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# HERITAGE EXPLORER

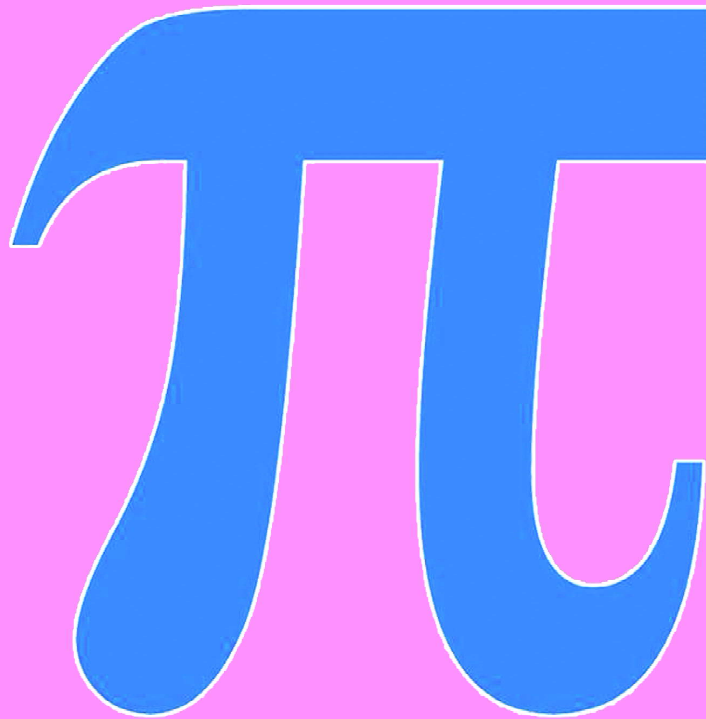
"LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES"

*A Monthly News Bulletin*

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**INTERESTING  
FACTS ABOUT  
INDIA**



**The value of "pi" was first calculated by the Indian Mathematician Budhayana, and he explained the concept of what is known as the Pythagorean Theorem. He discovered this in the 6th century, long before the European mathematicians.**

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

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## Reverse Climate change to save the Earth

As a matter of routine we celebrated the World Environment Day on 5th June this year amidst rising temperatures and uncertain weather conditions. It is not that we do not understand what is happening and why this is happening. Attitudinally we simply don't care because we perhaps believe that the wise man out there will look into these issues and do whatever is necessary. Unfortunately, this approach will prove disastrous especially for those who are now just above 25 years of age and have enough life time to live on this beautiful earth. This is because as per UN's Intergovernmental panel on climate change the earth has already warmed by one degree Celsius since the start of the Industrial Revolution and if the current trajectory continues at present rate, temperatures may reach 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming by 2040 causing irreversible damage to our habitats.

All of us are very much aware that the glaciers and ice sheets in polar and mountain regions are melting faster than ever. Almost two-thirds of the world's cities with populations of over five million are at risk due to rise in sea level because nearly 40 per cent of the world's population live within 100 km of a coastal areas. In contrast scarcity of drinking water is becoming more severe in many cities across the world due to abnormal rise in environmental temperature. Many of our Indian cities like Chennai, Bangaluru are facing similar crisis. The day is not perhaps far when Guwahati city may also go out of water due to gross depletion of groundwater. No continent is left untouched, with heat waves, droughts, typhoons, hurricanes and floods that are causing mass destruction around the world. 90 per cent of these disasters are now classified as weather and climate-related, costing the world economy 520 billion USD each year, while 26 million people are pushed into poverty as a result. Temperature rise is affecting the socio-economic life of people and leading to crop failures and wildfires that affect food security. Such impacts tend to fall primarily on the poor and vulnerable populace. As per a new study published in Current Science, there were 660 heat waves during 1978—2014 —defined as temperatures above the

normal average that lasted for more than two days causing death of 12,273 people. Global warming is likely to make economic output gap between the world's richest and poorest countries grow wider causing poverty starker. Climate change is a major threat to international peace and security because it heightens competition for basic natural resources such as land, food, and water fueling socio-economic as well as political tensions.

Time has come for us to understand the peril our country is facing for being located in the tropical region which is prone to unique geographical and extreme climatic conditions, The need of the hour is to understand the environmental factors that generate heat wave conditions to save ourselves from its adverse impacts. The last four years were the hottest years on record and this year the initial signs are clear enough to predict more torturous days. While science signals that climate change is irrefutable, it also tells us that it is not too late to stem the tide. This will require fundamental transformations in all aspects of society — how we grow food, how we use land, transport goods, and generate power. While science tells us that climate change is irrefutable, it also tells us that it is not too late to stem the tide. This will require fundamental transformations in all aspects of society — how we grow food, use land, transport goods, and generate power. As Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out in September, “the climate emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win”. Let us plant more trees, save our water bodies, conserve ground water and adopt rainwater harvesting, restrict use of fossil fuel and opt for non-conventional energy. At the same time our government must adopt and execute policies that promote environment protection, restrict industrial activities that emit heat trapping green house gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. There are many other areas we can chip in to rejuvenating our environment. Let us discover them and save the earth from total disaster.

*Romen Chakraborty*  
Chief Editor

# Sikkimese Bhutia's Culture Perspectives

Dr Jigmi Wangchuk Bhutia

(continued from previous issue)

The Bhutias of Sikkim may categorize into several principal and sub groupings of clans thus far. From the root tree of Khye Bumsa and his brothers, there branched a clans descending from Khye Bumsa's son; Dragtsen Darpa; to his three sons' Dorje Pal, Tathup Pal and Gyodpo Tsangkorpo. Tathup had four sons<sup>13</sup>; Guru Tashi<sup>14</sup>, Nyima Gyalpo, Tshegyud Darpo and Shangdarpo. Guru Tashi, in turn, had five sons; Jowo Nagpo, Wangchen, Lasopa, Shalngoi Jowo and Tadrin Dragpa. Jowo Nagpo had two sons; Se Adar and Chig Gyal. Shalngo settled in Gangtok and became the chieftain there.<sup>15</sup> The first Chogyal Phuntsog Namgyal was Shalngo's descendent and so they became the principal ruling clan of the Bhutias of Sikkim.

During Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal's reign, some of the descendants of Khye Bumsa's three younger brothers who had earlier settled in the Haa region of Bhutan migrated, via Chumbi, to Dremojong. They came to settle mostly in Naku Chumbong and Tashiding in west Sikkim; Bara Pathing and Pakyong in East Sikkim; Ralang in South Sikkim; and Lachen and Lachung in North Sikkim.

## The Sikkimese Bhutia Language

After the visit of Guru Rinpoche and a group of his followers in 8th century, and especially after the arrival of the legendary Khye Bumsa in Sikkim, the opening of the sacred hidden land by Rigdzin Godemchen, and the coronation of the first Chogyal by the three great Lamas, the vernacular usage of the Tibetan language in Dremojong, Drejong-Lhokey, gradually evolved into its present distinct written and spoken form. Drejong-Lhokey or the Sikkimese Bhutia language is amongst the 25 Tibetic languages or "dialect groups" which are derivative forms of the original classical or scriptural forms of the Tibetan language. The Drejong-key refers to the language spoken by the people who migrated to the valley of abundant grains, Drejong. Scholars of scriptural Tibetan generally referred to people living in southern regions of Tibet, and its bordering regions, as Lhopa/Lhopo, which means 'southern person/people,' so Lhokey meant the Tibetan language dialect used by the 'southerners.' In inter-ethnic contacts within India, the language is known as Sikkimese Bhutia.<sup>16</sup> The Bhutias resides in four districts of Sikkim and some other parts of Indian States.

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<sup>13</sup>In other context it is said that the Khye Bumsa's first son Kyabo Rab's descendants did not remain at same place and constantly changed their residence, thus they obtained the family name "Yul-thonpa". The Second son Langmo Rab later migrated to the present day Simik Lingzey, East Sikkim and thereby his descendants got the family title Lingzerpa. The third son Mipon Rab, who succeeded his father, married a lady from Sakya and had four sons. The first son being born at his maternal Uncle's palace at Tibet was named Shangpo-dharpa or Shangdarpa, the second being born on the tenth day on the month of Guru's Tsechu named Tshechu-darpa, the third being born on Sunday was named as Nyima Gyalpo and the fourth son who was born on the occasion of Tashi Rabne or the consecration ceremony of Guru Padmasambhava statue named as Guru Tashi who became the successor to his father as a new ruler of his clan.

<sup>14</sup> There are many sub caste but i don't find it important to mention here.

