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HERITAGE EXPLORER

"LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES"

A Monthly News Bulletin

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India's
contribution
to the rest of
the world

"If I am asked which nation had been advanced in the ancient world in respect of education and culture then I would say it was – **India**"

Max Muller German Indologist

Courtesy : <http://www.slideshare.net/jitendraadhikari/indias-contribution-to-the-world>

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Forest fire - control it or perish

Fire has been a predominant element of human history since time immemorial. Its ability to burn anything that comes in its way gave it an aura of divinity. The singular ability of destruction of anything and everything made it equivalent to a divine destiny maker. The divinity of fire was not only accepted by the primitives but by many of the culturally and educationally advanced populace belonging to different religious spectrum, the most prominent being the Hindus and Zoroastrians. It will not however be correct to assume that other communities and religious groups' world over were averse to bestowing a special place of honour to fire as may be seen from the rituals and traditions practised by many of them. Scientists generally agree that Homo erectus is the first human being to have acquired the ability to master fire about 400,000 years ago. They used to make fire by grinding stones or wood and used it to protect themselves from the cold weather and predators, find their ways in the darkness. Fire also helped our ancestors to move to colder regions and helped them to avoid mold on the grain during its storage, process their food; develop tools and artifacts of daily use. All in all, our ancestors, especially those belonging to tribal communities not only succeeded in controlling fire, but made optimum use of it to serve their purposes and interests, because they understood that being in control of fire is the only way to holistic development of their communities in particular and the humanity in general.

Unfortunately, the scenario today, so far as control of fire is concerned, is completely different. While concentrating only on one area of fire hazard related to the forests of north east, the situation appears to be alarming. Although small and limited forest fires are integral part of the forest ecosystem and are very essential for healthy and proper growth and development of forests, but large and uncontrolled fire badly damages the forest in many ways because of its increased intensity and frequency and also its uncontrollable nature. Forest fire cause changes in

land use and forest cover leading to loss of forests. This is a predominant phenomenon in eight NE states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, where the vegetation structure and composition is fast degrading beyond recovery. Historical data analysis of fire counts in NE Region of our country shows approximately 10,000 fire incidents each year. A Forest Fire Vulnerability Zonation map for north east region of our country prepared on the basis of historical data of forest fire occurrence from 2001 to 2010 focusing on the north east specific unique and varied forest types, topographic conditions and proximity to settlements, reveals the alarming proneness of the forests to fire hazard in this region. The results of the exercise also revealed that the forest fire in this region is more anthropogenic in nature and the dependence of communities on the forest resource has aggravated the fire incidents in this region.

It is high time that we should have a relook into the issue and take up cudgels to eliminate the dangers of forest fire which does not burn the forests alone but also destroys our environment and the eco system which sustains life on our planet earth. We should remember that our Government can only put in place an effective system and provide appropriate infrastructure for the purpose, but it will be our responsibility to run the system efficiently and vigorously. If there is any mismatch between the Government's initiatives and our efforts, the catastrophe is bound to befall us sooner or later. We should also remember that unless we individually take guard, the Government cannot prevent fires initiated by picnickers, grazers, tourists who are prone to throwing burning cigarette butts, hold camp fires and cook food within or near the forest areas.

One last thing that we must not forget is that the God in His benign benevolence has granted fire to our earth alone, the only planet in the universe where fire can burn. In the rest of the universe there is not enough oxygen to help in combustion. We should therefore handle fire with respect and care.

Chief Editor

The People with a Rare Gift of Wisdom: The Unsung Heroes of Nagaland

Dr. Raktim Patar

This article is a tribute to the unsung heroes of the present-day Nagaland who risked their lives for the better future of fellow Naga people and the integration of our nation. On 26th January 2020, I had a god-sent opportunity to witness an event perhaps one of the rare in the history of Nagaland. On that day the Governor of Nagaland Shri. R.N. Ravi dedicated the Durbar Hall of the Raj Bhaban at Kohima in presence of Chief Minister Mr Neiphiu Rio and host of other dignitaries to Dr Imkongliba Ao in recognition of his contribution towards building a peaceful Nagaland and his love for the country. Besides, the governor also handed over the letter of commendation to Dr S.C. Jamir, the former Chief Minister of Nagaland and family members of other 20 visionary Naga leaders who represented the Naga Peoples' Convention to sign the 16th point agreement with the government of India on 16th July 1960 which paved the way for the creation of Nagaland state. It was the first recognition by the government for their profound courage and love for peace and prosperity of fellow Naga people. During the function, I heard the emotional voices of some of the family members of the leaders which made me realise that the real heroes of Nagaland were never given their due recognition rather they were blamed as traitors of Naga people by those who are enjoying the sweet fruits of the sacrifices made by them.

Nagaland came into existence as the 16th state of Indian union on 1st December 1963. It had experienced insurgency and bloodshed for quite a long time before attaining statehood. The painstaking and dangerous journey towards attaining a separate identity within the constitution of India with a unique name and special provision of 371(A) was a history of sacrifices and courage of some patriotic Naga leaders that has been deliberately ignored in the

history of modern Nagaland. In the contemporary history of Northeast India in general and Nagaland, in particular, one can find the names of the militant leaders like British citizen Phizo and others and their unjustified violence for a so-called separate *Nagalim* or Greater Nagaland but the persons who braved the dangers of losing their lives for the cause of the Naga people and stabilising our nation's eastern frontier has never been given due recognition. On the contrary, they were treated with utmost disrespect and sometimes blamed as agents of India for their timely and futuristic decision to settle the Naga issue through debate and discussion and a settlement within the ambit of the Indian constitution.

The British colonisers before leaving India had sowed the seeds of division between the people in the hills and the plains. They infused a sense of bitterness in the hearts of the Naga people against all non-Naga people except the Christian missionaries and used these easy going and hard working Naga tribes to maintain their control over them for fulfilling their ulterior motives. After Indian independence in 1947, the bitterness culminated into a demand for a separate Naga identity and homeland. At this juncture the newly formed communist China offered logistic as well as financial support to wage armed conflict with the Indian government in the hope that they will be able to annex the Naga territory in future. As a result, thousands of people were killed, the villages were destroyed, educational institutions were closed down, the economy plunged to bottomless depth, starvation and famine become a common phenomenon in the life of the Naga people. Poverty and underdevelopment almost pushed the Naga people into primitive age. In the middle of the turmoil and confusion a group of courageous people under the leadership of Dr Imkongliba Ao decided to hold

the first Naga Peoples' Convention to discuss the future of the Naga tribes. Amid the sea of violence and bloodshed they toured the length and breadths of Naga inhabited areas and convinced all the 16 major Naga tribes to send their representative for the convention that was held at Kohima from 22nd to 26th August 1957. In this convention, more than 1735 representative of all the major tribes of the Naga people, particularly Naga hill and Tuensang area of erstwhile North-East Frontier Agency along with 2000 observers from other Naga areas such as Manipur, Burma, actively deliberated the issue for a respectable and peaceful political solution of the Naga problem. Due to the efforts of Dr Imkongliba Ao and leaders like him, the convention resolved to solve the Naga problem through satisfactory political settlement within the union of India and appealed the Naga people to give up the cult of violence for the greater peace and prosperity. It marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Nagaland. With the prompt response from the Indian government, the Naga leaders decided to go ahead with the resolution adopted by the Naga Peoples' Convention and discussed with the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru in September 1957. On the eve of their journey to New Delhi, Dr Ao, a visionary and a profound lover of peace stated that they believed neither in violence nor in the creation of an independent Naga state and what they wanted was a modification into the existing administrative set up so that they could share the fruits of India's independence and develop following their economic, social and religious beliefs. After a fruitful discussion, the government of India decided to amend the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution and created an administrative unit separate from Assam by the name Naga Hills Tuensang Area on 1st December 1957. It was the first milestone in the way of the creation of the autonomous state of Nagaland within the framework of the Indian Union. As a result, 3000 Naga underground rebels came out voluntarily including Phizos son and daughter saying that they were unable to bear the hardships of life in the jungles. While the hostile forces denounced the settlement, the peace-loving Nagas held it as the

dawn of the new era in Nagaland. However, hostilities continued in Nagaland. The rebels continued their plunder, attack and killing of the innocent Nagas.

Nevertheless, the peace-loving Naga organised a second Naga Peoples' Convention in May 1958, as encouraged by the success of the first Naga Peoples' Convention held in August 1957. Despite the protest and threat of the hostile Nagas the second convention held at Ungma village in Mokokchung district from 21st to 23rd May 1958. It was attended by more than 2705 delegates representing various Naga tribes. It reaffirmed the decision taken in the first Naga peoples Convention and expressed their satisfaction over the improved law and order situation in the Naga Hill. The convention strongly condemned all sorts of violence, decoity, theft, intimidation false impersonation and propaganda, the imposition of fines and closing down of schools in certain areas. Further, the convention formed a liaison committee under the leadership of Dr Imkongliba Ao and 7 other members to explore the possibilities for an agreed solution to the Naga problems and to convince and bring the underground Naga into the peace process. It was a horrendous task to contact and convince the politically motivated Naga underground leaders. Nevertheless, they risk their lives and made contact with them in the deep jungles but failed to convince them to fall in line with the Naga Peoples' Convention. Subsequently, a drafting committee was formed which formulated 16 point proposal. The sixteen point proposal envisaged the formation of a new state to be known as Nagaland within the Indian Union comprising the territories hitherto known as the Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA).

