

Chapter VI

6.1 Finding, Conclusion and suggestion:

Origin of the Shumang Leela:

The origin of Shumang Leela is indeed a debatable topic which had been discussed in two ways of interpretation by certain classes of scholars, a group of scholars had stated that “Shumang Leela can be trace back from the Meitei ritual festival the Lai Haraoba (pleasing of God),” Another group of scholar had also given another interpretation about the origin of Shumang Leela, it gives an account on how Shumang Leela was first known as Phagee (fare) Lila and it was performed at the king’s court. The Phagee Lila was first performed at the court of King Chandrakriti (1850-1886), by the court jesters. It was performed to entertain the court, especially the king and his subjects. According to N Ibobu he had stated that Shumang Leela could be observed as Phagee Lila at the initially in his book “Shumang Leela and its prose”.

6.2 Factors in the change of the form:

The structure and the form of Shumang Leela evolve with the transformation of the Meitei society. Initially Shumang Leela was started as a form of entertainment in a very simple ways, there was no proper script of Shumang Leela at the earliest period. The plays were about the historical mythology, religion and belief of the society. Such as the play of Sabitri Satyaban, Moirang Praba plays, Chandradas etc.

The consequences of the post war gave birth to the new form of Shumang Leela in the Manipuri literature, giving a reflection of the social status. The stories were more realistic projecting the issues of the society.

It highlights the conflict situation of the state, the hardship faced by the public due to the armed conflict, atrocities against civilians by the armed forces, crime against

women, corruption, bribery and extortion etc. Example: Eegi Mahao, Ee Thanglaba Kangla Sha. Thajagi Mahing, etc. were some of the renowned plays.

Presently, the approaches of Shumang Leela highlights the evil consequences of the modern society, problems on identity crises, and the influence of western culture and effects of degrading the cultural values, cybercrime, etc. Besides entertaining the audience, Shumang Leela has become a medium in educating and reforming the society.

Though, the state government and NGOs are using this medium in conveying messages and ideas to the people, but still the medium is used for limited purposes and for a few projects. It could be stated that the government still lacks its responsibility in preserving this medium. Most of the themes are developed by the scriptwriters and the troupe in the interest of the public. Through the interviews done to various Shumang Leela artists, it highlights that there is no such scheme or plan made by the government that could help in developing the career of the artist. Even though scholarships are provided to artist by the Central government under the Ministry of Culture, New Delhi, and the State Kala Academy, it is befitted only too few artists while the rest of the artists join Shumang Leela for the love of the art regardless of the money they received for their performance.

Under the Ministry of Culture, New Delhi has provided scholarships to few limited artists.

- Talent Scholarship – 18years
- Young Talent Scholarship – 18 years, 25 years are provided with the amount of Rs 5000 per month for the duration of 2 years.
- Junior Research Fellowship – 25 years, 30 years are provided with the amount of Rs 10,000 per month for the duration of 2 years.
- Senior Research Fellowship – 35 years and above are provided with the amount of Rs 20,000 per month for the duration of 2 years.

The Shumang Leela has provided jobs for almost 300/400 artist, which is a source of income for a livelihood, in an overall year an artist earn almost 50/60 thousand. The source of income is limited in Manipur, due to poor economic status of the state; the problem of unemployment has paved a way for the young talented artist to join Shumang Leela. During the initial period of Shumang Leela the amount charged for a performance fee was little, the performance fee are less as most of the artists belongs to the same locality or community and they have joined the Shumang Leela out of their interest, at some instance they even perform for free. The economic factor of the state has made a change to the form of Shumang Leela.

6.3 Factors that have influenced the change in structure:

There are reasons for the change in the structure of Shumang Leela which is a factor of changing its originality and it is developed due to the evolving changes of the society. The influence of theatrical forms accustoms of the school and individual gave a change in the art form.

Shumang Leela presentation had varied since its origin. During the early period, the props used by the artist are limited. The artist used the stick as a source of elements such as horse, elephant, etc. It was developed since 60's, table, two chairs a flower vase and telephone sword or spear were the elements used as a prop. With the evolution of time the utilization of props is increasing, such as used on guns, mobile phone, etc. There is a huge wave of differences to the journey of Shumang Leela since its early phase, in terms of costume, dialogue and presentation.