<sup>15</sup>Tshering, Khenpo Lha, *A Sage of Sikkim's Supremely Revered four Pioneer Nyingmapa Reincarnates and Their Torchbearers*. Published by: Author, 2002 pp. 203-204

<sup>16</sup>Namgyal, Dr. Kunzang, *Introduction of Bhutia Language*, [http://:www.hellobhutia.com](http://www.hellobhutia.com), 2017

Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941) mentioned in the Linguistic Survey of India “LSI” that there were over 35,960 speakers of Drejong-kay across India. But in the Census of India, 2001, lists 41,825 speakers of Drejong-kay. The exact number of speakers is difficult to determine because many young ethnic Drejongpas either do not speak the language or have a very limited knowledge of it. Many Lepchas living close by Bhutias also speaks DrejongLhokay. At present, the language is still quite actively spoken in various Bhutia communities in Sikkim, but Nepali has become the de facto lingua franca of all the peoples of Sikkim. Because of the rapid drop in the number of young speakers, Drejong-Lhokey has been described as a “severely endangered” language, and even “moribund” by learned linguistic George Van Driem (1957).

#### **Written language:**

From the 8th century till the 20th century the Bhutias never had a distinct grammar and literature/vocabulary of their own except the colloquial oral language. Until the 1970’s, the classical form of Tibetan was used for all writing, official or unofficial. Our erstwhile Chogyals’ offices and their respective government officials had used the same form of Tibetan language in their writings which have been catalogued for preservation at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT),<sup>17</sup> Deorali, Gangtok, East Sikkim. After the annexation of Sikkim by India in 1975, the Bhutia language along with other minority languages of Sikkim was introduced as an elective subject at Government schools under the Sikkim Board of Education. For this purpose a literary form of the vernacular language was needed, therefore, in

1977, Padma Shri. Norden Tshering Bhutia (1943-) labored to introduced and produce the first ever Bhutia language text book.<sup>18</sup> The renowned scholar, Mr. Pema Rigdzin Takchungdarpo (1946-), over a seven years period of research and study, revised and expanded upon the work of his illustrious predecessors by producing a modified Tibetan script and a comprehensive modification of the classical Tibetan grammar forms in order to provide a simplified means for students to write in the colloquial style. School books were then produced, most often by translating from existing Tibetan materials, first by Mr. Lobzang Rikzin Phenchungpa, Mr. Tenzin Gelek Rinpoche, Mr. Palden Lachungpa, but, mainly by the aforementioned, Mr. Pema Rinzing Takchungdarpo, who authored more than 20 books on a wide variety of subjects, followed by many others. From the year 1984, this trend has been further extended with the introduction of Bhutia language as a subject up to XII standard and from 2001 it has been included as a minor elective subject at the graduate level. Furthermore, since 2012, Bhutia Language Honours degree course have been offered at Sikkim Government Colleges and eventually in the year 2016 it was introduced at the postgraduate Masters level at the Central University of Sikkim.

In the year 1895, Graham Sandberg wrote his “Manual of the Sikkim-Bhutia Language or Dé-jongKe”<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, Sarat Chandra Das (CIE) also compiled a Tibetan English Dictionary<sup>20</sup>, where we can find abundant entries of words found in the Bhutia language. In the year 1981, Mr. Karma Lhendup published a Bhutia text book titled “Learn

<sup>17</sup>Tshechutharpa, Phurba Tshering, *Wake-Up "Thoku", Short Story of Bhutia Language and Literature*, demashong.blogspot.com, Saturday, 3 December, 2011

<sup>18</sup> *The first ever Bhutia book "Log-Deb" authored by Padma Shri Norden Tshering Bhutia and Mr. Tenzin Gelek Rinpoche, 1977*

<sup>19</sup>Sandberg, Graham, *Manual of the Sikkim-Bhutia Language or Dé-jong Ke*, Westminster Archibald Constable & Co. Published to India Office, Second and Enlarged Edition, 1895

<sup>20</sup>Das, Sarat Chandra, *A Tibetan English Dictionary With Sanskrit Synonyms*, Adarsh Books, New Delhi, 1902

Bhutia in thirty days”. In the year 1996 Mr. Bhaichung Tsiichudarpa published the first ever Drejong fictional work, a novel titled ‘Richhi’ or ‘hope’, which was followed by many other books which have come to encompass a much broader range of literary genres and perspectives. At present, there are some 30 authors who have produced more than 500 books in the Bhutia language. A daily Bhutia language radio programme has been broadcasted since the 1960s, first from Kurseong (West Bengal) by Shri. Yapchung Kazi, and later from All India Radio, Gangtok, by well-known, Aie Kiden Bhutia and learned people in the Bhutia community. Several dictionaries and terminology have been compiled, such as the dictionaries by N. T. Bhutia & Takchungdarpo (2001), P. Bhutia (2004), Lama (2013), Takchungdarpo (2013), Phenasa (2013), Bhutia, J. Wangchuk (2014) and so on.

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*“The great secret of true success, of true happiness, is this: the man or woman who asks for no return, the perfectly unselfish person, is the most successful.”*

*- Swami Vivekananda*

# Sacred Heritage

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

North East, as a miniature India is also a multireligious entity enriching the treasure trove of multidimensional sacred heritage. This particular endeavour is an attempt to bring forth the divergent facets of sacred heritage of this region from micro to macro level. Hindu pantheon encompasses various gods, goddess, deities in the religious world view of its' followers. We have listened the existence of thirty-three crore gods and goddess in our belief system. Our classical texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagawat Geeta always has been guiding and spiritual force in the mind of the followers of Hinduism. Various gods and goddess are occupying space in the temple or shrines and worshipped following adequate rites and rituals. Besides, there are various followers of religious preachers who guide common people for a sacred life. The sacred heritage of this region is manifold from traditional beliefs and practices to classified religion. Census of India always counting the number of population according to religious domain asserting the followers of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jain and some where religion is not mentioned. Preamble of our Constitution asserts the country as 'secular' allowing everyone equal rights and opportunities to profess own religious beliefs and practice according to own choice. Citizens are also allowed for religious conversion. In north eastern context, we have seen such conversion among the tribal societies of this region since the colonial period. There are several issues and concerns regarding such conversion. Our discussion deviate such issues.

Like Indian philosophy, the mind of the people of north east is very clear. They possess a spiritual bent of mind that has been expressed in different ways. This mind shows their subjugation to supernatural power in different ways. The concept

of 'sacred' varies from one society to another. If someone looks at the various parts of the region, it finds so many sacred spaces expressed as in the architecture of temple, mosque, church, gurudwara, monastery, and others formalized institutions, a contribution of various preachers, organized by tribal faiths and beliefs. Assam occupy an important place in enriching sacred heritage of the region. Long back Maheswar Neog edited a wonderful volume entitled *Pabitra Axom* (Sacred Assam) encompassing various sacred places of Assam. Shrine, namghar, temple and various religious places are included. Shivasm, saktism, vaishnavism, tantrism is the core part of religious tenants of Hinduism. In Assam, it is represented by various temples. Shiva temple is located in the nook and corner of Assam. Besides, there are different sacred complexes. The sacred complex has been an area of interest among some scholars. Various studies have been conducted at academic level, for example L.P Bidyarthi's work on *Sacred Complex of Hindu Gaya*. Theoretically, he borrowed the concept of little and great tradition provided by Robert Redfield. Bidyarthi made an attempt to examine it in Indian context. It tried to identify the mechanism of cultural complexions in an ancient Indian setting and studied the secondary complexions based on religious centres of India. For him sacred complex is a happy synthesis of sacred geography, sacred practices and sacred specialist of a Hindu place of pilgrimage, reflecting a level of continuity, compromise, and a combination between the great and little tradition. Now, we must know what is little tradition and great tradition? How can we differentiate? Is there anything like little or great? Such theories also invites lots of criticism among different scholars. But in order to understand Indian tradition one must interpret the theories. It reveals that little tradition consists of local customs, rites, rituals, dialects and great tradition contains legitimate



form of all these things. Another exponent Mckim Marriot revealed that when little tradition and great tradition interact with each other there are upward and downward movements. Scholars also assert that the folks or the peasants are included under little tradition and great tradition includes the elite group. However, both the types of traditions are inter-linked and constantly interact with each other. The interaction between these two traditions causes all sorts of changes and growth in cultural structure of traditions.

Let us contextualise the rural and urban scenario of Assam. Various temples mainly Shiva, Umananda, in the midst and Sukreshwar by the bank of the Brahmaputra river, Ganesha (near Capital complex, Latashil, Agyithuri, approaching Jorabat) are found in and around premere city of Guwahati apart from Kamakha at Nilachal hills and Nabagraha at Chitrachal hills, Basisthashram at the fringe part of the city, flourshing temple of Balaji at the byepass showing cultural contact with southern India, another Shaktipith of Ugratara (near Latashil), Krishna temples at North Guwahati (Doulgovinda) and Haigriv Madhab at Hajo. The sacred space of Hajo is really uncomparable. The entire area provides a real synthesis of religious integration for Hindu and Islam devotees. Kedar (Shiva), Kameswar (Shiva), Kamaleswar (Shiva), Ganesh temple and Hairiv Madhav temple represents the five pligrimage (popularly known as ‘Panchatirtha’ for availing religious tourism. The temple of Haigriv Madhav epitomizes contribution of Ahom Kingdom and also linkages of Buddhism. In the line of LP Bidyarthi, there is wonderful scope for studying sacred complex of Hajo in the context of Assam. It not only provide an interest for the scholastic exercise but also inspire religious tourism. The pious space is further extended by the presence of Poa Mecca, in the adjacent hill top near Hajo attract devotees irrespective of religion. The Ahoms rulers also contributed turning Sivasagar as a place of sacred heritage by constructing Siva DouL and Bishnu DouL.

