

# Exploring Ta-Khoushaba: The Spear Techniques of Thang-Ta Martial Art

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## Abstract

Ta-Khoushaba is a traditional spear technique that forms a significant part of the Thang-Ta martial art of Manipur, originating during the reign of King Khagemba (1597-1654), it evolved from the sacred practice of Thengou to make exercises accessible to the general people. Ta-Khoushaba comprises a series of systematic movements and sequences performed with a spear, symbolizing both physical discipline and spiritual realization. It is classified into various types based on regional and stylistic variations as developed by Gurus. Each sequence, ranging from salutation to symbolic combat action embodies deeper philosophical meanings related to self-control, awareness, and moral development. Beyond its cultural and spiritual dimensions, Ta-Khoushaba enhances lower limb strength, coordination, and cardiovascular endurance, offering significant benefits for physical education and sports science. Future research can focus on its physiological, psychological, and biomechanical impacts, positioning Ta-Khoushaba as a bridge between traditional martial arts and holistic human development.

**Keywords:** Ta, Khoushaba, Martial Art, Thang-Ta.

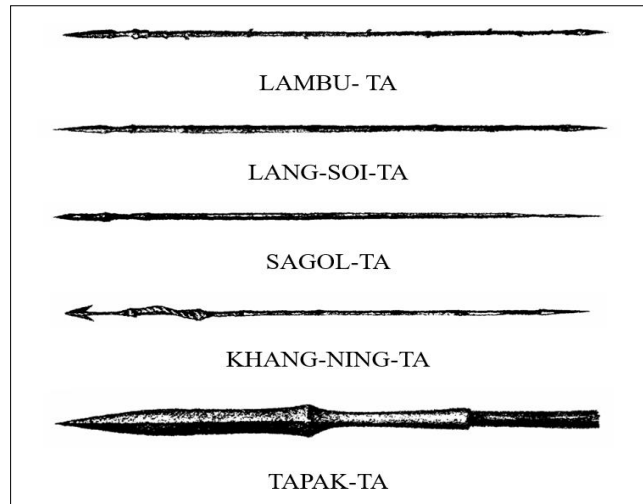
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## INTRODUCTION

Ta-Khoushaba is a part of Thang-Ta Martial Art, which originated from Manipur. The word “Ta” means spear. In ancient Manipur, it was mostly used as a weapon by the people to exile the wild animals and to defend themselves. They used different types of spears, which was varied according to their purpose, like spear for hunting tigers, spear for hunting elephants, and the spear to exile the wild boars. It was also one of the most powerful weapons for the cavalries of the ancient Manipur kingdom. The cavalries used two types of “Ta” (spear), i.e. “Hakthang-Ta” and “Taron- Ta”. Hakthang-Ta is a type of spear, which is longer than other and used to carry by right hand. Taron-Ta is a type of spear, which is short and specially designed for throwing purpose.

Ta-Khoushaba is a group of synchronized exercise or skills with a spear, performed by the Thang-

Ta martial artist. It was evolved during the reign of King Khagemba (1597-1654) of Manipur (Konjengbam Biren Singha, 2016). Earlier the art of Ta-Khousha was did not exist. It was Thengou, which was a sacred practice done by the Thang-Ta Gurus for the welfare of the society. Thengou can be practiced with Thang (Sword) or Ta (Spear). However, it is believed that those Guru practice Thengou with Thang (Sword) cannot practice with Ta (Spear), similarly those Guru who practice Thengou with spear should not practice with sword. Practicing of this Thengou was not allowed for the general people. Because, it was believed that during the time of practicing Thengou, if any mistake is occurred, then that was not good for the whole society. Therefore, King Khagemba was initiated to form the Ta-Khoushaba from Thengou for the general people. It was used for demonstrations during Kowak Tanba Festival.



**Fig. 1: Picture of Some types of Ta (Spear) used by Manipuri Warriors**

**Source:** Singh, L. K. (2000). A Historical Study of the Traditional Manipuri Martial Art (Thang-Ta). Manipur University

#### Classification of Ta-Khoushaba:

Literature says there are nine different types of Ta-Khoushaba i.e. Maram Nungsetpa Khousha, Maram Achouba Khousha, Maram Macha Khousha, Thel Khousha, Kabui Khousha, Tangkhul Khousha, Athou Khousha, Meitei Khousha, Atan Khousha (Singh, 2000). However, Guru Rajkumar Sanahal Guneshwar, who was the founder of Satjal Academy, mentioned only four major types of Ta-Khoushaba in his book “Meitrabakki Thang Tagi Maron,” which are Meitei Khosha, Kabui

Khousha, Tangkhul Khousha, and Maram Khousha. These Ta-Khoushaba are again divided into 25 different types, which are based on the techniques of following Gurus (Masters).

1. Guru Hijam Noutun Singha Laifam Lakpa from Chinga-mathak, Nameirakpam Leikai, Imphal.
2. Tongbram Chaoyaima Singha from Khwairamband, Kangbram Leikai, Imphal.
3. Laishram Mukta Singha from Sagolband, Imphal.

