



Role of Education in Preserving and Transmitting the Folk Culture of the Zeme Naga in Assam

Jasmine Riame

Assistant Professor, Hills Degree College, Haflong, Department of Education.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20623494>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 21-05-2026

Published: 10-06-2026

Keywords:

Culture, Education, Folk culture, Preservation, Transmission, The Zeme Naga.

ABSTRACT

The Zeme Naga, an indigenous tribe of Northeast India, possess a rich cultural heritage that has been preserved through generations in the form of oral traditions, folk songs, folktales, myths, legends, customary practices, festivals, dances, and indigenous knowledge systems. These cultural expressions reflect the community's identity, values, and worldview. However, in the contemporary era, these cultural treasures face growing challenges due to modernization, globalization, and cultural homogenization. Therefore, the preservation and transmission of Zeme Naga folk culture have become increasingly important. At the same time, empowering education within the Zeme Naga community is essential for addressing historical disparities, promoting socio-economic development, ensuring educational equity, strengthening cultural identity, and empowering future generations. In this context, the preservation and transmission of Zeme Naga folk culture grounded in human values have emerged as significant concerns in both cultural policy and educational practice. Education is widely recognized as a powerful means of preserving and transmitting culture, facilitating the transfer of traditional knowledge, values, beliefs, and practices from one generation to another. This study explores the role of education in preserving and transmitting the folk culture of the Zeme Nagas in Assam. It examines how educational practices contribute to cultural preservation and cultural continuity of the Zeme Naga folk culture in



Assam. The study emphasizes that education is not only a means of academic development but also a vital instrument for preserving cultural identity and ensuring the continuity of a community's heritage for future generations.

INTRODUCTION: The Zeme Naga are one of the indigenous tribes of Northeast India, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family and the Indo-Mongoloid racial stock. They primarily inhabit the hilly and contiguous regions distributed across three northeastern states of India: the Peren district of Nagaland, the Senapati and Tamenglong districts of Manipur, and the Dima Hasao district (erstwhile North Cachar Hills) of Assam.

The Zeme Naga possess a rich and distinctive cultural heritage that has been preserved and transmitted from generation to generation through oral traditions. Their culture is full of traditional myths and stories, legends, folktales, folk songs, religious hymns, and oral histories. These traditions serve not only as a means of preserving historical memory but also as a foundation for shaping the community's identity and worldview.

The traditional knowledge and folk culture of the Zeme Naga constitute an important part of their cultural identity and heritage. However, rapid socio-economic changes, westernization, and globalization have increasingly influenced many aspects of their traditional way of life, creating new challenges for the continuity of cultural practices. Therefore, the preservation and transmission of Zeme Naga language, folklore, and cultural traditions have become highly significant in contemporary society because safeguarding is not just a responsibility but a necessity for preserving and sustaining cultural tradition of the future generations.

This study seeks to explore the role of education in preserving and transmitting the folk culture of the Zeme Naga in Assam. It aims to examine how educational practices play a major role in cultural transmission and preservation. The study emphasizes that education is not only a means of academic development but also a powerful instrument for preserving cultural identity and ensuring the continuity of a community's heritage for future generations.

CONCEPT OF CULTURE: The term "culture" refers to the set of customs, traditions and values of a society or community. Culture also refers to all the inclusive habits of thinking which shape human behaviour in all its aspects and in all fields of human activity. It is a man-made social organisation



which includes their customs, traditions, values, beliefs, language, knowledge, and patterns of behaviour that are learned and transmitted from one generation to another.

As a socially constructed phenomenon, culture is reflected in various aspects of human life, including language, food habits, clothing, religious practices, artistic expressions, and systems of knowledge. It also includes the material and non-material elements developed by a society over time, such as tools, technology, institutions, norms, and traditions.

In addition to this, culture helps an individuals and communities meet their social, emotional, economic, and spiritual needs. It provides a sense of identity, belonging, and continuity, while also preserving the historical experiences and collective wisdom of a community.