The sixteen point proposal was placed before the third Naga Peoples' Convention which met at Mokokchung from 22nd to 26th October 1959. It approved the proposal to be placed before the government of India and requested the underground Nagas to come overground and to give up the path of violence and to participate in the running of the new government of Nagaland. Dr Imkongliba Ao who was instrumental in the drafting of the 16 point

(Contd. to Page 15)

Why I Am A TRC Follower?

Som Kamei

My earliest memories of childhood praying to the Almighty, Haipou Tingkao Ragwang was during Ragwang Jaang Lamei, a family worship and propitiation ritual to Tingkao Ragwang, led by my grand father, Shri Chanaphul Kamei, a man of high moral character and a very religious man who was a lifelong upholder and follower of Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak. All siblings, cousins and family members look forward to this ritual or worship as it meant family time of togetherness but for us children, we especially look forward to the nice chicken broth prepared from the sacrificial chicken meat for dinner. And somehow, the chicken was always more delicious for some reason and the best ever broth we had, it may be because it was blessed by the almighty Himself.

However, as children we did not really understand the concept of 'worship' as such. We simply followed what the elders told us to do and there was never an urge to question further the philosophy, the theology and the religious ideas of the Almighty or Tingkao Ragwang though we vaguely knew that Tingkao Ragwang was the creator of the universe, of man, animals, plants and everything on Earth.

As I grew older, I was sent outside to Delhi for studies as the social and political turmoil in our home state Manipur, was not conducive for peaceful education. Despite economic constraints and limitations, my parents, Prof. Gangmumei Kamei and Mrs Lanshailu Kamei decided to admit me in one of the most prestigious school of the country, Delhi Public school, RK Puram, New Delhi. I am speaking of 1983, a time when not many parents would not even think of sending their children of 11 years beyond Shillong, so obviously I was really scared and apprehensive to see the outside world. My parents' advice was to pray daily to Tingkao Ragwang to bless me with good result and do well in my exam and come out with flying colours. Here I would like to acknowledge my mother who not

only prayed for my success but also reminded me to pray for my health and well being. Now I really think all the little success I have got is due to my parents' prayers and the blessings of our Almighty Tingkao Ragwang.

In the new hostel atmosphere in the School, I was now exposed to children from all parts of India who were followers of different religious background like Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity and even Zoroastrianism from the Parsi community. Here I want to be very clear, there was never a serious discussion on religion of any kind during those school days as DPS was a very secular public school where prayers from all religions were read out during our school assemblies. As I was now exposed to other children from various backgrounds, it was obvious that I was often asked what religion I followed. I always used to answer that I am a follower of traditional Zeliangrong religion and that it had no name as such. Usually this query would lead to further questions on who we worship, what was its philosophy, whether there is Heaven or Hell concept, was it animism or worship of nature. My young mind could not answer all these curious questions but I simply answered all my friends' curiosity that we simply worship Tingkao Ragwang, the King of all Gods. My proud heritage and beliefs allowed me to be confident outside but as I grew up I wanted clarity in the concepts, philosophy and its meaning of Tingkao Ragwang. It may be mentioned that it was a time where no mobile phone or internet existed nor the 'google baba' to ask our questions on anything under the Sun. My only option was to ask my parents whenever we go home for holidays but being children, these things were not a priority in our 'to do' list during our break, so it was never taken up seriously for discussions. However, little discussion with my grandfather and father made it very clear that our religious tradition and practices along with our culture were age-old and has existed since time

immemorial. They always emphasized that it needed to be preserved and protected.

Great stories were shared over our kitchen hearth by my grandparents and my father who were wonderful narrators of folklore. Our childhood was filled with stories about our myths and traditions. According to our mythology, the origin of universe and creation of man started when Tingkao Ragwang willed to create the universe, gods, men and nature. He first created two primeval god and goddess, Didimpu and Didimpui (or Sudimpu and Sudimpui). As per the will of Tingkao Ragwang, they created the sun, the moon, the stars, the water, the wind, fire, the earth and seven layers of the earth, the seven layers of water and seven layers of the sky.

Amongst the many mythical stories on the creation from around the world, the story of the Zeliangrong's myth on creation of man is fascinating and is unique. According to traditional myth, Tingkao Ragwang created two more deities, Dampapu and Dampapui and directed them to create human beings. In their attempts, the first created a fish (Khagak), a frog and a monkey. The Supreme God was not satisfied by these creations, hence the fish was set free into the water, the frog on the land and the monkey was set free into the forests.

The two deities prayed to Tingkao Ragwang for advice and He revealed to them His image to be adopted as a model or prototype of man. The deities created a man and a woman out of the clay of an anthill. But the created man and woman were lifeless and could not move their limbs. They again approached Tingkao Ragwang for solution and advice. The Supreme God breathed soul (Bu) or life force on the head of the bodies and the man and woman became alive. Soul can be only given by Tingkao Ragwang to men. Since the soul came out of Tingkao Ragwang, the soul is presumed to be holy. The Supreme God willed that after death, the soul will go to the land of the death called Taroiram. From there, the good, the uplifted and holy soul will go to Heaven or Tingkao Kaidai or Tingkao Ragwang Kandi. Those who are sinners are believed to be reborn into degenerated life forms known as Thuntadijang. I learnt that in our philosophy, the ultimate goal of the soul is Heaven.

They also told me stories of traditional heroes and heroines like Gairemnang, the great bard of our community, the bravery of Jadonang who sacrificed his life in the process preserving and reforming our religion during the British period and of course, I heard stories about the great exploits of the greatest freedom fighter of North east India, Rani Gaidinliu who not only revolted against the Imperialistic British but also against the Naga undergrounds misled by Missionaries of those times who in their over-zealous zeal to convert our ancient people of Zeliangrong met a stubborn foe in her. They failed to crush her movement and in fact strengthen her resolve to start her reform movement of 'pure' indigenous religion Heraka in Zeliangrong areas of Haflong in Assam and Peren district in Nagaland. Their story was heroic ones and tells a story of sacrifice for the upliftment of our culture and religion. They became my Heroes and the fact that they were all followers of Tingkao Ragwang made me very proud to walk the path of these great souls.

As I joined college and then the university, the desire to find one's identity and culture overtook many of us and we endeavoured to find out more about our traditional practices. For the first time in Delhi University, our traditional festival was organized by students of the Zeliangrong community based there. After overcoming the initial reluctance of students from other religious background it was decided that all will participate as festival was time for rejoicing for all. However to ensure the authenticity and the spirit of our traditional festival it was decided to start with all the traditional rituals and invocation to our Supreme God, Tingkao Ragwang as culture and religion are inseparable for the Zeliangrong people. Culture is the vehicle of religion. The festivals performed by the Zeliangrong people through the ages are the cultural and aesthetic expressions of the worship of the divine. During the festival like Gan-ngai, people worship and pray to Him for welfare of men and bountiful harvests. The festivals are the rejoicing of the community with the prayer to Tingkao Ragwang for His blessings for plenty and welfare. The social and cultural values, the aesthetic and creativity of the people are expressed through dance, songs and music. But being

in Delhi, it was very difficult to replicate a festival in grand manner so it was mostly carried out at VIP residences or hired community Hall with donations from student community and well wishers. The impact was path breaking, many communities started reviving their own festivals whether it is Kut amongst the Mizo-Chin community or Bihu festival of the Assamese. We became proud torch bearers of our culture and religion in a far away land like Delhi. However, we were too busy with our studies and assignments which came with it to seriously ponder on the meaning of life and what it meant to be a follower of Tingkao Ragwang.

Around the same time, in the early 90's and mid-90's, a social and religious awakening of the Zeliangrong was churning in Imphal valley of Manipur, Silchar in Barak valley and parts of Nagaland. My search for identity and meaning of life in the vast multi religious plural cacophonous society was answered by the Historic Conference of April 1994 on Zeliangrong Religion organized at Imphal. The elders of the community and the leaders who attended the conference discussed thoroughly our traditional practices, the pros and cons and the desire to become more organized in the face of the onslaught of the dominating proselytizing religions in our areas. In the end of the conference, the elders and leaders of the community was of the opinion that our religion or traditional practices should be known or named after the Supreme and Almighty God, "Tingkao Ragwang" and the Conference also resolved to name it "Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak"(TRC) vide Resolution No.5 dated 16-04-1994.

This development meant a lot to all the youth of those times like me and it gave me a sense of pride and identity. The now ubiquitous symbol of "Boudaan" was adopted as the official symbol and was allowed to be used in House of Worship (Kalum Kai), as lockets in necklaces, earrings, stickers, posters etc. This symbol or "Boudaan" was now the identifying mark for the TRC followers.

