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HERITAGE EXPLORER

"LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES"

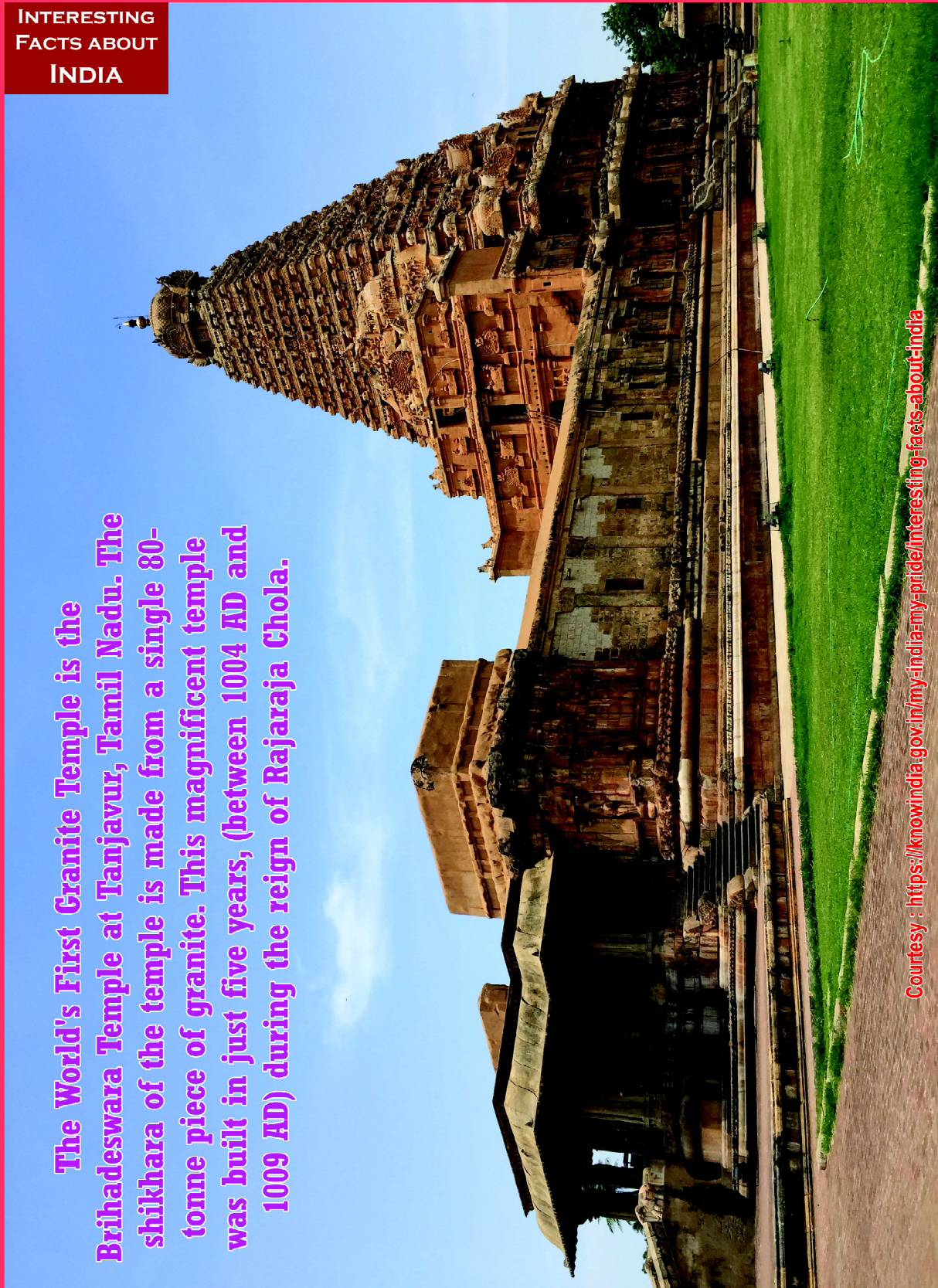
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INTERESTING
FACTS ABOUT
INDIA

The World's First Granite Temple is the Brihadeswara Temple at Tanjavur, Tamil Nadu. The shikhara of the temple is made from a single 80-tonne piece of granite. This magnificent temple was built in just five years, (between 1004 AD and 1009 AD) during the reign of Rajaraja Chola.



Courtesy : <https://knowindia.gov.in/my-india/my-pride/interesting-facts-about-india>

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Save mother language to protect Identity

In India language is one of the hottest topics of debate and difference. Hindi is opposed tooth and nail in the south and in Assam Bengali language has been the cause of repeated bitter turmoils. Assam was fragmented over declaration of Assamese as the state language giving birth to several smaller states. Cachar District in Assam has forced the Government of Assam to declare Bengali as an associate state language, causing lot of bad blood. Till the Bodo dominated areas of Assam was granted full autonomy, the demand for recognition of Bodo language continued to be a matter of bitterness for quite some time. In Arunachal Pradesh there are several distinctly different dialects and languages but as of now none of them are strong enough in terms of literature and usage to demand state level recognition. The picture is same in Nagaland, where pidgin Assamese language is serving as a language of inter-community lingua franca today. It is difficult to foresee the future in terms of co-existence of different languages in the north east because new forces are emerging to stake claim for political supremacy and language is the easiest means to stir the hornets' nest.

The language learned from one's mother is invariably very dear to each and every speaker around the world. Attachment of an individual to his mother language starts from the moment he is born. It is common knowledge that without the slightest knowledge about the language a new born responds positively to the words or the lullabies sung by its mother. Like magic, mother's words, though beyond his comprehension, soothes and pacifies it instantly. Social scientists world over unreservedly accept that mother languages are the most powerful instrument of intellectual growth and holistic development of young minds. It is also an undisputed fact that education imparted through mother language helps in faster comprehension and retention. Imparting education through a language far removed from the mother language or adopting an alien language as medium of instruction invariably restricts natural growth of the intellect of the young and impressionable minds. A large percentage of our students today are unable to cope with the added pressure of unfamiliar languages and just manage to pass their grades, but they cannot rise above a certain level to become an asset to his motherland. In addition to this, the detachment with mother language starting from the formative years, ultimately severs the emotional and

intellectual link with it giving rise to non-attachment with his mother language. He will feel no pain if his mother language is suppressed or sidelined or is denied the deserved legitimacy. Slowly but surely his mother language is destined to die one day because nobody is there to look after her.

Above became the background that prompted the member states constituting the General Assembly of the United Nations, to unanimously adopt a resolution for identifying a day to recognize the importance of mother language. Incidentally, this day was 21st February, the date on which more than twenty students of East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh) sacrificed their lives to uphold the honour and dignity of their mother language 'Bengali'. We must love and protect our mother language like the heroic students of East Pakistan, otherwise the survival of our dear mother language will be at peril. We must remember that every two weeks a language disappears taking with it an entire cultural and intellectual heritage. At least 43% of the estimated 6000 languages spoken in the world are endangered. Only a few hundred languages could secure a place in education systems and less than a hundred are used in the digital world.

The languages spoken in the north east belong to no fewer than five different language families: Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, Tai-Kadai, and Dravidian. Linguistically and culturally, our region is the most diverse in the world. This diversity may be a matter of pride for some, but it is also the cause doom for the indigenous languages, most of which are just coming out of the dialect stage. It is also sad that many of the indigenous speakers of this region are consciously adopting a more dominant language because they perceive that doing so will bring better educational opportunities or a chance to lift their socio-economic status. There are other factors too. In some areas many indigenous people have converted to Christianity and the impact of the church is affecting their choice of lingua-franca. The 'three language formula' for education is another reason that is compelling indigenous speakers to shift to other languages, especially the English, for practical purposes. The Government and the social scientists should give a serious thought to the issue and find ways to avert the catastrophe.

Chief Editor

Religious Rites of the Tribal People of Tripura

Naresh Ch. Dev Varma

(Continued from previous Issue)

RANDAK PUJA

Through the centuries, the Tripuri community has been observing the “RANDAK” Puja, a symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the welfare of the family. Two earthen pots are filled up with rice and some pebbles are placed upon it. The pots of the ‘Randak’ are kept on a dais made of bamboo or a wooden table in the dwelling house. The rice of the pots is changed every year with new one. It is believed that if the number of the pebbles increases, the welfare of family is confirmed. Like the Tripuris, the Jamatias also have ‘Randak’, but they keep one earthen pot instead of two. Among the Jamatias. Noatias and Uchois, the “Randak” Puja is a marked feature and the pebbles are used as symbol of a natural object.

The Riangs believe that the natural objects from stone to mountain are having life in them. The Riangs trust the luckiness of the certain stones and pebbles. They keep stones with due honour and offer worship in a pair of earthen pots full of rice. According to them, the two stones kept in the two pots are husband and wife and the smaller ones are their children. The stone-couple beget children near banana tree or at Jhum field. Any big river and tributaries are supposed to be mother and sisters respectively.

The Kukis generally believe that the hill “Longtorai” is a deity and they worship it. After paddy is harvested, a puja is performed in which a new earthen vessel is filled with neqtyllarvested rice and the eggs are placed as the representative of the deity. At the time of Jhum cultivation, two banana plants are posted by the Kukis at the place where the Jhum will be cultivated and seven pebbles are placed there. The holy pebbles are worshipped following the

traditional beliefs and practices of early primitive period.

