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HERITAGE EXPLORER

LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES

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India's
contribution
to the rest of
the world

"In India I found a race of mortals living upon the Earth. but not adhering to it. Inhabiting cities, but not being fixed to them, possessing everything but possessed by nothing" . -
Apollonius Tyanaeus

Greek Thinker and Traveller 1st Century AD



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The musings of the Republic Day

Human beings are God's unique creation, because they are never satisfied with the present like animals. The past and the future are also equally relevant to them. Living the present with the support of past memories and experiences augmented by the visualization of the future gives them a sense of completeness. Perhaps this ability and fixation to the concept of past – present – future combination have made humans the superior most living things in this universe.

The most common example of remembering the past is reflected in our fondness for observing birthdays, death anniversaries, marriage anniversaries etc. Other than the occasions of personal attachment we are also equally devoted to occasions of common interest like our Independence Day, Republic Day, Gandhi Jayanti and many other occasions of universal liking. Observance of these occasions not only add colours to our lives but also spur us to reminisce about our bygone days and the sacrifices made by our predecessors to leave behind safe, secure and happy living conditions for us.

The Republic Day, the 69th occasion of which was observed on last 26th January, is one such occasion of India's past that most of us would never want to forget. The day is the symbol of our valour, pride and achievement. 26th January is the extension of January 26, 1950, the day on which the Constitution of India came into force after being adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949. Many of us may not know the reason why January 26 was chosen as the Republic Day of our country. It was because, on this day in the year 1930, Indian National Congress (INC) proclaimed the Declaration of Indian Independence rejecting the Dominion status offered by the British Regime.

On this day of 26th January, our constitution bestowed on us a sovereign, socialist, secular and a democratic republic, assuring justice, equality, and liberty for all its citizens. We should not forget that the constitution makers not only gave us the

Indian nation, but also restored our pride of being Indians and made us the rulers of Indian Republic guided by the Indian culture and an Indian civilization. We should also remember that by virtue of being a Democratic Republic, our Constitution has provided for all our citizens, individually and collectively, the best fruits of democracy and ensured us those basic conditions and freedoms which alone made life secure, significant and productive.

The question that arises is how much our nation and its constitution has given us and what we are giving it in return. Most of us are very conscious about our rights forgetting about our responsibilities. We take part in the fanfare of the republic day ceremonies and parades but are reluctant to fight for the wellbeing of our nation. In the name of liberty many of us are clamouring for separate states even cessation. Some students and their so-called student organisations have started practicing antinational politics taking the advantage of liberty and freedom of speech. Sad to say that today our philosophy of life has become take as much as you can but give nothing. Our freedom fighters gave their lives for the oppressed people of India and now our liberated countrymen appear to be suffering from no hesitation to wield the weapon of oppression against others who come in their way.

No law or rules can remedy the situation prevailing in our vast country today. Our only hope is in our future generation who should be empowered to face the brutes. Every patriotic parent should instill a sense of duty and dedication to motherland in the hearts and minds of their children. Every teacher, starting from nursery level to colleges and universities, should take upon their shoulders the additional responsibility of upholding the ideals of man making and nation building. Any failure on our part will not only be disastrous for our country, the cradle of civilization, but will also annihilate the entire world.

Editor

The relevance of Vivekananda's teachings

Sri M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India

Arise, Awake and stop not till the goal is reached", this upanishadic sloka popularized by Swami Vivekananda must serve as an inspiration to every Indian, particularly the youth of today to build a New India through motivation, education and dedication.

The time has never been more opportune than now for India to realize its true potential by unleashing the energies of youth, who constitute about 65 per cent of its population. India is already one of the leading global IT players with the services sector contributing hugely to the GDP. However, for a multi-sectoral growth of India, rapid strides need to be made in manufacturing, agriculture, energy and infrastructure areas so that the country becomes the third largest economy sooner than the projected 10-15 years time.

Swami Vivekananda once told a group of journalists in the University of Michigan, "This is your century right now, but 21st century is India's century".

Skeptics and pessimists might still have doubts if India can break new ground and become one of the leading major economies? The recent growth patterns show that there are many good reasons to be optimistic. The assessment of the robustness of Indian economy by the World Bank, the IMF and other external agencies gives ample indication that the country is on the right development trajectory.

However, we have to recognize some impeding factors as well. Narrow prejudices of various isms that come in the way of a socially harmonious, prosperous, peaceful, inclusive and equitable India have to be buried fathoms deep under the foundations of the New India.

As famously said by the Father of the Nation, India lives in its villages. Unless those living in villages become part of the growth narrative, progress cannot be achieved. There is a need to adopt a bottom-up approach with a vision to transform villages into prosperous and self-contained

economic hubs. At the same time, farmers' incomes have to be doubled by making agriculture remunerative and viable. In a bid to ensure that food security is not affected, utmost priority has to be given to farmers' welfare.

In the recent past, the public discourse is getting sidetracked by non-issues rather than issues which have a bearing on the growth and development of the country. I feel the time has come for media and cinema, the most powerful communication tools, to do some serious introspection. We need catalysts of positive change. We need voices of reason, objectivity, hope, courage and calm. In a parliamentary democracy like, the people's representatives have a huge role to play in scripting the country's growth narrative. They should act as role models for others.

Here, I would like to point out that the preaching and teachings of Swami Vivekananda are eternally relevant and show a beacon to the world. What Swami Vivekananda said at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, in his epoch-making address is as relevant today as it was more than 125 years ago. He had said: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth".

He told the convention that "sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now".

Referring to the common ground of religious unity, he said if anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions

and the destruction of the other, to him I say, "Brother, yours is an impossible hope."

I have highlighted parts of Swami Vivekananda's speeches at the World Parliament of Religions to drive home the message that religious tolerance is of paramount importance for peaceful co-existence of people of all beliefs and faiths. Problems arise when ignorant, fanatical bigots try to impose their world view on others and indulge in one-upmanship. Irrespective of religion, this sort of behavior cannot be and should not be tolerated. Continuous efforts are needed to bring down caste barriers by all stakeholders, especially the political parties. Caste, cash and community must not be allowed to play any role in electoral politics and people must elect their public representatives on the basis of character, caliber, capacity and conduct.

Pointing out that caste was a social organization and not a religious one, Swami Vivekananda said it was the outcome of the natural evolution of our society. "It was found necessary and convenient at one time. It has served its purpose... ". He went on to add that Hindu religion no longer requires the prop of the caste system.

I feel that no other country is as uniquely placed today to fast-track development as India is with a predominantly young population. Here, I would like to mention about the relevance of the man-making mission spoken of by Swami Vivekananda. He said "Man-making is my mission of life. I am not a politician, nor I am a social reformer. It is my job to fashion man...I care only for the spirit: when that is right, everything will be righted by itself".

He wanted education to provide "life-building, man-making and character-making assimilation of ideas". We need women and men who have knowledge, skills and attitudes that foster societal transformation. Universal literacy and good quality education with a strong underpinning of universal

values are the foundations we must strengthen.

Swami Vivekananda believed in uplift of the humanity, irrespective of caste and creed and emphasized the importance of spiritualism for the survival and progress of mankind. He said "worship God in all living beings through service". This emphasis on service to humanity as a step towards spiritual upliftment needs to be underscored in our current national context.

He was an enlightened spiritual preacher, who brought Vedanta and Yoga to the West, while infusing a strong sense of patriotism among Indians during the colonial British rule. Through his historic speech at the Parliament of World Religions, he communicated the correct and accurate meaning of Hinduism and its way of life.

He acted like a bridge between the East and the West and played a pivotal role in strengthening the spiritual foundation of mankind. I feel that his life and teachings have to be popularized so that the younger generation in particular realize and assimilate the greatness of India's culture, spiritual heritage and traditions in the context of growing materialism and influence of Western concepts and lifestyles. The younger generation should emulate his ideals. Swami Vivekananda was a great nation-builder and his teachings have become all the more relevant today in the wake of attempts by a number of fissiparous forces that impede progress. From times immemorial, Indians believed in the concept of 'Sarva Dharma Sambhava' and have prayed for peace and harmony. We have upheld the principle of peaceful coexistence. It is time for us to recall and revitalize the well-springs of our rich civilization.

Swami Vivekananda can provide our society the eternal fountain of 'ananda' (happiness) springing out of 'viveka' wisdom. ■

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.

Swami Vivekananda

Education and Secularism

Dr Jyotsna Bhattacharjee

Our country seems to be going through a devastating crisis. Several incidents like communal strife, religious hatred, attacks on temples, churches and other religious places have clearly indicated the importance of secular education in the educational institutions. We often hear of various kinds of vandalism perpetrated in diverse religious places. Such incidents have demonstrated the intolerance of some people towards others' religion. The dictionary meaning of religion is that it is a particular system of faith and worship. It is supposed to unite people. But now we see that religion is dividing the people instead of uniting them. Whether it is the Upanishads, or the Bible, or the Quran, all these religious texts teach the followers the value of love and devotion. Violence is repugnant to every religion. All religious texts suggest various ways to attain God or the Absolute Reality. Hence the aim of every religion is same, only the means are different.

Unfortunately most people belonging to diverse faiths do not seem to understand the true significance of religion. They have vitiated the true spirit of religion by misinterpreting the teachings of their religions. Sages and scholars through the ages have taught people to respect all religions. Our ways may be different, but God is the same. As Swami Vivekananda said: "Religion does not consist in dogmas and creeds, temples and churches, rituals and ceremonies..... It is the manifestation of divinity, already in man"

Indian philosophers since ancient era have believed that divinity is potentially existent in every man. But due to various factors the divinity stays dormant and it has to be made actual by every individual by properly following the religious exercises and the moral principles. If we ponder over the religious texts of diverse religions, we will find that they all suggest ways to make us better human beings. In ancient era people in general adhered to high moral values. But today all the values seem to have been lost and people are committing heinous

crimes in the name of religion. Hence it has become very important to impart right education to children, so that they can work for the welfare of humanity and can make themselves better human beings. They must bring out the divinity lying quiescent in the mind.

