

INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF THE MATE TRIBE

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation aimed to study the indigenous traditional education system of the Mate tribe of India. The Mate people resided in few districts of Manipur, India, since time immemorial. They also inhabited some isolated places in the Chin Hills of Myanmar. The Mates have distinct culture, traditions and customs. They also had indigenous traditional education system like that of the modern education system. In the light of this background, an investigation was focused to study the salient features of the indigenous traditional education system of the Mate tribe. The present study also aimed to discuss the type of education and administrative system of the Mate tribe. Attempt was also made to study the curriculum of the traditional education system of the Mate tribe. Further, effort was directed to find out the educational implications and relevance of indigenous traditional education system of the Mates to the modern education system.

KEYWORDS: *Mate Tribe, Indigenous Traditional Education, Type of Education, Educational Implication, Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

The Mates are trans-border tribe of India and Myanmar. In India, majority of them dwelled in Chandel and Churachandpur districts of Manipur. While, in Myanmar a huge population of them dwelled in the Chin Hills and Sagaing Division. The Mates, one of the newly recognized schedule tribe (2012) of India, have a well knitted, unique and exquisite culture, customs, traditions and indigenous Traditional education system. The Mates have a long history of goodwill, peace loving, outward looking and are highly sociable people. Their origin is shrouded with myths and mythologies. The traditional believe amongst the people about their origin that had been handed down from generations to generations in the form of folklore, claimed that the great progenitor of the Mates was Songza, who once lived at Nawipigam (subterranean country) or Khul (cave). Though not proven, Nawipigam, now, is popular believed to be the caves situated somewhere in the southern part of China, but in absence of written records, this theory of their origin, the time and exact location of khul (cave) remained as a legendary folk tale. The folk tale further suggested that the ancestors of the Mates had migrated from Khul to the seven mountain of Burma and from there they returned towards the Chindwin river valley and then to different parts of India.

THIEMZIL/SIAMZIL

Thiemzil or Siamzil stands for the Mate's indigenous traditional educational system. In the present investigation, the term "Thiemzil" will be used to denote the Mate's indigenous traditional educational system. The term Thiemzil had been

used interchangeably with sawmbuk. Technically, the term “Thiemzil” is more comprehensive in connotation and scope. The system of “Thiemzil” had been part and partial of the Mate tribe’s culture. The details of the Mate’s indigenous traditional educational system shall be discussed in the Findings chapter.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The Mates, one of the newly recognized schedule tribe (2012) of India, have a well knitted, unique and exquisite culture, customs, traditions and indigenous Traditional education system. The Mates live in different parts of North East India and in the Chin Hills of Myanmar. As far as in the context of Indian Mates is concerned, majority of them are concentrated in the Chandel and Churachandpur, districts of the State of Manipur. In Manipur, the population of the Mates is roughly estimated to 13571 dwelling in 61 Mate villages and different parts of Manipur. The process of westernization had detrimental impact on the life style, culture, customs and traditions and their indigenous Traditional educational system and so much so culture, customs and traditions and their indigenous educational system is at the verge of extinction. Therefore, in order to preserve the distinct and unique culture, it was felt imperative to undertake a research study to determine the richness, abundance and uniqueness of the Mates’ culture, customs, traditions and most importantly the indigenous traditional educational system which had never been exposed to the world. Further, the investigation shall also attempt to study the educational implications of the Mates’ indigenous traditional educational system and practices. It may be noted that very few research study has been conducted in the proposed field. Hence the investigation is needed and important.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the Indigenous Traditional educational system of the Mate Tribe.
- To study the Nature of the curriculum Indigenous Traditional educational system of the Mate Tribe.
- To find out the types of education and administration of the Indigenous Traditional educational system of the Mate Tribe, and
- To study the various levels of education of the Indigenous Traditional educational system of the Mate Tribe.

METHODOLOGY

Method of the Study

The present study adopted historical method of research. This method was most suitable for achieving the objectives of the study.

Universe of the study

The universe of the study comprised of all the mates, 13571[1], residing in the Mate villages located in the state of Manipur.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive Sampling

In order to obtain pertinent information in connection to the indigenous Traditional educational system of Mates, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to incorporate of 330 adult mates, 165 male and 165 female, who has a great deal of knowledge about indigenous Traditional educational system of the Mates.