Assam also provides sacred space through other sects of Hinduism. In Guwahati city, we find Chaitnya

Godiya Math (Paltan Bazar), Ashram of Swami Bibekananda (Ulubari) and complex of Satsanga Bihar of Anukul Thakur (Bhangagarh). In Nasatra (near Sarthebari) of Barpeta district, there is ashrama of Krisnaguru. Under these sects, there are many disciples who is following specified rules and regulations under it. As a religious preachers, the role of Sankardeva and Madhavdeva is known to all. Simplifying the concept of Hindu religious beliefs and practices, Sankardeva conceptualized the *ek saran nam dharma* among the people of Assam several centuries back. He emphasis on the existence of one supreme ‘God’, that can be achieved by devoting *nam prasanga* (devotional prayers). He made a larger impact among the rural masses. More or less, in every Assamese village, we witness the presence of *namghar* (prayer houses) at the micro level and sattras in the larger context. Devotional prayers in various *tithis* (death anniversaries) of various religious gurus, birth day of Lord Krishna are celebrated apart from regular religious congregations. Earlier, there is a person known as *namgharia* who looks after the religious affair of every namghar. Namghar, in a village context not only suffice the religious aspects in a village context, it plays a vital role in the socio-cultural life of the rural folk. It plays an important role in integrating the village people. It is considered as a sacred place where nobody dares to tell a lie. Gaonbura (village headman) with the help of *raiz* (congregation of village folk) find namghar, as an important place to settle various disputes, conflicts and differences in the village context. Decision taken in the premises of namghar is accepted for all. Generally problems and matters relating to a village is settled without the intervention of external agencies. Some of the namghar premises become more vibrant while *bhaona* (performing arts) is displayed. It was Sankardeva who introduced this art form along with his neo-religious concept. It is basically a traditional form of entertainment with religious messages mostly compiled during early sixteen century staged in namghars as well as sattras. The various plays of bhaona are popularly known as *ankiya nats*-characterized by dialogues, costumes, masks, ornaments, specific body movement- differ from

other plays. It is done in a unique way. In Assam, the performance of bhaona in Majuli, its' style and content is widely appreciated. Barsaria bhaona in Jamuguri, a place few km away from Tezpur city, depicts the myriad colours of this traditional art form. Places like Barpeta and Majuli added additional features to the sacred heritage of this region. Holi is a colourful festival for the nation. It has regional variation. One such kind of variation is found in Barpeta when holi is celebrated as *doul utsava* (fakua) under the aiges of various sattras of Barpeta. The sattras of Barpeta blends the entire region with colour and devotion together. Majuli, is famous not only as a riverine island- apart from sattras it still maintain the art of mask making tradition of Assam. These masks are intergral part of various ankia nats. It is pertinent to mention that ankia nats are created from the womb of various classical texts- that has supernatural elements, gods, goddess, demon, mythological animals and their narratives. Without masks, it is difficult to represent them. During *raas purnima* (associated with God Krishna), Majuli become more vibrant while organizing 'raas'. No doubt, 'raas' (depicting Lord Krishnas, various phases of human existence) is one of the key segment that epitomizes the sacred heritage of this region. In recent times, various places like Nalbari, Palasbari, Jamuguri, and nook and corner including urban space, intergrate to the devotion of Krishna and spread the message of 'bhakti'- to supreme God.

Traditional groups of entire north east has added more to the sacred heritage of this region. Tawang is a beautiful place located in Arunachal Pradesh. Monpa, Shertukpen are the groups residing in the area. In religious aspects, Buddhism plays a key role represented by Tawang monastery also known as Merak Lama Lodre Gyamtso in the year 1860-61 AD. Rachel Jones wrote, 'there are many Tibetan monasteries in Arunachal Pradesh, with Tibetan roots in terms of how they worship, how they dress, what they eat, etc. The monasteries also serve as schools for children where they learn the local language, English and Tibetan.'. Monpa celebrates festivals with religious fervour. They celebrate Losar in the

last part of February. Torgya is another festival associated with monastry celebrated for driving away evil forces and to ward off any natural calamities so that people lead a happy and prosperous life. There is another sacred festival where birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava is observed at Khinmey gompas located at Tawang. Besides the reinventing Donyipoloism among different Tani groups of Arunachal Pradesh, temple architecture like *Gangging*, re-establishing myth by realizing Rang Fra gods and various temples found among Tangsa groups, and also some impacts on Noctes besides their own Rang O faith, really mind-boggling socio-religious diversity represented by the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Among the tribal societies of Assam, religious preachers has its' own impact in streamlining own religious practices. They carve a wonderful niche in the sacred heritage of Assam. There is wonderful example presented by Bodo and Zeme Naga groups of Assam. They are two important groups with distinct identity in terms of their settlements in plains and hills. Bodos, are the major and largest plains tribe of Assam. Their traditional religion is bathoism represented by *siju* plants (*Euphorbia splendis*), bathou shrine, encompassing rituals associated with indigenous drinks, sacrifices of domesticated animals, and others. The intervention of Guru Kalicharan Brahma provide a new dimensions towards the religious aspects and 'Brahma Dharma' introduced as neo-religion among the Bodos. Many of them accepted the new beliefs. It also provide a new surname 'Brahma' along with sophisticated Brahma temples seen in many Bodo dominated villages of Assam. In some of the Zeme Naga dominated villages of Dima Hasao, we can see 'Kelmuki'- the temple for the Heraka followers, is also significant. We must acknowledge the contribution of Jadonang and Rani Maa Gaidinliu, who initiate a struggle against the colonial administration in Naga dominated areas, and also felt the reformation of own traditional belief and practices, as Christianity inroads among the Nagas in general and Zeliangrong vis-a-vis Zemes in particular. Their efforts empowered their own

(Contd. to Page 18)

# Mising Life: Nature's role and theory of creation of universe

Lovita J R Morang

The Earth has just one moon. In ancient times people used the moon to measure the passing of the months.

In 1953, Clair Cameron Patterson, a renowned geochemist at the California Institute of Technology, measured ratios of lead isotopes in samples of the meteorite that put tight constraints on Earth's age. Samples of the meteorite showed that it was 4.53 billion to 4.58 billion years old.

Scientifically it has been proven that Earth is estimated to be 4.54 billion years old. Scientists have scoured the Earth searching for the oldest rocks to radio metrically date both earthly and extraterrestrial to determine the age of the Earth, meteorite, the moon and of the solar system.

Today as we enter the digital age where AI is taking over the basic chores, crippling at the same time our physique and intelligence. People will not henceforth look forward to the posterity or look backward to their ancestors. It is this detachment that shall free us, and pull us back from trying to know more.

Legends and ancestors: No matter where one's ancestry originated each tribe has a historicity of legend of its origin and historical truth about their migration. All these are matter of research. Societal values add richness to the cultures of the world that are unique to individual regions.

The Missings are known as worshippers of nature. They revere Donyi-Polo. Ane Donyi (Ane means Mother) and Abo Polo (Abo means Father), Polo means Moon). These are their supreme deities. The belief system of the Abotanis is all about tall tales of creation of universe. Their imagination, their curiosity, their myth has provided the elements of existence of universe that are very much embedded in the old age traditions and tales of racial migrations.

Their racial history can be traced from their rituals, customs and festivals.

The treasures of Abangs, repository of myths and essential features of oral traditions are elaborately embedded in Abangs, the oldest tradition in the course of migration. Crossing 18,518 sq. km of eastern Himalayas, the rugged terrain, labyrinth of precipitous, rocky mountain, graphite deposits, micaceous materials, ferrous minerals, sulphide mineralization etc. are still a treasure to marvel.

The tectonic settings of the great Himalayan mountain ranges made the structural geology and different forces have led to the formation of faults, thrusts and complicated weak zones that have sliced the plateaus. These features allows us to reconstruct the pictures of early Mongloid movements on the soil of India as they enter Assam, Since their advent before 1000 B.C., the Aryans obtained the mountain produce, medicinal herbs and other soma plants and from the dedication of Kirata to the caves in Vajasaneyi Samhita and from the reference in the Atharva Veda to a Kirata girl named Kairatika, who finds and dig a herbal remedy on the ridges of the mountain, which finds its mention in the four books of vedas in all likelihood in the 10th century B.C.

Mahabharata and Ramayana were taking shape between 500 BC to 400 AD. As per Dr. S.K.Chatterji the Tanis finds mention and reasonably identifies with the Kirata. The Misings are believed to have come down from heaven, holding golden creepers from Tsangpo to Siang to Brahmaputra valley within the domain of the Mahabharata in the abode of Kiratas. Kirata are Indian tribes of Mongloid origin. They are described in Mahabharata as pleasant looking, gold-like, yellow in colour. Kiratas are dwellers of the Himalayan region. These early settlers were identified as Kirata by the Vedic Aryans. According to some Indologists, the term Kirata occurred first in the

Yajurveda and subsequently in the Atharvaveda, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and other ancient scriptures. Kiratas are believed to belong to Indo-Mongloid tribes of the Himalayas and the North Eastern India.