According to Tyler (1871) “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, believe, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

CONCEPT OF FOLK CULTURE: Folk culture refers to the traditional practises, customs of a small often rural community which is expressed through its customs, beliefs, values, practices and way of life. It is formed by local communities and is rooted in ordinary people’s experiences, customs and beliefs that are deeply rooted in the everyday lives of communities. It is often followed by a small homogeneous group of rural residents. It is an authentic culture of ordinary people that are characterised by its close connection to the local environment, history and social values passed down through generations through oral traditions and informal learning. Folk culture comprises the traditional folk music, folk songs, folk tales, storytelling, folk dance and traditional clothing commodity, foods etc. that are passed down from generation to generation through oral traditions, observation, imitation, and informal learning rather than through formal institutions.

As an important component of cultural heritage, folk culture promotes social cohesion, strengthens cultural identity, and ensures continuity between generations. It serves as a repository of collective memory and reflects the relationship between a community and its environment. Therefore, folk culture plays a vital role in preserving the historical legacy, traditions, and worldview of a people while fostering a sense of belonging and cultural continuity.

NEED FOR PRESERVATION AND TRANSMISSION OF FOLK CULTURE: The preservation and transmission of folk culture are essential for maintaining the cultural identity, continuity, and heritage of a society. Folk culture is not merely a record of the past; it is a living repository of collective memories, values, experiences, and traditional knowledge that reflects the unique character of a



community. Preserving folk culture helps individuals remain connected to their roots, fostering a deeper understanding of who they are and where they come from.

Folk culture embodies the traditions, customs, beliefs, languages, arts, and practices that have been nurtured and sustained over generations. The transmission of these cultural elements to younger generations is crucial for ensuring the survival and continuity of a community's heritage. Without conscious efforts to preserve and pass on these traditions, valuable cultural knowledge and indigenous wisdom may gradually disappear in the face of modernization and globalization.

Furthermore, folk culture strengthens social cohesion by creating a shared sense of belonging and collective identity among community members. It serves as a bridge between the past, present, and future, enabling successive generations to appreciate and uphold their cultural legacy. Folk culture also enriches the cultural landscape of society by reflecting the distinct heritage, values, and worldview of a people.

Therefore, the preservation and transmission of folk culture are indispensable for safeguarding cultural diversity, promoting social unity, strengthening community identity, and ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of a society continues to thrive for future generations.

Here are some of the reasons mentioned why preserving and transmitting our folk culture is very much required today –

- To safeguard our cultural identity
- To pass down our folk culture to future generations
- To inculcate moral and social values among the young minds
- To promote social cohesion
- To develop valuable wisdom for modern life
- To protect our folk traditions, maintain cultural diversity
- To Pass down valuable lessons and wisdom to the younger generations about our folk culture
- To keep us rooted and connected with our folk culture and
- To also inspire the future generations to carry the legacy forward.



NEED OF EDUCATION IN PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING THE FOLK CULTURE: In the contemporary era of globalization, rapid social transformation, technological advancement, and increasing cultural interaction have significantly influenced indigenous communities across the world. While these changes have brought numerous opportunities, they have also posed challenges to the continuity of traditional folk cultures. In this context, the preservation and transmission of folk culture have become matters of great importance. Education serves as a vital bridge between traditional knowledge and modern society, making it one of the most effective means for safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage across generations.

Education plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting folk culture by facilitating the transfer of cultural knowledge, values, beliefs, customs, and traditions from one generation to another. Through both formal and informal educational processes, individuals learn about their cultural roots, social norms, ethical values, and community practices, thereby strengthening their cultural identity and sense of belonging. It also enables learners to appreciate the significance of their cultural heritage while developing respect for cultural diversity.

Additionally, education creates awareness among younger generations regarding the importance of preserving folk traditions such as folk songs, folklore, oral histories, dances, crafts, rituals, and indigenous knowledge systems. By incorporating cultural content into educational curricula and community-based learning activities, education encourages active participation in cultural preservation and revitalization efforts.