As I learnt more about TRC religion from various literatures by senior writers and activists, I discovered the theology, the philosophy and the cosmological meaning of Tingkao Ragwang worship. This gave

meaning to my young life where all sorts of confusions seems to run in my head as all our students life was about achieving our ambition to become a successful person and face the world and bring pride to ourselves, family and community. To fulfill this purpose in my younger days, I needed a sort of a spiritual guidance to inspire me to overcome all the obstacles I was facing as a struggling student. I knew in my heart that I needed to be close to Him, our supreme guide and protector, our one and the only Haipou Tingkao Ragwang, so I decided to go on a pilgrimage to Bhuban Hills in Eastern Cachar Assam, the traditional abode of Lord Bisnu, the arbiter of men's relation with God.

With this in mind I requested my father to take me to Bhuban Hills and just before the UPSC exam in 1997, I took the pilgrimage to the Bhuban cave. Though I did not feel any spiritual fulfilment during the journey initially, I felt a huge relief after I reached the summit and went into the cave to offer my prayers. I prayed for my success in the biggest exam of my career and I promised to come back to the same place if Tingkao Ragwang granted me my wish. Though this was not approved by my father who pointed out that only through our effort and hard work will our destiny be achieved. I too agreed and prepared for the exam with renewed gusto and energy. I just felt re-energized for the tests ahead and sensed a quiet confidence that I will get through the Exam. My joy knew no bounds when my name was also included in the list of only 620 successful candidates in the Final Result of that year. I thanked our maker and supreme Lord, Haipou Tingkao Ragwang, for his blessings and guidance. I felt His blessing inspired me to work harder for my little success. I also kept my promise to visit the Bhuban Cave for another pilgrimage the next year for thanksgiving for all His Blessings. Maybe my next pilgrimage will be with my children.

Though TRC is an ancient religion, it always existed and functioned at the village levels and it was never a Pan-regional movement prior to the 1994 Conference. Being confined to village levels and its interpretations, it was dependent on the village Shamans, Priests and it slowly became inward looking, superstitious and conservative and was not

adaptive to the modern world. The tradition of “Genna” or “Neihmei” practice for every events and propitiating all types of lower Gods for all sundry reasons made it a very vulnerable targets to attacks from dominating and proselytizing world religions.

Though Apou Jadonang started the reformation of our traditional religious practices and continued under Apei Rani Gaidinliu through the Heraka reform movement, the actual logical transformation into a reformed and modern organized religion was reflected in the TRC movement. Its modern approach by tying up with likeminded ideological groups like the United Religion Initiative (URI) based in USA, Janjati Faith and Culture Protection Forum of NE India and Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram helped in projecting itself in a very positive and confident light. By aligning itself with other similar indigenous groups it became a part of the larger whole and helped in facing the many obstacles by the organized and proselytizing religious groups. For a community group which has only around 25 thousand followers of TRC, it was a very important step for survival in a modern society where no quarters are given easily. It’s a long road ahead but I am indeed proud to be part this journey. It’s a privilege to belong to this small but determined community who continues to hold on to their ancient tradition, heritage and culture. It is significant that many research scholars in India and abroad is now interested in understanding this new reformed movement of an ancient primordial religion and its fight for survival in the horizon of world’s religions.

The reformed religion with modern outlook also attracted the educated elites who started participating in the activities of the TRC. This group forms an important support system as they started contributing monetarily to the TRC organization for all their welfare and religious activities of the movement. Monthly contributions from regular employees started and helped the movement in setting up branches, youth activities, propagation through seminars, talks, camps, printing of hymn books, CDs etc and most importantly the construction of ‘Kalum Kai’ in many villages was started. There are 25 Kalum Kai’s constructed till today and these were all purely built through donations from all its followers rich or poor, big or

small and even from other sympathizers from all religious groups. Many intellectuals from other communities are moved and inspired by the tremendous struggle of our small community to survive in these unforgiving and ruthless times. In fact it’s a miracle and a huge achievement that we have not only survived but thrived under such stressful circumstances.

These activities are important steps in building TRC into a small but significant religious group in North East India and the world. I am very proud and privileged that my family and I could play a small part in all the activities of the TRC. Now that the reformed TRC will be completing 25 years soon, we can say that it has come a long way in its journey to become a well known indigenous and primordial religion of the world. We have come a long way but we are also in the cross road. As I have reached a middle age and more responsibility have fallen in our lap, I want to share some of the wisdom which my late father, Prof. Gangmumei Kamei always reminded continuously to all of us that the followers of TRC have to accept the truth of the following realities:

- i) Tingkao Ragwang as the Supreme God is the beginning and the ultimate goal of human life.
- ii) The Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak (TRC) is the true religion of the Zeliangrong people.
- iii) Tingkao Ragwang Kaidai, or Heaven is the ultimate end of human life.
- iv) Our religion and culture are inseparable foundations of our identity. Culture can flourish only through religion.
- v) There is a great urgency to preserve and protect our religion.

The above narratives I hope have answered the question I asked as the heading of my essay, why I am the follower of TRC?

May Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak continue to thrive for eternity.

KALUM.

(The author is an Indian Postal Service officer and currently posted as the Postmaster General, Assam Circle and the views expressed here are his personal)

Beyond Loktak

Ranga Ranjan Das

I was sitting on a left side window seat of the AirAsia aircraft that was readying for a flight to Imphal. Just forty minutes after the flight took off from the Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi International airport at Borjhar, it was about to land down at Vir Tikendrajit International Airport at Imphal. My destination slowly started becoming visible over the horizon. The sequences of undulating hills are the common scenario of this part of the region and eventually reaching plain valley with crowded house grids. I explored an aerial view of large water body depicting some circular patches. Later on it was informed that it is none but the famous Loktak lake and the pride of Manipur. The round and circular patches emerged due to fishing activities. It was my maiden visit to the state of Manipur- land of Jewels, also referred as Switzerland of India. It was a wonderful opportunity that provided me lots of thought provoking, learning and sharing experiences by participating a *National Seminar on Inter Community Linkages: Socio Cultural Milieu of Manipur* under the aegis of Sanskriti-North Eastern Institute of Cultural Research, Guwahati. Manipur is one of the most important states of this region and also have some geo-strategic importance so far as Act East policy is concerned. It possess a rich socio-cultural heritage exemplified by three different core strain of groups: represented by Meiteis, Naga groups and Mizo-Kuki groups, residing in the valleys by the Meiteis, while rest two groups inhabiting in the nook and corner of the hills, essentially depicting a vibrant waves of indigenous lifestyle and cultural mosaic. Scholars have pointed out many dimensions of the inter community relations among these resident groups at different level and at different context. It varies according to the various socio-political issues and concerns. Accepting an invitation of participating such a seminar had accomplished many dimensions of understandings to listen the voices of the natives and also experience empirical reality of political unit. This narrative basically tries to

explore of a trip to Imphal and experienced gathered through listening views and comments of various scholars and observing closely the entire trip not only as a traveller but also a partial ethnographer. This brief visit to Imphal also provided me an opportunity to experience the border town of Manipur: Moreh and Tamu, another border town of Myanmar. It is therefore, I found 'Beyond Loktak' is suitable for this narrative.

Just landing at the airport, it has been two new experiences: one mild wind makes it more cold than Guwahati and an hour delay due to new system of Inner Line Pass. Illegal infiltration is one of the major problems of the north eastern states, Assam being mostly affected. It has been long pending demand of the people of Manipur that has been recently realized. The state have joined with other north eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland that has been such provision to check inroads of illegal migrants. Various indigenous organizations of states like Assam and Meghalaya is also aspiring for inner line pass system to curve such evil menace. Since, it is new in Manipur, it is yet to be streamlined, however, the concerned authority has been trying their best for smooth functioning. Airport police personal is standing with a simple form where personal details, address, purpose of visit and number of days and boarding with Adhar Number should be provided with a processing fee of Rs 100. It is indeed a wonderful way to find out the new entrant in Manipur as well as to accumulate some extra revenue. The glimpses of Manipur in statistical and pictorial form: its various districts, geography, martyrs, loktak lake, beautiful images of dancing posture of Meitei woman: where Gods start dancing as tagline, provide a great impression to the visitors of the state. The name 'Vir Tikendrajit' carve a wonderful niche in the history of Manipur. RP Athparia was also my co-traveler having the same destination. We had warmly received by Jacob Jose on behalf of the organizers.

Our accommodation was arranged at the venue of the seminar at Retreat House, Mantripukhuri, Imphal. It is fourteen km away from the airport. The driver belonging to Gorkha community of Sikkim nicely drove the car through the road connecting our destination at Imphal. The road condition is nice with two sides of shops and commercial establishment with a little traffic showing high density in the valley. An out glimpse of market reveals woman dominance in trade as asserted in various reports. It also testifies local Meitei woman has an upper hand in local markets at open shops dealing with vegetables, and other household edible items.

Entering into the city of Imphal, it also make me feel the presence of the living legend MC Mary Kom, who also recently awarded as second highest civilian award Padma Vibhushan during Republic day. She makes pride not only the Manipur rather than entire north east at global arena fetching laurel and glory in the boxing event. Not only Mary Kom, there are various other players who brought the pride for the nation. The state has occupied an important place in the sporting event of the country in the last one decade or so. Perhaps it is due to state government effort to put more emphasis on sports. On the way, I have seen the banner of 1st Chief Minister's Indigenous Martial Arts (Thang-Ta/Cheibi) Meet 2020 in Imphal. Later on I found a news 1 on that revealing many interesting facts.

'Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh has expressed a wish to set up indigenous martial arts training centres in every village of the state so that different martial art forms, including those of the hill areas, can be popularized. The initiative is not only for popularizing the indigenous (martial) arts forms but also to keep our generation healthy. It will also help the youths and children stay away from drugs and other intoxicants besides helping them maintain a disciplined life. He desires to double the number of martial arts training centres every year. At present, there are 43 training centres in Manipur. Thang-Ta and other indigenous martial arts played a vital role in protecting Manipur from invaders in its 2,000 years of civilization. However, it apparently lost its essence in the past few decades. As such, state government has been actively

exploring means to revive the age-old art form. As reported, there are 1500 participants representing 43 clubs involved into eight events: Cheibi Yendamnaba, Ta-Khousaba, Leiteng Haiba, Thang Chungoi Yannaba, Thang-Ta Chainaba, Thang Chungoi Marol, Sajel Kan-glon and Sarit Sarak'. The initiative of Government is important for all kinds of sports discipline. Centrally, government has undertaking various schemes for popularizing all sporting events. It is also felt that the dismal performance in the Olympics is also a matter of concern. Being a country of young and energetic people, why should not find out the real talents from the grass-root level. The recently taken initiative on Khelo India (just concluded in Guwahati) is such a platform to reach out hidden talents. The Assam has bag seventh position that is quite eye opening. On the other hand Manipur has shown its' potential in the national games over the years. Another poster caught my eye during the journey to Matripukhuri. It is on a theatre festival. Manipur is blessed with rich heritage of traditional arts form being it traditional dance, classical and traditional drama. In the promotional pictures of tourism, the dancing woman is seen with a tag line: 'where the gods....to dancing'. Regarding drama and theatre, there are eminent personalities who fetch international accolade. There was banner on 5th Khundongbam Brojendro Theatre Festival 2020 2 that was held at the JNMDA auditorium participated by internationally acclaimed theatre director Ratan Thiyam, critic and scholar Prof N Tombi and Dr RK Nimai. Ratan Thiyam, Chairman of the Chorus Repertory Theatre. It was held under the aegis of Khundongbam Brojendro Cultural Trust (KBCT). It was quite wonderful to have an idea about the activities ranging from promotion of sports as well as arts and culture. On 20th at around 12.45 pm, we reached our venue of seminar as well as place of accommodation. It was a nice place at the outskirts under the foothills. The cold breeze was blowing. I had my lunch and confined to my room going through some paper works for next day presentation. Later on in the evening hours I had been found the company of eminent Anthropologist Gautam Kumar Bera, who retires from

Anthropological Survey of India, and at present working on 'Immigration Problem of Tripura' as Tagore National Fellow under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. With Athparia and Bera, in the evening hours, we had a prolonged discussion on the emerging issues and concerns of the region emphasizing existing socio-political upheaval and developments. Bera, being an anthropologist, has wide dimensions of knowledge regarding not only the north eastern region but also entire national panorama. His thoughtful insights and lucid explanation was quite impressive. Our discussion continued even after post-dinner phases. In the midst of that I had the privilege to share our research thought to another young energetic scholar vis-à-vis socio-cultural activist Mr. Isaac Bukli. He belong to Tangkhul Naga and resident of Ukhrul district of Manipur. He possesses an inherent tendency to contribute for the betterment and socio-economic upliftment of his own society playing any role. He has close connection with Assam. His wife is working in the health department of Assam. It was interesting to learn his plans, objectives and ways to realize it.

21 January. It was the day for which we were in the land of Loktak and aspired to go beyond it. The day was also significant being celebrated as 'statehood' day. We had the entire day-long conference right from inauguration up to valedictory session, with two technical sessions in between, two memorial lectures on recently departed renowned anthropologists Prof. AC Bhagawati and a short film on him. Apart from some emerging scholars, faculties of Universities and other organizations, I met another two reputed personalities whom I knew earlier: Dr H. Khamkhenthang and Prof. Peter Haokip. Dr Khamkhenthang, is an eminent scholar and researcher of the north eastern region who have authored several books on his own community and others in the state of Manipur. Belonging to Paite community, he was associated with our institute in the compilation on the Customary Laws of the Paites of Manipur as a referee. He was associated with the Directorate of Tribal Research Institute of Manipur. During his tenure under the Government of Manipur, he has been successful to accomplish various

research activities and brought out in the form of publication. He was present in the seminar as a special guest who also released my jointly edited book on 'Customary Law as Discourse: The North Eastern Perspectives'. Besides, Peter Haokip, an eminent scholar, associated with Shillong based Theological College, deep inputs on ethnic situation of Manipur, was quite elaborating. His association in the seminar was continued when he was a part of a trip arranged on 22nd January to visit Moreh and Tamu, the border town of Myanmar. After the ceremonial inauguration, welcome speech and lectures by dignitaries, two memorial lectures were addressed by Bera and Athparia respectively. Athparia started his proceedings by showing a short documentary film made by Dr Tilottama Barua, of the Department of Anthropology, Cotton University depicting life sketch of Prof. Bhagawati, taking precious interviews of his colleagues, teachers, eminent personalities, students, research scholars family members, and his academic journey, researches beyond frontiers, contributions and achievements in a way of own voice over asserting 'stimulates our imagination'. In his lecture, Athparia remembered his association as an Anthropologist under Anthropological Survey of India, his field expedition in Manipur under People of India Project- Manipur Volume long back in 1985. He was dealing with Poumai Naga group emphasizing the scenario of women empowerment with the help of field based data. On the other hand, in the second Memorial lecture, Dr Bera, wonderfully carve his presentation in three different segments: from Anthropological studies in India, depicting AC Bhagawatis' life and research works and finally on to theme of inter-ethnic situation in the context of Manipur. Besides stating the celebration of Statehood day in Manipur, he pointed out celebration of another event in Indian context. It was about 100 years of Anthropology in India, as it was in 1920s' when teaching of Anthropology began in the University of Calcutta. In north eastern context, he did not forget to mention the names like DN Majumdar, BM Das, MC Goswami and their contribution in the field of Anthropology while remembering the contribution of AC Bhagawati. His elaborative presentation also makes an overview of the thematic understanding

of dynamics of socio-cultural changes due to various impinging factors like education, cultural contact, innovation, invention, diffusion and others. He also cites certain concepts in Anthropology like 'Jajmoni system' and how it helps to build inter-ethnic bonding, names of certain scholars like MN Srinivas, significant studies in Rampura villages and also review studies, like Mangala village in South India, work of PK Das Gupta on Shella village in Meghalaya exploring core cultural complex and ideas of identity formations and others. Indeed, his lecture touched a wide range of areas in the domain of Anthropological studies and its' role in contextualizing theme of the seminar. In my paper, I make an attempt to explore the existing elements of inter-ethnic bonding among the divergent groups of this region emphasizing two groups Maram Naga and Mate of Senapati district, with an assumption of 'Beyond enter-ethnic relations' that focuses close connectivity without any chance of cultural contact. It is more significant for the indigenous groups residing in this part of the region. A local scholar Mr Thohrii wonderfully pointed out scenario of inter-ethnic relations among the three strains of different groups like Meitei, Mizo-Kuki groups and Naga groups. He revealed the equation and degree of relations among them changes according to various issues and concerns rise from time to time. Issaic Bukli also make a short but thought provoking talk on the situation of youth, empowerment and employment to uplift socio-economic situation of hill dwellers. Apart from my own presentation, I also chaired a partial session followed by entire valedictory session where key invites put their final note on the theme of the seminar.