The Sabha Parva Book II of the Mahabharata testifies that during the Battle of Kurukshetra in 900 BC King Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha (Kamarupa Assam), Shailalaya raja the mighty king whose home was in the hills took part in the battle with his army of Kiratas. It is stated that the Kirata troops appeared like the forest of Karnikaras with yellow flowers.

Hiuen Tsang, the great Chinese traveller who came to Assam during the rule of Bhaskaravarman in 642 AD observed the manners of the people as simple and honest. Verrier Elyin begins with a prelude that history of Tanis ascends for hundreds of years into the mists of Tradition and mythology. Buranjis, the written records of Ahoms, also contain a wealth of information about the Kiratas.

History will not allow us to forget the great earthquake of August 15, 1950 that caused severe damages to human habitation, created chasm, gapping fissures in the Brahmaputra valley. Lush green valleys, rivulets of the richest biodiversity of the world was destroyed beyond recognition.

The great Misings of North-east India, one of the second largest indigenous tribes of Assam has carried on the legacy of being the most tolerant of Tani origin. They were proud of their identity as the inhabitants of valleys of mighty river Brahmaputra. Their strong presence was felt on the banks of rivers and islands from the great Himalayas to the valley of mighty Brahmaputra.

Extent and exact sources of information may fail to provide a comprehensive account of prehistoric and ethnological stages of the Abotanis but knowledge is traceable about the tribal tradition, trade and treasures. Tales from time immemorial are etched in mythological accounts and oral tradition of the Abotanis, the father of mankind,

Today we are a digital generation of 21st century yet evidences from Vedic scriptures mention the

stories of early migration of the Mongloids before 1000 B.C. Today tribal settlements are scattered all over Brahmaputra valley and are celebrating the bond of ethnic unity as a mark on toponymy of the valley. Toponymic evidences prove the frequent occurrence of deeper penetrations of tribes such as Bodos, Kacharis by rivers like Dihing, Dihong (Presumably known by its Austric name Hong meaning water) the Bodos renamed the river by prefixing di with hong, Disang, Diphang. The children of Abotanis continued to remain in scriptures and administrative records because they succeeded in forming a distinctive social structure.

What has bound this social structure is the golden threads of the legacy the children of Abotanis have carried on, thriving well with the blessings of their ancestors. They invoke their ancestors with firm faith and remembrance in their festivals when fagun air blows reminding

The term tribalism implies the possession of a strong cultural or ethnic identity that separates one member of a group from the members of another group. Based on strong relations of proximity and kinship, members of a tribe tend to possess a strong feeling of identity.

Mising were migrants, and known to be progressive tribe settled in a scattered manner on fertile lands by the mighty Brahmaputra. Lores lend us the belief that Mising came down from heaven holding the golden creeper from heaven. And on earth their gold-washing capability from rivers of Dihang, Siang to Brahmaputra have earned them title as gold washer and great negotiators of Britishers and the tribes of the land.

**Myth to reality the transition has helped Misings to reach this far.**

What has kept the beauty of the Abotani tradition alive is the oral tradition. Without any script the richness of literature thrives in Abangs which is both religious and secular depiction of the essence of survival and struggles of Tanis and most importantly, about the creation of the universe. Today, initiatives are taken by many intellectuals of the community

and are making an attempt to revive the written archaic language of Abangs written by Miris, the priest, which may not appear decipherable by the uninitiated layman. Abangs are like the Puranas of the Sanskrit literature and sagas of Teutons. Social issues were addressed in kebang. Kebang is a Traditional council of village elders. The village councils are self-governing institutions, enjoy good deal of autonomy in judicial, administrative and development matters, exercising authority at village level. They render important services in settling of disputes both civil and criminal matters. Administration of justice regulations, 1945 (Regulation I of 1945) is how archaic is debatable.

### Land

Right of ownership implies use and management of land. Under the provisions of the Sadiya Frontier Tract, Regulation 4 of 1947, the customary right of any members of a village or a community to cultivate is respected. Individual ownership over land under permanent or semi- permanent cultivation and land attached to dwelling house is recognised. Ownership varies from clan to clan and individual land.

Flowing along the river Tsangpo to river Siang and through various tributaries that meet forming a great confluence the only male river in the world mighty river Brahmaputra. These rivers have been the testimony to the tales the transmigrational occurred through trans Himalayan geographical importance The Misings have traversed. The trans-Brahmaputra tribes have cultural affinities, the village organizations, cultural and agricultural practices, religious beliefs, art, weaving, skill, livestock.

Mising women are weavers of dream. They weave dreams in the dress they weave. Inspired by nature and nature's elements they skillfully weave birds, butterfly, flowers and stories are depicted in the gamik means the motif and patterns they design. Today the clothes have made mark both internationally and commercially shell out to the market with high market value as substantial income for the woven traditional materials.

Social status of the Misings both men and women

with liberal attitudes have played a great role in upholding both domestic duties, responsibilities, as a caregiver and most importantly, upholding the socio-economic and religious life. Being from agrarian background, both men and women had to work together in the field right from the beginning of cultivation to harvesting.

Education has enabled Mising women to be financially independent. They are mostly seen today as civil servants, engineers, doctors, politician, authors, filmmakers, which is a good indication of a progressive society. For example the tapum gasor Rs. 1000bRs onwards, Ri-bi Ganseng, Kebbung ege-gasor cost Rs.3000 onwards. Gadu (inspired from jackfruit it's a fluffy heavy blanket) cost Rs. 5000 though rare now. These are the initiatives taken at an individual level. Economy is the approved trademark of a developed nation. As the world enters into a global era, even the well being of community depends much on commerce. Good economic conditions facilitates the progress of not only the community but the nation as well.

Celebration comes to instill spirit, to not only remind of the ancestral blessings to keep the community in harmony. Festivals are the reflections of such beauty of human wonders that harmonious habitation has proved its richness of culture, of heritage. It's a matter of pride that the present generation of Mising have the never failed to uphold the preciousness and piousness of Tradition.

Ali-Aye-Ligang is not only a festival to rejoice or a festival of dance, song. But, the underlying meaning has a humane message as a reminder to understand, love and follow the divine law and rules of nature. Ali means seeds, the root, Aye means fruits and Ligang means to sow.

There in the auspicious arrival of the spring season on the first Wednesday of February the Mising community declare the arrival of spring by the first seed sowing ritual as a mark of beginning of the festival with blessings, showing and expressing dutiful reverence of various deities like kine nane, dadi botey

*(Contd. to Page 18)*

# Traditional preservation system of Biodiversity among Poumai Tribe

Ngao Thohrii

For many years, traditional knowledge and practices of the tribal communities have been sidelined by the scientific community and the western world as flawed, ridiculous, orthodox and superstitious. It slowly appears after the global debates on climate change that the matter is not as simple as it has been projected so far. People's appreciation and acknowledgement of these forms of knowledge was born out of the fact that the knowledge system of the local communities in keeping ecological balance is far more sustainable than that of the modern knowledge. Using few ethnographic data of the Poumai Naga tribe of Manipur and by examining few of the areas in the field of traditional knowledge such as medicinal health practices and traditional resource management, this paper attempts to present an insider's perspectives into the questions of sustainability and traditional knowledge practices.

Traditional knowledge of the tribes refers to information gained through experience, trial and error method. It is shared and passed down from generation to generation. This knowledge system was the only form of know-how among the tribes before the advent of modern skills and

technology. To the Poumai, knowledge is not knowledge without practice; it is practice that defines knowledge itself. All that one knows of must be put into practice. It can be of skills, technique or methods in executing a complicated task.

## Poumai tribe of Manipur

With a population of over 1,87,180 (2011, Census of India), the Poumai Naga tribe constitutes one of the major tribe in the north-eastern states of Manipur. The tribe inhabits the northern hills of Senapati District of Manipur. On 31st May, 2002, it achieved its official recognition as a distinct Tribe under Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe Order (Amendment Act, 2002) Government of India. Situated on the southern-most space of the mighty Himalayas, it lies between the Longitude of 93.47°E-94.18°E and Latitude of 25.10°N-25.31°N. The Poumai are geographically divided into three blocks namely Paomata, Lepaona and Chilliive region. Covered by clumps of forest, wet terraced paddy cultivation areas, streams and small hilly ranges; the hills and ranges equally block the sight of the geographically divided parts of the Poumai dominated region.

Examining the traditional health practices and resource management of the Poumai community, an argument stating the relevance of this knowledge and the gradual changes that corrodes sustainability reflects the gradual causality of traditional knowledge system and its sustainable practices among the Poumai in the present social context.

