



Interaction between Ecology and Culture: A Study on the Ethnic Festivals of Karbi Tribal Group in Assam, India

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Abstract

In the multi-ethnicity of India the tribal societies have their own identity and cultural heritage. Their modes of occupational pursuit, norms, values, customs, practices as well as cultural heritages are very much interrelated with their ecological habitat. Their festivals, religious festivals and folk performances reflect cultural heritage and their cognition about surrounding nature. It reflects their community consensus and obedience, devotion to the nature. This paper is an attempt to discuss the cultural and ethno-ecological aspects of the religious festivals and folk cultural performances practiced by the Karbi people.

Keywords: Society; Culture; Tradition; Folk culture; Religion; Environment

Ethno-Ecology and Culture

Society and culture are interdependent and interrelated to each other. Society can be looked upon as a process, a series of interaction between human being where each person responds to the stimuli of other person. No social life is possible except such interaction and this communication is the basic to all social life. The whole human society and each group in the society can be viewed as the manifestation of the social processes between the interacting members. These interactions ultimately form the social structure and the norms, values and customs related with these social relationships determine the cultural aspects of human being. Actually a culture is the way of life of people; while a society is an organized, interacting aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life, thus society is composed of people and the way they behave is their culture [1]. Culture consists of the abstract values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that lie behind the people's behaviour and that are reflected by their behavior. These are shared by members of a society, and when they are acted upon, these elements produce behaviour that is intelligible to the other

members of that society. Cultures are learned, rather than inherited biologically, and they are learned largely through the medium of language. The parts of a culture function as an integrated whole. The unique capacity for culture in the human species depends on learning. Culture is obtained through the process called enculturation that is the process of social interaction by which people learn and acquire their culture. Human being acquires their culture both consciously through formal learning and unconsciously through informal interactions. Culture includes all the elements in man's mature endowment that he has acquired from his group by conscious learning or by a conditioning process- technique of various kinds, social and other instructions, beliefs and patterned modes of conduct [1].

The relation between life and environment is extremely intimate. Every change in a living creature involves some change in its relation to environment and every change in the environment creates some change in the response of the organic being. Our environment is our habitation in the complete sense. The daily livelihood activities and the cultural aspects of human being are closely related with the

surrounding environment. In context of society culture has its own application to the ways of life or designs for living common at any one time to all mankind; to the ways of living peculiar to a group of societies between which there is greater or lesser degree of interaction to the patterns of behaviour peculiar to a given society. The tendency for all aspects of a culture is to function as an interrelated whole which is called as integration. This integration is prevailed through its economic, political and social aspects. The fundamental components of every culture are its material and non-material aspects. Material culture consists of the physical products of human society whereas the nonmaterial products are intangible goods like values, beliefs, norms, morals, and customs.

India is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. Along with its multi ethnicity the cultural variabilities are diversified in nature. Simultaneously with the variation of geographical landscape culture has become different from one region to another. In the context of multiculturalism in India the tribal culture has its own importance. Most of the Indian tribes live in the forests, hills and naturally isolated regions and they are known by their distinguishing names meaning either the people of forest and hill or the original inhabitants and so on. The socio-cultural life of the tribals is intimately connected with the forest ecology and forest is an inseparable part of their daily life. Roy Burman opined in 1982 that “ directly or indirectly in the tribal mind forest symbolizes life in its manifold manifestations i.e. home, worship, food, employment, income and entire gamut. Tribals can in fact be regarded as children of forest [2].

The daily life of the tribal people is closely related with their surrounding environment. The tribal culture has its own heritage and it is nourished in the lap of nature. The cultural heritages of the tribals are informal, oral, illiterate and unreflected many i.e. folk based traditions. Their cultural heritage and their cultural traits and elements are not merely for the individuals rather it is for the entire community as a whole. Folk traditions of the tribals are a composite whole which is one of the dominant characteristic of their culture. In folk songs, verse and music go together and the musical aspect is much more reflected in practice. The simple catchy folk tunes conveying the feelings and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thoughts, their activities and achievements, their morals and discipline are of great value [2]. The term ‘folk culture’ includes unity, tradition, community dependence and collective awareness and consciousness of the concerned people. This term was first coined by W.J. Thoms in 1846 and it is recognized universally. C.F. Potter has defined folk culture as “a lively fossil which refuses to die” [3]. The tribal folk culture mainly includes folklore that is a collective combination of myths, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles, ballads, folk song, folk dance, folk