From history we learn that education was never regarded as the responsibility of the government in ancient India. The medieval rulers occasionally sponsored arts, but education for people in general was never considered as important enough to be the responsibility of the state. As far as we know from ancient literature, children from the royal households and from the aristocratic families were sent to the hermitages of famed gurus or preceptors who were well-known for their skill and accomplishments. They were venerated by the populace, including the rulers of the kingdom. The disciples lived in the hermitages and they were looked after by the Guru and the Gurumata as their own children. The state control of education did not even arise.

In that age the study of religion was considered to be an integral part of education and the character of young pupils was supposed to be moulded according to the religious model. From the ancient literature we learn about Ashramite education. The disciples were taught religion, morality, warfare and all the necessary things which would be needed for success and happiness in their future lives. Their education was not confined to merely books. It was a practical kind of education, which taught them the rules of life. They had to do hard work according to the command of their preceptors. They were given necessary training to face any situation in future life. Moral, physical, spiritual and practical education was imparted to the disciples. The entire process of education depended on the will of the preceptor and it was totally free of state interference.

Then the British came and they started a new

mode of education policy. Initially they accepted the classical pattern. Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781 and Benaras Sanskrit College in 1792. A few years later Charles Grant tried to introduce a comprehensive system of English education, but he failed. Many schools were set up all around the country by the missionaries, pre-eminently by William Carey.

After securing firm control over the administration in India, the British took an active interest in education. People in general were apprehensive about the intention of foreign rulers. They were afraid that the British rulers wanted to impose Christianity in the country through western education. However in 1935 it was resolved that the objective of the British government would be to promote European literature and science amongst the “natives of India”.

The move to impart western education in schools was supported by the leading Indians of that era. But some people were opposed to the introduction of western education. However this apprehension appeared to be unfounded. The famous dispatch of Sir Charles Wood in 1854, which laid the foundation of modern education system in the universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, reiterated the sound principle of religions neutrality. The document said: “Government institutions were founded for the benefit of the whole population in India. Education should be strictly secular”.

It was mainly due to the apprehension of the people that the English rulers were trying to impose Christianity on the people of India, the revolt of 1857 occurred. The British government suppressed the revolt and after that the Queen’s Proclamation declared: “We declaim alike the right and desire to impose our religious beliefs and mode of worship on our subjects”.

Accordingly the first Education Commission was appointed in 1882 for the smooth running of the education system. The commission observed, “The declared neutrality of the state forbids it connecting the institution directly maintained by it with any one form of faith, and the other alternative of giving equal facilities in such institutions for the inculcation

of all forms of faith involve political difficulties, which are believed to be inseparable”. At the same time the commission recommended that an attempt might be made to prepare a moral text book based on the fundamental principles of religion. The word “religion” did not refer to any particular religion.

In 1884, the government of India advanced its response in the following way. “It is doubtful whether such a moral text book of morality, sufficiently vague and colorless to be accepted by the Christians, Hindus and Muslims would do much to remedy the defects or the shortcomings of such education”. The position of religious education remained the same till 1947.

After independence the government of India appointed the Education Commission in 1948, which was headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. It recommended that in degree courses the lives of great religious teachers, notably Buddha, Confucius, Zoroastrian, Christ, Ramanujan, Nanak, Muhammad and Kabir be taught. Dr. A. L. Mudaliar was the Chairman of the Secondary Education Commission and the commission suggested the holding of an assembly at the start of the day’s session with all the teachers and the students being present. It also suggested a denominational prayer at the assembly. Because of the constitutional provision of a secular state, the commission thought that religious education could not be imparted in schools except “on a voluntary basis and outside the regular school hours..... such instructions should be given to the children of the particular faith and with the consent of the parents and management concerned”.

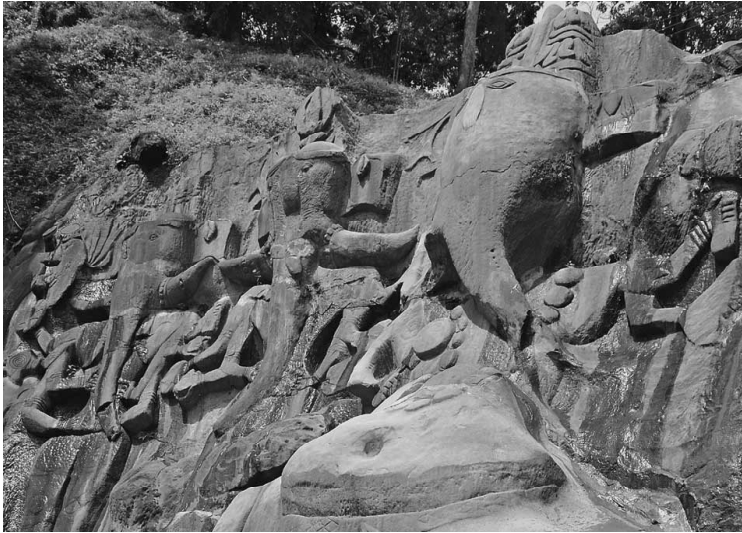
In 1959 the central Advisory Board of Education appointed a special committee to consider the education system. The committee was in favour of religious and moral instruction in educational institutions. The Kothari Commission also recommended education in social, moral and spiritual values. It proposed that a few hours in the time table may be set apart for religious and moral education, “as all religions stress upon certain fundamental qualities of character. ■

(The Sentinel , 31-12-2017)

The Unexplored Heritage Destinations in Tripura

Moupee Debroy

Every place has a story to tell. Every destination has a history that reveals much about the development of human civilization. It is these stories and revelations that make travelling all the more interesting. Northeastern part of India holds many such secrets and has destinations that will fascinate every traveler. Today, we are going to tell about



Boxanagar and Unakoti hills, the unexplored and lesser known parts of Tripura.

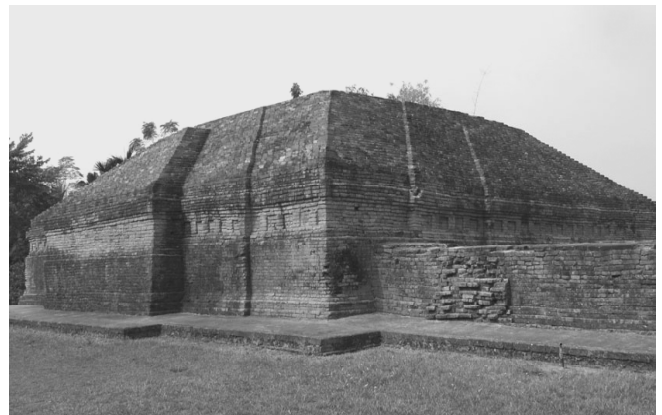
The 'lost hills of Unakoti' is unlike anything you have ever experienced in your years of travelling through various parts of India. It is an experience that cannot be ever valued in terms of money. However strange it may seem, this place is hardly known to people, let alone it being one major tourist attraction.

The word 'Unakoti' means one short of crore. Why the hills were named thus, has some fascinating stories associated with it. As you pass through the gates of Unakoti hills, you will feel like taking a step into a different world altogether. There are Shiva sculptures all across the hills and the number is close to unfathomable. As per the beliefs and sayings, there are 99,99,999 Shiva deities carved into those hills that date back to between 8th and 9th century. There are quite a few fascinating stories as to why there are so many deities carved into the hills. One of them states

that Lord Shiva and his entourage were passing through this place on their way to Kailash when they stopped here for the night. Shiva wanted to start early next morning but his entourage overslept. An angry Shiva cursed them all to be there for eternity and thus they adorn the hills till today. Another version of the story tells about Kallu Kumhar, a sculptor who had been tasked with the job to carve 1 crore deities of Shiva. However, he fell short by one deity. Whichever be the truth, the place is certainly a fascinating destination to visit.

There are many tales about the origin of Buddhism in India and each one is as much fascinating as the other. Boxanagar recently came into prominence when a Buddhist stupa dating back to the 6th century was discovered here. Today it is considered as one of the most important archaeological sites of India. Although you will not be able to find much information about the place, but the Buddhist stupa will certainly lead you to a most fascinating place to visit and that too within a really low budget.

There are many such places across India that we hardly know about and yet they all will amaze us if we give them a chance. A trip need not always be to the most popular tourist destinations. A trip to such unexplored destinations of lost heritage can be extremely rewarding and fascinating.



Witness of a rare event

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Fifteen years back I had just completed my masters and was planning for my next steps. My dissertation supervisor advised me to be part of a daylong field expedition planned for another scholar preparing her PhD dissertation under another guide. The proposal was really exciting, as I had no entrusted liabilities, except to share my experiences gathered through direct observation and interview. As planned we accomplished a field trip to Jonbeel mela, held half a km away from Jagiroad. On several later occasions, I had witnessed the event and attempted to explore the changes in the significance of the event along with the time frame. It is observed that scholars, researchers have a keen interest on the unique features of the mela. What is unique? Mela is one of the most popular words among the Indians, an exaggeration of huge participation of masses, exhibition cum sale, entertainments and diverse ways of commercial activities under temporary sheds at the same time in a specified place. In Bharat, Kumba mela, placed under the Unesco's heritage list, has been acknowledged at the global level. Apart from it, there are various micro and macro melas which are organized in the nook and corner of the country in the different period of a year. Among them, there are some melas that has a close nexus with a cultural heritage of a community. Jonbeel mela, one of the prime and significant events of this north eastern part of the country, reflect rich heritage of Tiwa identity and culture.

The value of money, currency in terms of rupee, dolar, euro, pound, toka (in Assamese), is known to all. My three and half year daughter asks me, 'papa ek toka eta dia, moi chocolate kham' (give me a coin of one rupee to buy a chocolate). She even, in spite of tender age, understands the importance of currency for getting a commodity. It is universal. Except gift and will, everything has a monetary value. This is part and parcel of modern economic systems. How society or people negotiate before introduction of such system?