Shumang Leela was performed in the courtyard, open space, mandaps or at the bank of the river, but today Shumang Leela could be seen performing with a proper stage set up. Lighting system installed on the stage and microphone are also set up inside the stage hanging from aerial parts of the stage, used of loudspeakers and other musical instrument has grabbed the attention of the viewers.

Used of more sophisticated music and sound instruments and techniques to make the plot more realistic. Duration of the play has also reduced to two hours. Upgrade in makeup more cosmetic is used by the Nupi Sabi, the artist puts their own make up by taking up training courses, workshop to make the artiste look more appropriate for the demanding role. The Shumang Leela association a general body forms by the Shumang Leela scholars and artist in collaboration with Theater Mirror Association, theater artist organized one month workshop to encourage young artists, to educate and explore their talent and reshape their abilities through this workshop.

The costume and the approach of the play show a great influence on western culture and eastern culture in terms of dialogue, the appearance of the artist and the dressing sense. Today the costumes are sponsored by the small scale clothing firms such as Indrani handloom, Ketawn, Ibemhal collection Praba Imporium and various other handloom houses for the promotion.

Shumang Leela has become one of the popular festival in the Manipur society, the song performed by the artist in the play is very fond by the youths, the dialogue used in the play is used by the public in the daily basis. It reflects the emotion of human beings and wins the heart of the public.

6.4 Impact of modern mass media on Shumang Leela:

Shumang Leela as a traditional art form has been able to adapt and evolve with the changing times. With the raging popularity of radio and television, the prospect of Shumang Leela was expanded. The scope of reaching out to people could be achieved; apart from showing a live performance it had gained its popularity through the various modes of the medium.

The All India Radio (AIR) broadcasts the first Shumang Leela program “Heiku Hidongba” in the year 1964 as a part of rural programs scheduled. Since then, it has been aired as a radio program at the weekend 6:45 pm and also on Sangai channel weekdays 12 pm -12:30 pm. The Doordarshan Kendra Imphal had also broadcast the

Shumang Leela on television it is also broadcast by the private cable operators ISTV (Information Service Television) and Impact television daily.

Shumang Leela can also be accessed at our convenient modes through the internet at any globe of the world at any time. The platform of Shumang Leela has been open to various channels through the various modes of modern media through mobile phones, CDs and DVDs. The exposure and its means of gaining popularity have increased rapidly.

6.5 Shumang Leela in present scenario:

Popularity:

Over the ages Shumang Leela has been an integral traditional media, which is very popular among the Meitei society. Till dated, the popularity of this art form has never been compromised by any other modes of entertainment. It still has the charm to grab the attention of the audience, and it can be proved during the Shumang Leela festival. The Shumang Leela festival is usually observed for ten days or a month, and we can find the hall being overcrowded by the audience even in the locality where the performance is shown we can find an audience overcrowded. Popularity of the artist, especially the Nupi Sabi, the womenfolk has even considered them as the fashion icon. The blooming small scale handloom industry promotes their work by giving sponsors to the troupe, through advertisements. The costumes wore by the Nupi Sabi's are in high demand in the market.

Prospect:

Shumang Leela plays are based on the choice of the audience, so for a medium like Shumang Leela to be in the lime time it is very important to grab the attention of the audience. To come up with a theme that could win over the audience emotionally, to adapt to the evolving status of the society without losing its traditional charm. Though there are certain loopholes and drawbacks faced by Shumang Leela due to the stiff competition with other modes of modern media the popularity of Shumang

Leela is not fading and will not be faded, it is familiar to each and every member of the family and has been deeply rooted in our society. The popularity of Shumang Leela has been brought down through the ages. Oja(Teacher) Keirao Rajen, a shumang Leela artist has stated that, “Introduction of producers in the Shumang Leela may lead to industrialization and commercialization of this pure form which has created a different wave to the structure of Shumang Leela. Due to the fund needed by the troupes to maintain its status in the society and to grab the attention of the audience the troupes had to undergo certain hardships especially the fund which is required for the outcome. The Producer provides funding only to the popular troupe, which has lead to the declining of struggling troupes which are not much popular. The struggling troupes are not able to compete with the troupes that have good funding from their producers in terms of presentation, costume, music and sound arrangement.”