music, folk carvings etc. It comprises the least tangible expression of the aesthetic aspects of culture [1]. The term folklore should not get restricted to traditional customs, rites and beliefs of the past lingering among backward people in complex civilizations, but now extended to include folk arts, folk abuse, folk proverbs, riddles, idioms etc. both among people of civilization and among primitive civilizations. He believed that folklore throws a flood of light on the early intellectual evolution of human society and for this reason he regarded folklore as “pre- history of human mind”. He emphasized upon the need to collect and preserve folkloric traditions, because they are the treasury of our past handed down from generation to generation. He told that the study of folklore should include folksongs, ballad, folk rites, folk traditions, folk beliefs associated with dreams, superstition, omen, folktales, folk proverbs, folk riddles, folk magic and Totaka, folk abuse, folk recreations etc.

This folk tradition is mainly based on dance and song with the tunes of music which are based on various natural tunes, notes and cords those come across the nature. The sounds of the birds, the flow of the river and the wave of the winds are the sources of their music. Ultimately the folk cultures of the tribal people are the reflection of their interactions with the environment and the nature plays here the keen role to create collective consciousness and unanimous celebration of folk cultural performances among the tribal societies. On the other hand their religious festivals denote humble submission and devotion to natural forces and supernatural agencies [4]. Among the Karbis different ethnic games have their own social significance Bodo F, et al. [5]. Different Karbi films have reflected a number of traditional cultural practices of the Karbis and some of their contemporary changes Rongpi B, et al. [6]. Bhattacharjee S [7] has discussed about the ethno-ecology of the Karbis and their cultural practices. Ultimately both their religious festivals and folk performances reflected their cultural heritage and an ethno ecological cognition in a wider spectrum. Such issues have been observed in case of the Karbi tribal group of Karbi Anglong, Assam.

Festivals of the Karbis

The present study and the methodology applied

The Karbi Anglong District is situated in the central part of Assam. The population of the district is predominantly tribal. The major tribal ethnic groups of this district were Karbis, Bodos, Kukis, Dimasas, Hmars, Garos, and Rengma Nagas etc. Besides, a large number of non-tribals also lived together in this hill region. The Karbis were the indigenous community of the said region. The studied people were all belonging to the Karbi tribal group which was the numerically dominant people of the district [8].

The present study has been done on the basis of empirical field work among a few selected villages under the Hamren sub division of Karbi Anglong district. The studied areas were one of the earliest settlements of the Karbi people. The study was conducted among 300 families with a total population of 1653. Among them there were 852 males and 801 females. The study was conducted during the period of January 2024 to August 2024. There were four divisions of the total field work. Two to three times of field work was done under each division as per the requirement.

- **Division-1:** Foremost, the general observation of the village was done along with the completion of Preliminary Census Schedule (PCS) to know the demographic composition of the studied people.
- **Division-2:** Case studies were taken on the concerned families. It was focused on the issues of their historical background, traditional cultural practices, religious belief, traditional occupational pursuit, folk cultural heritages and indigenous knowledge.
- **Division-3:** Detailed open structured interviews were taken from the key informant, eldest person of the settlement, leader of the traditional political organization of the concerned society, administrative authority related with the studied settlement. It focused on the significance of religious and folk performances in the livelihood of the concerned people.
- **Division-4:** The data was collected about the cultural and ethno ecological perspective of their different festivals.

Objective of the present study

The present study is primarily focused -

- To know about the society and cultural tradition of the studied people.
- To know about the religious festivals of the Karbi people.
- To know about the folk cultural performances of the Karbi people.
- To analyze the cultural and ethno-ecological perspectives of the festivals of the Karbi people.

Religious festivals of the Karbi people

'HI-I' and 'ARNAM'-roughly translated to mean 'demon' and 'deity'- enjoy equal status in Karbi folk rituals. The presences of deities and their negative 'counterpart' in Karbi rituals reveal their belief in Animism and soul [9].

The Karbis practiced various religious festivals. They performed rituals and festivals for the wellbeing of the people and that of the community. The various religious festivals of the Karbi are briefly discussed-

Peng: Peng is a household deity who protects it from all supernatural evil effects, diseases and allied misfortunes. He is the eternal sentry who guards the household against all dangerous intrusions. Peng is therefore annually propitiated and His 'alter' is placed atop the main door of the house. Its chantation denotes that Peng as a brother/sister; who eats from our hand, who is the protector of the household.