Human society has passed through several stages of human development. Experts, scholars pointed out the existence of barter economy where goods are exchanged against goods, articles and commodities in the past that is rarely witnessed in the present times. In Guwahati, I have seen some kinds exchange offer among a group of traders, apart of giant commercial bonanza of exchange of vehicles. That group of traders used to visit door to door fetching old clothes in lieu of still kitchen appliances. They redesign it to make a sale as second hand items fixing new prize. Leaving it, there are no such instances of getting items without cash.

Conception of cash less economy is of paramount importance under the aegis of the present ruling government. History and ethnography reveals that traditional societies were mostly cash less even after introduction of currency. Furer Haimendorf, one of colonial scholars nicely carves out the cash less economy of Apatanis of Arunachal Pradesh in one his extensive studies (cattle to cash) till recent past. Under such circumstances, Jonbeel mela, is unique, as commodities are exchanged through barter; one can exchange the commodities, food stuffs, in lieu of other food items. Cash or money, has played no role throughout in the framework of traditional process. In the recently held mela, I make a test by offering money to procure jinger, from one of the participant (a hill Tiwa women), but it was declined to sale such items. Being ask the reason, she replied that it is against their traditions, beliefs and practices.

Jonbeel mela, held the distinction of such an event that act as a catalyzing agent in fostering peace, amity, brotherhood and melting pot of plain-hills communal harmony. The participating community includes Assamese, Tiwas from the plains while hill Tiwa, Karbi, Khasi, Jaintia from the neighboring hills of Karbi Anglong and Meghalaya. They usually used to come down with their jhum

products like turmeric, raw and dry chillies, pumkin, gourd, sesame, ginger, lac, indigo, mats, and other products, and exchanges with items like pitha (traditional cakes), gura khunda (fried rice powder) and fried fish from their counterpart in plains. Mela is usually held after bhogali (magh) bihu. The participating families from the plains used to prepare necessary items in abundance keeping view for the mela. The organizer of the mela is the Prachin Gobha Deoraja Jonbeel Mela Samiti, with due consent from Gobha Deoraja. It is known as Jonbeel mela, as it is held on the eastern bank of the beel that is moon (jon) shaped, located five kms from Jagiroad towards Morigaon.

It is a three day affair, started usually from a Thursday, inaugurated by the ceremonial king of Gobha kingdom and his court member and concludes on the succeeding Saturday. Ceremonial community fishing is part and parcel of the event. Available literature reveals that the Jaintia king, after defeating the Kachari king, extended his kingdom up to the Kolong-Kopili River and established 'Pachu'- a small Tiwa Kingdom. The kingdom was headed by a chief who was known as the Tiwa Deoraja. Gobha Deoraja was the most prominent and efficient ruler among them, till the annexation to British rule in 1835. Historical discourse reveals that earlier the mela was known as Jonbeel hat, Jonbeel bazaar and later on as Jonbeel mela. Further scholars like to justify that Jonbeel hat might have started during the reign of Potsing Raja who, with the help of Mohan Phador (an official) shifted the capital of Gobha kingdom from Arnsai (Umswai) to Gobha.

The mela begin with offering their prayers at the Gobha Deoraja Charibhai Deosal Shiva than at Deosal. It is declared open after hoisting the ceremonial flag. A feast is also arranged on the bank of the Jonbeel, and the present Gobha King used to join the feast with his ministers of councils. The participants, who usually stay for the two nights, in a temporary makeshift, are provided a ceremonial welcome by the king. Traditionally, a raj durber is held in the initiatives of Gobha Deoraja where all the 'Pacho' and 'Sato' Tiwa Rajas, Jaintia

Raja, Khoiram Raja used to take part. Basically, it is an assembly of 18 titular kings from various kingdoms in middle Assam namely, Nellie, Paschim Nagaon, Pub-Uttar Khola, Chahari, Silchung, Sara, Tetelia, Kumoi Kacharigaon, Kumoi, Sukunagog, Baghara, Tarani, Domal, Ghagua, Mayong, Dimoria, Khahigarh including Gova Tiwa Deoraja. Tiwa performing arts are the highlights of every night during the mela. The state government also used to take active participation by distributing 'raj bhatta' cheque to 18 titular rajas during the event.

The mela, though, still maintain its' sanctity in keeping a unique tradition alive, its goes beyond its' objectives due to economic transition in



contemporary times. Huge monetary transaction is seen among the buyers and sellers of various commodities of day to day life. The new businesses man, don't want to lost the opportunity of a huge assembly of people. Modern day artifacts from iron to wood, silver to aluminum, from plastic to dress items, and including foods, are available in other side of the mela. The organizers, though cannot resist the advent of modernization, but successful in demarcating tradition from modernity by segregating the venue within. Though, there is a gap of fifteen years of empirical observation, for me, the existence of barter, compel me to remain as witness of a rare event in the modern days. ■

Education is the foundation of development

Sri Gegong Apang, Former Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh inaugurated the 2-day Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Government Primary School, Yemsing in Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh on 26th December, 2017 in the presence of the first graduate from Yemsing village, Sri Tator Dupak, several high Government officials, prominent public leaders, Teachers and both past and present students. The celebrations were organised to recall the memories of the fateful day of 12th February, 1967 on which the school was started with 19 students and one locally appointed private teacher, Sri Galong Taloh.

Dwelling on the subject of education Sri Gegong Apang said that education is the foundation of development of every society and family and appealed to the parents to cooperate with teachers in moulding their children in the right direction. He said that every child has the right to education and

that all children should get quality education. He congratulated the school's Management Committee for the milestone it has achieved and stressed that cordial relations between teachers, students, and the parents are very important ingredients for maintaining proper academic environment in the schools. Sri Apang further advised that it is equally important that the school's students should be respectful towards their teachers and elders and keep themselves updated on current affairs, take interest in co-curricular activities for personality development.

The community leaders of the village and the public in general commended the contribution of Sri Dakmo Jini, the then Circle Officer for helping in establishing the school in the remote Yemsing in the early '60s. They also recalled the initiatives taken by Sri Gegong Apang in bringing road connectivity and electrification in the area during the late '80s.

ONGC adopts a Tripura village

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has adopted the Korbongpara village in Western Tripura District to provide basic amenities, including educational support, healthcare, drinking water etc as part of the company's policy to reach out to the commonest of common people through its CSR.

The Korbong tribe, who inhabit the Korbongpara village located in the hills of Western Tripura, is on the verge of extinction, and today, has only 31 families. The initiative, a first of its kind, is aimed at providing self-sustaining livelihood and to revitalise the Korbong tribe as well as to develop their habitation into a model village.

Inaugurating the project, Dr. Ranjit Debbarma, Chairman, Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC, Khumulung) said that "ONGC has been one of the main partners in the progress of Tripura and improving the quality of life in the state."

ONGC has granted financial support to

Korbongpara for providing facilities like community centre, market shed, sanitation, drinking water and irrigation, internal road connectivity, education centres and provision of quality healthcare.

The project would create income generation opportunities for the villagers through pisciculture, duck and goat rearing, piggery farm and crossbred cattle schemes.

Speaking during the inauguration ceremony, Sri V P Mahawar, Director (Onshore) ONGC said "Korbongpara model village is a part of rural developmental programme taken up by the company to develop India's North East, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is indeed a moment of pride for ONGC, offering its first model village with all the facilities of sustainable livelihood in Tripura." Sri Mahawar said that more such initiatives will be taken under CSR. Sri D.D. Misra,

(Contd. to Page 16)

Tribe: Derogatory Appellations

Dr Satish Kr Ganjoo* & Reshma Rekhung**

The word “Tribe” occurs in 12th century English literature as referring to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The word is from old French “tribu”, in turn from Latin tribus, referring to original tripartite ethnic division of the Ancient Roman state: Ramnes (Ramnenses), Tities (Titienses) and Luceres. Ramnes named after Romulus, leader of the Latins; Tities after Titus Tatius, leader of the Sabines; and, Luceres after Lucomus, leader of an Etruscan army. It is assumed that the etymology of tribe is from Proto-Indo-European roots - tri (“three”), bheu “to be”. According to Gregory Nagy, Trifun is derived from a combination of “Tri”-and “bhu” (from Greek Phyle), where the second element is cognate with the Greek root φέρω “to bring forth” and the Greek φυλή “clan, race, people” (plural phylai φάλαξ). The Greek polis (“state” or “city”) was, like the Roman state, divided into three phylai. Europe in the late medieval era, used to write the Bible mostly in New Latin, so instead of tribus the word phyle (derived from the Greek φυλή) was generally used. In the historical sense, “tribe”, “race” and “clan” have often been used interchangeably.

Later the word has been widely used by Roman historians and Politicians such as Julius Caesar, Tacitus and so on with reference to ethnic group living in a place called Germania (land on east bank of the Rhine opposite Gaul). There were several Germanic tribes such as Goths (Ostrogoths and Visigoths), Burgundians, Lombards, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Suebi, Alamanni, Gepids, Scirii, Franks and Vandals among many others. These tribes along with Hunnic, Slavic and Avars were moving within or into Europe in the middle of the first millennium AD during the Migration Period (375 C.E). Caesar, Tacitus and others noted the difference of the culture of these people to the culture of the opposite side and specifically used to refer it as wild and dangerous region, less civilized than Gaul (Western Europe), so will require additional military

vigilance. These Germanic people belonging to the Migration Period had settled down during the early Middle Ages (5th-10th century CE) eventually stretching from contemporary Europe to Iceland and from Norway to North Africa.