The Halams also hold in high esteem a pair of stone which are preserved in a earthen pot filled in with paddy and are supposed to beget children.

Worship of God and Propitiation of Lower Deities :

The Ochais have a significant role in the tribal societies of Tripura. The Ochai is the priest of the tribal societies who is not distinguishable from the other members of the community so far as their behaviour concerned. However, during sacred occasions they become completely different from the others.

The Ochais are said to know the details about the good and bad spirits, can find out the causes of disease and then through their pujas or sacrifices they drive away the spirits. In addition to the Pujas, the Ochais treat the ailing persons by providing medicinal herbs to them. Thus, the Ochai as has been noted above is a diviner and medic. Here in Tripura, the Riangs generally believe that wrath of some malignant deities and spirits is the cause of disease and only through propitiation to these deities and spirits the patient can be cured. The Riangs’ priest is called a “Aouchai” who sacrifices a chicken or a pig for driving away the evil spirits. After sacrificing a chicken, the Aouchai cuts and opens the stomach of the chicken, and examines its entrails, and declares the result of his activities. Besides, a worship to cure a minor illness is called “Taodari Puja”, while a costly worship in case of serious diseases is known a “Dabikta Puja”. When a child or any animal is attacked by disease, the deities like “Buraha” and “Haichukma” are worshiped by the “Aouchai”.

Thus, the influence of worship of god and propitiation of lower deities, spirits, ghosts and other malevolent supernatural elements over the tribes of Tripura seems to be very great. The Tripuris are completely under the influence of the priest Ochai who has a pivotal role in the society. Apart from the worship and religious rites, Ochai is also a Medicine man. In the Tripuri tribal community also, the Ochai is called for treatment of disease. After observing the ailing person, the Ochai finds out why and how the man has fallen ill. If any evil spirit be responsible for the illness, the Ochai performs magical rites as a device for treatment to drive away the evil spirit that has caused the illness. To drive away the spirit the Ochai sometimes blows over the patient with utterance of mantras (incantations) which is said to be effective and curative for the ailment. Otherwise, for this purpose, the Ochai performs a worship. In this worship, he sacrifices fowls, Pigeons, Goats etc. and utters mantras (incantations) to remove the spirit. These mantras (incantations) are different for different illness, and the animals to be sacrificed in the worship also vary.

Besides, for various diseases the Ochai prescribes or applies folk—medicine as a mode of treatment. It is clear that the life of Tripuris is marked with a number of worshiping and propitiation to the spirits, ghosts and other malevolent supernatural elements. This is the highest common factor in the religious belief of the Kukis. Underlying the importance of propitiation in the Kuki community, it is to be mentioned that for the treatment of illness, their Priest Thiampu (Ojha) generally worships benevolent god—pantheon. In Tripura, an interesting trait of propitiation prevails among the Kukis which is closely associated with that of the Tripuris. Thiampu covers the face of himself with a piece of white cloth and incense is sprinkled over a piece of burning charcoal, which they call “Murik-Ai”. By smelling the incense smoke and reciting some magic spells, Thiampu will tell who will appear with what. Sometimes, Longtorai, Buraha and Dain (wizard) etc. all evil spirits are

to be appeared with a white cock, a black cock, a white goat, a black goat etc. Then, according to the result of the test, Thiampu worships pantheon to ward off the evil spirit and makes the patient cured. It is their belief that “Lushari” is the Supreme god in Heaven and if Pantheon seems to be indifferent to cure any patient by appeasing the evil spirits, appeal is made to him by the Thiampu to make the patient cured. The Uchois of Tripura like the Kukis and other tribes believe that Ochai can cure a patient from illness following the Shamanistic belief traditionally.

The Jamatias have priest who are called “Achay”. He conducts the Pujas and plays the role of an appeaser. As an appeaser or propitiator he first finds out the cause of the disease. Then he performs the “Kuway Chanayma” Puja, the Burasa puja and the Bwrwirog puja, if he thinks it necessary for a patient to be freed from the influence of the evil eyes of the respective deities. The Achay, in general, applies pujas, mantras (incantations) and last of all indigenous medicines for the recovery of the patient. The Kolois believe that the Ochai is a medicine man who cures a patient from illness. Like the Kolois, the Noatias also have Shamanistic belief and they engage the Ochai to cure a patient from sufferings.

The role of worshiping by appeasement to evil spirits, ghosts, lower deities etc. seems to have its influence upon the Khasis, Santals, Oraons, Mundas, Garos, Chakmas, Mogs, Lushais and even in the non-tribal communities of Tripura .

MAGIC

Magic is based on a fundamental belief in the supernatural spirits who can do good or evil to human. In course of time, these forces of nature were identified with the deities or gods. Magic appears as combination of ritual act and spoken spell which are secretly practiced.

In Tripura, like the other tribal people of the North-East India, religion along with Magic seems to be human’s response to meet inconceivable eventualities of life. Magic is related with each and

every religion of the universe. In case of Tripura, Magic is interpreted in general term by the tribal people as they claim to have ability to produce miraculous results with the aid of certain spirits who are controlled for such purpose. They believe that the principle behind both religion and magic is same, the appeasement of the supernatural forces to get desired results. Magic may be divided into two groups viz. imitative and contagious. According to the Anthropologists, imitative magic is generally based on the law of similarity, while contagious magic is based on the doctrines of contact. In the contagious magic, things which are once in contact with the person to be affected, if charged with some charms, become potent enough to the person targeted.

Obviously, the Tripuris have a decaying state on the magical beliefs today with modern system of education. But a section of the peoples specially the old generation still believe that some females of the society specialize in exorcism can use a magic to convert themselves into other forms, like tree, animal, bird etc. They are called dainee (witch) or "Swkal" in the Kokborok language. The Swkal practices witch-crafts and do harm to man, crops or plants. Whenever a man, woman or child suffers from several diseases or dies suddenly, then it is believed that the harm is done by a Swkal.

The tribal priests perform some magical rites and sacrifice animals, birds etc. to appease the Swkal, and to drive away spirits which cause harm to the people of the society. They have also firm belief that if a Swkal or evil spirit casts any look on fruit-bearing plant or growing crops the result becomes terrible and if the look is cast on a child the effect is very serious and the child is fallen ill. The priests are called for in these occasions and they defeat the malafide force and the child gets rid of disease.

The Riangs believe magic and they use the amulets to ward off the evil spirits. Belief in magic is evident in the various occasions, such as to cure disease, be-friend a person, cause divorce or to unite a pair. The magician or Aouchai can cause illness

and sometimes bring death to some persons. It is said that Aouchai is engaged to cause enemy's death. The villagers give the stool, hair, nail, urine and corner of cloth of the enemy to Aouchai for the performance of "black magic" i.e for doing harm to the individuals.

The belief of the Riangs in magic is originated by the religion. They have also belief in witches who are capable of sucking human blood.

Magic has a definite place in the Halam community. The Ojha who conducts the worship also perform magic. An example of magic is such that the Ojha i.e. magician throws magically potent arrows on a tree, the idea being that just as the tree suffers and that with the gradual decay of the tree the enemy's health deteriorates and he dies ultimately. Besides, nail, hair, a corner of enemy's cloth, urine, stool etc. are secretly collected to injure an enemy. It is believed that a magician can invisibly penetrate a sharp bamboo split or long thorn into the enemy's belly that cause his death.

Similar belief in magic exists among the Jamatias, Uchois, Noatias and Kukis. The Chakmas and Mogs have also belief in magic. The purpose of magic to them is to overcome the nialdfide force because of which they can fulfil their wishes. The Chakmas observe magical rites to invoke rain. It is found that they give in marriage the frogs in the belief that it will cause rainfall. It is thus interesting how the tribal people have accepted magic as part of their daily life. Therefore, magic is latent in the rites and rituals of the tribal people of Tripura, specially who are living in remote areas of the State and who are still lagging far behind of the modern education.

FERTILITY CULT

According to the Anthropologists, it has been noted that for the both animal and plant, fertility is a concern of the tribal religion. Rites of fertility and procreation are found in the Vedic ritualistic called Brahmans. But the concept of fertility cult was originated during the pre-vedic period. The tribal communities perform some rites to promote fertility

of crops, domestic animals and women beings. Mother goddesses are always associated with the land and agriculture. The fertility cult as being observed among the tribes of Tripura may be taken up for brief discussion. The Tripuris pay homage to mother goddess of water “Twima” sacrificing the animal like goat, chicken etc. “Mailuma” and “Khuluma” are the goddesses of fertility who are said to increase crops and to save it from destruction. The Mailuma and the Khuluma Pujas of the Tripuris are the similar to Mainokhma and the Khunokhma respectively of the Riangs. These two goddesses are worshiped for a good crop of paddy and cotton. The “Garia Puja” is also related to fertility cult. Singing, dancing and oral jokes go with this puja where erotic elements are traceable. Among the tribes of Tripura, the Jamatias perform the Garia Puja with splendour for seven days. The other tribes like Tripuris, Noatias, Uchois, Kolois etc. perform this puja on the seventh day of Baisakha, the Bengali new year. Believing the fertility cult, the Halams generally sacrifice Pig and Chicken in the granary for an increase in crops which is called “Saarthada”.