Chojun: The worship of Chojun is also known as 'arnam kethe karkli' literally which means worship of the Great Deity. Chojun is a household ritual and is performed for family wellbeing during which the Ancestor from both the male and female lineages are also propitiated. During Chojun a number of deities are propitiated in the alter serially arranged.

In Chojun there are six agenda to be performed. The castration of he-pig (phak arme kerot); The preparation of rice beer (hor ketun); The preparation of booth (phongrong keteng); Invoking to God (kasadi); Worshiped of Great God (kechopi). To see result of the worshipped (hanbor kelang).

Rit Anglong Arnam: It is also a household deity, but worshipped in the place where jhum cultivation is performed, and only the male folk eat the sacrificed which is fowl or goat once a year. It is performed to appease the deity living on the hills for a secured crop production. There is no fixed date of these rituals to be performed.

Volok Ase or Buichom or Chinthong Arnam: Volok ase is known to different name as Chinthong arnam and Buichom. It is also a household deity worshipped in tikup (space in front of the house). Generally Buichom is propitiated with the essence of white fowl and sometimes he-goat is also sacrificed. Volok ase is worshipped for peace and tranquility of the family and the village as a whole for co-existence with the neighbor.

Rongker: The Rongker is the annual religious festival. There are many types of Rongker as described below-

Than (Havar) Rongker, Pirda Rongker, Mavur Rongker, Vophong Rongker, Dengja Rongker and Tongrop Tongso Rongker. Rongker is performed to worship the local deities and others for the welfare of the people of the village. The worshipped of the deities differ from village to village.

Henn-up ahi kekan (Bamboo shoots festivals) and Hacha kekan (harvesting festival):

*"Arkoi pen there
Sengkan Kachingbe
Chonglat nangkele
Arkli Hemphu pen Hemthe
Damsarta klem me"*

"Chonglat" is the period between the months of January/ March, after harvesting and before cultivation. The Karbi perform "Se-Karkli" (worship) to the Hemphu and other

god and goddesses. Its happy time for youth to meet and marriage ceremonies etc. also held.

*"Krok Chur ma Krok Chur
Kangreng vo Krokchur
Sengkan aborom nangvur"*

When the 'Vo Krokchur' (a small seasonal bird) crying on the trees, it's a New Year and season for cultivation on the hills side. The youth group Jirsong (name of the Karbi Traditional Youth collective cultivation) goes to cultivate on them with tools, weapons and 'chenduruk' (a small wooden drum). The 'Jirsong' of young boys and girls sowing and cultivating in a rhythm of 'Ritnong Chingdi' (Harvesting Dance) is accompanied by the playing of bamboo musical instrument 'Chengkumbang'. The Phankri in the group is the only person to distribute betel-nut to them as the cultivated seeds grow; unwanted weeds and plants are cleared. Then it is time for the Karbis to cut and collect bamboo shoots (hen-up). These are gathered and brought to the village in 'ingtong' (a bamboo basket) the young boys and girls, then cut them into pieces and pound them in a mortar (Long) with a wooden prattle (Lengpum). The pounded bamboo shoots are stored in a bamboo basket and are called 'Hen-up-ahi' which is kept in the house of the village headman.

After a month or two the basket is opened by the headman in front of the villagers. Then the boys and girls perform the ceremonial dance 'Hen-up-ahi kekan', which is generally followed by heavy feast. The 'Hen-up' were then distributed amongst the villagers and is generally celebrated during the month of September and October.

As the paddy got ripen in November a small hut 'mandu' is constructed in the paddy field for stoking cut paddy called 'sokbui'. It is then brought to the clearing called 'Jimtim' where the collected paddy trashed by wooden bitterns. This is called 'Sok-pam'. After the paddy bundled in 'Mantung' (a bag made of cloth) and is carried to the owner house, which is called 'Sok-keroi'.

On completing the carrying of paddy, the 'Hacha-kekan' traditional dance is performed that very night till midnight and later only the boys dance to the song og 'Lunse'. Before dancing a vegetable curry 'Han-moi' is cooked and brought before the Lucse. Salt and other ingredients are added as the dance proceed. Girls serve the boys with 'rice beer' ('Horpo') from wedden container called 'Sero' and drink the rice beer and jumped upto dance. People feast after dancing.