During the colonial period the nomenclature “Tribe” was popularized by the British from Eurocentric world view throughout their colonies for the several small ethnic groups which were little backward economically and whose political and social systems were based strongly on their traditional customs. In India the British ruled (1757-1947) with the policy of “Divide and Rule”. In every possible manner they tried to rule the country by dividing the population so that they could extend their power to as much larger territory as possible. They established their factories in almost all the well established cities and conquered most of the Indian subcontinent through various treacherous methods and battles. As for example the Battle of Plassey (1757), Battle of Buxar (1764), Anglo Mysore War (1799), and Anglo-Maratha Wars (1817-19) and so on. They entered Assam and the state completely came under political control of Bengal Province which was under British administration in 1826. With their rule in Assam they started Anthropological surveys to record the physical, linguistic, ethnic and religious affinities of the various ethnic group inhabiting the then North East Frontier Agency. The census conducted from 1865-1947 during colonial era were more to accomplish the needs of the British agenda for governance and social engineering rather than to uncover the underlying structure of the population. According to Mr. Michael Mann, the census exercise was more British-oriented for the administrative needs than of the social reality for the Indian people. The data for “caste”, “religion”, “profession” and “age” was collected with a purpose to manipulate the structure and political overtones of Indian society. The Census Commissioner for India, Mr. J. H. Hutton, entered the word ‘caste, tribe

or race' in the census of 1931. He said that "the term caste needs no definition in India; 'tribe' was provided to cover the many communities whose caste identity was yet to be determined. " The term race was deliberately not used for 'tribe.' Later several British officials and anthropologists worked for conducting an anthropological survey of the so called 'Tribes' under the patronage of British Government. Sri S. K. Tiwari in 'Tribal Roots in Hinduism' says, "When India was slave, the British and other European authors wrote what was in the interest of British Colonial establishment." They tried to show that tribal culture and religion were different from the main religion of India (Hinduism). Many priests and missionaries worked as anthropologists with an evangelist bent of mind. Their sinister efforts were to prove that these ethnic groups were different from the people of India. Many evidences related to Buddhism and Hinduism such as the existence of their deities and temples were ignored or referred casually. The first of such works was Rev. Hislop's papers on 'Aboriginal Tribes of the Central Provinces' edited by Sir R. Temple (1866). Sir Glassford, Mr. C. B. Lucie Smith, Mr. R. Temple, Mr. C. Grant made a contribution in 'establishing' the tribes as 'distinct' people of India. The European missionaries like Reverend J. Cain spent their lives in India to write that tribals had no 'religion' or 'culture' of their own". Mr. Verrier Elwin, who was appointed as Advisor to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Affairs, was in fact formally educated for the missionary work. He belonged to a family of Christian priests and largely supported Britain based publication house which was donated to the church he was associated with. He is criticized by Sri V.S. Ghurye for his academic thought particularly "National Park Policy". He thought that the policy was plainly a British policy of disintegration. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia criticized him for his role in converting large number of North Eastern population into Christianity.

When the tribes were told that they were different from the mainstream population of India and made them feel distinct from the rest of the people by telling them that they had no association with the population of India neither in culture nor

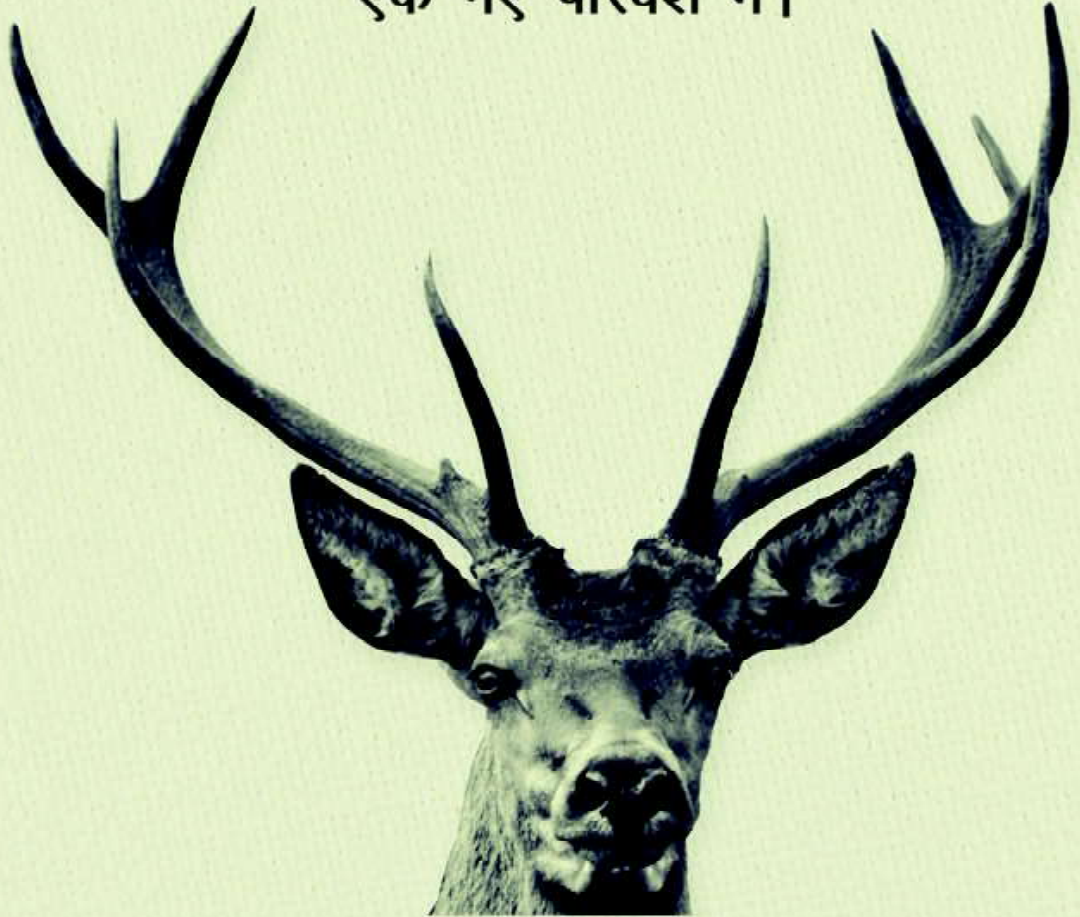
in religion, it became very easy to convert them in Christianity. They were told that their Gods or folk heroes were cruel and immortal. They were also persuaded to believe that their deities, which were in fact Hindu Gods in corrupted form or shape, were not Hindu gods or goddesses at all but tribal gods. This was deliberately done to dissociate them from the culture and religion of larger group of India. Mr. Verrier Elwin had crossed the limit of portraying tribal gods as vice, different from Hindu gods or worthless when he wrote one excerpt in his book 'Myths of Middle India'; "The English invaders came but found the Gond too strong for them. But the Englishmen have great wisdom... They decided to sacrifice a cow and human beings to Bara pen. They sacrificed a Panka boy and a cow. Bara pen was pleased and went over their side.... Now Bara Pen is only a name. We worship him, but he has no power, for his is in the hands of English." Another example which supported the fact that the British tried to show the identity of Tribals as different from the rest of the Indians when "C. Von Haimendorfs gives a really strange example in which a single deity has been described as "tribal" in one instance and "non tribal"(Hindu) in another, in his book "Tribes of India"(1982). Since the book deals with this subject the readers may see the hidden point of 'Separate identity'." They tried in every possible manner to change the mentality of the backward or uneducated people whom they called as tribe. It is obvious that when a person is converted into different religion his sentiments also become different from his fellowmen. In this way the Britishers believed that if the tribal population can be converted into Christianity, these people will remain more akin to British on the basis of their religion rather than Indians. They will be easy to exploit, dominate, and rule.

Another injustice which was done to the Tribal population was that the British transferred the epithet "wild", "savage", "barbarous" and "primitive" which were used by Romans for the British ancestors before the theory of Nation states to the so called 'tribes'. Throughout the history from Colonial Era till date these characteristics had blended or stick together with the word "Tribe". If the word tribe is



Jonbeel Mela

रुडयार्ड किपलिंग ने
उन्हें अपनी कल्पनाओं
में बसाया और अब हम
उन्हें बसा रहे हैं,
एक नए परिवेश में।



“ओएनजीसी बारासिंघा (ईस्टर्न स्वैम्प डीअर) संरक्षण परियोजना”
एक दुर्लभ प्रजाति को विलुप्त होने से बचाने के लिए
ओएनजीसी की सीएसआर पहल।

असम में पाये जाने वाले बारासिंघा या ईस्टर्न स्वैम्प डीअर (*Rucervus duvaucelii ranjitsinhi*) आज विलुप्त होने की कगार पर है। प्रसिद्ध लेखक रुडयार्ड किपलिंग ने जिस से मंत्रमुग्ध हो कर उसकी सुन्दरता को अपनी दूसरी किताब 'द सेकंड जंगल बुक' में कैद किया हो, उस जीव के लिये यह काफी दुखद स्थिति है।

ओएनजीसी ने इस प्रजाति को विलुप्त होने से बचाने के लिये अपने कदम बढ़ाये, और वो भी बिल्कुल सही समय पर।

इसके पहले चरण के अन्तर्गत इनकी अनुमानित आबादी, अनुकूल पर्यावरण, पशु-चिकित्सा अंतःक्षेप एवं सामान्य अध्ययन और जागरूकता अभियान किया गया। इनके स्थानांतरण के लिये मानस राष्ट्रीय उद्यान को चुना गया, जो इनके रहने के लिये बिल्कुल उपयुक्त स्थान था।

काजीरंगा राष्ट्रीय उद्यान से 19 बारासिंघो को मानस में स्थानांतरित करना बहुत ही कठिन काम था। योजना के इस अत्यंत कठिन दूसरे चरण को दक्षिण अफ्रीका से बुलाये गये वन्यजीव विशेषज्ञों ने बहुत खास तरीके से अंजाम दिया। 19 बारासिंघो का स्थानांतरण खास तंबुओ में किया गया, जिनको अन्दर से उनके प्राकृतिक आवास जैसा ही बनाया गया था। कुछ ही महीनों में 6 नवजात बारासिंघो ने झुण्ड में जुड़कर, स्थानांतरण की खुशी को दुगना कर दिया।

इस योजना के विस्तार के तीसरे चरण के अन्तर्गत 20 अतिरिक्त बारासिंघो का स्थानांतरण किया जा रहा है।

यह परियोजना संतुलित पर्यावरण की ओर ओएनजीसी की एक शुरुआत है। लुप्तप्राय प्रजातियों का संरक्षण करने के लिये प्रेरित, हमारा संगठन प्रकृति की असली सुंदरता को बनाये रखने के लिये प्रतिबद्ध है।



