *Riganlu*(a song sung to remind safety and security) pass on the message of community wellbeing.

Folklore is used as examples and lessons for personality development; they teach us how family is a well-knitted unit, for e.g. blood is thicker than water as a proverb comes from our folklore. It has a major role in shaping our community, and how the rules and regulations are made for each occasion, what things can be done and what to disregard and how peace is kept between members of the community at the village court (pei), comes from our folklore- Mangui.

From the above analysis, we can briefly draw out some of the important points which significantly contribute to the development of identity for personal, family and community levels in the area of; Language Development, Enriching Historical Knowledge, Built Relationship, Religious Belief, Dress and Attires, Creativity and Innovative etc.

5.Major Findings and Discussion

The findings of folklore prevalent in the Rongmei community and its significance at different events or social phenomena are discussed as follows:

- a) **Folk tales:** The finding of the study revealed that folklore is highly prevalent in the Rongmei community and it is seen that folktale (66.6%). Folk tales (*Bangkhunpari*) like the “*Thangang*” (Dragon) story depicting the dog that went up the sky to seize the medicinal bark taken by the sun and the moon. The dog's owner built a high tower ladder to bring back the same (dog), but due to the collapse of the ladder, the effort failed, and the dog turned to a flying python, the “*Thangang*” (Dragon). The tale of “*Langsai and Langam*” (tiger-devil and human being friendship), the story reflected the human being “*Langam*” got the upper hand in all competitions. The tale of “*Ganglenlu*” (village damsel married with an elephant that came in human form). The tale of *Jangjipu-Pan* (Duipan or Waterborne Rice mill). The tale of “*Meijipu*” (it is a story related to reincarnation, the story talks about “*Meijipu*” who went to the netherworld or Taruaihram (paradise) and lived with his family. His wife and children who died earlier received him in the paradise land “*Taruaihram*”, but everything was opposite to him that he returned to the mortal world only to die and go to the immortal world again). The story of “*Amangh*” (building painted house of merit, feast for all living beings and the art of living for all creatures taught by Amangh who built the first “*Tarengkai*”). Tales of wonders and amazement, impossible things made possible with miracles etc. “Folktales plays the role in transmission of moral values, philosophy, beliefs, humor, etiquette, and many other traits specific to the Bhutanese society holds an inescapably eminent” (Dorj 2002). Rongmei folktale helps in maintaining moral values, ethics and an aesthetic sense among the people. A similar finding is seen in the study by Doley 2014 wherein the Mising tribe folktales contribute towards maintaining the moral values of the children in the community.

b). Folk Songs: Rongmei society pampered much to the melodious folk songs of various types. The song comprises of *Laophun Lu* (Seed sowing song) which is a seed sowing song and sung with the belief that the goddess of paddy feels happy and blesses a bountiful harvest if the cultivators work in a happy mood- Kamei, Singh and Devi (2019). *Matui-Lu* it is a song sung in the dormitories (Thian) to stimulate a sense of positive competition for the wellbeing of the village. *Laoleau-Lu* (monsoon- song of pulling out weeds in the barn), *Lam-Lu* (song of dances), *Kailuangruan-Lu* (caroling song) sung by the youth and warriors to give a sense of safety and security to the villagers during night time, in short, is a kind of guard's song. *Mazaah-Lu* (Harvest song of praise/ song of rice) a song sung praising the goddess of paddy for an abundant harvest, *Luruang* (glorifying songs of dignity) themes of the song are mostly romance, socio-cultural, moral life, historical events, topographical description etc. *RamluanLu* (common song or love song) love, anguish and melancholy, *Pajei-Lu* (group song of cogender merrymaking), *Luchem-Lu* (wedding song) a song of curtesy and well wishing. *Magen-Lu* (obituary song), *Chapa-Lu* (romantic song of dignity) mostly sung at the time of *Gaan-ngai* festival, *Ludungh* (song of raised voice of praises), *Luh-Phaih* (song of temperance), *Luhtap* (song of interruption), *Lu Changling* (song of reversion), *Rah-Lu* (divine song), *Kaah-Lu* (song of grasshoppers), *Kuanh-Lu* (song of thanks), *Pantang-Lu* (song of pounding rice/paddy), *Banjai-Lu* (song of joining hands in dance), *Rih-Lu* (war song) sung on the occasion of Kaboumei ritual, Cham-Lu (song of charm and praises on capture of big animals). *Seih-Lu* (song of blessing for war front victory), *Rigan-Lu* (song of guarding village) and many other typical songs.