Voloketer: This is also a seasonal festival generally celebrated before monsoon in the month of April. This is a very important religious festival performed by the chief priest called "Katharpo". It is celebrated at Ronghang Rongbong, the Capital of Karbi Kingdom. The remarkable aspect of the festival is that it is connected with the legend of 'Ha-i-mu',

sung by the chief priest. This song is prohibited to sing except on this particular occasion.

Sacramental festivals of the Karbis

Right-de-passage of the Karbis is fabricated with certain significant festivals.

Birth: When a baby is born in a family it is very important to worshiped Hemphu for sanctification of the new born baby called "Klong-klo-athekar-kiti." The birth of child weather male or female is an occasion for joy in the family with the belief that a person who died earlier is supposed to be reborn in the same family.

Hence for a new born child the name giving ceremony, where the maternal uncle of the child takes the leading parts is the most important one. The maternal uncle takes a very small quantity of rice beer called horlang in a small container pours it in the mouth of a new born child drop by drop. If the baby is female the maternal uncle will utter the name of all the dead females of the family one by one associating a name with each drop. The name that will be associated with last drop will be automatically being the name of the female child.

Similar procedure of associating each drop of rice beer with the name of each dead male of the family is followed in case of name giving ceremony of a male child and the name associated with the last drop will determine the name of the newly born male baby.

Marriage: It is known as Adam Asar. A number of rituals are performed to protect the ceremony from the evil effect and to secure the future of the newly married couple.

Chomangkan : Chomangkan is a celebration of death. Karhi is an ambodiment of the Karbi cultural edifice. 'Charhepi' the dominant female character of the festivities. Death to a Karbi is only a transaction to a new identity, both spiritually and physically- through time and space. A mother is reborn to her brother as daughter and a father to his son as son- reliving the genetic relation.

Karbi folksongs are generally repetitive, lengthy and almost monophonic and first time listeners may find it difficult to admire the aesthetic and cultural values they embody.

In traditional Karbi society, every occasion is a ritual and every ritual is an occasion. And there are as many incantations or hymns as there are rituals.

Origin of Folk Culture in Karbi Society

It is a believer of Karbi people that song and music are a gift of the almighty. Therefore, song and music are the ritual creation of god. There is a folk song among the Karbis, which gives glimpses of how song and music first began.

*"Ru pen ri chethan palamo
Pirbita avelang ako
Karbi kave lun tomo
Chephong Teron ronsopo
Nangklang musilok sarpo
Karbi nim-rokom kecho
Dam kung apokle papho
Papho kadeng phong meso
Nangkoibeng alun hangjo
Anta lun kan aron do".*

Gist of the Verses: There is a folk tale that is often recounted by fathers and mothers. When the earth was young, the Karbis did not have song and music. However, there was a village named 'Terong Rongsopi' there appeared 'Musilok Sarpo' when the village 'Klengsarpo' was busy arranging a ceremony with his subjects without having songs and music. The ritual was held beneath the wild jack fruit tree, half burn by fire. It was said the ritual was performed graciously. It is believed music and song were first brought to the Karbis by two brothers, namely Seng Mirjeng and Long Merjeng sent to earth by the good of heaven. It is describe below:

*"Songsar ahukum tangho Mirjeng atum pososo
Sengmirjeng pen Mirdan rongso
Seng parjan po soso
Longjing pamahurado
Karlu phong loring angno".*

It was believed that the twin's sons of gods of heaven descended from heaven to earth in the guise of little orphan boys. The orphans looked pitiable and dirty with snotty noses.

Apart from that folklore like the 'Lunse Keplang' describes the origin of the singers and songs. This narrative belongs to 'metafolklore', first conceived by Alan Dundes as an oral literary criticism which would help elucidate the meaning of other folklore

According to Dr. Majunder and other anthropologists opined that tribal artistic life reflected mainly in three forms of their art:

- Oral Literature.
- Magic and Dance.
- Art and Dancing.

The above classification has excluded the folk artisan, craft, acrobatics etc. The artistic life of the tribals includes in itself three following forms:

• Folklore

The folklore is the oral literature of the simpler societies and perpetuated by oral traditions. There is actually no technique, connected with the making and sings of songs. They are learnt by ear, and transmitted in this fashion from generation to generation. Nor is there a conscious awareness of form or construction on the part of the folk-singer or folk-letter, there is no aesthetic or analytic theory in his hand.

