

## **Social Change and Development of Tai-Khampti Tribe in Namsai , Arunachal Pradesh: Role of NGO's towards this Goal.**

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### **Introduction**

Tribal population in India is demarcated in three tribal zones: North Eastern, Central and Southern. The North Eastern zone consists of sub-Himalayan region and mountain ranges of North-Eastern India. This zone is inhabited by tribes like Lepcha, Garo, Khasi, Naga , Tai Khampti and others.

The Tai-Khampti is one of the major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tai-Khampti inhabits in the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh. The word 'Khampti' means 'a land full of gold' (Khamp: gold; ti: place). The Tai-Khampti has a distinct, rich and unparalleled culture heritage which has till now remained unexplored in its totality. The community, as a matter of fact, is greatly orthodox and all its socio-cultural activities are religious. The Khampti offer prayers to Lord Buddha, meaning thereby that they believe in the existence of God, worshipping Lord Buddha whom the Hindus recognize as the 10th incarnation of God. The form of Buddhism practiced by the Khampti may be termed a progressive form of Buddhism.

### **Lifestyle and customs:**

The Tai-khampti people are very strong believers of Theravada(Hinayana) Buddhism. Every house has a prayer room and the families pray every morning and evening with offerings of flower (nam taw yongli) and food (khao tang som). They are peace loving people.

The Tai-Khampti is the only tribe in the state to be known to have their own script which the people call it Tai script (Lik-Tai). They also have varied dwelling systems. Houses of the Tai-Khampti are built on raised floors with thatched roofs. The roofs are constructed so low that the walls remain concealed. Wooden planks are used for flooring and the walls are made of bamboo splices. But with time everything has changes, and in this modern era the style of construction of houses with raised floors and thatched roofs has been replaced by cement and bricks buildings.

The Khampti have a very rich culture, equipped with magnificent arts and craft. Armoury is a part of the life, representing the aura of their skill as warriors. Their weapons include poisoned bamboo spikes (panjis), bow

and arrows, spear, sword and shields. The Khampti also have firearms, resembling ancient flint muskets and horse pistols.

The Tai Khampti people are settled agriculturists. They use the plough (Thai) drawn by a single animal, either an oxen or a buffalo (or even an elephant in the olden days). They practice both jhum and settled agriculture and produce food grains, vegetables and cash crops. Among food grains, coarse varieties of rice, maize, millet and cotton are important products of jhum cultivation. Potatoes have been introduced recently. Among vegetables potatoes, pumpkins, cucumbers and yams are mainly cultivated. Besides this, tobacco, chili, ginger and indigo are occasionally grown.

## Methodology:

The area of the study is mainly Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh. In this study, we have chosen 50 respondents from Namsai, Piyong, Nampong, Lathow, Chongkham circle. Out of 50 respondents, 5 head of the village, 5 prominent leaders and 40 common people are chosen as the respondent for this study by using the purposive sampling method. Both primary and secondary data are used in this study.

## Objective

To examines the social change and development of Tai- Khampti Tribe of Namsai District of Arunachal Pradesh : **Role of NGO's towards this Goal.**

## Role of NGO's

The Khampti tribe is advancing towards modernization and passing through a transitional period at present. NGOs like MahabodhiMoitriMandala, ArunachalBranch, SEWA, Women Welfare Society, TKDS and Arunachal Pali Vidyapith Society, are playing active role in social change and development of **Tai-Khampti Tribe in Namsai , Arunachal Pradesh** specially in terms of building health and political awareness, abolished superstitious belief, social evils, social disorder, providing humanitarian relief, moral values and occupation, Supporting educational and cultural renewal and other developmental activities are tremendous.

A few activities of NGOs are cited as follows -

‘Socio- Academic Counselling of collegian at Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College Namsai’ conducted by SEWA on 16/11/2014.

A **village Task force** formed on 20/06/2015 comprising MAHILA MANDAL of five village namely MANNA, ENTEN,KAICHU, MANHOFI, and ENTHEM ,member from ALL TAI KHAMPTI SINGPHO STUDENTS UNION(ATKSSU),ALL NAMSAI AREA YOUTH ASSOCIATION(ANAYA),SOCIO ECONOMIC WELFARE ASSOCIATION(SEWA),ALL NAMSAI DISTRICT STUDENTS UNION(ANDSU),WOMENS WLFARE SOCIETY NAMSAI(WWS),GBs and PRI members of the area under Namsai district to tackle the prevailing drug menaces in the area and adopted ten point resolutions.