Another significant contribution of education lies in its role in documentation, research, and dissemination of cultural knowledge. Educational institutions, researchers, and scholars help preserve folk culture through systematic documentation, recording, archiving, and publication of cultural practices and oral traditions. Such efforts ensure that valuable cultural resources remain accessible to present and future generations, reducing the risk of cultural loss and promoting long-term preservation.

Moreover, education equips individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to changing social conditions while maintaining cultural continuity. It enables communities to balance modernization with cultural preservation, ensuring that traditional values and practices remain relevant in contemporary society. Thus, education not only acts as a medium for transmitting cultural heritage but also as a mechanism for fostering cultural resilience and sustainable cultural development.



Thus, education is indispensable for the preservation and transmission of folk culture. It promotes cultural awareness, strengthens cultural identity, facilitates intergenerational knowledge transfer, supports documentation and research, and prepares future generations to safeguard their cultural heritage in an ever-changing world. Through education, folk culture can continue to thrive as a living and dynamic component of society.

NEED OF EDUCATION IN PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE ZEME NAGA IN ASSAM: The preservation of folk culture has emerged as a significant concern in the twenty-first century, particularly among indigenous communities facing the pressures of globalization, modernization, and rapid socio-cultural transformation. The Zeme Naga community, one of the indigenous tribal groups of Northeast India, possesses a rich cultural heritage reflected in its folklore, oral traditions, folk songs, dances, rituals, customary practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. However, the continuity of these cultural expressions is increasingly threatened by changing lifestyles, technological advancements, and shifting social priorities. Consequently, the preservation and transmission of Zeme Naga folk culture have become essential for safeguarding the community's cultural identity and heritage.

One of the major factors necessitating the preservation of Zeme Naga folk culture is the growing influence of global media and Westernized forms of entertainment. The widespread accessibility of digital platforms has transformed patterns of cultural consumption, particularly among younger generations. As a result, traditional forms of cultural engagement such as storytelling, folk performances, and communal rituals are gradually being replaced by modern entertainment media. This shift has reduced the younger generation's exposure to indigenous folklore and cultural practices, thereby weakening the transmission of traditional knowledge across generations.

The phenomenon of rural-to-urban migration further contributes to cultural discontinuity. As individuals migrate to urban centres in pursuit of education, employment, and improved living conditions, they often become detached from their traditional socio-cultural environment. This separation diminishes opportunities for interaction with elders, who have historically functioned as custodians and transmitters of cultural knowledge. Consequently, the intergenerational transfer of folklore, customs, values, and indigenous wisdom becomes increasingly fragmented.

Economic and educational transformations also play a crucial role in the gradual marginalization of folk culture. In contemporary society, greater emphasis is often placed on formal education, professional development, and economic advancement. While these developments contribute positively to individual



and societal progress, they may inadvertently reduce participation in cultural activities and traditional practices. As younger generations prioritize academic and occupational commitments, engagement with folk traditions becomes less frequent, increasing the risk of cultural erosion.

Furthermore, the preservation of Zeme Naga folk culture is challenged by the lack of systematic documentation and institutional support. A substantial portion of the community's cultural heritage continues to exist in oral form, making it highly vulnerable to loss. The absence of comprehensive documentation, research initiatives, and archival efforts limits the preservation of valuable cultural resources. Without adequate recording and scholarly attention, many oral narratives, traditional songs, rituals, and indigenous knowledge systems may disappear over time.

The preservation of Zeme Naga folk culture is therefore essential not only for maintaining cultural continuity but also for strengthening community identity and social cohesion. Folk culture embodies the collective memory, historical experiences, values, and worldview of a community. It serves as a source of cultural pride and provides future generations with a sense of belonging and identity. Moreover, preserving indigenous cultural heritage contributes to cultural diversity and enriches the broader national and global cultural landscape.

In conclusion, the preservation of Zeme Naga folk culture is an urgent necessity in the face of contemporary socio-cultural changes. Addressing the challenges posed by globalization, migration, technological advancement, and inadequate documentation requires coordinated efforts involving educational institutions, researchers, policymakers, community leaders, and cultural organizations. Through systematic preservation, documentation, and intergenerational transmission, the rich cultural heritage of the Zeme Naga community can be safeguarded for future generations, ensuring its continued relevance and vitality in an increasingly interconnected world.