ऑयल एण्ड नेचुरल गैस कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड

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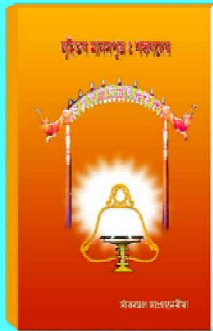
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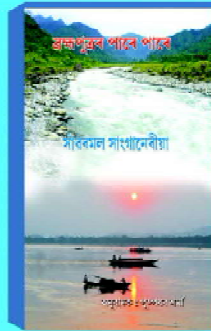
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হেৰিটেজ ফাউণ্ডেশ্যনৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰকাশিত কেইখনমান আপুৰুগীয়া গ্ৰন্থ :

হিন্দী ভাষাৰ সুলেখক আৰু ধৰ্মশাস্ত্ৰৰ বুৎপত্তিবান সদাশয় অসমপ্ৰেমী ব্যক্তি ড° সাঁৰবমল সাংগানেৰীয়াৰ ক্ষেত্ৰভিত্তিক অধ্যয়নৰ অপূৰ্ব ফচল শ্ৰীমন্ত শংকৰদেৱ, ব্ৰহ্মপুত্ৰ উপত্যকা আৰু অৰুণাচলৰ জন-সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক তিনিখন আপুৰুগীয়া গ্ৰন্থ-



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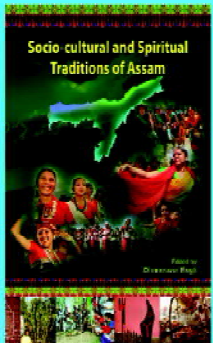


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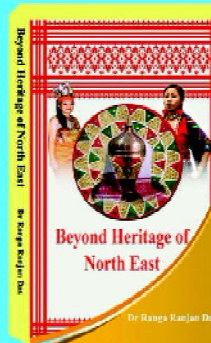


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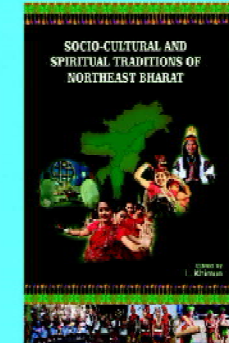
অসম তথা উত্তৰ-পূব ভাৰতৰ জনজাতিসকলৰ সমাজ-সংস্কৃতি-আধ্যাত্মিক পৰম্পৰা বিষয়ক ইংৰাজী ভাষাৰ তিনিখন প্ৰামাণ্য গ্ৰন্থ -



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প্ৰাপ্তি স্থানঃ

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used it has become a synonym for 'Primitivism, savagery, barbarianism or wilderness.' The motive behind extreme characterization of the so called tribal people with these characteristics was only that they wanted to tell the world that these people were uncivilized. For which the British rule was necessary in order to civilized these beast headed Tribals. In fact when the European people were not even properly settled in their respective nations Indians were already well established and even at the height of their Civilization. The kings and religious teachers from India already frequented different regions of the World for spreading Indian Religion and culture. When the Europeans were not even settled properly the greatest of the Hindu Temples were already built. "Indian Culture particularly Hindu-Buddhist culture not only reached the pinnacle but was flourishing in South East Asia. Java was ruled by the illustrious Hindu Kings up to 1500. Angkor Vat, the greatest Hindu architecture outside India was the creation of Surya Varman, the king of Cambodia (c1113-c1150 A.D). The older religious epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana were already known throughout most of the East Asian Countries. Indian religions had already given new spiritual heights to the crude totemistic beliefs and rituals, centuries back before the West could conceive the idea of 'Animism' or 'totemism' which they associate with the Tribal religious faith and Culture.

Actually when Marco Polo who travelled Asia and recreated Asia for the European mind could not sub- due his temptation of writing Indians as beast headed. Marco Polo in his return journey from China to his home land passed through Malaya Peninsula, Sumatra and Indian Islands of Andaman and Nicobars. There actually he saw the beast headed Tribals. In this way European thought India was inhabited by beast headed tribes. But in fact most of the tribal population which lives in North Eastern Region of India today they are very different from those which Europeans thought and portrayed in their writings. Dr. Laurence Augustine Waddell in his book "The Tribes of Brahmaputra Valley" also could not restrain himself from using the words such as "savage", "wild", "barbarous" and so on. He even began his writings as, "Few of the

wilder parts of the world, still left, preserve such a vast variety of savage tribes of such great ethnological interest as the mountainous valley of the mighty Brahmaputra in its course from Lower Tibet to the Bay of Bengal. He described every tribe of this region with an adjectives like "war like", "savage", "wild". He starts his description in regard with each tribe as, "Abhor (now Adi). The Abors, a wild independent Mongoloid tribe at the north eastern end of the Brahmaputra Valley, are amongst the most savage and least accessible of all the Tribes." They are even compared to the "dreaded cannibals", 'Black Lo Savages'. About Angami Tribes he writes, "The turbulent Angamis' are the most warlike and bloodthirsty as well as the numerically largest of all the wild head-hunting 'Naga' tribes and the finest in physique". Regarding Ao Nagas the description goes as,"A large warlike tribes of Nagas..." "Asringia and Ching Meg Nu as outlying sections of 'Naked' Nagas" Singpho written as Chingpho is described as "This aggressive tribe of hardy highlanders..." Mishmi tribe's definition starts with "This tribe is of special interest not only on account of its inveterate barbarism..." He says that "our Government was content to leave them and their country alone, except for an occasional expedition and the establishment of a few military outposts to punish a particular tribe for raiding or massacring British subjects". Thus, we can conclude that Europeans (British) were never interested in the welfare of our people. Everything was done for the benefit of their government.

According to the Dr. Ravi Shanker Prasad and Prof. (Dr) Pramod Kumar Sinha, "To justify the enlistment of communities under the "Scheduled Tribes", the government of India did make several criteria...The list of criteria includes "tribal language, animism, permissivity, hunting and gathering, 'carnivorous in food habits, 'naked and semi naked,' and fond of drinking and dance'.".....

(*Dr. Satish Kumar Ganjoo is the Chair Professor, Chair for Tribal Studies in Central University of Himachal Pradesh and **Ms. Reshma Rekhung is a Researcher, Chair for Tribal Studies in the same University.)

(Contd. to next issue)

2018 Padmashree awardees from North East

This year nine personalities from Northeast India made their respective states and the region proud by being selected for the Padmashree Award 2018 for their contribution in various fields of work.

Sri Prafulla Govinda Baruah, Ex-Editor and the present Managing Director of The Assam Tribune Group, a promoter of Cancer awareness (Assam) was chosen for the award for his contribution in the field of Literature and Education-Journalism. Smt. Saikhom Mirabai Chanu (Manipur), the second women weightlifter in India to win gold medal at the Senior World Weightlifting Championships, was presented the award for her contribution in the field of sports (Weightlifting). Smt. Langpoklakpam Subadani Devi (Manipur): A traditional weaver, was presented the award for promoting and preserving



traditional way of making clothes. Sri Somdev Devvarman (Tripura) received recognition for his contribution in the field of sports (Tennis). Sri Arup Kumar Dutta (Assam), Writer and Journalist, 'India's own Enid Blyton' received the honour for his contribution in the field of Literature and Education. Mr. Piyong Temjen Jamir (Nagaland), Smt. Joyshree Goswami Mahanta (Assam) and Mr.



A Zakia (Mizoram) were also selected for the honour for their contribution in the field of Literature and Education. Ms. Lentina Ao Thakkar (Nagaland), the Utu' (Grandmother), a Gandhian from decades old Gandhi Ashram in Chuchui lang village of Nagaland

was chosen for the coveted award for her contribution in the field of Social Work.

(Contd. from Page 12)

ONGC adopts a Tripura village

Director (HR) ONGC, who has been the force behind ONGC's CSR activities, said "it has always been a focus area of the company to reach out to the grassroot-level in terms of providing support for education, healthcare and skill-development. It is a proud feeling to promote Korbongpara as a model village." Congratulating the project team, Sri Shashi Shanker, CMD, ONGC, said, "The turnaround of the village into a smart village in one year's time is a remarkable achievement. We at ONGC, are committed to the upliftment of the marginalised sections of the society."

ONGC identified the village as part of its CSR outreach for uplifting the quality of lives of the villagers. The initiative has already started paying off as has been witnessed by the increase in education standards in the recent exams.

ONGC is one of the major spenders on CSR in the country. In the year 2016-17, ONGC spent Rs 526 crore on its various CSR projects. Education, healthcare, sanitation, water facilities, women empowerment and livelihood creation are its major focus areas.

Bravery Awards to NE Youths

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday presented the National Bravery Awards to 18 children including 10 from Northeast. The Prime Minister said their deeds of bravery will inspire other children and instill a sense of self-confidence in their hearts.

While congratulating the awardees, the Prime Minister remarked that most of the awardees are from rural and humble backgrounds and perhaps their daily struggles had helped instill resilience in them to deal courageously in adverse situations. He wished them well in their future endeavours.

The Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi, was present on the occasion. F Lalchhandama (17) from Mizoram and Loukrakpam

Rajeshwori Chanu (15) from Manipur have been awarded posthumously. Betschwajohn Peinlang (14) of Meghalaya has been awarded with the Babu Gaidhani Award for rescuing his 3-year-old brother from their burning house. Other recipients of the award are Mansha N, N Shangpon Konyak, Yoaknei and Chingai Wangsa – all from Nagaland, Zonuntluanga from Mizoram, and Maurice Yengkhom (14) and Chongtham Kuber Meitei (12) from Manipur. The awards are categorized into five sections – Bharat Award, Geeta Chopra Award, Sanjay Chopra Award, Babu Gaidhani Award, and General National Bravery Awards. The awards carry a medal, a certificate and a cash prize. The award winners will receive financial assistance until they complete their schooling.

RSS keeps Indians safe

After the Constitution, democracy and the armed forces, the RSS is the factor that has made people in India safe, and that the idea of secularism should not be kept away from religion, retired Supreme Court judge K T Thomas has said. Addressing an RSS instructors' training camp in Kottayam recently, Justice (Retd.) Thomas also said that, "If an organization has to be given credit for freeing the country from the Emergency, I would give that to the RSS."