From very early times, egg symbolizes fertility and sex. Therefore, the tribes of Tripura sacrifice egg to gods and goddesses. To the tribal people, egg can influence maternity, and increases livestock. Vermilion Kalasa (water-jar) with full of water and blood of animal are symbols that naturally lend to fertility motif.

The Bishu festival (Bengali new year) of the Tripuris, Riangs, Noatias, Uchois and Kolois, and the Bijhu festival of the Chakmas are festivals of fertility.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP

One of the manifestations of Indigenous Faith is the belief in Ancestor worship. In this regard, it may be noted that the tribal people’s belief in ancestor is world-wide. So, the Ancestor worship is naturally prevalent among most of the tribal people in India. The Tripuris of Tripura respect their ancestors, and the rites and rituals related with the death of a human body are observed by them. After removing the dead

body from the house, a cock is sacrificed at the feet of the dead body. It is their custom that the cock and some cooked rice are then offered to the dead. In honour of the departed soul, cooked rice and curry of seven items are offered in the evening. The food and a piece of new cloth are offered before the sunrise for consecutive three days. On the fourth day, cooked rice and curry are offered which is called “Maitokha”. On the thirteenth day, the Tripuris perform “Shraddha” (obsequial rites) and “Maikhalai” (offering of various items of foods and curries to the departed soul) ceremonies.

Similar belief also prevails among the Riangs and they sacrifice a cock at the feet of the deceased person, and cooked rice is offered along with that cock. Besides, cooked rice, eggs, paddy, water etc. are also offered after cremation is over. On that day, in the evening, rice, wine and water are given to the departed soul and such kind of offerings is also performed for consecutive three days in the morning. On the seventh day, on a newly constructed small platform cooked rice and curry are offered along with tools, utensils and various seeds of Thum crops that will be required in the next life. Some of the Riangs perform -Shraddha” ceremony on the seventh day or thirteenth day, and most of them perform the same on any convenient day even after a month. “Kathaimani” is an annual ritual of the Riangs connected with respectful and well-wishing offerings to the departed soul. The “Loklaimi” and the “Nak kathar” are also interesting ceremonies of the ancestors worship performed by the Riangs.

The Halams observe a certain rites after a death of a person, but there is no fixed period for that obsequial rites. Rice, cloth and wine are offered to the departed soul. There is no hard and fast rule for the ancestor worship among the Uchois. The Uchois observe “Sraddha” ceremony according to their own wishes. The ancestor worship of the Noatias is remarkable. On the fourth day after cremation, foods consisting of rice bear and curry are offered to the departed soul. Like the Tripuris, they perform obsequial rites according to capacity of the

dependants on the thirteenth day after cremation.

Just before the cremation, the Jamatias offer cooked rice with curry, egg or meat of pigeon to the deceased person. They worship the bone of cremated body every day till the same is sacrificed to the holy Ganga or other streams of water, alike the Tripuris, Reangs, Noatias and other tribal communities of Tripura. The Jamatias also observe “Shraddha” ceremony on the thirteenth day.

In Tripura, the Kukis also offer foods and drinks in front of the dead body, because they believe that foods and wine are needed by the dead person who has to go a long way for the other world.

The Mogs have the ancestor worship where the priest offers foods and drinks to the dead body before it is taken to the burning place. After seven days, some rituals are observed by the priest for the good of the departed soul.

Analogous to the Mogs, the Chakmas also dedicate a dish of rice to the dead body after funeral bath. The most important ancestor worship of the Chakmas is called “Vadya Puja”, which means serving rice to the souls of their ancestors. This offering is made on a wide patch of earth in the dense part of the forest. The family which arranges the “Vadya Puja” counts the souls of its ancestors up to the third to fifth of the past generation and place dishes of rice along with sweets etc. for each. The dishes of rice kept on the pyres which are laid up for the souls.

The religion of the tribes of Tripura in terms of their indigenous faith, rites and rituals being performed following the oral traditions have briefly been presented here. But it should be pointed out again here that the present generation, specially the educated youth of the tribal people are inclining to the modern life-style and showing apathy in the traditional belief, rites and rituals of the tribal people. Especially from the seventies of the last century, among the younger generation of the tribal people, the magnitude of conversion to the Christianity is gradually increasing. Even sixty years back, it had been followed as almost mandatory in the tribal

communities of Tripura that the tribal men and women at their old age used to hand over the charge of the family totally to their successors and to receive initiation of the Hindu Vaishnavism. Thereafter, they used to lead their remaining life through religious discussion, rites and practices. But in consequence of the new outlook of the tribal youth as stated above, number of Vaishnavas, and initiated disciples of the Hindu religious preceptors was in a decaying state at the end of the last 20th century. At the same time, the traditional chieftainship has almost been thrown out after introduction of the govt. panchayat system in the tribal societies. However, only the Jamatia community is still preserving its age-old social system as well as indigenous religious traditions. The other tribes, like Tripuris, Reangs, Noatias, Kolois, Rupini, Uchois and others living in the hills and rural areas are endeavouring to maintain their respective traditional social administration nominally, and are performing rites and rituals according to their beliefs through their respective priests.— Ochais, Achay, Aouchai, and Thiampu (Ojha).

However, as at present, a new trend is being found among the tribal youths wherein their own indigenous culture and tribal identity are the dominant factors. The educated tribal youths and even among those who have been baptized, are now becoming conscious about their rich culture and social heritage. They are now keen to preserve their tribal identity through the development of their own language and distinct culture. It is also observed that the tribal people are again coming up to receive initiation of Vaishnavism and be disciple of the various Hindu religious sects. A number of social organizations of the tribal people of Tripura are actively working for revival of their traditional social customs and systems.

Thus, at the conclusion, the saying of the Renowned Anthropologist Prof. N.K. Bose may be quoted here, “that their ‘tribal’ identity may be re-affirmed, and in the process a salvage takes place of as much of their tribal culture and religious faith as is consistent with the demands of modern life.” ■

World Wetlands Day

M. Asnikumar Singh

The Idea and theme of this day

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2nd February. The Convention on wetlands was adopted on 2 February 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. The Ramsar Secretariate's main objective is to raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands. This year's theme is 'Wetlands and Water'.

The increasing demands and pressure on wetlands without understanding their nature and consequences have led to their rapid degradation.

Loktak Lake: significance

Keeping this day and its significance in mind, the attention we ought to shed some light on the wetlands and one of the largest water resource of our region, the Loktak lake. Due to its socio-economic importance, it is often considered as the "lifeline of Manipur" and rightly so. Its biological richness and uniqueness of habitat has resulted in its designation as a "Wetland of international importance" under the Ramsar convention, a distinction it shares with just other five lakes of India. The LOKTAK lake and the area in its vicinity is one of the most important wetlands in the country. One often ignored statistics is that 60 per cent of the fish caught in Manipur comes from the Loktak lake alone. It also plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic life of the region.

Causes of and crystal clear warning signs of a lake slowing falling to its death

Sadly due to increasing pressure on the lake, attributed to a rapid rise in population, the shifting cycle of the agricultural land in the hilly catchments of the lake has reduced during less than 5 years. This has further led to land degradation and increased soil erosion leading to sedimentation of

water bodies consequently reducing its water-holding and water carrying capacity. The commissioning of the LOKTAK Hydel Power Project in 1993 and the construction of the dam at Ithai along the Manipur River adversely affects the ecological balance of the LOKTAK lake. Since the commissioning of the Ithai Barrage some 35 years ago there have been massive floods in and around the lake. The Ithai dam was constructed to maintain minimum water level required to generate electricity for the LOKTAK hydropower project owned by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation. The LOKTAK lake is the natural reservoir of the state's river system. However, since the construction of the dam, the migratory fishes which the lake and its catchment areas used to receive from the Manipur, Irrawady and Chinwin rivers, their migration have reduced drastically thereby affecting the economic situation of the fishermen dependent on the lake and its catchment areas for livelihood. Moreover, the dam has blocked the Manipur river which acted as its natural drainage outlet. This blockage has affected the refreshment cycle and volume of the lake to such an extent that many species of flora and fauna in the lake are on the verge of extinction. The natural pathway of the Ungamel channel, which drains out excess water from the Keibul Lamjao floating national park has been altered by the LOKTAK hydel project. Scientific analysis reveals the true picture i.e It is not only the responsibility of the people living in the vicinity of the lake but also the citizens of the state to come together and work towards improving the lake's bleak and uncertain future. Moreover our state's pride, the Sangai shares an inseparable bond with the Loktak Lake. The reducing depth of Loktak Lake, a naturally enriched water body is also the culmination of our egocentric behaviour.

Construction of roads, artificial structures in and around the major water bodies of the state like Loktak pat, Pumlel pat, Waithou pat, Loushi pat etc, which act as the natural water drainage system of the state is only inviting more disasters in the future. The task of wetlands restoration has become complicated in light of the threefold increase in global water demand in the last 6 decades.