• Folk Music and Dance

Folk-songs, music and dance of the tribals are a composite whole which is one of the dominant characteristic of their culture. In folk-songs, verse and music go together and the musical aspect is much more reflected in practice. The folk-poetry is merely a vehicle for the folk tune. The tribal people go on singing a small poem of four to eight lines for hours together with the help of folk-music. The simple catchy folk-tunes conveying the feelings and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thought, their activities and achievement, their morals and discipline are of great value.

The songs are of several kinds. There are life-cycle songs sung at different occasions like birth, marriage and death: moral songs, teaching morals, dealing with different seasons like the spring, the rains, etc., occasional songs, associated with festivals and religious songs sung at the time of offerings to deities. Again there are working songs which help in synchronizing the work. There are also songs of historical importance, which through their simple tunes can enlighten the tender minds with the tough subject of history, in the easiest manner. Moreover, such historical songs, narrating small stories, the heroic deeds of great heroes, especially the heroes of the past, are more interesting to the younger generation. There are songs for developing the intellectual capacity of the children, for instance, the songs for games, the riddle songs etc.

Folk-songs may be classified on the basis of the number of singers. According to this term of reference the tribal folk-songs fall under three heads:

- **Groups Songs:** These are generally sung by a group of dancers or a group of tribal people working together in the fields generally at the time of sowing and harvesting.
- **Couple Songs:** The second category of folk-songs is sung by the couple singers who constitute a very small part of the tribal India.
- **Single Songs:** The third category is represented by a single singer who is common in the tribal population.

The folk dances in terms of formation can be classified into the followings:

- **Group Dances:** In group dances, the dancers are linked to one another in certain manner by hands, by the waist or shoulders. The best known are those in the shape of a circle or column.
- **Couple Dances:** These can evolve in column formation or freely, without any special formation. Generally speaking, the revolving in couples prevails the girls make pirouettes and men virtuosity movements.
- **Sacred Dance:** The sacred encircling dance is perhaps the most common among the tribals. The object which it is performed is a scared one, an idol, an altar, a sacrificial victim, a holy tree, or a well. But the more usual ritual for

making the corps grow is the sacred dance round a tree.

A number of dances of the forest tribes are ritualistic in origin, devised mainly for the proportion of hill gods, and ancestors spirits. The gods held in reverence range from stones, trees, crests of hills, etc.

Funeral Dance: Dancing at the death of a person is prevalent among several tribes. It is a common among many tribal groups which is part of the ritual. It is believed among the tribal groups that this dance is a way to help the departed soul to reach to the land of the ancestors.

Karbi folk tales form an important genre. This oral art telling according to Stith Thompson, is far older than history, and it is not bounded by one continent or one civilization. Stories may differ from in subject from place to place, the condition and purposes of tale telling may change as we move from land to land or from century to century, and yet everywhere it ministers to the same basic social and individual needs.

Different social ceremonies associated with folk musical dance

Chong Kedam: The dance is performed during Chomkan. In this dance it is performed using swords and shields in hands of the dancers and performed by the males only which performed with the beat of the Chengpi (Big Drum). In the Chong Kedam two types of dances are performed Chongso kedam and Chongpi kedam. This dance is performed in memory of the great brave sacrificed or Martyr for the noble cause of the Karbi society. Through this dance it is a call for the Youth to be brave, bold and fight all the enemies to protect themselves as like their ancestors. This dance is performed on beat of the drum played by the Duhuidi (expert drummer). No song is associated in this dance.

Nimso Kerung: It is a dance for the departed soul during the ceremony of Chomkan. A group of boys and girls with songs, drums, Moritongpo (Flute made of Buffalo's horn) and Mori Jangkek (made of Bamboo) dance with the beat of the drum. In this dance only the boys are allow to sing. This dance is commemorated to Jili and Larta, the two ladies the first to dance in Karbi society. This dance is a lesson giving dance to the youth specially to the Karbi women to take part with the Karbi men in every walk of life joining hand in hand in love for the future generation. As the dance itself is dance by crossing the hands of both the boys and girls form behind of each other.

For this dance the male wear a Karbi traditional jacket, Pa-selang wore below the waist called as Ri-kong and Po-ho around his head. The female wear Pini, Pe-kok, Wam-Kok, Rup-Jaisai (Necklace made of pennies).

