

ISSN : 2581-9313

# HERITAGE EXPLORER

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
VOL. XX, NO. 8, AUGUST 2021



**MY VILLAGE  
MY FAMILY**

INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL ISSUE



# Mukhyamantri Sishu Sewa Achoni



- Special scheme for welfare of children left orphaned due to COVID-19
- Rs 3,500 per month to children who lost both their parents but have guardians
- Children below 10 years/adolescent girls who do not have guardians to be housed in child care institutions
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My Village My Family

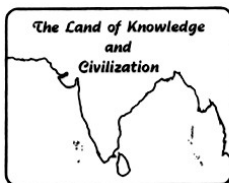
*Independence Day Special Issue 2021*

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(First Launched in 2002)

A Monthly Magazine

Vol. XX. No. 8, AUGUST 2021



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# Heritage Explorer

A Monthly Magazine

ISSN - 2581-9313

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**Editor:** Amarendra Brahma, C/o. Heritage Foundation, K.B. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati-781008,

**Published & Printed by:** Rituparno Tamuliphukan on behalf of Heritage Foundation, K.B. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati - 781008, Published at: **Heritage Foundation**, K.B. Road, Paltan Bazar, Guwahati - 781008 (Assam). e-mail: [ourheritage123@gmail.com](mailto:ourheritage123@gmail.com), Website: [www.heritagefoundation.org.in](http://www.heritagefoundation.org.in),

Printed at: Angik Prakashan, GNB Road, Ambari, Guwahati - 781001 & Saraighat Offset Press, Industrial Estate, Bamunimaidan, Guwahati - 781021

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## FOREWORD

### Heritage Explorer, special Issue with Theme, “My Village My Family”

Man is by nature a social animal. Living in social groups in cooperation with other fellow members is the common instinct of human being. On her /his very birth, a bipedal man is biologically, emotionally dependent on others. Man is, therefore, brought up by her/his near and dear ones who also help in adapting to one's own culture. 'Learn to acquire the attributes of one's culture' is the process called enculturation, which helps a person not only to learn but to internalize the cultural norms and values of the parental generations. The entry point to this process is possible through the family – the smallest and the universal social unit. It is this family unit through which a person develops his/her first identity.

Number of families living in close proximity in a territorial base in rural setting, usually smaller in size is the unit called village. Village generally possess certain identity, a history and an econiches of its own. Next to family, a man is close to her/his village.

There is variation and dynamism in both the family and the villages across the world. Starting from nuclear family – the most widespread type, there are joint, extended and other types of families based on modes of marriage pattern. Since the middle of the last century, there has evolved the concept of single parent family, blended family etc. particularly in the Western world due to frequent divorce and remarriage. The family although has variation by type, its residential pattern, the bases of consanguinity, the function it serves universally to the humanity is the same – providing the primary needs of a person besides, providing the immediate economic and social security to its members. Family is like a pillar stone to the society.

The village as an institution and space similarly is a dynamic one in terms of socio-economic facilities, life-style and culture. The continuity of basic function it renders to the families remains the same. Overcoming various crisis of life, sharing joys as well as sorrows, uniting the ethos of common living, management of resources – natural and man-made, generational transfer of knowledge and technology, administration of justice at the event of violating social order, misconduct, crime etc. are some of the important learnings one can acquire through one's village. A kind of solidarity that a village develops among its co-villagers, prepares one to face the other world (outside the village), helping each other in the time of distress, at the same time providing a common platform to organize and celebrate various cultural events are the other areas of learning. It is the village which instill and enhance various qualities in a person – leadership, managerial, organizational, survival strategies etc.

Towards understanding the basic structure and functions of society, the anthropologist's world around focus to the study of family and village with emic perspective. Such study not only support theorization of village society in its static and dynamic context; also, it throws various leaning perspectives about personality, values, ethics, traditions, customs, rituals, beliefs, festivals etc. that is an overall understanding of the culture. It is the emic perspectives the anthropologists have adopted make others understand the various aspects as well as the essence of both (family and village) in true sense of the term.

North East India with its varied cultural as well as geographical landscape provides a ground to have anthropological insights of the tribal people living mainly in the hills since long past. The tribal villages in North East possess very rich natural and cultural heritages – tangible and intangible. Within their village ecosystem they manage their livelihood; organize various events - social, political, economic and religious. Quite a good number of tribal villages in North East are located in remote and adverse environmental situations and still using very simple technology for survival. The educational and other infrastructural facilities in such villages are yet to capture far reaching goals of modernization. The Village in North East India is regarded as social, economic, political and a religious unit; the tribal people possess strongest affinity toward their family and village. In the development of village, the role of each individual family is indispensable.

Many villages of North East have lot of potentials to grow economically. The families can contribute a major role to identify such potentiality. However detailed study developing understanding and documentation on their resources - natural and cultural, tangible and intangible, management practices, traditional knowledge, unique system of village organization and governance, besides the emerging problems and threats the villages and the families are facing, are yet to gain a wider ground. This area needs an in-depth research.

I congratulate the team of heritage explorer for their effort in bringing out all such issues related to these two very pertinent social units or groupings – the family and the village in the context of India's North East. The structure and functions of families, the traditions and customs of the villages and other associated aspects of the both as revealed by the contributors have provided an emic perspective (insider's view) which is most essential for overall understanding. Twenty-five articles in this volume represented an overall picture of villages in north east India.

India being basically a rural country, the strength of Indian society lies in its villages with families. To carry forward the overall development of the country, the central focus should be on village development. The need of the hour is to understand villages properly to achieve sustainable development goals. Once again, I congratulate the Chief Editor Ramen Chakrabarty and his team for selecting such a pertinent topic for write up as part of their academic journey. It will definitely provide a knowledge base, an understanding, realizing the importance of studying village and family. I hope it will open a wider scope to carry on further research in this area. Thank you all.

Dr. Jonali Devi  
Associate Prof. and former head  
Department of Anthropology  
Cotton University  
Date: 28-07-2021



# Editorial



## **‘My Village and My Family’ – a concept**

Since the launching of Heritage Explorer News Bulletin in 2002, a special issue is being religiously published on every 15<sup>th</sup> August, the Independence Day of our country, to focus on various aspects of tradition and culture of the tribal communities of North Eastern region of India, their beliefs and faiths, their social lives and living and many others attributes with a view to bring them intellectually closer to the people of the mainland of our country. The motive behind this arduous exercise was to reveal the real life scenario of the people living in very remote and unexplored hilly and densely forested terrains of north east, for the benefit of the larger section of the people of our country who are mostly unaware of even the existence of this section of our brethren. It is sad that when some of these indigenous tribal people visit other parts of India for one reason or the other, they are often treated as aliens from other planets and ill treated for their physical features, complexion, language and food habits. They are often branded as uncivilized and treated as pariah because our so called civilized people do not know the true worth of their culture, beliefs and the depth of their traditional knowledge. To eliminate this knowledge gap to the greatest extent possible, the Heritage Explorer has taken up the cudgels to uncover the gold mine of information about the holistic life style of our indigenous tribal communities of North East India.

As a corollary to this motto different themes were chosen very carefully for the special issues

every year with the intent of elaborating at length about a specific topic relating to the tribal life style, religious beliefs, social customs, traditional health care, village administration etc., as also rituals from birth to death. The same process of selecting a theme for 2021 Special Issue resulted in finalization of a very down to earth theme – ‘My Village and My Family’.

We all know that the Neolithic age that spanned in Indian sub continent from around 7,000 B.C. to 1,000 B.C ushered in the development of settled agriculture and the use of tools and weapons made of polished stones. This in turn necessitated the graduation of the people from shelters to houses, which were generally circular or rectangular in shape and were made of mud and reeds. The people in those days cultivated ragi, horse gram, cotton, rice etc. for food and domesticated cattle, sheep and goats. The Neolithic sites found in North-eastern frontier of India clearly showed that they preferred to live near hilly river valleys, rock shelters, and the slopes of the hills since they were entirely dependent on weapons and tools made from stone to defend themselves from predators and other kinds of enemies. They started understanding the values of interdependence and need for helping each other. This realization gave birth to the concept of collective living in a cluster later named as village. The concept of family started taking shape slowly and the intermingling and living together made way to formation of a society, where the family was the smallest but the most important


unit. Family binds its members with love, affection, brotherhood and a sense of belonging towards each other. A person takes birth in a family and lives in the family home till the end of his life. The village where these families lived is the second most important unit of society where each one is related to everyone. In that sense a village is considered as an extended family and the responsibilities of upholding the age-old lineage of various sacrosanct traditional values, customs and rituals rested on them. Heritage Explorer therefore felt that we should try to explore little further to learn more about the olden day villages and the families living therein with the help and support of aged and knowledgeable elders, researchers and academically competent people of the community. Thus the concept of 'My Village and My Family' happened to be taken up as a theme for the present Special Issue.

In the present thematic issue of Heritage Explorer, several social thinkers, village elders, community leaders and learned academics have contributed well researched articles on the family

concept and village management systems followed by different tribal communities. The articles, though emic in perspective, are highly informative and enlightening and are capable of expanding our knowledge horizon about the indigenous social practices, traditions, culture and customs. Without naming any name, we feel privileged to place on record our sincere and heartfelt gratitude to all the authors and contributors of the present Special Issue for their labour of love and affection for their communities.

Before concluding, I must offer our special thanks to the erudite scholar of Anthropological science Dr. Jonali Devi, Associate Professor and Ex-Head of the Department of Anthropology, Cotton University for her kindly agreeing to pen down the Foreword for this special issue in spite of her busy schedule and various other academic commitments.

We earnestly hope that our present venture will serve the purpose for which it was undertaken and attract attention of the new generation of researchers and academics of our state.

  
Romen Chakraborty  
Chief Editor

# My Village, My Family: A Thematic Interpretation

Dr. Ranga Ranjan Das

Heritage Foundation is doing quite a special task by bringing special volume of Heritage Explorer every year celebrating independence of the nation in a unique style. Special issue always put emphasis on a particular theme that is rooted to the soil of India in general and the north east in particular. This issue particularly bring a very important theme: *my village my family* which is very much relevant for the country- a country which basically lives in villages. Father of the nation rightly said 'India lives in village'. There is a territorial division of India into rural and urban spaces differentiated by sharp salient features. It is quite distinctive from each other in terms of village folk, society, culture, religious dimensions, values and worldview. Industrialization, modernization and process of urbanization has transformed various rural spaces into semi-urban, small township, cities and metros, also emerging the rural-urban divide, rural-urban migration. People are leaving behind their ancestral villages in search of better avenues outside yet they never cut off their roots. Village has been always an interest for various disciplines. Various theories have been put forward by many scholars on the basis of village specific studies. In this regard few names like MN Srinivas, SC Dube, Andre Beteille, FG Bailey, DN Majumdar who worked in different villages is significant. The names of these villages became popular for the sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, rural development agencies: Rampura village of Mysore, Samirpeth of Andhra Pradesh, Sripuram of Tamilnadu, Bisipara of Orissa, Mohana village of Uttar Pradesh are some of them. In the north east, Dharendra Narayan Majumdar accomplished a wonderful village specific study in Meghalaya entitled *A study*

*of culture change in two Garo villages*. In the national and international context, it is Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas whose monumental work bring forth various theories. His work include Castes and Caste systems, Social Stratification, Sanskritization, Westernization in South India, Dominant Caste, the Remembered Village, Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, etc. MN Srinivas and many showed how the study of villages is more significant. At the level of discipline, it explores new areas apart from tribe specific studies. In north eastern context, villages are situated in different geographical terrain-from remote hills to plains, from the river bank to riverine chars, in the midst of islands in Majuli- in the homogeneous and heterogenous way, keeping alive own tradition, culture of specific groups with regional variation. Village also represent as a unit of micro study for a particular group. In Assam British scholar Audrey Cattle accomplished a monumental work by undertaking village specific study. She did work on Panbari village of Sivasagar district and established the culture and tradition of Assamese society in her widely appreciated book: *The Assamese*. It is considered as one of the important work. Religious interpretation, the concept of *Namghar* (prayer house), its role and function in the context of Assamese village, sattras, family relations, conceptualizing joint family, breaking of joint families, various case studies, concept of food in Assamese society, economic aspects etc. is wonderfully depicted. Through village specific studies, BK Medhi (Borkola, in Nagaon district of Assam) and ANM Irshad Ali (Mangaldoi, Assam) have nicely carved out social relations among the Assamese Sikhs and Assamese

Muslim groups of Assam. So, the concept of 'my village' has lots of relevance in terms of village and community ethnography. Depicting villages of north east, is another way to explore the heritage of a particular community represented by a number of residing families. What is family? How families are integrated into particular societies? Family, the universally defined, accepted, smallest identifiable unit of society, has intricate relationship with particular society. Two important process are involved: enculturation and socialization. The entire learning process in the context of a family and society signifies these terms in a wider context. The meaning of socialization is also embedded in a definition of culture that signifies culture as 'social transformation'. The definition says, 'culture is that complex whole...any other habits and capabilities acquired by man as a member of society'. The process of socialization is not biologically controlled. We, can say if an English origin child is nurtured in the midst of natives of Africa, child will adopt African cultural elements from speech to cultural practices, lifestyles, etc. Physical complexion remains the same. That is why the role of family is significant.

Talking about family has raised various theoretical dimensions that came up studying various families across the globe in cross-cultural perspectives. Family has been studied in the evolutionary lines from the prehistoric times, when people were at the hunting-gathering stages during paleolithic age. It is perhaps the neolithic period when people developed the art of cultivation and started a settled life. On the basis of type, form and structure, there are different types of families. On the basis of nature of society, there is patrilineal family and matrilineal family. We know there are two types of societies: matrilineal and patrilineal societies. These societies are differentiated from each other in terms of descent, inheritance and succession. In one, it trace through male line, while in other through female line. In north eastern region, most of the societies are patrilineal in nature. Matrilineal structure is found in three societies of Meghalaya, such Garo, Khasi

and Jaintia; and two societies from Assam. Rabha, is a prominent scheduled plains tribe of Assam. Earlier studies reveal that there was a gradual transformation among Rabhas from matriliney to patriliney. Still there is some such practices that shows their inclination towards matriliney. Another group is Tiwa, who is broadly classified as Plain and Hill Tiwas, according to their habitation. While plain Tiwas are settling in the Kamrup, Nagaon, Morigaon district; hill Tiwas are confined to various villages in Karbi Anglong, Jaintia belt of Meghalaya. Hill Tiwas still maintaining principles of matriliney. The matrilineal residence, avunculocal residence and role of maternal relations in family affairs are significant in matrilineal society. In the context of such societies, the family set up origin, grows and developed.

According to structure and orientation, there are different types of families: nuclear, joint and extended family. There is also categorical classification: family of orientation and family of procreation. Clan, lineage, moiety, fraternity are some larger unit in societal context. We have seen clan based classification among the different societies of this region. Rules of clan exogamy is followed in marital relations. There is 'we feeling' within the same clan members, as a part of greater family. In general norm, marriage is essential to form a family in wider canvas. What is marriage? Scholars says that marriage is the physical, mental, social and psychological union of two opposite sexes, undergoing through various sacred processes according to own religious domain. Marriage provide the opportunity to unravel the relationships like father, mother, son, daughter, grand parents, maternal and paternal uncle, aunt, etc. Within the parameters of these relationships, we find the classification of different forms of family. Family or nuclear family consists two different relations for two different individuals like husband or father, wife or mother, their biological unmarried son and daughter or adoptive offsprings. It is small one and mostly found among all the societies. Joint family comprises parents, their sons and daughters, grand parents, and his other sons' family. In a family

particularly for son when he marries, automatically become member of family of orientation and procreation. It is found in case of joint families, when he remains as son of his parents, and procreate children after staying together. Extended family is largest one where many people stayed together: parents, grandparents, uncles' family, fathers' sister and other close relatives. Recently, the head of the largest family of the world, from Mizoram is died. It is the exception. There is close nexus between family and village. Residence of many families compose a village in rural context.

There is two important divide: rural and urban. Village, is out an out rural in Indian context. But it' has close nexus with urban area. Due to various forces and factors, rural areas are transformed into semi-urban and urban areas. There is sociological processes of migration from rural to urban. People has a tendency to move to urban areas to exploit economic avenues. But at the same time there is a tendency to carve out a wonderful niche to create a village within. The most pertinent question, which is my village, which is my family? It is analyzed in three different contexts. Personally, I feel the entire north east, is my village as a conceptual category- all the people residing in the north east are my family members. The entire region though divided into different political units but they share a common worldview. They are open hearted, simple minded, hardworking, selfsufficient and hospitable in nature. Every village is unique in terms of society, culture and unique folkways. Except some caste population in Brahmaputra valley, Barak valley, plains of Manipur, Tripura; other groups has racially affiliated to Indo-Mongoloid groups, linguistically affiliated to Tibeto-Burman stock, except the Khasis of Meghalaya with affiliation of Mon-Khamer group of Austric elements. Naga groups in Nagaland, Manipur and Assam; Kuki-chin groups in Mizoram, Manipur, diverse groups of Arunachal Pradesh, colourful tribes of Tripura, plain-tribes and caste population of Assam exhibited their cultural heritage through village society. Over the years of empirical research, we have got the opportunity to

visit various villages inhabited by different groups of people. Same groups inhabited in different villages exhibit different culture. Recently, we had an opportunity to visit Nocte inhabited villages in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. Noctes are one of the major group of the state. They are residing in different villages situated at different altitudes from lowest to highest. It was noticed that every village differ from each other in terms of cultural practices as well as dialectical variations. In the context of village in the north east it is also observed that there is sharp variation of population density. If you look at the state of Arunachal Pradesh, it is largest in terms of geographical area, but density of population is very less. In some remote areas, ten families comprise a village. We can find pile dwellings or platform house (*chang ghar*) in every villages. It is done to create a even surface for habitation. Likewise in Assam, such types of houses are constructed by the Mishings who love to reside in nearby riverine areas- a kind of adaptive mechanism to get rid of frequent floods that submerge large territories during rainy season. Jhum or shifting cultivation prevails in the hilly terrain in a process of nature-nurture relations. Villages located in the hilly tracts shapes their tangible cultural products and folklikes. The wonderful example of maintaining a well settled village economy is provided by the Apatanis of Ziro valley of Lower Subansiri district. How artistically the villagers confined to small region transformed the entire valley a most-productive zone by undertaking terrace cultivation- fish farming and crop production in the same plot of land! Productive economy apart, they also have their own village governance. It is the most important hallmark of tribal village of this region. Structure and functioning of traditional village council is indeed unique that is running in a parallel way with the modern system of justice. Jamatia hoda, Molsom Dofa Rai committee, Devanseng of different groups of Tripura, Ho Ho set up in Naga village, Kebang of Adi groups, three tier mechanism of Rabha groups, Darbar Shnong of Khasis, are some of mechanism that helps to

resolve conflict at the village level. Every tribal village have some common elements: existence of vibrant culture, language, agrarian economy, sustainable use of natural resources, utilization of traditional knowledge, knowledge of biodiversity, role of medicine man, indigenous beliefs and practices, influences of classified religion and impact of Christianity, fishing activity, art of weaving, making craft items, 'we feeling' among the villagers, implication of clan system and role of each family, distribution of household work and importance of woman in the context of society. Most of the families still like live in a joint family. Staying in joint family ease many work. The villages located in the serene environment is really great. Every village is unique. Lets look into one tribal village from Assam. It is a homogeneous village dominated by Bitlia Rabha, one of the Rabha groups of Assam. In Assam, Rabhas are one of the major plains tribe comprising as many as subgroups. People know about Pati and Rangdani Rabhas. But less people know about Bitlia group. Goalpara district of Assam has many tribal villages. Barjuli village is one of the home of Bitlia group. It is located under Harimura Gaon Panchayat of Matia block of Goalpara district. It is comparatively big village comprising 152 families with a population of 760. It is interesting to note that like the Bitlia group has also has lost their dialect; however, they maintain their indigenous culture and practices. They speak Assamese language as a mode of communication. Lets look into the geographical situation of the village.

Dudhnoi is the major township of Goalpara. Matia Nepali khuti, is located towards' north of Dudhnoi. From the Khuti, village is located at a distance of 8 km. The village is surrounded by Sri Surya Pahar in the east; Harimura village inhabited by other Rabha group, Rajbongshis, Hajong, Koch, Garo, Muslims, in the west; Jinari river in the north and Petkata village inhabited by Muslims in the south. The village is controlled by a headman (gaonbura) selected by them. Agriculture is the main economy of the villagers. Cultivating seasonal vegetables, fruits and rice during rainy seasons,

apart from rubber cultivation, small scale tea gardens added a part of livelihood practices. Rice is cultivated around 400 bighas of land by the villagers. Since rice is the main product, they have developed a rice culture that includes different rituals associated with different phase of rice cultivation. They start the agriculture season from Jeth (second month of Assamese calender). Ploughing is done and sow the seeds for seedlings. Transplantation of seedlings is accomplished from the month of *Saun* (fourth) to *Bhada* (*fifth*) of Assamese calender. The first transplantation is known as *gasa diya*, and last day of transplantation is referred as *vui tula*. Lakhmi is considered as goddess of wealth. In both the rituals of *gosa diya* and *vui tola*, lakhmi is worshipped by offering litted earthen lamp. Harvesting starts from first of aghun (eight). This day is known as *aag ana*. On this particular day, a member of the family goes to the paddy field, offer prayer and cut two front branch of paddy, carry on its' head and tied to the main post of granary (bharal). This custom pave the way for harvesting in teams thereafter. There is influence of new economy. Most of the villagers use new tools such as power tiller, tractors for agriculture. The villagers avail opportunity to sell their surplus. Sesame (til), legume (mah), vegetables, tea and raw rubber, apart from rice is sold in the daily and weekly market. Lalabari is their daily market held in the evening hours. Dubapara market, held on Tuesday is located 3 km away from the village.

Villagers can prepare various items from cane, bamboo and wood. Wooden mortar and pestle (ural) is found in every household. Some other items include bamboo mat (*dbari*), bamboo basket (*pasi*), winnowing fan (*kula, dola*), sieve (*saloni*), a special bamboo basket for drying fish known as *jangka*, fish container with rimmed neck (*khaloi*), duli, dhenki (moral pestle where leg is used), fan, janthi ( a specialized sieve to filter local rice beer), *dbowachannng* (made of bamboo), etc. In a village context, some common items can be prepared by any villagers. Some items, however, needs specialized craftsmen. There are two such craftsmen: Kanak Rabha and Diganta Rabha who

prepare various bamboo, cane and wooden items for sale. There is custom of community fishing by traditional implements: jakoi, khaloi, chek (porangi jaal) sepa, boroxi, angkuba (*kekura boroxi*), jaal, etc.

Rice is their staple food. In their day to day life, use of alkali (*kehar*) and bamboo shoot (*keharisa*) is more. They prepare special food items: fish with alkali and rice flour, green vegetable with alkali and rice flour, dried pork with mat-mah pulse, khukuti, rice flour and alkali with pumkin and gourd (kumura), pork with trunk of plantain tree, chicken with arum, dried fish, small snail (xamuk), faring (small flies), eri worm (eri polu), etc. Small fish and leaf of lemon rapped in leaf, small fish with bamboo shoot are items of delicacy. Kharisa (*jim tenga*) and alkali is prepared in home by woman. They also know how to preserve food for longer use. Dried items like fish, pork, bamboo shoot, tamrind (teteli tenga), *thaihora tenga* (a sour item) are put into bamboo tube for longer use.

Traditional drink or rice beer is part and parcel of day to day life and socio-religious occasions among the villagers. It is known as junga madh (rahi). This type of drink is prepared from old bora rice. Preparing such drink involve indigenous knowledge as seen in the recipe of preparing fermenting agent (bakhor) for rice beer. Bakhor is prepared and made of rice flour with mixture of various leaves like sugarcane (kuhiyar), jack fruit (kothal), dubari ban and leave of *surasi* plant. All these items are mixed, transformed into cakes and dried. Proportional amount of boiled rice is mixed with dried cakes. The mixed materials are put inside in a earthen container or *junga* for several days. Over a specified period the materials are transformed into rice beer.

They have their traditional dresses like the other Rabha groups. Due to impact of Assamese society and culture, they also use mekhela sador (upper and lower garment of Assamese woman). Man use traditional towel (*gamosa* in Assamese- mainly white, having red border) and shirt while staying at home. The villagers use colourful gamosa, known as *pajal*. Woman folk wear blouse as upper

garment and *ruphan* as lower garment. Ruphan is used from chest to knee by the married and aged lady of the village. Another piece of cloth is tied around the waist by the women, known as *sengkanen*. Some women tied sengkanen along with mekhela. Traditional attire are mostly confined to elderly person while young generation prefer modern outfits in their day to day life.

Except the followers of Hinduism and traditional religion, there is no impact of other religion. As a followers of traditional religion, they believe in various gods and goddesses: Shiva, Kachakhaiti, Gohalideu, Kuber, Bhagawati, Jakhini, Khetor, Banabasi, Kali, Barmani, Ganesh, Biradeu, Jalkuwari, Lakshmi, Kati Thakur, Daini and Biswakarma. Some of these are either malevolent or benevolent. They have to keep appeasing to overcome different situations. During pregnant stage, khetor and daini is worshipped by sacrificing a pair of black hen. Kuber and Jalkuwari is worshipped as forest deity and water-goddess respectively. They worship Bhagawati and Lakshi at the community level. They celebrated all the three bihus and Dipawali. Saraswati puja. The impact of cultural contact is prominent among the Bitlia Rabhas.

It is also important to examine other villages beyond Assam. In this regard, it is significant to share an experience on the basis of a Nyishi village of Arunachal Pradesh. Among the various Nyishi villages, Ganga is important. It is comparatively large village. The village is located under 8 Ganga 1 GP segment gaon panchayat under Itanagar block of Itanagar subdivision of Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh. There is oral narrative regarding the name of village. There was once a female mithun who always used to bite her owner's hand while feeding her salt. The mithun was named as Gamga which means that bites frequently. Later the mithun died on this particular place. People named this place as Gamga after the mithun. Later in official documents the name Ganga was mistakenly recorded, which continues till today. The area of the village is 500 square km. The village is bounded by Chandanagar river in the east, Ganga

2 village in the west and Chime village in the north. The village consists of 75 households with a total population of 450, that comprise 220 males and 230 females.

Like other groups, Nyishis are also expert in making bamboo items for day to day use. Markets came only a few decades back. Many day to day items are available in the market. Such items are commonly used in the kitchen. But still in remote Nyishi villages bamboo made items are extensively used in domestic works. It includes various basketry items along with others. Locally made items include *nara* (local backpack), *egge* (bamboo basket for female), *oping* (bamboo carpet), *sadar* (local beer filter), *mula* (bamboo stool) and *upu* (used for removing husk from rice). Headgear is the pride of the Nyishi community. It is made with bamboo and cane strip, known as *bopia*. Traditionally, Nyishi male carry a machet in their waist. Iron part is procured but handle (*nalle*) is made of wood. Machetes cover (*bueh*) is also made.

They celebrate Nyokum festival for good harvesting. Besides Nyokum, other festivals like longte and boori boot, is celebrated by the Nyishis. They have own mechanism of dispute settlement through village council known as *nyelle*. Indeed Nyishis are one of the colourful tribe of the state. They are also advancing group due to educational empowerment. Many members of the group is nicely placed in government departments. They are hardworking, amiable and hospitable in nature. One must try to learn more about them by visiting and staying in the Nyishi villages. We will find the difference between the Nyishis of past as written in the history books and the present. It will teach us how to survive a ecofriendly life.

Ethnographers close observation on different villages traces many elements and salient features of the residing community. Assamese caste population villages, Assamese Muslim villages and

Assamese Sikh villages has interesting common features of Assamese culture and society. Religious dimensions assert the deviating mark of differences. Presence of temple, namghar, mosque and gurudwara cannot separate common world view of greater Assamese society: inter-personal relationship, kinship ties, food habits, dress-pattern has marked similarities. Linguistic differences is found in term of variant expression. Expression of same language by the villagers of Sivasagar, Barpeta, Nalbari, Sipajhar and Nagaon is different. There are differences in cultural practices among the villagers of upper and lower Assam. In my father ancestral village of lower Assam, there is a tradition of manasa cult expressed with pomp and gaity in the village temple every year. While mother's ancestral village from Upper Assam, having namghar celebrate bhaona (performing art form, a contribution of Sankardeva) every year. We also have found different terminology associated with marriage in different village context. Bridal dress and ornament providing ceremony is known as *telovar* or *jurum* in the context of different villages. Marriage songs are also having marked differences. There is diversity in every village. So village is important as a micro unit in the context of India in general north east in particular.

In the midst of city life, we also see emergence of villages where people belonging to different places come together and mitigate the vacuum of anomy and atrophy by restructuring a village for compensating their disassociation of roots. The urban neighbourhood of my residence shows various socio-cultural dimensions of various groups- while sharing the same place residing as different families-owing to same cultural group. Under such dimensions, it is important to undertake village based family studies to know the particular and vibrant socio-cultural heritage of any group. □





# MY VILLAGE - MY FAMILY

## (A village of the Zeme Tribe)

### L. Dilung Zeme

Ze-mnui (Yangkhullen) village is one of the oldest villages under the Willong Block in. Senapati District of Manipur. It is located at about 80 Km. from its headquarter and takes 2.45 hour by motor vehicle via NH-2 and NH-129 respectively. It is believed that it had its origin from Makuilongdi village. The village is known for its beautiful landscape blessed by nature, and fondly known as hanging village for its unique topography location in steep slope. Tourism activity in and around the village has been taken up to make the location more popular. Through tourism the village is expected to generate income for the local populace in the form of Home stay, sale of local produce, Guide & tour services and Videography etc. As per the census 2011, the total household in the village is about 599, population about 4166. The total male population is 2258 and total female population is 1908. The sex ratio is 118.35.

The village is surrounded by four fortresses (Hereki). The setting of the village, which is semi-circular in shape, is well planned in consideration of the safety and security of the village. In olden days wars were frequent and our ancestors felt that the location of Ze-mnui village was safe as well as secured. Ze-mnui village is predominantly inhabited by Zeme tribe. Majority of the populace are engaged in agriculture and dependent on forest product, such as Lumbering, Jhum cultivation, Jungle Apple, Goosebery etc. Nowadays the local people has also taken to growing Cabbage. Mustard leaves, Green chillies, Bitter guard, Beans, Squash and Yongchak (Monkey rice). They also rear Dog, Buffaloes, Mithun, Chicken and

Goat for domestic consumption and for ritual offerings.

Four clans mainly inhabit our village. They are Haume, Rapeiname, Hereinchame and Fwangchame. Inter clan Marriages are allowed but same clan marriage is prohibited. In the past houses were built by using wood and thatch for covering the roof for protection from sunlight and rain. However with the adoption of modernity, the locals started using CGI sheets, cement-concrete and timber. They paint their houses with Blue, White, Green and Black colours depending on their choice. Houses are built close to each other.

Father in the family enjoys the status of its head. There is no gender discrimination in the household. Educational opportunities and other rights and privileges are enjoyed by both male and female at par. Parent live with children. Once the children in the family become adult and gets married, properties are distributed to them proportionately by the head of the family. Parents then start living separately. All major decisions in the family is taken by the head of the family. Youth dormitory is still prevalent but on account of conversion to Christianity, only few people practice this tradition. Conversion had taken toll on our tradition and culture and the Missionary institutions as well as the new converts are converting the people belonging to our clans.

Though Monarchy and Royalty still exist modern methods of administration is dispensed through a Zeme council which take or make major decisions in consultation with the Government

representative Autonomous District Council of respective village. Land disputes and marriage discords etc. are settled by them as per their customary laws. Migration of villagers to another is allowed on the condition that migrating individual follows the customary laws of his adopted village. The area council, Youth and student organizations work hand in hand for village welfare, development and village affairs. Penal action and penalties are imposed on the violators who do wrong and resort to illegal activities such as poppy cultivation, cutting down of trees, deforestation etc. for money making. Taxes are required to be paid by the owner who sells his paddy to outsiders. Taxes are also levied when someone hunts down wild animals or birds within the village area.

Religious rituals and devotional activities play an important role in the society. Beliefs and faiths help in maintaining the decorum in the society. Cock is considered as holy Bird. Banana leaves, mud pot, Bamboo plate and curry pot are used in traditional rituals and ceremonies. Manei (Ritual) ritual is performed during the family get together seeking prosperity, success and happiness by sacrificing the holy bird.

**Heda pe:** On the occasion of this festivi, a cock is sacrificed to appease the gods. The interesting part of this ritual is that if the right leg of the cock moves at the times of his sacrifice, it is considered as good fortune. Small intestinal part called Bacheina is also looked at. If the Bacheina goes down, it is also considered as lucky.

**Hemang Kang:** This practice is performed on the occasion of birth of an infant. When the child is able to walk and speak, a ritual is performed by shaving the child's hair and encouraged to do long jump exercise. In the evening the feast is hosted at home.

**Melei Ngi:** This is the biggest festival of all and lasts for around ten days. This festival falls in the month of January every year. It is a post harvest festival cum ritual service. Eight day long ritual

and festivities are detailed below.

**1. Nig nah:** On day 1, male and female members of the family live separately in the house, Males have to cook, eat and sleep separately and the females have to follow the same practice.

**2. Rodi:** On day 2, Males in the family are required to wear traditional attire and decorate spears to perform Hoho in the Kisolet (Open space). Youngsters also perform traditional wrestling and long jump exercises. After that everyone dress up holding the spears and come down to Royal courtyard wherein Hereingchame clan and Fwangchame clan stand in line horizontally in front of the Royal courtyard. On the opposite Haume clan and Rapeiname clan stand on the same line. In between there will be a space for performing the war skills. The women folks and onlookers watch them from the balcony. From the two teams one each will come forward and give his performance wherein everyone in the field will praise and applause with war cry Oawiyii sound. Anyone can voluntarily come and perform and encourage others to do the same.

**3. Regaule hang:** On day 3, Everyone goes up to the hill called regaule to collect Firewoods. Male cut the trees and chop the wood to convert it into firewood. They also give the firewood on the traditional basket which is carried at the back of females. People can be seen clicking photos on the Occasion.

**4. Ngi Chingfo:** On day 4, Males go to the forest to collect firewood. On this day men folks show their strength by carrying firewood in big size baskets for the Male Dormitory to enjoy a warm night.

**5. Bansak:** On day 5, A Family get together is organized where guests and relatives are invited to the feast. Domesticated animals and Birds are killed for the Bara khana (Feast).

**6. Ka Kotei:** On day 6, Youngsters go to Barak river to catch fish. Chemicals and Fishing tools are banned from using on this day. Fishes are caught bare handed. After a day long fishing, whatever

fishes are collected are wrapped in leaves and the same are handed over to young Girl's Dormitory. On the return, Rice Beer (Drinks) and eatables are served.

**7. Regau Pa:** On day 7, Man relaxes and does some manual work at home. They also pray to nature for being kind and grant them good fortune.

**8. Tanghoi Nah:** On day 8, Ritual is performed to collect Thatch (straw) for providing Shelters and burning fire at night.

Some of the major scenic spots that still exist in and around Village are detailed below.

**1. Teizai (Holy pond):** This pond is considered as sacred by the indigenous Zeme community. Water never dries up from this pond. Females are restricted to go near the pond or touch the water. It was believed that ancestors used to doze off the fire with the water and also fought evil spirit here. Man folks wash and bath in the pond to purify themselves and eliminate illness.

**2. Kisole:** An open courtyard where wrestling and long jump exercises are performed on different occasions.

**3. Ngga pi pichanrei:** It is located at taure tia. It is believed that local man tried to cut the trees to make beds for ten people. The tree was huge. They cut the tree in half and left because they felt very tired. The next day when they came back to chop the same, the tree was found to have no cut mark.

**4. Height megalith:** This stone is installed between Ze-mnui and Kenelu just 50 meters away

from the village. This monolith is used to measure the height of a man.

**5. Rain Monolith:** The monolith is erected few meters away from Heringchame Fortrees. It is believed that when you touch the stone it rains.

**6. Fortress:** The four fortresses (Hereki) surround the village. The main purpose of installing them is to safeguard and protect the village. It has its unique beauty with stone collections; image sculpture and design to drive away the predators.

7. There are two Convents in the village. One is Missionary English School and the other is St. Mary School at Bendramai. Pou pai rennet primary school at Ze-mnui. Governmental residential school at Bendramai where poor students are given free education from class 6 to class 10. Government lower primary school at Kenelu village is also there.

Zeme tribe is recognized under tribe recognition serial number 09 in the provisions of Indian constitution. They are settled in various places viz. Ze-mnui village under willong block at Senapati District; Tousem sub division in Tamenglong District; Peren District in Nagaland and Haftong NC hill in Assam. Despite being divided by topography and political boundaries our community remains united, Annual meets and programmes are organized on regular basis to bring the Zeme population closer to each other. ▣

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# A Tangsa Vilage of Changlang

Songita Longkho

## **Brief history of geographic data on the location of the vilage:**

Wagun Ponthai is located under the sub-division of Bordumsa which comes under Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is 12 km away from Bordumsa the sub-district headquarter and around 97 km away from district headquarter, Changlang. Wagun ponthai has a population count of 492 people residing in the vilage with 75 houses in total.

Wagun ponthai villagers are known as Ponthai or Phong. They migrated from the Patkai hills of Present Namtok circle under North Changlang constituency. They were settlers from Jongchum vilage and migrated in the year 1969 at the present Wagun Ponthai vilage which was initially a forest land under the Bisa Raja of the Singpho community. The Bisa Raja gifted the forest land in exchange for education as one of the teacher posted at Bisa vilage was Mr. Tomtip Sumta who when asked by the raja to settle didn't want to without his family, relatives and villagers. So, the Bisa raja allowed them to come and settle at the nearby forest land in exchange for education as there were many pioneers who were educators at that time.

The name Wagun Ponthai was given because there were wagun vilages who were the neighbours. The vilage has many close neighbours and shares boundaries with vilages' like- kerempani, wagun-I&II, Saimu, Longkom Ponthai and Rajanagar. Wagun ponthai is now a well educated vilage with many job holders both in government and private sectors.

## **1. How the following elements are taken care of while setting up a vilage.**

### **a) Closeness to natural flora and fauna:**

The vilage at the beginning of the settlement wholly depended on the flora and fauna. As the villagers were animist and most of their activities and rituals were related to the forest. The animals, birds and wild edible were mostly used as food and as the vilage did not have proper road and the market area was very far from the vilage. The forest area was cleared for agriculture and also the trees and bamboos were used for building houses and baskets and other necessities. From the wild, medicines and vegetables were collected too. Now the villager mostly plant cash crops and still practices wetland cultivation and has stopped jhum cultivation.

### **b) Natural Environment:**

The villagers at the beginning settled near the stream of kherempani. They wholly depended on the stream for cooking, washing, cleaning, drinking, bathing and fishing. The people used wells and hand pumps too. The vegetables were collected from the forest and paddy and other crops were planted mostly by jhumming method and gradually wetland cultivation started as the land was plain and fertile. In the present days they have come afar from using surface water as they have stopped using water from wells and streams instead use motors connected with tube wells.

### **c) Ancestral guidelines:**

The vilage elders gather and perform a ritual before clearing the land for building houses and starting cultivations. According to the ancestors, the unknown and untouched land cannot be

directly used as it is believed that the spirit of the land will be disturbed or it will not allow the land to be used until and unless we ask for permission. So, proper rituals are performed seeking permission where a sacrifice of a dog, a piglet or a cock is made along with it a container of rice beer and a traditional handmade basket used to carry on the back, locally called as Deng or Churang is also offered. Everything that is brought for the rituals should be eaten at the place where land clearance rituals are performed. This is called Hajob. There are different types of rituals according to the owner or Ta-wa, who will perform a puja to know about the demand of the spirit. When the hajob is going on the neighbor of the field where the ritual is being performed cannot work on that day or the bad omen may befall on their field or them. As of the present the Ponthais does not follow such old customs instead they pray and fast according to Rangfra or Christian beliefs. We can say education has brought many changes in them and their community.

**d) Clan or kinship relation:**

There are about nine clans who settled at Wagun Ponthai village as stated below:

- |          |            |              |
|----------|------------|--------------|
| 1. Sawen | 4. Janpe   | 7. Songtheng |
| 2. Sumta | 5. Bo      | 8. Katang    |
| 3. Bolok | 6. Longkho | 9. Chilom    |

Sawen, Sumta, Bolok and Janpe were brothers who were originally Sawen and were given different names due to their daily work of life. So, they cannot marry each other as their ancestors were siblings. It is believed that the Sumta were the founder of salt, the Bolok brother is believed to have a pattern of visiting his two married sisters who lived far from each other where one lived on the hill side and the other down the hill so, because of his visit from up to the hill to down the hill he was given the title as Bolok. Janpe was another brother who had the interest of welding weapons for daily use. Sawen was the only remaining one of the brothers with original title.

Longkho and Katang cannot marry because they made a pact of brotherhood as the house god rituals can be performed by any of the elders

of the household.

**1. Shape or pattern of the proposed village like linear, circular, elongated, and rectangular and the advantages associated with the shape of the villages?**

There is no such pattern or shape of the village of wagun ponthai. The village population has grown much since the beginning of its establishment that many houses are built now near the field as it's near and also MGNERGA has given opportunity for connecting road making it easier for movements. So, the village does not have particular patterns and shapes and the houses are built according to the owners convenient.

**2. The norms followed for construction of individual houses, agricultural activities, accommodation of old and infirm people who live alone.**

The norms of house construction have change since earlier time. In the earlier days the population was not much so, only few houses were constructed. So, after selecting the land to construct a house, the owner will call the village elders along with the priest and a ritual for checking the land will be performed to know whether the land will be suitable for the family members or not. So, a young fresh bamboo will be cut from one close end to another(knot to knot) and in that small compartment rice seeds will be put counting the family members head and then close it by wrapping it back again. After that it will be put inside a particular area of land where the house is suppose to be build and check the nest day. The nest day after pulling the buried bamboo out they will check the contain inside whether the rice are fine or eaten by insects, if everything is the same a house can be build if not they will have to search for another land.

The houses in olden days could not be constructed in a single day due to less population but now a small traditional house can be constructed in a day. The owner has to arrange for the thatch, bamboos, wood, timber, rice beer, meat and rice for the house builders. Both men and women participate in building traditional house.

The women are the helpers who not only help in cooking but also showing the traditional thatch called Kara using a long bamboo with two sides pointy tips. The houses were usually built in a straight and long line with the kitchen at the very end and the front room will be open space room with a fire place where visitors can be entertain. Later, there will be new fireplace ritual where romrom is done and also 'chongrang that' ritual meaning honouring the house god or deity with rice beer and cock or piglet will be sacrifices by using their blood and liver. Only after the sacrificial rituals the feast will take place. And the next day 'Marongphu' ritual meaning the bad eyeing of unwanted human or spirit is chase out from the house by few selected elders and young men using wild leaves which looks like sugarcane leaves.

On the house opening day or within the same week the 'dakri khak' or blessing ritual is done by the maternal uncle of the family members. As of present such sacrificial ritual is not done and the decoration of house god is also not done anymore only dakri khak is done.

For the agriculture activities the same used to be done or a piglet or a dog will be carried inside churang (local basket carrier) and walk in circle on the supposed field for agriculture and scarifies it to the land spirit.