## Medicinal Health practices

Different ways of curing sickness and diseases were used by the community before the arrival of modern medicine. Although in the present context, the uses of traditional medicinal herbs or plant leaf has become a rare sight. This is due to the pervasive availability and advancement of modern medicine and availability of doctors. Availability of Medicinal herbs in the traditional village of the community and its surrounding were very common. The roots, leaves, barks, and shoots of certain plants are also used to cure all types of health ailments. Knowledge of some of the medicinal plants or herbs are passed from one generation to the other down the family line although it is not publicly acknowledged, while others herbs were more commonly used

(Veitayaki,1995). According to traditions, it is believed that the medicinal herbs or plants loses its value and purpose if the plants are made known to many in the village or community. So, mostly the knowledge of medicinal plants is best kept secret and grounded amongst family lines for fear of losing its effectiveness. People who possess this knowledge are widely known in the village. The medicinal knowledge is not passed down to all the family members, there are few chosen one from the siblings who the father/mother, grandfather/ grandmother secretly or openly blessed them with the knowledge. This system of knowing transfer is still prevalent among the people in few households. The preparation of medicines varies from plant to plant, herb to herb, and disease to disease. Some medicinal plants are crushed and boiled, and its potion is consumed directly or in a daily dose. Some sicknesses are known to have been effectively cured.

In some instances like broken bones or joints, the herbs or leaves of the plants are crushed and rubbed on the wounds. Some of the medicines are collections of a variety of plants, while others could be of single variety. Indigenous medicinal practitioners have a huge wealth of knowledge about curing certain dreadful diseases like typhoid, malaria, dengue, tonsillitis, niprolitheasis (stone case) etc.

One unique feature of traditional health practices of the

tribe is the traditional physiotherapy. The practitioners have a huge store of knowledge and experience about the procedure of treatment through systematic maneuvering of limbs.

### **Resources management**

Traditional ways of acquiring knowledge has a huge gap in between practices, skills, capabilities, belief and values with that of the modern ways of knowledge gathering. Prior to the advent of Christianity, Poumai was said to have around only fifteen to twenty villages, socially distanced, independent and autonomous. They maintained physical distance amongst them because of the fierce head hunting practices between villages, non-interference in their decision-making or administration, yet entirely dependent on their surrounding natural resources for subsistence and livelihood. What is significant in the community's traditional practices in relation to resource maintenance or management was their customary laws, land rights and their traditional value systems that structured their surrounding resources.

It is not any specific form of knowledge and practices that helped them maintain ecological stability of their natural surroundings. It is more to do with people's customs, values and respect for forest and fields which led to resource preservation. This is because the villages were wholly dependent for their subsistence on

their own natural resources and hence they felt that they have a responsibility towards judicious utilization of their surrounding resources or starve. The whole notion that surrounding natural resources sustain them for years led to well demarcation of land rights and values concerning utilization of resources amongst the neighboring villagers.

As villages were independent, no neighboring village interfered in the works or welfare of another village. Every decision and rules pertaining to villagers is taken by the villagers themselves, the collective principle of non-interference in other people's business is well maintained within villages. However, looking from the present context, the collective consciousness of the people seemed to be evolving due to economic and political connections between villages. With the perversity of local level politics and intense economic rivalry between groups and villages, the possibility of non-interference cannot be expected as a rule in the present Poumai society.

### **Conclusion**

We simply cannot rule out the relevance of traditional knowledge and practices even in this fast changing world of knowledge and technology. In the field of traditional medicinal practices amongst the community, in times of medical crisis, they resort to traditional way of curing the illness. Normal injuries, snake

bites, wounds or any other injuries while in the jungle or paddy field, the first aid comes from the plants, leaves or herbs to prevent the person from greater injuries or wounds.

Traditional physiotherapies are kept ready during any sports events to assist players who are injured during intense sports. Traditional natural resource management through customary laws and tradition is still highly prevalent among the many tribes of North-East. This surely does preserve and conserve the forest wealth of the tribes in a substantial way.

However, on a more pessimistic notes, rigorous changes in the present social settings of the tribal communities on the hills of Nagaland and Manipur is that the ways of imparting traditional knowledge to the younger generation in the community has become less popular. This is due to the younger generation's concerns about financial stability, jobs, educations and wealth. The yearning for better livelihood and better education has made many young people migrate to other towns and cities which contributes to their losing the traditional ways of knowledge and value system. The knowledge, belief and values which were once highly venerated by the community, have began to lose its essence and regards with the present generation. As the age old knowledge ceased to percolate amongst the present generation, it begun to lose its validity and became less relevant amongst the younger generation. In Spite of all

the changes taking place in the present era, the reliance on the village level traditional knowledge, belief, values and practices of the tribal communities continues even to this day. Though their religion and belief system may have changed over a period of time, but the continuity of their age old knowledge system and their respect for the surrounding environment still exist in the collective knowledge of the village elders.

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# The Inclusiveness.....

Bharat Kumar

We follow such a belief pattern, which has no beginner as some other religions have. We believe that whatever way we offer our prayer, all prayers goes to Him as all rivers flows into the same ocean. There are some basic principles which are fabricated into all sets of beliefs in our country –

- The Almighty Supreme Being is One and He is Omnipresent.

- As He is present everywhere, He is present in all Natural objects as well.

- And so, we must not harm or damage any living as well as non-living existences on this Universe.

Whoever agrees with the above set of beliefs are termed as followers of Indigenous Faith i.e. took shape and nurtured in the spiritual arena of this country. But same is not true with the Semitic religions i.e. Islam and Christianity as both are exclusive religions; use to believe that only theirs' are true way of worshipping whereas rest worshippers will go to hell! It is also astonishing that Islam does not believe in Christianity and the Christian religion also does not approve the Islam, both are exclusive at their own! So, it becomes a matter of fun that which one is really true, though it is difficult to assess but one thing may be concluded- 'Nature' does not accept any such 'Exclusiveness', Nature always gives option to an individual to chose his own way to suit his mental and emotional Self.

I would like to mention here that our life exist in this world with four facets: 1. Physical, 2. Mental, 3. Intellectual and 4. Emotional. Any paths that we select are bound to have an effect from all these 4 factors. No single way can be said to be suitable for all the individuals all over world as the Semitic religions use to claim. Here, I am not intended to criticize any set of beliefs or religion but just laid down the reality that exists in the belief patterns of

Indigenous religions and the Semitic religions.

We even find that in a single family, the different family members use to follow different way of worshipping which is obvious as individual construction of these four facets together are bound to differ for each of the family members. Here I am not going to elaborate further that why it use to happen, but it is bound to happen so. No two persons are equal in all respect; this is the law of nature, this much only I would like to say here. But it is again amazing that if each of the family members is following indigenous religion only, there will be no problem at all, as code of conduct is the same for all the indigenous religions. And, what we say 'Dharma' is nothing but this 'Code of Conducts' and this is developed through the ages from the experience gained by our forefathers from the Nature which is an Open Book for all and nothing secret. No one even claim that they are something special or unique. As all the paths or set of beliefs were emerged from the Law of Nature, the Code of Conduct also remain to be the same; may it be Arunachal Pradesh or Gujarat; be it Kashmir or Tamilnadu. This is the uniqueness of our indigenous faiths which is Eternal by nature and so they all are termed as SANATAN DHARMA- it means, Begin-less and so End-less. If anything is there which is Begin-less, it is also bound to be end-less, and so ETERNAL by nature. If there is a beginning, that is bound to face an end, it is a matter of time only.

SANATAN DHARMA; may it be a new terminology for some of the janajatis of the NE region, but it has its own foundation which is strong enough and it has the quality of being Inclusive of all thoughts/ belief patterns/ way of worships etc. but it put forth a condition that it must not disturb the very code of conduct that is fabricated into the Indian society nationwide. One may ask where is the

origin of Sanatan Dharma; but actually it is just foolish to ask such a question! Do we ask where the origin of sky is? As sky exists everywhere so is true for the Law of Nature- the Sanatan Dharma; it is a Universal truth. Someone in the Northeast may claim that Sanatan Dharma or the sense of inclusiveness is deeply rooted or imbedded in their religion also and it is true.

The Code of Conducts is the central theme and the religious beliefs and rituals are weaved around

it. This is the reason why we all are having the same sense of inclusiveness nationwide. No one will object if anyone in Tamilnadu or Maharashtra worships Donyipolo or Niam Khasi or Garia or Charak-puja because their central theme is the same! It is time to understand the core of our religious followings as well as the code of conducts that people follow nationwide and understand- how they bear the same opinion as of ours.

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*(Contd. from Page 10)*

## Sacred Heritage

religious domain enriching sacred heritage of this region. Besides Tripura, has added new feathers by various beliefs and practices of different ethnic groups apart from some concrete religious architecture like Tripura Sundari, Bhubaneshwari, Unakoti, Jagannath, Durga bari temples. Likewise, Mahabali, Shri Govindaji, Krishna, Sanamahi, Nityananda and Narasimha temples occupied the sacred space of Manipur apart from various traditional faiths by different Naga and Kuki groups, and also by various Churches of different affiliations.