#### Classifications of Ta-Khoushaba by Rajkumar Sanahal Guneshwar Singha

Name of the Khoushaba	S. No	Sub-Division	Name of the Guru
Meitei Khousha	1	Anoi Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	2	Palandabi Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
Kabui Khousha	3	Kabui Khulen Khoushal	Laishram Mukta Singh
	4	Kabui Yengao Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	5	Ngamei Kabui Khoisha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
Tangkhul Khousha	6	Tangkhul Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	7	Tangkhul Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	8	Athou Tangkhul Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	9	Theng Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	10	Khunjao Leichao Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	11	Leitak Khuntak Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	12	Panning Panmang Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
Maram Khousha	13	Maram Macha Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	14	Maram Macha Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	15	Maram Macha Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	16	Maram Achouba Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	17	Maram Achouba Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	18	Maram Achouba Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	19	Maram Nungsheppa Khousha	Hijam Noutun
	20	Maram Nungsheppa Khousha	Tongbram Chaoyaima
	21	Maram Nungshetpa Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	22	Maram Nungchongba Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	23	Nupi Khou (Lukhrabi Khousha)	Laishram Mukta Singh
	24	Then Khousha	Laishram Mukta Singh
	25	Pathet Maring Khousha	Unknown Guru

### Sequences of Ta-Khoushaba:

In each and every Ta-Khoushaba, some important sequences are there, which are already preset and will be followed by the practitioner. The sequences are as follows:

- i. Khuramba (Salutation): The Ta-khoushaba has to start with a salutation. Salutation techniques can differ according to the type of Khoushaba.
- ii. Khong-Nikpa, also known as Uchek-khong Houba (Sacking the legs): Khong- Nikpa is a process to activate the nervous system. So that the artist can perform more effectively.
- iii. Hanba (Return): In this step the artist has to return to the starting point. The technique of “Hanba” can also vary on the types of Khoushaba.
- iv. Hotpa or Khotpa (Scratching the ground): Hotpa or Khotpa means scratching. In this step the artist has to scratch the ground by both their legs alternatively.
- v. Sou-Kaiba (Removing the trap of sharp spikes): “Sou” means a type of trap of sharp and poisonous spikes, specially designed to injure the legs of the enemy, and the word “Kaiba” means removing. The technique of the Sou-Kaiba varies on the types of “Sou” and types of Ta-Khoushaba. There are two types of “Sou” –
  - a. Khuya-Sou – Designed to injure the feet of the enemy.
  - b. Khurai-Sou – Designed to injure the Shin/Shank of the enemy.
- vi. Setpa (Gesture of setting apart): “Setpa” is also known as “Urok Makha Setpa”. In this step, the artist used to jump and stretch the leg.
- vii. Laan-Yengba (Looking around to see whether the enemies are coming or not): The word “Laan” means battle, and “Yengba” means looking. Here the artist used to jump and look in every direction and observe whether the enemies were coming or not.
- viii. Laan-Koiba (encircling the enemy): In Laan-koiba, the artist acts like he is encircling the enemy with a specific jumping movement.
- ix. Sha-Thatpa (Blocking the animal): The word “Sha” means animal, and “Thatpa” means blocking. Sha-Thatpa is a specific movement where the artist acts like he is blocking the animal.
- x. Sha-Thinba (Attacking on the animal): After “Sha-Thatpa,” the artist acts like he is hunting the animal with the spear.
- xi. Khuramba (Last salutation): At the end, the artist must finish the Ta-Khoushaba with the same salutation as at the start.

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Ta-Khoushaba is not just an exercise performed with a spear. The pattern of the exercise reveals that it is also a philosophy of self-realization. At the beginning of the exercise, the artist prays to the God for the welfare of

the society. Then, it begins with activating or stimulating the nervous system, or we can say preparing them for further action. Act of Sou-Kaiba presenting the process of overcoming the barriers in our life. The inner philosophy of Laan-Yengba can be described as observing the enemies inside ourselves. Then, the action of Laan-Koiba is defending against the enemies or evils of ourselves. After that, Sha-Thatpa and Sha-Thinba are the philosophies of controlling the enemy or evils and eliminating those evils from ourselves. At the end, it is completed again by praying to the god.

Apart from this, the exercises of Ta-Khoushaba specially focus on the lower limb. Therefore, specifically, it can help to develop the explosive strength of the lower limb, balance, and coordination. It is also focusing on the breathing exercises that can help to develop cardiovascular endurance also.

### Future Scope:

Ta-Khoushaba, the part of Thang-Ta martial art holds vast scope for future research in multiple domains. Further studies can focus on the scientific validation of its physiological, psychological and biomechanical benefits. Experimental research can be done to find out the effects of Ta-Khoushaba on various motor fitness components and cardiovascular endurance. A comparative study also can be conducted between modern training methods of martial arts and traditional training methods. An ethnographic and cultural studies can explore the historical evolution, symbolic meanings and philosophical dimensions of Ta-Khoushaba within the context of Manipuri heritage. Inclusion of traditional martial arts in the Physical Education and sports can be a right tool for the holistic development and wellness.

### CONCLUSION

Ta-Khoushaba is a vital component of the Thang-Ta martial art of Manipur. It is representing a harmonious blend of physical discipline, spiritual realization, and cultural heritage. Apart from the physical practices, the sequences of Ta-Khoushaba begin with the salutation and other symbolic acts reflecting the philosophical aspect of life. Every movement of this art embodies the principles of balance, awareness, and inner strength, that transforming the practice of this martial art skills into a path of moral and spiritual development.

The physiological perspective of Ta-Khoushaba, the rhythmic and dynamic movement of this art helps to enhance the strength of the lower limb, coordination, and cardiovascular endurance. Apart from this physical enhancement, it also helps to foster concentration, self-control, and emotional balance. Therefore, the art of Ta-Khoushaba is not just a martial art practice, it is also the medium of self-realization. Integrating traditional martial arts in contemporary physical education also promotes and contributes to broader understanding of indigenous knowledge system.

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