Justice (Retd.) Thomas said he feels the Sangh imparts discipline to its volunteers for "protection of the country". He said: "Snakes have venom as a weapon to defend (themselves against) attacks on them. Similarly, the might of man is not meant to attack anyone. I appreciate the RSS for teaching and believing that physical strength is meant to guard (oneself) against attacks. I understand that the physical training of RSS is to defend the country and the society at the time of attacks." He further stated that "If asked why people are safe in India, I would say that there is a Constitution in the country, there is democracy, there are the armed forces, and

fourthly the RSS is there. What prompts me to say is that the RSS had worked against the Emergency. The RSS's strong and well-organized work against the Emergency had reached the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.... She understood that it could not go (on for) long."

On the concept of secularism, the former apex court judge said that the idea should not be kept away from religion, and that the Constitution has not defined secularism. "The minorities use secularism for their protection, but the concept of secularism is much more than that. It means that dignity of every individual should be protected. The dignity of a person should be seen above partisan approach, influences and activities," he said.

Stating that he does not agree with the notion that secularism is meant to protect religion, Thomas said: "In India, the word Hindu evokes a religion, but it should be a substitute for a culture. That was why the word Hindustan is being used. In the past, Hindustan had inspired everyone, now that word has been set apart for the RSS and the BJP."

(Contd. to Page 21)

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'GOD'?

Maria Wirth

We keep using the English term “God” as if we know what it means. But do we? “Of course”, many may reply: “God is the English term for the Creator of the universe, for the Highest Truth.”

Few will doubt that this universe and we included have to come from somewhere and ‘God’ is given as the answer. He is seen as the ultimate power, the highest truth, from which all else emanates. Yet somehow, ‘God’ has taken on strange attributes in public perception: He is invariably male, and has allegedly spoken to a few special persons and told them what he wants from us humans.

He is also said to be compassionate and loves those who believe in him and who follow the instructions sent down through those special people, but he won’t have any mercy for those who don’t follow his specific instructions. They will be sent to eternal hellfire.

Somehow this Abrahamic view of God has taken predominance, may be because the majority of humans are either Christians or Muslims. This view is reinforced and fear of eternal hell is instilled in children generation after generation. Even as adults, most don’t question their belief. It has become part of their mental make-up. And there is comfort in believing that one has the ‘right’ belief in the ‘true’ God and belongs to a big group of like-minded people, which will stand up for this God and defend him ferociously against any criticism.

However, though Christianity and Islam go both back to Abraham and have similar views regarding the creator, each one insist that its own God alone is the true one.

Therefore, they see it as their divinely ordained duty to make the whole world believe in their particular God. That means, Christianity claims all must become Christians, and Islam claims all must become Muslims to gain entry into heaven, and they can be (and have been) ruthless in pursuing their goal.

Both are united in claiming that those who worship many gods are the worst offenders in the eyes of their “only true” God and this ‘evil’ needs to be wiped out. So they feel justified in defaming especially Hindus

whom they see as “idol-worshippers”.

This notion of God needs urgent scrutiny – not only by outsiders, but also by insiders. Is it possible that the Supreme is a sort of superhuman entity and heavily biased towards his followers and unforgiving towards ‘others’?

Are there different views? Here, ancient India comes in.

In ancient times, long before Christianity or Islam appeared, Vedic Dharma (today called Hinduism) had a very mature understanding of the Highest Truth which is generally called Brahman (there are other names, like Paramatman or Tat).

Brahman is not personal, not a superhuman entity, not male or female, but the most subtle, invisible, conscious, one basis of all. The Rishis meditated on the truth and came out with astonishing insights. They declared, “Brahman is not what the eyes can see, but that whereby the eyes can see. Brahman is not what the mind can think but that whereby the mind can think” (Kena Upanishad).

They realized that this universe is a kind of wrong perception of Brahman, completely dependent on it but not the real thing. An example is given: we mistake in dim light a rope for a snake. The snake is not real, but since we believe it is real, we jump and run and our hearts beat heavily. Yet when we realise that the snake is a rope, all fear is gone.

The Rishis give another example how it is possible to miss the truth though it is right in front of our eyes: we go to a potters shop. We see all types of cups and jugs, but we miss to see the mud from which they are made. The mud is the essence of the temporary form of a cup. It remains after the cup is broken.

Similarly, Brahman is the essence of our person and remains when our person has ceased to exist.

Yet do the Rishis have any proof for their view?

Unlike the clergy of Christianity and Islam, who rely basically on a story book, the Rishis vigorously and intelligently enquired into truth which is

reflected in the ancient texts, especially the Upanishads. For example, they had criteria for what is true:

One: it must be at all times – past, present and future,

Two: it must not need anything else to shine or in other words, it has to be self- evident.

Those two criteria dismiss the whole universe as untrue. Apart from the fact that it was not always, it also needs something to ‘shine’ – it needs consciousness.

So what is left after the universe is dismissed as not true? The Rishis claim that the extremely subtle,

conscious basis of everything is left. It means that it is here right now as the source of our awareness. It is not some separate thing at some different place. It is our very being and therefore



there is a chance to ‘realise’ (know it as real) by turning inwards to what is unchanging and true in us beneath the ever-changing activity of our mind and develop devotion for it.

Unfortunately, we miss out on being aware of this source of our awareness because we prefer to look outside and hardly make an attempt to stop the mental chatter once in a while. This is unfortunate, because the Rishis claim that our essence is not only the source of valuable inspiration, but is also most blissful – far more blissful than what any worldly enjoyment can give. And the Rishis spoke from experience.

So the English term “God” is actually not denoting the absolute, highest Truth, but a great power in this manifested reality – more on the level of the “gods” in Hinduism, whom these two religions so despise.

The Vedic gods are mainly personified powers who are, as it were, in charge of running our world and on whose benevolence humans depend for a happy life. They however, unlike the two Abrahamic gods, do not condemn anyone eternally to hell if people fail to propitiate them.

It is strange that the Christian and Muslim theologians don’t realize that their understanding of God as a personal, separate, biased entity cannot be the ultimate truth. Scientists have realized it. In fact, some scientists are aware that the ultimate truth that they seek is in all likelihood the Brahman of ancient India, and many big names in modern science, though those names sound Jewish or Christian, were inspired

by India’s ancient wisdom – from Voltaire, Schopenhauer, Schroedinger, Heisenberg, Oppenheimer, Einstein till Steve Jobs and Elon Musk.

Maybe the clergy of Christianity and Islam don’t want to

realise it, as the present set-up suits them in pursuing their goal of world dominion. The threat that God will send those, who don’t do what the clergy tells them to do, eternally to hell is surely a powerful incentive for the ‘believers’ to stay in line. At the same time, it puts their intellect into a strait jacket and is an affront to human intelligence.

Hindus escaped this strait jacket. They are not told what to believe. Most of them don’t believe in God or gods, but they are sure that Brahman is the truth and the gods are at least as real as our persons are real – temporary aspects of the one eternal Brahman. This intellectual freedom may well be the reason why all over the world their intelligence is acknowledged and admired – and this in spite of the fact that Indian students need to take this huge, unfair hurdle of studying in a foreign language.

Celebration of Gaan-Ngai festival

Gaan Ngai, one of the biggest festivals of the Zeliangrong community in the State of Manipur, was celebrated at the State level on Sunday, the December 31, 2017, with fanfare on its opening day at Ngarian (Reangzang) in Churachandpur district. The post-harvest festival will continue for five days across Zeliangrong Naga inhabited areas of the entire northeast, particularly in the states of Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. In Manipur, the festival is particularly popular in the valley districts of Imphal West, Imphal East, Bishnupur, Thoubal and Kakching. Organised by the State Level Gaan Ngai Celebration Committee, the five-day festivities saw the presence of several dignitaries of the State. The programme was officially opened with the oblation of holy wine, which was followed by a traditional music and dance programme this morning

The festival began with lighting of the holy fire by Zeliangrong youths followed by congregational prayer before the community's deity and staging of traditional folk dances. Besides daily religious activities, the following days of the festival witnessed entertainment and sports events, grand feasts and exchange of gifts. The community also honoured their ancestors during the festival.

Chief Minister Sri N Biren Singh hoped that the festival would bring happiness and prosperity besides spreading the message of unity and brotherhood amongst all the communities in the state. The Hon'ble Governor of Manipur Mrs Najma Heptulla In her greetings for the occasion said that the festival showcases the rich cultural heritage of the Zeliangrong community. She also wished that the New Year will be full of hope and aspiration with Gaan-Ngai bringing in peace and harmony to everyone in the state.

Speaking as the Chief Guest, Chairman of the Hills Area Committee Mr. T Thangzalam Haokip expressed his pleasure over celebration of a State-level Gaan Ngai festival in Ngarian that falls under his Assembly constituency, Henglep and informed that it was even more delightful that this was the first time that he

was taking part in the festival.

Mr. Pouchalung Kamei (Khullakpa of Ngarian), Mr. Ph Chingkhudunpou (Khullakpa of Chinikom) and Mr. Makukonpou Kamei (leader, Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak) attended the event as the members of the presidium. Mr. Adim Patmei, Vice Chairperson (Manipur State Disaster Management Authority) and Mr. Athuan Abonmei, President, Zeliangrong Baudi, Assam, Nagaland and Manipur and UNC's Committee for Alternative Arrangement Chairman Mr. Asinpou Gangmei were also present as the guest of honour and special guests respectively.



Mr. Haokip stated that the festival was mainly organized by friends and neighbors in the past and lamented that he failed to take part in the festivities earlier due to his compelling preoccupations. He conveyed his best wishes to the Zeliangrong people and all the citizens of the State on this auspicious day of the Zeliangrong community.