Now, everything is different where prayer is the only method where selected elders attend and party is given to the whole village on building new house and later feast takes place. And the housing pattern also has change with time and the materials also were from traditional bamboo house to timber house and now RCC buildings.

### **3. How the modern life style has effected change in the size of the house, architecture of the house, materials used for construction etc.**

The style of the house has changed a lot from simple house to spacey houses and having individual rooms. The material used are like timber, cement, sand and others that are used for building modern houses. Those that have capacities are constructing houses with the modern techniques

using machines rather than human labour. But the good thing is that many of the villagers kept the traditional housing specially for kitchen used as many traditional method of cooking are still preferred.

### **4. How the village and community level decisions are taken in the village. Is there any system of village council, Gram Darbar, Gram Panchayat etc.**

The village community level decisions are taken by the village panchayat and other council members of the village. The wagon ponthai has own traditional council members too along with the village Gram panchayat members. The decision cannot be taken alone by the gram panchayat because from time immemorial the system of chieftainship still prevail in the village system of the Wagon Ponthai, though the chief or elders of the village might not have authority under the government organization but there are many rituals traditionally that is being taken in the village where Chief is needed. Especially during marriage and festival chief and other important members are needed for any decisions. Before any panchayat system the village was under the chieftain system called Rung (council) where every decision was taken by the chief (Luwang), minister (Ngongwa), Ramwa and other experts

### **5. Is there any village fencing, security enclosure or protection system employed in the village?**

There is no such system in the village.

### **6. Whether youth dormitory system is followed in your village.**

There was a youth dormitory system in the olden days known as 'Pang chem' for both male and female which is not practiced any more. Not much of it is known anymore.

### **7. Is there any problem of outsider/other community settlement in your village?**

Yes, there is a problem because we are a close knit clan based tribal community and so there will be a problem of outsider interference. We have

certain rules, traditions and ancestral beliefs which could be impacted by influx of other community/communities.

**8. Do the people of one village migrate to other village?**

No, until and unless there is some valid reasons.

**9. How the family values in a home and village is protected and maintained?**

Family values in a home and village is maintained by sets of protocols imposed by the village councils and elders. Like in olden times there was chieftainship and council of elder members who would look after all the village welfare and decided as per the situation. Moral values and individual family values are taught family wise or clan wise.

**10. Role of a family in maintaining the traditional legacy of values of the society/ community?**

We live in a clan based society so individually a family will have to maintain the certain traditional values of that clan. Likewise there are many clans in our community having certain traditional and oral folklore associated with it. For example in my village the chief/king called Luwang in my dialect is from sumta clan. So sumtas are considered Luwang clan. The clan has a history behind its name which literally means 'salt owners'. There is a story behind it. Like that many of the clans has its own folklore and ancestral histories behind it.

**11. How family and villagers are interdependent?**

As mentioned before we live in a clan based family unit in our village so all the villagers are part of a clan units consisting of kith and kins which look after each other. Thus village itself seems like a bigger family.

**12. Role of every individual in family and village?**

Every individual belongs to a family and every family belongs to a clan which makes up the village of multiple clans. So an individual whatever he/she does, impacts the family/clan and the village in general. So, all individuals play a major role in

the village like glorifying his family name which in turn glorifies his clan and the village as well.

**15. Whether the joint family system is followed in the village?**

Yes, many family follows the joint family system. However it depends upon the family which system they want to follow as per their situation and convenience.

**16. Who are the pre dominant community of your village and what is there total numbers?**

My village consists predominantly of a subtribe of Tangsa called as phong or ponthai. This sub tribe has several clans and consists of 75 households and 492 numbers of people, Amongst these clans the "Bo" clan is the most numerous in my village. There are a few non local economic migrants in the village who work in the field of some families who aren't permanent settlers.

**17. Describe village traditions, festivals, and important rituals.**

Traditionally our village follows animistic tribal laws and beliefs. It consists of a luwang (chief/king), ngongwa (minister), tengwa (priest) etc. which are all hereditary and clan specific.

Each clan plays an important role in preservation of the traditions and has certain unique ways. The villagers believe in spirits and worship nature, the sky (rang), land (ha), tasang (god/deity). There are many festivals celebrated by the villagers. One of the festival is called kuh/moh. The most important and vibrant festival is called hahrong kuh/moh which is a harvesting festival and appeasing the land deity for abundant crops and prosperity of the village. It is celebrated around October 1<sup>st</sup> week.

There are many rituals in the village from the birth of a child to the death of the individual. There are several rituals associated with it. Some old rituals are not practiced anymore. Maternal uncle plays an important role in the life of an individual in our village and is highly respected.

**18. Describe in details about the village deity (gram devta/devi etc) and its background, history and its management?**

The village deity doesn't exist specifically but the villager's believe in ha-tasong who is the land deity. Rangwa/khothak rang is the eternal supreme god believed by the tribe and the villagers, which means the sky father/god. Tongku wa is another name of the supreme god.

Family wise each household has a house deity called as "chongrang" who protects the house and its members. The tengwa (priest) perform all the rituals.

Presently, the villagers believe in an indigenous faith called "rangfraism". The faith calls for worship of Rangfarah, the supreme god.

The village has a Ragfarah temple or rangshomchem. The affairs of the temple is managed by the Secretary of the temple and elders manage it. The village also has some christain families too.

**19. The roles and functions of the village priest and his importance.**

The village priest is called as "Tengwa" who is usually a male. "taawa" is the semi priest who could communicate with spirit for appeasement in the form of sacrifice and finding out the problems of the followers. While tengwa could heal the person and do what the taawa normally does.

There is also a rare entity of "shaman" called as "winong" who can directly communicate with rangwa (god) and find cure as well as heal the miseries of the people instantly. Female 'winong' are regarded as stronger and more powerful than their male counterparts.

This practice of Shamanism is fading fast because many people have embraced Rangfraism or christainity to avoid economic stress as well as sacrifice of domestic livestock to appease the traditional deities.

**20. How matters related to marital discord and property disputes are settled?**

Matters related to marital discord and property disputes are settled as per the provisions village customary laws. Village council consisting of Chief (luwang), Ngongwa (minister), elders, clan elders arrives at a solution after thorough discussion on the issue as per the customary laws and give their verdict to be abided by the contesting parties. .

**21. How the traditional and cultural knowledge is transferred to next generation?**

The traditional and cultural knowledge is transferred to next generation through practical demnstration of cultural functions, rituals, festivities and by oral description through folk tales/stories which in the olden times consisted of folk songs. jangjam, khopa, khangrek, ngengrong etc. Some types of songs composed in local dialects were also used by the village elders to tell tales and.history of the yore.

**22. Do you think reforms of village systems and traditions are necessary?**

Actually it's the opposite, due to globalization and modernity many of the traditions and systems are forgotten or are being ignored. The olden ways can be practiced and fitted or modified as per the present scenario. Dialects are not being spoken and there is no medium to document historically importance heritage of culture and traditions of the village and community. So local dialect, cultural values, history and its importance must be taught to the younger generation as an extra subject in the schools and educational institutions in the village.

Development without losing one's own tradition and culture should be our first priority so that the future generations can have a glimpse of their heritage. Our traditions and culture even our dialects are in an endangered state and we are the only one to salvge these. □





# MY VILLAGE MY FAMILY

## (An Adi Village)

Dana Moyong

Sometime in the year 1970-71 the Rasam Village Committee under the leadership of late Obang Yompang where shri Talung Moyong happened to be one of them declared to form a new village and decided to clear the jungle in a place called GUNE. It is geographically located on the longitude 95.2886° and latitude 28.0644° and situated at an elevation of 286.66m. Basically the area is elongated in shape and offered a limited accommodation or expansion of households in the area. The villagers of Rasam Village unitedly cleared the jungle by spending nearly 5 days, but even after passing of many years no one turned up to shift their houses in that place. In layman's language GUNE means female mango tree.

The founder and first settler of Gune village shri TALUNG MOYONG thought that when the villagers have once chosen the place and accepted to form a new village, then no need to re-think and stay back in Rasam village. So when the time for construction of his house(kachha) arrived he started to clean the jungles in the Gune and then shifted to that new place from his old village in the later part of 1979 or early part of 1980. The team members for house construction (Ekum mopeh) collected the housing materials from Rasam to Gune, they completed the construction within 3 days. The house warming ceremony was done by sacrificing 2 pigs. They also invited the women group of Rasam village for dinner and ponung dance (KUMNI MOJIN). After the ladie, the men folk sung bari (group song in lead and follow styles). According to the rites and tradition of Adi community shri Talung Moyong was asked to

maintain the social restriction for 5 days on account of being shifted to a new location and also for the welfare of family members and to strengthen the condition of houses, to save them from being blown away by storm and invisible enemies. They continued to live here as one family for complete one year.

During his staying as single house along with his spouse and four small children in which writer is one of them, he was surrounded by jungles, no electricity, no road and telephone. Even an arrogant wild elephant happened to attack the kitchen garden at midnight, besides that the foxes attacked piglets and wild cats damaged poultry at late midnight, snakes and leeches were common. Shri Talung Moyong believed in ecological balance so he did not cut down much jungles around his house in order to maintain healthy relations with the flora and fauna. As per the faith of Adi community a bhoomi puja (AMONG KOSON) specially during the time of seasonal changes were performed by killing red colored cock in the jungle where generally no person visited regularly or by simply placing an egg near the big wild banyan tree (SIROT).

In the next year the settlers from Tigra and Rasani villages started to construct their houses in the Gune, then the founder of the village shri Taking Moyong now the Head Gaon Burah (HGB) was very enthusiastic to welcome them as his neighbors. The second year newcomers were Shri Onik Yompang from Rasam village, late Orak Gao, late Okep Jamoh, late Ma folk Jamoh all from Tigra village. The members of these five families

shared their sorrow and joy together like a single family. Shri Taking Moyong a centurion while remembering his initial life in this village said that the time has gone but sweet memories are still fresh in his memory.

This village falls under the Bogong Banggo Area of Pasighat, East Siang District Arunachal Pradesh. The Gune village is surrounded by PWD road on east Jawarlal Nehru College, on west by Tigra village, on south by botok Korong (stream) and on north by PWD road to Tigra village. By road the Gune village is 3 kilometers away from Pasight the headquarter of East Siang District.

In the third year five more families led by shri Tageng Ering, Shri Olom Perme, Late Tobom Osik, late Obang Gao, shri Obang lamoh all from Tigra village and late lidung Moyong from Rasam village settled in Gune.. There after year by year the number of houses increased. All the dwellers belonged to Adi community which offered many advantages In respect of festivals, social interactions, taboos and other community functions the close proximity offered much help. .

Economically, every family in this village have their own cultivable land and rears domestic animals and also earned extra incomes from other sources like weaving and carpentry works. Consequently the villagers are economically self sufficient.

For the aged persons, widows, widowers with low income, the villagers collectively constructed their houses by donating own housing materials like bamboo/ tokopatta/ thatches/ rope etc.. During the construction days the villagers did not expect lunch/dinner/drinks from such persons, rather they themselves voluntarily contributes rice/apong etc and completed the construction within one-two days. Even such infirm persons are not forced to participate in the village community activities like fencing/hunting/meeting etc.

Owing to the modernization, the thinking and the living styles changed from good to bad and vice-versa. The major advantages of modernization is

seen in the field of road and communication, electricity and water supply, education and medical facilities etc which are easily available on call. The government is providing various supporti schemes like bamboo/tokopatta/thatches/rope scheme, housing scheme, jal jeevan mission; NREGA etc simultaneously other benefits are also being offered to the poor villagers. There are many bike and car owners in the village so they can easily move about according to their requirement. On the other hand everything in the village are today looked in terms of money. They sale agricultural produce in the village at high price to customers which in earlier days were freely given in huge quantities. Everyone is busy in their individual work and have no time to visit their neighbors even listens to problems of others. However, inspite of modernization, the villagers of Gune are still sticking to their roots of indigenous faith and follow the traditional system of the village which is unique in itself.

To look after the rules and regulations of village system there is village level committee called as dolung kebang which is headed by President, secretary, Treasurer and Auditor. Generally elderly persons of character are selected as President, Treasurer and Auditor and for Secretary smart and expert youths are chosen. They look after the village activities like celebration of festivals, arrangement of social get togethers, conduct of community hunting, maintenance and renovation works of community hall, organizing the community fencing, organizing donation camp for victim of unforeseen happenings, settlements of dispute, conduct of village social service, conducting village rituals etc. for the greater good of the village. The Head Gaon Burah and Gaon Burah are appointed by the district administration to look after the law and order situation of the village. They conduct meetings (kebang) when necessary for solving any disputes arising out of land and property disputes, marriage, murder etc. Besides these there are PRI members who are supposed to look after the various developmental schemes of the Government for the village. To avoid the unnecessary misunderstanding a cordination meeting

is held prior to any activities.

There is no need of fencing around the village areas because there is natural boundary in the form of stream/valley/mountain/ and is known by others too. Within this bounded area the villagers are required to their agricultural cultivation and community hunting etc.

The dormitory system is not practiced in this village since its settlement but there is one community hall (MUSP/DERE) where the community functions are held and it is centrally located in village.

For the settlement in the village there is no restriction, provided there is sufficient space. The expansion of family is also given a chance to separate from their parents on being married.

When an individual family becomes well to do and obtains qualification in different fields, such families are allowed to occupy a good position in the village and are considered as asset of the village. In the Adi society the male (father) is respected as head of family. The joint family is not much popular in this village but there are still some families who still live jointly. Nuclear families are liked and the system is favoured by majority villagers. As far as possible the parents want their children to marry a smart and qualified girl/boy preferably from a well to do and reputed family of the village. The child birth is celebrated in two occasions i.e. 1st on 24 hours after birth which is known as oboh nilum/aran and 2nd after three days or five days which is known as erang aboh. The old woman and men along with small children are invited for lunch to bless the new born.

In the event of death, generally the last ritual for father's body is performed by the eldest son whereas mother's body will be performed by youngest son and accordingly the properties of parents will be divided by both of them, however this rule is different form community to community and place to place. When a person dies, all the villagers including relatives will contribute in kinds like rice, firewood, vegetables, clothes to

the family and participate in funeral upto burial place. The dead bodies are not burnt on pyres but buried in ground and then a hut is constructed over the burial spot which will be visited in the early morning everyday by placing small quantity of edible items and such type of visit may run upto 5 days or 10 days which depends on willingness of family. Performing of death ritual is not an easy task, one has to perform number of rites and has to face social distancing from others.

The house construction is generally completed within 2 days or at last 3 days. On completion of house a ceremonial function is given by owner by sacrificing one or two pigs, arranged lunch and dinner and pong( local drunk). The old woman and ladies group from the village are invited in the evening for dinner and ponung dance. During Ponung a chanting of rhapsody on back ground history of house; its materials will be sung sung by well verse elderly person. Blessing is seek from God (GUMIN-SOYIN) for healthy stay in house, well being of family members ,its domesticated animals, bumper harvest etc. Social restrictions are also need to observe by the house owner in order to safe house from invisible natural forces.

The commonly celebrated festivals are Aran/ Unying, Etor/Lutor and Solung/Lune besides these there are number of minor festivals. Almost all the festivals are directly or indirectly related to agriculture.

The Aran/Unying is celebrated on the 7th March every calendar year which is recognized and declared as local holiday in the Adi inhabited areas by government of Arunachal Pradesh. In this festival the villagers carries out hunting of rat/ squirrel/bird/animal and fishing, 6-7 days ahead of celebration. The hunted items are properly dried and kept in safe custody till 7th March. The hunter team (male) will return to village in the morning of 7th and the hunted items will be distributed out among themselves. The hunted items brought by male members team will be given or exchanged with relatives especially the maternal uncle.

In this festival every age group forms a separate

group, from children to parent for performing dance called Yakjong. The children wearing new traditional dresses and ornaments go out for Yakjong dance in the evening hour by visiting every house in the village. In the same way the teenage group, the ladies group, the old women group and male group also perform the Yakjong dance in alternate days. This festival lasts for nearly 10-15 days. The visitor (Yakjong) party will be offered with a pair of dried rat/squirrel/fish/bird etc, few grams of rice and cash as gift. During such Yakjong dance no house should be left un-visited unless refused by the family because it is believed that visiting of such party will bring prosperity and fortunes to the visited family. The marital ceremonies are mostly done during this festival by offering dried squirrel/rat/fish to the parent of bride. The war dance is part of this festival.

The other major festival is Etor (Lutor) which is celebrated on 15th May of every calendar year. This festival is generally celebrated after the completion of community fencing means just before start of cultivating the field. On the 14th May which is called as yegul longe a pig is sacrifice for feast of 15th May. During this festival hunting is not much done only Poultry (Chicken) is given more important for feast in Musup (community hall). This festival is mainly male dominated nature. The youth (boys) of the village do Delong dance for 3-night in musup. In the simple word, the god of animal kingdom Dadi Bote is respect and honour as chief guest in this festival, besides Kine Nane (Goddess of prosperity) as guest of honour and Doying Bote (God of wisdom) as a special guest. The youngest and most favorite festival is solung festival. On 1<sup>st</sup> September it is celebrated in all Adi tribe in habitat area. This is female dominated festival, Ponung dance is performed by girls in Musup for 3 nights. The festival is celebrated after completion of agricultural activities. In this festival, the Goddess of prosperity (kine nane) is respect and honour as chief guest, god of animal kingdom (dadi bote) as guest of honour and god of wisdom (daying bote) as special guest. The government of Arunachal Pradesh recognized this

festival and declared 1<sup>st</sup> September as local holiday in order to encourage and preserve and promote the festival.

The minor festivals include -Pimeng/Ampi/Dorung, etc. The festivals are unitedly and collectively celebrate in the Gune dolung.

In the olden days, there were no modern facilities to deal with the health related problems like vehicles for transporting patients especially for delivery cases to medical institutions. In emergency situations there were no qualified Doctors, medical staff or medicines. In such circumstances, the traditional Priests played very important roles with their god gifted power. They identified the causes of ailments and suggested specific rites for particular ailment. In some cases, the Priests themselves conducted the rituals by sacrificing Mithun/Pigs/Poultry even dog in case of very serious cases to fight with the evil spirits responsible for sickness. At the time of the ritual the priests used to wear a ridin (holy thread) tied to their wrist and their swords were adorned with costly beads. The villagers at this time of distress always helped and supported the family of the sick person by accompanied them wherever they needed to go and during nights they used to sleep in the house of Patient. They also helped in agricultural activities of the patient's family, during performance of traditional rituals, arranging medical facilities etc. It is sad that the importance of priest is decreasing day by day because they demand money as well as costly materials for performance of rituals. This practice is being opposed by the Donyi polo yelam kebang because due to such bad practices many of our indigenous families opted to embrace the alien religion. The roles of Gangging Priest is becoming important slowly because many patients like their healing manner on account of less expenditure. In every ritual activity there will be social taboos which range from 3-5 days or one year or even whole life in earlier days. However some priests have occupied respectable position in society because of their healing capability.

There are lots of community rituals to be performed in the village. In case of pandemic or epidemic a traditional gate is erected in all roads around the village to prohibit the entry of visitors in the village and exit from the village for the period of 2-3 days in order to break the chain of disease or in other sense to stop the evil (Germs) of disease from entering the village. There are different types of such gates (Pator) which are erected from season to season or based on situation to stop the entry of evil spirits (Germ) in the village. During the erection of ritual gates the main roles is played by aged person (Pator mijing) who while chanting the hymns, slaughters a chick or dog and hangs them on the gate. It is believed that the soul of

chick and dog will fight the evil spirit and will not let them enter the village. The erection of ritual gates were noticed recently in almost all village during covid-19 pandemic which indicates that we still believe in our indigenous faith in spite of living in modern world. Out of many community based rituals the Koson (bhoomi puja) is one of them. Generally this is a part of Lutor/Etor festival, where all the villagers come together in the musup or selected spot and perform the ritual as per traditional ways for welfare of human being, animals and for bumper harvest. Besides that when frequent unwanted or un-healthy events occurred in the village at that time by observing the situation the village committee can arrange the community ritual in greater interest of villagers.

Besides the community rituals, the individuals also perform rituals for healing sickness, for welfare of domestic animals and for resolution of property dispute which are considered to be the result of curse. In every village, there is one community hall (Musup/Dere), which is treated as holy place or temple. Mostly it is centrally located in the village. It is

believed that Babu Yim u Dumpu Yimu and Nane Veir Dumper Yeir both the (Devta and Devi) are living in the musup. To please both of them a mixture of roasted rice *and* ginger powder is sprinkled over the musup specially in and around

banggo (a scare place inside the musup).So urinating, defecating, spitting or desecrating the musup is banned.

In the Adi villages, marriage system is different from one village to other depending on location. But in the Gune village, marriage within same clans is not allowed. Once married a person cannot go for another marriage unless situation compels him to do so, but in case of a widow or a widower re-marriage with un married person is accepted provided rules and regulations permit it. Polygamy is seen common in the Gune village. The marriage beyond the the traditional laws or the marriage within the same clan, kins, close relatives is completely forbidden, unacceptable and discouraged by the villagers. Such couples are driven away from village or are treated as outcast. They are not allowed to move openly in the village. They are generally hated and treated as very low grade person. The Marital Problems and property dispute are settled by village council (Kebang). The kebang in Adi society is like a Gram Sabha in which elderly persons with clean image gather in musup or specific venue to discuss the details of disputes and pass the verdict truth and genuineness. They punish the culprits by imposing heavy to very heavy fine depending upon the gravity of the offence. In the earlier days, the fines are taken in form of costly vessels or traditional beads or mithun (Animalr bros-frontalis) but presently cash and money equivalent to value of above materials are imposed.

As there is no written record in tribal society, the heritages pass to the next generation orally or by participation in the proceedings. The culture and tradition are normally passed to the next generation by their parents. Folktale/folklore/folk songs also act as a tool for transfer of tradition and culture to young generation.

In the name of modernization, the traditional costumes are replaced by fashionble dresses. While participating in traditional Delong dance wearing costly shoes, socks, wrist watch, western hair style is not allowed. On such occasion they are compulsorily required to wear the traditional

clothes only. The traditional house is very hard to find nowadays in the villages. The dormitory system completely vanished from society whereas Mobile phones have become a constant companion.

The community activities are taken lightly but according to indigenous faiths violation of traditional taboos may invite social ban of errant villagers. We are not also using our mother tongue. The community land system is slowly disappearing and in its place individual land system is becoming common which is causing troubles and preventing peaceful settlement of the poor. The general burial ground supposed to be owned by village committee has been owned by individuals now. The most trusted village council the kebang system today fail to retain its original position due to various reasons, as a result losing its usefulness.

The most harmful effect of modernity is migration of people from rural to urban areas. Because of this village population is thinning and the number of school going children are decreasing fast. In the long run everybody will find difficulty in adjusting themselves to village life and decide to migrate out. There are number of villages that avoid the traditional part of festivals and celebrate the festivals in the name sake only. The above problems are the result of so called modernity for which the custodians of village administration like HGB/GB/PRI/Village council are responsible. Village elders and experts of our tradition and culture should study the problems and take steps to reform the system and tradition of our villages. The Gune village although thinly populated has 2 officers who are serving in the government of Arunachal Pradesh, besides that there are lots of

persons employed in various departments under government. The village has large number of graduates and post graduates in science and arts. On the other hand the village has maximum number of RCC buildings and every house owner own bikes or vehicles of their own.

In the social life, the two youths belonging to this village are associated with the popular organizations like Bogong Banggo kebang (youth wing). Shri Dejr Tamuk was its president for one term and Shri Kaku Moyong as general secretary for one term and as president for another term in All Bogong Student Union. In the political field Late Okep Jamoh has been elected as Anchal samiti member by a group of three villages and later elected as vice-president of zila parishad, East Siang district. In 2009, he contested as P.P.A candidate for legislative Assembly from 38<sup>th</sup> Pasighat east but could not succeed. The first Gaon bura of this village was Late Obang Gao.

The inhabitants of this village always welcome the guest without looking their background and respect them as their own family member. The village is well connected by road. The weather is very pleasant to stay here specially during summer season. There is no shortage of food items, like mango tree the villagers are always willing to contribute and help the needy at all times. The humble nature and innocent behavior of this villager attract the visitors. The visitors to this lovely village never forget to appreciate, the hospitality of the villagers. My village my family is proud to be resident of Gune Village. □

*(The author is a resident of Gune Village, Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh)*



# My Village, My Family

## (A Rabha village of Goalpara)

Charumohan Rabha

### Introduction:

Chatabari is my birthplace where I grew up. The village is under the Lakhimpur Revenue circle of Goalpara District in Assam. The village divided in two parts. First part and second part. Length and width of the village is 75 Km and 6 km respectively. The village is bounded by Daripar & Pandoa village in the north, in South baida 1st part Village and Dipkai village, in west Salpara and Hatisila, in East Pandoa, Pandoa Sitimkali and Dipkai 1st part.

### History behind naiming of the village:

When the Dodan, King of the Rabha, wondering aimlessly around, landed in a village, he found his Seven Sisters gardening in this village, that's why the village is named as Xatabari, Satabari. The village is situated in 53°65' North latitude and 124°8 East Longitude. From the gardens of seven sisters the name Xatabari first then Satabari became famous. .

### Natural Environment of the Village:

In the North of the village a river called Dari flowing down from east to west-South and to west and joined with a river named Jinjiram and flowed with the name of Jinjiram and combined in Bangladesh. There is a mountain and a forest of Sal trees in the south of the village and paddy fields between them. From the hills a fountain cascaded down to the east, south and west\where there is no passage towards north direction which is blocked by high hills. A major part of the village is covered with hills, forests and water reservoirs for which in rainy and summer seasons there is no dearth of water in the foothills. Small and big trees

with medicinal properties grow up on the banks of the fountains.

### Natural Environment:

The environment of the village is very beautiful. Mountains in south, in east, west and south are full of forests of Sal trees. Wild animals roam around the forests. In addition to Tiger, wild pig, porcupines, pangolins, fox, wild cats, vine cats, civets, big reptiles, there are a sizable number of bird varieties, vultures, adjutant, different types of egret, kingfisher, parrot, myna, wild cock, kukuha, sparrow, tailor bird, tadorna ferrugenia, whistling duck, dove, hawk cuckoo etc. Trees like Sal, Chegun, gooseberry, harad, bael, jackfruit, mango, jamun are plenty in the forests. Plants like plum, Burmese grape, turmeric, curry leaves, bamboo also grows in plenty in these forests.

Kharikas are made from Kakua bamboo as per the tradition of the village, and distributed among all. But now in the days of rubber plantstion, many inhabitants of the village have started cultivating rubber plants at the cost of natural plants and trees. Relation among the people of the village and relation with relatives are good from the ancient times. The society still respect and follow the traditions of the Rabha so far as marriage and community festivals are concerned. To build houses they still follow the Sauri system. Old traditions are not yet abandoned. They still solemnize social worships, celebrate private and community festivities with the help of everyone.

In the South of the village, there is a high hill of more than 600 meters. In East also mountains

greenery of the nature make people happy. In North a river called Dari flows and joins the river named Jinjiram. It is truly awesome to see Palas, Shimlu and others beautiful flowers blooming in the valley and hill slopes. Moreover, in the bank of the river kans grasses grow in plenty and wave with the winds. The surrounding of the village is beautiful because of the mountains and woods. The main obstacle of the village is that there is no good schools in the village even after 75 years of our freedom. There is no other higher Institution except of Primary school. Time never waits for anyone. With the passage of time, population is growing and village has been divided into two parts, one is 1st and another is 2nd. Though the village have been divided into two parts, yet the educational opportunities remains the same.

Our villages are changing slowly but steadily. Instead of the previous very long cottages with paddy barns, rooms for the family members and a kitchen, today's houses are far removed from the traditional pattern. Previously the cook kept the house and ran the Tatsal, the maya chuka nok, etc. In past 98% of the people of our village were involved in agriculture but not now. The young as well as the grown up girls in the village besides helping the elderly in the house also extended a helping hand in fishing in the village water bodies. It is a great pleasure to see this cooperation and sincerity amongst the villagers. The young as well as the grown up girls, their brothers and father all lived together in harmony. None of the old women in the village has a history of living in shelter homes, which are considered as sinful by the people of our village.

At present, village seems to be moving ahead with change, mainly because of the population growth and scarcity of land. The Kher Sauni's house in our previous village is not to be found these days. Since Habiyani is a land area, there is no wooly straw cultivation as before and there is no straw from it. That is why the use of tin roofs instead of sand on top using cement, stone sand and iron has become common. Due to non-availability of bamboo and cane for roofing of the

house, the present day houses have lost the old and traditional look. Above all the character of human beings has also changed. People's attraction towards old-fashioned houses have diminished because the supply of those traditional items for house building has decreased and availability of the state of the art modern day technological items. Another reason for the change in the house patterns of our village is the student movement of 1983. In the name of student movement, we had to lose our house designs, wealth, cow, goats, chickens and our paternal property. At that time, the roads were not paved but good enough to move around. In the miserable 1985, the Government of the Assam Gana Parishad was formed. It ruled for for ten years and then for 20 years the Congress government ruled the state but did nothing towards the development of our village. Nothing happened until 2005 except the usual straw roof that turned to tin roof. Then we got our village turned into a rubber farm to promote rubber cultivation. Everyone in the village started cultivating rubber saplings. Gradually, as the saplings grew up beautifully into rubber gardens, everyone got a good income from rubber and everyone started decorating their dusty houses of rock and sand. Also in Assam since 2016 with the formation of the government, the construction of houses in the name of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for the poor became pucca houses and the form of previous houses was totally lost. There was however no change in the roads of our village. Paved road work has been going on in our village since February 2018 but even the half portion of the length of the road that is 2 km of 5 Km road from main state road is yet to be complete.

Our village is under panchayat. Our panchayat is called Dadan Gaon Panchayat. The village of Rava also belongs to the Rava Autonomous Council. We have not seen the beautiful eye-catching form of the council's cow development. There are government primary/upper primary schools for village education but the arrival of teachers and students for the road is very hopeless. Except during the winter season, the miserable



condition during monsoon makes it very difficult for the teaching and students to come to their schools.

The new government model high school in the village started in 2012 but till date the school house construction work is unfinished. It is certain that the houses will become abode of ghosts if the government does not take immediate action in this regard.

The Dari River in the north of our village acts like a fence in the middle of the village. With hills on the south, west and east sides, we are beautifully protected which is why we do not need security personnel.

#### **Youth Chang or Girl Chang Arrangement:**

We Villagers belong to two communities. Garo and Rava. The Ravas do not have a provision for young chang and cow chang. On the other hand there is no such system among the Garas as well. So neither the young nor the cow chang is prevalent in our village

#### **Traffic inconvenience:**

We have mentioned the road in our village earlier. The roads that were paved before 2018 are quite poor now and all that remains is not very friendly for those who want to come to our village. Of course, completion of the bridge work on the north side will easily make it easier to communicate in all directions.

#### **Entry of other people:**

No one is allowed to come and settle in our village. The village is completely out of bound for outsider as nobody is allowed to sell his land so it is not possible for outsiders to migrate and settle in the village. Also the villagers do not allow such endeavors on the part of any one.

#### **Family Management:**

Our village has its own laws or regulations for the management of the village affairs Accordingly, a rule for running a family is well designed for which fights are very uncommon amongst family members. The village chief arbitrates for a

settlement through a village meeting in the society if there is any domestic dispute. Miscreants like thieves have not been able to indoctrinate our villages because of the strict governance of the society.

Families and villagers have become self-reliant by their respective work cultures. If there is a complaint of lack of mutual relations, it is resolved with the help of all concerned without any impact on the financial solvency of the village. In addition, the village has been able to stay away from sickness due to the good village roads roads and cleanliness of the domestic environment. Equal development and cooperation sustains the village environment in a beautiful way and that is what promotes the social harmony. Every family of the village has a rubber garden, banana garden and coconut garden and opportunities to adopt any other means of development of their liking.

#### **Economic development efforts of rural peoples:**

Collaboration of every member of the village to develop their village is highly essential. So the people of our village are up and doing to achieve self reliance and our womenfolk are forming groups have taken up pig farming, weaving of traditional dress materials, and pisciculture etc. As a result, the villagers are becoming financially solvent.

#### **Joint family system of the village :**

Joint family system is common social practice in most of the families of the village. Family become weak when it separates from parents. As a result their condition becomes weak.

Population of the Rabha people in our village is at about 1200 and the male-female ratio is 96:98.

#### **Worship, Religious and Social ceremony:**

People of the village worship Rishi and offer puja to happy earth Maranga-Mathanga God before New Year and before seeds are sown. For the worship of Maranga-Mathanga rainfall is a precondition. The worship process is very distinct

and follows the Rabha tradition, culture and rituals. Sanskrit slokas are not used in this worship.

#### **God and Goddess of the village:**

As a tribe we pray our tribal God and Goddess. Specially Rabha tribe worship Baikho Lakshmi, Kesa Khaisi, Chibudarma, Grimbuda, Maranga-Mathanga, Lakhori, Langa, Langamara, Mayra, Nakati, Daduri, Tamai, Rishi, Kimbisung, Baymaba, Pera Hasu etc. Lots of God and Goddess are worshiped. Moreover Leba Bai, Aryan God Goddess are worshiped. For example, Barmani, Bhagabati, Bargopal, Mama Gopal, Bihali Deu, Baghraj, Bayuraja etc. Moreover Rabha people worship Bakhra Deu or Jakua Deu. When a man is not able to do anything for joint and chest pain then people sacrifice duck, goat, pigeon or cock.

#### **Religious activity of the priest in Village :**

Generally in the worship ceremony of village, village priests perform the same. Priests make the arrangements of worship of all Gods and Goddesses. For worship people of our village never take help of Brahmin Priest. Puja Hymns are recited in our own language. Except the village priest our people are not interested in Brahmin Priest as they respect the village priest. Our Priests perform all the religious duties of our community.

#### **Marriage systems and Settlement of Marital conflicts of our village:**

In our Rabha society there are many types of marriage systems. Different types of marriage contracts are followed. In general, many types of marriages are solemnized but sometimes conflicts also arise. For solution of such disputes socially acceptable measures are taken. Sometimes arguments and fist cuffs and even fights can take place. If a couple is having some discord and misunderstanding the society takes the responsibility of solving the same and also tries to settle the family level disputes of the couple so that the couple can lead a happy married life.

#### **Agricultural way of life and living:**

All the families in our village have been relying on agriculture. The old farming method does not yield good results as such modern methods of production are being adopted by majority of the population. Consequently farmers are today earning more by taking to vegetable cultivation using quality fertilizers and financial support. Many of the villagers have also increased its income by establishing vegetable Gardens.

Now in the days of scientific agriculture, it has become a complex problem to earn enough to sustain a family. Therefore, today village children are more eager to go for higher education and thus help themselves as well as their families by taking up government or private jobs. Many of the educated people of our village have already got themselves employed in Government or private establishments. Many youths are also receiving engineering, medical and technical education to make them employable. They are inspiration to the new generation.

#### **Preservation of Tradition and culture:**

The key to the development of a society or a community lies in carrying forward the traditional folk culture of that community. Lack of unity in the society irrespective cast or community shatters the society, more so when every person abandons old customs and societal ties, So the old folk culture needs to be revived and improved upon by incorporating changes wherever necessary. This will also ensure progress of the future generations.

It is a known fact that when the village people keenly and sincerely pay attention to the art and culture of their village they can very well attract and inspire others to work for its protection and preservation. Our village has created a collective money reserve to finance its development projects without looking for help from others. All money collected from the villagers is deposited with the Treasurer and the Village head who in turn invest this money in Banks operated by them. All the

*(Contd to page no. 35)*

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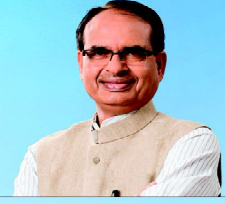


श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी  
प्रधानमंत्री



मध्यप्रदेश शासन

## उन्नत सिंचाई सुविधाओं से आत्मनिर्भर बनते किसान



श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान  
मुख्यमंत्री

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मध्यप्रदेश ने सिंचाई सुविधाओं के विस्तार में अभूतपूर्व उपलब्धियाँ हासिल की हैं। बेहतर प्रबंधन एवं स्मार्ट तरीके से सिंचाई परियोजनाओं को जमीन पर उतारने का परिणाम है कि प्रदेश में अधिक-से-अधिक क्षेत्र में सिंचाई के लिए पानी की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित हो रही है। मध्यप्रदेश सरकार द्वारा सिंचाई की उन्नत सुविधाओं के निर्माण से कृषि उत्पादन में बढ़ोतरी कर किसानों की आय बढ़ाने के हरसंभव प्रयास सुनिश्चित किये जा रहे हैं।

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“ उन्नत सिंचाई सुविधाओं का विकास सुनिश्चित करने में मध्यप्रदेश तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहा है। कृषि उत्पादन को बढ़ाकर किसानों की आय में वृद्धि के लिए हर खेत को सिंचित बनाना हमारी सर्वोच्च प्राथमिकताओं में है। ”

- शिवराज सिंह चौहान



### निर्माणधीन प्रमुख वृहद परियोजनाएं

- **मोहनपुरा परियोजना-** राजगढ़ जिले के 1,45,661 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 800 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 3866.34 करोड़**
- **बाणसागर परियोजना-** टीवा, सीधी, शहडोल, सतना जिलों के 2,91,620 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 2695 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 3858.73 करोड़**
- **कुण्डलिया परियोजना-** राजगढ़ जिले के 1,39,599 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 800 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 3448 करोड़**
- **बीना संयुक्त सिंचाई एवं बहुउद्देशीय परियोजना-** सागर एवं विदिशा जिले के 90,000 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 305 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 3255.31 करोड़**
- **बण्डा परियोजना-** सागर जिले के 80,000 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 332 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 2610.54 करोड़**
- **पंच व्यपवर्तन परियोजना-** सिवनी, छिंदवाड़ा जिले के 1,26,400 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 410 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 2544.57 करोड़**

- **लोअर और परियोजना-** शिवपुरी जिले के 1,19,535 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 222 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 2208.03 करोड़**
- **पार्वती वृहद परियोजना-** राजगढ़, सीहोर और भीमाल जिलों के 48,000 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 157 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 1815.54 करोड़**
- **बाणसुनारा परियोजना-** टीकमगढ़ जिले के 75,000 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 183 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 1768.50 करोड़**
- **शामगढ़ सुवासरा सूक्ष्म सिंचाई परियोजना-** मंदसौर जिले के 85,117 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 226 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 1662.47 करोड़**
- **सुठालिया सिंचाई परियोजना -** राजगढ़ जिले के 49,800 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 220 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 1375.24 करोड़**
- **गदौठ सूक्ष्म सिंचाई परियोजना-** मंदसौर जिले के 21,400 हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में होगी सिंचाई, 62 गांव होंगे लाभान्वित।  
**लागत- ₹ 360.20 करोड़**

### उपलब्धियाँ अब तक

- वर्ष 2020 तक कुल 40.27 लाख हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में सिंचाई सुविधाएं विकसित।
- प्रदेश में 19 वृहद, 97 मध्यम एवं 5344 लघु सिंचाई योजनाओं का कार्य पूर्ण।
- 27 वृहद, 47 मध्यम एवं 287 लघु सिंचाई योजनाएं निर्माणाधीन।
- अगले 5 सालों में 65 लाख हेक्टेयर में सिंचाई सुविधा उपलब्ध कराने का लक्ष्य।

### प्रधानमंत्री कृषि सिंचाई योजना

में मंडला, डिंडोरी, शहडोल, उमरिया एवं सिंगरौली जिलों में ₹ 1707 करोड़ की लागत से 24,364 भू-जल संरचनाओं के निर्माण से सीमांत एवं लघु किसानों की 62,133 हेक्टेयर भूमि में सिंचाई

### आत्मनिर्भर मध्यप्रदेश रोडमैप के लक्ष्य

- आगामी तीन वर्षों में नर्मदा जल का पूर्ण उपयोग सुनिश्चित करने के लिए राशि ₹ 15,000 करोड़ की व्यवस्था।
- अगले एक वर्ष में प्राथमिकता के आधार पर तीन नर्मदा नदी परियोजनाओं को पूर्ण करने के लिए ₹ 4000 करोड़ की अग्रिम राशि की व्यवस्था।
- आगामी एक वर्ष में ₹ 30,000 करोड़ की राशि के कार्यों को प्रारंभ करना।



श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी  
प्रधानमंत्री



मध्यप्रदेश शासन



श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान  
मुख्यमंत्री

## कोविड-19 संक्रमण के दौरान मध्यप्रदेश सरकार द्वारा उठाए गए कल्याणकारी कदम



### मुख्यमंत्री कोविड-19 चालू सेवा योजना

1 मार्च, 2021 से 30 जून, 2021 के मध्य जो बच्चे इस कोविड आपदा में निराश्रित हो गए हैं, उन्हें योजना में निम्न लाभ दिए जाएंगे -

- रुपए 5000 प्रतिमाह आर्थिक सहयोग।
- निःशुल्क शिक्षा और राशन की व्यवस्था।
- आचर्यकता होने पर सुरक्षित आवासीय सुविधा।
- इस प्रकार की कोई शर्त नहीं कि माता-पिता की मृत्यु कोविड के कारण हुई हो।

### मुख्यमंत्री कोविड-19 विशेष अनुग्रह योजना

- कोविड-19 के कारण शासकीय कर्मचारी की मृत्यु होने पर परिवार और सदस्यों को 5 लाख तक की वित्तीय मदद। सभी प्रकार के सरकारी कर्मचारी, संविदा, दैनिक वेतनभोगी कर्मचारी भी इस योजना के पात्र होंगे। यह योजना सभी पीएसयू (सार्वजनिक उपक्रम) और अन्य सरकारी संगठनों पर भी लागू होगी।

### मुख्यमंत्री कोविड-19 अनुकम्पा नियुक्ति योजना

- शासकीय कर्मचारियों की कोरोना के कारण मृत्यु होने पर उनके परिवार के किसी एक सदस्य को अनुकम्पा नियुक्ति। यह योजना सभी शासकीय कर्मचारियों सहित संविदा, दैनिक वेतनभोगी, आउटसोर्स कर्मचारियों पर भी लागू होगी। साथ ही यह योजना सभी पीएसयू (सार्वजनिक उपक्रम) और अन्य सरकारी संगठनों पर भी लागू होगी।

### मुख्यमंत्री कोविड-19 योद्धा कल्याण योजना

- कोविड-19 ड्यूटी पर तैनात फ्रंटलाइन वर्कर की मृत्यु हो जाने पर परिवार को 50 लाख रुपए की वित्तीय सहायता का प्रावधान।

### मुख्यमंत्री कोविड उपचार योजना



प्रदेश में आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर समस्त परिवारों को निःशुल्क कोविड उपचार उपलब्ध कराने के लिए राज्य शासन की योजना -

- प्रदेश के समस्त शासकीय चिकित्सा महाविद्यालय, जिला अस्पताल, सिविल अस्पताल एवं कोविड उपचार करने वाले सामुदायिक स्वास्थ्य केन्द्रों पर कोविड मरीजों को पूर्णतः निःशुल्क उपचार उपलब्ध।
- प्रदेश के 4 बड़े जिलों में 07 निजी चिकित्सा महाविद्यालयों द्वारा संचालित अस्पतालों में अनुबंधित बेड पर भर्ती होने वाले कोविड मरीजों को पूर्णतः निःशुल्क उपचार उपलब्ध।
- आयुष्मान कार्डभारी परिवारों को आयुष्मान योजना के अंतर्गत आयुष्मान संबद्ध निजी अस्पतालों में निःशुल्क उपचार उपलब्ध।
- हेल्प लाइन नंबर - 181



### सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली अंतर्गत पात्र परिवारों को 3 माह का मुफ्त खाद्यान्न

- माह अप्रैल, मई एवं जून-2021 में राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम 2013 के अंतर्गत 4.82 करोड़ पात्र हितग्राहियों को मुफ्त खाद्यान्न का वितरण कराया गया है। साथ ही इन हितग्राहियों को माह मई एवं जून 2021 का प्रधानमंत्री गरीब कल्याण योजना अंतर्गत 10 किलो प्रति हितग्राही मुफ्त खाद्यान्न का वितरण किया जा रहा है। विगत माह लगभग 4.00 लाख नवीन हितग्राहियों को जोड़ा गया है एवं यह कार्य निरंतर जारी है।



### शहरी पथ विक्रेताओं को वित्तीय सहायता

- शहरी पथ विक्रेता योजना (PM SVANidhi) में नामांकित लगभग 6 लाख से अधिक पथ विक्रेताओं को 1000 रुपए प्रति लाभार्थी के मान से कुल 61 करोड़ रुपए का भुगतान।



### ग्रामीण पथ विक्रेताओं को वित्तीय सहायता

- मुख्यमंत्री ग्रामीण पथ विक्रेता योजना में 6 लाख से अधिक पथ विक्रेताओं को 1000 रुपए प्रति लाभार्थी के मान से कुल 61 करोड़ रुपए का भुगतान।



### किसानों के लिए

- खरीफ 2020 में लिए गए ऋण के भुगतान की अंतिम तिथि को (शून्य प्रतिशत ब्याज, फसल ऋण योजना अंतर्गत 1 मार्च से 31 मई) भारत सरकार के निर्देशानुसार 30 जून तक आगे बढ़ाया गया।
- गेहूँ एवं अन्य फसलों के उपाजन के माध्यम से किसानों के खाते में 23 हजार 422 करोड़ रुपए का भुगतान।



### भवन एवं अन्य निर्माण श्रमिकों को वित्तीय सहायता

- मध्यप्रदेश भवन एवं संनिर्माण श्रमिक कल्याण योजना में अधिसूचित 11.28 लाख श्रमिकों को 1000 रुपए प्रति लाभार्थी के मान से कुल 112.81 करोड़ रुपए की सहायता।

टीकाकरण अवश्य करवाएं

जिंदगी अनलॉक करें, कोरोना को लॉक करें

दो गज की दूरी, मास्क है जरूरी

# हमारे किसान हमारी सर्वाच्च प्राथमिकता



श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी, प्रधानमंत्री

श्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान, मुख्यमंत्री



## किसानों के लिए मध्यप्रदेश सरकार के प्रयास

- कृषि अधोसंरचना विकास फंड में मध्यप्रदेश देश में सबसे आगे। अधोसंरचना विकास के लिए आत्मनिर्भर कृषि मिशन का गठन।
- प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि के साथ किसान कल्याण योजना में प्रदेश के किसानों को ₹ 4000 प्रति वर्ष देने का निर्णय। प्रदेश के 78 लाख पात्र किसानों को लगभग ₹ 3200 करोड़ की राशि का भुगतान होगा।
- प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना में कुल ₹ 8646 करोड़ का भुगतान।
- 16 लाख किसानों से 1 करोड़ 29 लाख मीट्रिक टन गेहूं का रिकॉर्ड उत्पादन, ₹ 27000 करोड़ से अधिक का भुगतान।
- पिछले 8 माह में 2 करोड़ 10 लाख किसानों को विभिन्न योजनाओं में ₹ 46000 करोड़ से अधिक का भुगतान।
- उर्वरकों का अग्रिम भण्डारण।
- पिछले 8 माह में लगभग ₹ 8000 करोड़ से अधिक की 7सिंचाई परियोजनाओं की स्वीकृति।
- 2002-03 में प्रदेश का कुल सिंचित रकबा मात्र 7 लाख 50 हजार हेक्टेयर था, जिसे 15 साल में बढ़ाकर 40 लाख हेक्टेयर तक कर दिया।
- 15 वर्षों में सिंचाई बजट ₹ 1005 करोड़ से बढ़ाकर ₹ 10,928 करोड़ किया गया।
- तीन वर्षों में 1000 नये "कृषि उत्पादक संगठन" का होगा गठन।
- शून्य ब्याज दर पर ऋण योजना वर्ष 2020-21 में पुनः प्रारंभ।
- मंडी नियमों में ऐतिहासिक सुधार। मंडी टैक्स 1.5% से घटाकर 0.5% किया गया।
- सहकारी बैंकों की वित्तीय स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए ₹ 800 करोड़ जारी।

“  
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हम उनकी सेवा में  
कोई कसर नहीं छोड़ेंगे।  
”

- शिवराज सिंह चौहान

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65 वर्ष और उससे  
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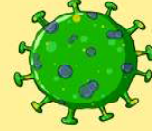


10 साल से  
कम उम्र के बच्चे

- ऐसे व्यक्ति जो गंभीर रूप से बीमार हों जैसे - उच्च रक्त चाप, अस्थमा, हृदय रोग, मधुमेह और किडनी से संबंधित बीमारी।
- कम रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता वाले व्यक्ति जैसे - कैंसर, धूम्रपान करने वाले, अंग प्रत्यारोपण करवा चुके और एच.आई.वी. रोगी।

## थोड़ी सी सावधानी से होगा कोरोना संक्रमण से बचाव -

- ✓ ऐसे व्यक्ति घर से बाहर न जाएं और बाहर से आये व्यक्ति से दूरी बनाकर रखें।
- ✓ घर पर इनके भोजन का पर्याप्त ध्यान रखें तथा भोजन से पहले और शौच के बाद साबुन से हाथ धोएं।
- ✓ इनमें सर्दी, जुकाम, बुखार या सांस लेने में तकलीफ जैसे कोई भी लक्षण दिखाई देने पर तत्काल चिकित्सक से परामर्श लें।
- ✓ इनकी वर्तमान बीमारी का इलाज विशेषज्ञ की सलाह पर करें।
- ✓ घर के अंदर ही हल्के व्यायाम, योग एवं ध्यान करायें।
- ✓ घर के सदस्य खाँसते या छींकते समय रूमाल अथवा गमछे का उपयोग करें। जब आवश्यक हो तो निर्देशानुसार मास्क का उपयोग करें।



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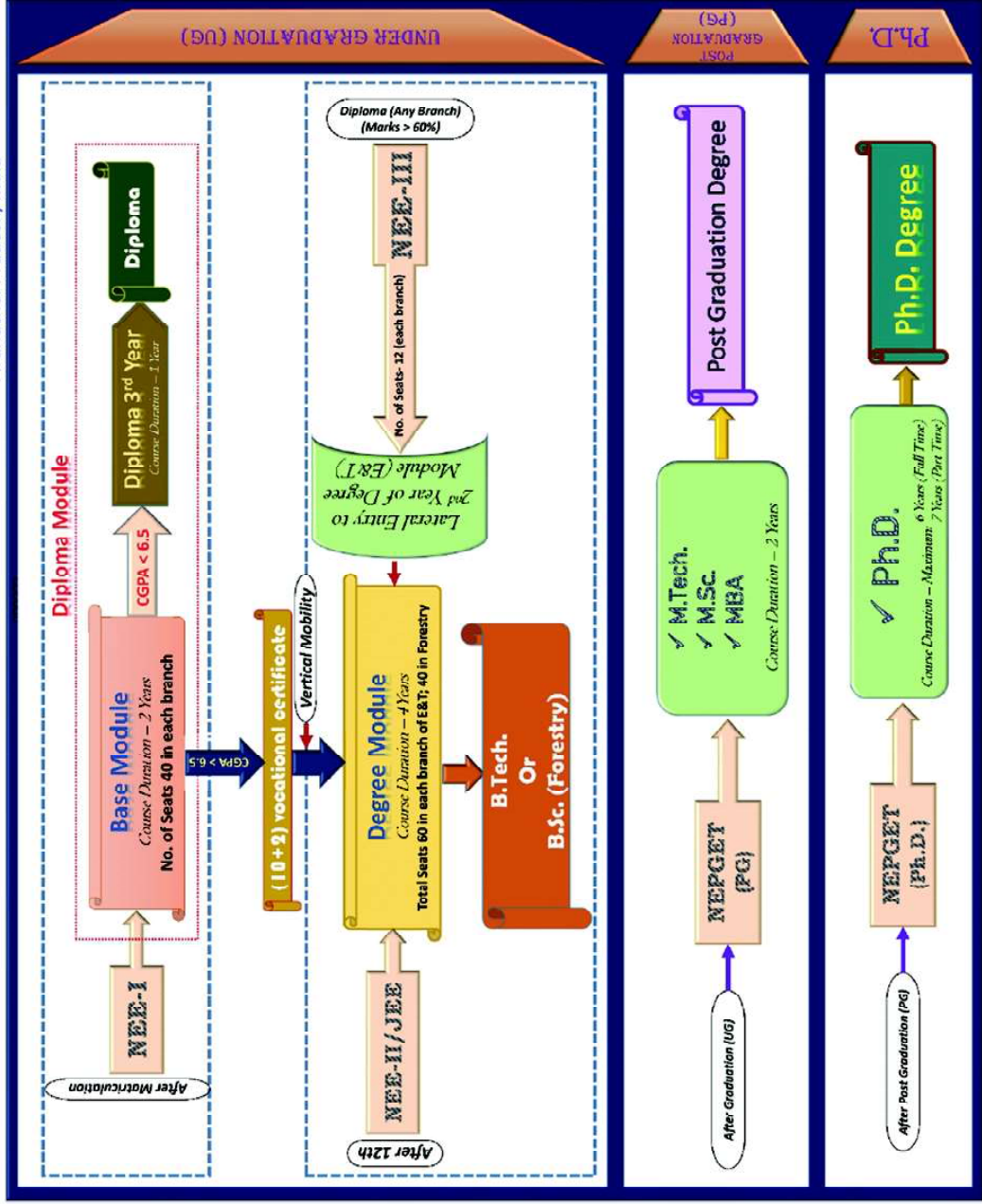
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## विकास के प्रतिबद्ध प्रयास

- ❖ मुख्यमंत्री किसान कल्याण योजना में प्रधानमंत्री सम्मान निधि के हितग्राहियों को 4000 रुपये की अतिरिक्त राशि राज्य सरकार की ओर से।
- ❖ किसानों को ब्याजमुक्त ऋण के लिए बैंकों और समितियों को 800 करोड़ रुपये जारी।
- ❖ आदिवासी वनाधिकार पत्रों का वितरण- 2 लाख 70 हजार से अधिक व्यक्तिगत और 39 हजार 996 से अधिक सामुदायिक वनाधिकार पत्रों का वितरण।
- ❖ चम्बल प्रोग्रेस वे- भिण्ड, मुरैना और श्वोपुर होते हुए राजस्थान सीमा तक कुल 316 कि.मी. लम्बा।
- ❖ रीवा सौर परियोजना- विश्व की सबसे बड़ी परियोजनाओं में से एक। 4000 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से निर्मित परियोजना में 750 मेगावॉट बिजली का उत्पादन।
- ❖ वर्ष 2018-19 के खरीफ एवं रबी फसलों के लिए 16 लाख किसानों को 3100 करोड़ रुपये की फसल बीमा राशि का भुगतान।
- ❖ विभिन्न योजनाओं में आर्थिक सहायता- जरूरतमंदों के खातों में 24 विभागों की विभिन्न योजनाओं के अंतर्गत 40 हजार 500 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की राशि अंतरित।
- ❖ प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना - उद्यानिकी फसलों को भी रबी 2020-21 से रबी 2022-23 के लिए सम्मिलित करते हुए क्रियान्वयन।
- ❖ प्रदेश के इतिहास में पहली बार महिला स्व-सहायता समूहों को 479.44 करोड़ रुपये के ऋण स्वीकृत और 343 करोड़ रुपये के ऋण वितरित।
- ❖ संबल योजना- 6 माह में 25 हजार से अधिक हितग्राहियों को 268 करोड़ रुपये की सहायता।
- ❖ राष्ट्रीय जल जीवन मिशन- 3 हजार करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की योजनाएं स्वीकृत। ग्रामीण क्षेत्र के 26 लाख से अधिक घरों में नल कनेक्शन का लक्ष्य।
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- ❖ बिजली बिलों में राहत- 97 लाख से अधिक बिजली उपभोक्ताओं को बिजली बिलों में 623 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की राहत।



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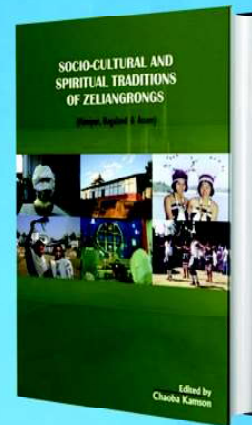
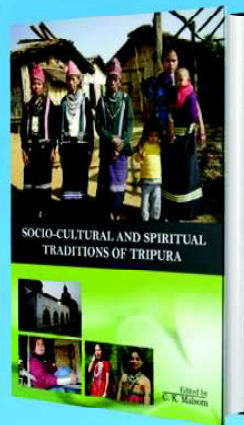
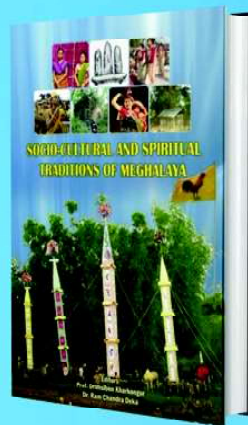
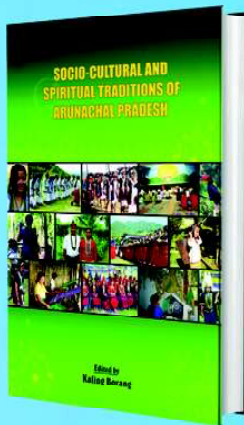
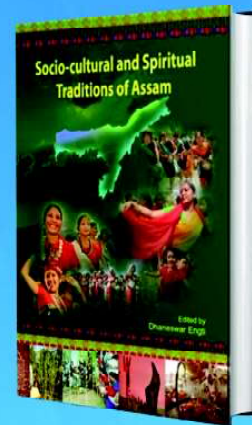
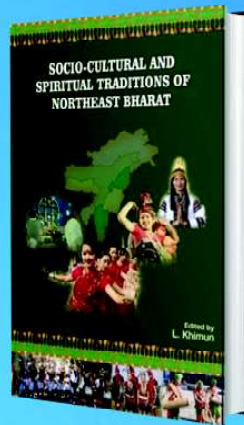
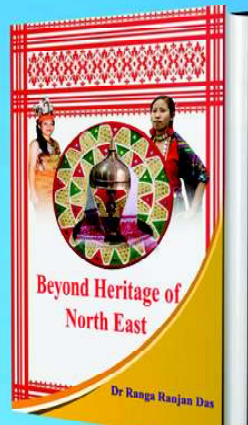
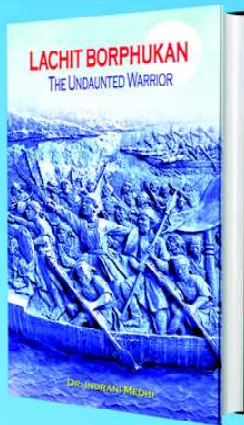
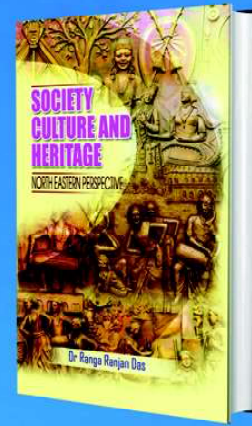
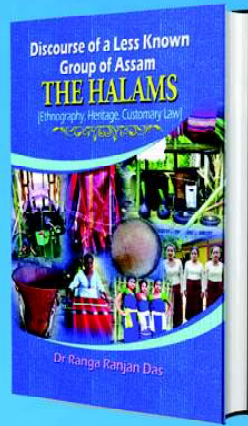
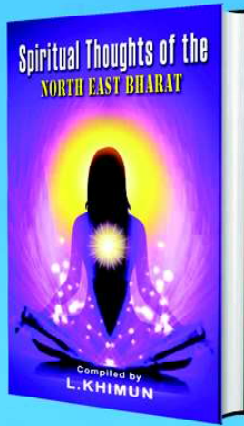
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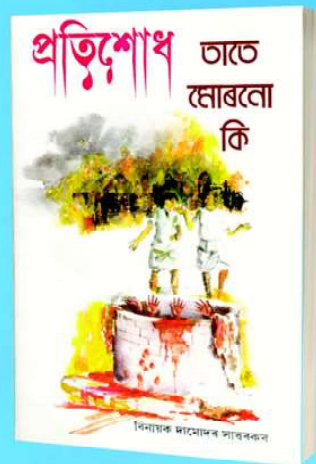
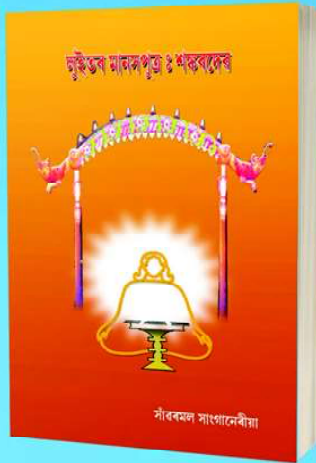
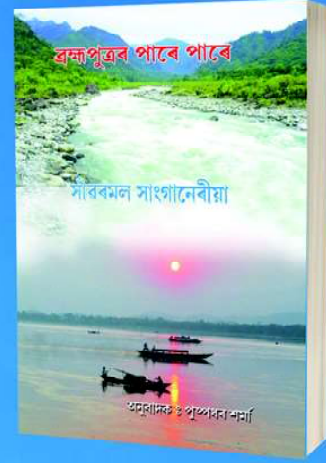
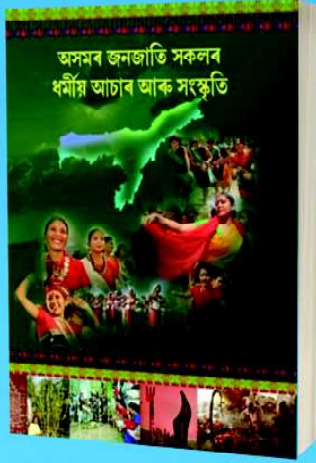


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(A Rai village of West Sikkim)

Sang Dolma Tamang

The term ‘village’ means a location or place bounded by natural features like stream, spring, jhora and ridges consisting of certain number of households. The villages maintain ecosystem and environmental balance to a great extent. In the present-day scenario, the village people are conscious of preserving and conserving the flora and fauna of their area. The village is the only place where people can enjoy clean air to breath and pure water to drink. The organic eatables are available only in the village. The residents of the village know and understand the contributions of nature towards their survival and the preservation of eco system. The villagers feel proud of living in the village amidst natural environment.

People who live in the villages are the nucleus of human progress. They live with their family members and community brethren in the villages which are in reality extensions of natural environment and ecology. We need to know the villages and their resident families to understand the secret of natural living.

Before I delve deep into the subject matter, let me furnish the salient feature of my village as under.;

- a) Name - Sigeng
- b) Aspect - south facing
- c) Topography -gentle slope
- d) GPU-Mabong Sigeng
- e) Word No. - 4,5,6
- f) Natural boundary i) North - gurasey dara  
ii) South- rothok khola

iii) West- mabong khola

iv) East- baidang khola

1) The origin of my village could not be ascertained as to when and how it came into being. Name of my village is Sigeng, west Sikkim. The name is derived from the word ‘sigang si’ which means ‘one’. Geng is corrupt form of ‘gang’ which means ridge. Our village is bounded by streams in the east and west and the ridge stretching from east to south.

a) The topography is undulating with gentle slope.

b) Demography- The village is mainly inhabited by Rai community. The total population is about one thousand. The village is divided into three wards under Mabong sigeng gpu.

2) In my village the floral distribution is as under: papal, mango tree, pear tree, mel tree, nevara, syalfasray, chilawnay, bamboo plant, barard, khanew, chewri, simbal, seris, chekrasey, tarpin,sajana(drumstick tree) tanki, banana tree, banian tree, jack fruit tree, jamuna etc. The following faunal species are available such as cow, dog, ox, fox, dove, peacock, cat, pigeon, crab, snake (cobra), frog, fiesta, bat etc.

3) The shape of my village is elongated one which helps in having a very nice and good view of other neighbouring villages.

i) It helps in accomodating more houses in the area.

ii) Its soil and weather is helpful for growing abundant organic vegetables and other agricultural

products.

iii) The people of the village are very friendly and maintain good relations with each other..

4) Most of the people of our village are illiterate. So they earn their living by working in agriculture field or daily wage labourers in private sector,. Unemployment is gaining pace slowly.

5) Modern life style in our village has slightly changed the size and structure of the houses. Thatch roofed houses have been replaced with cement concrete roofing. The mud structure has been replaced by cement mortar and brick. There are more than one room in each house.

6) In our village people abide by the decisions taken by the Panchyat because it is very easy for them to communicate their opinions on various issues. If any problem arises in the village panchayat arbitrates and takes a decision on the issue. Panchayat has more power as compared to individual so they can attends to matters and solve them .

7) Family value in a home is considered more important and sacroscent, Family members love each other, help each other in every step, try to sort out every problem of each other and share their own bond. They face problems and overcome by themselves. They love their village as one likes his or her family. This bond of oneness protects them and ensures security for all.

8) Each family in the village maintains co-operation in fighting against the outside forces of evil. All the families in the village maintained utmost unity. They always respected their tradition and culture. Our forefathers taught us our language and culture. They always encouraged us to wear our own traditional attires. Tamangs, Rai, Limboo, Sherpa and Darjees co-exist very happily in our village. .In our village the dominant community is Rai. We respect each other's traditions and cultures.

9) Our villagers are interdependent. When problems arise in our village we all come together

to fight against our common enemy. Whenever required we join together for funeral as well as Birtthday party, weeding party etc. We always remain helping each other. So, we all are human being and we all do take affords to relief each other in difficult moment.

10) The role of every individual in family and villager shall be maintaining peace and fight -out-the adverse

11) Yes, I also belong to join family, some where they live small family also. But I like to stay in joint family because we share love each other. We get much help and afford from the family member.

12) Rai is the dominant community of my village. The total number of houses in our villager is 183.The Tamang community is 75 house and Rai 108 house that's why Rai is dominant in our village.

13) Mainly we follow Buddhism and we celebrate Buddha Purnima, sagadawa, lochar etc. like Hindu celebrate their festivals like desai, dewali, and many pujas. Christian also live in our village they also celebrate their Christmas. So, we all have to respect tradition and its good for upcoming generation to follow others' language and tradition.

14) In every village people follow their own Devi puja. They follow such tradition generation to generation.

15) Priest is like a god. When the villager becomes ill, at that time priest pray for that person. That's why we believe on priest and also follow their rules.

i) They play a important role of the village area and give a new life.

ii) If there is no priest, then we suffer a lot.

iii) Priest is like a god and they give a new life.

16) In the marital cases, a middleman is appointed and he will solve the problem.

17) Traditional and cultural knowledge is transferred to the next generation by inducing then

to participate in such events or performing drama or through documentation.

18) The culture and tradition maintained in village is the identity of the locality or particular community. In the past, inter-cast marriage was very difficult. The bride and groom and also their party would not be allowed to enter into the home. The

village jury decided the matter and sent them back.

19) In our village the literacy rate is low. But now it is improving then previous and they are conscious of present day education. It will be developing our literacy rate day by day .So it also represents the employment of the people in private and public sector. □



*(contd. from page no. 32)*

## **My Village, My Family**

### **(A Rabha village of Goalpara)**

accounts and documents relating to Bank deposit are maintained by the Treasurer and the Village head. The Treasurer and the Village head are also responsible for maintain full records of all financial transactions and expenditures incurred for any developmental work. This policy of book keeping is being strictly maintained with total transparency. A community rice store is being maintained by the village to provide rice loans in times of food shortage. People in need of money atr also provided monetary loans at nominal rate of interest from the fund reserve at the disposal of the village. As a result of this facility, the villagers need not have to go to the money lenders

or the rich people of the village comprising their self respect.

In conclusion it can be stated that the tradition and culture of the village need to be preserved and protected very carefully. This will transform the society for the greater good of every villager. We agree that there may be need for some reforms in our traditional customs and if we attend to those we can have a very beautiful as well as a fully functional society. Our villagers are very much aware that our customs and traditions are very important and they are therefore working hard to preserve the same for our coming generations. □



## My Village - My Family

Chandra Krishna Malsom

The name of my village is Palanjoy Para which falls under Purba Taicholong Village Council of Ompinagar Rural Development Block in Amarpur Sub-Division of Gomati Tripura District. Actually, it is a part and parcel of undivided South Tripura District. Gomati District was created in 2012 A.D. curving it out from the erstwhile South Tripura District. Now, Amarpur, Karbook and Udaipur Sub-Divisions are under newly created Gomati District. Around 50 families were there before 2001 A.D. but unfortunately today it has come down to around 20 families which is also amalgamating with some neighboring villages like Doulat Bahadur Para and adjoining Baromohi para of the nearby Village Council.

The reason behind this decline in number of families is unrest, insecurity and the malevolent activities of the then extremists. Unfortunately, maximum number of families of my village fled away to different places like Ambassa of Dhalai Tripura District, Kanchanpur of North Tripura and a lion portion went to Kanmun of Mizoram. They are really displaced families. All families belong to Molsom under Halam Community of Tripura. I love my village very much for I was born here. It is a small village, but a lovely one. Small traditional tong houses, mud huts and cottages are there. Most of the households are of mud and sand and only a handful of them are made of cement-concrete. The village panchayat building is made of cement concrete.

We have some facilities and amenities scattered around the village. People of this village speak in Molsom language in general, but when some outsider lands in the village, the villagers

try to speak in the language of the visitor for his/her convenience as far as possible though many cannot afford to speak in languages other than Molsom. There is one Pijanjoy para Senior Basic School in the village. Nearest High School is located at a distance of 3.5 KM at Jambookbari and Higher Secondary School is at a distance of 7.5 KM. These are some other Government institutions under Education Department in the area but there are no colleges in the village. The nearest Public Health Centre (PHC) is located at Ompinagar around 10 KM away from the village. The roads are all made of mud and stone and there are no paved roads in the village, Our village consists of a close-knit community with Debbarmas of Gamai para. Everyone knows each other here. We have good relations with them. Language does not matter for communication with each other. Inter caste marriage also found to be increasing and both of us found no problem in society. Because, the basic traditional faith, culture and social norms are almost synonymous in nature. But unfortunately, the conversion in Christianity is drastically increasing day by day which is posing a threat to the age-old tradition of our society and culture. The main occupation of the people in Palanjoy para is manual labour, handicraft making and agriculture.

For me, my family is the most loving in the world and is an important unit of our society. A small or large family is of great importance to its members and is considered to be the strongest unit of society as different families make a good society. A family becomes the first school for children where they acquire nuances of our

culture and tradition and most importantly the core values of life. It plays a great role in teaching good behavior and inculcate good habits. It helps in the development of a person with a good character and conscience. I feel it my good fortune to be born into a small good family where I learned everything during my childhood. I belong to a middle-class family consisting of five members

(me, my wife and three daughters). As per our settled social norms, each of us has to follow the commands of the head of the family. We truly respect and love each other in the family. The family plays a very important role in giving shape to a good citizen, acts as its teacher of the rituals, keeps us abreast of the traditions and values as a member of the society. □



# ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW KABUI VILLAGE

Dr. Kamei Rockos

The Kabui (Rongmei) is one of the ethnic groups of Zeliangrong tribe, who live mostly in Manipur, Nagaland, Assam and other parts of North East India. The Kabui population according to census of 1971 was 40,259 and their economy was almost wholly dependent on agriculture. Shifting or Jhumming Cultivation which is as old as humanity is popularly practiced among them. The kabuis are hard working and live a self-sufficient economic life.

The Kabui village is a natural social and political unit made up of different clans. They live in the villages amidst the forest and mountains. A village has its own demarcated territory, recognized and accepted by the neighboring villages. There is no limitation on number of the houses in a village. It exists as a small republic without any interference from outside. The initial stage for the establishment of a new village is to select a proper location. The selection of land depend on a number of factors such as physical environment, physical security, forest resources, availability of water and the nature of the hilly terrain for jhum cultivation. Generally, they prefer to locate the new village where there are good natural vegetation, favourable movement of the air, good and reliable source of drinking water, higher elevation, and fertility of the soil.

The village land is classified into four categories: (i) Village site (*Kailong*), (ii) Cultivable lands of the village (*Laoram*), (iii) The grove of the village (*Rambou*) and (iv) A separate forest dedicated to the village deity (*Suang*).

**Probable reasons for setting up of a new village:**

- (i) Lack of unity among the villagers.

- (ii) Limitation of land for settlement and cultivation.

- (iii) Conditions created by Aggressive forces.

- (iv) Environmental conditions of the area.

**Procedures for settlement of a new village:**

## 1. Selection of clans

Customarily, villagers will choose three clan elders taking one each from Kamei, Gonmei and Gangmei/Longmei who are not widower. The selected clan elders will proceed towards the selected site of the village and pray to *Tingkao Ragwang* (Supreme God) for having a good dream in their favour. One day ahead of this prayer, they should sleep alone without touching their wives.

## 2. Seeking of divine guidance

On the next day, each of the clan elder with an egg and a cock each will proceed to the said site to see the omen of good or bad for the settlement. On reaching the site, a village priest will kill a cock by strangulation and observe the omen of cock's legs and its intestine. After that, a large pig arranged by the villagers will be slaughtered and examine the pig's spleen one after another. Each of the clan elder digs a pit on the ground to a depth of below ankle and buries the egg together with paddy grains at the central location of the site. Then, they will pray to Supreme God and the village deities for a blessing to keep the egg intact and make the paddy seeds to germinate if the selected site is favorable for the settlement of the village.

## 3. Performance of the ritual ceremony

Before the insertion of an egg into the pit (*khun*), a priest will perform the ritual by chanting



the hymns of new settlement (*Namsu Disumei kashoi*).

#### 4. Establishment of a new village

##### (i) Omen by observing an egg (*Roidui daan jaomei*)

Eggs are boiled in a pot on the fire of a tripod at a selected site. If the eggs shells are found to be intact without crack then it is a good sign. There is also another method of omen observation i.e. by burying an egg at the proposed site to find out whether the new location is suitable for the human habitation. Normally, it is executed with a kind of religious hymn. After five days, if the buried egg is found intact and not rotten then it will be presumed as a positive sign for setting up of a new village at the selected site. But in case, the egg is rotten or empty, it is an unfavorable sign so they will shift to another place for selection.

##### (ii) Omen by extraction of fire (*Meirapmei*)

Extraction of fire (*Meirapmei*) by means of friction of dry wood and bamboos will be done at a proposed place. If the fresh fire is produced at the first attempt then it is believed to be a good sign. In case the fire is ignited after many attempts, the result is said to be not so good.

##### (iii) Omen by smoke (*Mhaikhou daan jaomei*)

According to the tradition, wood and dried leaves are collected and set to fire. If the smoke from the burning leaves and wood went up straight into the sky it is considered as a good sign and the site is selected for settlement.

##### (iv) Omen by Paddy (*Napgum daan jaomei*)

After digging up a small portion of land in the selected site of the village, paddy seeds are sown with a prayer to *Tingkao Ragwang* for good omen and plentiful production. Traditionally, if the grains germinate well after a week it is believed to be a positive sign. But, if the grains do not germinate well it is presumed to be bad omen and they will shift to another location.

##### (v) Omen by observation of cock's legs (*Roiphai daan jaomei*)

According to the custom, a cock will be killed by strangulation and observed the position of the legs which is known as *Roiphai daan jaomei* in Kabui dialect. If the right leg is on top of the left leg (*Jat doumei*) it is considered to be better omen and if the left leg is above the right leg (*Chagaan doumei*) it is also good. If one leg crosses over other leg (*Tankang doumei*), it is not good for settlement and the site should be shifted to other place according to the indication of omen.

##### (vi) Omen by Pig's spleen (*Gakpai daan jaomei*)

A pig will be killed and the spleen is examined to find omen of good or bad for settlement in the proposed site. If the spleen is found to be smooth without scratches it is a good sign. And if scratches are there it is unlucky. This observation of pig spleen to fine out its omen is known as *Gakpai daan jaomei* in Kabui.

##### (vii) Omen by pond's water level (*Dui kathak jaomei daan*)

It is a process done by checking the water level whether it dries up or become less from the earlier mark of the pond. The above mention omens are taken to determine the issue of future for the settlement.

##### (viii) Omen by cock crowing (*Roi tikhuangna jaomei daan*)

Each clan elder of Kamei, Gonmei and Gangmei/Longmei will proceed to the village gate to take an omen for selection of the village founder. These three elders would bring a cock each and observe which cock crowed first at dawn. Before going to bed, they will pray to *Tingkao Ragwang* seeking His divine blessing in their favor. So, these clan elders will sleep near their respective cock. The leader or head of the clan whose cock crows first would be chosen as the founder (*Nampou*) of the new village. It is believed as a God ordained divination. And the other clan leader whose cock crows in second would be declared as administrator

of the village (*Namgakpou/Kbullak*). The owner of the last cock which crows third will be chosen as the in-charge of agriculture rites (*Napmupou*) and finance in the village.

### **Construction and Inauguration of the village gate**

After completion of the appointment of members of the village authority, the villagers will turn their attention to the work of clearing the jungles, digging of village pond and foundation site, construction of village gates at both ends of the village followed by erection of fencing around the village.

First of all, villagers will locate a proper place which is suitable for the village gate. After that boys will be deputed to the jungle to bring a tree called *Sengbang* for the gate posts. When they find out the tree, it will be cut into four pieces and brought shouting *ho-buai* from the jungle to the village. Then, small pit will be dug at both sides of the entrance, and will be followed by chanting a ritual hymn for the erection of the village gate. While chanting the ritual, the founder of the village (*Nampou*) will also at the same time offer the essential items by putting them into the pit. These items are: Ginger chutney (*Gutam*), Fresh wine (*Zouga*), Iron pieces (*Tanba*), Thatch and a kind of grass (*Sampri sampra*).

Then, two posts will be erected in the northern gate and the remaining two will also be erected in the southern gate of the village. Meanwhile, the fencing work will also be carried out side by side planting with pointed thorny plants like “*Raangpan Thingbang*”, “*Khang*”, a thorny creeper plant etc. After completing the construction of village gate and fencing around the village, all the villagers have to sleep one night outside the village gate whereas the founder of the village will remain inside the gate by praying to *Tingkao Ragwang* for well-being and prosperity of the villagers. Then in the early morning, the village chief (*Nampou*) will declare the village gate is open in the inaugural function in the presence of all the villagers. After inauguration, village

chief will lead his villagers to a house where inaugural feast is served.

Before or after the inauguration of the village gate, Nampou will sanctify and open the village pond for drinking water in a function of *Duikhun khumei* by chanting a hymn. After the village pond is dug, the founder (*Nampou*) will observe a fasting for a night. Then, the village council will prepare a wine which will be offered to Supreme God and related gods and the remaining portion of the same is used for consumption by the village authorities. *Nampou* will bury a *Duikhun Ga* (species of ginger) near the village pond without letting anyone know for it is a confidential act and this *Ga* cannot be lost.

### **Installation of presiding deities (*Bambu Sommei*)**

Village founder will first offer holy wine to the presiding deity and install the same near the northern gate (*Keipi bambu*) of the village. The village administrator (*Namgakpou*) will install another deity (*Keiba bambu*) at the southern gate of the village.

The Kabui people are the followers of a profound indigenous religion of the *Tingkao Ragwang Chapriak* (TRC). This is an ancient religion, practiced and preserved through oral tradition through the centuries. This religion is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the people. The Kabuis believe that *Tingkao Ragwang* is the Supreme of all Gods. The Kabui people are religious and God fearing people. They worship the supreme God on all occasions. The religion of Kabui people consist of many Gods and Goddesses.

### **Selection and digging of the jumping ground (*Daan champung*)**

Initially, village chief (*Nampou*) will offer holy wine to the *Tingkao Ragwang* and other gods at the house of village council (*Peikai*). Then, the villagers would move to a suitable place for locating the village jumping ground known as *Daan shaanpung*. *Nampou* and *Namgakpou* will act as priest and offer holy wine and ginger chutney to the place of

jumping ground and stone throwing. Customarily, the location of jumping ground will be selected and dug out at the centre of the village.

### **Formal entry in the village**

The village founder (*Nampou*) would perform the ritual called *Namgutmei* ceremony. It is the last ceremony for entering into a new village. This formal function of *Namgutmei* ceremony is to instruct the villagers as to how to enter the village as also follow and observe the norms before and after their entry into the village. The instructions are as follows:

(i) It is compulsory for all the villagers to take food before the sun sets and gather all their belongings including their domestic animals like fowl, dog, goat, cow, pig, buffalo, etc. They should move out of the village gate and sleep a night outside the gate.

(ii) At dusk, the chief priest (*Taku*) will announce fasting (*Munthinmei*) to all the villagers to abstain from eating, drinking, feasting, etc.

(iii) Then, *Nampou* will close the village gate so that no one can enter the village and will go inside and sleep there whereas the villagers will sleep outside the village gate. In the next morning, *Nampou* will open the gate for the villagers to enter.

(iv) After the gate is opened, the villagers will enter touching the “Cornelian/Nut Beads” (*Tadantu*) as a token of purification in entering the new village. The beads will be hung at the centre of the entrance gate of the village.

(v) After that the villagers will proceed to their respective hut/house of the new village.

(vi) Some youth will go to the jumping ground (*Daan shaanpung*) and ignite fresh fire by means of friction of dry pieces of wood and bamboo and set fire on a heap of wood. The village chief will then inform the villagers to come and collect the sacred fire for the cooking purpose. Accordingly, the villagers will come and collect the fresh fire for cooking their food in their huts.

### **Erection of founding pillar (*Kairaoteng khunmei*)**

Accordingly to the tradition, if a man wants to construct a house, he has to perform first the ceremony of pillar erection (*Kairaoteng khunmei*) on an auspicious day. A priest will erect a post as a foundation pillar. While erecting the pillar, care is taken so that man’s shadow doesn’t fall upon the pit. The items needed in the performance of *Kairaoteng khunmei* are: Mud of earthen mound (*Pungneng*), Piece of iron, Grinded ginger, A kind of grass, Pebble (*Taotbu*), Fresh wine and Water in a banana-leaf cup.

Soft mud (*Pungneng*) will be used in this ritual with the objective of becoming the family rich like a earthen mound. The priest performs the ritual ceremony by putting all the prescribed items one after another into the pit where the first post is to be erected. Right after dropping all the ritual items, the priest will chant a hymn of erecting the foundation pillar. Then, the priest erects the foundation pillar by offering holy wine to the Supreme God and related gods. This oblation of holy wine is known as *Maleng keimei* in local dialect. The leftover of the grinded ginger will be wrapped with the banana leaf and tied to the pillar with a string. A bow (*Paisam*) will be fitted at the pillar to avoid any flying bird to perch on it.

### **House warming (*Kaithan kumei*)**

After the completion of the construction work, the house owner will fix an auspicious day for the inauguration of the newly constructed dwelling house. He will verbally invite all the villagers including the authority members to be present in the inauguration function without fail. First, the priest will offer holy wine and grinded ginger at the founding pillar (*Keiraoteng*). After that, a hearth will be set up by erecting tripod at a suitable place of the kitchen. These three erected stones for the purpose of hearth is called Tripod (*Laibu*).

### **Erection of Tripod (*Laibu Sommei*)**

In the morning, *Nampou or Namgaakpou or Taku* will perform the ceremony of Tripod erection.

Tripod is triangular in shape which is set up of three stones representing *Kambuipui*, *Charaipui* and Ancestors (*Kairao*). It will be erected serially and its ritual process will also follow its serial. The essential items required for performance of the ritual of Tripod erection are three hearth stones (*Laibu kathum*), mud of raised earthen mound, one kind of grass, ground ginger, fresh wine, unbroken rice (*Napsam baomakmei*) and water.

The performer acts as a priest and put all the above essential items into three holes dug for the erection of tripod. After putting all the items one after another, the priest will chant relevant hymns of tripod erection. After reciting the hymns, the priest will erect the three hearth stone (tripod) one by one. And then he fills up the holes with the earth tightly and offers holy wine on each hearth stone (*Laibu*). He dedicates the new house to the *Tingkao Ragwang* with a prayer for peace and prosperity to the family. Then, he will go and see all the rooms of the new house. Customarily, a dog will be killed on this day which is known as *Kaithan Si* in Kabui. A fresh fire is also produced by the friction of dry wood and bamboos and the same fire will be kindled at fire place. It is compulsory to make the fire burn continuously for five days. The first items to be brought inside the new house are a pot containing full of rice (*Napsam pantilai akhat padikmei*) and a pot full of water (*Duikhu padikmei akhat*).

### The village system

In the past, the Kabui people followed a joint family system consisting of grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, brother and sister. Due to the effect of modernity the joint family is becoming a nuclear family of husband, wife and children. Yet, lineage, family and kinship ties are still very strong. Traditionally, the Kabuis have a patrilineal system of family where the family is known by the surname of the father or forefathers. Being a patrilineal society property is inherited by male members of the family and descent is traced through father's side. If a man dies leaving no male child, his nearest kinsman will inherit his

properties. According to the traditional custom, daughters are not given the right to inherit the parents' properties. However, these traditional customary laws have undergone changes in modern Kabui Society.

Every Kabui village has the dormitory system. The dormitory is an important social institution, which sustains the Kabui society, religion and culture. They have a separate institution for all the members belonging to this community according to the age group and sex. The number of dormitories depends on the size of the village. In case of a big village it has normally three dormitories each for boys and girls respectively. Membership of the dormitory in village starts only when a boy or a girl attained puberty.

The whole administration of a Kabui village is controlled by a council of the village, which is called the *Pei*. The *Pei* is not only the council of elders but also the collective supreme body representing different clans and lineage of the village. Woman does not represent in the village council. *Pei* is the highest decision making body, highest court and centre of administration. The Kabui political system is based on the land system and the founder of the village who is known as *Nampou* becomes the head of the village and the village *Pei*. The house of a respectable elderly person with influence and reputation in the village is chosen as the office of the *Pei*. The most important functions of the *Pei* are executive, administrative and judiciary rather than legislative. The legislative function of the council is less because there are already well set unwritten customary laws, which seldom need amendments.

The festivals are organized by the Village Council (*Pei*) through the dormitories. These festivals are celebrated in all seasons and almost every month of the agricultural calendar. Every festival is associated with the stage of agricultural operation. The festivals are deeply associated with religion, worship of *Tingkao Ragwang* (Supreme God) for successful cultivation and plentiful

harvests. There are about nine to ten festivals in Kabui society. Among them, the *Gaan-Ngai* is the greatest festival. It is a post harvest festival and starts on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Lunar month of *Wakching* which falls in December or January every year.