Listening to the entire proceedings, it is rightly found that the state possess admixture of multi-ethnic strains of groups with their own vibrant socio-cultural heritage. The scenic beauty, natural resources and geo-strategic location was wonderfully explored in 22nd January during a trip to Moreh. The beautiful sequences of hills beyond the valleys, the ever green forest, bamboo groves, rich plant diversity seen during a daylong journey of 110 km, was quite amazing. It was planned trip by the organizers of the seminar to explore the border town Moreh of

Manipur, who in recent times came to limelight for realizing Indias' Act East Policy. The township is just adjacent to Tamu, a small township of Myanmar. Due to political dialogue between both the governments (India and Myanmar), one can visit each other with minimum formalities without any passport and visa. The entire journey from Imphal to Moreh and beyond was guided by Peter Haokip, who had a comprehensive knowledge on the ethnic distribution of hill tribes according to various districts and villages that came across during the journey. Except, the formal quizzing by the Assam Rifles in the midst of journey and by Myanmar Border Police at the border check post, there was no any difficulty of visiting about two and half hour in Tamu. It was such a first hand experience. We had to leave our vehicle within the border of India. It is not allowed. From the border, there is provision of taking hired 'tempo' who can lead towards approaching town. We did. He was a local youth having own tempo and citizen of Myanmar who know broken 'meitei' that was enough for our communication. While moving in the side the Myanmar, I never felt it as a separate destination, as it like 'home away home'. The people, dress pattern, house type, flora, road condition, food and cuisine, markets have lots of similarities with Indian markets. We were at the mid of a day. It was time for a lunch. A wonderful Tamil friend of the host settled in Moreh, who can speak multiple dialects like Burmese, Tamil, Meitei, Hindi arranged the lunch at Hotel Dagon in Tamu. It was also his marriage anniversary so he was delighted to get us as his guests who also insist to visit his home at Moreh. But we were running out of time. We had a wonderful pure Burmese food comprising soups, dry fries of fleshes, vegetable noodles with an extraordinary taste and delicacy. After lunch, we proceed towards a border market at political boundary of Myanmar. It was flooded with essential household electrical goods and other commodities imported from China apart from fruits item. Some of co-participants purchased electronic goods at the cheaper rate. Personally, I have got the taste of dragon fruits at Moreh for the first time, which is not available in our local markets. It was found in border market at Tamu. Micro-sizes oranges with a quality taste were other eye-catching

items. It is a product of China. I procured them as a memento. It was dark at around 8 pm when we reached Imphal. Next day, as on 23rd, I had my Air India flight at 2.10 pm. But we started for airport a little bit earlier. There were some tasks of the host at the foothills of West Imphal district. I had the opportunity to explore some more places in and around Manipur beyond Loktak that was quite illuminating as the highway where we travelled connects Jiribam as well as Silchar also. I was again in a window seat in the flight that was delayed by half an hour to reach Guwahati. It is quite refreshing

to remember and thanking Maria Goretti, Alex Panmei, Simon Poumai, Rose Poumai, Limarose Panmai, Pinki Tanti for wonderful hospitality at Imphal.

Notes:

1. (2020, January 20) 'Need indigenous martial arts training centre in every village: Biren Singh', The Assam Tribune, Guwahati, p. 10

2. (2020, January 20), 'Khundongbam Brojendro theatre fest under way in Manipur', The Assam Tribune, Guwahati, p. 10

(Contd. from Page 6)

The People with a Rare Gift of Wisdom: The Unsung Heroes of Nagaland

proposal in his letter 26th July 1960, to the Prime Minister of India clearly stated, "It is only in a separate homeland of our own, we will fully play our part in the development of the country as a whole and running of our popular government according to our culture and traditions. Finally, the sixteen point agreement was concluded between the 21 representatives under the chairmanship of Dr Imkongliba Ao and the government of India on 30 July 1960. Following the agreement an Interim Body comprising of 42 members and Dr Imkongliba Ao as its Chairman was inaugurated in presence of thousands of peace-loving Naga people by Gen. Shri Nagesh, the governor of Assam, on 18th February 1961 at Kohima. The members of the interim body expressed their allegiance to the constitution of India and committed themselves to work for the upliftment and general welfare of the people. Dr Ao appealed to the hostile Nagas to abandon the path of violence and not to sabotage the final decision of the Naga people who wanted to have no more bloodshed, suffering and miseries. However, the Rebels turned a deaf ear to the appeal and continued their hostile activities against the government and the Naga people. Out of frustration, they assassinated Dr Imkongliba Ao at Mukokchung on 22 August 1961, while he was

returning at night from his dispensary after serving the sick and needy. A great soul who wanted to integrate the Naga society for the greater well being of the Nation became a victim of conspiracy hatch by foreign elements.

The contribution of Dr Ao and his fellow people through the Naga Peoples' Convention was instrumental in building a peaceful and prosperous Nagaland but also sowed the seeds of peaceful North East India to a gear extend. It paved the way for establishing our nation's eastern frontier. They were the leaders and nation builders of post colonial India. Their patriotism and love for India were denigrated by the Naga rebels and the rest of the country forgot them. After 58 years of silence in the hills of Nagaland, Dr Imkongliba Ao and his visionary friends are being honoured. It is indeed a humble but incomparable gesture by the Governor of Nagaland. Dr Ao and his men never thought of their aggrandizement or self-benefit what they did were out of their devotion and love for the people of Nagaland and the Country. As Indians we must cherish their role in the making of our nation. They deserve more than what the people of Nagaland and the country had given them.

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The Evolution of Modern Assamese Poetry since the 1980s to the Present

Subhajit Bhadra

If any intrepid scholar makes an attempt to chart out the trajectory of Assamese poetry between 1980s to the present time, he or she will be awestruck with its variety and different hues. If we want to talk about post 1980 Assamese poetry then it becomes essential to make an attempt to understand the contemporary socio-political environment. During 1979 to 1984 there was a conscious movement (Known as Assam Agitation Movement) to drive away the non-Assamese people from Assam who, according to the native Assamese people, were eating up the economic framework of the State. During the poetry of that period we find a typical Assamese community consciousness. During that period some of the poets became progressive in their attitude of course, according to some critics, that kind of consciousness was integrally related to the formation of Assamese community as a whole. The Assam accord which was signed as a result of the Assam agitation Movement brought about a new sense of being in the mindset of middle class people who thought with enthusiasm that change would come. One also finds a sense of new dawn and the rise of regional politics which gave birth to a narrow sense of provincialism. This sense of enthusiasm felt by the middle class did spread among the contemporary Assamese poets. Parallel to that the rise of ULFA and their activities of terrorism brought about a huge change and that period also witnessed the rise of small communities who were striving to form their own identity. Some there was a feeling of disenchantment and the sense of shattered dream affected the poets of the contemporary period.

Some of the tribal communities were also demanding sovereignty which found reflection in the contemporary poetry. The dream which was visualized by the contemporary middle class people during the Assam Agitation Movement was shattered

by the happening and incidents of terrorism that took place during the 1990s because of full fledged arm struggle spearheaded by the ULFA. Assam was shattered due to the failure of Assam accord, fundamental or communal hatred, conflict, murder and continually increasing violence.

Against the background of such a scenario contemporary Assamese poetry advanced in a fragmented way. There was the rise of a huge number of poets, they continued to practice poetry, some could not leave the field of poetry but some other poets totally disappeared after writing a few poems. The poetry starting from the 1980s saw a departure from the poetry of the 1960s as it became less complex in tone and reader-oriented in tenor. Even though the sense of urbanity witnessed in the poetry of Nabakanta Baruah had not totally vanished yet the present Assamese poetry has become more and more anti-urban in nature. Assamese poetry has enriched itself because of the participation of a few tribal writers who are writing their poems in Assamese. Regarding the aesthetics of Assamese poetry the contemporary poets are quite influenced by the western poetry of symbolism and imagism. Newer techniques have been applied by the Assamese poets and one can even witness the influenced of movement like magic realism. A sense of uncertainty, an attempt to visualized readers as merely consumers, a distrust of universalism, and belief in the sense of plurality an anguish against everything pre-determined, rejection of a sense of cohesion, accepting poetry as a commodity, a sense of spiritual emptiness, socialists thought, disbelief in any sort of ideology, distrust of any unified movement regarding the change of society, to regard men as playthings in the hands of destiny-all these can be seen in the contemporary Assamese poetry in fragmented way.

Sameer Tanti (born in 1956), started writing his major poems since the 1980s and his poetic voice has been recognized as unique. He has penned several poetry collections – some of those are *Poems of Battlefield*, *The text books of Torture*, *Green Festival*, *Context of Famine*, *Companion of Melancholy*, and *the Boat of Blood and Darkness*. He has also exposed in his poems political ideology, has offered his own criticism of politics and thus he has also expressed anguish, desolation and these have given birth to a voice of protest. According to the Sahitya Akademi award winning poet Harekrishana Dekka, ‘Sameer Tanti is not an ordinary poet . The way he has expressed the political restlessness of contemporary period in his poetry has not been seen in the poems of any other poet.’ He has presented to us a blending of so called socialist poetry and modernist poetry. If we look at the tenor and life blood of his poems then we would find the so- called progressive trend but if we look at his language and its expression then we can find the experimentative streak of modernism. He has expressed the turbulence of the 1980s in his poetry which cannot go unnoticed. His poetry becomes a witness of the contemporary political unrest, loss of communal harmony brought about by a strong sense of provincialism, the ruthlessness of state machinery and death, murder and violence of society. But yet he has expressed a sense of protest and optimism in many of his poems. There is also a sense of universalism in his poetry. His poetry is not bereft of the concept of love-though that love is directed towards his native land, his compatriots, the tortured and subjugated simply human being, the vulnerable and fragile people or sometimes an unknown beloved. His poetry basically expresses political plight of the State but there has been witnessed a sense of lyricism in his later poetry very strongly.

At certain times, his poetry has assumed a sense of individuality and subjectivity. His poetry portrays nature, love, emptiness and a consciousness of death. In many of his poems he has depicted the life of tea-tribes. We find a smell of soil, the sound of drums, the tribal dialect along with polished Assamese

language in some of his poems.

Anupama Basumatary (born in 1960) has registered an individual voice in the domain of contemporary modern Assamese poetry. She deserves credit for popularizing contemporary modern Assamese poetry and it has become possible because she has successfully bridged the distance or gap between common people and poetry through a unique linguistic touch.