c). Folk dances: *Rih-Lam* (war dance after the battle), *Banjai* (ring dance of unity or joining hands), *Kit-Lam* (dance of cricket insect), *Khoigu-Lam* (bee dance), *Dingren-Lam* (men and women joint dance), *Tuna-Lam* (girl's dance), *Gaan-Lam* (male dance), *Hansengh-Lam* (bamboo stick dance), *Kaibuan-Lam* (praise of host dance), *Kuanh-Lam* (valedictory dance), *Kaa-Lam* (grasshopper dance), *Gaa-Lam* (crab dance), *Tareng-Lam* (spinning dance), *Pantang-Lam* (pounding paddy dance). All these diverse dances depicted creativity, unique and vibrant costume, closeness to nature, patriotic and heroic and a harmonious existence within the community. "The history of past community life is used as learning and applying good values in community life" (Adriyanti, Suwandi&Subiyantoro 2019). Rongmei folk dance is considered as one of the most beautiful and distinctive among the tribal dances.

d). Folk Festivals: Most common festivals of Rongmei community are as follows- “*Gaan-Ngai* (Winter Festival), *Nanu-Ngai* (ear boring festival of the children), *Napkaodai* (Ginki)-*Ngai* (seed sowing festival), *Gudui*(Maleng)-*Ngai* (completion of seed sowing cultivation festival) convey grateful heart and hospitality, *Tun-Ngai* (festival of rains to improve ponds, paths and village street), *Ten-Ngai* (Festival of Bun), *Puakphat-Ngai* (Festival of new crops), *ChakakNgai* (Soul departing festival), *Donjao-Ngai/Banchat-Ngai* (declaration of the largest producer of paddy), *Rih-Ngai* (Festival of War- it’s a grand festival celebrated after the victory of war)” Kamei (2014). These festivals give a sense the harmony with nature to the community members.

e).Hoi (Hoe-hoeing including yelling): *Laothao- hoi* (start-of field work with group voice hoeing), *Naphao-hoi* (meal time hoeing), *Hoikaogangmei*(hoeing/mass voice of solemnization or ordination on vital achievement including declaring an appointment of public post), *Tiengpuan-hoi* (hoeing on mass carriage of massive pillar or raptor or any other heavy articles), *Hoi gamhmei* (hoeing of elation), *Hoi loukeimei* (hoeing of conclusion or benediction).

f). Folk musics: Folk music includes rural musical instruments like “Rah” (traditional or country violin or harp), Tao (mouth organ of country made bamboo base musical instrument or flute), Khong (drums), *Lonluh* (typical mouth organ made of bamboo tube and dry gourd sound box), *Tengka* (trumpet/made of bamboo tube), *Siemmu* (cymbal), *Sienkhiek* (tambourine), etc.

g). Traditional or folk lifestyle: As revealed in the study the folk stories of Rongmei people comprise human and gods were living together as inmates of “*Khangchu*” (men’s dormitory at the house of earthly God “*Tingpurengsonang*”) followed by Lord Amangh, who taught the people all facts of life and security. The Rongmei Naga villages are run by Headman or village king called “*Namguang*” (later Nampou) as practiced with other tribal people. It is believed that due to the long separation from each other’s, varied dialects were formed. For instance, in the story of *Tingpurengsonang*, war broke out between gods and human dormitory inmates where the gods killed in the war rose again alive, but when human beings died, they did not come back to life. When human number decreased- the host/patriarch of the “*Chara-ChameiKhangchu*” (godsmen joint dormitory) *Tingpurengsonang* bade the gods to spare some human lives but the gods did not take heed to his intervention. When the *Khangchupou* (Dormitory patriarch) sought the opinion of his spouse (the mistress of dormitory), whether to support gods or human beings, the mistress-godmother said that human beings are better as they pay oblation and offerings with obedience and adoration, but gods are contemptuous. So, the master of dormitory allowed human beings to spare some gods, which human beings obeyed. The above folktale connected with the Rongmei mythology, which contains knowledge to lead the life of dignity and freedom with village kings. The same can be seen in the study of Sibarani et al. (2014), which denotes that local wisdom is local genius of a society derived from the noble values of cultural traditions to regulate the order of people's lives in order to achieve community progress both in creating peace and improving people's welfare. Many more folktales of great values are left behind by the Rongmei ancestors for the coming generations to inherit.