The culture consciousness is a unique character of the Kabui people. They have a very rich social and cultural heritages which are preserved in the form of festivals and feasts, dress and ornaments, dances, songs, music and many other entertainment programs and cultural activities like games and sports. Their life in village is occupied with these different cultural activities all the year round. All these cultural activities are participated by the village communities through the village council, the dormitories and the family Household.

The Kabui world of traditionalism was caught off-guard with the coming of modernization. In spite of lot of changes and progress, they have preserved their tradition and culture to a great

extent. Negligible modifications here and there may have occurred, but these were only the effects of changing times. □

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# My village and my family

(A Koch village in Garo Hills)

Vedvyas Koch

## Profile of my village:

My village, the Kumali Gaon of South West Garo Hills, Meghalaya is bordered by the state Assam on one side and Bangladesh on the other side. It is a small village which has 186 households and the population is approximately 834. The people of the village are highly dependent on agriculture and horticulture for their livelihood. Most of the people, whether young or old have limited knowledge about modern agricultural and horticultural methods and food production.

The major sources of water for cultivation are dam, river, streams and rainfall. They don't use fertilizers in their agricultural land and practice mono cropping. It is noticed that 80 percent of the villagers has their own land whereas 20 percent has rented land or land taken on lease because they are poor and marginal farmers. Villagers also engage themselves in Timber plantations of Sal and Segun which is of high demand in the market. Areca nuts and Cashew is extensively cultivated in the village.

The village has three temples. They are Gopal, Shiva and Kali temples. These temples are made of concrete and the statue of Kali is made of marble stone, Shiva and Gopal God's are mostly made of stone. The Kumali gaon celebrate Holi, Diwali, Shivratri and on every purina (full moon) a puja celebration takes place. The village has a big lake which is surrounded by lush green trees. It is also a sacred place called Naribhita where a puja performed in the month of march.

## Geographical condition:

The geo-climatic condition of Kumali Gaon offer an excellent scope for growing of different types of horticultural crops including fruits, vegetables, spices, medicinal and aromatic plants of high economic value. A wide range of tropical and temperate zone fruits such as Pineapple, Banana, Lemon, Guava, Pear and Plum are grown in the area. A large variety of vegetables both indigenous and exotic are also grown in the village. These agricultural practices are expected to change the entire economic condition of the people of the village in near future.

## Existing Institutions

The word education is derived from the Latin word 'educatus' which means to bring up, rear, train or to raise. It means to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual. It is the process of facilitating learning or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, belief and habits. It is the only means to make a civilized society.

Our village has two primary schools, one upper primary and a secondary school. These are bilingual, English and Assamese medium schools. Most villagers are proficient in Assamese and most of them can speak Hajong, Garo, Bengali and Hindi languages.

The village has also one Sub centre to look after basic health support and first aid of the patients in the village before hospitalization. In order to cater welfare needs of the women of the

village there is one non government organization named Mohila Sumiti. The samiti also runs a weaving society from 1960 with the objective of promoting traditional weaving practiced from time immemorial. It also focuses on empowering the village women and guide them to a higher level of economic prosperity so that they can contribute to a better livelihood option for the society.

A club named Pragati Cultural Club was established in our Kumali village in the year 1963 with the main objective of empowering the youth in different aspects of their lives focusing the areas of sports, music, culture, traditions and literature. Only males are the members of the club. The club also takes up developmental work in the village through various government schemes.

#### **Village Administration:**

Village head of my village is called Headman or Gaonbura who look after the welfare and development of the village and also actively intervenes when there is any kind of conflict, quarrels or disputes that may occur. Almost all community related issues are controlled by the Gaonbura. The Gaonbura is also involved in preparation of all schemes and documents of the village. He is highly respected in the village. There is also one man whom we call Dakora, the assistant of Gaonbura. He is the person who is responsible for informing villagers about all kinds of community issues and invites them to take part in the public meetings.

#### **Livelihood pattern :**

The community of Kumali Gaon is fully dependent on agriculture, horticulture, plantation and petty business. In the past, villagers practiced Jhum cultivation which is known as Haba haoni but due to certain environmental issues they have now abandoned the practice. Villagers also rear cattles and pisciculture. Ladies of the society are excellent weavers. They weave their own clothes i.e traditional dresses using local Gandi or handloom which is called Kami-takni or Bana. They make

for their own usage as well as for commercial purposes which are in high demand in the local market as well as outside. The quality of the cloth is fairly good. They also weave both cotton and silk textiles for which they get their inputs from the market and sell their products in to the open market.

Due to certain religious belief poultry and piggery farming are not allowed in the village, but this do not hamper the economic progress and livelihood of the villagers. Almost every household keeps cow for agriculture purposes and milk. Rice is the chief crops which the villagers cultivate for their livelihood. They also grow varieties of seasonal crops and sell those at the local market.

#### **Gender relations:**

Although women in the region appear to be enjoying a higher status compared to their counterparts in the rest of the country. Traditional and customary practices appreciate the women in so many ways. Women in the region when compared with men they often portrayed as enjoying greater freedom with respect to their mobility and the absence of certain practices such as dowry, obligatory burqas etc.

Similar to Bodo race, the Koches of the Kumali Gaon differs from other societies in the area because they follows the matrilineal system where decent is traced from mother to daughter where women play an important role in the family as well as in the society and they are highly respected. There are in fact not so much inequalities between male and female in the village.

#### **My family:**

I am a resident of Kumali Gaon. I live in a joint family where I have my father, mother, three uncles, two aunts and one younger brother. My

*(Contd to page no. 59)*

# A PAITE VILLAGE AND A PAITE FAMILY

(The Lungchin village of Manipur)

H. Kamkhenthang

Lungchin Village was established by a man belonging to the Guite royal clan from Selbung village in early part of 1940s. The village was situated in a woody forest in the Indo-Burma border area. The area of the Guite land spread on either side of the inter-national boundary areas as the boundary was made after the partition of India from Burma. Guite was a royal clan long before Paite villages had been established in Manipur and is still now a royal clan. The chief ship of the Guite had been usurped by Khanthum and his sons by taking the martial force of Falam warriors. Khanthum and the Guite chiefs maintained marital relationship with the Guite for a long time before Khanthum and his sons, with help from hired warriors caused havoc on Thadou and Zou in the Chin Hills in 1848. Guite chiefs were the wife giver and Khanthum were the wife takers. The Sukte clan group known by the name of their clan invariably as Sukte or by personal name Khanthum and even by the name of his son Kamhau etc. In Paite culture, wife taking group as Khanthum and his sons were inferior to the wife giving group, the Guite. Khanthum and his hired martial force did not attack the Guite group and their subjects. Their relationship is technically sungtu-putu in which the Guite were Pu (mother's brother) and the Sukte were Tu. While the Sukte attacked the Zou and the Kuki and chased them outside the Chin Hills area, many people died and many houses were burnt down. There was no exact estimate of the time of the incidence. However the British put the probable time to be 1848 (Cf. Bertram S Carey & H.N. Tuck, 1976).

The story of the Guite clan existed many generations back in the present Chin state of Myanmar. Majority of the Paite are still living in the Chin State and is also known nowadays as Zo or Zomi in nomenclature. The Sukte chief ruled till the end of the British rule in Burma and India.

## Establishment of New Village

One Guite man living in Selbung village in Burma led a party of members belonging to certain clans of the Paite to establish a village called Lungchin Village (India) by following traditional norms after obtaining permission from the principal Guite chief to create a new village. The time of establishment of Lungchin village would be around the time of World War II. The establishment of a new village started with certain traditional norms. A party of about seven or eight persons under one leadership goes to ascertain a forest area on the British-Indian side which was investigated for a new village site. Permission was given by the Guite chief seated at Hanship. A source of water was always required whether in the form of a perpetual fountain or pond or rivulet etc., for the sustainability of the village within the investigated land. In earlier days, availability of a water point was an important point of consideration

Let me just point out how the water supply of Tedim Township was founded by the elders of the Guite clan – a party went out to find a new village site along with a source of water to sustain it and soon thereafter discovered a good pond. The women folk back in the old village were eager to



know about the water supply for the new village. So when the party had returned home, they inquired the party whether they had found any good source of water supply to which the men folk replied that they had found a big water-body which was flowing with ripples with the breeze under the sun. The nature of the water flowing with ripples (Tedimdim) had been taken to be the name of the new found settlement as TEDIM and was taken permanently to be the name of the settlement of the chiefs of Guite and Sukte clans.

Water supply in the hills in dry season is usually very scanty. The inhabitants of Lungchin village are presently not worried anymore because the village has now regular supply of pipe water provided by the state government and thus, everybody can fetch water from a common reservoir placed at the centre of the village. Life is much easier now that the problems of scanty and distant source of water are gone.

It must be noted that the source of water point will be always closer to the village site. The location of the village site and water point is now satisfactory. The next step is to finalise the site selection. Now, let us see the next step in selecting a new site for a village. A ritual performance was to be compulsorily held. The party will bring with them the required materials like (1) one cock and one egg of a domestic fowl.

The cock brought to the site was tied with a string on the leg and tethered to a tree. The movement and behaviour of the tethered cock was observed by the priest and other members. Whether the cock was afraid of the place was to be verified. The observation is good if the cock behaves normally without any signs of fear. Whether the cock behaves normally or not is observed. The cock is not threatened by the spirits if it behaves normally. Another observation is made by cooking an egg of a domestic fowl. The egg is to be cooked over a small oven. A small fire is made to cook the egg mounted over a three-stone oven. The over burnt egg will run over of its content. The priest will watch and read the omen. Everything is taken

for granted that the spirits abound in the jungle permit human habitation there.

### **Role and Function of the village Priest (Siampu)**

It is said that it is not possible to establish a new village without village priest. The old saying is “Siampu lou a khua kisat thei lou” which means - for the smooth establishment and running of a village three things are absolutely important. They are i) the village chief, ii) the village priest and iii) the village crier who give information to the village people by shouting the important official pieces of information. The three sets of village top officials are (1) the village chief, (ii). The village priest and (iii). The village Crier are important and inevitable criteria of the village. The importance of the village chief of the past can be comparable with the present role of medical men of today. The traditional village chief, the priest and village crier are obsolete now. The role of the traditional priest is to look after the health of the village people, officiates community worships. He is ritual expert and knows how to deal with the spirits.

Anyhow I am putting the details in present form with a view to make them easily understandable. Much of the role played by mother's brother to the children of his sister are more or less similar to the roles of the priest. A person who likes to be a priest spends time and money. Magical formulae written or verbally communicated cannot be given to someone free of cost. One man who was in the Indian army in the prime period of his youth from Tedim visited his clansmen in Manipur. He visited me in my house. He had shown two type printed books on magical formulae. I asked him to give the two books to me at the rate of Rs1000.00 per book. He did not like to part with it. ‘If I part with it, you will publish the books and many people will read it. Then the efficacies of the magical formulae will be lost’, he said.

The village priest looks after the sick people of the village. Every man can call or visit and consult the priest. In some cases he prescribes an exorcism

rite for offering a cock, black or white, a hen, black, white or red; and so on. He will try to find out as to which kind of evil spirits is responsible and which types of exorcisms would be needed.

Since the village priest is appointed by the village chief, the priest taxes every household annually and they pay annual fee of paddy called *siam-an* of a certain quantity. He can exempt widows and poor families. As such the position of village priest is said in a terse manner as ‘*Siampu sialkong hong lou om kei*’, which means that there is no priest who does not open his *sialkong*.

### **Migration from one village to another village**

The question of migration of a family from one village to another has multiple issues of consideration. A family from Lungchin village can migrate to a non-Paite village as well as a Paite village. A Paite migrant in a new village requires recognition of his own new *inndongta* in a new village. Whether he can get correct persons in a new village belonging to the prescribed members of definite kin group in a Paite and a non Paite village is that matters. The Paite of Manipur and their own tribesmen in Tedim of the Chin State now call themselves *Zo* or *Zomi* have the most elaborate form of *inndongta* while the families in Mizo, Kuki (Thadou) and the Pawis of southern Chin of Chin State have what the Paite call *Inndongta* (Household Council) in a very vestigial form.

A team of migrants consisting of persons who could be members of same *inndongta* could usually migrate together in a group. They could migrate to the village of other tribes in a body. But their *inndongta* will not be as important as it should be if correct persons in line of kinship are not included.

Previously any willing family could not migrate to a Paite village. The chief also did not easily allow a family of his subjects to migrate to other village. Earlier a village chief collected a basket full of annual paddy and one scapular part of animal killed by his subject in his land. The village chief wanted

a new migrant because he will be gaining in his annual collection. But the village chief of the outgoing migrant may not allow him to migrate out because he will lose part of his income. The chief got a fee of one basketful of an annual tax of paddy and one scapular part of animal killed by his subject in the village land. This payment to the village chief is called *Buhsun-Saliang*. A village chief may welcome a new migrant from other village and he may not easily permit a family to migrate out from his village. Formerly the village chief had the power of blocking the properties of recalcitrant person of his village that was called *innkhak-loukhak*. Such a person took recourse to leave the village in the dark and carried what they could take along with them.

### **The Eldest Brother**

A number of households form a union called *inndongta* which may be called household council. All the households of Lungchin married brothers and married sisters, as in other Paite villages are joined by invisible links of kinship ties. One household may have a nuclear family or a joint family or both. The Paite are primogeniture in heritage and the eldest son inherits the parental properties. He and his wife and children are to look after the old parents. His younger brother(s) after having one or two children leaves the parental home and form a nuclear family. Whenever the eldest son with his family is separating from the parental family, it is looked with askance by the society. In such a case, it is assumed that there are some points of discord in the family. Nowadays, separation of the family of the eldest son from his parents is no longer looked with suspicion if he is in a government service working in another place. The eldest married brother can leave his wife and children at home under the care of his parents for some time. In such cases, his younger brother looks after the parents physically and financially and in unison with his elder brother. Superiority of the eldest married brother remains as a wise saying stating that “*khuk in kha khellou*” meaning that

the knees never remain at higher level than the chin. The elder brother helps and advises the younger ones. He can be thallouh in the household councils of all the younger married brothers. The younger brothers will send the heads of wild animals they kill to him

There is no choice but to settle at the bottom of the village for a new comer as the villagers do not allow them to do otherwise. Normally, a member of a family living at the bottom may unfortunately die. People used to migrate from one village to another. Formerly the chief of a village may not allow his subject (khua-leh-tui) to migrate to another village. The chief of the village may not like a man to migrate to his village. There are certain pertinent considerations for an intending migrant to be accepted.

Whenever a new migrant child dies, it is regarded as filling the gap while saving the other; this is called Pemta awnghu meaning the death of the child of a new migrant is taking place on behalf of someone of the village. Mother's brother is a respected person for the children of his sisters. The children of his sister are as close as to their mother's brother as if they were really born of the female cow mithun mother of their father's sister. There is much about the norms of behaviour and ritual practices between mother's brother and the children of his sisters. There are certain rules and behaviour in the relation of a man with the children of his sisters. There are relation of respect, obligation and avoidance by the sister's children. The behaviour and ritual relations of a man with his sister's children is started at birth and ends at the burial of his sister's son in the grave. The end is even said "Pu lou a haan kitang theilou!" This purports to say that a man cannot get the burial of his dead body without his sister's brother. It is his mother's brother who will lay his corpse in the grave. Actually, the ritual relation of a man with his sister's children starts on the occasion of birth ceremony. On the occasion of the birth ceremony of his sister's children, the mother's brother is to provide rice-beer. The ritual beer is called Tuilak zu.

### **Cordial Relation of Lungchin with Neighbours**

Lungchin village people had a very good social relation with the people of Zou village in which a teacher of a church belonging to Lungchin was posted. Lungchin also had friendly relations with the people of other Zou villages.

Social leaders of Lungchin often challenged the people of other villages to fight in duels. The date, time, and place for exhibition duels in a Paite village was intimated to the Zou group. Teams were formed to fight in duels. The appointed venue was a Paite village of Suangdoh. No information was given to the people of Suangdoh in this regard. Besides the fighters, a good deal of people from the village of the Zou also came to see the match. After waiting for some time the Zou group could realise that it was only a joke of the Lungchin people for entertainment.

Tuilak zu is a rice beer provided by the mother's brother to be drunk by the child's mother in order to enhance her breast milk for the child. Tuilak zu consists of two cocks given by the mother's brother to make a ritual for the participants with the Siampu (the ritual expert). Mother's brother occupied privileged social position in the family of his sister's household. He is a respected person because of his ritual position. It was the mother's brother who prevented the souls of his sister's young children from leaving their bodies by offering rites of a kind of exorcism. He would utilize his magical incantation to detain the souls of his sister's young children. He would put bundle of white down-feathers in the neck of the children of his sister. He tied a bundle of down feathers to the neck of his sister's children symbolically with blessing for good health and all the blessings without any prejudice. This offering is called pu-zu kholh offering of rice beer to mother's brother. Offering of beer to the mother's brother could be done as frequent as possible. Cultivation of millet has been done in the primordial period for the staple food. Beer made from millet was offered to the mother's brother and a saying "Pute leh gitta in

chiam masa pen” became a saying.

Pu (mother’s brother) was both good and bad for his sister’s children. He could curse as well as bestow blessings to them. Pu possessed a supernatural entity called power (puk) by which he could curse and bless his sister’s children. There had been structural positions of house orientation and jhums position of mother’s brother and that of the sister’s sons. The families of his sister’s children cannot live in front of the house as well as below the level of his own house for fear of his supernatural entity called Puk. Similarly the children of his sister could not have their jhum site below or in front of the jhum of his mother’s brother’s jhum. Rain water flowing from a higher level where the mother’s brother’s house stands to the lower level on the jhum site or homestead which supposed to have bad magical effects on the sister’s son’s family.

### **Houses and the Homes**

By 1970s all the houses in Lungchin used to be roofed with thatch grass. Recollecting my memories, I still remember the appearance of the roofs of the village after rain; their look was rather dark, emitting smoke of cooking food for the evening meals. The real traditional house styles are no longer in practice today because there were many changes in the culture.

Simple individual fencings of houses in Lungchin were made with simple materials of bamboo and wood which prevents domestic animals from trespassing the home sites. The domestic animals are accommodated within the house fencing except the mithun but, they tethered cows underneath the pile dwelling floor. The cows are not herded for grazing but instead they were let loose to feed and graze for themselves in the open area. The houses of the chiefs were constructed with the help of the villagers with teak tree in the past. The traditional houses with wooden fencing provided safety to all the animals and the members of the family. Big dormitory building was constructed in the centre of the village for boys in the past. Only after the advent of

Christianity. A person having a big house might volunteer part of his house or a room for sleeping as a dormitory for some boys; a place for sleeping at night. A makeshift dormitory was unsuitable for performing its natural functions for social, cultural and educational development. Discontinuation of dormitory system brought many other changes. It was a centre for learning that inculcated the youth the traditional way of life. The younger members learnt obedience and respect to their elders in the village.

The shape of the village has no special importance. The villagers are known as Khua-leh-tui, literally meaning village and water and they are the citizens of the village. Lungchin village is situated in between Suangdoh, a new sub divisional office within Churachandpur district which is the southern most district of Manipur bordering with the north-west site of the Chin state of Burma. Next to Lungchin is the last Ngalzang village on international boundary.

The houses of Lungchin village in 1970s were made of wood, bamboos thatching grasses collected from the village land. The village chief permitted only families who were willing to construct a house to collect house making materials within the jurisdiction of the village free of cost. There is a reserve area of forest around the village where it was not permitted for anybody to cut the trees so as to prevent the forest area from desiccation for fear of wild fires that could spread to the village. House building materials were all collected within the village land.

It is not necessary that all the houses should face the same direction on the slope of the ground. The family of the household was not allowed to change the original orientation of their house. The front side of a house once facing any cardinal direction cannot be changed to face any other direction. The restriction is spoken of as “Inn ngawng hek phallouh”. It means it is not permitted to change the orientation of the house to face the original back side. The front side of a house is used for entry and exit and it is more important than the

back side. The least usefulness of the back door is compared with the least usefulness of a woman's mother's brother as he is a distant relative. The front side of a house needs more sunshine. The front side beyond the roof line has unroofed platform used for various purposes like basking in the sun, exposing of wet clothes to the sun for drying, etc.

The house of a person is his/her home which shelters them from all dangers thereof, if a man intrudes into the house of the other person to attack the inmate(s), it is a big crime punishable with a fine of one mithun. The comfort of safety provided by a house is spoken of as *innlum* meaning warmth of a house pervading with the milk of human kindness. There is a saying in regard to the security of a house compared to a person who inserts his hand or fingers into the hole of a crab and gets bitten by the crab in self defence. The saying goes like this "Ai kua I sawk taak in ai in hon kei na ke!" It translates that you are sure to be bitten by a crab if you put your hand into the hole of a crab. It is sure that the person(s) will resist you and attack you if you intrude into his/her/their house in self protection. A house is made of wood, bamboo and the thatching grass while the home is made of love of the inmates. Persons living in one house form one household meaning persons living in the hall of the house. One household may be a nuclear or joint family. One household is one unit. Persons living in one house are basically one family. An *inndongta* organization called Household Council is formed by the combination of several households of married brothers and married sisters along with households of mother's brother's household besides a household of a non-clan male member, and a male member of any clan who is a confidant friend.

### Parts of the House

A traditional house is no longer seen nowadays. It is likely to be seen in the real Chin (Zomi) State of Myanmar now. Houses nowadays have some parts of a traditional house. A real traditional house was enclosed within a fort like wooden palisades

all around. The main wooden entrance gate is called *sial kong* meaning door or gate of mithun in the front side of the house at the corner of the fencing there is a stone pillar called *tang suang* meaning public stone (cf. No.1) inside the wooden fence within the compound or court yard is pillar(s) called *song* (cf. No.2). There will be several wooden forked trees depending on the number of dangerous wild animals and mithuns killed by the father of the household. A barn (cf. No.4) for storing paddy (cf. No.5) is an unroofed one having a low veranda for entrance into the house (cf. No.6) the elevated and higher veranda is also unroofed. Bamboo poles are put in four sides for the purpose of spreading cloth and protection of the sides. It usually provided seating area on feasting days. See the horizontal bamboo poles for drying wet cloth in the sun. (cf. No.7) is a mortar for husking paddy. This area is very important. The under surface of the roof (*biching*) just specifically interior to the position of the mortar is very important from the points of view of the worship of the old goddess of the household in earlier days. *Sumtawng* part (cf. No.8) was used as a boys dormitory by providing a platform for the boys to sleep at night. *Hulliap innka* (Roofed veranda) (9) is a joint roofed portion that gives more spaces to *innka niam* (5), *innka sang* (6), *hulliap innka* (9) on ritual days of feasting. Hole at No.11 was used to feed pigs placed underneath the floor by pouring pig's food into a wooden trough. It was also through this hole a child who died young was made to pass through this hole. Longitudinal extension of the side-wall to make a space is called *sawnkhiak* (15) which was for sitting etc.

### Parental Seats

The area around the fire place is very important. On either side of a hearth there's a parental bed on one side of the hearth and for the outer side of the fire place is the sleeping bed of the married son with his wife. Interior to the fire place, there is parental bed for the parents. A seat of honour of the father of the household is the interior side on the fireplace, that place between the fire and the

parental bed is the seat of the father and head of family. A visitor never sits on the parental seat on the fire-side. The bed sanctified is the parental bed placed at the inner side of the fire place. No one is to climb on the parental bed. He or she is to be fined as he or she climbs on the parental bed. At the same time the eldest married son has his bed placed at the external side of the fire place. The fire place on this side is the seat of the eldest married son and his wife. This reflects the position of the parents and that of the son and the wife.

Visitors can sit in front of the fire on the hearth. Children are supposed to sit behind the fire near the back wall. Sometimes the children are asked to play outside by saying that children and winter are friends. So children used to go and play outside. The daughters of the household would normally look after the fire. It is said that a single piece of firewood cannot burn and thus the daughters would add more pieces of firewood to the fire making the whole inside of the house warm for comfort. Single firewood cannot burn well and hence more firewood is added to burn. It further means to say that a man or a woman cannot live alone and they also need a partner is the direct inkling.

Over the fire, there are hanging structures for drying meat, paddy and others over the fire. There are also the second and the third structures for keeping household articles above the fire place. Next to the parental bed there is a portion of wall called in normal language *banglai* simply meaning middle wall. It is *sunden* in technical term. This *sunden* wall was important on ritual occasion of death of a member of the family. The corpse of the dead was made to sit formerly on a bamboo structure called *laang*, leaning the back against the wall so that the corpse did not move or fall. In this connection, a strong word of keeping a promise unbreakable came into being. Bamboo structure for keeping the dead body was made to sit on this structure with the face facing the front side of the house. The nape of the head was tied to the *banglai* or *sunden* wall so that the corpse

remained firm when it was taken out to dance in honour of the dead.

Next to the middle wall (*sunden*) is a space which was often used for storing paddy unless a separate barn was made outside the house. The middle half had a transverse wall which was supported by one of the central king posts. Various articles used to be hung on this king post. Next to this area there was a transverse long wall having a door in the middle for entry into this last room. This room was small but it was as long as the breadth of the house. There was a hole on the upside portion of the floor above the ground. This room was a latrine for the members of the family. The ground underneath had been kept wet all throughout the year. Keeping the ground under this wetted room related with the continued living existence of the family and the household.

Inside the house, above the down slope of the ground there are places (14) for keeping water for daily use, *sawnkhiak* an extended side-floor (15), window for light and air, space (29) bed for sleeping of unmarried daughters. This sleeping place of the unmarried daughter is on the left side of the house. This indicates that the unmarried girls are not permanent members of the family but are to leave the house on marriage.

The central space between the fire-place and water point of the house is more or less spacious for family gathering at meal time. It provided a good space on occasions of family ritual gathering of worship of ancestors, household deity which was the old wizard, the spiritual grandmother of *Thanghou* and his brother *Liandou*.

*Paité* house is a centre of peace and life for those who are wrong doers to this family seeking forgiveness from the household he had harmed. This process is expressed in a form of wise saying like this “*Gul lut si, mihing lut dam*”. A snake that enters the house is normally killed while a man who enters the house for asking for pardon is spared with consideration. .

A newly married girl is a bride called *mou*. As a

bride (mou) she has no real position in the family. She is in transition position As a mou she has no position except as a new recruit. She cannot be a mou all the time in her new house. Paite women marrying in the house of some cognate tribes are not bound to be addressed as “ka mou” or “mou” even by her younger sister-in-law. A newly married girl of the Paite is a mou for identification; as such mou is a term of reference and not a term of address. In a Paite family a newly married girl is not addressed or called as mou. In order that a newly married girl in a Paite family can be sooner and well integrated in the family she is not addressed as mou. As such so that makes her early adjustment of her position as a member of a family.

In the year 1970s the non-Christian population of the village was at the verge of extinction in Lungchin village and Christian members were on the increase. Way of life between the non-Christians and Christians grew into conflicts. Any function of a family was accompanied either with the drinking of rice-beer which was contributed by the members of inndongta.

A traditional and non-Christian family did not accept a Christian person or family to be member of his inndongta. In every meeting of inndongta it was the norm for the members of inndongta to contribute a pot of rice beer each. Christian members were not accepted by the non-Christians as they cannot contribute rice beer. As such in Lungchin village non-Christian families reshuffled members of their inndongta for the sooth function of inndongta and for smooth running of family.

### **A Village Scene**

A village scene is common with other surrounding villages and typical signs of human activities and movement of some of domestic animals. In the early mornings, crowing of the cocks was taken as a sign of good health of the village people. At early dawn the women folk pounded their paddy. The sound of pounding the paddy could be heard to a certain distance in the surrounding areas. It is a lively sound of human

activities. Pounding of paddy was a feminine work. There is one obsolete common saying which is no longer in use. This proverb or saying is “numei khualzin suktum toh khualzin”. The meaning of this saying is that a woman travelling used to travel with her wooden pestle for pounding paddy. Here, the implication is that girls are more helpful to persons who are in need of help and that they continue in helping the family of the host by helping the host family in husking paddy and serving the family at meal time husking paddy and in serving the family mealtime. But nowadays, almost every village has a rice mill and thus, the function of husking paddy is being done by the small rice mills and this wise saying became obsolete. A family meal time is not a visiting time. A person coming to the family at mealtime used to retreat back by saying audibly, “Oh it is a period or time of ugliness” and the visitor returns. Mealtime is a time in which all the members are present. It is a time for the parents to instruct or to say some important thing to the children. It is time to scold who deserves; It is also an important time to announce division of works for members of the family for the day. It is an odd time for a visitor.

The village scene of the past before the people adopted Christianity was greatly different and drinking bouts were common occurrences. Occasion of killing wild animals was one common occasion of drinking bouts. Persons who were related in kinship and their families or households were affiliated to one another in household organisation and as such they use to bring their rice-beer in beer pots to celebrate the birth of a child, name giving occasion, marriage within the group, burial of the dead and so on were the main occasion for drinking, dancing and feasting. The occasion of death and the dead ceremonies were big occasions for mortuary feasts. Certain relatives in the inndongta are required to provide animals for the mortuary feast, The thalouh must provide a pig as the liver of the pig given by the thalouh makes a link of the spirit of the dead with the ancestral manes spiritual babd iftheual

Different relatives such as mother's brother of the dead, sisters and brother of the dead were required certain specific domestic animals to be given for the mortuary feasts. The ritual part of the mortuary feast was concerned to make certain specific part of the killed animal given to the dead so that it could be brought to the spirits of the ancestors in the land of the dead. As for example, slices of the liver of a pig given or contributed by the brother of the dead to the dead made the union of the soul spirits of the dead.

### **In the past men could see Evil spirits with naked eyes**

In olden days men could see evil spirits with their naked eyes but the evil spirits could not see the human beings. Human beings could easily kill the evil spirits. They killed a lot of them. Their population was in the verge of extinction. Only one pregnant woman survived. She went to the God and complained about it and God took pity on her. She asked God to help and protect her species. God asked her to have a big bag of ashes. She should take her position over the door. Whenever a man comes to the door she would make a noise and the man will look up at the door. At that moment she should throw the ashes into his eyes. The white particle of the ashes made the eyeball of man white and lost the capacity of seeing the evil spirits. Then the evil spirit tortured human beings in various ways. The wicked spirits demanded appeasement in the form of animal blood.

Traditionally, the Paite believed in the evil spirits. There seemed to be wicked spirits or other spirits that troubled mankind. Those spirits were abound in the woods, precipices, water and jungle. They believed that human beings could be annihilated by the unsee-ables but the visibles did not play havoc on humans. This is the reason why most people feared the invisible evil spirits who dwelt in the precipices, high mountains, near sources of water and so on. The vast forest area was thought to be teeming with evil spirits. Man used the volume of his voice while working in the jungle as well as

his way of living to avoid being detected by the evil spirits. Illness and suffering of humans were thought to be caused by the invisible spirits and they even believed that these invisibles could annihilate them

### **Evil Spirits in the HAUSAPI PRECIPICE and Community Worship**

At the intersection of the northern portion of the Chin State and the southern intersection of the state of Manipur, there is a famous Hausapi Kawl (precipices of the great chief spirit). An old male spirit had several seats in the area around the precipices. There are also several villages in the midst of the precipices and the precipices were known far and wide and many people all around had heard of the many stories of it. The old spirit was most famous for having his seats on all sides of the precipices where Manipur was situated on the northern side, Chin State on the eastern side and Mizoram on the western side. In some villages, goat were offered to please the spirits. The animal which was offered was to be healthy and fat and without any physical defects.

### **Community Worship**

The village chief of Lungchin had a stone slab as a seat of one of the deities found in Hausapi Kawl. Other villages that could see Hausapi Kawl (precipice) paid reverence to any gods there. The chief of Lungchin village at one time in around 1973 had a stone slab on which the blood of pig was offered. This was an annual community worship arranged by the village chief through an exorcist called Siampu. In the annual worship, the spirits of the Hausapi Kawl was invoked for asking good health, success in hunting, shifting cultivation as well as spiritual blessing for everybody. The village chief ensured that every household would make one mud figurine each of mithun per family would also embed in the figurines grains of paddy equal to the number of their family members. One mud figurine of mithun would represent one family. Each of the family members would bring their clay figurines and deposit them on the stone shrine near the house of the village chief. The village chief



and the priest would then officiate the ritual followed by sacrifice of a pig on the stone slab of the shrine on behalf of the people of the village and the blood would be anointed to the stone. This too, was village community worship. That day was sacred with restriction called Zehsah or tabu. and on that day, no one from the village could leave their village or go out of their village and no outsider (including the insider who could not come home earlier) could enter the village. Green leaf branches of a tree was put at the entrances of the village to warn that the village was under tabu and no one could enter the village. Any entry into the village nullified the effect of the magical formula. A fine would be imposed on the defaulter and the rite repeated

### **Khodou Thanks Giving and Expulsion of Evilspirits**

The traditional exorcist (siampu) has been abandoned now but there is yet another means of invoking evil spirits that is on the annual celebration of harvest festival called Khuadou/Khodou which is a thanksgiving day. Here, 'Khua' literally means village and by extension, khua is something like a village which is capable of a feeling and having a spirit that can feel something. In Khodou festival, the blessings given by the spiritual powers have been acknowledged and reciprocated in sumptuous feast and drinking bout at the end of agriculture year. Khuadou or khodou is a annual harvest festival performed after harvest. The literary meaning of khodou means to give and to reciprocate the magnanimous kindness of good deeds done by some one. Let me make it a little more clear in this way. A traveller has a good host. The host gave good food, good drink and comfort as long as the traveller stayed in his home. The traveller is grateful to his host. A good thing people get from God or from the spiritual entities, the blessings of material properties, good health and all blessings are being reciprocated and offered back to the spirits in khodou festival. For this sumptuous feasts and heavy drinking bouts are organized for all the people in the village. Divination to see whether

the next year will be good or bad. They like a positive reading. For this the youth group collected a bee hive from the jungle. They all like a positive reading of omen. The priest in spiritual communications to the spiritual world cuts opened the bee hive and sees young ones of the bee full of the bee hive. The next year will be good. People will be healthy. Hunters will get more quarries as there were many young bees in the hive. They can even repeat reading of omens by opening another colony of hornet. Many days continue feasting, drinking and dancing zangtalaam dance and others dances in accompaniment with gongs, drums and beating of the horns of bull mithuns.

The last day comes. People did not like the evil spirits to stay even a night in their village. Every body equipped with sticks and other materials as they could hold in their hands shouted at the top of their voices. They pushed their sticks to all the nooks and corners of the houses. They asked the devils to leave their homes and village they shouted."You greedy ones, go away. Leave us alone. You had drained the blood of our animals. You make us poor and poorer. You killed all our animals". In this way they chased away the evil spirits.

### **Co-operative Way of Constructing A house In Lungchin village**

Construction of a house is a difficult task for a single family. A family will take long time to construct a house. In Lungchin village, the Inndongta members of a household or a family understand very well the need and difficulties to construct a house. If a single family without the help of the members of its own councils of household will take time to construct a house. In Paite society, there is none who is without a home in his/her village for shelter of its family. In order to complete the construction of a house in an easier and quicker manner there is a particular system of labour among members of Inndongta in the course of work. In Lungchin village, three male members of thusa e.g. thusapi, thallouh thusa and thallouhmang do not climb up to the roof for

thatching or demolishing the roofs. They have to direct the workers on the roof from the ground. One thusa member takes his position on the down slope side of the ground below the homestead and the second thusa on the upslope side of the ground above the homestead. The third one is in and out of the house to see what the workers need. The proficiency of group-work depends upon members of the Inndongta. The work is progressive if members of Inndongta can lead other members efficiently. The three members of thusa are to take away bundles of thatch removed from the roof when the roof is being dismantled. They have to keep the removed building materials in order. At the same time of thatching the roof, they are to send bundles of thatch and slips of bamboo to the roof from the ground. No members of the worker ventures to fetch them adequately and on time. They just remain waiting for more roofing materials. The thallouh is there in equal footing with the father of the household looking and supervising the work as a whole. He looks and helps makers of the bamboo wall. Of the members of the tanu, the female ones fetch water, cook rice while the male members of the tanu are engaged in cooking. After meals in the middle of the day, the members of tanu join the workers. After the elementary works, the female and the male members of the tanu are also engaged in cleaning the inside of the new house. They also help the members of the household in refilling the fireplace with earth and ram it hard.

### **MARRIAGE**

The marriage system of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo group of tribes in common is agamous. It is neither endogamous nor exogamous. It is rather agamous. At one time in the past as a whole, a marriage of a boy with the daughter his mother's brother was an accepted norm and an ideal marriage. It appears that presently there is no marriage of a girl with her mother's brother's son in Lungchin village is observed. This is marriage by exchange and all forms of marriage by exchanges are prohibited.

The age old prescribed marriage for a boy was

marriage with the daughter of his mother's brother's daughter. Marriage market is widened and this form of marriage was prescribed and ideal one. It appears that there is no marriage of a boy with his mother's brother's daughter now in Lungchin village and rare elsewhere. Any form of marriage that amounts to marriage by exchange of woman are not permitted.

### **Breach of Prohibited Marriage and Super Natural Visitation**

The punishment of the breach of prohibited marriage is severe. Visitation of evil spirit in the form of illness is serious. It is said in a traditional saying that a man has more heads of chicken if married to his father's sister's daughter. He was to have more heads of domestic hen means that the breach of the restriction will bring more ill lucks, illness and more domestic fowls. This is an ironical speech. More and more domestic fowls will be required for offering to the evil spirits to cure the illness of the women who married her mother's brother's son. By marrying her mother's brother's son she will be sickly and more and more fowls will be required to be offered to the evil spirits to cure her illness. To have more domestic fowls in exorcism rite for appeasing evil spirits is the supposed consequence of the mismatch. Irregular marriages such as marriages by elopement are to be regularized by the household councils of the wife's father and that of the household council (inndongta) (Cf. Kamkhenthang 1988;15) of the boy. Ways of Paite life cannot be understood without the implication of the household council called, inndongta. A brief explanation of inndongta can help one to understand Paite way of life. Inndongta is a cooperate household union of married brother, sister and households of other relatives from father and mother sides. In marriage by exchanging the bridal baskets of meat that accompanied the bride was replaced by substitution when the wife giving group happens to be wife taking group, the bridal basket was given back to the original wife taker. It is because of this marriage by exchange is also known as marriage by exchange of baskets.

Everybody in the village is for everybody. People help one another. Persons belonging to the same clan are nearer to each other. Male persons belonging to one's mother's clan are one's potential member of the household council. Link of clanship is most enduring in cementing their kin relationship. Person marrying the same clan sisters or the sisters of the same clan are also had a feeling of closeness in their relationship and in mind also. Two male friends who contracted friendship became something like real friends called *zawl*. They are confidants. Two bull mithuns supposed to have their wives who are children of the same father and mother have more affection to each other and they even lick each other while they were drinking salty water in a cow lick pond. This is in Paite Sial nuphal zong sihkuang ah kiliak . The purpose of this saying seems to preach love and affection to the human society. Everybody is expected to condole the death of a villager. Death of a fellow villager is the common concern of all the villagers. Death of villager was announced by the sound of a gong. When a man breathed his last the immediate neighbours come to know first because of the cries of a member of the family. Now a days every village has a knell in a church to announce the death of a member in the village. There is mutual help at different levels. Households married sisters, brother and non-clan local cognate and cognate groups in what is called *inndongta* which is in reality Household Council. *Inndongta* or Household Council is the main fulcrum of all the activities of the people in a village. Individual members are the husband and the wife of a household for a certain office. But the whole household are included in the particular offer. A married woman is appointed as the first *tanu* known as *Tanupi* (main female *tanu*) and her husband is the male *tanupi*. Most Every office is manned by a man and his wife in *inndongta*. The the wife being the female *tanupi* as her husband is a male *tanupi*. Every household had *inndongta* instituted in Lungchin village since the establishment of the village. Every family or household renders help to other household, in the house of which this household is holding many

membership or offices had given *inndongta*/ household council somewhere. Households of certain clans of married persons of any clan can form a household council in total absence of their clansmen in the *inndongta*. But there is no person in this village without having a member of his or her own clan. A household without member of his clan, mother or father's clan can form his *inndongta* out of any available clan members in his village.

Traditionally the main mourners of the dead are the members of *inndongta* of the dead. Member households having membership of certain position contributed a pot of rice beer. The close relative holding an office in the households of the dead needs to contribute animals for mortuary feast earlier before Christianity was accepted. Most of the earlier ritual practices of the dead were extinct now. Earlier grave digging was done by male members of the *inndongta* of the dead. Grave digging was lightened now as the onus was taken by the Young Paite Association (YPA) in all Paite villages. Members of YPA used to keep awake over the corps of the dead if it was not buried on the day of death. Individual member of the village and a person who was sitting with table to receive the condolence money. Members of YPA continue visiting the house of the dead for the next two evenings in condolence for a short while. In cases of natural happening of accidents such as loss of one in the jungle, in the river, etc. Voluntary works had been accelerated. Traditional community services done at *inndongta* level had been done at full community level as practiced by the Young Mizo Association (YMA). There was a lone elderly man in the village. He was laborious man and working hard in his *jhun*. He could not visit the dead in the village because he liked to work more in the field. But he used to offer a small pot of rice beer to the family of the dead and he went to his *jhun* field to work without joining condolence in the village. At last he also died. Every household sent a small pot of rice-beer and they also went to other respective field as the man did while he was

alive. Thus there is no one to condole his death and to mourn over his death.

### **Clan Song**

The Paite are divided into two patriarchal clans. Each clan has at least two sacred clan songs. These songs are normally sung during mourning and at wake. They are sacred songs and they cannot be sung at random at any time and place. They cannot be mentioned in vain. They were not permitted to be mentioned and sung in the home or jhum field. These clan songs are called Lapi meaning principal song. They are sacred songs. The sacred songs are 1) Si Khakna La meaning Farewell song to the dead and the second song (2) Tanu Khakna La meaning farewell song to the married dead daughter. Sikhakna La is a song for bidding farewell to the departed male members of the clan and sacred songs for bidding farewell to the departed souls of unmarried female members of the clan.

The two types of clan songs are the means of sending the spirits of the dead to join the spirits of the dead ancestors in the land of the dead ancestors. A person knows only his own clan song. Every person must know his own clan songs so that he could establish his own identity without fail. Since clan songs are sacred songs it was not the business of any person to know the sacred songs of other clans. One's sacred songs are needed to be memorized. It appeared that every soul in the land of the dead could help the new comers in locating the places of other souls if he or she can narrate his/her clan song. The identities of a new comer will be established when he narrated or sung his song to other souls. Other people identified the new comer by his clan song that he belonged to such and such group and directed him to go to such and such place where members of his clan are occupying.

### **TANU KHAKNA LA (A farewell song to a dead married daughter)**

A married daughter is accorded Tanu khakna la by her parents. Her husband bid farewell to his wife by singing song of their clan as this woman

had disaffiliated spiritually from the group of her father's clan. As she physically and spiritually belong to her husband's group as she had already absorbed in the clan of her husband after her spirit had been transferred wherever the stages of her marriage might have completed after she had shed blood in marriage. This is called wading through blood (called sisan pal). And physically and spiritually transferred to the group of her husband. Then the husband's group have the right to bury her body when she dies. That is why her husband's group bid her corpse with the farewell song of the husband's clan. At the same time her parents bid her farewell by singing the farewell song of their clan'. Her father had two types of farewell songs: one is for bidding farewell to any of the clansmen and another is a farewell song of married clan woman. These sacred songs were prohibited to sing, under normal circumstances inside the house, in the jhum field. It was permitted to sing the sacred songs on the occasion of death of man of the concerned group of people. It could be permissible to sing those sacred songs on occasion of ancestral worship like feast of merit, death ritual in which Kosah feast called Mortuary feast was accorded to the dead parent/persons.