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING THE FOLK CULTURE OF THE ZEME NAGA IN ASSAM: The Zeme Naga community, an indigenous people of Northeast India, is known for its rich cultural heritage and vibrant folk traditions. In the preservation and transmission of this folk culture, education plays a vital role as one of the most effective tools. It not only helps people learn about their cultural roots, values, and traditions but also enables the protection and continuation of their heritage across generations. Education serves as a powerful tool for keeping cultural identity alive while creating awareness among the younger generation about the importance of their folk culture. It is also undeniable that the education system contributes in many ways to promoting, preserving, and sustaining this valuable cultural legacy.



The following discussion elucidates the significant role of education in ensuring the preservation, continuity, and transmission of the rich folk traditions and cultural heritage of the Zeme Nagas in Assam:

- 1. Preservation of Zeme culture and identity:** Education serves as an important instrument in preserving the cultural identity of the Zeme Naga people amid the pressures of rapid modernization by integrating indigenous knowledge, language, and cultural practices into educational processes, which helps in strengthening cultural continuity which enables the community to engage with broader social opportunities.
- 2. Documentation and Preservation of Oral Traditions:** The folk culture of the Zeme Naga is deeply rooted in oral traditions, including folktales, myths, legends, traditional songs, proverbs, and indigenous knowledge systems. Education plays a vital role in documenting these cultural resources through research, publications, and community-based learning initiatives. By transforming oral knowledge into written and digital records, education helps in preserving valuable cultural heritage for future generations.
- 3. Transmission of Traditional Knowledge of the Zeme Naga:** Education plays a significant role in the transmission of the traditional knowledge, customs, rituals, and practices of the Zeme Naga community from one generation to the next, by incorporating cultural elements into the curriculum. The inclusion of a specific subject for the Zeme Naga community in schools further strengthens this process by ensuring that learners are introduced to their language, traditions, values, and folk culture through formal education. In this way, education not only preserves traditional knowledge but also ensures its continuity, relevance, and active transmission within the community.
- 4. Preservation and transmission of culture:** Education plays a crucial role in ensuring the preservation and intergenerational transmission of Zeme Naga folk culture. Through documentation, research, and recordings of folk songs, oral traditions, folktales, rituals, and customary practices, education helps safeguard cultural resources for present and future generations.
- 5. Storytelling and oral tradition:** Storytelling has always remained an important informal educational practice for transmitting folk culture in the Zeme Naga society. Through folktales, songs, myths, and oral narratives, education helps preserve traditional wisdom and strengthens cultural memory among both present and future generations.
- 6. Empowerment of youth:** Education empowers Zeme Naga youth to develop pride in their cultural identity and to become active agents of cultural preservation. By providing them with knowledge, skills, and access to resources, education enables them to participate in cultural documentation, oral



history collection, and the recording of traditional practices, thereby contributing to the revitalization of Zeme Naga heritage.

- 7. Preservation of Zeme Naga culture and identity:** Education serves as a vital instrument in preserving the cultural identity of the Zeme Naga people amid the pressures of modernization and globalization. By integrating indigenous knowledge, language, folktales, and cultural practices into educational processes with the introduction of the Zeme Naga subject in government schools in Assam from Classes 1 to 8, education helps strengthen cultural continuity while also enabling the community to engage with broader social opportunities.
- 8. Language preservation:** Education plays a vital role in preserving the language of the Zeme Naga community in Assam, as language is a carrier of cultural knowledge, identity, and collective memory. With the support of the Assam government, the inclusion of the local language in the education system enables students to learn, read, and write in their native tongue, thereby strengthening linguistic continuity and cultural identity. Such efforts not only safeguard linguistic diversity but also ensure the intergenerational transmission of Zeme Naga cultural heritage.
- 9. Encouragement of cultural activities in schools and colleges:** Educational institutions play a significant role in the preservation and promotion of Zeme Naga folk culture by organizing cultural programmes, festivals, and traditional events in the schools that provide students with opportunities to participate in folk dances, folk songs, indigenous sports, and traditional attire showcases. Such activities help in transforming culture from a subject of study into a lived and practiced experience, that allows students to engage directly with their heritage. These institutional efforts are especially important for the Zeme Nagas because they create a meaningful space for the expression, appreciation, and intergenerational transmission of cultural values, which will strengthen cultural identity and continuity.
- 10. Integration of Zeme Folk Culture into the Curriculum:** Educational institution has played a significant role in preserving and promoting the Zeme folk culture by incorporating elements of Zeme history, folklore, traditional practises, customs, oral traditions and indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. This integration provides students with valuable opportunities to learn about their cultural heritage in a structured and meaningful way, which has also helped them to develop a deeper understanding of their roots, strengthens their sense of cultural identity and foster pride and appreciation for their traditions.
- 11. Preservation and Promotion of the Zeme Language:** Educational institutions plays a significant role in promoting the use of the Zeme language through mother-tongue-based education at the