Banjar Keku: It is also a dance performed in the social death ceremony. This dance is performed by male during Chomkan ceremony rehearsing the art of making house from starting to end so as to impact education to the next generation. A part from being the head of the family in future every individual in the society must have the knowledge of making a house and protect the family and the society from the natural calamities either no song and music is followed in this dance. The dancers dance in voices dancing around the bamboo pole with small bamboo pieces. The name of Haija Bey (Thireng Vangreng) who introduced Chomkan in the Karbi society is taken in the process.

Botor Keku: According to him Botor Keku is the religious festival associated to agriculture. This religious festival is conducted for good season and for the good harvest all through the year. This religious festival for agriculture season is conducted in the month of March. In this religious festival offering and chanting are made to 'Ha-i' who is regarded as the 'Goddess of Season'.

Hacha Kekan: It is celebrated when the annual harvest is broaded to home. The ritual involves the ritual of singing the song 'Rongkim Alun' (song of origin of the first Karbi village).

There are two types of Hacha kekan, one celebrated in the month of between December and January on the other hand second one is celebrated in the month of September. The dance celebrated in the month of between December and January is known as Sokroi kekan (Dancing while picking the grains) and the other celebrated in September is called Hen-up ahi ke-en kekan (Dancing while carrying the Bamboo shoot). It is a ritual harvesting of bamboo-shoot by the entire village community. In this ritual a huge bamboo basket (Hen-up ahi) is crafted and erected in the middle of a village where the bamboo-shoot chopped into smaller pieces, are collected. A pig is sacrificed, cleaned and shoved into the basket. This is left for until the next festival of Hen-up ahi kekan is celebrated. The bamboo-shoot and the meat are distributed to the village heads, 'HABE' provincial governor etc. a ritual fest follows soon after. Ritual songs and dances are performed by young girls and boys.

Hence, Hacha kekan is the festival of the farmers in which they praise and thank the god almighty and try to share their happiness among themselves after getting wed rewarded for their hard labour.

The young men wear the shirt called 'Choi-hongthor' and loin cloth called Rikong. Girl generally use pini kamplak, a piece of cloth tied around the waist like a sarong. A piece of artistic cloth is used by them to cover the upper part of their body and it is called Pekok. An intricately women waist with artistic motif called Vamkok is also used by carry woman and girl.

Chomkan: Karbi people celebrate Chomkan with a great festival mood. It is also known as Chomkan or Sokepamparin, which means dancing for the departed souls. There is difference of opinions among the scholars regarding the origin of the ritual. According to Bareleng Timung, in the groups dances organized by the lamas of Tibet, and still perform the very group dance in the similar fashion in the form of Chomkan. Therefore, it becomes evident that Karbis are continuing the dance, which they used to perform while they were still in Tibet. But according to Samson Sing Teron as Chomkan seems to be influenced by the Khasi dance style, he concludes that Karbis must have had borrowed this style from the Khasi. But this motion also appears to be wrong. The very word Chona means region of yama, the dead god and Kan means dance, so it should be taken as a dance from dedicated to the departed souls. It is said that earlier Chomkan was celebrated within the 7-8 years after the death of some individuals. But these days it's beyond the reach of each and every Karbi on account of its being very costly.

Date of funeral ceremony is decided after proper consultation with the relatives, village headman and other senior member of the village. Arrangements are made to make everyone informed about the date of the ceremony. Drum is beaten at the home of the family performing the ceremony every day at a fixed time, along with that some people also practice dance and singing as a part of the preparation of the ceremony to be observed.

There are three types of Chomkans to be celebrated namely-Kanphla-phla, Langtuk kekan and Harne. All the three types are observed three days each, three or four people are mainly entrusted with the proper conduction of this ceremony, viz. Charhepi (singing women) Uchehi (Lady who arranges the clothes and prepous food for the people whom this ceremony is meant), Ulrikabi (maid who used to serve the dead) and chief drum beater-Dihuidi. Singing women plays significance role in the ceremony and while singing the songs changes the theme as the rituals proceeds. It is said that, the singing women shows the way to the souls of the dead for whom funeral ceremony is meant and hence also known as the path shower towards the original abode of the dead spirits.

Chomkan can be observed in Karbi society, Karbis believe that, after death, soul are supported to reach the heaven but until the funeral ceremony is performed their soul cannot enter the by villages and the cities. It is also believed that without funeral ceremony spirits wonder here and there. Hence Chomkan is performed in order to facilitate the entry of the spirit in their original village and city (heaven and for their peace).