These sacred songs have become obsolete and the associated rites and rituals were also automatically defunct. For example Pu, who is mother's brother of a man was no longer lay the corpse of his sister's son in the grave. On the occasion of the death of mother's brother's son, the usual payment of what its called Gunman or Lukhong is paid to his mother's brother. Earlier he was given some simple articles like strike-alight, spear head were given as if it were that the mother's brother laid the corpse of his sister in the grave so as to fulfil the saying that runs like this Pu Lou a Han Kitang Theilou: One cannot get in the grave without mother's brother. Incomplete with of all this, mother's brother continues to get a presentation not in a traditional form but in a more costly form of blanket. A payment to mother's bother is interpreted as memory of the boy by his

mother's brother. The day after burial is Handalni, a day for making a simple enclosure as to mark tomb by making enclosure with bamboo piece. The church members of the dead used to visit the family of the dead for making real consolation.

Traditional system of burial of the dead had been given up in Lungchin in as far as back as in 1970s. There is a remnant of such burial done by the elder non-Christians members. As their member was very less, they could not perform it in full as they liked. Three or four elderly persons under the leadership of Phungnok, the priest who used to play the role of village priest formed union of priests called Siampi to help burial of elderly non-Christian persons in a traditional way. What

Phungnok and his few friends made was a bamboo structure for carrying the corpse of elderly traditionalist in 1972. This bamboo structures was called Laang. This laang was generally to be kept on the outer side of the middle wall of the house of the dead. The dead was made to sit on the laang facing towards the front side of the house. The head was tried and fixed to the middle wall of the house. The corpse was tied to the laang in sitting position. The dead was to be carried by members of Siampi to the grave. This laang was suitable for what it was called Silap, teasing and toasting the corpse of the dead. This was the last time in which the old tradition could make its appearance in Siampi. □



*(contd. from page no. 45)*

## **My village and my family** **(A Koch village in Garo Hills)**

father has a small stationery shop at home and one of my uncle is into handloom business. He sells the clothes in the local market. Also both my aunts are primary teachers, they teach students in the schools. One of my elder uncle lives in Tura with his family. He had retired from his job recently from District Agriculture office but again he joined in the District Horticulture department, Tura. During auspicious occasions like Dushera,

Diwali our villagers come to village and spend their leisure time with us. My younger uncle is a musician and can play number of musical instruments. He composes Koch modern songs too. My youngest brother is a journalist. He mostly collect news from the South Garo Hills district, Meghalaya and send it to the news channel North East Live. We stay together and live very happily in peace and harmony. □



# My Village and my Janmabhumi

## (A Rongmei village of Manipur)

Lungjengkwan Kameih

### Introduction

This paper is a humble attempt to highlight a brief account of Rongdai usually called Bolongdai village, located at Luangba (Nungba Head quarter) Tamenglong, Noney District, Manipur, India. The paper is organized in three sections with a view to present the conclusions in a systematic manner..

**Section –I:** Describes name and foundation of the village, location and boundary, Flora and fauna, the people and their physical structure, some great personalities of the village.

**Section –II:** Present the economic life of the people, such as main occupation, important crop grown, employment in the formal sector, educational statistics and infrastructures.

**Section-III:** Examines the village administrative system, feasts and festivals, dances and dresses, Hills and rivers, Advent of Christianity.

The data for this write-up were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered through interviews of knowledgeable adults of the village. The secondary data were from published and unpublished authentic documents.

### SECTION –I

#### Name & Foundation of the Village

Rongdai (Bolongdai) is more than a century old village. It is a Rongmei village, according to the oral source of information handed down from generation to generation stressed that Rongdai village was founded in around 1550 A.D. by none

other than the sons of Khanguang Gangmei of Bwanruangh village. The said sons once migrated to Namthan and Changdai villages and then they decided to found a new village where they could live and settle together. Accordingly, they came together from Namthan and Changdai villages and founded “Rongdai/Bolongdai village”. They were originally from Bwanruangh village (one of the oldest and legendary village in Rongmei history). They founded the village with a dream and aspiration to make it bigger and more prosperous than their parents village “Bwanruangh”. There is no doubt that the village had witnessed, generation of prosperity and strength. They lived a rich socio-cultural life, economically a self-sufficient and contented life. The people are industrious. Socially, they are free and frank and well behaved people. The village, in course of its existence, has stood the test of time and trial, and today it has become one of the fast up-coming hilly village of the state of Manipur.

As far as the name of the village is concerned “Bolongdai” is corrupted name given by outsiders. The name “Rongdai” has a background meaning of its own and literally “Rong” means “South” and “Dai” means “Big” and clubbed together we get “Rongdai” which means “Big Village in the south”.

#### Location and Boundary of the Village:

Geographically, the total land area of the village is about 21 sq. kms. It lies roughly between latitude 24<sup>0</sup>45N-24<sup>0</sup>71N and the longitude 93<sup>0</sup> 25'E-93<sup>1</sup>60'E. It has an altitude between 350m and 830m. The village is bounded by the Lemga river in the east and by two streams in the south. The

streams begin from both sides of a hill which stands on the Rongdai - Nungba border- one running eastward (Khonthok) and the other westward (Bidai- Taosompang) which are in the south from the location of Rongdai. In the west it is bounded by the Ramreipang river. From the upper Ramreipang the boundary runs northward till Kaitheibut and then runs down northward before it deflects back forming almost a v-shape upto a hill range. It then runs eastward from Thingou-Rengpang (Namthan) boundary through a stream (Laokipang) upto the Lemga. Unfortunately, there was once a boundary dispute between Thingou and Rongdai villages in early 1970s. It was largely owing to the confusions of landmark made by the forefathers of the two villages some decades ago. Fortunately, the dispute was solved under the case NO. FIR 11(6) 86 NBA.PO 4/5188/434 1PC.

The NH-37 passes through the land in the eastern part and the village is located on the north of Nungba headquarters and is adjacent to it. To the north of the village is Thingou village at a distance of about 8kms. To the north-East and the north-west of the village lie Okolong, Namthan and Rengpang villages stretched over 8 kms, 9kms and 7kms respectively. Bwanruangh villages are to the east of the village at a distance of about 8 kms. To the west and south lie Pulton villages, the birth place of freedom fighter Haipou Zadonang the mentor to Haipei Rani Gaidinliu, and Nungba Head quarter and Tajeikaiphun villages at a distance of 10 kms, 1km, and 7 kms., respectively. These are the neighbouring villages and their inter-village relationship, from the early days, is cordial, cooperative and of mutual amity.

### Flora and Fauna

The village is rich in flora and fauna. There are varieties of orchids that bloom in different seasons of the year. Trees with flowers, Creepers with flowers, plants with flowers both on the ground and on the branches of different trees are found plenty in the forest of the village. Some of the important variety of trees and plants are nGaeng Thing (*Gmelina arbera*), Tolhao (*Teramanaha*), Uningthou (*Phoebe haniensis*), nChuang

(*Michebampaca*), nSiangthing or Tairen (*Toona Ciliata*) Ngaithing or Uthou (*Messna ferria*), Manse Thing or Ushing sha (*Ceinnamomum zeylanicium*), Agar (*Aoggolocha*) nKambang (*Parkia roxburgii*), nRiang (*Bamboos*), Rui (*Canes*) etc. The four kinds of bamboos are mPeih, nRiangh, nChih and mPaam etc. Besides trees and bamboos, many kinds of animals and fowls are found. Some of them are Kamang (*tiger*), Chagam (*bear*), nSanh (*deer*), Chakhaeng (*rein deer*), Suh (*wild pig*), nSah Si (*wild dog/fox*), Joukuang (*porcupine*), Jou (*monkey*), and many other reptiles like nRui (*snakes*), nThanh (*python*), Guiphuap (*tortoise*), etc. Raeng (*hornbill*), Ludlam (*wild duck*), Arik (*wild cocks and hens*), Lamtuai (bats), Joukaluk (*flying squirrel*) etc.

Inspite of small land area and being hilly terrain, it is comparatively rich in forests products. The forests abound in bamboos, valuable woods, canes, medicinal herbs, agar, etc. These valuables, have reduced to a great extent due to the scourge of the jhuming practices. It is said that the land had been once the sanctuaries of many wild animals and birds. Bigger animals like elephants, rhinoceroses, etc. were seen as transient visitors in the land. Notable birds like different species of horn bills, tragopan (peacock of local variety, Loilam) are disappearing year by year and particularly hornbills, peacocks, gibbons, alligators, antlers, squirrels, etc. have left the land for good.

### The People

The people of the village are not tall. On an average people stand 5'3" tall. They are not fair complexioned but are reddish brown and few individuals are dark complexioned. As to the variation in heights, the people of the past generations were said to be stout and tall standing 5'6" to 5'10". Majority of the people is composed of the Gangmeis followed by the Kameis. There are a few percentages of the Panmeis, the Riammeis, etc. Some of them migrated to the village in recent past but the great chunk of the Gangmeis has been in the land for centuries. At present the total population of the villages, as on 31st March 2021 is 1075. The total males are 572 and that of females are 503. The sex ratio is 835.7 (per 1000).

## Heroes

Infact, it would be a great injustice if we ignore to include the extraordinary past personalities of the village. The name and fame left behind by the Ganii for themselves as well as for the village is well rembered. We are still proud of them as sons and daughters of the village. "Lentuang" is the title given to those personalities. A few recollected accounts of the achievements of the following heroes.

**Phumrilung:** He is said to have possessed, according to oral narratives, the strength of four strong men. A huge cobra and a tiger are said to have attacked him at different places and occasions when he was on the way to Oklong village in connection with ritual matters to a dreamer. He was also known for his swiftness that it was a matter of a few minutes for him to cover about 7 kms. A python is also said to have caught him at the Lemga river while he was crossing it. He overcame the monster by cutting the beast with his sickle.

We can well speculate about his strength to carry an excessively heavy bag of paddy which caused his tragic end. He was popularity for his enormous strength which led him to take such a risk. In this last bout he stumbled and fell headlong causing him a fracture of his leg from which he had never recovered.

**Haoliang :** He is also said to have possessed the strength of more than three strong men. A living proof of his strength is a stone monument (Khangnatao) weighing about 90 kgs, along with the lost one which may have been about 40-50 kgs, were brought all alone at a time to the village (Munbutlong) from about 5 km distance. It is said that the two stones were wrapped up in his coarse shawl and carried with ease. The stones were then deified as god and goddess of protection of the village. There is a theory of the lost one which is said to be a male known as the Lungmakiang. The stones disguised themselves as village young men and fought against the intruders from other villages. The fight is said to have continued till dawn. The daybreak forced the females to return to their place but the male prolonged and realized that it was

too late to return disappeared from the scene.

Usually the strength of men and women of the village is said to have been measured by how far one was able to lift or carry a stone known as Taosi or Khangnatao. In the olden days woman and man lifted it with ease, the most prominent among them were Ms Gaidamlu and Mr. Dunjei Gangmei of the village. It is said that Dunjei was able to lift it with his bare hands sitting on the ground. Gaidamlu is said to be a woman of enormous strength and said to have fought and overcome seven men of another village who made her put up for a physical bout with them. Her known strength led her to the challenge of those men. She is said to have possessed the strength of two strong men.

**Kaonganang:** The village also produced a songsmith. He sang of the beauties and charms of the land. He also celebrated women of uniqueness and virtuosity of the village. Let us have a look at his own words of song:

Aramhmei lunathiu almanuh lo,  
.... Luruang hei suanthau 'thei  
Tunahta lu loumak, 'thei gaimak tuange,  
Kazi khang lou tuange.  
Tanpui Lubuannei lu suna  
Paan sow khang phuaklou tuange.  
Raenghku huuapthutei.  
Launau zam gai khoutei  
Inkhuaih tei ramla,  
Khundaipang neih liam mak nung,  
Guang low kho.  
... Akhaikhang khou tunahta,  
Phaeng pat howe.  
Duikhunluangh thu tei,  
Tunah anei bam khang,  
Intauh - pack phai kho na,  
Karian Luang ding e,

The meaning of the passage is as below: Women of my village, listen to my song which I composed and to be sung by my girl Lubuannei while pounding rice. Song without mention of women is not significant. There Raengkuhuap where there is sightful landscape and then collecting Inkhuai (a creeper used for washing head), let us be back to Khundai (every first water-hole of the village) and



wash before it is short of sunshine. Gazing from our Morung I saw my girls. I remember what I promised to make seats of slab-stones for my girl and me there Duikhunluangh.

It is also said that the villages produced many rich men and women. It is evident by the presence of many amazing claims at various sites of the village. The village, thus, is not destitute of men and women of renown in the past. They were gifts of nature but ours must be of nature and efforts to make another step towards adding more glory to the village in our times.

## SECTION-II

### Economic Life of the People

Being the land in the sub-tropical region, the temperature of the village has 0°C-4°C and annual rainfall from 170cm to 200cm. The kinds of soil available here are also various depending upon the condition of the land. In steep land soil is red and ferruginous containing acidity and which is under thick forest has rich humus ranging upto PH - 5. Small portion of low and level lands are found at Lemga basin and the western most part of village. The basin has thus wet-fields measuring about 50 acres. And the rest of the land is mostly hilly terrain with little scattered portion of level lands.

The land of the village, inspite of favourable climate for various crops particularly rice. The rice production has gradually decreased today due to years in jhuming cycle. Yet change in jhuming practice is a hard thing for two reasons: (a) it is inherited culture and (b) absence of suitable alternative land for jhuming practices. What is traditional today is what was once practiced and propagated. But when it is passed to next generation it becomes an inheritance. Now what is inherited is hard to be given up. Mode of cultivation and other related practices are inherited which has become an obstacle to progressive economic life of the village. The main occupation is rice cultivation by slash and burn jhuming practices which become gradually unproductive with the decrease of soil fertility in the terrain. But about 60% of the cultivators still engage in jhuming cultivation. It is true that the nature of the land

forces them to stick to this traditional way of cultivation. The land is largely community owned rather than privatized. Each family cultivates, at average, about 1½ acres every year. At the rate of this calculation the village which has 21sqkm. reduces jhuming cycle to 8-9 years only, if portion of uncultivable lands is deducted. A layman can imagine that the duration will not generate enough formation of humus on the ground for any successful cultivation of rice. So, the farmers usually harvest 15-20 bags of rice annually. A family of 4-7 members can consume the quantity within 5-6 months. So, their barn is emptied usually after April and they are forced to starve for about four months. It is only after August that hope of survival is regained. In spite of this frequent scourge of scarcity of food, people who have habituated in jhuming practices remain helpless without finding remedial alternative. But it is also true that their attitude to other alternatives is not so positive. They need education on the emerging compulsion arising from the change of time. Perhaps one best recuperative alternative may be modern farming practice in the region including the village.

### Important Crops

The most important cash crops being cultivated in the village are bananas, betel leaves, chillis, pineapples, maize, etc., and some other crops produced for domestic consumption are yams, beans, papayas, pumpkins, ginger, etc. The most marketable crops in view of successful cropping are chilli particularly cone-shaped chilli (umarok) which is known for its flavour and sweet smell. Though it is sharply hot it bears a spicy smell too. The peculiarity is that this chilli is mostly grown in the district at present. It luxuriantly grows on the land where there are good amount of humus accumulated or where bamboos are amply grown. Besides this, bananas of different kinds, betel leaves, pineapples, etc. can be extensively cultivated in view of their rich harvest. Above all, the most reliable cash crops are citrus like oranges, lemons, etc. Since the demand for these crops is great and more profitable than others, the crops can be extensively cultivated and which can best assume a recuperative alternative of jhuming

life. At present the village has not much of these products after the wholesale dry-up about 30 years ago. It largely owed to lack of medical care. So, the entire orange orchards in the forest areas of the village had dried up. But the precedent of its success is always a convincing proof and an encouragement for orange recultivation. A mature orange plant which is normally matured after 10-15 years, bears 200-2000 oranges. At the rate of Rs. 10/- for both medium and giant oranges, a family which has 50 plants can earn more than Rs. 1,00,000/- annually. Majority of the families can earn this amount annually..

Another cash crop which has shown the success of its cultivation in the village is tea plants. Tea plants grow luxuriantly without much care except weeding out the bushes and shading the plants by growing trees in the gardens. At present there are about 5000 tea plants which generate enough products for local consumption and some surplus quantity of hand-made tea leaves for marketing. It has shown for the feasibility of large scale cultivation by its growth in the soil for more than half century without sign of decline. But its cultivation except for local and domestic consumption is not seen growing and no tea growing enterprise have ever sprung up financed by the government or under the initiative of any private party

### **Employment and Education**

The government employees are the mainstay of the economy of the village because there is no scope of paid employment in the village for the general mass. This is mainly due to absence of commercial establishments, lack of education, poverty and mass ignorance. These factors primarily stifle the employment opportunities of the village in formal sector.

As on 31 March, 2021, only about 41 people of the village are employed. Majority of the employed villagers are serving as School Teachers, GD Rifle man, ICDS Worker, Police personnel. Only four people are serving at reasonably higher level positions of Assistant Professors and Medical Officer.

### **Rongdai Students Union**

The educational growth of the village has been rather encouraging indeed. The Rongdai Students Union, hereinafter be referred as “RSU” for its brevity, was founded in the year 1976 under the leadership of Pouh (Late) Gaibondai Gangmei and Pouh Thiuliangaipou Gangmei, in order to cater the needs of the upcoming generation in the field of education. Over the years, the RSU have witnessed robust growth in its pursuit for excellence and have produced distinguished personalities and leading the society. The RSU commemorated its Silver Jubilee on 18th to 20th December, 2001. Since its inception, the Union has its board of executives led by the President and General Secretary. It is necessary to mention here that almost all the members of the RSU are highly educated and possess the distinction of being Ph.D: Research Scholar (4), MA (17), M.Sc(1), M.Com. (4), MSW (2), LL.B & LL.M (1), Mass Com.(1), PGDCA (1), B.A.(40), B.Sc.(8), B.Com. (3), B.B.A.(1), B.C.A.(2), BHMS (2), B.Sc. Nursing (1), P.B. B.Sc. Nursing (1), D.El. Ed. (3), GNM (3), Diploma in Civil Engineering (1), Diploma of Ophthalmology (1), Diploma in Radiology Therapy (DRT) (1), Lab Technician (MLT) (1), Diploma in Dialysis Technician (2), Certificate on Tour Guide (1). In addition to the above there are 13 persons who have either completed their Theological studies or are pursuing the same.

With love and blessings received from the Almighty God, the RSU have come thus far keeping intact the principles and values on which the union was founded and shall continue to ‘Learn’ the basic humane tenets as responsible men and women to bring change and transformation and ‘Shine’ the light of victory in our land as the motto read “Learn and Shine”.

Modern democratic society and socio-economic development are inseparable from many counts. Many progressive and collective developments are conveniently possible through political backing for various village activities. Unfortunately the village, for one reason or the other, has not been successfully administered for discernable collective

socio-economic changes in the past. So, the village has miles to go for any quantitative, qualitative collective and socio-economic growth and development in the village. Internal factor which deprives the confidence, as it is usually happens, are the men in power who failed as voters' choice as also unsuccessful in attracting the attention of the officials concerned to the village. It must be understood that the more the people look for personal gains from the representative, slower will be the pace of collective socio-economic development of the village.

### **Infrastructure in the Village**

The village is greatly lacking in many necessary infrastructures particularly which can produce direct impact on village development. There are two government school viz., Primary school and upper primary school. A village community Hall and a play ground which can accommodate a few thousands of people, are located at the centre of the village. Territorial Army Post, Assam Rifles Post, police station, Inspection Bungalow and a Highway Inns are located within the jurisdiction of the village. Some of these setups bears the name of Nungba headquarters. A helipad, now abandoned is also located at the top of the village. It was constructed by Sikh Regiment in 1998. More than three choppers can land on it. There is a jeepable ring road that runs from NH 37 connecting almost entire village. The road fulfills one of the objectives of the village for shifting the village from its previous site to the present site. Physical Infrastructure such as Gas godown, Airtel towers, hydro electricity towers, Jiribam Tupul railway line tunnel and a Gorkha regiment camp for the security of the railway workers are also located within the jurisdiction of the village. Recently, a small scale industry known as cane and bamboo handicraft society was established in the village with the help of the government.

### **SECTION -III**

#### **Village Administrative System**

The village is governed by Village Authority members headed by ex-officio Chairman and a Council of elders of the village. The village council

is known as "Pei". This is the highest social, cultural, economic, religious and political authority of the village. In fact, it is the highest decision making authority in the villages. In the earlier days many village workers both traditional and co-opted or selected, have been looking after the village affairs in their various capacities. In the past, the village Council was headed by the village hereditary chiefs (Khullaks and Khunbus) aided by selected or co-opted elder-members of the council. The judicial concerns of the council were confined to the settlement of disputes arising from matrimony, lands between individuals or villages or among villages, murders, thefts, etc. Its administrative concerns were such as deciding on cultural festivals, defense of the village from intrusions or feuds, regulations of health issues, rituals, determination of sites for jhuming cultivation. The council also took decisions on necessary cooperation for the success of marriages held in the village or at outside villages and in latter case the bride should be a girl of the village. Regular schedules for the sessions of the council were usually held on the eve of regular cultural occasions or festivals and it could also be convened at any time depending upon the nature of the urgency or the problems. This traditional form of administration continued till the early 1920s after which change came with the passage of time and the village administration became now complex and it was not easy as it had been before.

The change was seen in structure and dimension of functions of the village council. The heads of the council were aided by Gaon Boras and further transformation was also seen after 1956 in the form of new village administrative body known as village Authority. Now the body was not entirely reflecting traditional form but seen as the combination of both modern and traditional.

Nature of administration was not only internal but also external now. For instance, it was indeed a responsibility of those who were at the helm of village affairs particularly from 1950s to 1960s. The period coincided with escalation of Naga underground movement. As a result, security forces of Indian Government resorted to various forms

of harassment, the brunt of which the leaders suffered physically and emotionally. In spite of this cruel period, the village leaders, with their best tact, guided the people through except in the episode of 1967. In the year, because of misunderstanding between neighbouring villages on the question of Naga freedom, the village had undergone a tense period leaving the village en masse to other villages for a period about four months. But, as the village is known for its unity, all stood together as one man in weal and woe in the past life of the village.

### **Khullaks**

Regarding the succession of early traditional heads, some of them, in the absence of documents, may not be correct or as precise and accurate as that of those found in the existing documents, or those whose names are fresh in memory. Therefore, some of them have been listed and their periods of tenure have been fixed in order of their seniority in age. So, their names are traced out from the family line of the Khullak and periodised. The periods do not cover the times prior to 1812.

<u>Name of Khullaks</u>	<u>Period of Tenure</u>
Khanguang Gangmei	1812-1834
Marellung Gangmei	1835-1856
Kinthuigi Gangmei	1857-1877
A member from Gangtungmeikai	1878-1888
Guilang Gangmei	1889-1889
Satou Gangmei	1900-1915
Poulotdai Gangmei	1916-1920
Sikaraeng Gangmei	1921-1948
Kubampou Gangmei	1949-1967
Gaikanlung Gangmei	1982-1990
<u>Names of Khunbus/ Chairman</u>	<u>Period of Tenure</u>
Chingbonang Gangmei	1968-1981
Poukhuilung Gangmei	1991-2007
Ningkhampou Gangmei	2008-2017
Gaikulung Gangmei	2018 till date

**Note:** *After retirement from chairmanship of the village, Poukhuilung Gangmei was installed as Khullakpu from 2011 till 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020.*

The present and future generation of the village must bear in mind that our forefathers founded a village for us. Before, 470 years, our forefathers came to this land with a great vision for the generations succeeding them. They may not have visualized how the generations will live and grow yet they founded the village with some hope. Their only wish was for our growth and multiplication and to be proud of their sons and daughters. Therefore, they chose a land where their dreams could be realized. They left their native land,

Bwanruangh, and set their foot on this soil for the mission. With their blessings many of their children became men and women of renown as we have seen them earlier. With the mighty sons and daughters the village was well protected from the onslaughts. Countless daughters born to our forefathers and to their next generations were women known for their beauty, virtue, talent, melodious voice, etc. They lived here and paid their debt of nature after becoming women of riches and fame. Generations of such were countless and

they adorned and exalted the village past. None of the rich had ever worried for the displays of their cultural pomps and grandeurs because of their readily available services for the purposes. Many families of the rich pursued the tradition of keeping ‘girl of home’ and ‘home of boy’ and the boy and the girl were raised to high social status and held them in high regards in the village. Many expensive rituals performed to adorn more beauty and regards to the persons concerned. For example, “Dapanmei” is a adoration ritual to the boy concerned. It seems that the custom must have been a foundation or root for the making of royal family which, of course, had not bloomed into fruits owing to gradual decline of the family concerned. Thus the boy or the girl builded and left high social status to the family. The boy or the girl concerned led a life without manual labour in life and was simply fed.

### **Feasts and Festivals**

Socio-Culturally, our forefathers are said to have lived a life of positive challenges, competition and co-operation among themselves. The village has a record of celebrating a number of extra ordinary cultural festivals as Maliang, Maku-Banru and construction of Tareng Kai, Senluanmei Kai and many other cultural feasts. Of all these, “Senluanmei Kai” is said to be the costliest cultural house and is the highest honour that one can get in the society.

Besides, these feasts of merit, there are number of annual festivals which the villagers celebrate all the year round. Some of the important festivals are Ring-Ngai, Nahnu, Maliang-Ngai, Tun-Ngai, Napla-Ngai, Tuphadai-Ngai, Pumthan-Ngai, nGan-Ngai, etc. All these festivals are celebrated according to different agricultural activities fixed and performed by following lunar calendar of their own. The lunar calendar of the village is composed of 12 months in a year. They are Ringai-Bu, Nahnu-Bu, Laokei-Bu, Laophundun-Bu, Maliang-Bu, Tunngai Bu, Naptu-Bu, Pukpha-Bu, Laodai Tai-Bu, Buhlei, Laonam-Bu and nGan-Bu.

Oral narrative also gives an account of highest materials achievements. In the past the material status of the rich was shown through the

performance of various grades of feasts of merit. The narratives say that the village had ever witnessed high class of feasts of merit by building, Apuileikai, Senluanpulkai, Tarengkai, Ngoukimei, etc. The first three were related to the construction of magnificent buildings with elaborate designs by the rich and Ngoukimei was a rare grandest feast meant to serve numerous partakers. Apuileikai means ‘amazing house’ because every part of the building was abnormally big and the parts appeared grand and amazing. This building shows the strength of the village and the riches of the family. It seems Senluangpuikai was primarily the display of riches of the rich. Its special characteristic is that the family would afford only silver plates at the feast on the day of inauguration of the building. Such afford, some 300 years ago in traditional society may have been rather a difficult job unless one had been man of great possession. When Tarangkai could be built by the rich in order of grade of feasts of merit, it also belonged to only those who were rich enough. The latest Tarengkai was built in early 1980s in the village and three other feasts of merits (Two Banrus and one Maleng in 1960s and 1970s.). Besides these, the village also had witnessed inauguration of many huge cairns found at different sites of the village, celebration of Matuis (festival of youth of one morung), construction of Tariang Kangbians, etc. These are all the great displays of the rich under a philosophy that the day the rich who had held feast of merit died, he would enjoy high status and attainment of better life in the land of gods.

The oral narratives also remind us of enormous size of the village which is also confirmed, by the evidences of the village extent found at particular site of the village. In those days for various reasons like intra-clan attachment and for security, the forefathers lived in a compact area containing several houses (20-40) within a few acres. So, the places like third site which shows the extent of about 15 acres may have contained 100-120 houses. Similar extent is also found at Munbutlong, fourth site of the village. Joint family system was prevalent in those days having members of a family ranging from 10-40. So, the population at the third site may

have been 1000-4800. As to the steady existence of the village the oral narrative further tells us that us that the village had experienced ups and downs in its life. For certain reasons migration from the village took place in 17th century itself and latter part of 18th and 19th century. Therefore, many people of Gangmei clan from the village are found in Cachar valley of Assam even today. So, the rise and decline the village had undergone in the past.

### **Dances and Dresses**

The village has different forms of dance and dresses. Some of the important dances are Rih-laam, Huay-laarn, Raeng-laam, Khuaigna-laam, Tariang-laam, Pheiman-Ngadapnmei-laam, Langgu-tap laam, Ganriji-laam, Jousuk-laam, Tompuimai-jaipui-laam, Hansiang-laam, Kaipei pui-laam, Baengphen-laam, etc. These dances are performed during different socio-cultural occasions of the village.

The villagers are also known for their colourful dresses, most of which are their own products. Dresses are divided into male and female dresses. Female dresses include Chana, Pikhim, Thinghiam, Tu, Tareo, Tukang, nThih, nTan, Chadu, nDahre, Langmuphei, nPhaengphei, Pheilaek, Parei etc. while those different dresses for men are Pikam, Rengmai, Guangkam, Tuh, Parei, Tajeidang, nTan, Langsiam, Raengran, Pheilaek, nPhaengphei, Nthiam Phei, Phaisang, Phaiduam, Phaikam, etc. Of course, these complete dresses are worn when they perform dances.

### **Hills and Rivers**

The village is located in the midst of several streams and rivers. Some of the important ones are Peitouliangthuak, Peitampang thuak, Duisi/Ramrei Peng thuak, Tao Suam Pang thuak, Khwon thuak, Lemga thuak, Reng thuak, Tao ga anghthuak, Guding thuak, Laoki pang thuak, Duiruan thuak, Khundai thuak, etc. They are gifts of God meeting the different needs of the people of the village. As the village is located on a hill top and is surrounded by different hillocks, mentioned may be made of Jaulangbut, Kandibangbut, Kaiguangluang but, Munbanglong but, Rinu but, Aga Luang but, Kaithei but, Ruai raotu but, Dui Kailuang but,

Guangdeng Tao Reng but etc. Forest of these hillocks is the treasure house for the village community as a whole, from which everything is extracted. Right from collecting raw materials for construction of their houses to the collection of daily needs are all from the forest. Hunting, fishing, collecting honey, herbal medicines etc. are done in the forest.

The land of the village were considered productive and are comparatively so even today. It was once adorned with majestic forests where countless animals and valuable trees were abound. Orchids of different species and kinds decorated the forests. In fact, it is a land of flora and fauna of different species even today. Being a land of omis of countless species, it is full of music. Songs of cicadas in all seasons mesmerized the inhabitants everywhere and songs of the birds from majestic trees of forests were echoing between and around the hills those days. Howling of gibbons (Paeng) were heard from mounts Thingoubut and Langroikhou of neighbouring villages till the early 1980s. Countless animals were roaming in the jungles without hunger and thirst because of the bounty of the nature. Nature has really blessed the land.

Lands of kins lying in the north and the east and the west are seen from this land being located between the extreme south and the northern lands. The village locates at the place which gives many conveniences for its inhabitants and others. True, it is partly by choice and luck. The NH-37 is within the land and thus the village is accessible from the east and the west. There is want of such privilege for many villages of the region. The village is optimistic about its future prosperity that the streams of various developmental blessings will moisten the village and the region.

Something always learnable from the past is its life of unity. The village is known for its unity. When unity does not mean uniformity, it is one of the choicest things human being ever need it for ail group situations. As someone has said, 'United we stand and divided we fall', the village had demonstrated this truth evident by its experiences

of the celebration of countless feasts of merit including the highest grades. These displays would be impossible without unity of all. This healthy culture and habits were the breath of strong human set up and it must be strengthened by cultivating greater understanding and empathy in the days to come too.

### **Advent of Christianity**

The village has three sacred places where its gods and goddesses are believed to live. The gods and the goddesses are protectors of the village. They are known as Ruinubutpui, Taosi, Kunmeipui, etc. Sacrifices to them are made by the village. But for a wonder Christianity came to such land where people believed and worshipped other gods having different concepts of human destiny. The arrival was a great change indeed from both spiritual and secular considerations. It is always an amazing thing for a man to change his religion which he inherited and practiced it for long. The new religion involves the change of entire concept of God and man's spiritual destiny. This unknown religion becomes their religion now and they hope to inherit those divine blessings promised in the holy book. The new faith imparts changed attitude to present world. It was also from the coming of Christianity that liberal education began to take root in the village which paved the way for modern life. Slowly and gradually the village attained a complete Christian village after consummate conversion in 1999. So, the coming of Christianity is a great turning point of the village which took in the village and in previous century.

The village has now attain 150 (one hundred fifty) houses. It reminds us of the past growth of the village. We want it to grow and become bigger than that of the olden days. It is encouraging to see the increase of population on the one hand and take it as a challenge to families and leaders

of the village on the other. Many healthy and intelligent children are, in fact, boon to the village and the community if their lives are blessed with many successes. Physically and materially it has been a growing village.

Lastly, but not the least, may I have a distinct privilege to quote a sophisticated statement made by none other than our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi, "The strength of my country lies in the huts of the poor; in the villages; in the youth, mothers and sisters; in the farmers.... I believe in your strength and hence I believe in the future of our country". □

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*(The author of this article is a Lecturer and a Ph.D. Research Scholar)*



# MY VILLAGE – MY FAMILY

## (Formation of a Karbi Village)

Dhaneswar Engti

Inglong Cherop

In the olden days, the Karbis were not habituated to establish a permanent village at one place, and they were found to be living scattered in the hilly terrain. They did not know how to live by establishing a village at a particular place. They used to live in the wild like aborigines. As the time passed, they felt the need for organized living by establishing villages to thwart the constant threats from the wild animals like tiger, elephant and other ferocious wild animals. There is no written testimony to be cited as proof of their style of living. However, there are substantial narrations about establishment of a Karbi village in the folk songs of 'Rongkim Alun' or 'Rong Kikim Alun' which is usually sung by the revered 'Lunsepo' during the Karbi cultural celebrations. Though there is lack of historical evidence of establishment of an organized village, but we can easily understand the intense desire for setting up a beautiful Karbi village from the below mentioned folk song of 'Rongkim Alun'. There was a necessity of establishing a permanent Karbi village in the hill slopes in order to prevent from encountering ferocious wild animals and intrusion of untamed flora and fauna into the human's habitats.

“Iri Basapi,  
Nangju alamdi  
O' machor Longki,  
Mekar donsuri  
Charnam than nonti,  
Kasen arani si  
Chiphong seng nangji,

Pirthe mo' kangtang durmi  
Mahu arani si,  
Lason aniti  
Kapinchong pinthi...”

**Meaning :** Basapi, the divine lady, so said, - “Oh, my soul mate, Longki, - you ask all the villagers to assemble at your courtyard, and ask them to establish a village at a suitable place, if you do that, people will remember you as the architect of Karbi villages in future...”

The incarnation of 'Kasen' was a great blessing for the Karbi tribe. *Kasen* was the wisest king of the Karbi tribe. His incarnation had brought a drastic change in the Karbi's social life. He was regarded as the originator of Karbi village during the days of old. His good counsels had brought a new ray of light in the Karbi society. As per his advice, the ignorant Karbi people began to realize the necessity and importance of establishing a permanent Karbi village in the hills ends. Hence, he was regarded as 'Ru Kasen', the most revered Kasen, of the Karbi tribe.

However, there were more names of venerated legends to be mentioned in regards to the formation of Karbi villages. Earlier than *Rukasen*, there were three great legends in the past, who had tried to establish Karbi villages; however it could not succeed due to lack of proper planning and lack of foresight. There was neither such specific idea of establishing a permanent Karbi village nor any rule and regulation had been framed for the sustenance of Karbi villages in



future. So, the names of those Karbi legends got misplaced from the Karbi folk songs in due course of time. *Kasen* was a man of forethought and vision. He was a man of unusually keen foresight and a person of foresight. He was an intelligent person; and was known for his good nature. He was the wisest king of the Karbi tribe ever had as per the Karbi folk history.

Wophong Bey was the great grand father of Rukasen, who had first imagined to have a Karbi village in the hill ends. He met all the people in the hills and formally insisted them to work collectively for establishing a Karbi village there. He gave an opinion to build '*Sang ghar*' (Hem thengsong) in the hills slopes, but he could not succeed to mobilize the Karbi people, hence he failed to fulfill his dreams at that time.

However, he had succeeded to establish a Karbi village on the bank of a beautiful stream of 'Taralangso' in his second attempt, and the name of that village was known as – '*Amsikso*'. It was mentioned in the Karbi folk song as follows:

“Iru arni Sar Wophong  
Kedo Nilip  
Lumbajong  
Chiphong Amsikso anglong  
Chiphong rongkim  
pathirklong  
Jun-sok ke  
Taralangso adong  
Chiphong ke  
Taralangso abolon”

**Meaning:** “In the days of old, there was a ruler called ‘Sar Wophong’, who lived in the Nilip Lumbajong area. The name of his village was ‘Amsikso Anglong (hills), he had established a permanent village there. There was a small stream named – ‘Taralangso Adong’, they collected pure drinking water from this river. It was a beautiful village to see during those days.”

Thus, there was a great contribution of establishing a Karbi village by this great legend of the Karbi tribe, named Wophong Bey. In the olden

days, it was common to hear about Wophong Bey’s contributions in regard to establishment of the Karbi village. Following Karbi folk song elaborates about the same.

“Iruke ajang  
Ser Jangphong  
Iruke judet ason son  
Chephong kedo’  
malihui ong  
Chephong ketang  
palar nang non  
Mekar kesar riso’  
langphrong  
Chephong tangdam  
jengponron  
Tangdam ke  
Klohpli anglong...”

**Meaning:** Ser Jangphong was the incarnation of god; he talked about many things and almost fad up with living in the same village. He wanted to move to a new place. The villagers were impressed with his idea and without more ado they left for searching a new place to establish a village. Finally they reached Kophli Anglong and found the place...”

Jangphong Bey was the son of Wophong Bey, and after the death of Wophong Bey, he took over the charge of his village. At the time of the death of his father, he was a teenager. When he grew up he vowed to fulfill the unfulfilled dreams of his father. So, he tried hard to establish a beautiful Karbi village in the hill’s ends. But, he encountered several problems and his plans for establishing a new village came to an end. The villagers began to run away from his village, but he was not disheartened at all. He gathered more courage and began to invite all the villagers who left his village and re-established a new Karbi village at a beautiful location. The village was named as – “*Klohupso*”. But, due to lack of proper planning and groundwork, the village could not last long; people dispersed to other places in due course of time.

Ridem Bey was a clean and tidy son of Jangphong Bey. He was loved and respected by his subjects very much. He had a great love for his subjects and because of his good nature, he could win the hearts of the villagers. He could do so because of his good approach and excellent behaviour. He was also known as -"Sar Wophong Ridem" who was a direct lineage of Wophong Bey. He succeeded in establishing "Lamthomkep" village, consisting of thirty household there. The following Karbi folk song tells the tale:

"Non esarke Ridem,  
Sarta Ridem  
Sar Wophong ke  
Mekar Sar Riso lopong  
Chiphong tangdam  
jengponron  
Thekdam lamthomkep anglong  
Chiphong rongkim  
don thongkep..."

**Meaning:** "This time our ruler is Ridem, Sar Ridem was the son of Sar Wophong, his subjects were Riso Lopong, they went together to find a new village and finally found a 30 (Thirty) metre long hillock. They finally established 30 (Thirty) households there."

But, this time also the village did not last long due to lack of proper supervision and strong leadership to lead the villagers.

Rukasen happened to be the fourth generation of Wophong Bey, the first Karbi ruler, who had established a Karbi village for the first time in the Karbi history. Rukasen was an exceptional ruler who had knowledge and expertise in organizing Karbi people. He had succeeded in controlling his subjects and made them to live in a place peacefully. The place was called as Karbi village. He was known for his intelligence and farsightedness. He was one of the most influential and wisest rulers of the Karbi tribe. He was one of the architects of Karbi nation. Because of his indomitable spirit and benevolent nature, he was given the title of 'Ru' which means a godly person.

He was finally given the title of "Rukasen" in the Karbi's cultural history.

The tale of how Rukasen, the wise king, had succeeded in establishing a Karbi village, could be heard from a Karbi folk song called - "Rongkim Alun". In that 'Rongkim Alun', founding of a Karbi village in the days of old was described very beautifully. Rukasen was a highly distinguished and illustrious leader of the Karbi tribe.

From the above mentioned folk song, it could be learnt that, it was him who had established a permanent Karbi village for the first time at a place called - "Nongkula", in which he had introduced the post of Gaonbura, the village headman, to look after the administrations of 'Nongkula Village. 'Sarthe' is the nomenclature of Gaonbura in Karbi language. Since 'Sarthe' is the head of the village; he has to look after the administrative affairs of the village. He also introduced some rules and regulations for peaceful administration of the village. He was instrumental for introducing village council, youth organization (Riso Aterank), and some customary rules and regulations for proper and peaceful supervision of the village. Those rules and regulations were introduced for the peaceful co-existence and proper development of the village. The folk song called "Rongkim Alun", describes this as below.

One fine day, the wife of Rukasen offered him some wine to drink and said politely, - "You've to organize your subjects and try to establish a Karbi village with some acceptable social norms at the earliest. It is required for a happy and peaceful coexistence of our ignorant subjects. Our subjects needed peace and prosperity for the sustenance of our Karbi nation; otherwise our Karbi tribe on no account can progress in life ..."

The folk song goes like this:-

"Iri Basapi  
Nangju alamdi  
Mekar donsuri  
Charnam than nonti  
Kasen arani si

Chiphong seng nangji  
 Pirthe mokangtang durmi  
 Mahu arani si  
 Lason aniti  
 Kapinchong pinthi ...”

**Meaning:** Basapi, the legend, said, - “You tell the Mekars (Subjects) that during the reign of Kasen, a village was established, and people will remember you, that this had happened during time of Kasen and it’s going to be remembered for ever...”

Thus, as per good advice of Basapi, Kasen had invited all his subjects to come to his courtyard and had arranged a community festival there. In order to entertain the gathering, Basapi, the wife of Rukasen, had made sufficient rice beer and was ready to serve the same to the members present there. She had prepared strong rice beers at home to meet the requirements. Thus, the messenger, (Pherangke) was sent to formally invite all the villagers to attend the cultural festival at the courtyard of Rukasen, the wise king. All the villagers willingly came to attend the cultural festival at the house of Rukasen. All the obedient subjects of his kingdom had assembled at the courtyard on scheduled day. The villagers were very much enthused to know about the idea of celebration of the Karbi cultural festival there.

Then, Rukasen, the ruler, had started to address the gathering as follows:

O’ mekarpo marli  
 Chiphong Ramtarsing tombi  
 Lumarme eli  
 Chiphong o’ nangji  
 Jutha mekar po’ marli  
 Konat-thu ahi si  
 Nang sengve kahudi  
 Rongrengsang ahi  
 Ma Nongkula ahi...”

**Meaning:** “Oh, my dear subjects, our village is entirely covered by hard reed, we cannot prosper here anymore, we’ve to abandon the village, you

tell us where we have to go, what’s your choice, - Rongrengsang Ahi or ‘Nongkula Ahi’.