primary level under the instruction of the New Education Policy 2020, the development of learning materials, and language-learning programmes. These efforts help ensure the continuity of linguistic heritage and facilitate the transmission of cultural values and traditional knowledge.

12. Foster critical thinking and awareness: Education equips the people of Zeme Naga with the skills to critically analyse social and political issues affecting their communities. This empowers the local tribal people to advocate for their rights and participate in decision making processes

13. Community leadership: education helps the Zeme Naga individuals to emerge as leaders and contribute to the development and governance of their communities by inculcating in them the required leadership skills through education.

14. Economic opportunities: with the help of educations and with the establishment of various vocational training and higher education creates opportunities which enables the young Zeme Naga youths to secure better employment opportunities and improve their livelihoods.

CONCLUSION: Ultimately, empowering the Zeme Naga community, particularly in the state of Assam, through education not only preserves their folk culture and identities but also strengthens the broader social societal fabric ensuring a more inclusive diverse and sustainable future. However, for education to fulfil this potential it must be inclusive, culturally sensitive and adapted to the unique needs of Zeme community. Addressing challenges such as accessibility, resource limitations, and curriculum relevance is crucial to ensure that education serves as a means of preserving culture rather than cultural assimilation.

Furthermore, transmission of Culture in addition to preservation of culture is a task of education to maintain the continuity of culture by handing down the existing cultural experience, values, traditions, customs etc. from one generation to another through its various programmes and practises. Without such transmission, the continuity of cultural heritage and the collective progress of society may be significantly hindered.

Education also serves as a powerful tool in the preservation, promotion, and transmission of the folk culture of the Zeme Nagas by safeguarding the traditional knowledge and practices, promotes cultural diversity, preserves cultural artefacts and heritage sites, and supports cultural awareness.

therefore, education serves as a powerful instrument for sustaining the rich cultural legacy of Zeme Naga while equipping them to participate meaningfully in the contemporary world.



REFERENCE:

- Hansda Joseph. (2020), The role of Education in Safeguarding Tribal cultures and identity in the face of Modernization, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, volume 7, 858-861. Retrieved from: <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2003433.pdf>
- Kazi, M. d. M. R (2022), Globalization and folk culture of North-East India: An analytical review, *International Journal of Health Sciences*, Volume 6(S1), 6744-6751. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360266003_Globalization_and_folk_culture_of_North-East_India_An_analytical_review
- M.M Soumya and Arulsamy. S, Role of education in transmitting culture in society, (2020), *ResearchGate*, 1-6, Retrieved from : https://www.researchgate.net/publication/33981271_Role_of_Education_in_Transmitting_Culture_in_Society
- 4. B. Rajesh (2011), EDUCATION, CULTURE AND IDENTITY AMONG THE TRIBES IN NORTH-EAST INDIA, Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319454800_EDUCATION_CULTURE_AND_IDENTITY_AMONG_THE_TRIBES_IN_NORTH-EAST_INDIA
- Internet Sources: India net zone. 2009 (November 14), Kachanagatribe. http://www.indianetzone.com/8/kacha_naga_tribe.html