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Mukna: An Indigenous Game of the Manipuri

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Abstract

The Manipuri have fame for their rich cultural heritage. This cultural heritage played a very important role in founding the Manipur kingdom. This presupposes not only the possession of an advanced political culture but also a physical culture. An interesting fact in the physical culture of the Manipuri's in the traditional or indigenous games. The different indigenous games such as Mukna, Khong-Kangjei, Sagol-Kangjei, Lamjel, Hiyang Lamjel, and Kang etc. may be traced in the ancient literary work and other chronicles. According to tradition and myth the origin of Mukna was closely related with the creation of the Manipuris(Meitei). Mukna was one of the oldest forms of wrestling practised by the Manipuris. IT generally regarded as one of the manliest of games has been perhaps with Manipuri from time immemorial. The word Mukna was the corruption of Mukna-Namba the meaning throwing the rival down to the ground with certain techniques. It was the belief of the Manipuries that this Mukna technique was invented by the gods. We try to focus in this paper the one of the oldest Manipuri indigenous game Mukna and its components in the culture of Manipuri.

Key Words:1 Manipuri,2 Indigenous Game,3 Culture,4 Mukna,5 Heritages etc.

Introduction:

The Manipuri have fame for their rich cultural heritage. This cultural heritage played a very important role in founding the Manipur kingdom. In the valley and its horizontal political expansion over hill areas and neighbouring states of Manipur. This presupposes not only the possession of an advanced political culture but also a physical culture. An interesting fact in the physical culture of the Manipuri's in the traditional or indigenous games. The different indigenous games such as Mukna, Khong-Kangjei, Sagol-Kangjei, Lamjel, Hiyang Lamjel, and Kang etc. may be traced in the ancient literary work and other chronicles. According to tradition and myth the origin of Mukna was closely related with the creation of the Manipuris(Meitei).

Mukna was one of the oldest forms of wrestling practised by the Manipuris. IT generally regarded as one of the manliest of games has been perhaps with Manipuri from time immemorial. The word Mukna was the corruption of Mukna-Namba the meaning throwing the rival down to the ground with certain techniques. It was the belief of the Manipurians that this Mukna technique was invented by the gods. We try to focus in this paper the one of the oldest Manipuri indigenous game Mukna and its components in the culture of Manipuri.

Mukna and Its Rules:

In the beginning of this game of Mukna, certain rules were laid down. But many changes in the rules were introduced from time to time. In introducing the changes in the rules, *Laiharouba* played an important role in framing the rules of Mukna which were acceptable to all. In the fight between Pakhangba and Poireiton, Luwang Punshiba brought in certain rules of Mukna (Sanahal, 35-36). The styles, Costumes, grips and Positional Stance of narrowing down the centre of gravity remained the same. In accordance with the positions, various techniques were also developed and judges were appointed.

In *Laiharouba*, Mukna competition between the two teams was held as a regular feature. Each team consisted of seven players, selected its own team players on the basis of their performance in the trial *Yendumnaba*, they were given the positional names as Makok, Mathang, Langjei, Langjei Mathang, Ngamthang, Khomei and Khomdon(Sanahal, 125). However, the Mukna Jatra of the previous year was normally given the position of Makok without any trial. In most of the *Laiharouba*, generally two teams were competed in different names such as Laroi and Singloi, Lok-khunba and Loklenba, Mangsok and Phamen etc. Somtimes Mukna competition among the individuals was also held. Any players coming from outside the village where the *Laiharouba* was being held could participate in the Mukna competition.

Play Field of Mukna:

In the past, Mukna was played in the open fields having the area of nine square lum (3 lum × 3 lum) approximately. But in the later period it was played at kangjeibung.

Dress/ Costume of Mukna:

To play the game Mukna, a special Mukna costume was required. Ningri-Phijet. A long cloth was the common Mukna costume. The cloth was tied around the waist as belt and the groin. The two ends of the cloth were tied at the back in a knot called ' Huitri Lonjan'(Devabrata, 94). The size of the belt was not beyond the grip.

In presence of the royal audiences and in the big festival of *Laiharouba* the costume of Ningkham Samlin and Mana Phee were also worn by the contestants who were entitled to use it. However, in Moirang Harouba Ningkham shamjin was allowed to be used by every contestant.

Judge of Mukna:

Mukna experts or elderly retired Mukna Jatras were appointed as judges to conduct the bout. There were two judges who checked the costumes and any other unwanted things such as long nails, oversized belt and other things which were dangerous to the contestants.

Start of the Bout in Mukna:

When both the contestants were ready for the bout they were brought in the centre of the arena by the judges in the poses that the knees were bending slightly their upper bodies were also bonding forward parallel to the ground at least one and half feet so that trunks became straight along with the hands. Then they exchanged their hands properly to hold the grips. It was known as 'Phee-Sinaba'. Then the judge said 'Houro' with it, the bout was thus started.