Kasen was not interested to live scattered in the forest; he was seeking for a new place to establish a permanent Karbi village there. The village they lived in now had become aged and not fit for cultivation anymore. It was full of hard reed and not fit for jhum cultivation. So, he had to ask his subjects to select a suitable place for establishing a new village. They have to select any one of the two places of ‘Rongrengsang’ or ‘Nongkula’. Kasen told his subjects to select any one of the two places as per their choices.

After prolonged discussion on the matter, the villagers had formally informed Kasen, the ruler, about their unanimous decision on selection of a suitable place for establishing a new Karbi village as follows:

“O’ Longki amukhi  
 Ne mekar donsuri  
 Neseng kahusi ke  
 Nongkula ahi...”

**Meaning:** Oh, my revered ruler, we are satisfied to live in - “Nongkula Ahi’...”

After getting the satisfactory opinion from his trusted subjects, Rukasen had finalized the date and time for moving towards ‘Nongkula Ahi’. Thus, one fine morning, he along with his subjects began to move towards ‘Nongkula Ahi’ under his able leadership. After reaching the place, he worshipped the deities as per Karbi customary practice and offered a pot of beer to ‘Than Arnam’ and found the indication of good fortune for establishing a new Karbi village there. So, Rukasen decided to establish a new village at ‘Nongkula Ahi’. He then asked all his subjects to take up construction works of their houses there without delay.

*Nongkula* was the first place to be remembered, where a ceremonial Karbi village was established according to ‘Rongkin Alun. It is mentioned in the Karbi folk songs. After the establishment of a Karbi village at a place called - ‘Nongkula Ahi’, the

Karbi's social and administrative system began to grow speedily. Some rules and regulations were introduced for the proper administration of the Karbi villages. Hence, Rukasen has been called as the creator of Karbi village (Rongkim).

Thus, the dreams of Wophong Bey, the grand father of Rukasen, were fulfilled during the reign of Rukasen. He was the great grandson of Wophong Bey, the divine ruler of the Karbi tribe.

The description of the village, which was established by Rukasen, can be visualised from the following Karbi folk song of *Rongkim Alum*:

“Langhe lo’ ali thok-kri  
 Iru alanghe abi  
 Notun nune Basapi  
 Chiphongta plenglo donsuri  
 Klimso toi-toi ra nini  
 Hemtun jakve chilosi  
 Jakve malongpi hupri  
 Hemtun pharo’ro’ lokri  
 Puru phandar palokri  
 Iru bang atingkhong mesi  
 Iru rup bolon lokri...”

**Meaning:** It was nice to see ‘Nonhkula’, village, small hilly fishes frolic in the ghat, there is a beautiful road leading to bathing ghat, the village accomodates one thousand households now, children are happy and playing around, the villagers live in their houses, there are hundreds of households in the village, the courtyard of the divine king was glittering like silver, it was very beautiful to look at...”

Thus, the village was established in a row and it was established on the bank of a river with wide and spacious rooms. The houses were erected in two separate lines, and in the middle of the village there was a beautiful road leading to the bathing ghat. Near the village, the jhum fields were full of paddy and other hilly vegetable plants for consumption, the young boys and girls of the village were very happy to live there...”

As the time passed by, the number of

households increased considerably. The village of Kasen, at ‘*Nongkula*’, got to prosper significantly, and finally Kasen came to be known as - ‘*Rukasen*’, the divine ruler of Karbi tribe, he was regarded as the architect of modern form of Karbi villages.

During the reign of Rukasen in ‘*Nongkula*’, a great thinker, named - Harbamon was incarnated in the Karbi kingdom. His actual name could not be ascertained even today. The name of ‘*Harbamon*’ was an ornamental name to be offered, and the real meaning of ‘*Harbamon*’ was a ‘*Divine priest*’. He was a saintly cleric of the Karbi tribe.

Harbamon was regarded as the universal priest of the Karbi tribe; he was also regarded as ‘*Kul Purubit*’ of the Karbi community. He was a wise and learned priest of the Karbi tribe. He tried to help out the common people during difficult times and he was helpful in healing the people from many kinds of diseases during those days. He also performed various kinds of pujas and worships to different deities in order to heal the diseases. Thus he tried to save the lives and property of the common people during the days of old. The common people of the villages considered him as the protector of human’s life. Thus, he had succeeded to earn honour and respect from the common people during those difficult times.

In the later part of his life, *Harbamon* came into contact with a wise king, *Rukasen*, and as per the request of *Rukasen*, *Harbamon*, the wise man, had devoted his entire life for reform and restructuring of the Karbi society. Because of good deeds of these two great wisemen, the Karbi society got to go on board, and a new age of peace and progress began to shine in the backward Karbi society.

*Rukasen* and *Harbamon*, both of them, were the reformers of Karbi society; they were the architects of modern Karbi society. They were founders of modern Karbi villages. Without their cooperation and help it was impossible to imagine the successful establishment of Karbi villages in the past. The Karbi tribe still considers the sweet reunion of these two great divine souls of *Rukasen*

and *Harbamon* as the blessings of God, and it was regarded as the golden age of Karbi socio-cultural history.

It could be heard that, as per sincere request of Rukasen, Harbamon left for 'Nongkula' and took a long journey beyond 'Miring-Rongsopi' to reorganize the most neglected and freckled Karbi tribes, who lived in the undisclosed places. He persuaded them to remain united and advised them to establish their houses in a village, so that, they could live with peace and harmony. Thus, they could be protected from the wild animal's attacks and other blitzes of natural calamities.

*Harbamon*, the learned man, was a great reformer and truth-seeker of the Karbi society. Mention may be made here that, - *Harbamon*, the wise man, had succeeded to establish many traditionally important Karbi villages, and the names of those legendary villages were - 'Teran Rongsopo' village, 'Akli Rongsopi' village, 'Borli-e' village, etc.

It came to know that, the village, 'Rongrengsang', was established by Rang Mukrang. This legendary Karbi village was established as per good advice of *Harbamon*, the wise man, during his visit to that place. Rang Mukrang was elevated to the honourable post of 'Sarthe' or 'Rong Asarthe', the village headman. He was appointed as 'Sarthe' or 'Rong Asarthe' by none other than *Harbamon*, the royal priest of the olden days, himself. He was the architect of Karbi's socio-economic reforms; he was the person who tried his level best to transform the backward Karbi society, and had succeeded to spread the light of Karbi civilization in the days of old.

It could be heard that, *Harbamon* was the first wise man, who had introduced co-operative society at 'Amseng' (Amseng hills). He had engaged some enthusiastic youths to do jhum cultivation on cooperative system for the first time, and today, it is known as - 'Jirsong' or 'Jir Kedam'. He was the main architect of 'Karbi Jhum Cultivation', which has been practicing in the hills, till today, as means of livelihood. He was the wise

man, who had introduced the 'Jirsong Asong' in order to organize the jobless Karbi youths. He knew very well that, youths were the future of Karbi tribe and they were the envoys of Karbi culture and literature. The Karbi youths were the future of Karbi nation. He tried to educate every Karbi youth how to do jhum cultivation, basket making, mate making, making of 'Karbi Chang ghar', singing of various Karbi folk songs, Karbi folk dances, etc., so, that, they could become a good citizen of the Karbi tribe in future. In order to meet all these requirements of the Karbi society, *Harbamon*, the wise man, had introduced the system of 'Jirkedam', a kind of modern day co-operative society, in the Karbi society during the days of old.

Because of the reasons mentioned above, *Harbamon*, the wise man, was regarded as the first planner of Karbi customs and traditions. It could be heard from the legends that, - *Harbamon*, the reformer, belonged to the Terang's clan of the Karbi tribe.

Thus, under the able guidance of *Rukasen*, the wise king, the Karbi villages were established with certain rules and regulations. The following important portfolios were appointed for peaceful and successful administration of Karbi villages, and it is in vogue in the Karbi society till today. The important portfolios of Karbi villages are as follows, -

- 1, Sarthe/Basapo
2. Riso Basa
3. Pkerangke
4. Ove Barim
5. Terank: (i). Klengsarpo  
(ii). Klengdun

**SARTHE/BASAPO:** The post, *Sarthe or Basapo* of a village is generally appointed by the *Habe* on behalf of Karbi Recho, Ronghang Rongbong, in the West Karbi Anglong district, while *Hima Asar* appoints the *Gaonbura* in the East Karbi Anglong on behalf of the *Habe* and *Pinpo*. It is pertinent to say that, *Sarthe* or *Gaonbura* plays

a dominant role in the village level council including administration of the village. *Sarthe*, the village head, has full control over all kinds of social, religious as well as judicial matters including marriage ceremonies connected to his own village. Hence, *Sarthe* is regarded as the most respected and indispensable person of the village. He is the first person to be invited with respect to any social, cultural and marriage ceremony of 'Adam Asar Kangthur' which is held in the native village. Without his presence, no such religious or marriage ceremony can take place. However, in absence of *Sarthe*, he can depute *Risobasa*, his Deputy, to attend the function in his behalf. *Sarthe*, the village headman, can take all kinds of pity cases except murder and sex related offence like *Kursenem* and *Lisenem* cases of the village. *Kursenem* and *Lisenem* are the highest social crimes in the Karbi society. During the reign of Rengbonghon Recho, the accused person was given capital punishment. However, he had reformed this draconian form of punishment during his kingship to evade this kind of severe code of law. Such cases of murder and sex related offences are taken up by the Habes and Pinpos in the Ronghang Rongbong, Chinthong Rongbong and Amri Rongbong located in the present West Karbi Anglong district, while the *Hima Asar* and *Arnam Pharo* also can take up such heinous cases of murder and sex related cases of *Kursenem* and *Lisenem* in the present Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

**RISOBASA:** *Risobasa* is the second in command of the Village Council or *Mei*. *Sarthe* is the Chief of the Village Council or *Mei*, while *Risobasa* is the Deputy Chief of *Sarthe* of the village council. He attends all the meetings of the village council in the absence of *Sarthe*. It is the duty of *Risobasa*, the Deputy *Sarthe* of the village council, who holds all charges of the *Mei* in the absence of *Sarthe*. *Risobasa* takes up all problems relating to the youths (*Riso-Ejang*) of the village. *Risobasa* is the Chief Adviser of 'Riso-Ejang' of the village. The house

of *Risobasa* is the head quarter of the youths (*Riso-Ejang*) of the village. *Klengdun* and *Klengsarpo*, the two heads of the youth's dormitory, known as *Terank*, must visit to the house of *Risobasa* in order to take necessary advices from him as and when it is necessary to do so. They take necessary advices from *Risobasa* and try to settle all the pity disputes generally crop up among the youths (*Riso-Ejang*) of the village at his level itself.

**PHERANKE:** The post of *Pherangke* is another important portfolio of a Karbi Village. The duty and responsibility of *Pherangke* has to inform the people of the village when a meeting is summoned by the *Sarthe*. Further, he has to take up necessary arrangements of food and lodging for the guests invited to the meeting in the village. He has another important duty to do is to collect money or coins and rice etc. from each and every household of the village. It is necessary to do during any social function very sincerely, or else, the matter may be reported to *Sarthe* to take necessary legal action against him as per Karbi Customary Laws.

**OVE BARIM:** The *Rong Asarthe* or *Sarthe* of the village has to appoint an aged and wise person of the village as *Ove Barim* in order to enable him to give proper advice to the *Riso -Aterank* of the village. He teaches the youths of village (*members of Riso-Ejang*) how to articulate art and culture including the art of making handicraft for household uses in the future. He is also given the responsibility to teach the Karbi youths how to perform different Karbi cultures, like – singing of Karbi folk songs, Karbi traditional dances and rules and regulations of the Karbi Customary Laws. He is given the responsibility to teach the young boys how to perform jhum cultivation during the time of *Jirkedam*. It is a kind of modern day cooperative society to be functioned in the Karbi villages. Thus, he has to educate the young boys and girls how to execute all kinds of Karbi traditional activities and developmental works under the leadership of *Klengdun* and *Klengsarpo*, as well.

The villages are the backbone of our Indian economy; agriculture is the main source of our

livelihood. There are crores of village populations in our country, India. Hence, it was possible to feed our population sufficiently. The villages are the main contributors of growth and prosperity of our country. The people of my village are strongly bonded to each other. They celebrate 'Rongker', 'Chojun', 'Chomangkan' festivals every year with much pomp and gaiety in our village. The villagers are very hard working and they do not hagitate to toil all day long in the jhum fields. The village women take care of elderly persons and the children very well. Now a day, there is electricity in our village, good drinking water facility and beautiful road connectivity. My parents live in the village

and in my village, our family is highly respected. My grandfather is the village head as well as the head priest of the village. All the Karbi rituals are sincerely performed by him. We are proud of our grandparents.

This is the short portrayal of my village and my family. Let us love our village. To love our village is to love country, to love our country is to love our nation, we love India. □

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## My village - My family

(A Bru village of Tripura)

Pancharam Rieng

The place where I was born has been known as Toisarangjauh located under Amarpur Sub-Division, Gomati District of Tripura. In the area many small hamlets are there like Rejamani Para, Gamanjoy Para, Sungsapha Para, Toipra Para, Kaskau Para, Hapeing Para etc. All the residents used to live on the “Chaar-Nouh” (a high platform house completely made of bamboo) with roof covered by Chhon grass. Not a single mud house was visible till seventies.

Most of the hamlets had a Mtainouh or temple which were mostly constructed at the outskirts of the village, normally just before entry to the village. The common sight of Mtai-nouh or temple are hibiscus flower tree, Sichu plant, Tulsi plant, Mander tree (a medium size tree having spikes at the bottom and having red colour flower), Bowchu tree (silk cotton tree) and cactus tree etc. The temple is a permanent structure made of bamboos and remain as long as the village exists. Sometimes the Bru people in search of fertile jhum cultivation area abandoned their village permanently. The sound of blowing buffalo horn used as conch-shell is heard twice a day, once in the morning and the other in the evening. In my childhood days when we usually heard the sound we could easily make out that offering of puja to the god or goddess was over. The god and goddess commonly worshipped in the Bru village were known as “Hathai-kchu” or “Masa-ktham” (father, mother and son). It has been a common belief that they protect the villagers from all sorts of problems and dangers. They consist of –Longdrai, Sungkhotarinima and Kalajiban. The God Longdrai has been regarded

as father, Goddess Sungkhotarinima regarded as mother and Kalajiban as son. They were offered puja on all auspicious days of the month or year by the Bru people. The first harvest of jhum cultivation is offered to them first before any other deities. God Longdrai was a great priest and a holy devotee of Lord Shiva. He was a holy and pious man before turning into deity by the blessing of Lord Shiva. His wife and son too were pious and holy devotees of Lord Shiva. So they were blessed by Lord Shiva to be turned into deities. His real identity as human being was Toireingpha Aukchai, a famous priest about thousands of years ago. Through his holiness and strong meditative power he even made the inmates of “Swargluk” to oblige him. The Longdrai temple is maintained and worshipped by a man known as “Mtai pusenaiha”. He looked after the “Mtai-nouh” (temple) in all manner. All the village inmates of our village offered their first harvest to the “Hathai-Kchu Mtai”. Apart from these, the villagers sacrificed buffalos, goats and pigs for the well being of their village on an auspicious day.

Programme were organised with great pomp and joy where all the villagers irrespective of age and gender used to meet in a get together. It was a part of our culture that in such occasion the priest and elderly members of each village used to retell the old traditional oral history to the villagers by sipping the cup of “Aarak” (wine) which is offered to the deities and later distributed as Prasad to each and every member before the meal is ready. They taught us how the universe was formed. How human being or our ancestors was created. How the puja system



came into being among the Bru tribe. How the puja is performed and what ingredients are required for the specific puja. And what are the hymns used to different deities. How the symbol of deities is curved on a bamboo pole or in a small part of bamboo. In a brief, the whole life process of Bru tribe used to be depicted orally during any get together programme in each village. Because of such tradition, the history of Bru tribe is still alive in the lips of men having strong memory power and also fond of our culture. The Aukchai or priest held a high status in the Bru society. None of the members who took part in the get together in connection with any puja is allowed to sip a cup of wine or a piece of meal until the priest allowed them to do so. The Aukchai or priest was revered by the host family by touching the feet of the priest placing two bottles of "Aaraq" (country made malt wine). Thereafter the couple of host family asked about the omen of the puja performed. He used to tell how the family will fare in the coming year. It has been our hard and fast rule of Bru culture that the priest is to be provided special dishes in every puja. After the programme is over, a man is appointed to escort the priest safely up to his residence. It has been our custom that a portion of sacrificed animal's uncooked meat is provided to the priest as a token of honour which is called "Aukchai-dosti" Having seen the status of Aukchai (priest) in our society, once in my childhood I had dreamt of becoming a priest.

I was set to a boarding school at a young age to pursue formal education which was far away from my native village. With the advancement of my studies, I gradually got detached from my culture as I had to spend 10 months in a year in the town school and the chance to witness our own rituals become very rare. The proverb aptly said that out of sight is out of mind. Among the educated members among us began to put question what is the use of these kind of puja. And from these arguments, most of our educated members got converted to Christianity. In my childhood I had seen my grandfather to pray the Sun God in the

morning after he woke up. I also witnessed him to pray to Goddess Ganga while taking bath. Women of Bru people used to offer wine bottle to the Lord Shiva in each spell. They placed the wine bottle in a clean place prepared for the purpose with some hibiscus flower near the bathing ghat and say some prayers.

In the Bru custom, there are two type of Aukchai or priest. One who perform Abusumo, Bachauhkamo, Khungkhoh kamo, Para Kaatihamo, Soinairao puing taingmo, Kpal Toilumo etc, while the other rituals that were performed were related to death like Aichu Mai Baomo (meal offered to the soul of the deceased on the following day of cremation), SaSneema Mai Baomo, Lungkhaimo, Nouh-kthar etc. Beside these, there were prominent devotee of Lord Shiva and Durga of our village. They were- Bishnuram Reang (Promilampha), Tasampha Aiyong, Podaingpha Aiyong, Milebchu Aiyong, Saorboinompha Achu,, etc. At the present moment, with the demise of those elderly people, temples or "mtainouh" are rapidly vanishing from sight. The sound of blowing horn is rarely heard. Only two "Hathai-Kchu" temples still survive amid the odd environment. One is located at Parakta and the other is at Hapeing Para of our village.

The main livelihood of our village is jhum cultivation. Now it is replaced by rubber plantation. Earlier no vehicle could ply on the mud road that led to our village, now small car can ply on it. The customs of community worship gradually diminishing and people have began to admire the customs of overseas. The hills, rivulets, old trees still stand as witness to such great change that would destroy our culture and heritage within a very short span of time unless proper steps are not taken in this regard.

I was born in the year 1965 in the month of Agrahayan. And the time of birth as stated by my parents was – around 8.30 a.m. They stated that then the villagers just had completed a part of their assigned morning jhum work for the day. I am stating the actual facts by putting the original

statement given by my parents. It was not their fault. They had no calendar or clock for keeping the right date of birth, month and year for their children. They kept records in their memory, the name of the area of jhum field they had cultivated and simultaneously count the birth of their children easily. They used to say that my elder son or daughter was born when we had our jhum cultivation at “Taobauhkho” (den of bats) and so and so. And the style of telling time of birth is expressed by earmarking part of the day particularly used by our ancestors. The expressions are – horja (midnight), Aichu- Taola khuha kshimo (first round crowing of cock), second round crowing of cock, Aidroih (dawn), Phuaing Leinglaha (rest time for first round jhum work), Sal wa-ksungha (rising sun visible in the horizon that is equal to the length of a bamboo i.e 12 feet), Saja-khring khring (night 12 O clock), Sal- maisubla (time for husking paddy i.e around 3 p.m), Sal-rumo ksungha, Mnauhchrom- chrom, Muhkhangsom etc.

My school records shows that I was born on 28 January, 1965. It became such that during that period the academic session of school used to begin from January to December. When my father took me to school, the teacher easily made an entry in the admission register as they deem fit because my father had no record in hand. I was born in a jhumia family. Both of my parents lost their mother in their childhood. They had to bear the ill treatment of their step mother. Sometimes they recounted their past life and also taught us how to sail across the tough time when someone would have to face in his or her life. When a Bru (Riang) boy get married he has to render free service to his father-in-law’s house at least 3-5 years. During free service period the new groom has to perform all the household jobs assigned to him be it in the odd hours of the day. It is like the young trainees of Indian Army where “no Sir” word has been omitted from their training dictionary. The groom has to oblige any sorts of assignment allotted to him by any elder member of his father-in-law’s family. My father had to undergo three and half years free

service in my grand fathers` family. I was born after three years of their conjugal life. When I was born my parents got separated from the joint family of my grand father. We are six siblings- 3 brothers and 3 sisters. I did my schooling up to class-v at Sonachhara Primary School then sifted to a town from class-VI to XI and then did my graduation in commerce from Maharaja Bir Bikram College, Agartala under Calcutta University. A years after my graduation, I joned govt. service at Civil Secretariat, Agartala. I took the responsibility of education of my brothers and sisters. Among my six siblings 3 brothers and one sister has been in the govt service. My parents used to perform puja as per our culture -like to god Soinairao, Bonirao, Toibuma, Hathai-Kchu, Mkhor Taingmo (Goddess Tripureswari), and other social ceremonies with devotion. I still remember the puja that my father had taken me to Goddess Chandimangal Temple to pray the goddess for my well being when I got admitted in Amarpur H.S.School in 1977 which was far away from my village. I was put to a boarding house for studies. I still keep praying to the god and goddesses that my parents followed. I got married in December 1996. I have two daughters – one has just completed her Bachelor Degree in Agriculture from Central Agricultural University (CAU), Manipur and the younger one will be appearing CBSE Board class-XII (Arts) candidate for 2021. My wife is a strait forward women with a soft heart and follows all religious rituals. She has a strong command over the ritualistic matter because she belongs to a reputed priests` family of Belonia. The name of the priest was commonly known as Toroni Ojhai, (Toroaha Reang) a well known priest from all circle in the state. The Bengali community of Belonia loved him most and used to visit him more than the janjati people. He expired 10 years back. The reputation he carried is still remembered by the people. It was that once K.D.Menon, an IAS officer probably the first Revenue Commissioner of Tripura state by chance met Toroni Ojhai in Kalma, the home town of ojhai. As stated by people, the IAS officer was also belonged to a Kerala Brahmin family. He asked

the ojhai about his personnel life. Ojhai at once sat in meditation and told the whole history of their family accurately – including about his parents, siblings, their properties, number of their houses and their direction and his conjugal life. Since then K.D.Menon Sir had called the ojhai as father and a good relation had developed in between the families till he left the state. When any auspicious day falls like festival or pujas the ojhai`s family is brought to Agartala, Kailashahar, Unokuti, Tirthomukh at Menon`s expenses. He even made arrangements for ojhai and his family members and other elder members of the village to visit to Kamakhya Temple of Guwahati. All the expenses were incurred by Menon Sir. At the end of my writing, I honestly would like to add a point on the expertise of the Ojhai as case history. In the first part of 1996 I went to Kalma with some friends of mine with a view to visit the Ojhai as well as my relatives there. I was then bachelor. So myself and one of my friends went to visit him to know about our future in advance. My friend cum brothers was then married and he had been trying for government jobs. We visited the Ojhai and pay

due respect by conveying namaste or khlungkha. Then we were told to pluck two fresh flower and to put the same in his prayer place. He foretold that my friend cum brother would not get job in his life. Then he switched over and examined his luck in the politics and asked whether he would get any ticket for TTAADC or State Assembly as because he had good links in politics. The ojhai had replied –no chance. Yes, that was true. Neither he got job nor any political tickets in his life. Out of frustration, he ended his life 5 years back leaving behind wife, a son and daughter. For my case- I asked about my would be wife. He says “your wife is here”. Owing to disbelief to his reply, I took it casually and did not ask more and came back home with my friends. Yes, his forecast become true when I got married to his grand daughter in December, 1996. And we are happily shouldering our responsibility by the grace of Achu Sibrai, parents and grandpas and grandmas of both sides. □

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# Village and Family Structures of The wanchos

Dr. Modang Reena

Longding district is the 17th administrative district of Arunachal Pradesh in North East. Longding district was once a part of tirap frontier agency which was created in 1943 covering some areas of Lakhimpur frontier track with administrative headquarter at Margarita town in Assam. The Tirap frontier agency was later renamed as Tirap frontier division under northeast frontier agency, administration Regulation 1954 and administrative headquarter was shifted from Margarita to khela which was again shifted to its present site at khonsa for administrative convenience. The Tirap frontier division was later bifurcated into two districts Tirap and Changlang in 1965. The Longding became fullfledged district of Arunachal Pradesh on 26th September 2011. The district was formally inaugurated on 19th march 2012.

The latitudinal extension of the district is 93°57-95°23'E and longitudinal extension of 27°69-29°27'N. It shares its boundary with Tirap district in the east, Nagaland in the west Assam in the north and Myanmar in the south. The total geographical extension is 1063 sq.km. According to 2011 Census the total population in Longding district is 56,953 out of which 28710 are male and 28243 are female.

## Village and the House Pattern

Almost all the houses are situated on the hill tops which are on the either side of the slope or over the flat area. There is no systematic lay out of the villages nor any definite plan.

For the easy performance of intra –village activity each village is divided into number of segment called “jong” which consists of number

of houses. Each segment has got bachelor dormitory and a controlling junior chief under the main chief of the village.

Any kind of social work in the village like cutting village path, construction of the chief's house etc are generally done “jong” wise but social function like village festivals are performed village wise. Sense of competition prevails among the “jongs” when they perform any work either within the village or outside, but this sense of competition prevail which is of course in respect of own village only. But in respect of other villages, the whole village becomes a unit.

## Family

Family consists of father, mother and their children. This group forms the household which transform to an extended family. Eldest son who by custom live in the parental house, has the responsibility of looking after the family and age old parents. Other sons have to establish individual household after marriage. All the family members of the family take their meal from the common kitchen. But in case of chief it is different. The Chief marries a wangpan girl from the same village especially to cook for him. She is called “sha chonnu” “sha means food “chonnu” means one who serves”. In other word she can be called royal cook. Other wife cook their food themselves. Other wives of chief apart from wanghcha doesn't enjoy special privileges, they cook their own food, goes to the field, work and raise crops like others. Each wife has a separate room called “noi”.

## Kinship System

Wancho society is a patrilineal society. Most of the kinship term are applied to persons of both

cognetic and affinal relationship. Only a few terms are used to denote some particular person which are generally not applied to others. Person who are junior in age are generally addressed by name and narrated to by the kinship term. Both parallel and cross cousin are denoted by common terms but marriage with the cross cousin is permitted whereas parallel cousin marriage is not only forbidden but also considered incest.

### **Marriage System :**

Clan exogamy is strictly prohibited in the society. It is the fundamental rule of the marriage. Intra clan marriage is looked upon as incest and never allowed. Violation of this rule ends in excommunication and even in capital punishment in extreme cases. In case of arranged marriage, marriage is formally negotiated and settled by the parents but the preferences of the young is always considered.

### **Bachelor Dormitory or PAA**

The Wanchos have well institutionalized bachelors' dormitory system which is called 'Paa'. But this institutionalized system is declining and has almost become non-functional. In the good old days bachelor dormitory system was part of life. The bachelor dormitory was an important educational institution for the youth of the village. The custom and tradition have been transmitted from generation to generation through folk music and dance, folk tales and oral tradition, carving of figure on wood. It was also called as a guard house during times of war. The bachelor dormitory is decorated with wood carvings and skull of

buffaloes and other animals sacrificed on various occasion.

There is a qualification for admission to Paa. Generally children do not stay in the Morung as member though they may enter it. But females of any age are prohibited from entering it. Only on the day of construction of 'Paa' young girls and women may serve food in the feast given on that day. In 'Paa' they not only learn cultural values and warfare techniques but also provided the structure for working principle of the village council. In short it is the fulcrum of democracy.

Each Paa has a big long log drum called 'Kham'. Different rhythm produced by log drum beating indicates different meaning. These are known and people on hearing the rhythm or sound act according to the message conveyed.

Like the boys dormitory the girls dormitory was also prevalent known as 'Noi' where the girls would stay in the dormitory after attaining puberty till they choose their life partner and settle in the family life. During her stay in the dormitory she would learn weaving, cooking etc. apart from this she would get lessons about manner, morality and ethical code of conduct. But, unlike Paa the males are allowed to enter into the 'Noi'. But strict exogamy is maintained. The boys and girls of same clan cannot enter or stay in the dormitory of the same clan. □

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# MY VILLAGE MY FAMILY

(A village of the Apatani)

Ms. Dani Nampi

Mahatma Gandhi rightly said - 'The soul of India lies in its villages; for a village reflects the ground reality of any State. The interdependency of people of the village and the collectivism itself says the existence of traditional values. Like any other village, my village Ziro is one such place with distinctive culture and age old tradition.

Ziro, the headquarter of Lower Subansiri district in the state of Arunachal Pradesh is a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains. It is located at an altitude of 5754 ft and its longitude and latitude are about 93 degree 52' and 27 degree 32' respectively. We natives are called Apatanis. This land of the Apatanis has approximate arable land area of 32 square km. There are no recorded evidences regarding the origin of Apatanis. Apatanis trace their descent from their mythical ancestor - Abotani. Although traditional folktales and priestly versions consider the place of origin to be probably Mongolia (it varies from village to village), it is believed that our ancestors had migrated from there by traversing various routes including Tibet, probably Himalayan ranges, Himalayan Rivers to ultimately settle at present valley which was limited in area yet fertile and blessed.

According to 2011 census, total population of the Apatanis is around 29,000 which is spread over n 8 main villages in the Ziro valley out of which Hija is the name of my village. Every village has many clans which comprise of all the relatives (maternal or paternal) and all the offsprings of one ancestor in a lineage. The clan is based on male line descendents since ours is a patriarchal society. Apatani society presently has 77 clans.

The habitation areas in the village are located little away from the agricultural fields. Considering the limited area of Ziro valley in general, every village in the valley has a compact look with houses built at close proximity with each other, 3 to 4 meter apart. Traditional houses are constructed by locals themselves with collective effort using Apatani Bamboo which is different from other Bamboo species. After the completion of every traditional house, a ritual is performed with the belief that it brings peace in the house and blessings from the deities for the residents. Further, the ritual also aims to seek forgiveness from the Gods of forests and nature in general from where all the construction materials like timber, stones etc were brought. Blue pine tree is also used for the same. With the process of modernization, traditional houses are also being replaced by cement concrete houses. Number of purely traditional houses are decreasing. With increasing population many residences are also being built in the agricultural field.

Agriculture has been the main occupation of the people in village since time immemorial. The very systematic and traditional way of Paddy cultivation is popular all over the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The distinctive Paddy cum Pisciculture also has worldwide recognition. Almost every family has one or more than one Paddy field. As per recent data, a total of about 2735 cultivators are dependent on Agriculture. Members of each family are comfortable with the farming process although most of the farm activities are carried out by the female members.

To do the agricultural works, a very traditional

practice is followed in which people form themselves into groups of 6 to 10 members of contemporary age group popularly known as Patang. The members of such Patang make a reciprocal help to one another in agricultural works. This Patang system has been prevalent since old times and is still popular. But these days due to the busy schedules of local people labourers are often hired from outside the valley to carry out agriculture related activities. The reason may also be attributed to the displacement of individuals to other towns of the State away from the village for the sake of job and hence fail to keep up with the farming season. This even results in renting the field to other people who are non native.

Although the land was fertile, yet factors like rainstorms, insects, pests have always been a problem. In order to tackle them certain rites and rituals are performed. The objective is to pray the Gods and Goddesses responsible for those phenomena and seek forgiveness for any unintended mistakes. Also such ritual practices are for healthy yield, bumper harvest and protection from famine, epidemics, pests and hailstones.

Dree festival which is the main festival of the Apatanis is celebrated every year on 5th of July. It is actually the celebration of victory over the malevolent spirits responsible for destruction of crops. This festival had an old form of observance which included celebrations in the respective villages, following taboo periods in which going to field work or the forest was strictly restricted which otherwise had negative consequences in the form of destruction of crops, starvation etc. But today's version of Dree celebration is a reformed one which has become befitting in nature characterized by public feast, music and dance, games and sports etc. There are also some other important festivals celebrated which includes Myoko, Murung. Myoko festival aims to strengthen the relationship between men and Gods and also among men. It is celebrated in the month of March. Another ceremony is Murung which may be considered as the greatest individual rites performed in the month of January.

Usually it takes around the whole month to complete all the ritual activities.

Unlike Dree, these two traditional practices (Myoko and Murung) have remained intact without change since 1983. But the reforms are unavoidable and is clearly visible today in terms of food offering, choices of food, participation in ceremonial procession (today non-Apatanis can also take part in ceremonies unlike before).

Apatani society follows nuclear family system where a father, mother and their children constitute a family. Marriage is based on the rule of clan exogamy and traditionally tribe endogamy. Monogamy is generally practiced. Being a patriarchal society, oldest male is the head of the family who also make all the major decisions but today the times have changed and the decisions making is shared between the male and female elders of the family.

A village is an extended family. There is a sense of fraternity among the individuals of the village which holds them together. For instance, if there is any kind of ritual to be carried out in one particular family, the whole village volunteer themselves for its observance. In case of any dispute among the individuals of the same family, the village council addresses the issue. Likewise if any mishap like fire breaks out in one house the whole village offer itself for the reconstruction of that house. Such activities reflects the inter dependence of families and the village.

We the Apatanis have a democratic system of running our society through the institution of village council called Buliang. This council is responsible for upholding customary laws and traditional practices. Buliang is considered as the highest authority of socio-political and judicial administration in the society as it addresses the issue of major dispute redressal in regard to land, property, family or other social offences in society bringing settlement to the case and thus maintaining peace and harmony therein. The Council usually takes place in a community

platform known as Lapang which is built one for every clan. The status of Buliangs were high earlier as they decided the cases based on customary laws and traditional values but nowadays its services are not much regarded as the values are often compromised while settling issues.

Apatanis are nature worshippers. Danyi Pillo, which is the Sun and the Moon, are regarded as our deities. We also believe in divine spirits of universe. The interaction between the people and the spirits are made through various rituals and rites. The Priest act as a mediator between the Gods or evil spirit and human beings. Any activity which is considered sacred or which demands hymns and chants, whether it be an individual house or in the village, the Priest is called upon for performing the same. There is no monetary demand from the Priest's side. Instead, the society follows a tradition to honor the Priest in which some amount of cash is given which is 200 to 400 rupees at present. Also a certain part, such as forearm of the sacrificed animal is given for every ritual. Thus Priests play a very important role in maintaining the tradition and culture of the village and continues to do so. But nowadays, as the youths are more inclined towards other more promising professions, the role of priest is slowly declining with hardly any youth willing to take up the role. This is due to disinterest among the youths to memorize the hymns and chant them accurately from memory.

As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that the only constant thing in life is change; with contemporary world taking a leap towards change

every day, reforms in tradition and culture of indigenous tribes are bound to occur. There have been noticeable reforms in the ritual practices of my village. Some of the taboos have been discarded, taboo periods have been reduced, there is more acceptances in the society for outsiders in terms of participation in ritual ceremonies. Traditional beliefs are being reformed. While there was no defined structure like temple for praying in olden days, such temples are established in different places now. Such temple for indigenous faith believers of Apatanis is popularly known as Medernello. Likewise, reforms are also visible in the traditional outfits, food habits and education system. Many reforms have taken place in an organized way as per the demands of changing lifestyles and convenience. Despite so, the faith still prevails within each one of the Apatanis that there is a need to preserve and protect our age old culture and tradition which is our identity and make sure that the reform system does not negatively affect our tradition and culture. □

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# My Village, My Family

## (A Singpho Village)

Smt. Koing Samon Umbon

The Singpho people are very old settlers of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in the North Eastern Region of India. In Arunachal Pradesh Singpho's live in Changlang and Namsai District. At Block level at Bordumsai and Diyun and Miao the Singpho villages are found. In Namsai Chongkham Block few villages are there. In Assam, Singphos live in Tinsukia, Jorhat, and Sivsagar district.

The Singpho Villages are set up along the river bank of Nao-Dihing, Buri Dihing and Tengapani. In olden days the river was the only mode of transportation. Some people liked to reside near it. But in plain areas water is found in a well and pond so people spread out in plains. In the Singpho areas the flora and fauna is very rich and evergreen. In olden days the people built their houses in a very complex manner. However now a days they live and build their houses in a plot. The house faces the East and it is believed good for family.

There is no definite shape or size for setting up a village. It may be of any shape. In olden days houses were built long comprising of 10 rooms or 20 rooms as per the number of the family members. But now a day's houses are made in modern design. The older structures are disappearing, cement concrete houses are coming up in the villages also. In a singpho house kitchen was made big and long to accommodate many people at a time. Along with the main house one traditional go-down room was built for paddy storage and one cow-shed. The houses were normally surrounded by fruit bearing trees, Areca nut and Tea bushes. In Villages the medicinal plants were also grown for medical use.

In villages most of the families are joint families where all the family members are accommodated. The family members take care of the old and the infirm. In a village there are some persons who can make prophecies. So before construction of a house people consult with such person and start construction. In olden days the elder person take bamboo pieces and the pieces are cut in two parts and put rice there in triangular shape and put under the plot at night where the construction is to be done. In the night the elderly person of the family will go and try to hear the sound at the spot where the Bamboo piece is put under the earth. Sometimes the sound of animals are heard from there. If the sound of cow, goat, dog is heard then the house can be built there. If the sound of lion or tiger is heard then the plot is good for the chiefs. If the sound of fighting and ghost is heard then it is not good for construction. Early in the morning the Bamboo piece will be dug out and if the thrice rice is intact then it is a good sign. If the rice is not found or if the ant are found then also it is not good for construction.

In olden days the Singpho people used to do Jhum cultivation of paddy but now a day's wet cultivation is done. In kitchen garden vegetables are grown and in every house the 'kotchu' (yam), maize & other vegetables are grown. In some houses fisheries are also found.

In every village there is a headman. The village council is headed by the headman or Gaon Burha. All meetings are held in the house of the headman. In the present times there is a panchayat Raj system as per the instruction of the government.

In our villages has no security fencing to protect the life and property of the villagers. To compensate for it every household fence their compound with bamboo or concrete. Our villages does not have any dormitory system either for boys or the girls.

In most of the villages outsider settlement is not found but in few villages outsiders do settle. Due to this cultural encroachment sometimes occur, land dispute arise and environment is polluted. The villagers sometimes migrate to other areas due to marriage and also to look after the in laws.

The Singphos are basically a Theravada Buddhist. In every village there is a Buddha Vihara where the monks live. The monks are looked after by the villagers by offering them food, cloths, tea and snacks etc. Villagers often offer sumptuous meals to the monks. In every village cooked food is routinely supplied to the monks. Early in the morning the house wives prepare food and offer to the Buddha at their home and also offer at Buddha Vihara. So this also helps in maintaining the traditional legacy of the society. The Dana, Shilla and Bhawana of Buddhist philosophy is transmitted to the generations. The new year celebration (sangken) varsa vasssa 13 days tithi (sandang ) for three months is practiced in every villages. Where the elders observe Astha Shilla and panchashilla by the villagers. The monks practiced Dasa Shilla every day. Buddha jayanti and all the Purnimas, Amavashya and oposathas are observed by the elders.

In every Buddha Vihara and in individual household the offering food to the Buddha and Dipa dana in evening is practiced every day. It has become a way of life. Dipa dana is considered a very sacred practice by all the villagers.

Marriage in the is done in traditional way Singpho community is solemnized in a very traditional way. The bride is brought to home with pomp and show observing all the formalities.

When a child is born then alls rituals and naming is done and those who help in child birth are invited and offered food.

When a person get sick or becomes ill then also some rituals are performed to drive away the evil spirit. The ritual is performed by a village elder.

When a person dies, the family observes seven days penance for the deceased person by inviting the monks and other villagers and feed them to their satisfaction. The dead body is mostly burnt on the pyreas. However a small section of the Singpho community bury their dead.

In this way the social and the cultural values are transmitted to the new generation. The Singpho celebrate a festival called 'Shapaw Agyawng Manau Poi'. This festival is observed by the community together at one place. This festival also helps us to keep our tradition alive.

Family is the unit of society. Families are sustained by village so family and the villagers are inter connected and interdependent. In older days the house is built of Bamboo, timber and palm leaves. The villagers come together and build a house for all the family. In agricultural field also the villagers helped each other. If any festival comes then also they observed it together. In marriage also the villagers played effective role. When a person died the villagers come forward to complete the death rites.

The beauty of our village is one temple, one school, paddy fields, fruit and flower gardens, Tea bushes, beautiful birds and animals. All this beauties glorify our village. Village life is simple and pious. This way all the householders work together, organize meetings every month, engage themselves in economic activities together and have a vision of development of the village to make a heaven on earth.

The individuals of a village must a have deep rooted love for their village. They must inherit the traditions and follow the social norms. They must have common goals to develop education, economy, agriculture, forestry etc.

In Singpho villages the joint family system is still going strong. If any orphan or infirm are there

then the householders and relatives take the responsibility of that person. This kind of gesture is predominant in the north east India. If this system continues then there is no need of old age homes.

In some villages, predominance of some families are found. Man is selfish by nature, egoistic also. So the predominant family most of the time asserts there supremacy in the time of taking decision against the minority families. When an opportunity of contract comes they will grab the contract. If a minority clan boy loves the majority clan girl, they will force the boy to pay fine etc. Now a days Panchayat Raj election are done so in such occasion majority plays role of dominance. So these kind of power games goes on. The minorities are always oppressing in all spheres. But some villages where the headman is virtuous, truth follower and democratic then such things do not occur. It all depends on the nature of people. If all are educated and truth follower then the village will be very beautiful and peace will prevail.

Singpho villagers pray together in Buddha Vihara in every festival. All the villagers come at 7 am to 8 am and pray and offer food, candle, agarbati, flower, Rice, vegetables and other items together.

When the new harvest is taken to home the monks are invited along with the villagers and are offered food. This is called 'sat unlung' (new food) ceremony. The 'sat unlung' is observed in the morning hour. In Buddhism the monks take food for two times before 12 Noon in the day only. In the evening they do not take food. So in the evening also monks are invited for puja at home to drive away the evils spirits and to bring Mangala (Good omen) for the household. If somebody falls sick at that time, the monks are invited for Sutra path (Chanting the Mangala Gatha, Ratna Sutra, Karaniva sutra for invoking the spirituality at the home. If an old person has prolonged illnesses then also a monk is invited to chant Yonsu lik (a prayer) in one go. Due to the effect of that chanting the ailing person gets well or dies immediately in a few

days. It is a belief and reflection of faith in Buddhism.

If there is several calamities in the village then five to seven monks are invited in the village to chant the 'naga parthana' in the four corners of the village. Due to such chanting the village gets peace and happiness and all sorts of evils spirits goes away from the village. Peace prevails in the village. On such occasions no outsiders are allowed to go out of the village the village.

After Sangken and after varsa vassa the villagers pray to village deity and in goju village located on the hills of Digboi which is known as Dubam Bum, worships are performed to protect the village from all sort of calamities. One earth pogoda is made under the pipul tree in the evening where the monks are invited and the villagers come together and pray to the Buddha and obeisance is paid to the Dubam Bum. The Singphos believe the Dubam Bum grant rain for us. The four hills or mountans in our area are very important. Those are patkai Bum, Dirak Bum, Jennam Bum and Dubam. Bum means mountain or hill. The deity of the Bums protects us from all kinds of calamities. We believe that every hills or mountains have its deity or nats. Even the rivers have deity or nats. That is why when we do puja we always share merits to the dewans (nats), nature, earth, galaxies,village and all sentient beings.

