

Analyzing the Development of Modern Thang Ta Sports in India

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Abstract

Thang-Ta, a traditional martial art from Manipur, India, has evolved significantly into a modern sport. This combat art is also known as Huiyen Langlon. It integrates swordplay, spear techniques, unarmed combat, and spiritual practices. This study explores the development of Thang-Ta into a recognized sport at the national level. For this study researcher collected primary data from TTFI and published books, journal article as secondary data. Key milestones include the establishment of the Thang-Ta Federation of India (TTFI) in 1993, its recognition by the Indian Olympic Association in 2006, and inclusion in the National School Games and Khelo India Youth Games. Data from national championships between 1993 and 2022 highlights a steady rise in participation, increased gender inclusivity, and regional representation. Efforts to codify rules, promote accessibility, and adapt to modern sports frameworks have successfully transitioned Thang-Ta from a heritage martial art to a vibrant competitive sport.

Keywords: Huiyen Langlon, Indian Martial Art, National Championship, Modern Sports.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Thang-Ta is one of the Indian martial arts, which was originated from Manipur, a northeastern state of India. It was popularly known as Huiyen Langlon or some time use as Huiyen Lallong. The word “Huiyen” means war while “Lallong/Langlon” means knowledge of art. The Manipuri people respect “Thang” as mother and “Ta” as father, therefore it is recognized as Thang-Ta. The term “Thang” refers to sword and “Ta” refers to spear. Thang-Ta martial art is the combination of different unique art forms, like Thanglon (art of sword), Ta-ron (art of spear), Sarit Sarak (unarmed combat technique), Mukna (Manipuri wrestling), Thengourol (spiritual art), Ningsha Kangleipak (breathing exercise), Herikonba (Meditation) etc. It was a compulsory education for people of ancient Manipuri kingdom, also known as Kangleipak. Most of the traditional art form of Manipur are directly or indirectly related with this martial art.

Thang-Ta sports is not a new concept. History reveals that, it has been playing from the very beginning in Manipur kingdom, where two brave warriors used to combat openly with strict rules. According to a historical story of Manipur, Kangbisu of Heiren and Chakha Moiremba of Khuman were the competitor. According to their mutual understanding, they measured a distance by their spear handle and took their respective position. In the said combat Moiremba threw the spear at first and make slightly scratch with blood on the body of Heiren Kangbisu. According the rule that was enough to declare the winner. But the

Kangbisu claimed that the injury was occurred by the bite of a leech during the time of cultivation in the morning, not by the spear of Moiremba. In the next turn Kangbisu threw his spear and killed Moiremba. When this news got by the Leima Namul Khambi, wife of Moiremba, that her husband was killed by cheating, she started to search someone who could revenge his husband's death. She went to her brother-in-law Shikhong Ningthouba and finally Ningthouba decided to kill the wicked Kangbisu. Before cut off the head of the loser, the two rivals used to have wine and food together. Generally, the winner used to burn the loser's body, if the loser requested for that. But the Ningthouba took the head of the loser as a trophy (Singh, 2000). This story reveals that, in the ancient Manipur the warriors were used to compete with each other to prove themselves better and superiority, which was a deadly sport. Later on, the weapons were replaced with modified equipment's like 'Cheibi', which was used for the combat during the time of skill test by the Gurus.

In the year 1863 AD, during the rule of Chandrakirti Maharaj (King of Manipur), invited a Master of Martial Art from Panjab as a trainer for himself and to test the martial art skills of the trainer, the king ordered to arranged a demonstration fight with one of the Meitei warriors, namely Paonam Naolsingh (Paona Brajabashi) at the residence of Major Longjamba Lamasingh. In the fight both the players used 'Cheibi' (fighting stick) and 'Chungoi' (Shield). Naolsing was an expert in Thang-Ta martial art. He struck on the wrist of the Panjabi master and the 'Cheibi' was dropped from the hand of the master. As Naolsing, also known as Paona Brajabashi abled to dropped the opponent's weapon, therefore he was declared as the winner (Guneshwar, 2000).