This is just a partial over view of the sacred heritage of this region represented by religious faiths like Hinduism, Christian, Islam, Buddhism, traditional faith, reformed religious practices contributed by different religious preachers, Gurus and their ideology and acceptance by the people. The assimilation and integration of diverse religious faiths and their co-existence in the same region epitomizes not only sacred heritage of this region but also reflect the unity in diversity, strengthen the concept of 'secularism' enshrined in our Constitution.

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*(Contd. from Page 13)*

## Mising Life: Nature's role and theory of creation of universe

and most importantly the Donyi-Polo. The (Ane) Mother Sun is the sign of fertility and (Abu)Father Polo as a dispeller of darkness invoking ancestral blessings to carry on the well being of mankind. Therefore, the children of Abotani, the first man, the father have proved to be the progressive progenitors, who could keep the faith, belief, richness of tradition and heritage alive on par with challenges of digital era that shall not surpass the beauty of natural intelligence the Mising community possess

as a progressive community. As a worshipper of nature and believer in the theory of creation of the universe, the belief system instilled in the minds by ancestral blessings couldn't depart from the minds of the Misings that has morphed a magnificent living on Aamong (the earth) for the river-bank dwellers. The beauty of this living is the culmination of this cultural significance that has proved the objective reality of Mising Life.

# Inter-Community Relationship: The Case of Chin-Kuki-Mizo In Bangladesh, Myanmar & India

Dr. Lal Dena

One of the worst victims of British Imperialism and perhaps the most misunderstood ethnic groups are the Chin-Kuki-Mizo (hereafter CKM) who are scattered today in Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. In India's North East alone, the CKM are scattered in all the seven states. Naturally, they are known by different nomenclatures to their neighbours. Those who live in Myanmar are called Chin. The same group of people who live in different part of North East India and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh are known as Kuki or Mizo, while a dozen of tribes inhabiting the present Mizoram are collectively known as Mizo.

Though divided by International and state boundaries and called by different nomenclatures, the CKM are one and the same people having common myth of descent, common homeland, common historical memory, common language, common religious beliefs and cultural practices. There is a common belief regarding the original home of the CKM. One belief was that they originally came out of a place or cave which was known as Sinlung to Hmar, Chhinlung to Lushai, Khul to Thadou, Paite, Vaiphei, Simte and Zo; Khurpui/Khurpi to Aimol, Kom, Koren, etc. This place is now located somewhere in and around the stone forest near Kunming in Yunnan Province, China. It is believed that the decline of Nancho's rule in China marked the first major dispersal from Yunnan Province sometime in early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and the second wave of their migration started between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century AD (L Keivom). Still moving further west and following the Chindwin river, they began to spread over the Arakan and Chin Hills as far as the Kabaw valley in Myanmar where they perhaps lived for several decades. The earliest migrants from Myanmar to different parts of North East India were

called Old Kuki and the later migrants New Kukis. According to 1931 census, Old Kuki includes Aimol, Anal, Biete, Chiru, Chothe, Kom, Koran, Hmar, Lamkang, Moyon, Ronte, Tarau, Tikhup, and Viaphei. While the New Kuki includes Gangte, Paite, Ralte, Simte, Sukre, and Thadou.

Opinions differ on who really was the first ancestors of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo. According to some scholars, Zo (Chhuahzova) or Zosanga was the first known ancestors of the CKM. The Hmar oral tradition however maintains that Manmasi was the first known ancestor (Hranglien Songate). C Chawngkunga, ex-Minister, Government of Mizoram, however, argues that the first common ancestors was Zo, and in support of his view got published a very detail "Genealogical Tree of Mizo" covering all the major tribes under CKM in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The exact population of CKM now spreading over the North East India, Myanmar and Chittagong Hill Tracts (now Chittagong Division) of Bangladesh cannot be ascertained due to various reasons including the remoteness of some parts of the region and the constant churning of ethnic conflict where every imaginable tribe or community has at one time of the other claimed and fought for separate identity and in the process swallowed up by the most aggressive and organized groups from outside their parent community. For example, the sizeable community from the CKM fold in Manipur had already declared themselves as Naga for political expediency and sheer survival. For some people political brotherhood is thicker than blood.

Linguistically too, the CKM people are one and the same people. When the Linguistic Survey of India conducted by the British between 1894 and 1928 under the direction of G.A Grierse, the CKM group

was classified under Tibeto-Burman family. Kuki-Chin and Burma Groups under Volume III Part III. Therein, their total number was estimated at between 600,000-1,000,000 which included 240, 637 Meteis. As per B Lalthanliana's "Mizo Chanchin", the Tibeto- Burman groups recorded in 1901 census were; Tibetan 235,229; Himalayan 190,585; North Assam 41,731; Bodo 594,411, Naga 247, 780, Kachin 125,585, Kuki-Chin 624,149; Burman 7,498,794. Following the Linguistic Survey of India" Lian H Sakhong in his book "In Search of Chin Identity" has made further divisions as given below: the Northern group; Thadou, Kamhau, Sukte, Sizang, ralte, Paite; the Central group; Tashoo (Thaisun), Lai (Pawi), Mara (Lakher), Lushai (Mizo), Bawmzo and Pangkhup in Bangladesh; the Old Kuki group; Hrangkhawl, Koren, Kom, Puram, Hmar; and the Southern group; Chin-me, Chin-bok, Chinpun, Khyang (Asho, Bangladesh), M'ru (Khumi), Shendus (Yundu) and Walaung. (Lian H Sakhong, 2003-17)

The CKM people can also be broadly divided into two linguistic groups; those tribes having "R" and "T" (tri) in their alphabets and those other tribes who do not have "R" but use "G" instead. For example, tribes falling under "R" and "T" (tri) group are Aimol, Anal, Bawmzo, Biete, Chawrei, Chiru, Khumi, Khyang, Kom, Koren, Hmar, Hrangkhawl, Lai, Lushai, Mara, Ralte, etc. Accordingly Zoland is pronounced as Zoram. Under the "G" group come Gangte, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Zo, etc. and Zoland is pronounced as Zogam. Despite these minor differences, the CKM people are one and the same people ethnically, linguistically and culturally. So the language is not a barrier among them. Even a few day's stay among any community enables one to communicate to one another in one's own dialects easily. Pick up few hundred vocabularies of the languages of these CKM, you will find more than sixty similar words and this speaks of their oneness. Shakespeare, an authority on Lushai Kuki clans, also concludes thus, "There is no doubt that the Kukis, Mizos and Chins are all of the same race. " (Shakespeare).

Majority of them settled in Manipur, Mizoram,

Assam and some section of them entered Tripura from Thanangchi forest during the reign of Raja Manikya in 1490 AD and still further down in Chittagong hill tracts and its surrounding areas in Bangladesh as mentioned before. According to Nathan Loncheu, a Bawm scholar, the migration of Kukis in Bangladesh took place in three phases. He contends that the first phase was believed to have taken place around 80 AD. In the second phase, the Kuki group moved down to more fertile land and hills by practicing shifting cultivation and tending to animals due to mautam or thingtam which broke out around 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the third phase, the other Kuki tribes along with Arakanese came to Chittagong Hill tracts in around 17<sup>th</sup> AD (Nathan Loncheu) The CKM tribes in Bangladesh, according to Lancheu, are Bawm, Chak, Chin, Khumi, Kyeng, Lakher, Lushai, Mru, Pangkua, Thangchaya, etc. Surprisingly, the language of Bawm and Hmar are most similar. Now, these tribes are seeking closer integration with the mainstream Kuko or Mizo in India.

On the other hand, the allied tribes in Tripura who once belonged to CKM are gradually drifting away to form themselves into more cohesive group to identify themselves with more powerful ethnic group for political survival as it happened among the Old Kuki group in Manipur. Initially, they were collectively grouped under the term "Halam". But now they are realigning themselves as Borok which includes Bongeher, Choroi, Darlong, Debarma, Jamatia, Halam, Hrangkhawl, Kaipeng, Koche, Koloi, Rupini, Twipra, Ichui, etc. One significant development among this group of people is the gradual emergence of Kokborok as common language.