In a village the monks plays very important role for maintaining sanctity and serenity of the village. The educated monks shape the ideology of the village binding the village in mutual trust. The village priest of the Singphos is called 'chere' who lead the prayer from the villagers side. Whenever puja is organize the chere comes and prays for the village and also in household ceremony the chere performs the puja. The village priest is also very important in a village. He is much respected and offered goods and money in lieu of spiritual services.

In Singpho villages the matters relating to marital discord are settled in a meeting called by the village headman and attended by village elders.

Both the parties are called to the meeting and the party which is found to be guilty is fined or sometimes the problems are solved after clearing the misunderstanding of both the parties.

The property disputes are also solved by the village committee after hearing both the parties. The traditional and cultural knowledge are transferred through generation by observing the events in day to day life, there is no any institution for it.

In the villages the reforms are very essential in the matters of marriage, drugs and opium addiction, education, economic activities and agriculture etc. In olden days everything was available in the village and the desire or wants of the people were very limited. There was no education or schooling system there so the children's were at home and they learnt everything at home. The boys tilled the land, the girls wove cloths, vegetables were grown by themselves. The firewood collection, koupat collection was done by the boys and girls together,

hunting and fishing done collectively by the villagers.

But now the ways of life has completely changed in the villages. Now every village need schools and children goes to school. Due to that the new generation are unable to weave clothes, do not know artwork and almost all the traditional skills of yore are lost. So the vocational education is to be inculcated among the new generation. Due to cultural invasion by TV and social media the cultures and traditions are also affected in the villages. The traditional clothes and food habits, culture and religious practices have become a showpiece. The need of the hour is therefore a mix of traditional knowledge and modern education, which alone can help in regaining the lost glory of the villages. □

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# My Village My Family

Dr. Tsewang Gyatso Bhutia

This article is based on oral narration made by  
Village Elders and Bulletin of Tibetology (NIT) 2013

Sikkim, also known as Beyul Demojong or hidden land of Guru Padmasambhava has its own distinctive culture, language and tradition and has a place of pride in the history of mainland India. It has also the distinction of being a sacred land located in the North East of India where Mahayana Buddhism flourishes uninterruptedly till today. Buddhism is one of the most prominent religion of the state of Sikkim.

In the proposed article “My Village My Family”, attempt is being made to articulate on various socio-cultural, religious and community aspects of the topic. Being a native of Rongong village, I take this opportunity to highlight some of the important features of my village. Rongong village literally means “rough terrain” is surrounded by beautiful mountains located in the North District of Sikkim at a distance of some 40 kms from its capital Gangtok. Rongong, a small but beautiful village comes under Rongong Tumlong Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU). The village is located amidst of natural environment with all kinds of flora and fauna. Geographically, Sikkim may be divided into four districts: South, East, North and West. North Sikkim being the largest area of Sikkim and is largely populated by its ethnic Tribal communities. Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim are predominant communities of the state. It is recorded in many writings of foreign travelers that people here are honest, kind and hospitable. Theft and cheating are almost unheard of and religious feeling is deeply

rooted in local culture. People would refrain from involving in any kind of unwholesome act. They would not do anything unless they have performed appropriate religious rites first, be it starting a business, embarking on a journey, holding marriage, construction of new house, they would first consult their village priest or Lama. The same is with cattle farming and agricultural tasks.

The Rongong village is well known for its sacred sites as it is believed that there were many practitioners who used to do solitary meditation for several years in and around the village and considered as enlightened meditation master. They were popularly known as Tsampos in local Bhutia language or Lhoke. The village has some 100 households with the total population of 385 and 80% of this population are buddhists by faith and follow Tibetan Buddhist tradition whereas 20% of population are Nepali community who follow Hinduism. People here have been continuously carrying out their age-old farming culture like paddy cultivation, millet, maize, barley cultivation and cattle farming uninterruptedly. In the same way, varieties of vegetables are also grown in abundance. The presence of Nyingma Retreat Centre Woesel Lundup Ling is just above the village founded by Ven. Khenpo Rigzing Dorjee in 2014, similarly Namgyal Chorten or stupa built up at the left side of the road was consecrated and blessed by His Holiness Zuri Tulku Rinpoche of Bhutan in 2018 and the Rongong Mani Gonpa a dedicated

Gonpa for womenfolk, to do prayers on some special occasions. These religious features added yet another glory to the village and have immeasurable significance for the devotees here and cater the religious needs of local people today.

More importantly, the village is also known for its religious importance of 3rd Lachen Gomchen Sangbum or hermitage. The sacred site is located on the hill top of Mophila at the distance of some 6 kms from our village. As we can see the place beautifully located over some 8000 feet and has its own history which is closely attached to the religious sentiments of local people. We can also have a glimpse of magnificent Kanchenjunga and other mountains of Sikkim with a beautiful panoramic view from the hilltop. This holy place has blessed and glorified our village over the years.

The 3rd Lachen Gomchen Ngawang Kunsang Rinpoche (1867-1947) was a great meditation master who spent some years of solitary meditation and blessed this place. In the course of his life, he travelled to Tibet and was famously known as Denjong Gomchen or Sikkimese meditation master in Tibet. It is also to be mentioned that he was well known to the outside world through the writings of French explorer Alexandra David Neel, who was his disciple and she got introduced to Buddhism through Lachen Gomchen during her stay in Phodong monastery from 1914 to 1916. It was also said that she was so impressed with Lachen Gomchen that she tried to take him out of Sikkim but was prevented by local people.

Today, it is in fact disheartening to see the gradual decline of age-old traditions and its values. Looking at the current situation, one could simply see the decline of culture, language and agricultural activities due to many reasons. As of today, traditional Bhutia architecture is can hardly be seen in the villages and some of the old structures need to be preserved and given due attention from Government as a heritage site to promote tourism industry in the State as it is one of the most rapidly growing industry which generates employment for the local educated youth of the village.

It is largely due to the construction of village link roads under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Scheme of Government of India which in many ways, made easy access to the transportation of RCC building construction materials to each and every village. In addition to this, Chief Minister's Rural Housing Mission (CMRHM) under Rural Development Department Govt. of Sikkim which was launched in the year 2010 to achieve the status of a "Katcha House Free State" in the state. In fact, it was a mission to improve the housing status of the poor by providing them a housing grant and alleviate poverty from the state. As a result of it, the old traditional wooden architectures are being dismantled and rebuilt with modern RCC building structure. So, on one hand people living in the rural areas are now easily access to the Vikas Yojana of Government of Sikkim which made their living better and stronger but on the other hand, the traditional architecture of the community is now gradually declining with the emergence of modern lifestyle. Further, this is also to be added that the modern lifestyle has affected village culture in all aspects including age-old farming culture to a larger extent. Today, most of the farming lands are either acquired by Mega Projects like PMGSY, Hydel Power Projects or remain as a barren land. As educated people from rural areas are now preferring to settle in the capital for their better education and employment opportunity. Therefore, the limited man power in rural areas, human animal conflicts and cost involved in the agricultural activity led it declined sharply and now State Government has also been encouraging farmers to operate ploughing machines (Tiller machine) rather than age old bull ploughing which of course affected the cultivation culture.

After Sikkim became 22nd State of India in 1975, several old systems got abolished including Mondol Raj. The Panchayati Raj system then got introduced in the State to streamline the system under mainland India. The community-based decisions are unanimously taken in the village level

meeting under Ward Panchayat or Gram Panchayat of the village. A village level local member (Gyapon) is also nominated on yearly basis to make communication easier and faster. Panchayat of the village is elected from the Panchayat General Election of the State after every 5 year. The Gram Panchayat Units are under Zilla Parishad which comes under Rural Development Department Govt. of Sikkim. The community or village level developmental work and its accountability & transparency are regularly monitored by Ward Panchayat and other members of Gram Panchayat Unit (GPU). The Gram Sabha is held to discuss and implement developmental works under respective Gram Panchayats from time to time.

In the meantime, this is to be recorded that unlike Panchayati Raj system there is a unique practice called Dzomsa in Lachen and Lachung areas of North Sikkim where nominated Pipons (Area leader) are equivalent to Gram Panchayat and they are the decision-making authority within their areas. This system is duly recognized by Government of Sikkim. As far as village fencing is concerned, it is not encouraged in any manner; as every village has their own identified territorial boundary as per the record of Land Revenue Department Govt. of Sikkim and there is no infiltration in the village as such.

The head of the family or elder people of the community are always looked up as a motivator, teacher and mentor for the younger generation, the attempt is also being made to maintain age-old culture, tradition, ethics and moral values right from the family, society and community level. The State in general, has been facing problem of influx who are illegally entering Sikkim from neighboring states including West Bengal & Nepal etc. In some cases, some of these migrant laborers got settled in rural areas of Sikkim. So far, there is no outsider settlement from one village to another. In case of property dispute and marital discord in the village, it is usually an attempt to settle among the family by involving elder people of the village, maternal and paternal relatives and Gram Panchayat. If it

still doesn't get settled then the matter would be taken to the nearest police outpost for further course of action.

Being a buddhist society, village priest is one of the most important components of the village as they have always been the object of veneration and key person in the community. It is very common in Buddhist community that there is hardly no area in the village where village priest is not involved. Right from the birth of child, naming of child, holding prayers for both living and deceased, the village priest is actively involved. As mentioned earlier, Buddhism is a predominant religion of the area therefore, village priest or Lama has an encouraging role to continue the age-old culture and they are the binding factor to keep community intact and live harmoniously. Further, village priest is also involved in ground breaking ceremony of new construction, site examination and house warming ceremony etc.

Moreover, it is customary in the village to hold special dedicated prayer on the 10th and 25th of every month of the year where village priest is invited to do the prayer and every household needs to host the day long prayer on a rotational basis. Similarly, there are several other community-based prayer and puja which is performed on a special dedicated day of the year including important buddhist festivals like Chostrul Duchen (Festival of the Buddha's Miracle), Saga Dawa (Enlightenment, Birth Day and Mahaparinirvana of Buddha Shakyamuni), Drukpa Tseshe (First teaching of Lord Buddha), Guru Trungkar (Birthday of Guru Padmasambhava), Lhabab Duchen (The Descent of Lord Buddha from Tushita Heaven), Bumkor (Mass Religious Procession) and Pang Lhabsol the historic event of Sikkim. Pang translates to "witness", and Lhabsol stands for "worship". The day is dedicated to the celebration of a great event that took place in the 13th century. Pang Lhabsol is a day for the entire Sikkimese Buddhist to commemorate blood brotherhood treaty of Bhutia and Lepcha community of Sikkim which falls on 15th of 7th

month of the Sikkimese Calender. It is also an occasion to invoke and worship the Guardian Deity, Khangchendzonga, and other territorial Deities of Sikkim by both village priests and shamans (Bongthing).

Loosong celebration is yet another important event of the village. The Sikkimese New Year or Sonam Loosong is celebrated on the first day of the 11th month of the Lunar Calender. The celebration is to mark the end of the harvesting season and offering of bountiful harvest to the guardian and family deities which is followed by other merry making celebrations. In the same way, we also do celebrate Losar, the Tibetan New Year Festival on 1st day of the 1st month of Lunar Calender and our Lepcha brothers and sisters celebrate Namsoong as their New Year. Apart from that this is an encouraging fact that there are village priests famously known as Soesunglam (weather controller). It is customary for the villagers to collect household wise contributions and make offering those priests just before harvesting or before any important event like wedding ceremony and funeral service in the village. This practice is still alive especially in the locality of North Sikkim and these village priests are highly revered who had undergone several years of extensive practice to get that title “Soesunglam”.

The head of the family has a very significant role both in the family and in the community. A fascinating feature of Bhutia family is that most of the head of the family is enrolled as a monk in their nearest monastery and they are supposed to discharge role and responsibility as a both family head as well as a monk, it is therefore mandatory for the both Bhutia as well as Lepcha family to enroll one of their sons to become a monk so that he can continue the legacy of his father and grandfather continuously.

In the Sikkimese society, paternal brothers (Phapun) hold special position in carrying out social

and community work. They are especially involved in marriage ceremony of their sons including marriage proposal, engagement and actual wedding. Likewise, they are equally important to perform social rites and rituals of diseased persons of the family. Similarly, maternal uncles are also equally important in the society. In those days, the size of the family was larger than the present day. In my own family I have 8 siblings and the same is with the other families of the village. But, today the size of family is drastically reduced to very limited children due to many reasons. Another feature of the family is that if you belong to the same clan or kinship relations then you will carry on the title of that particular clan and they do common worship of their ancestral family deity once in a year.

It is always motivating that the family members and the villagers are cooperative, supportive and extend their services voluntary during prayer congregation and other occasions. As the practice of joint family does not really exist here but it is customary to help the host family during special occasions by family members and relatives afar whenever need arises. This is also an occasion to get interactions and to share ancient wisdom and cultural knowledge by elders of the family so that the same can pass down to the coming generations.

At the end, Sikkim today is not the same as witnessed by both natives and outsiders. The culture and social structure have changed a lot with the pace of time. State Government has been actively involved in implementing various social, developmental and education programs to make state socially progressive and economically strong. But, at the same time our younger generations should also continue to carry forward the age-old culture, language, ethics and make every effort to safeguard and preserve our traditional values. □

*(The author of this article is An Assitant Proffesor in Namchi Government College)*





# MY VILLAGE, MY FAMILY HABRUBARY

Phuleswar Basumatary

I belong to a very small hamlet called Habrubary in the district of Kokrajhar, Assam. The word 'Habrubary' literally means Muddy village. It is a very sleepy village situated just along the NH 31C in greater Patgaon area and a good 38 kilometers from the district head quarter of Kokrajhar. It is very small village inhabited exclusively by the Bodo people. But it has its neighbors belonging to various other communities like Nepali, Santhal and small number of Rajbanshis and Bengalis. The village has around 35 families. The interesting part is that the entire village has families which has family lineage of 3 to 4 major families only. The villagers basically owe their origin to those family lineage. Over the past, the families have grown in number and have set up their own families. The villagers are agrarian in occupation and most of the families have 5 to 6 members.

The village is situated by the forest reserve under the famous Haltugaon Forest Division, one of the largest forest division in Assam. The village is surrounded by two rivulets on both sides flowing down to lower streams. These two rivulets are the source of water for agriculture purpose and during the winter periods, its flow come down. At one point of time, the village was surrounded by the beautiful dense forest. The Forest was full of Sal Trees, Gamaris and many known and unknown species of flora and fauna. Our village forest is a part of Forest Area which has recently become famous in India for housing different breeds of butterflies. The forest was full of wild animals like elephant, wild boar, deer, porcupines etc. During the leisurely days, the villagers had

the practice of going for community hunting after lunch. At the end of the day, the villagers will return to the village with their prized catch and the same will be shared among all the families in the villages. Further, the villagers had the habit of community fishing whereby all the villagers will collect in the community fishing area. The villagers never used any chemicals in community fishing. In fact, one wild plant called Na RuRwda (One kind of medicinal plant) will be used for fishing in the river. The crushed plant will be poured into the river or pond and the fish will come up from the river bed.

Our village had the wonderful practice of Chauri (Practice of community Help) whereby any villager who cannot complete his household chore like planting rice or ploughing in time will be helped by the entire villagers. For this, the person through the village headman will make an appeal to the villagers to help him. In return, he will have to offer a feast to them. This practice of Chauri is basically practiced in case of ploughing, paddy plantation, wedding ceremony, events related to cremation where the mass participation becomes important. This practice was an wonderful one considering the fact by this no one is left behind while completing their tasks and it brings the entire villagers closer to each other. In our younger days, we witnessed several joint families wherein families of brothers from a single family lineage used to stay together but unfortunately, this practice of joint family system is nowhere to be found in my village today. The concept of joint families really had many advantages like economic and social security. The

predominant role of the parents in a family were very visible in almost all the families. Almost all the families were strictly guided by the words of patriarchal head of the family. In a joint family, the role of eldest brother was unquestionable.

The village is administered by the Village Headman (Gaounburah) who is ordinarily aided in day to day administration by Halmaji, who is none other than the village messenger. He is appointed by the villagers and paid from the village account. His job is basically to help the village headman in running the village administration. He announces the important programme of the village to the villagers on behalf of the village Headman. Crime of any kind was unheard of in our childhood days. Any kind of minor dispute used to be settled by the villagers themselves and I do not remember any official from the civil administration or Police administration visiting my village solve any dispute. In our childhood days, the practice of Daaini (Witch hunt) used to be prevalent and we used to hear those gruesome incident from our nearby villages where many innocent people were killed in the name of witch hunting. In our village, all except one family used to practice Bathou Religion. The entire villagers after harvesting will offer Prayer in our community ground of Worship, Garja. The place of Garja Puja is normally performed in the precinct of the village only. This is basically a community worship where villagers used to worship for the well being of the entire village. Sacrifices were made in these worships and community feast held. Our village did not have any specific village priest but we used to have one person who used to be known as Douri who at the end of village rituals will sprinkle Holy Water in the households of village. He purifies the village houses. As the villagers had their family lineage in the village, we never witnessed any new family settling in our village from outside. But yes, some of our village man had migrated to nearby forest villages for better life. There they cleared the

forest and settled down with their families.

Literacy rate in our village was very poor. In our younger days, most of our younger generation and girls engaged themselves in farming activities. Parents were too happy to send their sons and daughters to agricultural fields. But over the years the scenario has changed and now almost all the households in the village have school/college going children even though the ratio of villager holding govt. job is very poor. The first one to join the govt. job was from my family only when my father became a school teacher years back in 1960s. Next to him was my uncle who became MBBS Doctor and joined the Govt. service years back in late 1960s. Over the periods, the boy and girls from my village with higher educational qualification have moved to town like Kokrajhar and began settling down there.

The practice of common village youth dormitory was unheard of in our village which was otherwise practiced by other Tribal people in the region. The greatest moment of joy in the village used to be the wedding ceremonies where village people could be seen singing and dancing. There used to be two kinds of wedding- one being the most traditional one-Hathashuni and the other as per the Brahma Religion. Our village being predominantly inhabited by the Boro people practicing Bathou, the wedding ceremony used to be conducted as per Hathashuni tradition. The Hathashuni wedding ceremony was very simple and used to be over within hours. The practice of Dowry was unheard of and thankfully in our village it is still considered a taboo.

Our village had no specific cremation ground. In our younger times the dead bodies were mostly buried near our village end. At present, this practice of burial has almost been done away with and now dead bodies are cremated in wooden pyres. Though the practice of collecting ashes was not there among our villagers, we used to hear that some vital parts will be taken out from the dead body and the same will be placed at the

crab's burrows in the village river. The argument justifying this strange practice was that the soul of the dead person will remain in peace inside the crab burrow. The cremation will be followed by Sharadu (Shraddha) wherein the relatives and the villagers will collect at the place of the deceased for post cremation rituals.

Though many of the practices of the bygone days have disappeared over time, some of the predominant practice of village rituals and values are still in vogue. Inter caste marriages and

conversion to other religion is yet to be seen in my village. People are still predominantly farmer by profession even though many have switched over to govt. job and some other profession. Literacy rate has gone up by and large compared to previous years. Financially, our villagers are almost in the same ratings. We don't have extra ordinarily rich people and people seem to be happy with their present life style. □

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## The *Krai Pinung*: Tiwa Root Village

Dr. Raktim Patar

A Tiwa village is among the most closely knit village set-ups that one can find among the tribes of Northeast India.<sup>1</sup> It is the centre of socio-religious and economic activities. It closely controls, monitors and determines every act of the Tiwa individuals of the village. In a traditional Tiwa village, the village elders (*Pisai*) play a very important role. Their support and consent are absolutely necessary to undertake anything other than what is laid down by Tiwa customary laws and tradition. Without the consent of the *Pisai*, practically nothing can be done in a village.

According to a legend current among the Hill Tiwa, in the olden days the Tiwa people consisted of twelve clans who lived together for several centuries at Nukurikhunji.<sup>2</sup> Clans had their priests (*Loro*) under whom they would offer different sacrifices at different seasons of the year. Here they often fought among themselves over the right in selection of chiefs and for gaining dominance in village administration. With the passage of time, such internecine feuds caused organisation of clans into different groups. Subsequently these groups moved out of Nukurikhunji and settled at various places. In this process, twelve villages came into existence. These villages were Amsai, Marjong, Amni, Rogkhoi, Makro, Lumphoi, Mayong, Amkha, Amri, Sagra, Ligra and Amjong. It is important to

note that, when the Tiwa meets their fellow tribesmen they generally identify themselves by the root village to which they belong. Even in case they form a new village away from their root village, they would identify themselves by their original village. They use the suffix *wali* to denote their place of descent such as the Amsai-wali, Marjong-wali, Rogkhoi-wali etc. signifying the particular root village. The Tiwa called these twelve villages as *krai pinung* or the root/original village. Out of the twelve root villages Amri and Ligra is no more in existence.<sup>3</sup> During our fieldwork, we traced a village by the name Boramri in the Kapili valley near Chapormukh under the Raha revenue circle in Nagaon district. Our informants told us that according to their oral tradition the ancestors of Boramri had come down to the present area from the hills of West Karbi Anglong. From the description we can assume that the present Boramri is an offshoot of the now extinct Amri village. Presently the Assam government has created a development block by the name Amri in West Karbi Anglong after the lost village of Amri. As far as Ligra is concerned we could not find any village by this name. However we could trace an oral tradition shared by the Tiwa people of Bherakuchi, Nibera, Bahtola and Bamfor in the Demoria area of present Kamrup district that

<sup>1</sup> S. Karotemprel, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church Among the Tiwa*, Shillong, 1981,.,,p.8

<sup>2</sup> According to the Hill Tiwa Nukurikhunji was a village of one hundred and eighty families. They say that it was located on a hill near Bormarjong village around 40 kilometers from Jagiroad in the Amri development block of West Karbi Anglong district of Assam. This oral tradition is still current among the Hill Tiwa. It was also recorded by N.K. Shyamchaudhury and N.N. Das in *The Lalung Society*, ASI, Calcutta, 1973, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Exact reason for the disappearance is not known. Many people believe that due to short distance migration propelled by epidemic and *jhum* cultivation might be some of the reasons. During our fieldwork we found that short distance migration due to epidemic and other superstition such as attack of ghost and unnatural death is a common phenomenon among the Tiwa.

indicate that they are the descendants of the *Ligrawali* people.

Presently four root villages namely Mayong, Amjong, Makro and Lumphui are located in the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya under the Khyrim chieftainship. Every year the representative of these villages offer their annual tribute in the form of a he-goat to the Khyrim chief on the occasion of the Nongkrem festival held in the month of November at the official residence in Smit village near Shillong.

The present Tiwa villages in the hills of Karbi Anglong district of Assam as well as villages in the plains of Nagaon, Morigaon and Kamrup and in Meghalaya are the branches of the twelve root villages mentioned above. The Tiwa call the branches of the root villages as *phams*. The *phams* traditionally owe allegiance to the root village and identify themselves as a part of it. It is mandatory for the *phams* to participate in all the important festivals of the root village and contribute both physically and financially. The following are the root villages and its offshoots enumerated in the course of fieldwork:

**Table showing the Pinung and Its Branches**

Root Village( <i>Krai Pinung</i> )	State/ District	Branch Village( <i>Phams</i> )
Amsai	Assam/West Karbi Anglong	Moro, Amsai Pisa, Chukuri Amsai, Mawlen and Punduri Makha
Bormarjong	Do	Sukuri Marjong, Khawra Krai, Silangkunji, Natral, Hadaw, Umbormon, Uthangkunji, Murji Khunji, Deosal, Dabarghat, Pumakhunji, Khaplangkunji, Bhulaguri, Sanisor, Amdoba, Mugaguri, Bhongraguri, Mobai, Singum, Kyabat
Amkha	Do	Amdoba, Maslaikhunji, Amkhalam, and Kothiyatoli
Amri	Do	Boramri
Borrongkhoi	Do	Balikhunji, Tharakhunji, Rongkhoisa, Gomnasal, Gorkhunji, Andari Krai, Amsikhunji and Ashukhunji
Amni	Do	Amnisa
Ligra	Assam/Kamrup	Bherakusi, Nibera, Bahtola and Bamfor
Magro	Meghalaya/ Ri-Bhoi	Phatmagro, Ulukhunji, Tiwa Jungthung, Silaguri, Khromkhunji, Khumrai Khora and Orlongshadali
Amjong	Do	Amdubighat, Markongduba, Panbari and Tiami-Amjong
Lumphui	Do	Phitrisal, Dapsal, Krombaro and Tiami
Sagra	Do	Amphreng
Mayong	Do	No branch identified

Ethnographic evidence reveals that the Hill Tiwa villages are set up near the source of water in the foothills, valleys and in the ridges. In absence of big water body such as a river in the Tiwa inhabited region in hills of West Karbi Anglong the settlement pattern of the villages are determined by numerous small streams.

To understand the settlement pattern of the Tiwa, surveys were conducted at Tharakhunji, Bormarjong, Khawrakrai, Hadaw, Singlangkhunji, Khromkhunji, Silaguri and Amsai village in the Amri development block of West Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The survey showed that the Tiwa have settled in different kinds of landscape. Most of these villages are located on hilly slopes and along the narrow valleys of the small hilly streams.

Houses in Tiwa villages are not compact and follow a scattered plan wherein houses are located at some distance from each other. The number of houses in a village generally varies from 20-150 households. Every household has a well maintained kitchen garden protected by seven to eight feet tall bamboo fencing called *pera*. These bamboo fences protect the family from the intrusion of wild animals and work as a fortified wall. The compound has only one entrance located in front of the house. The entrance is regulated by a bamboo gate called *langra*. It is three to four feet wide made of hanging bamboo tubes attached to a bamboo stick placed at the top supported by two bamboo poles on two ends. While entering the gate one has to draw the bamboo tubes aside and the loud sound thus created while opening the gate works as a doorbell. The major determinant in house forms is the use of locally available materials. Hence houses are equally constructed using bamboo, wood and grass for thatched roofs.

The *Loro* along with eleven members of the council of elders in a village are collectively known

as the *Pisai*. Other than the *Loro*, the members of the *Pisai* are selected from among the senior members of the village. Once selected the members of the *Pisai* continue to hold office till they die or get too old to do any work. If any member of the *Pisai* dies, his place is not filled until the next *Khelchawa*<sup>4</sup> festival that takes place once every five or six years. Being the head of the *Pisai* the *Loro* is also known as the *Pisai Mul*. The following are the twelve members of the *Pisai*: *Loro, Tolo, Phador, Shangot, Maji, Hadari, Barika Baro, Barika Pisa, Phayak Mul Kra, Phayak Mul Majowa, and two Phayak Mul Jokba*. According to tradition, each of the positions in the *Pisai* system is distributed equally among the clans of a village.

Apart from discharging secular responsibilities such as settlement of disputes and penalizing the offenders; the *Pisai* also actively takes part in all the religious functions of the village. They decide the date of ceremonies and carry forward the process of celebration. During the religious ceremonies the *Tolo* oversees the preparation of the place of sacrifice. The *Phador* oversees the preparation of the place of sacrifice along with the *Tolo*. The *Sangot* is an important member of the *Pisai* who prepares the materials required for various religious ceremonies. On the other hand, the *Maji* is responsible along with the *Sangot* to take care of the animals required for a religious ceremony. The *Hadari* is the personal assistant of the *Loro*. He assists the *Loro* in various religious ceremonies. He has to stay near to the *Loro* and provide manual help to the *Loro* during religious ceremonies. Among the *Pisais*, there are four positions of *Phayak Muls*. They are appointed by the *Loroto* act as helpers during religious ceremonies. According to tradition, anyone who is offered rice beer in a bronze bowl in the *Loro's* house is thereby appointed to the post of *Phayak Mul* and has to accept the responsibility.<sup>5</sup> They are

<sup>4</sup>The *Khelchawa* festival marks the demolition of the old youth dormitory and inauguration of a new one. It is the time when the youth body or the *PanthaiKhel* gets its new leaders to manage the *Shamadi*, the youth dormitory of the Tiwa. In the past the *Khelchawa* festival was held after a gap of five or six years. But due to the expenses involved and paucity of resources, some villages take up to twelve years to have a *Khelchawa* festival.

<sup>5</sup>U.V. Josh, *Tiwa-English Dictionary*, Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Culture, Shillong, 2014, p. 418

responsible for cleaning, cooking and serving at religious ceremonies. The *Pisai* also includes two *Barikas* or messengers. They are responsible for conveying messages and collection of donations/contributions from the village. It is noted that the member of the *Pisai* are well versed in their given responsibilities and discharge them according to time honoured tradition.

Besides the *Pisai*, another important person in a Tiwa village is the *Sarkari Gangbura* or government appointed headman. He is not a part of *Pisai* but holds a significant position as he is appointed by the Government. In the hills of Karbi Anglong, he acts as an agent of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. Though he is not allowed to take active part in any of the religious ceremonies, nevertheless his status is considered to be higher than that of a common villager. The main functions of a *Sarkari Gangbura* are to assist visiting government officials during the general census, election purposes, implementation of government schemes etc.

In a branch village or *Pham* the *Pisai* is composed of a *Gangbura*, one *Tewri*, one *Parikha* and one *Randbuni*. There cannot be a *Loro*, *Toloi* or *Shangot*

in a *Pham* as it is exclusively reserved for the root village. It is mandatory to inform the *Loro* of the root village, when someone is appointed as a *Pisai* of the *Phams*.

The main function of the *Pisai* of the root villages is to conduct the religious ceremonies. They also act as the overall in-charge of village administration. They not only look after the religious needs of the people but also act as an institution to maintain social harmony and peace. Under the leadership of the *Loro*, the *Pisai* disposes a majority of disputes according to the customs of the Tiwa society. Punishments for different types of offences are imposed by the *Pisai* according to customary law. Penal fine are imposed in cases of disobedience of village social customs and rules. In many occasions, the *Pisai* acts as a jury to resolve petty criminal cases and disputes associated with land and property. In fact, the *Pisais* are the custodian of Tiwa customary law. While pronouncing judgments on different cases the *Pisai* may ask advice of the *Sarkari Gaonbura*. □

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# Purni: My Village My Family and Searching for Identity

Dr. Surajit Ray

## Introduction

The question of what constitutes a family is one of the long-standing debatable topics among the sociologists. The concept of family is a subjective issue that varies from person to person based on their own socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a family is a group consisting of one or two parents, their children and their close relations. A husband, a wife, and two children, may be even a pet, is a traditional family for the Americans of the twentieth century. The Bharatiya concept of family, on the other hand, refers to a small unit in a society where children dwell in a home with their parents, grandparents and other close members in coexistence of their domestic animals. Although the concept of family in Bharat is mostly associated with the traditional structure of joint family system, it is now disintegrating into nuclear families due to various factors, such as western influences, shifting to other places after joining government and non-government service sectors, migration to towns and cities in search of work, etc. Nevertheless, family is the strongest organized social unit that binds its members with love, affection, brotherhood and a sense of belongingness towards one another.

As far as village is concerned, it is a heart and soul of a nation. Mahatma Gandhi once said that 'the soul of India lives in its villages'. Village is a second unit of the society which is also a strong social unit where everyone is interrelated to one another. From this structural point of view, a village is regarded as a large, or

an extended family where the responsibilities of each member of the extended family enhance manifold as each one of them are required to manage various situations in a collective manner. Unlike an urban society, shared responsibility is still there in a village which is guided by its age-old lineage of various sacrosanct traditional values that they follow with all reverence. Community-based rituals, traditions and festivals celebrated in a village intensify the sense of integration and consciousness among the members of a village. Certain villages tend to formulate laws and principles that govern the society for the safety and security and orderly management of the village, ensuring peace and tranquility for all. Later such village laws and principles slowly and gradually turn into tradition and customs of the society.

Village being a strong unit of a social organisation plays an important role in maintaining identity of individuals. To make a place their comfortable habitation, people have to depend on certain dynamics, such as topography, economy, society (i.e., peace, security, cooperation, etc.) and ecology, and these dynamics, in return, provide distinctive identities to the people who settle in such a situation adjusting with these factors of the ecosystem. If a geographical area provides a human-friendly and liveable environment, people start making settlements there and thus they get accustomed to the place and grow a sense of belongingness with it and maintain their geographical identities with the place of their living. Geographical identity of people gets solidified not only due to



the physical factors, but also due to the affective factors that connect the people to the geographic entity emotionally and psychologically. Once identity is established, people grow community sentiment which is the primary core of any village community. They display a strong sense of belongingness and 'we-feeling'. Often "my own village" is the normal expression of such community sentiment.

A humble attempt is being made here to give a picture of my village focussing on its characteristic socio-cultural and historical aspects, with special reference to the people of the Koch-Rajbangshi community.

### **Geographical Location of the Village**

My village Purni is located under the Revenue Circle cum Police Station of Golakganj in the district of Dhubri, Assam, India. The village, situated on the northern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra, is 30 kilometres away from the district headquarters at Dhubri. The Rupsi Airport is adjacent to the village which is 8 kilometres in the east. Its nearest town and railway station is Golakganj which is 10 kilometres in the north. There is a market in the village known as Harirhat, where all necessities are available on all the days of the week. The village is well-connected by good mortorable roads.

The shape of the village is almost triangular with a total geographical area of 380.17 hectares. As per the 2011 Census data, there are about 707 houses with a total population of 3,073 of which 1,614 are males and 1,459 are females. The village falls within the Harirhat Gaon Panchayat under Golakganj Development Block in the district of Dhubri, Assam.

### **Traditional Livelihood Systems**

As far as the population diversity of the village is concerned, people of different caste, creed and religion live in this village. Agriculture is the principal source of income for a majority of the people, with an exception of those who

work in the government and non-government sectors. Fishing is also a means of livelihood for a certain section of the people. The river Gangadhar that flows through the village and other water bodies provide support services to the people who depend on fishing as their way of living. After agricultural activities are over, a section of the people of the village, such as masons, painters, dairy farm workers, etc. tend to migrate to different cities searching for work to earn extra money during their off-time periods of agricultural activities.

However, with the passage of time, there has been a change in the livelihood pattern of the Koch-Rajbangshis, the major community of the village. In the age of LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation) and due to the spread of education, the Koch-Rajbangshi youths are able to manage government jobs and other opportunities which support the economy of their families. Educated youths tend to migrate to cities and other States to join the MNCs and other business establishments. However, with agriculture becoming less attractive and less profitable due to use of traditional tools the Koch-Rajbangshi youths of the disadvantaged section tend to search for alternative ways of livelihood such as business, masonry, carpentry and sometimes migrating to big cities for jobs.

Apart from the above, there have been several Koch-Rajbangshis employed in various government sectors, especially in education and military. Over the last three decades or so, youths from this community have joined military services of the country in good numbers. There are ample examples where there are two to three members from a single family who have joined the Indian military services.

### **Housing Pattern**

The people of the village, especially the Koch-Rajbangshis prepare their settlements in a unique way. While constructing their houses, they are always guided by the customary dictum "poobey

haash, pachimey baash, uttarey guwa, dakshiney dhuwa” that has an inherent economic viability, in addition to respecting the ecosystem. The meaning of the dictum is that, there should be a pond on the east side of the house, a bamboo bush on the west, a garden of betel-nut trees on the north, while the southern side of the house should be open. The fishery, the betel-nuts and betel leaves, and the bamboo garden are the traditional and regular sources of income for the Koch-Rajbangshi families. Every family possesses a fishery where they grow fish and sell them to the fishermen from time to time to meet their family expenses. Similarly, a bamboo garden is not only a basic source of support in making their houses, but also a source of income. The Koch-Rajbangshis earn money by selling bamboos. With the joint families disintegrating into nuclear ones, such housing patterns are not strictly followed these days.

Traditionally, the people of this village build their houses with bamboos with thatched roofs. Around the 1960s, they started building houses with cement-plastered interwoven bamboo walls supported by wooden frames with the holding of roofs made with tray-shaped clay (locally known as tali). However, to avoid constant repairing and rainwater leakage in summer, the people started using tin sheet for durable roofing solution. With the passage of time and with the improvement of their economy, some of the people of the village got going with the construction of PCC (plain cement concrete) and RCC houses. It is a matter of great satisfaction that presently the economically vulnerable people of the village have become able to get their concrete houses constructed with the help of the social welfare programme, the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awas Yojana (PMGAY).

### **Community Decision and Security Scenario**

For local level government, there is a Gaon Panchayat for carrying out developmental works. Whether it is government or public-initiated developmental work in the village, the people

tend to take decisions on a community basis for right implementation. When any government-initiated developmental work starts, the people keep watchful eyes on them for proper implementation of the government scheme. Besides, the people also construct various temples through public donations with due consultation with the villagers. They believe that, donations received from the members of the village and of its surrounding areas in the constructions of temples create a sense of brotherhood, religious integration and spiritual satisfaction among the people. While organising any community worship, fair and competition, people get together and take collective decision for successful completion.

As far as the security scenario is concerned, the village has a Village Defence Party (VDP) for ensuring the safety and security of the village. Besides this, when any problem arises, the people take community decision to keep vigil at night to prevent any untoward occurrence. To put pressure on the government departments to complete delayed or pending works, the villagers get together to protest against such delays and inefficiencies of the departments.

As the river Gangadhar flows through this village, some ‘chars’ develop on its own within the river which are generally outside the regular watch of the police administration. Such areas are always thought to have served as safe haven for the infiltrators and harmful elements. Moreover, the population of such areas are generally educationally backward.

### **Joint Family System and Family Planning**

As mentioned above, family is the strongest organized social unit that binds its members with love, affection, brotherhood and a sense of belongingness towards one another. The people of the village used to live in joint families where all worked for the common interest of the family. While the men worked in the agricultural fields, the women worked together for the family by

performing household chores. To accommodate the large number of members of the family, there used to be four houses with rooms on four sides of their housing complex, along with a separate kitchen. After the day's work, all the members used to sit in the courtyard, a space within the four houses, in the evening for tea and rest.

However, with the passage of time, a wave of change has swept over the village transforming the family structure. The joint families have now fallen apart and turned into nuclear families. There are, of course, various reasons for this, such as western influences, shifting to other places after joining government and non-government service sectors, migration to towns and cities in search of work, etc.

As far as family planning is concerned, there had been no such idea among the people before four or five decades back from now. As they had sufficient land and other properties, they needed manpower to take care of the agricultural lands. They were of the belief that, their children would be able to handle their ancestral land and properties in their absence in future. The villagers were guided by their practical wisdom in those times. However, with the passage of time, the people of the village too have changed their thinking process with regard to family planning. With the increase of population in the family, the land and other properties became insufficient for them. In view of secure and happy family, they started planning of a small family. At present, most of the families have adopted two-child policy which is not only convenient for them, but also sustainable for the motherland.

### **Value Systems**

Values reflect one's sense of right and wrong. They work not only as guiding principles that help a family and a village grow and develop in the right direction, but also assist to create the future they want. The decisions that are made reflect the values of the family and society. Values are

generally learnt from the parents and the village elders. Sometimes new life experiences may change values of a family and a society that are previously held.

In view of the value systems prevailing in the village of Purni, the parents and the village elders enjoy respectful social positions. Unlike the urban society, there is no old age home in the village. The parents are well taken care of by their sons and daughters. Although joint families are broken into nucleus families, parents are taken care of by their sons. Parents are thought to be repository of traditional knowledge who guide the growing generations. Love and affection between the grandparents and grandchildren have been strong. The practice of telling stories related to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by the grandparents to their grandchildren has strengthened their moral character.

Matrimonial relations are made by following the traditional social norms of the village. Marriages are generally arranged ones. Inviting the people of the village to one's family programmes and social festivals has been a conventional social system of the village. This practice has served the village to stand united, thereby maintaining social relations afresh and intensifying the sense of brotherhood. Participation of villagers in the social functions has solidified their sense integration.

In organising family functions, such as marriage and other rituals, people used to be interdependent. People would extend helping hands to one another with manpower, along with materials, such as utensils, decorative materials and even with money. In the absence of modern-day catering systems in those days, local boys and girls used to serve food in the family functions. Money was collected from the society to help the economically weaker people who were going to organise marriage ceremony for their daughters. However, a lot of changes have taken place today. Things are not the same as they used to be.

## **Traditions and Puja Practices**

The people of this village, especially those of the Koch-Rajbangshi community, are the committed followers of the folk traditions of this village and its surrounding region since ancient times. The tradition of the Koch-Rajbangshi community is multifaceted, based on which various folk festivals are observed. The indigenous worship system of the Koch-Rajbangshis is quite different from all other communities. They worship various deities, such as Hoodoom, Marai, Kartik, Sonarai, Madankam, Suwasoni, Joka, Baisto, Mashan, etc. Remarkable among them is the Hoodoom puja, where only women organise the puja on a darkest mid-night, at a secluded place, away from their homes, in a bid to invoke the god, Barun. Along with the offering of puja ingredients, the women wear clothes as minimum as possible and sing to the god of Barun in a language which is not normally used in day-to-day communications. The Koch-Rajbangshi women believe that, it is the intensity, passion and force of the language used in the prayer song that the god of rain gets easily invoked and pleased. Being satisfied with their songs, the god blesses them with showers of rain that helps the cultivators.

Another distinctive puja observed among the Koch-Rajbangshi people is Marai puja. It is also known as Manasha puja. Marai is traditionally worshipped as the snake goddess. It is organised at the individual as well as at the community levels. To get rid of snake bites and to do away with any misfortune, Marai puja is held. As this goddess is worshipped in every household, Marai is often called a home deity. It is a traditional practice among the Koch-Rajbangshis to worship Marai when any marriage ceremony is solemnised in their family.

In addition to the above, there are several other gods and goddesses such as Ghar-Goshani, Rakkhal, Thakurani, Shitalata, Dhumiya Thakur etc. which are traditionally worshipped by the Koch-Rajbangshis in the village of Purni and its surrounding areas.

## **Village Priest and his Functions**

The people of the Koch-Rajbangshi community of our Purni village have their own priests known as Bairagi. The word Bairagi refers to a righteous person, who keeps himself away from material desires, attachment and greed and helps promote spiritual understanding of the people. The Bairagi is given priestly right by the society to perform rituals in the houses of the Koch-Rajbangshis. He is not to engage in any other profession, but to perform religious rituals and offer puja in the households. In order to resume daily puja practices at a household halted due to someone's death, or any other inauspicious incident, the Bairagi has to offer puja at the altar of Tulsi, a sacred plant and purifies the members of the family. In addition to this, in a religious ceremony held in a household, the community feast is prepared by the Bairagi. He enjoys an exalted position in the social space of the Koch-Rajbangshis.

## **Historicity of the Village**

The village of Purni is a witness to the historic events that occurred during the times of the Koch kingdom in the sixteenth century. The historic 'Gohain Kamal Ali' runs through the village. As the history goes, before launching the attacks against the Ahoms, the Koch king Naranarayana and his brother Chilarai had instructed their younger brother Gohain Kamal to construct a 600 kilometres (350 miles) long highway connecting Kooch Behar with Narayanpur (Lakhimpur). Gohain Kamal completed the task in 1547 in record time of only one year. This highway, known as 'Gohain Kamal Ali' is one of the long-lasting contributions of the Koch King.