1.1. Purpose of the study:

In this study the researcher will investigate the development of Thang-Ta as a modern sport in all India level. Which may draw a present scenario of this indigenous sports.

1.2. Delimitations of the study:

- Researcher delimited the study in national level Thang-Ta championships since 1993 to 2022.
- The study is delimited within Thang-Ta Federation of India.

2. Methodology:

For the present study the researcher will collect the primary data from Thang-Ta Federation of India, like participation record, medal tally, interview of the members of federation and secondary data like published books, journal publication etc. To check the authenticity and accuracy of the data the researcher used external and internal criticism.

3. Development of Modern Thang-Ta Sport in India:

Modern Thang-Ta sports movement started in the year 1985 by Guru Huidrom Premkumar under the supervision of his Guru Rajkumar Sanahal Singh. In the year 1988, 12th to 15th November first time modern Thang-Ta competition was started in the name of Guru Sanahal (Aminsana) Memorial First State Level Huyel Langlon Championship (After the death of Guru Rajkumar Sanahal Singh on 11th November, 1988), where the players of Manipur took part. It was the first time that, a set of rules and regulation was formed for the Thang-Ta sports. In the year 1991, 6th to 10th January, Guru Sanahal Memorial, First North East India Huyel Langlon Championship was conducted with the participants from North-East region of India. After the North-East India, it was the time for all India level championship. To develop in all India level, a meeting was conducted 21st November, 1993 and formed Thang-Ta Federation of India (TTFI). Since, 1993 every year the Federation conducting National Thang-Ta Championship (**Table – 1**) with the

participants from the different states and union territories of India. 20th December 2006, in the Annual General Body meeting of Indian Olympic Association (Indian Olympic Association, 2007), Thang-Ta Federation of India (TTFI) was recognized. After five years of IOA recognition, in 2011 Thang-Ta Federation of India (TTFI) was recognized by School Game Federation of India and Thang-Ta was included in the National School Games as a medal event. In the Khelo India Youth Games 2020, Assam, organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, Thang-Ta sports was demonstrated and in December 2020, Thang-Ta was included as a medal event of Khelo India Youth Games.

Table – 1: List of National Thang-Ta Championship

| Sl. N | Title of the National Championship | Date & Venue |
|-------|---|--|
| 1. | 1 st National Huyel Langlon (Thang-Ta) Championship 1993 | 21 to 25 November 1993, Manipur. |
| 2. | 2 nd National Huyel Langlon (Thang-Ta) Championship 1995 | 10 to 11 May 1995, New Delhi. |
| 3. | 3 rd National Huyel Langlon (Thang-Ta) Championship 1996 | 8 to 10 December 1996, Manipur. |
| 4. | 4 th National Thang-Ta Championship 1997 | 12 to 15 December 1997, Maharashtra. |
| 5. | 5 th National Thang-Ta Championship 1998 | 22 to 24 December 1998, New Delhi. |
| 6. | 6 th National Thang-Ta Championship 1999 | 25 to 27 December 1999, Haryana. |
| 7. | 7 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2000 | 6 to 8 October 2000, Madhaya Pradesh. |
| 8. | 8 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2001 | 8 to 9 October 2001, New Delhi. |
| 9. | 9 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2002 | 28 to 30 December 2002, Haryana |
| 10. | 10 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2003 | 3 to 5 October 2003, Assam. |
| 11. | 11 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2004 | 29 to 30 December, New Delhi. |
| 12. | 12 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2005 | 28 to 30 December 2005, Gujarat. |
| 13. | 13 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2006 | 23 to 25 December 2006, Goa |
| 14. | 14 th National Thang-Ta Competition 2007 | 21 to 23 October 2007, U.P. |
| 15. | 15 th National Thang-Ta Competition 2008 | 5 to 8 September 2008, Himachal Pradesh. |
| 16. | 16 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2009 | 30 th Sept. to 3 rd October 2009, Rajasthan. |
| 17. | 17 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2010 | 12 to 15 August 2010, Tamil Nadu. |
| 18. | 18 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2011 | 9 to 12 October 2011, Jharkhand. |
| 19. | 19 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2012 | 6 to 9 September 2012, J&K |
| 20. | 20 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2013 | 17 to 20 December 2013, Manipur. |
| 21. | 21 st National Thang-Ta Championship 2015 | 22 to 25 January 2015, Puducherry. |
| 22. | 22 nd National Thang-Ta Championship 2016 | 28 to 31 January 2016, Tamil Nadu. |
| 23. | 23 rd National Thang-Ta Championship 2017 | 26 to 29 January 2017, Telangana. |
| 24. | 24 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2018 | 28 to 30 March 2018, Haryana. |
| 25. | 25 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2018 | 13 to 16 December 2018, Karnataka |