Musical Implements:

Cheng: It is the main folk musical instrument of the Karbis. It is made from the Phang tree (Gmelina arborea tree). It is crafted hollow in the inside living both side of the timber open so the sound wave could vibrate inside to produce sound. One end of the whole is made bigger in circumference and the other end smaller than the other in circumference. Then the skin of the Cow, Deer, Stag, Elephant, Rhino and Wild Buffalo as leather is used to cover both the whole of the drum where the Dihuidi (expert drummer) hit it with the 'CHENGBE' (the drum stick).

The Chengpi is the main musical instrument which is used to perform the Chomkan ritual with the Chengpi the ritual cannot be conducted.

Chengso: It is made of copper and it produce a very sharp sound. It is just smaller a version of a cymbal used in the drum of western culture. The Chengso is played with the beat of the Chengpi. It is played during the Chomkan and it is said that it should be played by the female only. Its shape is just like of a ladies hat with the middle portion of the curved out and a hollow in the inside. To pieces of the Chengso is taken together always. It is played by striking to each other which produce a sharp vibrating sound of a metal. It is played by a female during the ritualistic performance of the Chomkan.

Chengburup: It is made from the tress like Phang, Bengvoi, Phong, Hokon and Hai. Since the ancient time the Chengburup had been the musical instrument associated with the youth. It is used mainly during the time when the youth go for work in groups to help a member of the community in time of cultivation or harvesting the crops or preparation of house etc. It is also played in the time of some social meet of the Habe-haren, Dili-pator, etc. The Chengburup is the smaller class of drum. Its shape somewhat that of a trophy cup with a bigger hitting surface and cylindrical at the bottom. The hitting surface is made of the skin of cow, goat, deer, stag etc. The drum stick can be made of bamboo by folding one end make it a 'J' shape and two drum sticks are used for playing it.

Chengkumbang: It is a drum made from Kaipho or Chek (Bamboo). This particular drum Chengkumbang is usually played during Ritnongchingdi (Festival of Cultivation), Hacha Kekan, Kamme and Lengpum Sokchon. The Chengkumbang cannot produce sounds, it can produces only one sound. The Chengkumbang is made by taking a piece of bamboo is shield from both end and the upper layer of the bamboo is peel very thinly making a kind of a string but not taking it out completely from the bamboo. Here both side of layer of bamboo must remain attached. Just like another layer is taken from the same bamboo making two layer of string keeping it in a parallel distance from one another. Then a piece of wood is use to make the string tighten by placing the piece of wood beneath the string. As a result of the tension produce by piece of wood the sound of the Chengkumbang can be

raise or lower the pitch. As the Chengkumbang produces no different sound it is mainly used to give timing to song and dances only.

Chenglangpong: It is also made from Kaipho and Tereng (bamboo). Chenglangpong is prepared by taking a bigger size of bamboo and cut it into like a pipe living both ends open. Again in the same way another bamboo is cut like a pipe living both ends open but keep shorter in length than the other. Chenglangpong is played by holding both the bamboo pipe in vertical position hitting both the bamboo pipes on to the ground which produce sound. Just like the Chengkumbang it has only one sound no different sound can be produce. It is played along with the beat of the or timing of the song or dance.

Mori Tongpo: It is a combination of two flute joined together. One flute like the usual flute used by everyone but the other part, the front part is different. The front part is made of hard timber in the shape of cone with the face circumference bigger in size and gradually decreasing the size to match the size of the other flute to join properly. The wood hollow on the inside and joined by another flute the blowing part made from Inghin or Kaipho (bamboo). Another version of Moritongpo is made from the horn of the buffalo in place of the wooded pipe like the earlier. Here instead of the hollow wood pipe the horn of a buffalo or wild buffalo is used.

Mori Jangkek: It is also another form of flute prepared from a wood which look like the horn of a wild Buffalo. It is curved out of wood making output side of the flute bigger in circumference and through with the played smaller and is made from bamboo which is joined together. It is played during the time of Chomkan, Nimso Kerung and during singing of Jili alun and Bong-oi alun (love song).

Pongsi: It is just like the other flute played by musicians. It is made up of the bottom part of bamboo. An Inghin or Tereng which is selected for preparation of it. It can be played with any songs with Ka-charhe, kapacha alun, Bong-oi alun, Bor-et alun etc.