## **Conclusion**

The village of Purni is inhabited by the people of different caste, creed and community whose livelihood chiefly depends on agriculture. Peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding are the characteristic features of the village. Simplicity and

warm hospitality are the elemental character of the people of this village. The age-old value system of the village has worked as a guiding principle in strengthening the socio-cultural and communal fabric in the village. The Koch-Rajbangshis, the aboriginals of this village, are socio-culturally rich upholding their traditional dignity. The distinct gods and goddesses and their traditional puja practices indicate the unique characteristics of the Koch-Rajbangshi community of this village and its surrounding region.

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# “MY VILLAGE MY FAMILY”

Sahiya Jamatiya

This article has been prepared with oral inputs from the Village Head, my mother and the community inhabitants of our village. No support from any Book or magazine have been taken except the village registration records.

- Author

## Introduction:

Tripura is a small state located in in northeastern India. The third-smallest state in the country, it covers 10,491 km<sup>2</sup> (4,051 sq mi) and is bordered by Bangladesh to the north, south, and west and the Indian states of Assam and Mizoram to the east.

The state had eight districts, 23 subdivisions and 58 development blocks. Eight Districts are: North, Unakoti, Dhalai, Khowai, West, Sepahijala, Gomati, and South.

## General Information about My village Khamar/Khapar Bari:

In the above context I had mentioned about had been eight district , because as per topic I have to mention that from where and which district belong to I and my family and my village . Earlier we were belonged under West District but after 2012 we became under Khowai District, Teliamura Sub-division. Actually my village is under south pulinpur ADC Village. The geographic location of Khamar Bari is located in teliamura block of Khowai District in the state of Tripura. The nearest town is Teliamura, which is about 14 Kilometers away from Khamar/Khapar Bari. The village of khamar/Khapar is located 2 km away from teliamura to khowai main road, another land

mark is teliamura railways station its about 1.5 km away from local village road.

## Elements of setting up a village:

One important element of setting up a khamar/ khapar village is still controversial. According to my Mother we shift out of our original place of habitation because of some social problem (Kind of community & Religion problem) hoping for a better survival requirements like avilibility of water and natural resources as informed by the residents of that area. We call the area chosen for habitation as Khapar which means an area where people can work on agricultural land on temporary basis. In documents it is also named as Khamar.

As per record of village registration for last 20 years there are 160 households in the village. Population-wise there are 50.10% females and male constitute 48.28% of the population. There are 6 tribes including the Jamatia who live in the village.

## Land and Natuaral Resources in Khapar:

Natural temperature of the area around our village is average. In winter maximum 6 to 7 Deg celcius and during summer max 35 to 38 Deg celcius, During rainy reason sometimes floods inundates the village after railway tracks were laid through the village. This is because after laying up of the railway tracks no passage way for the rainwater was left. As a result of these flash floods

the villagers often has to suffer.

### **Flora and Fauna**

In Tripura there are three different types of ecosystems: mountain, forest and freshwater. The existence of bamboo and cane forests with deciduous and evergreen flora adds to the quality of village ecosystem. However presently there are some small changes due to the increase in grasslands and swamps, particularly in the plains area of our village.

### **Environment:**

The topography features seem to have influenced the climatic condition of our village, where the plains are hotter in comparison to the hills. The four main season here are- (i) Winter season (December to February), (ii) Pre-Monsoon season (March to May), (iii) Monsoon Season (June to September), and (iv) Post Monsoon season (October to November). During summers the diurnal temperature goes above 30 to 35 degree Celsius and in winter it can drop down around 8 degree Celsius.

Irrigation system upon which agricultural activities depend is entirely controlled by the drainage system i.e., rivers, canals, streams, pond and obviously rain. About 90 % of the village geographical areas are characterized by plain land covered with grassland and swamps.

### **Agriculture scenario:**

It is quite different between earlier and present system as per village people because earlier people depended on agriculture like paddy cultivation, vegetable and many different kinds vegetables depending on the seasons. In olden days people had lot of land area and they could get sufficient return for their hard labour. In contrast the people now a days have lesser agricultural land but can manage their families out of the benefits from different government schemes and incomes from well paid government or private jobs by virtue of their educational upliftment. Village people now a days often complain that they do not have enough

plain land to construct new houses.

### **Construction of House type:**

In earlier times it was mud house or bamboo house. With the advent of modernity the style of houses have underwent considerable change. The architecture of the house and materials for the house construction are also very much different.

### **Village scenario:**

In our village we have a Chokdiri who enjoys the right to take decision on any matter pertaining to the village. He acts like a head of the village.

Chokdiri's roles are so many like a father marrying off his daughter, who has to remain ever ready to act as the priest says while performing any ritual or worship. The village committee is headed by Luku Chokdiri (Luku means village and chokdiri means head of the village) assisted by Khandol (kind of organizer of any function and program in village) and members.

In our village there is no youth dormitory system as are followed by other tribal communities. The present day youths of our village are unaware of the earlier ways of village life. They are more influenced by the modern ways of life and are not very interested to live in the past. They are not keen to work for the development of the village and take initiatives in different village level activities like sports, traditional songs, dance, music and competitions like in olden days. Today they are interested in free coaching classes, vacation coaching classes, competitive examination coaching classes and conducted educational tours etc. They feel that nothing of past is relevant today. They forget that our past equally memorable at that point of time and the present is equally good in the prevailing times. It is admitted that now a days our youths have variety of options for education as well as career, but sacrificing our earlier carefree and joyful cultural life will not help us save our identity. Rather this will open the flood gate for alien culture and distorted tradition. Upgrading our lives to digital does not mean downgrading our tradition and culture.

### **Settlement System:**

In our village any new comer family of our community as also people from other communities are not allowed to settle without proper and valid reason and vision. For the sake of protection of the village and the tradition and culture of the villagers specific information's are required to be furnished. Every newcomer who are allowed to settle in the village must register their details in the "Luku Registration Copy" maintained by villagers. This registration is mandatory to enforce village rules and regulations. It is also used for survey purposes and for ensuring participation in all community rituals and festivals. The Luku Register contains confirmed information about each and every villager, number of their family members, their close relatives living in the village etc. The register also contains the accurate details of the number male and female residents of the village and the details of all those who have completed Graduation, Master Degree or have dropped out from school or college.

### **Migration:**

As our village is located in plane area it has enough open space for habitation as well as for cultivation. Consequently none is required to migrate to other areas either for livelihood or for good life. Our village offers ample opportunities for seasonal cultivation of paddy and vegetables.

### **Family values:**

Family values are always held at the highest esteem in our village. I personally believe that if I do not respect our family head and my family than I am not a honest person. This is because our first learning process starts from our home and family. Every parent want to give the best to their children. Every decision taken by the family head about education and our life are always for our good.

Village level decisions are not taken by the village head alone. In case of emergency when taking a decision becomes expedient, then the village Head (Chokdhiri) takes it. Otherwise, the normal practice is that the village committee sits

in a meeting, discuss the issue and takes a decision with approval of all members.

Interdeotence is the key word in our village. Importance of interdependence can be realized when one lives in a village. We always need to help others because we also need help from others. In villages we depend on agriculture, but every one of us does not have kind to cultivate. Those who do not have land work for the land owners and earn their livelihood. During marriages, rituals, festivals we depend on others and vice versa. There many other things for which we are compelled depend on others and they depend on us for financial compensation we pay to them. In our village we not only believe interdependence but practice it.

### **Joint Family System:**

In present times people have generally abandoned the joint family system. In our village most of us are not followed this time tested system more. It is a universal truth that every sibling or close family relatives prefer to live nearer to each other. Unfortunately from the 90s the residents of our village have given up the practice. According to my Mother, some people lived in joint family in our village in the past. .

### **Predominant Community:**

Jamatia community is the predominant community of our village. Actually our village can be called a Jamatia majority village. However now a days inter-marriage is no longer abhorred as in past. People are marrying from others communities because other than the Jamatias more than 3 or 4 communities are also living in our village..

### **Village Tradition, Festival & Rituals:**

In our village all villager prefer Indigenus Hindu culture. We are generally devotees of Lord Baba Garia. Since Jamatia community are very committed to their tradition, festivals such as Baba Garia Puja, Aama Sangratram, Hojagiri, Hangrai etc are widely patronized. There are some percent of Jamatia who have converted into other religions



now a days . Reason of conversion is controversial. All families who live with us as of now will not convert into other religion. Some youth and students who studied in missionary schools have got converted to Christianity. As a village tradition, 'Luku Samwng' (Ker Puja) is most popular in our village. Luku Means village and samwng means kind of Puja. "Sangatram Puja" is totally a personal family puja normally observed by those whose wishes were fulfilled. Our main festivals are Garia puja which lasts for 7 Days. The first day of the puja is called 'Buisu' and the last day it's called 'Sena'. As of now we are able to maintain tradition.

### **Roles of Village Priest:**

The role of village priest is very important and carries much responsibility. Village formation is incomplete without a priest. Their roles are seen everywhere as such any puja, rituals, traditional

festival etc. without a priest is inconceivable. Marriage ceremonies cannot be held without a priest. Same with death rituals, new born baby rituals. They are always available whenever villagers need them. Marital status does not affect any agreement and dispute of property. It has maintained equality amongst all genders. In our society ancestral property goes to the weaker amongst the siblings. Till date we have been able to maintain and follow our tradition and culture I hope next generation will do same too. It may not be exactly like our ancestors did because generation to generation things will change. At present day we are aware of other cultures, food habits, tradition etc. but we must not abandon our own tradition and culture. From our village and our family we must relearn how to maintain and how important our own tradition, culture is. □



# A Study on Kheti Village: An Overview

## (A Village of the Noctes)

Dr. Chalit Sumnyan

### Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the North Eastern region of India. The state was conferred the status of full fledged statehood on 20<sup>th</sup> February 1987 in accordance with the State of Arunachal Pradesh Act, 1986. The state covers a geographical area of approximately 83,743 sq.km. The state has an international border with Bhutan to the west, China to the north and north-east and Myanmar (Burma) to the east. The state also has a common border with Nagaland in the east and south-east and Assam in the south. The state is a home for as many as 26 different tribes and 110 sub-tribes and minor tribes. The state is divided into nineteen districts namely; Tawang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Papumpare, Lower Subansiri, Kurung Kumey, Upper Subansiri, Siang, West Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Upper Dibang Valley, Lohit, Anjaw, Kra Dadi, Namsai, Pakke Kesang, Shi Yomi, Lepa Rada, Kamle, Changlang, Tirap and Longding.

Kheti village is situated in Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh. It is located in between two mountains in the East and West known as *Sunket kong* and *Sunpa kong* respectively. The village is expanding over the period of time with the increase in population. The main road links to the district headquarter and passes through the middle of the village which ends at a village called 'Lazu' in the Myanmar border. The people belonging to the village are from a tribe called 'Nocte' which is a major tribe of the District. Like the other Noctes

settled in different villages of Tirap the villagers of Kheti also have legends of their origin and settlement. They don't have written records as the scripts were never part of their culture. Therefore, the oral sources and the secondary sources have an important role in order to understand their origin and settlement.

The term 'Kheti' means the founder or discoverer of a place in Nocte dialect. The migration of the villagers took place twice. Firstly, few families migrated from Central Asia' to Tannyu village in present Longding district. Again from there they migrated to the present location of Kheti village after the discovery of the place by two brothers namely, Witwang and Teywang whose generation still rule as village Chief. There were two more groups that branched out of the village and migrated to the villages presently named as Thinsa and Hanyan (Notun Kheti).

### Socio-Political Study

The entire village under the Chieftainship system is divided into two major colonies viz, *Kheti Sum* and *Khela Sum* by imaginary boundary line known as '*Longpekial*'. These are again divided into sub-colonies. The chieftainship system in the village comprised of *Lowang* (Chief) and council members namely, *Ngoawa*, *Lammawa*, *Lamthakwa*, *Sumpawa*, *Wangchbawa*, *Humcbha Lowang* and *Wootina*. The major decisions in the village are taken by the Chief and the council members. The festivities in the village, selection of jhum land and the cases of boundary disputes

are decided by the council. The civil and criminal cases have been taken up by the chief and his council since time immemorial. But with the awareness of law of the country the cases are also being given to the police stations at present.

The dormitory system has also been part of society since the early days when the area was reeling under inter-village warfare. The boy's dormitories known as *Pang* were four in number namely, *pang dong*, *se kiat pang*, *lamma pang* and *Ju ku pang*. During the early days the young boys had the responsibility to guard the village by staying in the *pang* both during the day and night. In the present period only two dormitories namely, *Pang dong* and *ju ku pang* are existing. The roles of the youths in the *pang* have also changed as the inter-village warfare is not practiced in the modern period. But they remain alert for any problems that may arise in the village.

There were frequent inter-village wars during the early period mainly for boundary issues and natural resources. Kheti village had war with neighbouring villages like Khela, Lazu, Dadam, Honkan and Saala (Borduria). After the war the head of the enemy was brought to the village as a sign of bravery and kept in the *pang*. The skulls of the heads of enemies preserved these days also in the *pang* can be considered as source to study the inter-village war days. The *log drum* also kept in the *pang* has been used to announce the fixation of dates for festivals and other relevant information. During the days of inter-village warfare the *log drum* was also beaten to alert the villagers from the enemy.

The institution of marriage in the society is given utmost importance by the villagers since the early days. The heavy fine involved in divorce can be a proof to that. The village chief only has the right to have more than one wife. The villagers have been divided into four number of exogamous group based on blood relations since early times. The marriage possibilities of boys and girls are based on their clan group. These

groups are:

1. Socia (boys)/Soaknya (girls)
2. Tesia(boys)/Tennya(girls)
3. Bangsia(boys)/Bangnya(girls)
4. Khoisia(boys)/Nyemnya(girls)

It is such that boy of Socia clan can marry a girl from Bangnya and Nyemnya, same as a girl of Soaknya can get married to a boy of Bangsia and khoisia, likewise, a boy of Tesia can get married to a girl from Bangnya and Nyemnya and same as a girl of Tennya can get married to a boy of Bangsia and Khoisia. The marriage of a boy of Socia to Tennya or a Soaknya girl to Tesia boy is totally restricted. In the same way a Bangsia boy getting married to a Nyemnya girl or a Bangnya girl to a Khoisia boy is totally restricted. The marriages within the same clan group are a punishable offence which amounts to ostracize from the village.

The joint family system is not prevalent in the village as customarily the younger sons have to move out of the parent's house. The eldest son only has the right over the ancestral property and the house. The younger sons are given a piece of land for the construction of their houses. The girls also have no right over the ancestral property. But the concept of *Thbaphak* does exist in the society in regards to the girls as part of marriage ceremony. In this ceremony the boy's family has to provide buffalo and pig to the girl's family as bride price. This is practiced by some other Nocte villages also.

The community service is also part of the society which is being continued in the modern period also. The cleaning of the ways leading to the *jhum* land known as *lam saam* is a kind of community service in which every family in the village has to participate by sending one of its members. The constructions of the dwelling houses are also part of community services. The villagers help each other in the construction of dwelling houses which are made of materials like wood,

bamboo, cane and palm leaves. In case of natural disaster also the community service acts as a base for the resettlement.

### **Economy and Belief System**

The economic life of the villagers is basically based on agriculture. The shifting cultivation is widely practiced in the village which mostly amounts to self sufficient production only. The selection of the site for the jhum is done in the month of November after the rains ceased. This is followed by clearing the site by cutting down trees and shrubs from the month of December to January. The process of sowing starts after the area is burned into ashes. Both male and female play active role in the agricultural field.

The agriculture land is abandoned after two years of cultivation and left fallow for regeneration of forest vegetation to recover the lost fertility. After fallowing the land for 6 to eight years the farmers return to the same site for cultivation. In this way the jhum cycle continues for years. The commercialization of the jhum products is yet to be undertaken by the villagers as there is hardly any surplus production.

The festivals celebrated in the village are mostly associated with agriculture. The festival of *Ronghuan* celebrated in the month of August is associated with harvesting of millet. The entire village gets into merry making and dances are performed which starts from chief's residence. The *Kobkbut* festival is celebrated in the month of March as a day of paddy sowing. The day is also marked by enjoying swings rides made of wild creepers. *Chhaliwon* is yet another agricultural festival which is celebrated before sowing seeds in the field. The other festivals like *Panyaklang* and *Worangjab* are not celebrated anymore in the village.

In the religious sphere most of the villagers have accepted Christianity as their religion. The Christian religious leaders have an important role in the village. But the ceremonies and rituals related to naming of a new born child, marriage

and most of the festivals are practiced customarily. They were traditionally follower of animism. They worshiped two stones which were in the outskirts of the village on way to the jhumland. It was considered to be a pair of male and female known as *Longtumwang*. In the winters a piece of cloth was collected from each household as a contribution for it. During the festivals the pair was worshiped by the Ramwa who was a village elder. Generally the villagers along with the other Nocte villagers refer to God as *Joban*.

### **Conclusion**

In order to have a developed nation the roots of the nation needs to be made strong enough. The villages are those roots which need to be given every opportunity to grow so that it can contribute towards nation building. Kheti village is one of the developing villages from Tirap District in Arunachal Pradesh. Besides one IRS and one IFS officer, it has till now produced many more officers in various departments. The village has a primary school which needs to be upgraded and a Don Bosco School which have immensely contributed towards the education field. The village being situated very close to headquarter of the district is a boon in disguised. □

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# Family life of the Mising Tribe

Kamala Pegu

**Introduction to Mising:** The North East of India is abundant of different communities. Different identity is given from other Indian communities as their facial structure, color, diet, physique are Mongolian in characteristics. Misings are the second largest among the Mongolian communities in Assam. According to India and British researchers, the Misings people of Assam are a tribe from Chinese Mongolian or Tibet Burmese sources.

The Misings were known as 'Miri-Jati' in Assam long before the British reign. The tribal reserve list of the Constitution of Independent India also records them as 'Bhoiyam's (low land or plain) Miri'. The word 'Miri' originated from the word 'Mibu' or 'Mirri' (Deodhai). According to another thread, the people who came down from the hills and lived on the plains were called 'miri' ('mi' means man, 'ri' means hill). But since the mid-twentieth century, the Miris have been projecting themselves as the abyssal 'Mising tribes (people living by the water). After all, the Mising community wishes for an amendment to the Constitution as a 'Mising tribe' at present.

**Migration:** Abang (oral religious song), traditional stories of Adi Mising and ancient field-based studies by intellectuals of Mising community reveal that Misings entered Assam Valley before similar tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh entered Assam following the Chiang River from the south eastern border of Tibet. Their paths were guided by Tsangpo river when they migrated from Tibet, Siang in Adi Hills and Brahmaputra in Assam in the last part. Despite different theories in deciding the exact year or century of their migration the

Mising are known to have arrived before the Chutia and Ahom rule in Assam as the Chutia king appointed them for 'haati-ghahi' (elephant-grass cutter) and as 'Miri Sandikoi' in Ahom reign. It is mentioned in the history of 'Tung Khungia'. History reveals that

1. Miri Avar's nuisance was suppressed under the leadership of Ahom General Phukan and captain Bacha Rajkhowa under the reign of late Kamleswar Singh (1806).

2. Defeat of Shadiya Khamti in Miri Avar's Joint Attack (1790).

3. Incidents like the killing of Burmese soldiers in the Brahmaputra Valley with the help of Avar by the Miris, etc., indicate that the Mising people of Assam are very old indigenous community.

According to a story of the ancient Mising, they faced the Adis many times during the journey on different routes over time. A group of padam (vomi) wanted to come and settle at the same site while two groups - Mising 'Doley' and 'Pegu', were living in the hill called Killing-Kange. But the Mising left the place due to some dispute or other reasons with the new neighbourS and moved towards plains in search of fertile soil.

According to another traditional source of Mising; Milli, Kumbang patir and some fellow migrants reached plain area on the hilly path of pachighat-pangin of Regam Hills and Pait, Pav reached through the hilly path of tarni jaaging. It is believed that the ancestors of the Sayangs were in 'Pesa Sayang' (Dambuk). Similarly, the Bari, Regam, Sarah came a little late and established themselves

at the foot of the hill. The time and location of the settlement of Misings in the hills are confirmed from the Adi-Mising stories. According to a note written by The Mising thinker, writer Dr Nomal Pegu in his book “The Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley”, the people of ‘Pegu’ group of the Mising stayed near the Kark Hills for a few years. At present, the lake ‘Pegu Seing’ (Pegu Lake) bears proof of that.

The rapid rise of the Mising civilization was possible after hundreds of years they reached the Brahmaputra Valley. Because many centuries ago different groups settled on the banks of the river, but they stayed away from other communities and passed time in primitive ways in solidarity with agriculture. Fishing in river, bird hunting, Deer and pig hunting, swimming in river, struggling against the stream with the country boat decorated with their own hands during the rainy season, were the daily activities of the Mising. Of course, with the progress of civilization, their artistic life also began to infuse. It was then; they learnt to be delighted with the faintness of the tune.

#### **Beginning of family life:**

We have to make a splash in the distant past to know what ‘family’ means before we start describing family life of the Mising and when the family life has begun.

In the ancient period, primitive man used to travel with people who shared same language and similar sentiment in search of livelihood. Sometimes they took refuge in caves or trees to escape from wild animals which was very painful for them. Gradually, with the advancement of conscience, they started a permanent sophisticated social life. Human civilization is at the last stage of this exercise. They entered the doors of civilization and people learnt to live together in a society. They arranged for the child to live through a bond of affection in the same residence with the parents. This is how family life has been brought to light in human history. The reflection of

civilization in the social life of different races spreading all over the world today is different but can be mainly called the modern passage of social life of the distant past.

#### **Differences in social life in the East and the West:**

Although there are different theories about which part of the world the first step of human civilization fell, there is no disagreement that European countries in the more radical West are ahead of the Eastern ones. There is a great difference between their physical structure, skin tone, food habits and Mongolians in the east. From China Mongolian to Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and India, there is a certain racial resemblance among the Mongolian populations in the Northeast. Several communities of Assam like Bodo, Rabha, Tiwa, Match, Sonowal, kachari belong to this Mongolian community. Their social life is nature oriented but conservative.

#### **Family Definition:**

We generally understand that family is a group of people where parents, brothers-sisters, grandparents live together in one home. In the literal sense, the word ‘family’ is formed by translating the word ‘Famila’ in Latin language. In the same house, when the families of Uncle - Aunt, elder brother –younger brother become the same undivided large group due to the increasing population of generations, the joint family takes shape. Sociologist Merrian Webster told — “A consanguineal family unit that includes two or more generations of kindred related through either the paternal or maternal line that maintain a common residence and are subject to common social, economic and religious regulations’. In a patriarchal or matriarchal joint family all the social, economic and religious activities are holistically practiced in the same house. As three or four generations altogether continue to live in a joint family, both merits and demerits are visible. The tradition of joint family in rural Hindu society

is on the verge of extinction.

**Family life of Mising :** The society of the Mising has been governed by democratic methods since the past. There were no kings or soldiers with them during the migration period. In plain areas, they first used to reside as neighborhoods, later in the form of villages. There was a caretaker of a village called 'Gam' (village old). Most of the senior members represented Kebang (village council). Gam's advices along with their (Kebang) judgment on the issues of marriage, land disputes etc were considered final. They preferred honesty and conservativeness in judgment. Women's contribution to social work was impeccable but the social system being the patriarchal; they had to remain voiceless even if any decision goes against them. Almost all the wealthy families lived together under the same roof. The Mising community was sensitive to keeping the families of their fathers' lineage together. Living in the same residence, members of three/four generations used to share each other's happiness and sorrow. The eldest (Rutum) of the family took over the responsibility of managing the family. All the members of a family showed loyalty towards him without any hesitance. Rutum always showed equality, equal rule towards all members, resulting in the family being disciplined. The prominence of joint family in the Mising community was seen till the late 20th century.

### **Reasons, why Mising people like joint families:**

#### **1. Social Reasons**

**a) Agricultural work:** The main food of the Misings was food produced from crops like rice, bean, mustard etc. In addition, potatoes, arum, wood potatoes, vegetables, turmeric, ginger, garlic, chilies, onions had to be cultivated to meet the daily needs. They also set up villages by breaking and cutting jungles. They thus possessed numerous land properties. They adopted

cooperative methods in farming. A family needs human workers like ploughman, ruwoni (woman who transplants paddy seedlings) etc. till the time of harvesting of the soil. For a maximum production of crops it was needed for the families to put high engagement of human labour in cultivation. A high Production of crops used to be a source of happiness and enjoyment. On the other hand, food grains were stored in 'Kumchung' home for the entire year. The eldest woman of a family occasionally took out the paddy from storage to the front yard of the house as per their needs .The women of a family used to enjoy by grinding rice together.

**b) Construction of houses:** The method of construction of houses of the Mising was of special kind - which is rare in other communities. The houses were built like long train cars with bamboo canes in the north south. The length of the house was decided by dividing the rooms in proportion to the married members of the family. The main door and verandah were on the south side out of the main three doors of the house, another door that can lead to the back balcony on the north side. There was also a door from the kitchen to the 'kaar' (all the work space) behind house. The last room was kept for grandparents in which a 'meram' was lit next to the said room for their comfort during winter. The kitchen room was on the west side from the middle of the house to the outside. That's where the family's food was prepared in large brass cooking utensil. Children, teenagers, unmarried youths ate together and young women ate in different plates. Similarly, married brother 'Kakai', the daughter-in-law ate rice and drink Apong (rice beer) in the same way. Such a food intake system strengthened the love and unity of the family. Even when a large house was built, the male members of the family volunteered to work as laborers.

#### **Economic Reason:**

**c) Business:** A joint family had several paddy store houses and it was a matter of pride to be



able to store month-long amount of mustard. People sold extra paddy, pulse or beans, mustard to far-flung Bihari or Marwari traders for the expenses of festivals, Puja and medical causes. Some wealthy families reared two/three elephants as the mark of nobility. These elephants pulled valuable wooden kundas from the forest which were used for house decorating purposes in addition to selling the same to pay for the family's collective expenses. Another profitable business was rearing cattle. They were reared in the grass forest in the middle of the Brahmaputra. They allowed the Nepalese community to look after the animals. Also the family teenagers - the youth were all involved in it. A family was very self-sufficient with excellent milk production. Women were also not lagged behind in this. The women earned by selling pigs and chickens and hosted guests with their income. Mising women had a good reputation in weaving. It is said - 'Mising women weave dreams on their looms through different flowers. It was like duty of the mothers and sisters who made 'Aag, Ribbi, Gaseng, Ger for women and 'Mibu Galok', 'Dumer', 'Ugan' for male members of a family. Miri - Jim (Gadu) is an important textile asset of the Mising society. Its market value is sky-high. There are no one in the world other than women of the Miyong community of Arunachal, who know the Mising 'gadur' weaving system. The families' daughters-in-law worked together to wash cotton, yarn - fair (panam), bosom, fill cotton pieces in yarn etc. which seem to be attractive but difficult. It was compulsory for every male child to have a gadur cloth. But Gadur is very rare to find presently in Mising society because of the reasons such as- scarcity of cotton, less interest of daughters, lack of weaving practice etc.

#### **Religious reason:**

**d) Puja-Patal :** The Mising have been worshipping their ancestors and Donyi polo prominently. They believe that the good spirits of the heavenly people have been living with god and protecting their families. Secondly, 'Maa'

Donyi and Father 'Polo' lit up the whole world from darkness and save the children he created on earth. So Donyi is their revered deities. Worship of ghar badiya, talengwi, patanwi, urang of the deceased, aping, dadgang (funeral ceremony) etc. were also prevalent in the society. The execution of these is complex and expensive. According to social norms, a family's daughter and daughter-in-law had to cooperate to provide pigs, chickens, Apong (rice beer) necessary to feed the village and relatives by dedicating it in the name of God and goddesses. Ali Aye Lrigang, Beu (Bihu), marriage etc. were celebrated together and all the members of a joint family enjoyed with lot of fun. Participation of all the members lessened the amount of hard work needed to conduct the rituals.

**e) Illiteracy:** Until the first decade of the 20th century, simple Mising society was covered under darkness of illiteracy. Less number of teenagers started to go school from the launch of the education system by the British. Again, study was a far dream of teenage girls. Due to this illiteracy they were far behind the realization of good and bad sides of developing societies. Their sole purpose of living was to attain complacency by delivering a house full of food and wealth in their lifetime and to live a life of joy with the rhythm of dance and songs by dissolving themselves in the lap of nature in leisure time. Uproar, love affairs, extreme joy with euphoria were the most common scenes in a joint family. In the midst of such a lifestyle emerged the most sensitive of Mising - 'Oi Neetam', which attracts modern-day old and young people to listen to the fainting of the forest song.

**f) Grandparents' Supervision:** Mising women were as busy as men in the field due to their energetic spirit. Their children had to be tied to the back of the younger nebing of the family and they had to leave for work. Grandparents took the responsibility of looking after children at home which is as rare as finding turtle eggs on the mountain in today's world.

In fact, 'Love your family, spend time, be kind and serve one another, make no room for regrets Tomorrow not promised and Today' - - these words were thought to be worthy of a joint family.

**Two aspects of joint family:** Children from joint families are broad-minded and in a harmonious spirit, they are on the verge of becoming good citizens of the country in future. But joint families are convenient only in rural societies. It is difficult to arrange food with limited income in the city. It is not easy to handle a large family as both husband and wife are busy with respective job or business.

**Break up in joint family in Mising society:** From the mid-20th century onwards, the breaking of joint families began in the Mising society. The prevailing atmosphere gradually forced them to prefer single families. As time changes, joint family has become like a burden to household. At present the joint family system has been removed from most of the societies for many factors. Such factors seem to have been relatable in the Mising society as well.

**Factors :**

**A) Lack of agricultural land:** In the great earthquake of 1950, the fertile lands of the Misings submerged in the river. Global climate change has caused repeated floods turning many into landless farmers. Frequent shifting of villages led to large families becoming smaller ones.

**B) Light of Education:** Since independence, the promotion and spread of education in the Mising society has progressed rapidly. School and colleges were established in the villages. Educated families preferred to stay with their parents. Again it was economically viable for them to help their children pursue good education.

**C) Conflict between families:** It became difficult for the head (Rutum) to handle the joint families because of increasing number of family members. Some member's negligence in the farm, mental conflicts led to separation from existing family in search of comfort.

**D) Sharing of land property:** Greater families preferred to stay separately with their equal share of land due to the variation of numbers of family members.

**E) Unemployment Problem:** Financial problems have been faced by the landless young farmers of the Mising rural society. Many people want to settle permanently in the city for education. As a result the number of members of rural households has come down to single families. Due to the lack of bamboo-canes in villages, construction of concrete houses instead of traditional ones is becoming widely popular. And along with the extensive usage of machines in cultivation, the need for more workers has deteriorated.

The impact of family planning which advocates having one or two children, resulted in decreasing numbers of members in missing families.

**Conclusion:**

At present, Mising families can be considered as having a high standard of life. The rate of educated people in Mising society is not much higher than that of other communities but with the benefit of single families, many of the villages have been able to assess the education of the youth. Some have been able to establish themselves by passing competitive examination of state or central services by pursuing higher education. Moreover, many have been able to introduce themselves by working well in medical services, engineering departments abroad. Apart from these; politics, social service, business trade, everything has been beaten by them like any other ethnic community. Nowadays the modern atmosphere of single families in the city and the lack of time for employed parents to look after their children, have increased mental pressure on teenagers. This has led them to wrong direction. But there is hardly any reflection of such actions in Mising families. The crime tendency can be thought to be low as it is applied in parallel to the lax or strict policies of the society.

Some examples of joint families: 40% of joint families were prevalent in the Mising society till the 90s of the twentieth century.

**For example –**

1. Three brothers of the late Jetuka, head of the Dusutimukh village in Bokakhat constituency, was heard to have a large family of about forty people together for nearly three generations and consumed food grains from the same field.

2. Three generations of the late Dasiram Pegu (Mahajan) family of Majuli passed through the same house in the sixties.

3. The late Gorokhia Pegu of Dusutimukh left a packed house in 2016 with four sons, grandsons, great grandsons in the same house.

Apart from Assam, the neighboring Arunachal Pradesh's Adis have successful joint families. Their practice was prevalent till the late 20th century.

A news paper, two years ago had printed photograph of the head man along with 120 members of a family in Mizoram. In fact the head man had a large joint family with many wives, children and unlimited number of grandchildren under the same roof. □

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1. *History and the Culture of the Adis by Dr. Tai Nyori*. P- 45, 46, 47, 68

2. *The Misings of the Brahmaputra Valley* by Dr. Nomal Pegu.



# My Village and My Community; the Dimasa

Dr Phirmi Bodo

## Introduction:

Village has remained a significant unit of Indian Social System. Village study can enrich the knowledge of the Indian society in general and rural in particular. India is a country which is predominantly rural with more than two-thirds of its population living in more than half a million villages. Gandhi considered the village as a site of authenticity, of the “real” or “pure” India, uncorrupted by Western influence. In Gandhi’s view, the new nation had to be founded in its villages, where the majority of its people lived. The village is a community whose members have a sense of “we feeling”. Their relation is intimate having strong community feeling. The village has been seen as the ultimate signifier of the “authentic native life” a place where one could see or observe the “real” India and develop an understanding of the way local people organize their civilized lifestyle and belief system. As Andre Beteille writes, “The village was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilization”.

## The Dimasas:

The Dimasa are one of the oldest inhabitants of the North-Eastern part of India and is one of the many Kachari tribes. They live mostly in the northern half of the Dima Hasao District, an administrative district of the Indian state of Assam that includes the ravines of the Jatinga valley and Lower portion of Karbi Anglong district (East), Lower Crescent region of Nagaon district, Cachar district of Assam and Dimapur and Jiribum region of Nagaland and Manipur respectively. The name

‘Dimasa’ stands for ‘Children of the Big River’. Kacharis appear to be one of the earliest indigenous ethnic groups of North-eastern India. Most Independent tribal communities in this region are of Kachari origin. The Bodos, Rabha, Sonowal, Thengal, Dimasa, Garo, Hajong, Deori, Sutiya, Tiwa or Lalung, Trippra, Mech, Rukkini Barman of Hailakandi, and Karimganj are all of Kachari origin.

## Village of Dimasa Society:

A village in a Dimasa social scenario is constituted with certain ritual and customary laws of Dimasa society. Its size may be either small or big according to the numbers of homesteads of a village. A Dimasa village has its own demarcated boundary, the record of which is maintained by the local self-government authority. In Dimasa, the village system is called as ‘*Nobali*’ a cluster of houses and the whole village with its population is called ‘*Raji*’. Dimasa tend to live on river banks and next to streams. They usually build their houses on hill slopes with rivers or streams flowing nearby. The houses are constructed in two rows, facing each other with a wide gap in between. A village generally consists of thirty to forty houses and the houses are built on ground and not on platform or *Chaang* like some other hill tribes of North-East India. Traditionally, the villages have protective fences all around with two gates, one at the top of the village and the other at the bottom. The houses are hall type, Timber, bamboo, thatch and *ekra* are used in their construction. The walls made of *ekra* are plastered with mud on both sides and the hall is divided into two chambers by partition wall.

The outer chamber which is bigger than the inner one is used for all purposes including dining, sleeping and sitting while the inner chamber is used as kitchen and dormitory for unmarried girls.

The Dimasa people has a particular set of structured village organization which is a council for the entire administration of the village which is known as *Sali*. Each village or village council is headed by the *Khunang* (village headman). It is usually seen that the village headman is selected among the oldest member of the community, at the same time who are courageous, benevolent, intelligence, educated and it is democratic in nature. The *Khunang* has both executive and judicial power. His executive powers are mainly related to developmental work or counsel concerning celebration of community festivals in the village, while judicial functions are concerned with the adjudication of cases and maintenance of law and order in the village. He is assisted by *Dilek* who is also elected by the senior members of the village, followed by *Daulathu* and *Habaisagao*. There are also village officials such as *Pharai*, *Mantri*, *Hangsebekhu* and *Jalairao*. Dimasa people being a law-abiding and peace-loving people, they respect their societal rules and regulations. The village council also decides cases pertaining to adultery, divorce and similar other cases. The personality of *Khunang* is so much sacrosanct that without his prior approval no community function in a Dimasa society can be performed and it still prevalent today.

In traditional Dimasa village society *Nodrang* (Dormitory) is accorded a very significant position. It is generally constructed in an accessible place of the village and is almost like a big hall having no compartments, but there is a hearth in the Centre of the hall. It serves the purpose of an organization of the youths of the village. All unmarried boys are the members of the *Nodrang* by default. It is in that dormitory that young boys learn the art of dancing, singing and playing of musical instruments. They also learn the art of making bamboo and cane articles

including the art of hunting and fighting. The latter skill is very crucial because the dormitory serves the purposes of a guard house for the protection of the village from any foreign attack and from wild animals. The dormitory accommodates strangers as well.

Dimasa village divides their land mainly into three types, Jhum land, Dry Land and Wet land. Such lands are owned individually and a certain quantity of land is treated as a community property. This community property is enjoyed in common by the entire village. The dry lands are mostly situated on the plain areas and the Dimasa select high river banks for their dry fields. This type of land being permanent is chosen for cultivation and can be cultivated without giving any respite. The wet lands are utilized for cultivation of paddy and ownership of such lands are also permanent.

The village authority takes care of every individual and vulnerable sections of the society like orphans, widows etc. The villagers have undisputed right to their properties, both movable and immovable, and enjoy the rights to live in their respective ways of life. The individual rights are not affected by any outside factors. The villagers are very keen on protecting and enjoying their individual rights. There is generally a good deal of inter-village relationship. Whenever problems regarding crossing of village boundary of other villages arise, all are settled mutually. The status of a village in relation to the society is to maintain social order properly. A village is responsible for the misdeeds or anti-social activities that take place in the village itself.

### **Conclusion:**

Assam has been the confluence of various ethnic tribal community, they are vigorous, adaptable and forward-looking people with rich culturing moorings of their own. In the midst of adoption of modern technology and culture many challenges came in the way of village life of Dimasa society. With growing population and with

modern technique of production, the style of living in villages are changing now. However, the continuity of the basic structure of a village society is still maintained while bringing about reformation and changes in the society which are inevitable for it to keep itself abreast of time.

The North-eastern part of India which is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse region has its own culture and tradition which they are being practicing since time immemorial. However, the region since the colonial period of

time instead of connecting with the rest of India has disconnected it through the politics of divide and rule. But if we visit the place and meet people there are numbers of evidences which gives you an idea about the rich social system of the rich Dimasa Kachari. □

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GOVERNMENT OF  
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Celebrating  
**75<sup>th</sup>**

**Independence Day**

15 August, 2021

ENSURING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

ARUNACHAL ON THE FAST TRACK TO GROWTH



**ITANAGAR ROAD OF PACKAGE A FROM CHANDRANAGAR TO PAPU-NALLAH COMPLETED AS ON DATE**



**THE WORK AT HOLLONGI AIRPORT IS EXPECTED TO COMPLETE BY AUGUST 2022**

### MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF TEAM ARUNACHAL

#### HEALTH

- ◆ Dedicated Covid Hospital, **MLA apartment**, Chimpu will be permanently converted into full-fledged specialised hospital which is currently serves with more than 120 functional beds.
- ◆ **8 District Hospitals** to be upgraded and built new hospitals for the new districts for an estimated cost of ₹ 400.00 Cr
- ◆ Two **600 LPM** capacity oxygen plants dedicated at TRIHMS Hospital, Naharlagun and one **500 LPM** capacity at Dedicated Covid Hospital Chimpu.
- ◆ **1000 LPM** Oxygen Generator will be installed at TRIHMS.
- ◆ **815** oxygen supported beds available.

#### EDUCATION

- ◆ Arunachal Government has declared '2021' as 'Year of Education' with ₹ **1000 crore** investment planned
- ◆ **Mission Shiksha**—Overhaul the Education system in the state right from the infrastructure of schools to evaluation, promotion, motivation and transfer and posting of teachers through technological interventions.
- ◆ With a vision to impart quality education and to provide employment opportunities to educated and deserving youths **115 PGTs** and **404 TGTs** have been recruited through APPSSC in 2019-2020.

#### AIR, ROAD, TUNNEL & BRIDGES

- ◆ **Fly Big Airlines** to connect remote tourist destinations with its fixed wing air service, Pasighat & Tezu connected under Fly Big Airlines.
- ◆ Massive infrastructure boost along international borders. Hon'ble Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh dedicated **20 km 2-lane Kimin-Palin** road among 10 others to nation
- ◆ Approved the demolition cost for package B and C of 4 lane highway from **Papu Nallah to Banderdewa**
- ◆ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid foundation stone for **Nechphu Tunnel**, Sisiri bridge over Sisar river and Tawangchu bridge over Tawangchu river has been inaugurated and made operational.
- ◆ **Connecting in the border areas:** 29 bridges built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in frontier Arunachal Pradesh inaugurated by Defence Minister (DM) Rajnath Singh from Leh.

#### RAILWAYS

- ◆ Construction of Murkongselek-Pasighat Railway line on front foot
- ◆ Final Location Survey (FLS) of the new Railway line from Bhalukpong to Tawang with approximately 200 Kilometres of Railway Tracks done.

#### SPORTS

- ◆ National Centre of Excellence established at Sangey Lhaden Sports academy, Chimpu, Itanagar in – **Weightlifting, Boxing, Wushu**
- ◆ **52 Khelo India centres** approved for Arunachal.
- ◆ Arunachal Cabinet approved for creation of two posts of **Adventure Promotion Instructor (API)** in the department of Youth Affairs.

#### DRINKING WATER PROJECT

- ◆ **Arunachal Jal Sankalp:** Arunachal Pradesh reaches a significant milestone, achieves coverage of 50,014 household with FHTC against the target of 76912 in 2021 under Jal Jeevan Mission
- ◆ **1.89 MLD** integrated Drinking water Project for Jia-Bolung-Bukkong inaugurated.

#### FOR THE FARMERS

- ◆ Under **Chief Minister's Sashakt Kisan Yojana**, 1553 farmers were benefitted. They have been provided subsidized farm machineries like Tractors, Power Tiller, Rotary Tiller, Paddy De-husking Machine, Power Sprayer, Atta Chakki, Reaper, Combine harvesters.
- ◆ Under the **Farm Cluster scheme**, we have selected clusters in each district having an area of at least 3 hectare upto 100 hectares with focus crops for cultivation covering almost 4000 acres of land.

#### ARUNACHAL RATNA

- ◆ Arunachal honours its true Hero, **Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khathing** with 'Arunachal Ratna', the highest civilian Award of the State and laid foundation stone for a memorial in his honour

#### AWARD

- ◆ **India Today 'State of the States Award - 2020':** Arunachal Pradesh has been conferred as the 'leading small state in the fight against COVID-19' and 'the most enhanced small state in education'.

#### FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME

- ◆ **SARKAR APKE DWAR** - 421 Camps planned to ensure that the grievance of the last man is heard and redressed. 181 camps covering over 1.80 lakh people have been covered.
- ◆ **Chief Minister's Arogya Arunachal Yojana:** 1.01 lakh beneficiary families enrolled so far. 81 hospitals have been empaneled of which 27 are out of Arunachal Pradesh. 15 being in neighboring Assam.
- ◆ **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Swavalamban Yojana:** Govt. of Arunachal releases first instalment of ₹ 11.35 cr for FY21-22