| 2019 and 2020, championship was not conducted due to COVID-19 | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| 26. | 26 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2021 | 27 to 30 March 2021, Manipur. |
| 27. | 27 th National Thang-Ta Championship 2021 | 18 to 21 December 2021, Jammu |
| 28. | 28 th National Junior Thang-Ta Championship 2022. | 1 to 3 December 2022, Manipur. |
| 29. | 28 th National Sub-Junior & Senior Thang-Ta Championship 2022 | 1 to 3 February 2023, Tamil Nadu. |

3.1. Analyzing the Development of Modern Thang-Ta Sports:

Fig. 1: Year Wise Total Number of Participants in National Thang-Ta Championship from 1993 - 2021.

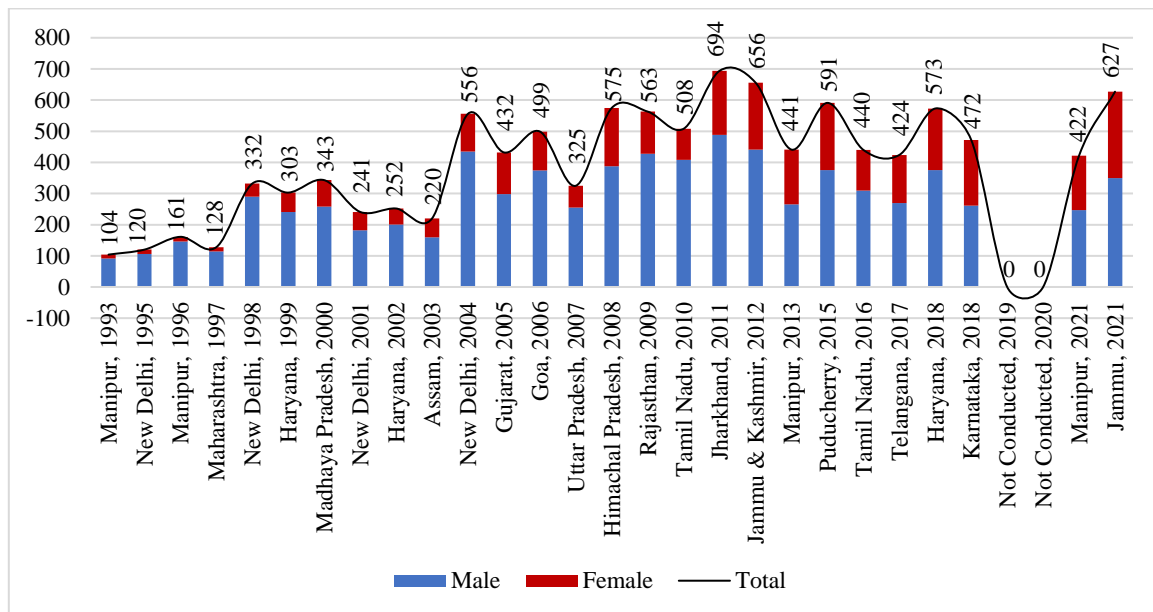
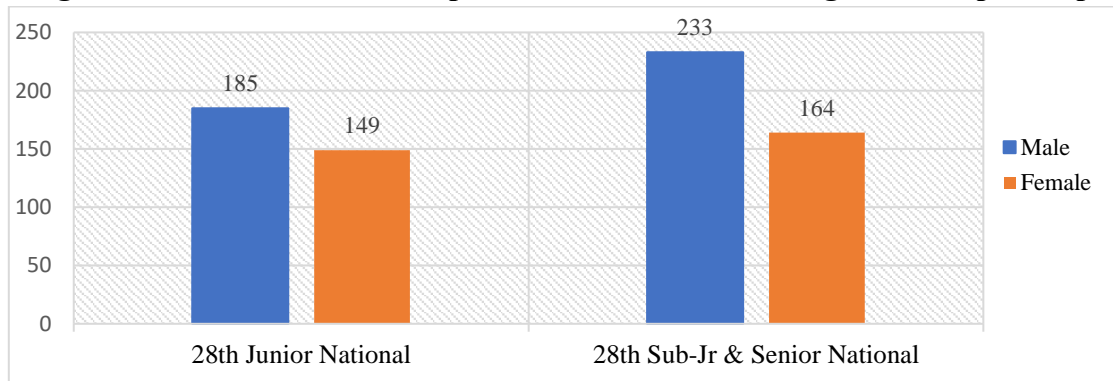