One day programe on ‘Awareness for Disability on Therapeutic intervention’ on 28/4/15 at Namsai town Club and on 29/4/15 at APVS Chongkham conducted by SEWA in collaboration with CRC

Guwahati. 180 people and out of which 85 participant persons with different kind of disability were benefitted in one day long session of the programme on awareness for disability.

SEWA of Namsai has conducted a 15day Badminton coaching of teenage which began on 30th March and ended on 12th April 2018

The various humanitarian activities are being conducted in the Mahabodhi Maitri Mandala, Arunachal Branch, namely establishment of

1. **Mahabodhi Lord Buddha College.**
2. **Mahabodhi Monastic Institute.**
3. **Mahabodhi Maitri Girls Home.**
4. **Mahabodhi Gotami Vihara, Buddhist Monastery of Nuns.**

“Data Dissemination Workshop on Census Data, Census of India 2011” was organized in the Mahabodhi college on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2015, under the supervision of Director of Census Operation, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Shillong.

## **Peace Rally**

To highlight the importance of National Integration of Communal Harmony’ Mahabodhi Maitri Mandala organized a peace rally on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 on the special occasion of Buddha Jayanti.

## **Blood Donation Camp**

Mahabodhi Maitri Mandala, Arunachal Branch organized a one day Blood Donation Camp on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2016. There are 44 persons participated in the camp and donated blood to Blood Bank Civil Hospital, Tinsukia, Assam.

Arunachal Pali Vidyapith Society provides **A Guest House** which attracts hundreds of visitors to this remote area for its hospitality and good accommodation facilities.

Working in the health sector, Arunachal Pali Vidyapith Society has been implementing projects such as **a Mobile Dispensary Unit** for the remote areas in entire Namsai Sub-Division, **a De- Addiction Project** for De- addiction and Rehabilitation of addicts, which beneficiaries are from the entire state of Arunachal

Pradesh and **three Targeted Intervention Pro-jects** at Chongkham, Namsai and Tezu, for prevention and control of **HIV/AIDS**.

### Education

Education is one of the most significant structural elements which not only determines ones' social status but also acts as an instrument of social change. Following this assumption an attempt has been made here to analyse educational level of respondents from Namsai, Piyong, Nampong, Lathow, Chongkham circle. Hypothetically, higher educational level brings about considerable changes in the attitudes and values of the people and also in the social structure by affecting social status, health status, economic and political consciousness and general way of life of people.

Table 1.1

### Distribution of Respondents by Education

Sl. No	Education	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	2	4
2	Up to Middle	21	42
3	9th-10 <sup>th</sup>	10	20
4	Under-graduate and Graduate	11	22
5	Post-graduate	5	10
6	Professional	1	2
	Total	50	

An examination of data (Table 1.1) reveals 4 per cent only are illiterate.. Among the educated, 42 per cent and 20 per cent have middle standard and matriculation qualifications respectively . In comparison to these respondents only 22 per cent have education upto under graduation and graduation and 10 and 2 per cent have post graduation and professional education respectively.

### FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP AMONG THE KHAMPTI TRIBE

In this paper, it is trying to highlight the change in the institution of family, marriage and the nature of prevailing kinship system of Tai Khampti Tribe.

### Family

**Family structure is another expected area of change due to the ongoing development processes. The data on type of respondents family and their parents' family is indicative of change at the inter generational level.**

There has not been sufficient research on changes in the family structure of Tai-Khampti. The changes taking place over a period of time are such that the traditional joint families have been disappearing. During the field

work of researchers have found the most of the educated young boys and girls are finding difficult to adjust in the joint family and force them to establish their own household because of various reasons. Thus, they form nuclear family in order to fulfill their own needs.

The analysis of the present data regarding the family types among the 50 respondents shows that there is a process going on in the formation of nuclear families. However, it may be noted that the family formation from the 50 households do not provide the exact nature of family structure of Tai-Khampti.