Kum Li-Eng: Kum li-eng traditional Karbi one stringed violin. It is made from a bottle gourd. The bottle gourd is dried by taking out all its inner muscle then the neck of the bottle cut in a round shape keep only the bottom portion. A bar made from bamboo is inserted through the gourd and the hollow mouth of the bottle gourd is covered by a thin layer of wood. Then a string made from the upper layer of skin of Mengsori or Jinsikong which made like a rope. This rope made from Mengsori or Jinsikong is tied one on the top of the bar and one end to the bottom of the bar then a thin layer of wood is place on top of the bottle gourd just near to the bottom part of the bar to act like a bridge just like the western violin this

give the string of the violin required tension to produced the correct tune. It is played with a bow like instrument holding with right hand and placing the left hand finger onto the string just like playing the western violin.

Kum Dengdong: Kum dengdong traditional Karbi two string violin. It is made soft and lesser weight tree. The bar and bale of the violin all made from one piece of wood. The bottom part of the violin is totally made hollow and the skin of cow, deer, buffalo etc is used cover hollow part of the violin. The strings made from Mengsori or Jinsikong is taken tied one end to a nod made from wood inserted to neck just like that of a guitar and one end of the string is tied at the bottom part of the bar. A bridge made from a thin layer of bamboo or wood is used to give a little raise to the strings. It is played with right hand finger and placing the left hand finger on top of the string on the bar.

It can be noted that, the folk cultural performances and ethnic festivals of the Karbis have a deep symbolic interpretation. It reflects their deep social solidarity, community sentiment and their strong bondage with the surrounding nature. The meaning of most their folk songs mostly mean the beauty of nature, resemblance of different natural resources in their daily life and cultural practices.

General Observation

Society is the complex network of social relationships. The series of interactions between person to person lead towards a cumulative approach for the achievements of better ways of livelihood as well as development. The human society is keenly interwoven with the cultural aspects. Culture helps to accumulate the daily livelihood requirements and means of survival in fashioned aggregate. The norms, values and customs related with the cultural aspects control the human life and their social behaviour. Every society is exposed to an environmental milieu and it is the main resource from where the concerned individuals can accumulate their requirements. Culture controls the social behaviour of human beings and it is keenly related with the environment. The ample production of environment control the economic backbone, material needs of the society in diversified ways and it is also related with their rituals and customs. It is well observed among the tribal in various ways. The tribal society worship the nature as their mother and the impact of environment on their social, economic and cultural life can be noticed from several dimensions. Being closely surrounded in the lap of nature the tribals' cultural performances like songs, dances, proverbs, riddles are the reflection of their interaction with the environment. Folk cultural traditions are the note of their social solidarity and community consensus. The folk tunes reflect the beauty of nature and simultaneously it is the prayer for the prosperity

and welfare of the entire society. Being closely related with nature and environment their folk cultural practices are not only for recreation, there are also the devotion and obedience to the nature. In this way they offer their prayer to nature for protecting their property and wealth as well as to provide the continuous resource of natural products to them. Folk culture does not imply only the artistic activities and musical performances of the tribals; rather it bears a much wider aspect. The folk lyrics denote the collection and accumulation of the natural products to provide the requirements for the entire community members. The folk cultural heritages are keenly related with the knowledge and practices that how the environment can protect the daily livelihood of the tribals and how they should utilize the natural resources in this concern. It prevents them from the wastage of raw materials and to redress environmental degradation as a whole. At present the environmental degradation and sustainable development has become a global emerging issue. In this concern we can apply the knowledge of the tribals for environmental preservation as well as to protect the environment from its gradual degradation and sustain it for our improvement. The tribal concept of environmental preservation may have some regional variation but the key concept lays to the issues of safety and security of the environment all together [10].

The livelihood, culture and economy of the Karbis are intimately related with environmental resources. Naturally for the security of livelihood they used to appease the natural forces to act in benevolence. In their rituals different natural resources were plays the role of material cultural offering. Their folk cultural tradition reflects the beautification of nature and it reflects their cognition of surrounding nature and its cultural assimilation with their livelihood. Their folk festivals reflect the community integrity and it is the method of devotion which is being collectively done by all the community members. Thus it can be summarized that the festivals of the Karbi people reflects their interaction with the nature and it is intimately a part of their cultural cognition. Their aesthetic mind reflects their devotion to the power superior and it is intimately associated with natural forces

and supernatural agencies that are believed to control their sustainability and wellbeing. Thus among them environment, cultural cognition and festivals are intimately associated with one another. They have own symbolic meaning and cultural interpretation in relation to their ethno-ecology.

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