Fig.1, Representing the number participants in the National Thang-Ta Championship from 1993 to 2021. In the year 1993, very a smaller number of participants i.e. 104 numbers of participants were taking part in the National Thang-Ta Championship and it was gradually increasing. It is observed that a large number of participants were increased from 2004 National Thang-Ta Championship held at New Delhi, which is around 152.73% than previous year. This might be due to the impact of pre recognition work of the federation and that resulting the TTFI was recognized by IOA. Up to 2003 the average participants in national championship was around 220 and from 2004 to 2021 the average number of participants in national championship has become around 517. However, there were up and down in number of participations, but in compression to numbers of participation up to 2003, the number of participants is gradually increased from the year 2004. Up to 2003 the average ration of male and female participation was 4.31:1.00 (around 4:1) and from the year 2004 to 2021 it became 2.11:1(around 2:1).

Fig. 2: Total Number of Participants in 28th National Thang-Ta Championship.



After 27th National Thang-Ta Championship 2021, held at Jammu, federation decided to conduct the national championship in two parts and then, the 28th National Junior Thang-Ta Championship 2022, held at Manipur from 1st to 3rd December, 2022 and ratio of the male and female participation is 1.24:1.00 (Around 1:1) and in the 28th National Sub-Junior and Senior National Thang-Ta Championship 2022, held at Tamil Nadu from 1st to 3rd February, 2023 the ratio of male and female participation was 1.42:1.00 (Fig. 2).

4. Conclusion:

The development of Thang-Ta from a traditional martial art of Manipur to a recognized modern sport has been marked by significant milestones. The formation of the Thang-Ta Federation of India (TTFI) in 1993 and subsequent recognition by the Indian Olympic Association in 2006 catalyzed its growth. Integration into the National School Games and Khelo India Youth Games further solidified its presence on the national stage.

The steady rise in participation, particularly post-2004, highlights growing national interest. Efforts to ensure gender inclusivity are evident, with a shift in male-to-female participation ratios from approximately 4:1 in the early years to near parity in recent championships. Division of events into junior, sub-junior, and senior levels has also improved accessibility and focus. Despite challenges like interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, Thang-Ta's journey reflects a successful transition from heritage to modern sport, with increasing visibility and inclusivity nationwide.

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