Table 1.2

### Types of Family

Sl. No	Family Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Joint Family	5	10
2	Nuclear Family	45	90

Source : Primary

**The data distribution with regard to respondents' type of family (Table 1.2) indicate 90 per cent live in nuclear families and the remaining 10 per cent in the joint families. The sample, therefore, represents two major types of families in the study area. However, the data evince variations when viewed comparatively at micro levels.**

### Marriage

**Marriage practices represent institutionalisation cultural patterns of a group, community or society. Therefore data has been collected regarding marriage practices which shows that traditionally three types of marriage i.e. arranged marriage, marriage by service and marriage by elopement.** In arranged marriage , a man acting as go-between is engaged by the boy's parents to negotiate the marriage. After marriage proposal is finalized, on a mutually agreed day a party of boy's relatives (not the bridegroom) goes to the girl's house to bring home the betrothed girl and a party of girl's relatives also escorts the girl to her would be husband's home. This involves prolonged negotiation in regards to quantum of bride price (Huka), other presents (Faak). Book containing instructions to the girl to follow as a daughter –in-law of the new home (Lik Pang- Lau) is read out at the entrance of the house. Hai-lau(libation of rice beer) is the last item of the ritual. The leader of the girl's party pours rice beer on the hearth of the house invoking the invisible guardian spirit of the house (Fi-nam) to bear witness to the arrival of a new member of the household as daughter-in law.

The marriage by service after mutual agreement to the marriage is reached, the boy formally goes to the house of the girl to stay and work as a household member of the house for a specified period of 3 to 5 years. The boy and the girl are allowed to live as husband and wife. At the end of the period of the couple leaves the house for the boy's home.

In the elopement system the boy stealthily takes away the girl in marriage. Then the boy's parents, as per custom, inform the girl's parents early claiming responsibility of the act of 'theft' by sending a small packet

of sugar with small sum of money(Faak Palaak) through a messenger. In this system a heavier bride price and fine are imposed on the boy's parents for showing disrespect(Tang-aai), committing offence of 'theft' (Laak Sao), breaking the fence and gate (yaata-mong-kang) of the village.. In establishing marital ties the principles of tribal endogamy and clan exogamy are followed in Tai- Kahmpti Society. The Tai-Khampti social organization is patrilineal. Though monogamy is the general rule, polygamy is practiced. The society is divided into some strata based on status difference, which are ascribed. But this is on the wane now.

### **Law of marriage**

1. A person cannot marry to closely relate family member or its own clan and it is treated a Wott (profane) Person committing such thing are socially excluded.
2. A person can divorce his wife or her husband if he/she is not happy with the manner/character of partner and compensation is to be paid to the wife if the society enforce so, divorced wife usually does not have the right to take with her any of their offspring.
3. A man can remarry, if his first wife is barren. In such case, for the second wife usually wife sister is prepared.
4. Man generally prefers to marry maternal uncle/ aunty daughter.
5. Adulteration is strictly prohibited and therefore, if any person commits illicit adulteration he /she or both has to be performed the rite called Pongtam, in which the person are entrusted to fetch the said bucket of sand and water to Kongmu(pagoda) or Kyong, cleaning the premises of Kyong as a punishment which is shameful in such case. If both repeat the act again and want to stay together then, they are not allowed to live in the village or and are not allowed to involve in any social occasion.
6. The bridegroom must pay the bride price in cash which is called Choi (one Choi is equal to Rs.140 ) and some kinds as per demand to the parent or relatives of the bride.

### **Mate selection**

Once an individual knows his broader area or field of eligible, he has to choose the spouse within that prescribed limit. Selection of spouse is largely influenced by various criteria which can be broadly divided into two: (i) Family and (ii) individual. With regard to individual, his age, physical appearance, his health, his economic position, his character, nature etc., are taken into account, whereas with regard to family, consideration is generally given to family size, its socio-economic status, its reputation and kinship linkages. However, it does not mean that all women opt for economically well off husbands.

On the other hand, in some cases, selection of the spouse is made by the parents, and the individuals concerned are consulted for approval. However, the individuals concerned, especially the girls, are at full liberty to reject or approve the proposal, and the parents can not force their decisions upon them.