Tools of the Study

The tool used for data collection was self-developed questionnaire-cum-interview schedule and was administrated to the sample mentioned above for obtaining pertinent data

Data Collection

On ascertaining the sample of the study and after the essential tools was developed, the tools were administered to the sample mentioned above. After several persuasions, data were obtained through questionnaire-cum-interview schedule from the following number of respondents;

[1] Dr. Jangkhulun Mate, Final Report of UGC Minor Research Project entitled “The Indigenous Traditional Educational System of the Mate Tribe: A Historical Perspective.” Submitted on 2018.

Table 1: Number of Respondents from whom Data were obtained

Adults	
Male	Female
165	165

Thereafter, the investigator proceeded with the analysis of the questionnaire-cum-interview schedule and finally interpreted the qualitative and quantitative data.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The analysis began by categorizing, i.e. classifying data into categories. After categorizing, data were quantified through tabulation and counting by using the computer program called ‘Microsoft Excel’. The statements or items, in the questionnaire cum interview schedule were converted into numerical figures either ‘1’ or ‘0’. The numerical figure ‘1’ was

used to denote the respondent's appropriate answer from among the different option available in the particular item. Whereas, the figure '0' was used to denote those options of the items which the respondents felt inappropriate answer to the items or did not opted. Once the tables were ready, the responses were entered as mentioned earlier. After which, a tally was computed for each items. Through this process, the verbal data (responses to the items of the questionnaires) were converted into numerical data and that the data was interpreted.

MAJOR FINDINGS

In the past, the Mates had traditional indigenous education system of the Mates was known as "Thiemzil" or "Siamzil." However, it was not well coordinated as the modern education system

It was also observed that the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates had a school like that of today, which was known as "Thiemzil-inn" or "Siamzil-inn."

This school system had functioned in few old and big villages and was not wide spread.

The thiemzil-inn was a big hut made of bamboo, wood and thatch. The walls and the floor were made of bamboo chips, the pillars were made of wood columns, the roof was covered with thatch and the thiemzil-inn had a spacious varanda called Thiemzil-inn-mai. The thiemzil-inn was like the community hall of today, and most of the academic activities were conducted inside and in the varanda of the thiemzil-inn.

Prescribed Curriculum: The present study found out that the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates had a prescribed curriculum at various level

Curriculum of the Bultilzil

The core curriculum of traditional indigenous education system of the Mates at this level was to mingle with the seniors and observe them, and participate in all the activities inside the Thiemzil-inn, thiemzil-inn-mai, or in the field and commence learning of preliminary knowledge about farming, growing vegetables, jhum cultivation, arts and craft, weaving, wood works, hunting, etc.

It also included sitting by the seniors and learning various skills.

Further, the curriculum of traditional indigenous education system of the Mates at this level included communication between Hilpu (teacher) and Zilpu (pupil) and informal sharing of knowledge and skills culture and customs, and agriculture as a whole.

Curriculum of Tulzil

The core curriculum at this level was interaction between Hilpu (teacher) and Zilpu (pupil) in all the activities inside the Thiemzil-inn, thiemzil-inn-mai (varanda), or in the field. The Hilpu (teacher) and Zilpu (pupil) actively participate in all the educational (skills development) activities, like vegetables farming, jhum cultivation, arts and craft, weaving, wood

works, hunting, making of traditional rice mill, house making, fence making, etc.

The curriculum also involved learning folktales and folksongs and also traditional method of singing.

The curriculum of traditional indigenous education system of the Mates included discussion among the seniors Zilpu (pupil) and Hilpu (teacher) on matters of traditions, culture and customs, including folktales and folksongs.

The curriculum of traditional indigenous education system of the Mates at this level included direct and on the spot learning. Zilpu (pupil) were taught by the Hilpu (teacher) hunting, jhum cultivation, rice mill construction, basket making, etc.

The curriculum of traditional indigenous education system of the Mates also included learning in natural setting.

Levels of Classes/Levels of Education

The study found out that the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates had two levels of classes, which may be described hereunder;

Lower Level or Class

The lower level or class of the thiemzil was called "Bultilzil," which means preparatory class/entry level.

At this stage, the new Zilpu (pupil) were allowed to mingle with their seniors and they were given the opportunity to observe the various activities of the senior members.

They were also allowed to stay in the dormitories.

Education was compulsory and binding for all young boys and girls.

The only criteria for entry at this level were maturity or puberty.