Recently, pro-integrationist intellectuals among the CKM began to feel the need for having one common nomenclature which has become an endless debate till today. Vum Kho Hau, former Burmese ambassador, opting for Zo lamentably remarked that , " Had the word Kukis been changed to Zo, at the time of the right word for calling the various tribes and clans of the Zo race inhabiting the areas joining Burma (Myanmar) East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and

Assam would have been answered a long time ago” (Vum Kho Hau 1963- 297). Dr. Vumson Suantak, a Sizang (Siyin) by tribe from Tiddim township in Chin state and a scientist by background tried to convey in his book the oneness of CKM peoples and the title of his book is called Zo History. L. Keivom, an IFS (retired) in his paper “Towards Zo-unification” has also used the term “ZO” and traced the history of Zo people from pre-historic time to present time by emphasizing the need to promote “emotional integration by constantly reminding themselves (CKM) of their common ethnic and ancestral root, historic homeland, common myths and historical memories, culture, language, hopes and dreams. By further emphasizing the need to unite into a more cohesive force under a common nomenclature with a common language, he warns that if the CKMs do not heed the writing on the wall and continue to maintain fissiparous tendencies, they will not have a chance for survival as an ethnic nation.(L. Keivom). The identity of Zo ethnic group is now more or less ensured in the formation of the state of Mizoram in 1986. Dr (late) Vumson who did not speak Duhlian (Mizo) goes to the extent of saying that if at all there should be a common language for the Zo people, the Lushai (Mizo) dialect is the ultimate choice (Vumson Suantak, 1987-:20-21) But L. Keivom is very pessimistic. To quote him, “The core state of Mizoram has began to slowly abandon its role model as a forerunner of Zo Integration and has become less and less accommodating. Increasing intolerance shown to non-Mizo speaking Zo community within and outside Mizoram by the Mizo speaking community has caused ripple effects on the progress of Zo unification and put the process of integration in a reverse gear.”( L. Keivom, *ibid*) The issue of CKM integration has now been taken up by the Zo-Reunification Organization (ZORO) since 1988 to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in Geneva and New York several times. This is an ongoing peaceful movement and it has at least succeeded in bringing emotional integration among the Chin-Kuki-Mizo peoples irrespective of the countries they belong to.

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# The Eternal Religion in perspective of Malsom Janajati of Tripura

Chandra Krishna Malsom

The Malsom Dofa is a sub-group of Halam community of Tripura State in North-East of India. It is believed that the Malsoms are known as No.1 Halam in the long past and it is prevailing like this till today. It is, therefore, taken for granted that the culture of the Malsoms must be similar to that of the rest of Halam Janajatis. On the other hand, it is also revealed that little variations in traditional food habits, rites and rituals, dialectical pronunciation are worth mentioning today.

From popular belief, we know that the number of sub-groups in the Halam community is 12(Twelve) in number. This is why, all sub-groups of this community are commonly known as 'Baro Khil Halam'(a community consists of twelve sub-groups). The twelve sub-groups are (1) Malsom, (2) Kaipeng, (3) Hrangkhawl, (4) Kalai, (5) Rupini, (6) Bongcher, (7) Karbong, (8) Langkai, (9) Chorai, (10) Morsophang, (11) Ranglong and (12) Thangachep.

In addition to the above, the following sub-groups also subsequently merged with the Halam Community. They are- (1) Natianglong, (2) Nasbang, (3) Saimar, (4) Dab and (4) Sangachep. Actually, all these sub-tribes came from some original Halam sub-tribes like Bongcher, Karbong, Langkai, Morsophang, Ranglong and Thangachep etc.

It is interesting to note that each of the Halam Janajati (sub-groups), consists of some clans (Tero Panchi). For instance, the Malsom Janajati also consists of 13(Thirteen) clans, such as – (1) Sungphun, (2) Uisa, (3) Lengman, (4) Mapu, (5) Nokham, (6) Nawmpor, (7) Lourak, (8) Singar, (9) Achep, (10) Lungthung, (11) Dourai, (12) Tuisum and (13) Rawnte.

All these clans (Panchi) are named after some natural objects. For instance, Nawmpor is named after leaf; Nokham after fire; Achep after forceps;

Lungthung after oven; Singar after a wild cat and so on.

## The origin:

The folktale tells that the Malsoms had been originally residing in the village named Arsien khawsak that was situated at Bolpuitang which is supposed to be somewhere in the North-Eastern Region of India. The area of Arisien-khawsak was so large that if any one travelled all over the village with a wet wrapper made of raw cotton that is locally called Pawnpui then the wrapper would dry up by the time walking was completed. In that village all Malsoms were under control of the community Chief known as the Kanchikao. Besides other activities, the Kanchikao collects subscriptions for the annual Sengrak worship popularly called Khawser from time to time. Moreover, he had to arrange for daily worship of Lord Sengrak.

Once the Kanchikao was so busy in collecting the subscription for several days that he had forgotten to arrange hens for the daily Sengrak worship due to some unavoidable circumstances. The Sengrak became angry since no hen was offered to Him on all those days and in anger he left the village and went to a nearby hill. By that time, an evil spirit named Rurengnu entered the village and started killing one person of the village everyday. But the villagers were unaware of this in the beginning due to the density of the population in the village, the loss of one person every day was almost ignored by them. But they became astonished when one day the daughter of the Kanchikao was missing. The Kanchikao ordered all the villagers to apprehend the person or thing responsible for the missing of his daughter. Every youth of the village started searching day and night for the abductor. Meanwhile, the Sengrak by exercising his supernatural powers, came to know all about the mischievous deeds of the

Rurengnu. He then took the form of a snake and entered the village to punish the Rurengnu. But as soon as the Sengrak entered into the village in the form of a snake, the watchers beheaded him unknowingly. The Sengrak however, could save himself with the help of his supernatural power.

The watchers then distributed the flesh of that snake among the villagers according to social custom. An old widow got its head as her share, which ultimately she kept on the hearth to dry it up for future consumption.

The next day, early morning, the snake's head cried out like a hen and then in clear human voice told the widow to flee elsewhere because an earthquake would destroy the village. The widow conveyed this forecast to all the villagers without delay. All people of the Arsien khwsak, accordingly, vacated the village that morning with all their belongings. They had to cross a river on their way to another hillock. It was too deep and cold to live. They made a rope-bridge with fiber of a local tree known as Ronrui and started crossing the river. The Kanchikao was monitoring the safe movement of the villagers across the rope-bridge.

After the villagers had crossed the river, the Kanchikao also started crossing through the bridge; suddenly the bridge broke down. He shouted for help loudly. The widow then clearly declared that it was the consequence of the sin committed by the Kanchikao to the Sengrak for which he failed to cross the river. She advised him to worship the Sengrak by sacrificing a hen from the tail part of which no feather is lost. In fact, it indicates a matured hen. The widow then told the Kanchikao that he would be able to cross the river by worshipping the Sengrak. After worshipping the Sengrak as stated, the Kanchikao also crossed the river and joined the other villagers.

#### **Nomenclature:**

According to the folktale, the Malsoms used to reside originally at Bolpuitang, which was probably somewhere in the North-East. The particular village where they were residing consisted of 'ten hillocks' from which the name 'Malsom' was coined. In Malsom, 'mal' means 'hillock' and 'som' means 'ten'

and thus Malsom means 'the inhabitants of ten hillocks.'

#### **The Language:**

The Malsoms also have a language of their own which is very close to Kuki and other allied sub-tribes of Northeast India. Besides Kalai and Rupini, the rest of the sub-tribal dialects are found to be almost synonymous. The Kalai and Rupini use Tripuri language, which is called Kok-borok. It is interesting to note that the Kalai and Rupini are included in the Halam community, though they speak Kokborok.

#### **The Concept of Primordial Tradition :**

The idea of the Primordial Tradition evolved out of the concept known as perennial philosophy, which in itself is a development from the *prisca theologia* of the Middle Ages. Both the idea of the Primordial Tradition and the *philosophia perennis* attempt to establish common factors amongst different traditions, with the goal of producing a superior gnosis or level of wisdom than that which would have been obtained by the study of a single religion. This is remarkably similar to the mode of study used in comparative mythology and the study of the history of religions. In this sense, the term Primordial Tradition is utilized to describe a system of spiritual thought and metaphysical truths that overarches all the other religions and esoteric traditions of humanity.

The concept of the Primordial Tradition was well received by both practitioners and the academic community. The Eternal or Primordial Tradition encompasses a wide variety of topics, locations and religions, and it is for this reason that our magazine is equally diverse in content. The application of the word Primordial does not imply that we are dedicated to the revival of archaic or historical religions. The word primordial is instead employed to illustrate that the fundamental ideas expressed by certain traditions are so deeply entrenched in the human psyche that their origins are unknown.

It is a matter of regret that the concepts of philosophy, spirits and theology of different janajati communities all over the country are remaining obscure to the so-called scholars in India and abroad.