Table 1.3

**Mate selection**

Sl . No	Mode of acquiring Mate	Frequency
1	Arranged	17
2	Marriage by service	2
3	Marriage by elopement	31
	Total	50

Source : Primary

From the table 1.3 data indicates that the mode of acquiring mate among the respondents of Tai-Khampti Tribe. Of the total married individuals highest number of 31 married individuals falls in the category of Marriage by elopement and lowest is 2 in the category of marriage by service and remaining 17 respondents fall under the category of arranged marriage. According to the respondents, in the past, head of the family used to take decisions for arranging marriages. But at present, either parents after consulting their children or children themselves take decisions for arranging marriages. Moreover people have also started shifting from traditional to modern form of marriages i.e. temple/court marriages. This type of change has been observed among few people of Tai Khampti Tribe.

**Kinship**

Kinship system among Tai Khampti Tribe is based on unilineal descent group in which they trace their descent from father and all the individual belonging to the same ancestry are considered as related to one another. All relatives or kins collectively participate in ritual and other activities. Members of the relatives actively participate in socio-religious functions of their members. It is obligatory on the part of each household belonging to the same lineage to send their representative during such socio-religious functions. They form a close knit cooperative group. At the time of any crises like sickness or death of a member, members of the lineage render help and cooperation. The relationship drawn through father is locally called Chow and through mother is called Mei.

Different kins through father's, mother's father, sister's husbands and so on are presented as in the following :

Different types of Kins

Sl. No

- |                          |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Grand Father's Father | Puling    |
| 2. Grand Father          | Pu-Chow   |
| 3. Father's big Brother  | Ling Chow |
| 4. Father's brother      | Ajao      |
| 5. Father                | Chow      |



6. Mother	Mei
7. Mother's big sister	Peichee
8. Mother's sister	Anchowchee
9. Son –in Law	Luk Khau
10. Daughter in Law	Luk Pau
11. Grand Son	Lan Chai
12. Grand Daughter	Lan Yeng

Source : Primary

The study of kinship terminology is one of the most reliable and authentic parameters for understanding the intrinsic structure of kinship organization in a social group, for it not only reflect various levels of social reality but also manifest a definite socio-cultural ethos of the society concerned. Through kinship individual is taught to recognise the significant groupings in the social structure to which one is born. Thus, the study of kinship term may help to explain the idea underlying the Tai Khampti Tribe in the way of recognising and grouping of kins.

## Conclusion

**The understanding of social change is beyond the capabilities of a single scholar, especially when the time and resources available are highly constrained. But this does not mean no study as such can be undertaken in the area of social change and development of a tribe. This micro study on Social Change and Development of Tai-Khampti Tribe in Namsai , Arunachal Pradesh: Role of NGO's towards this Goal is quite useful in the process of accumulation of knowledge. In this study, the following areas were explored:**

**Firstly**, the Tai-khampti people are very strong believers of Theravada(Hinayana) Buddhism. Every house has a prayer room and the families pray every morning and evening with offerings of flower (nam taw yongli) and food (khao tang som). They are peace loving people.

**Secondly**, NGOs like Mahabodhi Moitri Mandala, Arunachal Branch, SEWA, Women Welfare Society, TKDS and Arunachal Pali Vidyapith Society, are playing active role in social change and development of **Tai-Khampti Tribe in Namsai , Arunachal Pradesh** specially in terms of building health and political awareness, abolished superstitious belief, social evils, social disorder, providing humanitarian relief, moral values and occupation, supporting educational and cultural renewal and other developmental activities are tremendous.

**Third**, The changes taking place over a period of time are such that the traditional joint families have been disappearing. During the field work of researchers have found the most of the educated young boys and girls are finding difficult to adjust in the joint family and force them to establish their own household because of various reasons. Thus, they form nuclear family in order to fulfill their own needs.

**Fourth**, Marriage custom of Tai-Khampti is of 3 types- arranged marriage, marriage by service and marriage by elopement.



**Last but not least**, Kinship system among Tai Khampti Tribe is based on unilineal descent group in which they trace their descent from father and all the individual belonging to the same ancestry are considered as related to one another. All relatives or kins collectively participate in ritual and other activities.

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