This level last for a period of 6 months to 24 months depending upon the health and physical growth of the Zilpu (pupil), the pace of his ability to learn basic skills, and social, emotional and intellectual rate of development.

The Hilpu (teacher) is the final authority to decide the eligibility of the Zilpu (pupil) for the next level called "Tulzil."

The Main Level or Class

The next level in the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates was "Tulzil," meaning "main level."

This was the most fundamental level in the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates. At this level, Zilpu (pupil) were taught all the necessary skills and knowledge for successful living in the society as a productive and useful member.

Zilpu (pupil), both sexes, at this level were taught various skill for growing vegetable, jhum cultivation, arts and craft, hunting, culture and traditions, including folktales and folksongs and most importantly, they were taught to live in harmony with the nature and fellow human being.

Female Zilpu (pupil)s were taught how to make threads from cotton and the traditional methods of weaving cloths, they were also taught the traditional techniques for carrying fire woods, and fetching water.

Mastery over the skill was the basis of measurement and evaluation at this level. This means that Zilpu (pupil) at this level must acquire 100% skill for graduation.

Once, the Zilpu (pupil) acquired the skills taught he/she is allowed to venture into a new life of getting married and to bear offspring's.

Type of Education

The study found out that the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates was co-ed in nature, where both boys and girls were taught various skills together in the thiemzil-inn. The thiemzil was administered and managed on the basis of social service and donations.

Proper Educational Administration System

It was found out that the thiemzil-inn (school), wherever it existed had a well-defined and proper educational administration system. The chief was the head of the traditional indigenous education system of the Mates. He had a council which advised Him in educational matters including dispute over curriculum, discipline, and administration. The Hilpu (Hilpu (teacher)) was the implementer of educational programmes and stood at the lowest in the chain of educational administrative structure.

Functions of the Head of Thiemzil-inn: The village Chief was the head of the thiemzil-inn. His functions were limited to providing a land for the thiemzil-inn campus.

Functions of the Council Thiemzil-inn: The council's main role was to advice the Head on matter of thiemzil disputes like curriculum, discipline and administration. His decision was final and binding as there was no provision for further appeal.

Functions of the Hilpu (Hilpu (teacher)): The main role of a Hilpu (teacher) in the Thiemzil-inn is to train the Zilpu (pupil) various skills necessary for survival. He also narrate folktales and taught the traditional folksongs and also taught the methods to sing traditional songs of the Mates. His fundamental duty was to supervise the learning of the Zilpu (pupil). He also coordinated the field works with the help of the elders who are expert in certain skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it may be inferred that the Mates traditional indigenous educational system was operational in the earlier days. It had provided the most effective educating methods or techniques of training for the younger generation of the Mates. Like the present day school, the Mates had schools called "Thiemzil-inn," which had effectively shaped the younger generation for discharging their responsibilities as a pillar of the Mate tribe for many generations. Some of the

characteristics of the thiemzil system which may be introduced into the modern education system. The Mates had long realized the importance of universal as an effective means to sustaining the societal development and prosperity. The two levels of education in the thiemzil system had practical implication in the zilpu (pupil) life. Education of today must have levels or classes which have useful implication to students' life. At all educational level, Zilpu (pupil) must be fit to earn from various field – agriculture, industry, service sectors, and also in various government departments in different ranks or positions. Curriculum must be designed according to local resources and employability of the Zilpu (pupil) in the local circumstances. Educational administration must be designed in the simplest possible manner rather than the complicated and red tape motivated system. Commitment and social service attitude of the leaders, the village chiefs, in the thiemzil system had proved most efficient and conducive for success of the thiemzil system. Such attitude of the leaders must be the basic foundation of modern education for realizing maximum target of education of today. Indigenous methods of education which had proved the test of the time then must be adopted and encouraged besides various attempts to globalize the Indian education system so that the country is provided with adequate local human resources for the survival and sustenance of the nation. The adoption of local languages and dialects must be given impetus as this will improve not only the quantity but also the quality of education. In this respect, Indians had a mad rush for modern English education which has led to exodus of well train professional to advanced country, which is a negligible phenomenon in China, Japan, Germany, and the likes. Politically and culturally, Indians emphasizes unity in diversity, but not in the field of education. Therefore, it imperative that if Indian democracy is to continue in the present ideal conditions, i.e. unity in diversity, so must so, the Indian education system must also be founded on the similar principles.

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