Pressing issues

Attention ought to be drawn on the following key issues which need to be addressed on priority basis to secure the health of Loktak wetlands, and linked livelihoods of communities living in and around. Efforts for addressing the degradation of the wetland have been made since 1986 when the LDA was established as a nodal agency for conservation and integrated management of Loktak. An amount of Rs. 491 crore has been spent on implementing ameliorative measures for the wetland till date, with financial assistance from the North Eastern Council, the Planning Commission, the India Canada Environment Facility, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India and state plans. As an outcome of the interventions, that has been an increase in open water area in the central sector (from 439 ha to 7638 ha during 2002-2017), decrease in area under athaphum (from 982 ha to 212 ha during 1999-2017), increase in dense forest cover in catchments (by 6,612 ha during 1988 – 2017), and increase in capture fisheries (from 1,473 MT to 3,800 MT during 2003 – 2013) has taken place. Yet, the wetland continues to be under threat from continued pollution loading, conversion of phumdi into fish farms and impeded hydrological connectivity within the complex. Systemic institutional weaknesses have resulted in very limited enforcement of extant regulatory regimes, and lack of coordination in the implementation of various development programmes related to Loktak.

Based on the evaluation of data and monitoring

records, observations from field visits and discussions, we seek the priority attention of concerned authorities of the Government of Manipur to the following:

a) Implementation of water allocation plan: Revising allocation of water to meet human demands (for hydropower generation, irrigation and flood control) with ecological needs (maintaining KLNP habitat, enhancing water quality) is central to the management of Loktak. Based on a scenario-based assessment of hydrological regimes, a water allocation policy to achieve these multiple objectives was drafted by Wetlands International South Asia and endorsed for implementation by Steering Committee of LDA chaired by Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur. The plan provides a win-win option for all stakeholders, including NHPC. A water allocation plan implementation sub-committee (constituted in 2010 comprising representatives of Departments of Forests and Wildlife, LDA, NHPC and Wetlands International South Asia) was tasked with the identification of water level gauging stations, wherein monitoring was to be done for one year to come up with a specific barrage operation rules. The recommendations of the committee meeting held on February 18, 2013 (to monitor lake levels at Awangshi pat in Northern Sector, adjoining Karang Island, adjoining Chingmei Hills in KLNP and at power channel) are yet to be implemented. Priority may be accorded to implementation of this decision and framing up of a barrage operation rule within one years' time frame.

b) Implementation of Nambul Action Plan: Nambul River discharges the waste of entire Imphal City into Loktak, leading to pollution loading and aggravating spread of phumdi. Financing of the Nambul Action Plan (for treating the waste of the Imphal City and preventing direct discharge into Loktak) may be pursued with the MoEFCC.

c) Reorganization of LDA: LDA's capability to coordinate integrated management of Loktak has significantly reduced in the recent years due to lack of skilled human resources, uninterrupted financing

to meet operational needs, and multiplicity of agencies implementing programmes with implications for Loktak Lake. It is pertinent that LDA is revamped into an efficient and results-oriented institutional structure. The Governing Body meetings of LDA may be held regularly and all sectoral development programmes reviewed and approved with due consideration of implications for Loktak. Within the Authority, units for wetlands monitoring, planning and design and stakeholder engagement need to be set up. Avenues for career progression of all technical staff need to be identified.

d) Wetlands monitoring: The Wetland Monitoring Laboratory of LDA, established with India-Canada Environment Facility support presently is in a dilapidated state for want of refurbishing and staff capacity. The laboratory needs to be revived to ensure that wetlands monitoring is systematically conducted, and the infrastructure generates revenue of its own by conducting monitoring and tests for other agencies.

e) Reconstitution of Technical Advisory Committee: Given the complexity of issues related to the management of Loktak Lake, the role of a technical advisory committee is crucial in ensuring rigorous technical scrutiny of various programmes. The committee constituted in 2011 under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Government of Manipur, has not met since 2013. The committee may be reconstituted with national and local subject matter experts and meetings held quarterly.

f) Regulation of expansion of fish farms: Since 1970, over 112 km² of marsh fringing Loktak have been converted into fish farms and agriculture, thus reducing capacity to regulate hydrological regimes, cycle nutrients, support biodiversity and community livelihoods. Such conversions are also against the provisions of Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017. Urgent actions are required to halt further expansion of fish farms. Use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides within the

existing farms should be prohibited, and organic farming practices promoted

g) Delineation of wetland boundary: The boundary of Loktak Lake needs to be delineated to prevent any further encroachments. This is also required under the provisions of the Manipur Loktak (Protection) Act, 2005 and the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.

h) Delisting Loktak from Montreux Record: Information on changes in the status of Loktak since the date of listing under Montreux Record (1993) needs to be compiled, along with an updated Ramsar Site Information Sheet and communicated to the MoEFCC.

i) Immediate Remedial Measures

- Restructuring of LDA: Organisational structure of LDA to be revamped to be able to undertake ecosystem approach steering away from the engineering and mechanical approach.

- Review Barrage Operation Regime: To address the ecological and human issues.

- Robust Monitoring System: It is critical to put in place a system to describe, monitor and detect changes in ecological character to support decision making. This will also enable assessment of the effectiveness of management actions that are to be taken up.

- Protection of Lake Area: Demarcate the boundary of Loktak Lake on the ground and take up measures to control encroachment.

- Rejuvenate Lake Fisheries: A special action plan for sustainable fisheries development addressing fishermen Issues:

- Involvement of Local Community in Phumdi management: Weed or phumdi management to involve the local community taking advantage of the traditional knowledge base.

- Formulation of an Integrated Management Action Plan

J) Road Map Ahead

Policy direction may consider the following points:

- Institutional arrangements to ensure conservation and wise use of entire wetland complex associated with Loktak Lake.
- Integration of all the associated lakes in conserving Loktak Lake.
- Integration of lake conservation with the Manipur River system
- Improve water quality through waste management and minimizing nutrient runoff from agricultural fields.
- Control of sedimentation giving emphasis on critical watersheds.
- Biodiversity conservation through water regime improvement
- Sustainable livelihoods for lake dependent people.
- Ecotourism development considering cultural heritage values.

K) Involvement of the dwellers of the lake in all the activities taken up by authorities is related to the lake. The interests and livelihood of the dwellers of the lake cannot be compromised at any cost. Steps taken by the NGT (National Green Tribunal) with regards to preservation of water bodies in India:

In its order dated, 1 January 2020 the National Green Tribunal while emphasizing on the importance of conservation of water bodies advocated for enhancing the capacity of the existing ponds/water bodies, creation of water harvesting structures in sub-watersheds to the extent possible, setting up additional water bodies/water harvesting structures wherever viable using available funds, including under MNREGA and involving the community at large at every level. NGT also directed that action in this regard must be taken the District magistrate/district commissioners in coordination with the department of IFCD or other concerned

departments such as Rural Development/Urban Development/Local Bodies/Forests/Revenue etc. More importantly, the compliance of the above directions is to be undertaken under the supervision of the Chief Secretary of the concerned state and the reports are to be furnished to the chief secretaries of the states by the concerned District Magistrates for the compilation of action taken report at the state level.

Further, in an order dated 18.11.2020, the NGT directed all states/union territories to designate a nodal agency for the restoration of water bodies, wherever no such agency has so far been designated. According to the order, the nodal agency, under the oversight of the Chief Secretaries of the states/UTs shall hold its first meeting before the 31st of January,2021 to take stock of the situation and to plan further steps including directions to district authorities for further course of action up to Panchayat Levels and time evolve further monitoring and grievance redressal mechanism. Further, periodical reports on the action taken are to be submitted to CPCB/Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, and Government of India by the end of February 2021.

The NGT has assigned the Manipur State Wetlands Authority with the task of protection of all water bodies in the state in addition to the normal functioning of the authority.

The importance of data in wetlands protection

However, it will not be feasible to make meaningful monitoring of water bodies without having reliable data related to water bodies in different districts/States including their numbers, types of water bodies, plan area, capacity, usages, their present conditions in terms of water quality, the source of water, source(s) of pollution. Therefore, keeping this in mind, the first and the most vital step for concerned stakeholders in this regard is data collection, analysis and assessment for steps using the same data.

Water crisis

Population growth, urbanization and consumption patterns have put unbearable pressure on wetlands and the water in them.

- ◆ Almost all global freshwater sources are compromised with 82% of the world's population exposed to high levels of population in their water supply.
- ◆ 2.2 billion People don't have safe drinking water with an annual economic cost amounting to \$260 billion.
- ◆ Water equivalent to the annual flow the Volga river Europe longest river is squandered in 1.3 billion tons of food wasted from farm to fork each year.
- ◆ Water insecurity was a key factor in conflict in at least 45 countries in 2017.
- ◆ 14% more water is needed to produce 70% more food by 2050 for 10 billion people.

Five solutions

We could have enough water for nature and us if we:

- ◆ Stop destroying start restoring wetlands
- ◆ Don't dam rivers or over extract from aquifers
- ◆ Address pollution, clean up freshwater sources
- ◆ Increase water efficiency, use wetlands wisely
- ◆ Integrate water and wetlands into development plans and resource management

Wetland loss impact

Our water consumption means less water for nature. Wetland loss and pollution has intensified a water crisis threatening all life.

- ◆ Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands lost since 1700s those remaining are disappearing three times faster than forests.
- ◆ 25% of all wetland species and 1 in 3 freshwater species face extinction.
- ◆ Climate change is reducing surface and groundwater in already dry regions, resulting in increasing competition for water.

UK's model wetland restoration

Europe's largest coastal wetland restoration a 670-hectare waterscape of salt marshes lagoons and mudflats at Walla Sea Island was designed as a long-term flood defense with climate change and rising sea levels in mind. A model based nature-based solution with active human management; the wetlands were restored on reclaimed farmland using 3 millions tones of waste London clay.