Meanwhile, the 23rd State Level Gaan Ngai was also held simultaneously at the Zeliangrong Union office at Paona Bazaar where villagers, elders and members of ZCC and SLGCC assembled together at 4.00 a.m. and took part in the customary rituals. The gathering was welcomed by Mr. Amu Kamei, President, and ZU while Mr. Chandra Haomei, Vice President ZU, offered the Vote of Thanks. The day's events concluded with a Gaan Ngai feast at the ZU office.

An Indian takes yoga to Afghanistan

Md. Ghulam Askari Zaidi, a young yoga teacher from Haridwar is quietly making waves in Afghanistan, spreading the ancient Indian science of harmonization of body, mind and the spirit to a rising number of yoga enthusiasts in that country.

In a short span of time since he based himself in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif, Md. Zaidi, in his mid-30s, has helped popularize yoga among numerous young and not-so-young Afghans. Originally from Lucknow, Md. Zaidi was sent to Afghanistan for a year by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR). Md. Zaidi has been involved with the Yoga Foundation at Mazar-e-Sharif, once the hub of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, set up by the Afghanistan Olympic Committee's Zonal Unit in collaboration with the Indian consulate there.

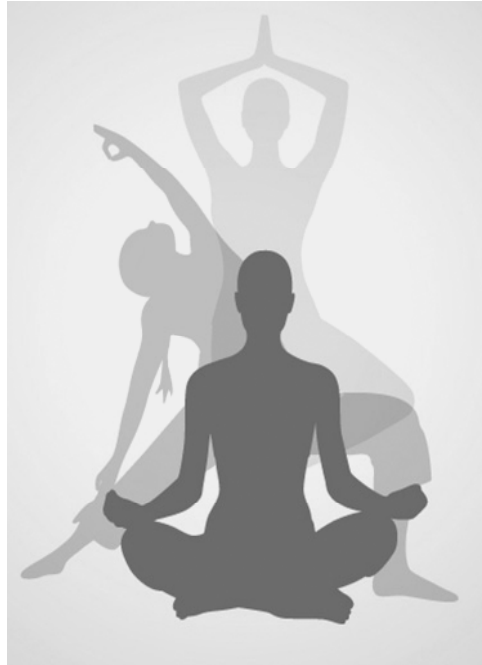
Md. Zaidi said that people in Afghanistan were most enthusiastic about yoga. "They have been attracted to yoga because of the health benefits they can get from it as well as spiritual well-being. Some are also interested in teaching and promoting yoga in other countries. And with all the conflict and war around them, they find yoga soothing," he said.

Md. Zaidi's yoga classes are held mostly within the

premises of the Indian consulate at Mazar-e-Sharif. "The classes attract both male and female students of all age groups," he said. "Some are from women's organizations. Others are sportspersons or physically challenged. There are a lot of children as well."

A post-graduate in yoga from Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya (DSVV) in Haridwar and an Assistant Professor in its yoga Department, Md. Zaidi interacts with the Afghans learning yoga in English, Farsi and Urdu. Although initially he found some hesitation among some Afghans in learning yoga as they felt it was linked to Hinduism, but now their understanding has radically changed, he said. One reason for this, he felt, was the influence of the Indian media in Afghanistan. More and more Afghans realized that although Yoga, an ancient Indian science, was about mind control and having better health through systematic and regular practice.

Md. Zaidi admitted there were some problems too. "While the environment in Afghanistan is generally favourable for yoga, there are certain constraints arising mostly from issues related to security," he said. "These hinder free movement and classes outside the consulate complex have to be held under tight security."



(Contd. from Page 17)

RSS keeps Indians safe

He said that "In the Constitution, religion has the fifth position —fundamental right of religion should come only below an individual's fundamental rights." Stating that India is the only country which has a commission for minorities, Thomas said the section of minorities has not been defined in the

Constitution. But the concept of minority in India is based on religious belief and population size, he said. "Minorities feel insecure only when they start demanding rights which the majority segments don't have," he said.

Himachal girl wins India's 1st international skiing medal

A 21-year-old Manali resident, Ms. Aanchal Thakur, created history on Tuesday by winning India's first ever international medal in skiing. She clinched a bronze in the coveted Alpine Ejder 3200 Cup organised by the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) — skiing's international governing body — at the Palandoken Ski Centre in Erzurum in Turkey. She won the medal in the slalom race category. Ms. Aanchal told that "Months of training have finally borne fruit. I started well and managed to take a good lead, which helped later in getting the third-place finish". Her feat is special given that there is no culture or even infrastructure for winter sports in India. Also, those participating in winter sports in India get negligible support from any quarter.



Sri Roshan Thakur, father of Aanchal and Secretary General of Winter Games Federation of India, was elated after knowing about his daughter's achievement. "She called me on WhatsApp and showed me the medal. I thought it was some kind of a souvenir given at the end of every FIS event! But she told me that it was a bronze medal she had won. I could not believe my eyes. This is a breakthrough for the sport in India and the entire skiing fraternity is proud of her achievement," he said.

Aanchal's journey in international skiing has mostly been financed by her father and at times the funds for her trips were provided by the FIS. Aanchal's father rued that there has been no monetary support from the Government. "The bureaucrats in the sports

ministry do not recognise winter sports. They don't acknowledge skiing as a sport," Sri Thakur said.

A professional skier requires skis, boots and bindings, poles, helmets, ski suits, ski goggles and skiing gloves to compete in the sport. Just the equipment costs around Rs 5 Lakhs to Rs 10 Lakhs. "I hope Aanchal's medal helps our cause in getting financial support from the Centre. I want to see my daughter and son represent the country in the 2018 Winter Olympics," Sri Thakur added. "The Centre only funds travel and logistics from one Olympic to another. Rest of the time, you have to fend for yourself."

Ms. Aanchal hails from Burua, a small village in Manali. She learnt the nuances of skiing from her father. Later, Sri Heera Lal, a former Olympian, honed her skills. She informed that "I was eight when my father introduced me to skiing. He bought me skis from Japan. I practiced along with my brother on local ski slopes of Manali and participated in club competitions."

Sri Heera Lal, her coach, said, "Aanchal is relatively short in height in comparison with other international skiers, but her maneuvers belie her short stature. She has improved considerably over the last five years." Aanchal's brother, Himanshu is also a skier and the brother-sister duo is trying their best to qualify for the 2018 Winter Olympics scheduled to be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea from February 9 to 25, 2018. Himanshu had represented the country in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

Nulding Kut -the Biате Festival

Nulding Kut, the Festival of Renewal of Life is regarded by the Biате community of Dima Hasao as auspicious occasion of the beginning of a new year. This year the Festival was observed in different places like New Sangbar, Thingdol and Old Sangbar of Dima Hasao district on Thursday, the 11th January, 2018, with traditional fervour and gaiety.

At Haflong, the Nulding Kut celebration committee organized a day-long programme at Fiangpui Playground, where Mr. ST Jem Hrangkhoh, Executive Member, N C Hills Autonomous Council, attended as the Chief Guest. At New Sangbar and Thingdol, Nulding Kut was celebrated in a befitting manner where people from Mizoram also participated. The day's programme included traditional games and sports, traditional dance and folklore. Nulding Kut is one of the many festivals of the Biате tribe which are celebrated since time immemorial. In the earlier days, the ancestors used to celebrate this festival during the early part of January every year on different dates in different villages. The Biате people observe this auspicious day by performing religious rites followed by cultural functions like performance of traditional dances, singing of folk songs, drinking of liquor (Zu

and merry- making. People of all ages, especially the women, dress themselves in their colourful customary attire (Nampuan). People also enthusiastically take part in games and sports of various kinds all day long. They enjoy it as the beginning of a new life and also as the beginning of the New Year. The solemn environment of the day spurs the Biате People to forgive and forget their short comings, sorrows and discontentment arising out of their past deed. Hence the occasion is also regarded as a day of forgiveness (Ngaidamna ni). Another important feature of this festival is that it is celebrated as a day of prayer led by the village priest (Thiampu). People assemble in one place and pray to God (Puihitm) for forgiveness of their past sins and mistakes. Yet another interesting feature of this festival is that the elderly people meet together in the house of the Village Chief (Siar Kalim) and hold a village Durbar, sort of a general meeting (devan).

One best thing about the occasion is that it offers opportunities to young men and women to mingle freely for the purpose of choosing their life partners (nupui/pasal).

Dwijing Festival of the Bodos

The 12-day long 'Aie River Winter Festival', which was renamed this year as 'Dwijing Festival', was inaugurated on Tuesday the 26th December, 2017 by Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Sri Hagrama Mohilary on the bank of the Aie river near Hagrama Dalang in Chirang district. The festival attracted large gatherings and proved to be very popular last year.

The 1.12-km long 'Hagrama Dalang" over the river Aie where the 'Dwijing Festival' was organised, was constructed at a cost of Rs 78.83 crore and was inaugurated on 25th May, 2013. The bridge connects Tulsijhora and Khagrabari and offers most convenient surface communication between the northern part of Chirang district and

Bhutan through the National Highway 31C and Bongaigaon district headquarters.

Speaking about the festivities, the Sidli legislator Chandan Brahma informed that Paragliding, Parasailing, Horse and Elephant rides, Boating, Helicopter trips were arranged near the Festival site for the amusement of the visitors. He further informed that in addition to numerous stalls selling handicraft items and traditional foods traditional games of the indigenous communities were also showcased during the festival. The most attractive and mentionable item of the festival was the State-level Archery Competition, which not only attracted large participation but also proved to be a memorable experience.

Poumai community celebrates Thounii

The oldest, most popular and the biggest traditional & customary festival of the Poumai community, better known as Poumai Thounii, was celebrated on 5th January, 2018 at Thingba Khunou (Shomai) village, about 130 km north of Imphal in Manipur's Senapati district. The festival was jointly organized by Poumai Naga Union and Shomai village.

