

Abstract

The thesis “Narratives as Cultural Memory: A Study of the Mao Naga Folk Narratives” deals with the select folk narratives of the Mao Nagas of Manipur. The study looks into how narratives function as cultural memory, and how they play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the past and contribute to constructing the identity of the Mao Nagas. It examines the select folk narratives in prose, poetry, and proverbs, and study them from the perspective of cultural memory.

The Mao Nagas had no written records of their past before the 1920s since they were an oral community. The rich traditions and customs of the community were preserved in the collective memory of the people and passed down orally from generation to generation. Thus, memory studies rely on narratives because they can shape, interpret, and disseminate past knowledge.

Monuments and objects that bear historical importance are vehicles of cultural memory for the Mao Nagas. Through them society remembers their past, affirms their identity and shapes their future. The narratives attached to these reflect the collective worldviews and values of the people. They help in the construction of the collective memory of the people and reinforce shared narratives.

Since the research study is interdisciplinary, it uses memory studies and folklore studies approaches for analysis. The theories of collective memory by Maurice Halbwachs and cultural memory by Jan Assmann are used in particular to examine how narratives in their varied forms mediate the cultural memory that encompasses the collective memory of the Mao Nagas.

This research study comprises five chapters, besides the introduction. The first four chapters deal with the actual theme of the research. Chapter One presents *An Overview of the Mao Naga Narratives*, Chapter Two *Narratives as Cultural Memory*, Chapter Three *Constructing the Mao Naga's Identity through their Folk Narratives*, Chapter Four *Mnemonics Devices in the Mao Naga Folk Narratives* and Chapter Five is the *Conclusion* and it presents the results of the research findings of the aims and objectives and research questions. It also attempts to evaluate the role that narratives continue to play in its preservation, and, at the same time, the danger they face in the fast-changing world. It also proposes suggestions for further research.

Research studies have been done on the Mao Nagas from different perspectives; historical, sociological, anthropological, ethnographical, and philosophical. Very little work has been done on the subject of the Mao Naga folk narratives as cultural memory, and so this research intends to fill that gap. The folk narratives form the cultural fabric of the identity and culture of the Mao Nagas. Therefore, the scope of this research study is to look critically into these folk narratives and study them from the perspective of cultural memory. The study will help in the discovery, critical study and preservation of the Mao Naga narratives. The research study while making a significant contribution to the discipline of memory studies, will make available to a wider readership the rich cultural heritage that is associated with these folk narratives and bring them into the bigger arena of memory and folklore studies.