Though she has been born into Bodo family who have their own language (Both oral and written) yet she has found her true poetic expression in Assamese language. She is also one of those women Assamese poet who has got a distinctive poetic style. She believes that poetry is the mirror of heart and soul and yet her poetry is not devoid of intellect and the depiction of freedom of women. Her poetry brings us closer to sensibility which has the audacity to discard traditional rigid social values and who can tolerate the ups and down of life, who can distinguish between moral and immoral and create a path of her own and who can candidly express every incidents or secret of individual life. She had given expression to the loneliness of women and their pain and sorrows. She has experienced a lot in her life and she transparently expresses those experiences in her poetry. She has taken life as a scientific laboratory and dissected the complex relation between males and females. One of the major themes of her poetry is love and this has been pinpointed by readers and critics alike and she does not disagree with them totally. Love has come to her life at many times and she has given expression to those poems in her poetry. But she does not agree with those critics who have said that she has wasted her poetic talent by writing simple love poems. She has written two unique poems taking snail as a symbol where she depicts the poignant experience of life. The tribes to which Anupama belongs eat snails. In her poems we find solitude in the midst of company and strong sense of feminine sensibility.

Nilim Kumar (born 1961) has given a new lease of life to modern Assamese poetry through new experiments and he is not only widely recognized but

also hugely popular. He has made a departure from traditional subject matter and form. His poetic sense has evolved through paradoxical intellectual crosscurrents. On the one hand we find in his poetry a sense of melancholy and desolation while on the other hand we find a sense of raw enthusiasm and a sense of revolution. He becomes nostalgic in some of his poems as he departs from traditional cultural rituals. He rages a battle against the traditional Assamese poetry and he has been compared with the Beats poets of the 1960s and 1970s. He has shown that he can blend emotion and intellect, a tendency to experiment, a mixture of symbol and images, a keenness to observe life from different viewpoints etc. One of his most famous poems *Narakasur* shows or exhibits these tendencies. He laces his poetry with narrative story, and he uses a strong sense of intellect to give a sense of dramatic turn to serious and unsolved mysteries of life. In Nilim Kumar's poetry we find anecdotes regarding women, their sensibility. In this context Nilim himself says,- 'My poetry has taken its shape through the contemplation of women body and its transcendent existence. I want only the Midas touch to love to impart me the much cherished pain.

According to Dr. Madan Sarma Nilim Kumar's poetry has a rare charm and an unusual freshness. Though always aware of and alive to the contemporary reality, he tries to negotiate with it in his own way, always exploring the self. Love, sexuality, spontaneous, exuberance of joy at richness and variety of life, indefinable sadness and gloom at times from the thematic concern of his poetry. Insecurity and uncertainty of the present after take him to the past, to the childhood memories and even to the womb, to a pre-lapsarian state. A remarkably un sentimental, even a little playful poem on childhood memory and disappearance of simple, familiar and uncomplicated rural ways of living is "Chor" (thief). His poetry has a variety of moods and a resonance of multiple voices.

Anuvab Tulsi (Born 1959) has been writing since the mid 1980s and he has exhibited a unique poetic sensibility in the realm of contemporary modern

Assamese poetry. Dr. Hiran Gohain aptly pointed out in the preface to Tuls'i's maiden poetry collection '*Nazma*'. '*Nazma* is a new experiment in Tuls'i's poetry. Thought his economy of words of sense pain found in Japanese poetry, inner beauty etc... The lucid picture of Assamese folk culture is expressed in his poetry through beautiful imageries, symbolic hue and a strong sense of lyricism.' He has not neglected social reality. Because of his intricate symbolic tune the readers have to go through intellectual exercise to understand his poetry. The colorful portrayals of his birth place, intermingled with his existence in Guwahati, reading of English Literature and his knowledge of western cinema has added a modernist touch to Tuls'i's poetry. Depiction of nature and rural life have given a unique touch to his urban experience. Love is a central matrix of his poetry and it is found in his poetry in different dimensions.

Among the poets who could avoid NabaKanta Baruah's poetic style is Rajib Barua and he has discovered a new linguistic medium of poetry of conscious effort and hard labour. He has also shown a Wordsworthian streak to democratize poetry through the simplification of language. He penned a poem titled 'Football' where he has used a comment by Miroslav Holub "Poetry should aspire to the condition of newspaper and the experience of watching a football match..." Rajib Barua has exhibited an intimate poetic touch through the observation of common human life. He has used both satire and narrative style in his poetry and these have turned out to be his strength. Some of his poetry show a spirit of French symbolic pattern but it would be an exaggeration to comment that Baruah is an exponent of Symbolism. In the context of post Laxminath Bezbaruah Assamese poetry Rajib Baruah has exhibited a style of satire which was practiced by Jaigeshwar Sharma.

(Contd. to Next Issue)

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A request to the Finance Minister

Partha Pratim Mazumder

“The simplest definition of a budget is “telling your money where to go.”

So many different explanations are being offered for the current slowdown in the economy that budget 2020-21 needs to provide a level of explanation far greater than what has been done by any previous budget document. The philosophy of the government needs to be given as much space as the actual plan itself.

For a start, the budget needs to explain how the government has fared on the non-economic goals it set for itself last year. A first message that would build credibility is to clearly indicate what was achieved in some of the areas.

There has been a view that the appetite for investment has tapered off. At a philosophical level, animal spirits are required to drive investment. These abound only when there are meaningful opportunities for profit. The dramatic take-off in growth in the mid-90s was because opportunities for super profits existed. Inevitably, these opportunities also created oligopolies amid accusations of the disproportionate accumulation of wealth (For example: Harshad Mehta/Sukh Ram and other worthies from the past). A series of actions, starting from the overreach during the 2G scam, through to the highly priced auctions for resources, have tightened the tap on some of the routes to high profit. This has particular resonance when one expects private parties to actively participate in divestments or the sale of natural resources like coal. It would be worthwhile to indicate that the government is prepared to leave some money on the table, as that is the incentive for people to invest behind in what is an uncertain risk environment. The government needs to communicate that investment and job growth may take precedence over revenue maximisation. There

is nothing wrong or unethical in making such a choice.

This period of slow growth has placed a burden on State revenues, imposing fiscal pressures. Governments have traditionally sought to understate fiscal deficits, through their cash accounting mechanism — by simply not making payments. In particular, in situations where the last-mile closures of projects have not happened (in the case of highways, for example), for reasons outside the control of private parties, there needs to be an approach which ensures at least some liquidity to the bidding company. It is better to acknowledge the existence of a higher fiscal deficit, explain its causes and increase the flow of payments through the system. Credit rating agencies, who are often sensitive to fiscal shortfalls, are likely to be far more accommodating of fiscal expansions if the budget indicates why the actions taken will be useful, especially in creating jobs and stimulating demand.

One response to anticipated fiscal constraints seems to have been a tightening of tax collection, resulting in anecdotal instances of the creation of a fear psychosis. The finance minister and others have correctly sent across the message that the tax department needs to be more transparent in its positions and be seen to be fair towards the assesses. Greater collections and a lower potential for harassment will come only with a simple tax code. It will be worth stating how the government wants to simplify the tax process, and what its expectations would be by way of higher revenues but greater ease of tax management, so that assessors and assesses know the behaviour expected of them.

The strong mandate received by the ruling party would indicate that the efforts made towards the provision of toilets, gas connections, insurance and financial inclusion were, in some measure, successful.

This constitutes an extraordinary achievement in a country of our complexity. If the government can provide third party evidence of improved outcomes, this would demonstrate that its welfare State activities have actually paid off. It is also worth explaining why these actions, if successful, have not boosted growth. This might indeed be because many of the products that were delivered to the public provide great convenience (such as the Ujala scheme), but do not necessarily induce extra consumption. But, we need to hear this from the finance minister and the chief economist.

A defining feature of the past few years has been the pursuit of investigations into irregularities of various kinds. These investigations are desirable to reinforce a compliance culture, which was often largely absent. The budget must indicate a time frame to arrive at some settlement of most of these investigations. While the government cannot control the judicial processes that defendants might use, they can make clear the behaviours, in their view, violate the spirit of the law and that such violators would, in future, not meet “fit and proper” requirements for, say, government contracts. In a market economy, that alone would normally suffice as punishment. There is more than enough discretion in government to bring errant companies to heel by using the “spirit of the law doctrine”.

In specific situations such as the sale of stressed assets through the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal, the government could reiterate that those who take on stressed assets will not be held accountable for the misdemeanours of past owners. This is not being said often enough.

Considerable debate has ensued about the quality of economic data, without which one cannot objectively assess the performance of government. Changes in statistical bases, though very well-intentioned, have allowed opponents of government action the room to make criticism that are then difficult to disprove. Greater effort could be made to explain exactly why these changes in data were made and for the government to help interpret these in a credible manner.

Budgets are about choices, and by explaining the rationale underpinning these, the government will increase the conviction in the plans for the \$ 5 trillion dollar economy.

The forthcoming budget may make special efforts to boost the rural economy. This is a step in the right direction. Unless the rural economy is rejuvenated, any sustained revival in mass incomes, and, therefore, demand, will continue to elude the Indian economy. Here are four things which the budget could consider.

One, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) is among the most crucial policy instruments of mass income generation. Anecdotal accounts and reports by social activists have repeatedly pointed out that payments under the scheme are often delayed by long periods. This defeats the purpose of the scheme, as those seeking work are mostly looking to buy their next meal. The budget should make sure that such delays do not occur. Two, the government has spent a lot of money on providing private infrastructure such as houses and toilets in villages to improve standards of living. It should now focus on public infrastructure to augment incomes. Livestock is a key area here. A focus on reviving common pastures will help both farm incomes as well as environmental concerns. Three, the last budget announced its intent to make India self-reliant in edible oils. It should build on that commitment with a clear policy to incentivise farmers to achieve this goal. Four, with rising freak weather events, crop losses will mount in the future. This hurts both consumers as well as farmers. The budget should lay down a policy to deal with such exigencies in addition to the existing public distribution system. Finally, if revenue shortfalls and fiscal considerations lead to a cutback in rural spending, then it will reinforce the idea that the rural economy is only the residual element in this government’s scheme of things. Any tall promises in the forthcoming budget will have to be taken with a pinch of salt in that case. ■

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CAA should have been introduced 50 years back

Er. Rajesh Pathak

Relationship of Myanmar with its neighbour, China, was the history of conflict for years together. But the year 2017 saw the beginning of a change, when the alleged atrocities of Myanmar administration on Rohingya Muslims led 7,30,000 of them fleeing the country. This ignited severe criticism of Myanmar from world over. Despite Myanmar's claiming of Rohingyas being terrorists, International war crimes tribunal was even reported to have come to the point of taking firm action against the country's leadership, and all those found involved. But China intervened and blocked the move, openly defending Myanmar. Notably China then got the support of Philippines and Brundie; and they claimed they had the support of 100 other countries.

In view of its commercial and strategic interest China took the step in favour of Myanmar. But then the communists and seculars like Nasruddin Shah having sympathies for Rohingyas did not utter even single word against China. Like China, India also can opt to have CAA imposed against infiltrators inside the country, keeping in view its interest. But the same people are now not ready to listen. Inspired by Javed Akhtar, Farhaan Akhtar, Arshad Ayub, Javed Jaffri and their likes the gazal singer Munavvar Rana also could not resist himself from registering his presence in the agitation against the govt. His daughters have stepped ahead of him and adamant to take law into their hands. Javed Akhtar and Munavvar Rana hold the image of being seculars in the country. And the fans of their arts are no less even in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Today the pain for Muslim infiltrators grew uncontrolled for them. Why not then they ever felt the necessity of raising their voices against the inhuman atrocities on the minorities there due to their faiths.

Lives of minorities in Pakistan is much more

difficult due to notorious law of blasphemy, which has the provision of death penalty too. Christians have been targeted more particularly behind the façade of the law. In Faislabad in the year 2005 Christians had to flee the city, because crowd grew violent against them as the rumour spread that some Christian living there put Koran on fire. Churches and several of the institutions run by them were ransacked as a result of the rumour. The case of Christian student, Rimsha Masih, and that of another woman, Aasia Bewee, gained the world attention, as they were accused of Blasphemy. It was due to his opposition to the partisan law of blasphemy that Christian minister of minority affairs, Mr Bhatti, was gunned down in 2011.

Ignoring the advice of Dr Ambedkar, Jogendrnath Mandal was the one who gave support to Muslim League, settled in Pakistan after partition, and became first law minister of the govt. headed by Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The letter that he wrote to the then PM of Pakistan, Liyakat Ali Khan, well describes the situation there at that point of time. He wrote-‘What is the condition of East Bengal? I am continuously receiving the news of little girls being raped. Muslims made the boycott of Hindu traders, advocates, doctors, shopkeepers owing to which they are forced to migrate from there. Muslims are not paying the full price of the commodities sold by Hindus. At the time of partition there were 1 lakh backward caste Hindus in west Punjab. Big numbers of them have been converted into Islam forcibly. I received a list according to which 363 temples and gurudwaras went under the possession of Muslims. Some of them have been converted into butcher houses and hotels.’ Disenchanted, Jogendrnath could not stay longer there and finally came back

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Sahityarathi statue to adorn Kolkata Assam House

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal unveiled a life-size statue of Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbaroa at the Assam House complex located at Russel Street in Kolkata on Sunday. The statue has been installed through a joint initiative of the cultural affairs and the general administration departments of the Assam government.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that installation of the life-size statue of the Sahityarathi would give a new impetus to literary, cultural and people-to-people relations between Assam and West Bengal, an official press release here said.

Terming the day as historic, Sonowal said Bezbaroa created many of his literary works while in Kolkata and that the statue would help the young generation to know more about the literary doyen. While addressing the students present at the statue unveiling ceremony, he said success comes through hard work and they must put in their best efforts with dedication to excel in life. He also asked the Assam House authorities to take adequate steps for proper upkeep of the statue. He appreciated the work of sculptor Biju Das who made the statue.

Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in his address said Bezbaroa made extraordinary contributions to the growth of Assamese literature and that the interest shown by the young generation of Assam on the literary works of Bezbaroa was a good sign for Assamese literature. He said that after Srimanta Sankaradeva, it was the Sahityarathi who gave a distinct identity to Assamese literature. Sarma further said that the Assam government was planning to develop a new 11-storey building by demolishing the existing Assam House of Kolkata.

Chief Minister's media adviser Hrishikesh Goswami said Bezbaroa contributed to

Assamese literature even when he was staying away from Assam at Kolkata and Sambalpur. "Just like an ambassador, Bezbaroa gave a new dimension to the growth of relationships among the people of Assam, West Bengal and Odisha," he said.

New Assam Bhawan: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated an additional Assam Bhawan and Trade Centre-cum-Youth Hostel built by the State PWD at Salt Lake, Sector 3 in Kolkata today.

The new Assam Bhawan was constructed with a cost of Rs 25.18 crore. The 11-storey new building has been built with modern amenities and air conditioning. The building has 35 rooms and dormitories separately for men and women. ■



Reh festival celebrated in Anini, Roing

Dibang Valley district celebrated the 52nd edition of Reh festival of the Idu Mishmi community here on Saturday with Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui joining in the celebration, and Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurating projects and laying foundation stones.

The CM inaugurated the new fire station and the 'augmentation of water supply' project in Anini, besides laying the foundation stones for the district hospital, the mini-secretariat and the mini-stadium in Anini, the ADO office in Arzoo, and the 'innovative and multipurpose water harvesting' projects in Gipulin village.

Khandu congratulated the district police for ranking 5th in the country's list of the top police stations, and awarded Rs 3 lakhs as a "gift of recognition" to the department.

He spoke on relaxation in the state's investment & industrial policy to welcome investments for the development of the state, and noted that Dibang Valley has plenty of resources which can be converted into revenue.

"The Dibang project is a Rs 28,000-crore investment which should be supported 100 percent. It will generate employment opportunities for the unemployed youths and help in the development of the district," he said.

The CM also promised to post more doctors at the district hospital, which currently has only three.

Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar and MP Tapir Gao also assured to provide support in developing Anini. They encouraged establishing homestays to help tourism development in the district.

Our correspondent adds: Celebration of Reh, the most important festival of the Idu Mishmi community, began on Saturday at the central Rehko in Cheta, in Lower Dibang Valley (LDV) district, with the theme, 'Giving back to society'.

The three-day festival is celebrated centrally, as well as in villages across LDV, Dibang Valley and Lohit districts, from 1-3 February.

Attending the celebration, Agriculture Minister Tase Taki conveyed warm wishes to the Idu Mishmi community.

"It is evident from the Reh mythology that we are all very closely connected to nature. Humans are a product of nature, and hence, we have to give back to it. If nature is not respected, we should also be ready to face its wrath," he said.

The minister spoke about the government's schemes for the benefit of the people, and encouraged all to invest more in agriculture, horticulture, fishery and general livestock farming.

"We will not have to import these products into our state if we are self-sustained, as the demand is greater than the produce," he said.

Festival-goers, especially children, attired in exquisite and intricate traditional Idu Mishmi dresses filled the venue with a very festive vibe.

Pasighat East MLA Kaling Moyong commended the involvement of children in the festival.

"Involving children in community celebrations is very important to get them closer to their tradition and culture, and to keep them intact. It is solely our responsibility and only we can preserve and promote our culture and tradition. No outsider can come from anywhere in the world to do it. It is only upon us to do so," said Moyong.

He also stressed on the importance of using one's mother tongue and keeping it alive.

Speaking about the drug menace, he said "it has gripped almost all parts of our state, and community-based organisations should take it upon themselves to fight the rampant menace and get rid of it."

Children from various schools presented a string of cultural performances during the celebration, including a performance by flutist Daychie Tacho. Noted Idu Mishmi singer Anyiyu Mena and guitarist Nili Lomi also performed.

Numerous stalls were set up by local entrepreneurs and women SHGs, showcasing handlooms, bamboo artwork, homemade soaps, art, craft and food items.