The salt marshes absorb waves, reducing pressure on ancient sea walls, while sluices control water levels with the Lagoons enhancing wildlife habitat. The restoration recovers some of the 30,000 ha of Essex salt marshes lost over 25 years providing 1 billion Euros worth of coastal floods defenses in the UK. These salt marshes also lock up large stores of carbon.

South Africa integrating water management

Identifying and understanding the value of 22 strategic water sources fundamental to South Africa's water and economic needs has led to nearly 50 integrated water interventions aiming to increase water quantity, improve water quality and expand economic development. Although the water sources cover only 8% of land area they provide half the country's surface water that supports 51% of the population and 64% of the economy interventions include.

- ◆ Integrating wetlands and built infrastructure into water management to better serve Durban and Pietermaritzburg.
- ◆ Conserving the Umzimvubu River system from source to sea through restoration and management while supporting economic development.
- ◆ Improving water quality of the Berg River supplying water stressed Cape Town and surrounding agricultural areas exporting 70% of produce to Europe.

The road ahead

With such clear warning signs, it would be daft on the part of all concerned stakeholders (including myself) not to follow the NGT guidelines at the earliest possible instance. The first and foremost step would have to be data collection which is not a cakewalk. The sooner the concerned parties have reliable data in their hands, the better it is for setting up a proposed timeline for restoration of water bodies in the state (as directed by the NGT). More importantly, the role of local bodies in this mission cannot be taken for granted. They are the ones who share the purest and closest bond with these resources so it is only natural that they ought to take part and benefit from the restoration and protection of these

water bodies. These include the 300 odd people of the floating village Champu Khongpak; people who have been literally neglected in every sense (their names were taken off from electoral records in the 1980s) by past governments. We cannot change their past but we can certainly atone for it by at least making sure that such communities are involved as stakeholders in the restoration and preservation journey of our wetlands. This is a journey which has never really got going and needs a proper reset and restarts at the earliest possible instance. ■

(Writer is a well-known environmentalist and political activist, presently he is a member of the Loktak Development Authority, Public Grievances Committee, Manipur State Wetland Authority and also Spokesperson of BJP Manipur Pradesh)

Oriah festival celebrated in Arunachal Pradesh

Oriah, the agricultural festival of the Wancho tribe was celebrated at Longding and Itanagar in a low-key manner adhering to all the SOPs related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Public gathering was not allowed and other cultural activities like dancing competitions were not organized this year.

In an interaction, a member of the Oriah committee told that adhering to SOPs related to Covid-19, the committee decided to celebrate Oriah in a very low-key manner this year.

Even in the all the administrative HQs the celebration was organized avoiding mass gathering.

Oriah festival is celebrated on 16 February every year. The Oriah festival at Longding aims at the unification of all the Wancho villages irrespective of their origin of migration to the present settlements. It aims at the harmonious co-existence of the Wancho people leaving aside the memories of the past inter-village feuds and differences. It is also an attempt for the protection, preservation and promotion of the rich tradition which have been inherited from the ancestors. It is also an occasion for showcasing the colourful tradition and rich legacy of the past.

Among others, the programme was attended by Longding MLA Tanpho Wangnaw, Deputy Commissioner Bani Lego, Superintendent of Police Vikram Harimohan Meena, other officials and members of the Wancho Cultural Society.

Attending the celebrations at Senki Park in the state capital Itanagar, Kanubari MLA GD Wangsu called for preserving the tradition and culture of the Wanchos.

He also urged upon the youth to get out of the grip of drugs and join the mainstream. He gave a clarion call to one and all to promote traditional items, such as clothes, food, etc.

Special guest, Capital DTO Chakpa Wangsu informed that the celebration this year was not as exuberant as previous years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“However our enthusiasm is high and everyone should enjoy the essence of the festivity,” Wangsu said.

The celebration witnessed a few local dance performances and the festival mythology was also read out on the occasion. ■

Tribal Warrior ‘Tilka Majhi’

Executive Summary

The credit of being the first revolutionary in the history of India’s war against colonial regime goes to Jabra Pahadia Tilka Manjhi, who fought against the British rule in the hills of Rajmahal (Jharkhand). He organized the tribals to form an armed group to fight against the resource grabbing and exploitation of British by adopting Indian guerrilla warfare.

Tilka Manjhi strongly opposed the brutality and brutal actions of the British rule and waged a long battle. He also led the famous Santhal movement. The heroic freedom fighter Tilka Manjhi is named as the country’s first freedom fighter and martyr. Tilka was arrested by British forces and hanged in 1785. Some sources mention 1784 as the year of his hanging.

Bullet Points

- ◆ In Jharkhand the tribals had a number of encounters and battles, recorded as Santhal struggle of Tilka Majhi, Siddhu-Kanu, Bhumij (Sardar) struggle, Vir Buddha Bhagat movement, Tana Bhagat Movement, the freedom struggle of Birsa Bhagawan, etc., which did not allow the British to set their feet on the sacred land. But the crafty British recorded these territories as ‘excluded’ to mislead the world. Accordingly, their territories remained outside the purview of the general law. (Chathapuram S. Ramanathan; Subhabrata Dutta (15 August 2013). Governance, Development, and Social Work. Routledge. p. 44)

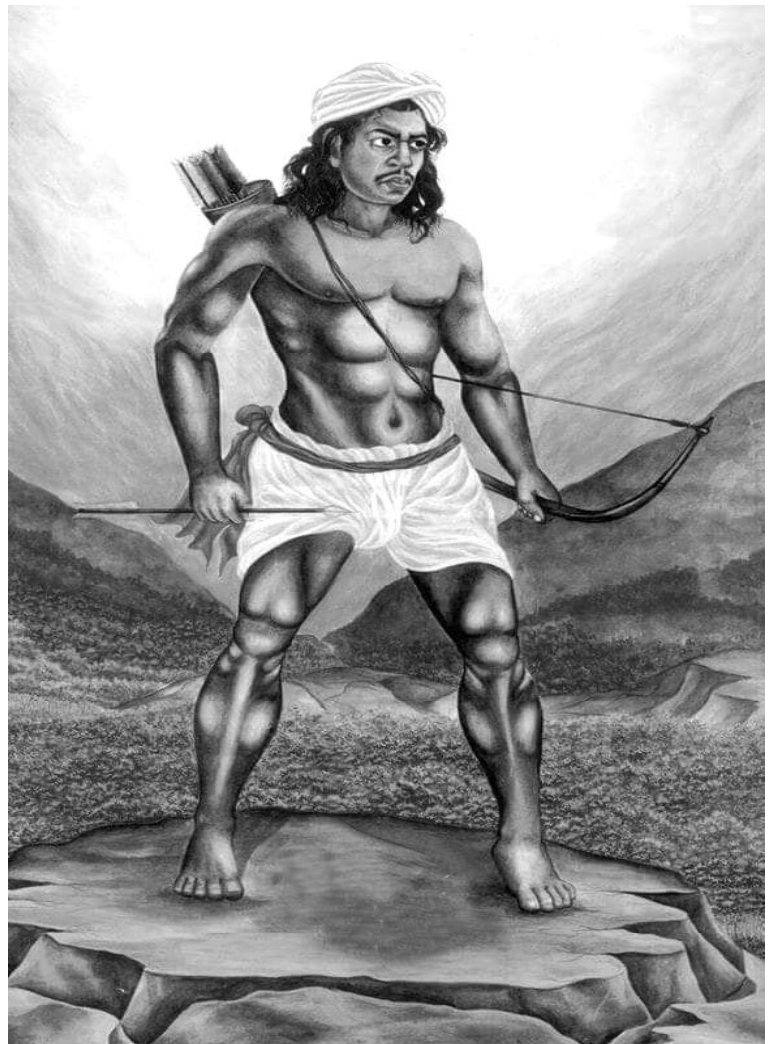
- ◆ ‘This land is mother earth, our mother, we will not pay rent to anyone.’ - Tilka Majhi during the war with British forces between 1781-84

Detailed Biography

- ◆ Tilka Majhi was born on 11th

February, 1750 in Sultanganj, of Bihar. He was born in a small village called Tilakpur and he belonged to Santhal family. His father’s name was Sundara Murmu. Since childhood, Tilka lived in the shadow of forest civilization and hunted wild animals. Workout, wrestling, climbing on the big trees, walking in the valleys, playing with wild animals, roaming in wild forests, rivers, etc. were his daily routine of life. Wildlife had made him fearless and brave. Tilka Manjhi is also known by the name of Jabra Pahadia due to his unbeatable courage.

Since childhood, he has seen the tyranny of



English people on his family and on the tribal people. English rulers had their rights on the poor tribe's cultivable land and timber plantations. Tribal people, children, women, old men were greatly tortured by the British. Sardar inhabited the hills and they too fought with the English Government to protect their lands. The mountains were inhabited by the landlords and they used to keep the British people happy in return for money.

First Encounter with British forces

The struggle between the forest dwellers and the British revolutionized Tilaka. One day Tilaka called for a war against the British at a place called Shanachar (Banachari Jor). The tribal warriors led by Tilka were heading towards the forest areas of Bhagalpur and Sultanganj. They were taking on the British soldiers on the land of the Rajmahal. The British government (1767) was upset due to the Chuhad retaliation conducted by them. The forest dwellers under the leadership of Tilka Manjhi started to dominate the British. Seeing the severity of the situation, the British appointed an officer named Cleve Land to be sent to the Rajmahal region.