Challenges:

Shumang Leela as an art form has always been a challenging by nature, the approach of Shumang Leela shows an interest in the socio political aspects of the state, its early period. It has become a platform of notification to the public. The audience relates to the theme shown in the play perceives it and reacts to it. So it is a very important tool used for connecting people, the public relies upon this medium to highlight the important issues faced by the public. At some point of time the Shumang Leela troupes and artist also faced certain threats from insurgent groups. With the fast and rapid growing digital world, the Shumang Leela and the artists find it challenging for its survival and to mark a place in the society.

6.6 Shumang Leela and viewer’s perception:

- 1) The Shumang Leela viewers prefer to watch the live performance even though it is available through various modes of the medium as they find live performance to be a direct approach.

- 2) The viewers like Shumang Leela as they believed it is a part of the traditional media and they had been exposed to it since childhood by the family.
- 3) The viewer thinks that Shumang Leela can motivate them as the theme of the play is simple to understand and able to convey the message to all ages of people in the society.
- 4) Shumang Leela as an art form or medium can reach out to the audience at the grassroots level through its simple and creative performance without losing its entertainment values and thinks that it is the most effective medium.
- 5) The viewers are able to relate to Shumang Leela easily.
- 6) It can address the important issues of Manipuri society.
- 7) The Shuman Leela is able to gain its popularity despite stiff competition from other modern modes of entertainment.
- 8) Shumang Leela as an art form have successfully highlight the social issues such as family planning, rural development, women empowerment, good over evils and other moral values.
- 9) It is educative and informative.
- 10) Highlights the current trend of fashion.

6.7 Conclusion:

The traditional media are close to the hearts and minds of the people as it is personal and connect to the intimate level. It satisfies the innate need for expression, for moral instruction which is a combination of entertainment. The traditional forms is the preservation of the tradition and culture of the forefather in a disseminate ways. Traditional media can be used to reach people in the process of change and development of the country. Traditional media are still effective in rural environment as number of practices vibrating rural public with changing seasons, nature's moments, social gatherings and family rituals.

When it comes to entertainment in Manipur, Shumang Leela is the best and effective tool with the right component in entertaining the people. It is performed

during the harvesting season where the audience could enjoy their leisure time and forget their hardship. The popularity of Shumang Leela is so much intense that today, it has become a basic part of a program in an occasion such as childbirth, inauguration and in festival seasons, Holi, Lai Haraoba, Durga Puja.

It has been observed that traditional media like Shumang Leela has been an integral part of the society; it has been deeply rooted in the mind of the people through the ages. The family and the society had taken down this art form through generation. Even though there has been a change to the form and structure of Shumang Leela. The society has accepted it and has embraced it as the medium that always highlights the issue of the society. It has become an important tool to express the anxiety and the curiosity of the people. The medium has been grown and transform into a platform which can influence the society, it has given a platform for the youth to expose their talents and earn a livelihood out of it.

The various reasons for the change and structure of Shumang Leela occur due to the stiff competition with other modes of the medium and also with the raging development of modern technology. People started opting for other medium which leads to the rapid make over of Shumang Leela losing its originality. People are busy in their own ways; they are more confined to their work, which isolates them from the society. The form of Shumang Leela change with the changes in the society. In order to maintain its popularity among the audience this traditional media has transformed its perspective, according to the trend of the society. At the initial stage it was performed to entertain the public, there was no proper script, but with due course of time and the transformation of the society, this art form has developed and represent a medium which can reflect the events, activities occurring in the society. The audience owns this art form; the troupes have to perform according to the interest of the public. The audience decides the popularity of the play according to the story. The troupes had to do some research to know the trend of the society so that the script could be established to attract the audience. To cope up with the current trend the

Shumang Leela form has been compromised; today's audience will hardly watch a Shumang Leela play which is based on the historical or mythological events. Also, due to the stiff competition among the troupes, the script is based upon the trend of the society, to attract the audience. Even though mythological play is performed; it does not receive a good feedback from the audience, thus it makes the troupe to opt for the scripts which is related to the contemporary issues.