From the above discussion, we can briefly draw out some of the important points which significantly contribute to the development of identity for personal, family and community levels-

i) Language Development: From a very young age, children are told folktales from their home by their parents, grandparents and even siblings, which provoke their imagination, provide them with materials from which children create their understanding of origin and purposes of life and form abstract concepts and values which may guide them. Folktales like ‘*Asa*’ le ‘*Mhikcharung*’ stories are mostly narrated by the elders. Folktales bring a holistic approach to language learning.

ii) Enriching Historical Knowledge: Folklore of different communities reinforces the sense of ethnic and social identity. It is not just a memory of the past but a living and still developing tradition, especially with the increasing rate of ethnic crises in recent times. With the help of such understanding that folklore is taken as the main source for history. Folksongs like ‘*Luruang*’, ‘*Laophun-Lu*’, and ‘*Laoriauh-Lu*’ convey the traditional practice which is prevalent to this present day and historical figures like ‘*Ahmang*’, ‘*Meijipu*’, ‘*Tienglham*’, ‘*Tukduk*’ etc. are also influential to the society which shows the supportive nature of social structure for individual potential.

iii) Relationship: When we talk about the building of relationship, some of the relevant folktales are '*Asa le Mhikcharung*', '*Chamdan le Juthung*' and '*Langsai le Langam*' where we learn the intimate friendship, the strong bond between them and the mutual understanding with one another. Rongmei people used folklore for interaction and managing cultural situations for identity construction. It also established relationship of people with culture and ecological situation where there exist solidarity and harmony in the society.

iv) Religious Belief: The identity of a person is constituted by the cultural environment he or she is born in. Therefore, beliefs and rituals are experienced within this cultural environment wherein every belief and ritual contributes to the community. Beliefs and ritual are the most fundamental ground elements that constitute the common ground. This is also related to the folklore of *Tienglham, Meijipu*.

v) Dress and Attires: Rongmei community has rich and colorful attires which have been handed down from the past. '*LiangdaisuguanmeiPari*' is one of the examples where one of the attire is being discovered and passed on to this day. The traditional dress may include such as garments, jewelry, and accessories imbedded in the past that is worn by a particular group of people. Though changes take place over time in colour, form, and material are acknowledged, the assemblage seems to have handed down without much change from the past.

vi) Creativity and Innovation: Creativity is the capability or act of conceiving something original or unusual. Innovation is the implementation of something new. Invention is the creation of something that has never been made before and is recognized as the product of some unique insight. Rongmei community is enriched with a folk story like '*Jangjipu*' where the main character '*Jangjipu*' is a creative and innovative figure which inspire individual as well as the community to strive for creativity and innovation.

From the above discussion, we can draw out some of the crucial points which substantially contribute to the development of identity for personal, family and community levels. The folklore prevalent and practiced in the Rongmei community has intrinsic value with the potential to stimulate an understanding and appreciation of different artistic expression. Folklore as a cultural resource capital inspires creative experiences; this, in turn, enhances holistic personality development and a clear sense of individual and community identity.

6.Expected Main Results or Outcomes

Folklore being traditional beliefs and tales depicting the essence of oral or written literature, tradition, lifestyle and food for thought, tends to provide an easy way to identify a tribe and place. Folklores are traditional beliefs and stories of a community or culture (Humpherys & Babb 2020). One can imagine constructing the form of identity with the attributes displayed by the folklore. The salient features of a tribe with the area of habitation can be reflected or shown by the knowledge involving in the folklore of the said group of people concerned. In the words of Deka (2011), folklore as a source is important to explain and understand societies in the context of preserving cultural diversity and protecting minority cultures, especially those of indigenous

peoples and marginalized social groups. With the increased growth of several ethnic identity crises in the region in recent times, the roots for their respective indigenous history are often traced to folklore. Thus, this study has a prospect of providing more knowledge on the folklore and strengthens the social structure and socialization of the Rongmei people. In addition, the study will help in sensitizing youngsters to learn more about the significance of folklores in the process of identity development both at the individual and community perspective.

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