Murder of Cleve Land

Cleve Land and his army and police was deployed in the Rajmahal hills. Tilka with his force was in constant conflict with the English government. In the valleys of jungle, Terai and rivers of Ganges, Brahmi, etc., Tilka Majhi, with his army flaunting small indigenous weapons, continued to fight incognito in the mountainous areas of Munger, Bhagalpur, Santhal and Parganas, fighting constantly against the British. Cleve Land and Sir Eyre fought pitched battle with brave Tilka's army. While the British troops headed for combat, Tilka's soldiers began to secretly hit arrows on the English army. Tilka climbed a palm tree. At the same time, Cleve land came climbing on a horse. At that very moment, Tilka killed Superintendent Cleve Land on January 13, 1784 with his arrows. After the news of the death of Cleve Land, English government grew shaky.

Landlords, soldiers and officers became very shaky out of fear.

Arrest of Tilka Majhi

The British government decided to find and hang Tilka. One night when Tilka and his revolutionary partners were at a celebration of dance and music and were lost in exultation, a traitor warlord Jaudah suddenly attacked the Santhali army. Tilka survived this sudden attack, but many of his soldiers were martyred. Some were imprisoned. Tilka fled from the scene and took refuge in the mountainous region of Sultanganj. English army laid a trap for him in the surrounding mountain areas of Sutanganj and Bhagalpur. Heroic Tilka and his army now hid in mountainous areas and struggled hard to survive. His soldiers starved dying due to lack of food and shelter. Now the heroic Tilka and his troops started a guerrilla war against the British army. The English army was attacked by the Santhal tribals from odd directions but Majhi was entrapped by the Britishers during the skirmishes.

Arrest of Tilka Manjhi and Supreme Sacrifice

Tilka Manjhi was arrested and brought to Bhagalpur by the British and was dragged behind 4 horses bound by thick ropes.

In 1785, Tilka was hanged to death on a banyan tree.

Tilka was the first Indian who fought against the British to free India from slavery. This war of independence was again rekindled after long 72 years in the shape of a struggle for independence in 1857. To perpetuate the memory of Tilka, a statue of the hero was erected in front of the Bhagalpur District Court. There is also a university named after him. Tilka will forever be remembered as a son of Mother India who laid down his life for independence of India. ■

References

Brave warriors -Nand Kumar Sai

A brief Report of Seemant Darshan Yatra

Arunachal Vikas Parishad (AVP) is a Social Organisation working for the all round development of the people of Arunachal Pradesh through its various activities. AVP also organises various types of events and programmes to promote the Indigenous faith, culture, tradition and languages as well as the feelings of National integration and patriotism among the young generation.

On the eve of Republic Day, AVP has organised a very inspiring programme “Seemant Darshan Yatra-2021” to visit the border villages, situated in Arunachal Pradesh share an international border with Myanmar, Bhutan and China occupied Tibet to meet the brothers and sisters of remote area with the feeling of affinity

Seemant Darshan Yatra was organised by Arunachal Vikas Parishad (AVP) from 23rd to 26th January 2021 emphasizing the following points:

(a) To express the sentiments of oneness with the inhabitants of the border area of India and Tibet (China), Bhutan and Myanmar.

(b) To enrich the confidence about India's strengths and capabilities in the minds of the residents of these villages.

(c) To contemplate the living conditions of the residents of these villages.

(d) To comprehend the pivotal pre-eminence of Indigenous faith and culture in the daily life of the residents of these areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

(f) To verify the assertions of Chinese intrusion of Indian Territory.

The Yatra was flagged off by Deputy Chief Minister Shri Chowna Mein and Youth and Sports, Forest and Environment Minister Shri Mama Natung, Director General of Police Shri R.P. Uppadhyay, IPS at Nyeder Namlo, Itanagar. Shri Tai Tagak, Advisor to the Chief Minister. and Shri Kumsi Sidisow MLA were also present in function.

The Seemanta Darshan Yatra programme

concluded on 29th January with experience sharing and report submission in Itanagar AVP office. Shri Techi Gubin, President, AVP and other 30 Seemant Yatri participated in experience sharing programme. Many other delegates sent their written reports and observations to AVP. The Yatra covered 111 villages of border area of 25 administrative circles of 12 districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The delegates of the Yatra interacted with 17 tribes residing on the border areas and visited 35 security personal camps (Army, ITBP, SSB, Assam Rifles etc). On the occasion of Republic day they hoisted national flag in 41 boarder villages.

193 delegates from 16 tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and different parts of the country viz. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Tripura Bihar, West Bengal, Assam enthusiastically took part in the Yatra. The Yatra represented the picture of oneness of the residents of the villages of border areas and the greater India.

The delegates visited house to house and distributed : Bharat Mata photos-2500 nos. Stickers of patriotic slogans – 3000 nos, National flags-90nos, Mike set-41nos. Indigenous flags-300nos, Locketts-1550 and Immunity buster Ayurvedic Kada powder. The Village people were very much happy to see such kind of pamphlets and stickers because they never saw some of these items previously especially the photo of Bharat Mata.

Some Important observations of the Yatra:

❖ The spirit of Indianness is thoroughly seen in the villages on the border areas. The villages identify themselves with India very strongly.

❖ During the Yatris the participants got to know some famous historical and mythological site in Acheso (Dembean) village, Mechuka, Tawang, Geling and other many places.

❖ The village is populated only by elder people. Young generation is staying in district head quarter

and others parts of India for studying and jobs.

❖ The people take active part in state as well as national elections.

❖ The villages have good relations with the armed forces, Army as well as ITBP, SSB etc. SSB has constructed a Local Prayer center in Samdrung village in West Kameng District. Youths from the villages accompany the patrolling units of ITBP as porters and guide. The youths also act as informers of the forces.

There is matrimonial relation of resident of West Kameng district with the Bhutanese. In Jagan Village, Longding district having less land for cultivation and facing a lot of difficulties in surviving.

The villagers are aware and concerned of the Chinese aggression but without fear of war. When they go by porter up the borders they can trace the Chinese intrusion in our territory. In Taksin Upper Subansiri, One Villager Shri Takia, PI. Narrated that Chinese army PLA has made about 100 houses in Mibachu in Maja area during 2018 to 2020. The Chinese intrusion also took place in Sila-2, Sila-3,

Sila-4, Sila top and asapila area in 2018. In Ojomada 4 Km from Taksin town PLA come every week and marked presence in red ink. . The roads that have been built by China up to border areas make them anxious about Chinese intentions. Their hospitality, love and concern for every team of Yatra of received in every village is beyond words. Villagers especially women was waiting for hours in ice cold wintry weather.

Hindi is spoken freely without any hesitation by everyone in the village. Tata Sky, DTH have reached in villages and they enjoy watching it on solar energy. But Mobile net work is not available in remote area. It requires improving the communication network.

Government schools are situated in many remote villages. Students are very less and teachers do not attend school regularly. The infrastructure that was seen in all the schools need repair and maintenance.

The medical facilities are very poor with no health worker in the village level. Hence the people are forced to travel to nearby towns for medical assistance or rely on their traditional healing system.



The intellectual terrorists Vs Indian democracy

Partha Pratim Mazumder

They come in varied hues - social activists, 'noted' historians, journalists, advocates, litterateurs and of course prominent citizens. They are over active and reactive when it comes to the protection of evangelists, jihadis and Maoists and their silence is articulate in any matter that concerns the sentiments of the Hindus or the nation.

The fact that India is plural and secular because of the Hindus is never acknowledged by these pamphleteers, who re-write India's history to suit the convenience of their bias. Hence, the marauder Ghazni becomes a routine plunderer who was attracted by the wealth. That each of these foreign Muslim invaders broke our temples, set on fire our libraries and attempted to spread Islam through the sword is never mentioned in any of their history text book.

They never condemn the naxalite violence. During TV debates they in passing mention, of course we do, and hastily add, but we must go to the root cause of this. They would never call Afzal, Kasab and scores of other terrorists as Muslim terrorists. The 26/11 attack is not described as Islamic terror. But persons like Sadhvi Pragya, Col Purohit have been branded as Hindu terrorists. They rave and rant about 'draconian' terror laws and campaign for the human rights of terrorists. The media, especially some of the English newspapers, magazines and TV channels are the oxygen that keeps this motley crowd alive. Kashmir separatists have more supporters in Delhi than in the state. So they survive. There are some regulars who are seen in this club. The National Advisory Committee has been filled with these people by Sonia Gandhi to direct and dictate to the nominated Prime Minister of India. They of course operate in different circles and routes but come together as if on cue on Pakistan, Maoists, jihadis and the evangelists. Some of the most familiar faces are Arundhati Roy, who declared she is no more a citizen of this country, but continues to hold the

Indian passport, Ramachandra Guha, whose heart bleeds selectively for the threat to pluralism (from Hindus!), They would campaign against India going nuclear and yet refuse to see the threat from our east and west. Their love for freedom and human rights does not extend to the Tibetans. The religious persecution of Tamils in Malaysia and their plight in Sri Lanka are non-issues as far as these club members are concerned.