Yet this traditional media has never loose its popularity and conserved a large space in the heart of the audience. Till date the charm of Shumang Leela exists in the society, it cannot be replaced by any other entertainment. Even though, the Shumang Leela play is easily accessible through television, internet or through mobile sharing from any place at any time, regardless of Shumang Leela season, it never compromised with the live performance audience. The impact of live performance audience is still massive, the audience never gets tired of watching live performance play, as it gives an opportunity to meet and interact with everyone, have a leisure time and exchange conversation of their daily life, the youth takes this opportunity to meet their partners, admirer and have a glance, while the elders and old generation watch the play and relates to the themes and the dialogue delivered in the theme laugh to the comedy made by the comedians and cry along with the artist according to the plot of the play. The children watch the play attentively and later imitate it in their playtime or used the dialogue as some new trend thus making the artist popular with the dialogue. Shumang Leela has been one of the best means of entertainment medium of Manipur and it will be the best entertainment medium. The audience has been supporting this medium for decades and will be supporting it in the future; it is the only platform that has given a huge impact to the Manipur society. It is impossible to replace this medium by any other medium, as it has taken its place in the integral part of the Meitei society.

From the study, it has been found that the prospects of traditional media reflect the lifestyle of the society; it still touches the emotional corner of human being

through its performance. Every folk and traditional medium are always closed to the society and exist within the society. We are bound to folk media in every stage of our life in nature, social gatherings, in family rituals in our culture; it shows the originality of the society in a simple and intimate ways. Traditional media create the link of human emotion in bringing unity, love and harmony, a connection of closeness through the ritual activities. Traditional media show the ethnic identity, creating an emotional association and love of ethnic identity.

The future of Shumang Leela has positive perspectives, as this traditional medium has the ability to adapt itself to various other modern mass media. It has been able to maintain its popularity through ages by giving a positive outcome to the audience. It is simple and easy to understand by any group of audience and also entertain the viewers.

6.8 Suggestion:

1. Shumang Leela is the simplest and easiest medium to be identified by the public. Shumang Leela is well known by all ages, since birth to dead this art form has been part of the circle of life; it nurtures and mold every individual of Manipur. Unfortunately, the originality of Shumang Leela could not be seen in today's world which may bring a slight disturbance to the old traditional ways and values the modes and the belief. In the earlier days the joy of watching live performance has reduced in some instance as it can be observed through various channels. It may have a fear of losing its direct approach to the audience, lack of socialization due to the busy scheduled and less connection. The troupes have performed mythological play, but it failed to attract its popularity among the audience as audience expect to watch play related to the present lifestyle.
2. It is the high time for the State Government to take up firm steps to safeguard this traditional media for the future and generates some certain consideration for the Shumang Leela artist in the policy making so that it can encourage

them and groom for the future prospects since the artists have economically suffered severely as their programs lack sponsors from the commercial organization and has not been commercially paid up by the viewers.

3. The government can promote this art form in conveying messages to the people, creating social awareness campaigns throughout the year, even though there are few campaigns done by the Shumang Leela troupe which has been sponsored by various state department authorities, and had conducted for a short duration of period, in certain selective areas. There are still places in the state where there is no electricity and the modes of communication are still backward, in these certain areas Shumang Leela can be the medium to interact and educate the public.
4. The number of troupes have reduced comparing the earlier period of Shumang Leela, for some troupes, they performed the play only during the Shumang Leela festival due to the tough competition of hiring good and talented artist, it has become more professional the producer and the director of certain troupes, selects the young artist who participates in the Shumang Leela festival and hired them in their troupe, the medium has become a short cut for actors who want to be in lime time in misusing this pure art form, a staircase in gaining name and fame.
5. Promote certain measurements and steps to encourage the artist by providing some benefits and funding to the artists, recognize the noble dedications made by the artists by providing financial support and pensions to the retired artist.
6. State scholarships should be provided for the young and talented artists, so that more aspiring artists could be produced and to encourage them in taking up this art form professionally.
7. This art form could be introduced in the primary levels through schools and colleges as an extra curriculum activity, in this way the traditional form of Shumang Leela could be preserved.
8. Shumang Leela as an art form should have the ability to maintain the balance

between the message and entertainment as it is necessary for the folk media to upgrade more and standardized so that it can help in strengthening the bond of unity, provides opportunity for millions of people to enunciate the codes of social conduct.

9. Shumang Leela has created opportunities for scholars, artists, academician to study on this art form. Various theories had been made through their findings, which has severed a bigger prospect to the Manipuri Society. This art form has encouraged scholar to study the impact of traditional media in the society. It can grab the attention of scholars for further research on the various fields of perspective.