It is a great pity that none of the academicians, social reformers, great writers especially in the field of religion and theology care to know this unique system of life, culture, faith, worship of the mostly isolated Janajati communities generations after generations. To speak the truth, most of the so-called scholars and theologians like to describe that Janajati culture, tradition, faith and way of worship as animist as they believe in abstract elements like spirits, witches, ghosts, ghouls and so on. Besides, they also argue on the ground that Janajatis are the mere worshippers of natural objects like bamboo, tree, water, mountain, air, fire, stone, sun, moon, stars etc. which they find no reason to be worshipped. Actually, these scholars and theologians did not see the inner meaning with philosophical point of view. Moreover, none of them thought to study the burning fact that the Janajati way of life is being governed by their unique system of culture on the basis of their eternal faith supported by moral values. In fact, human beings cannot live without natural objects like water, air, sunshine, bamboo, tree etc. and out of obligatory moral value with sense of owe and respect for powerful natural elements created by the Almighty God and thus their worship is quite reasonable. In this point of view, Janajati people worship water as Gangadevi, fire as Agnidev, tree as Thingkung-ngwi, air as Pawandev, stone as Mother-Earth and so many others. If we deeply think over the utility and contribution of these natural objects in the survival of human beings and other living creatures on the surface of the Earth, we cannot deny their necessity to sustain our life and thus we find the cogent reason of worshipping them. This eternal truth of Janajati people is being neglected by so called advanced people, for which indigenous religion, faith and philosophy are labeled as animist, savage and un-cultured. This dogma needs to be wiped out from the minds of the people. Indeed, the Janajati communities in India are not savage, barbaric and uncultured. They have had their rich cultural tradition, unique system of worshipping God in different names though they were mostly illiterate until recently and some of them even today. But they have inherited from their forefathers, generations after generations the social rites, rituals and customs with which they could settle all sorts

of disputes, tussles, quarrells, clashes etc. under the leadership of their respective community heads and this system is prevailing till now. In fact, the way of life, culture and age-old traditions of Janajati communities are all ingrained in the Sanatan Dharma (primordial/eternal) religion from time immemorial. Sufficient literatures of Janajati literature and religion are not readily available and are being created through interviews/discussions with the priests, knowledgeable elders of different villages and other resource persons, and a humble attempt is made to highlight in brief the following points.

### **1. Belief in the existence of God :**

God is called in various names by different communities in their own dialects viz. Subrai in Kokborok, Siprai in Halam language and so on. God is the Creator of the Universe, other gods, goddesses, diverse natural objects, sun, moon, stars, air, light, mountains, various animals, plants, human beings and so on. He is benevolent to His all creations and also the Protector of everything. His role in this universe is limitless. Everything is happening according to His wishes. He is the Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. So, man cannot guess and estimate His power, through his own limited capability.

### **2. Belief in Polytheism:**

Polytheism is belief in the existence of many gods, goddesses and deities who are assigned by the Heavenly God to look after the different aspects of the world, nature and humans. These are usually assembled into a pantheon, along with their own mythologies and rituals. Many religions, both historical and contemporary, have a belief in polytheism. Polytheists do not always worship all the gods equally, but can be monolatrists, specialising in the worship of one particular deity. Other polytheists can be kathenotheists, worshipping different deities at different times.

The Malsoms also have their own social system which is known as 'Malsom Dofa'. The Dofa controls the community with some systematic procedure of its own since long past. A number of rites and rituals, conventional traditions, religious taboos etc. are

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# The Tale of the Monkey and the Hare

Dr. Uzzal Sharma

There was a monkey and a hare who happened to be great friends. They lived together, ate together, and roamed together. One day they saw a man going to a feast carrying bananas and betelnuts. Two friends said to one another that they must contrive some plan to get hold of his load. So the monkey sent the hare to wait on the road, but himself hid in the jungle. And when the man came up and saw the hare sitting on the road, he put down his load and ran after him. No sooner had he done so, than the monkey came and carried off the bananas and betelnuts into a tree, and, for fear the hare should return, ate them all up in a great hurry, keeping only the skins of the bananas for his friend.

But when the man found that he could not catch the hare, he gave up the chase, and went home disconsolate; and so the hare went back, searching for his friend, and shouting his name. When he found him and demanded his share of the spoil, the monkey offered only the skins of the bananas, and the hare, in his rage, said that he would have his revenge. So, first of all, he went and sat very quietly under some kachu (arum) plants. Then the monkey climbed down from the tree and began crying - "My friend! my friend!" and the hare replied "Who are you calling me a friend? I am watching the king's sugarcane field. What do you want?" Then the monkey came forth and said "Ah, my friend, give me a little of the sugercane to suck." But the hare said "I cannot give you any. If the Raja were to hear, he would beat me." But as the monkey grew impatient, the hare said "Eat, then, if you will, and don't blame me." But when he ate, the acrid juice of the kachu caught his tongue, and he rolled on the ground howling due to burning sensation. But the hare only said "It's your own fault. I told you not to." Then he went and sat beneath a wasps' nest. And the monkey, moaning, and complaining, followed him and asked him what he was doing there, and the hare replied that he was watching

the king's cymbals. "Let me play on them, only a little!" entreated the monkey. But the hare said "I daren't do it. The Raja would kill me." "I will only play very gently," said the monkey, and, prevailing by means of his importunity, clapped his hands on the wasps' nest and broke it, and straightway the wasps started stinging him from all sides and stung his mouth and face and body all over. He rolled on the ground crying out in agony. But the hare only said, "I told you not to, and you would not listen to me, what could I do?" And then he went away to where a gowala snake lay. And again the monkey followed him and asked what he was doing there. And the hare said that he was watching the king's scepter. "Ah! let me brandish it. "do" said the monkey, and for all the hare's warnings he seized the scepter. Whereby he got bitten and was in great pain than ever. Then the hare went away and sat down on a marsh, and the monkey followed him once more, crying as he did, and when he again questioned his friend, the hare said: "This is what they call the king's litter." "Let me sit on it for a moment," said the monkey. "I can't do it," said the hare, "what would the king say? I think you are a fool, my friend. I tell you not to do things or else you will repent." But the monkey did not listen to him and jumped onto the marsh and stuck miserably in the mud. And then the hare said "Now, my friend, you gave me plantain skins to eat, did you not? You can now stay where you are. I wish you good day. I am off." And, so saying, he left the monkey and went his way.

And first of all, a rhinoceros came. But when the monkey begged for help, he said that he was hungry and thirsty, and could not stop; he was very sorry; and, so saying, he too went away.

And then a buffalo arrived on the scene. The monkey addressed him, but he, too, had other business and went away. Last, of all there came a tiger, who was extremely hungry and to him the

monkey said, "My father, if you do not help me out of this scrape, I have no help left," and with such and such words the monkey tried to entreated him. But the tiger said "What good will it do me if I help you?" He started to walk away when the monkey cried out "Father, father, take me out of the dreadful marsh, and then if you like, clean me and eat me." And the tiger was so hungry that he said: "It is not so much that I want to eat you, but if I rescue one fallen into such calamity, it will be well with me hereafter. However, as you yourself have offered yourself to be eaten, I see no harm." So saying, he stretched out his tail into the marsh, and the monkey, grasping it, was drawn out. Then the monkey said: "Let me get dry in the sun, and when I am a bit cleaner, you can eat me." And so saying he sat down in the sun and waited. But presently

the tiger looked another way, and the monkey slipped up a tall tree. The tiger was in a great rage, waited two or three days at the foot of the tree. But, as the monkey would not descend, he lay at the tree's root as one dead and opened his mouth with his teeth grinning, and the flies came and buzzed in his mouth. The monkey looked at the tiger lying flat and thought it was dead. So finally he crawled down, and slowly inserted his tail in the tiger's mouth. But the tiger did not stir. Then he felt one of the tiger's great paws. But the tiger remained still. Then the monkey said "Ah, you would crush my bones to make your bread, would you?" and danced about gaily, and cried "See if you can eat my head now," and, so saying, he put his head in the tiger's jaws. And then the jaws closed with a scrunch, and that was the end of the monkey.

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## The Eternal Religion in perspective of Malsom Janajati of Tripura

surviving till today in their culture. They also believe in Mantra & Tantras (miraculous power of magic). They believe in many gods and goddesses like Ninu Thapa (Sun and Moon), Inkil Pathwn (Manasa), Likhi (Laxmi Devi, Goddess of prosperity) and so on. They also perform a lot of Pujas with great joy.

Sengrak is their traditional God. And its temple is temporarily situated at Manithang para under Udaipur Sub-Division of South Tripura District. The Malsoms observe the Khawser (Kerpuja) every year in their respective villages. A lot of domestic animals are sacrificed on the occasion of the Puja. They offer chickens, goats, pigs etc. and thus enjoy a lot of meat. Some other Pujas are very much akin to various Hindu Pujas. In this context, it may be stated that the Malsoms are an inseparable part of greater Hindu Samaj.

A number of indigenous worships are found in their religious activities of the Malsoms, like worship of Ninu-Thapa(Sun and Moon), Thingkung ngwi (God of Tree) and so on.

Malsom married women do not use vermilion (Sindur), conch bangles or iron bracelets, which are

commonly used by the neighbouring married Bengali women. A few of them follow Vaisnavism and thus worship Lord Krishna and Radha. They wear as neighbouring Bengali do, a set of Tulsimala around their neck and paint Tilok (the holy clay of Ganga river and other holy places) at different places of their bodies.

Alike other Hindus they worship Likhi (Laxmi Devi) but instead of idol of the goddess they make the image of goddess Laxmi with crushed rice and egg. They keep some rice in an earthen pot and then they place the earthen pot containing rice and egg under a decorative bamboo rectangular structure locally known as Rosong. They worship goddess Laxmi generally on the full moon day by sacrificing a hen and offering local rice beer and egg. It may be worth mentioning here that the activities like sacrificing of animal like hen, pig, use of alcohol liquor, egg etc. are indigenous traits in their worship of goddess Laxmi with pranam, choker(uludhwani), fasting etc., which are religious activities performed by the Hindus.

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