They attempt to divide the Hindu society by declaring tribals as non-Hindu, wean away the dalits and other socially deprived classes as outside the Hindu fold. Without a drop of understanding they discuss the caste issue. Paradoxically, they support reservation to Christian and Muslim converts from SC/ST. RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal are the proverbial red rag for them. Politically, their preference is Congress, since the communists have no presence outside Kerala and West Bengal. Outside that they support anyone who can defeat the BJP, because it is tinged by saffron and hence a huge no-no.

What is clear is that they are playing to a gallery that is not India. The issues they select, the positions they highlight and the posturing they assume are all so consistently against the sentiments of an ordinary Indian. They are perched in their comfortable chairs, not having to go anywhere near the poor and the wretched of this country, but to speak for them in sound bites for TV and produce articles for cohort publications. It is high time we identified and recognised these intellectual terrorists and isolated them, so that we can live in a free society, with a system that is unmindful to their ilk. Naxals aren't wild jihadis. Naxals are smart. They are educated, understand politics, war strategies, and the topography of the country. They know that the transport and communication facilities are inferior in jungles and the remote countryside is very far from military centres, making it difficult to reach them in

(Contd. to Page 23)

51st Central Tamla – DU celebrated at Khoraliang

51st Central Tamla – DU Festival celebrated with a difference this time here at the Khoraliang where Armed Force personnel from General Officer Command (GOC) Dinjan Dibrugarh Assam and 181 Mountain Brigade Lohitpur enthusiastically took part to give the festivity a new look.

Each member of the Mishmi community was witnessed in thronging at the festival ground in their best traditional attire to showcase their rich culture. Previously the festival was celebrated individually however since 1970, the tribe resolved to celebrate it centrally to showcase their rich identity in a single platform for better exposure.

While expressing his first Tamla – DU festival in Arunachal, Brigadier Rohit Sehgal Commandant 181 Mountain Brigade as a chief guest said that the Army always stands as a sentinel for nation first and then its beautiful people that treasure thrive with various exquisite cultures. “We are committed to facilitate all sorts of aid and support to local populace. We have several basic services under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ensure for this platform to usher the overall development of the community”, the CO promises.

Whilst extending complement to the Army active participation in the festivity, Karikho Kri local MLA said our nation, culture and everything is saved because of their tireless work and supreme sacrifice to guard the border. Their involvement in the event gets exposure to know each other, he says.

”We have unique culture, folklore, handicraft and rich heritage to carry forward. Our pioneer Mishmi political leader, social worker and senior members did their best to showcase which the onus need to be shouldered by the youth”, hopes the MLA further. Earlier, Dorengso Pul and Shantanu Kri Chairman and General Secretary 51st Central Tamla – DU Celebration Committee also highlighted the gist and essence of the festivity.

The GOC also handed over 7 (seven) wheel chairs to the physically challenge person here on the occasion to mark the day.

Meanwhile, Marshal Art, sophisticated weapon display, Bhangra dance, and musical band display from GOC Dinjan Indian Army together with traditional fashion show by the children, flag hoisting ceremony, mega dance and others were attractive events of the daylong celebration. ■



Spearheaded the destruction of invaders

E. Rajesh Pathak

‘The Marathas and Sikhs were the spearheads of the Hindu revival. And the Mughal empire was finally overthrown by them, not by the British’-[p-365, 370-‘Glimpses of world history’]. The whole chronology of finally coming to the glorious moment of history expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru as above is very interesting , and instructive too.

First foreign invasion to affect country’s geographical unity was mounted by Mir Qasim in 638 A.D. on Sindh, when King Dahir Sen ruled it. Taking sea-rout when the military of Mir Qasim landed on dessert adjoining the sea, the ministers of Dahir advised him to cut the supply of food and water to enemy. So that they would have already be dead due to hunger and thirst before engaging themselves into war. But this was the time when deceptive tactics in the Indian art of warfare was held in contempt. To Dahir this advice seemed to be in contravention of ‘Kshatra-dharma’ [ethics of warfare] and therefore he declined. With his military Qasim consequently got to reach as close as to the fort of Deval near Karachi. And, as oppose to Dahir, kshatra-dharma being alien to him and his lot, first thing Qasim did was to mastermind the kidnapping of three children of chief guard of the gate of the fort. Without wait Qasim got the head of one of the children chopped off , sending the message what could be done with two other children if his order was not followed. Helpless, Chief guard yielded, and opened the secret gate of the fort. Subsequently, in fierce battle Dahir got defeated, and thus Sindh went in the hand of foreigners.

Later, the next invasion that country witnessed was in 980 AD. This time the way the foreigners chose passed through Urganistan[today’s Afghanistan] , and their commander was Subuktgin, the sultan of Gazni. Getting hint from the spies that in Indian tradition war was not fought in the night, he sent an emissary and first got it settled with Indian king, Jaipal Shaiya, that war would be initiated next morning,

and then violating the agreement he unleashed the attack upon the Indian soldiers in the dead of the night, when in deep slumber and unarmed they were! Defeated in this one-sided battle, Jaipal had to shift his capital from Kuba[Kabul] to first at Udabandpur, and then finally at Lavkushpur [Lahore]. Fury of invasions did not come to close even though. Where subkutgin ended the battle, his more barbaric and cunning son, Mehmood Gazni, took it forward from there. Using his ancestor’s most reliable weapon of deception he dealt defeat on Jaipal Shaiya’s descendant Anandpal and then Trilocahanpal Shaiya, breaking Afghanistan and Punjab away from India and, subsequently, merging them into his empire.

Attacking not the fleeing enemy from his back; granting pardon to the enemy fallen in the hand; not raising the arm on an unarmed adversary; not backtracking from the promise once given, come what may; unconcerned to victory or defeat in the battlefield, holding self-sacrifice in the battle a matter of glory — such was the exclusivist outlook to the human virtues which Indian kings could not part with even onward course of history, and made country suffer the ignominy of slavery and of secession of its territories one by one. But during this period for the first time one that in true sense grasped the deceptive tactics of invaders and left them behind in their own game and successfully laid the foundation of downfall of Mughals he was great Maratha Hindu king Chhatrapati Shivaji. It was the time when Hindu kings and vassals had the lone priority of somehow saving their respective territories by appeasing the foreigner invaders. Launching first attack on them was such a thing they can’t even think of. But as Shivaji laid the foundation of Maratha power he opened the war-front against Mughals by launching fierce attacks, tearing into their military capabilities and empire as a whole. Utterly inferior since he had been before Mughals in strength and resources both, the strategy he adopted got to be

famous in the annals of history as 'Gurilla-warfare'. Using dexterously the mazes of terrains of Sahyadri Mountain, forming a force of its tribal inhabitants, Mavales, he dealt one after another setback to the enemies. Gradually he gained upper hand; and as his strength increased he began to attack openly on Mughals. And with the shattering defeats dealt upon Mughals led by Aurangzeb in the open battle of Salher in 1772, Maratha warriors even forced the opponents to adopt defensive stance! Away from the capital for 1 ½ years, Shivaji then successfully fulfilled the famous 'Karnataka-mission'. With his able administration and planned strategy he won one after another battles, and founded a separate sovereign Maratha state on a region of south-eastern Maharashtra.

Emulating the ways shown by Shivaji, later Maratha grew so formidable a force that Aurangzeb, frustrated, even had to propose a truce with them. But as of now it was too late; his proposal met with outright rejection by Maratha power. And from this shock of contempt, which could never be expected by him, he could gain redemption only when death embraced him.

And, especially after 1740, when Mughals got weakened during the reign of Mohammad Shah the real power of the country had shrunk into the hands of Maratha. During 1755-1756 under Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar they dealt decisive defeat to Rohillas and Afghans and succeeded in liberating Punjab after 800 years from foreigners. And later when the downfall of Marathas began, Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh, filling the voids thus created, took the mission of rejuvenation of Indian sovereignty in his hands and established Indian rule in Punjab. Breaking the foreign dominance, army of Maharaja led by Harisingh Nalwa even entered deep inside Afghanistan upto Kabul and earned the glory of bringing after centuries the jewel studded gate of Somnath-which Mehmood Gaznavi looted to carry with him in 11th century- back to India and laid it again where it once stood tall. Likewise Harimandir sahib gurudwara of Amritsar that was burnt down by Ahmad Shah Abdali was renovated and as well as embedded with the gold, giving it the form of today's 'Swaran Mandir'. Cow-slaughter so also was prohibited in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. ■

(Contd. from Page 20)

The intellectual terrorists Vs Indian democracy

the jungles. Therefore, they have made dense forests their main bastion to wage war against the enemy (India). They call it 'liberated zone'. From here they plan to 'attack the enemy (India) in the cities' by using various groups of people, ranging from labourers to intellectuals to lawyers to professors and artists. Urban Naxal now becomes 'invisible enemies' of India. "The cadres have to be regularly sent to cities to impart necessary ideological and political education & training. If part-time (PT) or professional revolutionaries (PR) are exposed due to the mistakes of the cadre, then they should be immediately sent underground'. You can't identify anyone. This is achieved with the help of 'media mobilisers'. Who are these media mobilisers? You will find them running small media houses without any journalistic competence, public figures with strong 'influencing potential', legal activists, student leaders,

et cetera. They come with many faces. Feminism and freedom of speech are safest. You don't need much academic knowledge as 'both these issues are rants'. Also, issues of feminism attract a large number of people who help in 'mass mobilisation against the enemy (India).