The festival was inaugurated by none other than Sri Biren Singh, the Chief Minister of Manipur, who graced the inauguration Ceremony as Chief Guest, in the august presence of the Works and Power Minister Th. Biswajit Singh, Functional President at Thingba Khunou (Shomai) village. Amongst the most notable presence in the ceremony were Sri N Kayasii, Minister of Tribal Affairs and Hills Areas, Sri Losii Dikho, Minister of Public Health and Engineering, Mr. M L Markson, Chairman of Autonomous District Council of Senapati, Sri L Soloni Pao, President of the Poumai Naga Union, Sri Vineet Joshi, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Sri Arun Irengbam, Media Advisor to the CM

In the course of his inauguration speech the Chief Minister Singh informed that a heritage complex for the Poumai community would be developed by the state Government at Saranamei village. The project is to 'preserve and protect the historical elements and antique items associated with the community.' He assured that he will forward the proposal for broadcasting of Poumai dialect programmes in between 6.20 to 6.50 pm in All India Radio of Imphal and expressed his willingness to discuss the demand to declare Poumai Thounii as a restricted holiday for the state.

The programme commenced with the welcome address delivered by Mr. C D Jongeo John and was anchored by Mr. H.Liba. God's blessing was invoked by Rev. P. James, Executive Secretary PNBA. The Chief Minister unveiled the Thounii monolith and released Poukhe Iaqobvii English-Poula dictionary written by P.S. Lolly and Poumai

Naga folk tales written by Paul Punii. During the ceremony Folk songs were presented by Village artists of Koide, Tungjoy and Laii villages.

Addressing the mammoth gathering, the Chief Minister stressed on the need to preserve and protect the tradition and culture of Poumai ancestors. While stating that every community should revive, sustain and preserve the historical places of their forefathers, Singh urged the Poumai community not to lose the oral history passed down to them by their forefathers.

On the development front in the hill districts of Manipur the Chief Minister said development was lacking due to lack of proper planning. He assured that the developmental activities of the state would be on topographical need based and commensurate budgetary allocations will be sanctioned. The Chief Minister further informed that the state level Anti-corruption cell will be fully functional soon. He asserted that his government is committed to fight corruption and urged the young and educated people to support the Government.

Highlighting government's new initiatives in various fronts, the Chief Minister informed that the government will launch two different welfare schemes on January 21, 2018, the Statehood Day of Manipur. He informed that 'Hakshelgi Tengbang' (Manipur Health Protection Scheme) will be launched on the Statehood Day and will become functional from the next day. The scheme would provide cashless benefit up to Rs 2 lakh per year per BPL/AAY/poor family. The Chief Minister also informed that ten well-equipped ambulances will also be put in service at all hill district headquarters from 21st January, 2018 onwards to reduce the inconveniences faced by the people of hill and interior areas in bringing patients to the health centres and hospitals. He further added that Rs 11 crore has been earmarked to construct a Guest House for the Chiefs of different villages of hill districts inside the Royal Palace complex in Imphal.

Annual Conference of The Rashtriya Chakma Tribal Sangh - a report

A three days Annual Conference of The Rashtriya Chakma Tribal Sangh (RCTS) of Sajek Valley Zone was held on 15th to 17th December 2017 with Mr. Surjyosen Chakma present VCP of Silsury East as Chief guest. Dr. Jyotinnoy Chalana, Asst. Professor and former President of Central Young Chakma Association (CYCA) graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. Mr. Shyamal Bikash Chakma also attended the conference as a Special Invitee. The programme started with a cultural presentation by the students of Hujurukhbhui. The first day's proceedings ended with a colourful cultural presentation by the students



of Hnahva village. The second day began with a group chanting and meditation and the first common session begun with a Chakma Miloni Holar Geet which was composed and led by Mr. Uttam Kumar Chakma, RCTS Organizing Secretary of Old Sachan. The next programme that followed was ceremonial lighting of candles by the Chief Guest and other delegates in front of the images of Lord Buddha, Bharat Mata and Ma. Balasaheb Despandjeji, the founder of Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA).

Explaining the aims and objectives of the Sangh, Mr. Rohim Chakma, Gen. Secretary of RCTS Sajek Valley presented the Annual Activities Report of the Sangh for 2016-17. He informed that for the first time in Sajek Valley, the RCTS has decided to felicitate and present Appreciation Certificates to 30 prominent Sajek Valley citizens who selflessly made

immeasurable contributions especially in the field of education, health and local administration.

In his presidential speech Mr. Dharma Mohan Chakma, the President of RCTS Sajek Valley Zone, informed that as of now the Chakma population stands at 2,26,860 out of which 96,972 are residing in Mizoram. He also acknowledged the benevolent efforts of Mr. Surjyosen Chakma and Mr. Rangasur Chakma who has extended educational opportunities to large number of boys and girls belonging to Chakma community through Kalyan Ashram and other educational institutions. He urged that the Chakmas should walk hand in hand with all other tribal communities to bring success and prosperity themselves. Addressing the gathering the Chief Guest said that since the time of India Independence the Chakma community are lagging in the field of education compared to other communities. He therefore emphasized that studying only for getting jobs should not be their life's goal rather it should be aimed at being identified as educated and civilized individuals.

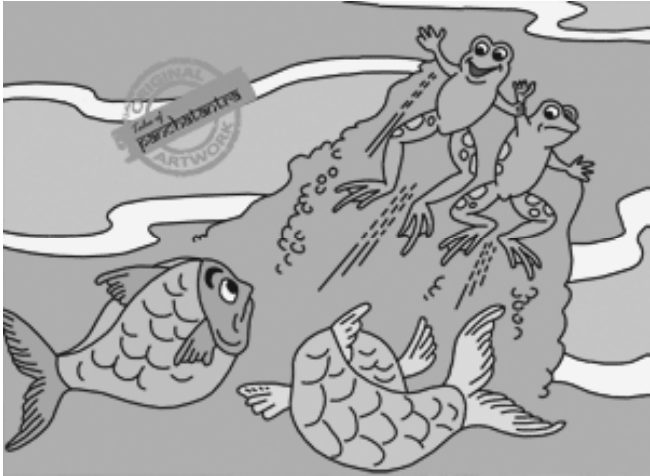
Mr. Jyotinnoy Chakma the guest of honour said instead of thinking about other country or community the Chakmas should first think about their own community. He said that let us not sleep but keep awake towards the development of our community. He added that in order to develop a community the people should be well established in every field whether it is education, health, culture and traditions. In the deliberations the representatives from different sectors unanimously concluded that education is the only weapon by which the Chakma community can bring prosperity to their community.

In the third day of the conference the delegates deliberated on various community issues and took final resolutions on six points. In the conference 240 delegates were registered. In making the conference a grand success the people from different villages have contributed an amount of Rs. 1,03,385.00 in total and out of which Rs. 94,935.00 was spent to defray the essential expenses.

The Tale of Two Fishes and a Frog

Two large fishes, Sahasrabuddhi and Satabuddhi lived in a big pond, and were close friends with a frog called Ekabuddhi. They spent a lot of time together on the bank of the pond.

The Tale Of Two Fishes And A Frog - Panchatantra Story Picture One evening, as they were assembled on the bank of the pond, they saw a few fishermen



approaching. They had nets and big baskets with them, which were full of fishes that they had caught.

While passing by the pond, they noticed that the pond was full of fishes. One of them said to the others, "Let us come here tomorrow morning. This pond is not very deep, and is full of fishes. We have never caught fishes in this pond."

The Tale Of Two Fishes And A Frog - Panchatantra Story Picture They agreed to return the very next morning, and continued their journey homewards.

The frog was depressed on hearing the fishermen and said, "O Friends, we should decide what to do, whether to run or hide. These fishermen will return tomorrow morning!"

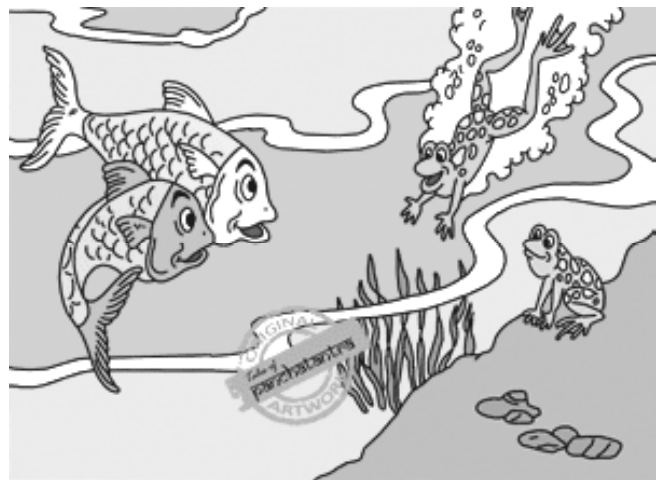
The fishes however did not care much. The first fish said, "O Friend, it is just mere talks of few passing fishermen. Don't worry, for they will not come. And, even if they do, I know innumerable tricky water movements. I shall save myself and my family with ease."

The Tale Of Two Fishes And A Frog - Panchatantra Story Picture The second fish joined, "I am as talented in tricky water movements as you! I will be

able to save myself and my family too. I support your stand, for I will not abandon the home of our ancestors for the sake of some mere talk of few passing fishermen."

But the frog was not convinced, he said, "My friends, my only talent is that I can foresee danger. You may stay, but I will leave with my family to some other pond before morning."

The very next morning, the fishermen came and cast their nets all over the pond. They had a big haul, and caught many fishes, frogs, tortoises and crabs.



The Tale Of Two Fishes And A Frog - Panchatantra Story Picture Sahasrabuddhi and Satabuddhi tried hard to escape, but none of their tricks worked. They were caught, and when the fishermen dragged their net on the bank of the pond they were already dead.

Being the largest of the fishes the fishermen caught, they proudly displayed Sahasrabuddhi and Satabuddhi, and carried them separately as they started homewards.

Meanwhile, the frog, Ekabuddhi, had already found a well for shelter. Being worried and anxious, he came to the surface. But as he saw the fishermen departing with his friends, he became sad.

He told his wife, "They were very talented, but lacked the only talent that was most important. As for me, I may have only one talent, but I swim happily with my family!"

The wise indeed say:

At the first hint of danger, act quickly to save yourself.

Zeliangrong Heraka Youth Conferrence at Nimlo, Haflong





Gan Ngai Festival of Zeliangrong Community