Celebration committee president Rasto Mena and AIMSU GS Mompalangi also spoke.

Among others, local MLA Mutchu Mithi, IMCLS president Ginko Lingi, IMCLS GS Rao Dele, and DC Mitali Namchoom attended the festivity. ■

Assam CM attends Ali-Aye-Ligang celebration in Lakhimpur

Speaking at the central celebration of Ali-Aye-Ligang at Ghunasuti in Lakhimpur district on Wednesday, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said that Mising people are the indispensable part of the larger demography of the State and the fruits of development that the State at present is enjoying can significantly be attributed to the cultural and educational contributions of the Mising community. The Chief Minister further added that considering the immense contribution of the people belonging to Mising community, the State government is taking several schemes for the socio-economic, cultural and academic empowerment of the Mising people.

Chief Minister Sonowal also said that to sustain the valuable role of the Mising people, they would have to take the help of education and adapt themselves to the changing circumstances induced by science and technology. He observed that the 21st century is the age of science and technology and in this century if a community has to sustain its progressive march, it has to acclimatize with the latest innovations of science and technology.

Paying tributes to various personalities belonging to Mising community in the field of academics, Chief Minister Sonowal urged upon the younger generation to emulate the personalities like Taburam Taid, Dr. Rana Patir, and the host of others.

Hailing the people of Ghunasuti, which is an interior part of Lakhimpur district, Chief Minister Sonowal said that the enthusiasm radiated by them in celebrating Ali-Aye-Ligang is a source of

motivation and encouragement for the government. He also announced that to remove the bottleneck of communication and to facilitate good communication between Ghunasuti and Lakhimpur, the government would construct a bridge at Ghagarghat and would lay new roads in phases.

He also said that besides facilitating expeditious completion of a cultural complex after the name of late linguist Taburam Taid at Gogamukh, the State government would install a large size statue of the late academician at Ghunasuti and announced Rs. 20 lakh from the government's untied fund for this purpose.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also felicitated nine eminent personalities of Mising community acknowledging their role in different walks of social life. He also released a souvenir on the occasion.

The function organized by Cultural Affairs Department in association with Lakhimpur district administration and greater Ghunasuti Ali-Aye-Ligang celebration committee was addressed among others by Minister of State (independent) for Cultural Affairs Department Naba Kumar Doley, MP Pradan Baruah, MLAs Bhuban Pegu, Dr. Ranuj Pegu, CEM of Mising Autonomous Council Paramananda Chayengia among others. MLAs Utpal Dutta and Debananda Hazarika, representatives from different organizations of Mising community and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion, stated a press release. ■

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CAA should have been introduced 50 years back

to India to live in West Bengal, where he died in 1968.

It is because of the above facts that a non-political, austere and a saintly one who is above the pleasure and pain of physical world and is popularly known as Jain muni Pranam Sagarji

Maharaj said in a programme organised for the journalists at Bhopal that our 'Country needs not religious fanaticism but deep faith in Indian culture. In my view CAA should have been introduced 50 years back. Rising above political thinking we must hold national interest above everything.' ■

Arunachal Deputy CM stresses for reopening of Stilwell Road

Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Sunday stressed the need for reopening the historic Stilwell Road, saying that the road will deepen the age-old cultural linkage and will help in promoting spiritual tourism between India and South East Asia.

Participating at the Oriah festival of the Wancho community here, Mein said that the State government would form a committee on 'Stillwell Road Development', and would appeal the Centre for prioritizing the restoration of this road by both India and Myanmar, as it would be mutually beneficial for both sides.

Terming the North East region as the gateway to the ASEAN countries, the Deputy Chief Minister said that reopening of the Stilwell Road or Ledo Road would ease travel and cut distance for people living on either side of the area and would also act as catalyst for cross-border trade.

Mein further said that India's Act East Policy is on the lines of improving people-to-people contact which is fundamentally envisaged for building socio-cultural relations, increasing trade ties, promoting tourism and developing the economic scenario of the South East Asian region through outreach initiatives. He also raised the issues related to the creation of infrastructure and better development of the border areas in the State to curb migration from the border villages.

"There is every possibility for Arunachal Pradesh to become the fruit bowl of country and the State has also the potential to become one of the tourist hotspots in India. But the need of the hour is to explore means to utilize these natural resources to our advantage for attracting more tourists," he added.

"Arunachal Pradesh is a land of many tribes; and each and every tribe has their own distinct cultural identity," the Deputy Chief Minister said while calling upon the youths for promotion, preservation

and protection of their age-old tradition and culture. He added that it is during such festivals that the tribal communities can showcase their rich cultural heritage and traditions which they have inherited from their forefathers.

"I must commend the Wancho community for jealously preserving and protecting their rich cultural heritage despite the challenges of modernization and western influence," he added. Mein informed that the State government is providing every possible support for the protection, preservation and promotion of the indigenous tribal cultures which is dwindling away day by day.

Chowna Mein has been personally advocating the preservation of the age-old practiced traditional systems and rituals in the digital form or in the documentation. He further informed that the Government would provide every possible support to every tribe for carrying out research and documentation work to safeguard their cultures and traditions. Pointing out that the traditional healing system of the Idu-Mishmis is in the verge of completion; he informed that the Government had provided some funds to the research department last year to make documentation of the system.

The Deputy Chief Minister also urged the youths to shun consumption of drugs and opium while asking them to take responsibility for developing the society. "The State government has launched many subsidized schemes," Mein informed and appealed to the youths to take full benefits of the Government-subsidized schemes for starting new entrepreneurship and to make themselves self-reliable and making them job providers instead of job seekers.

Various colourful dances mesmerized the audience but the warrior dance of Pongchau village was the showstopper of the celebration. ■

Seed sowing festival Luira Phanit celebrated

The seed sowing festival of Hunphun under the theme 'Ngashan Reisingmeiranu' began with prayers for bountiful harvest on Sunday at Atungtang in Ukhrul.

Additional SP of Bishnupur, Lanmiyo Luikham and retired assistant engineer, NEFR, Leiyopam Rumthao attended the opening ceremony at the Mission Ground as chief guest and guest of honour respectively. Lanmiyo Luikham said that Luira festival is being celebrated in different places even in the metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru etc. He added that the festival is organised to pray for a good harvest. Luikham urged the youths, "just as we struggle for a bountiful harvest, let us do our best in whatever fields we have stepped into; be it studies or entrepreneurship or sports." He added, "If the youths do not give their best, then they cannot become a promising custodian of our identity and culture." He also urged the elders and parents to support their children in their endeavour and talents. He stressed the need to give recognition to those who have excelled in different fields by felicitating them during Luira Festival.

"The success of youth is our identity. Hunphun has produced many beautiful faces but we are yet to produce a child who has excelled in academics and other fields. Giving due recognitions is our utmost duty and I appeal to the Hunphun Shanao Long to facilitate the 'Women Achiever of the Year,'" he added.

Leiyopam Rumthao said that in the earlier days, outsiders were not allowed to enter the village on the first day of Luira. At times of emergency such as illness, death, etc., if relatives from other village pay a visit during Luira festival, they could meet only at the village gate, he recalled. He said that after all the celebrations and ceremonies were performed, the village was opened to outsiders on the second day, he maintained. Along with that, the village was also opened to market, he further said while adding that the people from other villages would come and sell their goods such as earthen pots, salts, among others.

As a practice, for a bountiful harvest and a good year, the Hunphun village chief would first till the land invoking as the village gets ready for planting and sowing of the seeds. ■

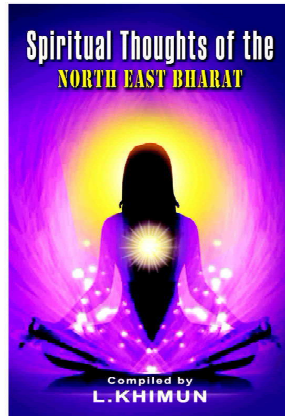




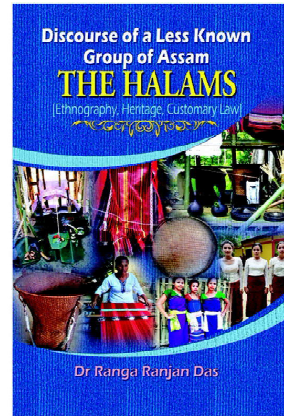
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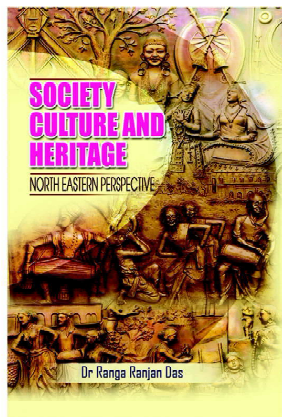
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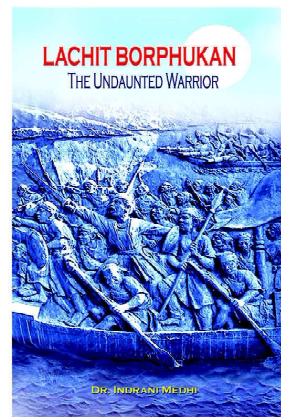
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