What happened yesterday was very unfortunate and a sad day for Indian democracy. I am sure most of them were an innocent and unaware lot. I am sure that most of these people might regret later. But regret, we all do. We mourned when we lost India to the Moghuls, when we lost to the British, the French, and the Portuguese, when we lost, after Independence, and when we lost to a corrupt dynasty. For the last thousand years, because of the direct and indirect link of some dishonest and irresponsible citizens, we have been losing and regretting. ■

The Real Artist

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

More or less, a section of people in our contemporary society put a label on a person as an 'artist', often there is some genuineness, but sometimes it is just an imaginary label, due to some professional legacy, pecuniary interest, mitigating ways of earning bread and butter in number of ways like singer, actor, painter, dramatists, instrumentalists, and whatever comes under it as broader meaning. Dictionary meaning of 'artist' is 'a person who creates paintings or drawings as a profession or hobby', 'a person who habitually practices a specified reprehensible activity', Wikipedia assert 'an artist is a person engaged in an activity related to creating art, practicing the arts, or demonstrating an art. The common usage in both everyday speech and academic discourse refers to a practitioner in the visual arts only. However, the term is also often used in the entertainment business, especially in a business context...'. Contrary to its' modern meaning, this endeavour is an effort to explore the 'real artist' in the context of Assam. In Assamese, the term silpi is used equivalent to artist. The people of Assam considers Jyotiprasad Agarwala as a real artist due to his creativity and real contribution in the multiple genres like poem, songs, music, drama, films, etc. His songs are still popular as 'Jyoti Sangeet' and he made the first Assamese film

'Jyomati'- a historical episode depicting a segment of Ahom dynasty portraying the heroics of a female Jyomati who sacrifice her life for the interest of her husband, who later on king of Ahom dynasty. It is just a fragment of Jyotiprasad Agarwala's contribution, a great 'artist' who in his brief span (48 years) of life work for the Assamese society and culture. The real artist is one who goes beyond all thought in a smaller canvas but possess a greater interest at larger level. 'Silpi diwas' is celebrated every year on 17th January as his death anniversary. His



articulation is reflected in rare double: inner and outer beauty. His accomplishments reflect inner explicitness while title 'Roopkonwar' reflects the outer. This particular discourse is incidental not intentional while I have witnessed the celebration on 17th January.

People of Assam like to remember some dates and important event. It is related to a narratives of recent times. It was a cold Sunday morning. In a relax mood, I was browsing the newspaper but seriously reading some of the articles on Jyotiprasad Agarwala. After reading it, it was realized that it was 'silpi diwas', I must admit that I forgot. There was a call from a noted journalist and serious writer. He invited me to join him for attending some meetings organized for 'silpi diwas'. I grabbed the opportunity

and joined him. It was indeed great experiences that prompt me to this endeavour.

There were indeed two meetings, where I could attend as an ‘on looker’ as his companion. I was also honored as special guest (but no formal invitation), which I don’t expected in reality. My appearance was indeed, to gather the knowledge and pay tribute to the real artist. The first plot, was set at Satribari, just three km away from my residence. The area, is indeed a mixed kind of settlement of different community affiliations. It was nice to see the effort of some young Assamese people who come together to celebrate the death anniversary of the iconic figure of Assam. The Satribari area, has been influenced by Christianity since past, having infrastructure of school (Nicholas) and hospital managed by church authority. Within such ethnic complex, it is nice to hear the eco of the songs, dance drama, and music compositions rendered by small children in the platform provided by Satribari Middle Guwahat Sahitya Sabha in that auspicious occasion assigning as binneal meet and Xixu Samaroh (children festival) as well. In the entire area, stage courtyard, I felt the vibration and soul of the real artist. A group of young lady started the proceedings with tore more alukore jatra, followed by various other solo songs popularly known as ‘Jyoti Sangeet’ and dance performance on such songs. Ankurita Bora’s singing and Monalisa Das dance performance was quite artistic. A real artist never belongs to any caste, creed, religion and community. He belongs to entire humanity-for all the people. Their imagination and creativity acts as catalysis for peace, amity and common brotherhood. They really provide us to release our differences and conflicts. The event was also a testimony of it. It was observed when Gitipriya Ghosh nicely rendered gose gose and a other song of the artist by Anjelina Basu.

A solo mime performance by Gayatri Mudo, depicting the entire scheme of collecting flowers from tree, arranging flowers for garland and at the end offer to the great artist, was indeed mindboggling. Being the representative of Assamese

cultural heritage, it was nice to watch a vural nritya by young children. Besides, Kabyanjal Kumar Das’s played violin on a very popular song of the genius, had made the environment electrified and blessed. In the list of iconic figures of Assam, thinkers and scholars would like to keep names of Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, the exponents of Vaishnavite religion, followed by the real artist, Bishnu Prasad Rabha, as Kalaguru, and Bhupen Hazarika, added in the list. Hazarika’s contribution in the forms of song lyrics, poems, write ups, music composition, is the asset for the entire Assamese society. He provides a new identity for the Assamese people and the territory. Popularly, known as ‘Bhupendra sangit’, is also popular like Agarwala’s song in a different genre. One of his popular song is ‘Asom amar rupahi gunaru nai xesh’ (praising the land of Assam and its’ virtue). It was staged in a dance form that was quite illuminating. Reflection on situation of present times, was also seen when a group of children performed a play entitled corona ahi ase (corona is coming). The thought of a real artist always different and it for the sake of own mother land and its’ safety, security, progress and development. Some of the verses of his song was seen pasted in the temporary shed:

(a)

*Kun kot asha
Aah o deka lora
Toi kanmukat hoi thiya
Matri pujar vag loboli beli kara kiya?*

(b)

*Ai prithibilo aniba lagiba mohattar mohajoy
Kariba lagiba gotei jagat amrit anandamoy*

(c)

*Moi sodexb moi bidex
Moi nana dexb xato mahadexb
Xatobar ghuri phuri
Gynar manik-mukuta anim anjali vari vari*

(d)

*Tore moree alokere jatra
Abhirata abhirata*

*Ami palu jibanar artha avinab
Swagata swagata xatbirtha*

(e)

*Kamrupa mur kbuyodixuria
Axomiya vaxa
Jagat xavaloi jaba
Ujjal xujjal kahinur pindbi
Habi jyotirupa haba*

Since these fragments are in Assamese language, it is essential to provide the meaning for non-Assamese. I also admit, my limitations, to explain the real meaning. Mere translation is not enough to penetrate the underlying genesis. Still let's try to understand the meaning in broader perspectives. First appeals youth to worship mother, second reveals to bring happiness in the entire world, third emphasis on gathering knowledge, fourth asserts journey together and finally about Assamese language that will reach world platform.

The second destination was in a primary school located at Hatigaon, an area located far away from Satribari. The event was organized by a woman wing- Brihatar Dispur Xuravi Mahila Xangha. Like the previous one, it was also children who composed the larger part of the audience. It was indeed a great significance to provide platform for budding generation to know the works of a legend. Pakhila Kalita, a noted dramatist provided insights- his birth, education, training, about his drama, films besides rendering his songs in recital form. He was born in 17th June, 1903 in Dibrugarh, Paramananda Agarwala and Kiranmoyee Agarwala, was his parents; had his schooling from Assam and Bengal. He went to Edinburgh for higher study and learnt the film making in Germany. He got an international exposure while he was quite young. Besides, the first film Joymati, he wrote several plays like Sonit Kunwari, Karengor Ligiri, Rupalim, Khanikar and Labhita. Every plays are significant in terms of form, content and articulation. Sonit Kunwari, is all about the mythological content depicting the narrative of Usha and Annirudhya. Oral history of the present

day Tezpur, a city of Assam, asserts such narrative. On the other hand, he depicted ultra modern ideas of love within and outside wedlock in Karengor Ligiri, Rupalim set against tribal background, depicted the clash between love and jealousy, between love and lust, Khanikar, as a social play depicts how the young artist Nabin Phookan fought against the conservatism of his family and went to Europe and reached his goal, in Labhita, he presented significant episodes connected with the revolution of 1942 and the central character Labhita who swims courageously through the torrents of the times and is killed when planting the Indian national flag on the soil of our British dominated country ¹.

Truly, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, is a real artist, whose focus on common masses and who has its own view of defining culture. As observed ² culture, is not a medium of entertainment, it is a instrument of struggle. Culture cannot be impartial- it takes the side either on the sense of conscious human being who is in struggle or antisocial element. He did not suggest the artist to be impartial; rather suggest taking side of poor masses. He appeal to the artist that with the help of fine arts, they should stand amidst common masses leaving all fear, weakness. His definition of culture, says 'the words, the works, thought, attempt, that makes human and real human life, beautiful and great, lift from barbarism to civilization, enable human to enjoy happiness and peace, makes happy to happiest, that is culture'. On that Sunday, I was deeply appraised by some write up of prominent scholars besides had first hand learning experience on the legacy of the real artist of Assam.

END NOTES

1. Prafulla Pran Mahanta, (2021, 17th January), 'Jyotiprasad as playwright', *The Assam Tribune, Guwahati*

2. Paramananda Majumdar, (2021, 17th January) 'Sanskriti aru Silpir Motadarxa', *Axomiya Pratidin, Guwahati*



Seemant Darshan Yatra by Arunachal Vikas Parishad

Loktok Lake, Moirang, Manipur