Khut Sinaba or exchange of hands of the two contestants was very important part of the Mukna-bouth. It was in this exchange that a contestant always took full advantage of the mistakes made by his rival. This was known as Chakri-Tounaba (excessive defence). This was never encouraged by the Mukna experts and spectators as well. In presence of the king, Chakri-Tounaba was regarded as very improper and it was never done. Their hands were properly exchanged to take a firm hold of the belt properly (Amubi, 52). This was known as Phee-Sinnaba. In the bout, the contestant who attacked first with the technique of Mukna was known as Lou-Houba and the contestant who reacted in the defence of the technique was known as Lou-Okpa.

Techniques of Mukna:

Techniques of the indigenous game of Mukna were invented in Manipur. No doubt, Longkhrou was the first ever technique of Mukna. It was for the first time used by the god Konglouton Louthiba. Nongda Lairen Pakhangba defeated Poireiton in Mukna in defence of Khudong Awangba (Sanahal, 167). All the Mukna techniques were known as Mukna-Lou or Lou. As stated above, there were sixtyfour techniques of Muknabut among them the following technique can be mentioned-

1. Longkhrou (leg entangling throw).
2. Longkhrou-thak-in (Leg entangling with shoulder pushing throw)
3. Kaplak Kotpi (Outer leg reap throw).
4. Khongchep-Haibi (leg sweeping throw).
5. Khuk-u-Theibi (Knee blocking throw).
6. Ning-gong hunba (Hip spring throw).
7. Ning-gong Langba (Hip rolling throw).
8. Chep-Ching (Floating throw).
9. Khudong machete (Lifting up slightly in the air and throw).
10. Khudong Haipu (Lifting up in the air and turning around and throw).
11. Khudong Awangba (Lifting up high in the air and throw).
12. Houdong Lou (Outside leg clip and throw).
13. Khut-ki-Ningong (Hand supporting hip throw).
14. Namei Yanba (Pulling up the go in belt and throw).
15. Heibong Kaba (Stamping toes above the knees and throw).
16. Khut-Shatpa (Hand holding throw).
17. Mukna Lengchup (Shoulder seizing throw).
18. U-nap-lou (Leg blocking throw).
19. Khudong Pung Yan (Body pressing throw).
20. Khongchep Haipu (Orthodox leg sweeping throw).
21. Ngakthi Chappa (Neck holding throw).
22. Shuptek (Body crushing throw).
23. Chaokot (Body side drop).
24. Long chep (Body corner drop).
25. Kok-Changbi (Body inverting throw).
26. Ngak-Leiba (Neck twisting throw).
27. Manung Khongchep (Sweeping legs from inside and throw).
28. Khong Shatpi (Leg removing throw), etc etc. (Sanahal, 198).

Each technique has its own significance. Besides, there were many un-named technique which can practically be used in the Mukna competitions. Leng-Louba, taking the advantageous position inserting

the shoulder in the chest and pirai-ngakpa, resisting of the help of the hands keeping straight were also technically used in Mukna.

Fouls of Mukna:

The uses of fouls were strictly prohibited. The following methods were contrary to the Mukna rules-

1. Holding below the hip or thigh or any other parts of the leg.
2. Attacking the opponent's face with fist, nose with knee.
3. Choking the neck and pulling the hair ,etc.

In the contest no player caught hold of the groin of the rival as the opponent might react to him in the same manner or it might lead to another start if he gave up the grip as a protest. Kicking inside the inner thigh by in –step and holding the neck with hand were permitted.

Time duration of Mukna:

There was no time limit in Mukna. It depended upon the superiority of the contestant to his rival in techniques and strength. In an unusual lengthy bout, the judge or judges only cautioned the contestants. But the system of awarding penalty to any of the constestant was not known in Mukna.

How to win in Mukna:

The contestant, who successfully threw his opponent to the ground was declared winner. In case of falling of the two contestants together with the sides of the bodies on the ground, in the application of Mukna technique, the contest was decided from the position of the legs or in favour of the contestant whose head was above the of his rival. If they fell apart, the contestant who fell with his back on the ground was declared defeated and thus the decision went in favour of the other contestant who fell with his chest on the ground. Sometimes, a contest was decided without any fight if one of the contestants touched the ground with his palm or with his knee. In Manipur, it was a custom among the contestants that the winner pulled the defeated around and encouraged him in his technique of Mukna in the best interest of the sports.

Conclusion:

Beginning of the ancient times the Manipuris inhabiting in the valley of Manipur have fame for their rich cultural heritage. Mukna was one of the oldest forms of wrestling practised by the Manipuris. It came to be recognising as one of the game of the Manipuris since time immemorial. It was under the strict rules of Mukna that Nongda Lairen Pakhangba defeated Ewa Chingkhong Poreiton and occupied the vacant thorn of Manipur. Again Laiharouba help to develop Mukna as a game. Villagers was more attracted to this kind of game , Mukna. Children enjoyed playing Mukna in their leisure limes. In the Manipuri society Mukna training was more or less compulsory for every male member for their self defence and for sports as well.

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