

Editorial

Imphal, Monday, December 21, 2015

Think for something innovative

The Strife torn State of Manipur, inspite of the unenviable tag of a disturbed area, has much more potential and unexplored potential than that of being one with the most prolific and industrious system for churning out militant groups, thought the tag is unlikely to come off anytime soon in the foreseeable future. On a brighter note, we have some of the most diverse and varied vegetables, fruits, pulses, cereals and grains. Condiments that has not yet been regular ingredients in Mainland India has been in use in the North East for centuries. The introduction of Korean channel "Arirang" revealed an astonishing similarity, both in the ingredients as well as in the methods of preparations, in the diets of the two regions. Our elders, much to our chagrin and resentment, used to refer to the imported hybrid vegetables and fruits as those from the "Block", and preferred the local varieties of everything. That preference has now started to make sense, more than ever, with the perceptible difference in the aroma and taste between the imported hybrids and the local varieties. Anyone who had a friend or near one from outside as a guest in Manipur will surely have received compliments on the distinct aroma and taste of the dishes of the state. All these has been a clear indication of the unique qualities of the plants and vegetables grown on the soil of the State whose more than 70% of it's population is still engaged in agriculture and other allied activities. So what does all these discussions point to? And how do we utilize these to the fullest? There is no doubt that the distinct aroma, varieties and extent of availability of these plants, herbs and vegetables has been confined to the local market. While the reasons are many and varied, yet it is pretty clear that there is an apparent lack of enthusiasm and earnestness on the part of the Government to explore and exploit markets outside the State and beyond. The latest confirmation of the interest shown by people outside the State for products grown in the State is the report about a certain person from the United States inquiring about the possibility of exporting the black rice (Chak Hao) through a processing factory in India, and this is just one instance. This positive development should be an eye opener of the potential the State holds for earning through exporting of it's varied and unique agricultural products after due finishing processes. It would be a blunder and a shame for everyone if the State is reduced to a supplier of raw products only. The need of the hour is for developing a tertiary sector that provides value addition to the products and thus provides double benefit to those involved. The products are there. The steps to mass produce them, to process them and to market them needs a systematic approach that coordinates and complements each of the components in the chain of process. It is time to make a radical change in the approach towards agriculture from that of a subsistence one to that of a highly rewarding, financially lucrative and emotionally fulfilling occupation. That change needs to be initiated by those who are assigned just to do that, else our people will just be the farmers who produce the things others outside the State will buy who will then convert these raw materials into finished products who will then sell it to the State at an exorbitant price. Heard the story before? Got the drift?

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Role of oral history in building communal harmony in Manipur

The written history of Manipur starts with accounts from 33 AD when Pakhangba became the king of the Ningthouja clan and started his reign from Kangla. The unification of the clans started during his time. During the reign of King Pamheiba (1709-1748AD) the name 'Manipur' was given to this land. Cultural and religious differences between the *chingmees* and the *tammees*, and also among the *tammees* began to take root when King Pamheiba introduced Hinduism as the state religion. These differences were quite pronounced when Manipur was captured by the British in 1891. More divisions were made due to the constitution as Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and General, etc. within the population of Manipur after Manipur was formally merged with the Indian union in 1949. In the present situation of Manipur, we can see noticeable differences, distrust and disunity among the various communities in Manipur.

In order to bring out the unity and the similarity in origin of the communities of Manipur from the oral histories of the different communities, an attempt is made here to study the oral history of Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Thangal, Paoma and Kabui communities that are mostly settled in Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong districts. All the above mentioned communities of Manipur are said to have originated from a place called Makhen in the Senapati district. The people from this place were said to have moved out and settled in the South-eastern regions of the state.

The Kabui people inhabit many parts of the valley and most parts of Tamenglong district. The Kabuis, also known as the Rongmeis, have a very close relationship with the Meeteis. They form a part of the bigger group called the Zelianong which is made up of Rongmei, Zeme, Liangmei and Puimei. According to oral history these four groups lived together at Makhen, after which they migrated to different places and based on the direction of their migration, they were named into their respective names. Those who went south came to be known as Rongmei; those who went west were called Zeme; and those who migrated to the north were called Liangmei. The Kabuis call their supreme god as Haipou Ragong (also Tingkao Rangong or Tingkao Ragwang). He created Dampa Pui and gave him the task to create the world. Dampa Pui created the world and all the creatures that will live in it, but he was not able to create the human beings. At last he created human beings after seeing the image of Haipou. In the beginning human beings lived together with the gods. When the time came for the gods to leave, they kept them in a cave and closed it with a big stone because they thought that the humans were weak and had inferior intelligence. When the humans became more intelligent, they wanted to come out of the cave. They could open the entrance of the cave only with the help of a bull.

The cave was called 'Ramting Kabin' or 'Mahou Taobei'. The cave is still present near Salong in Senapati district. After coming out of the cave they lived in a place called Makluongdi. There were supposed to be 7,777 families living in this place. From here they migrated to different directions. The beginning phase of the history of origin of the Kabuis bears lots of resemblance with the story of the exodus of Poireiton of the Meeteis; the difference being that Poireiton's exodus is available as written history in the form of manuscript and is called 'Poireiton Khunthokpa'. The Kabuis, like the Meeteis, worship Lainingthou and Lairembi. Both the communities have accounts of their stay at the Kouhru hill a long time back. Another oral history of the Kabuis say that in the ancient times there was a man named Iboudhou Khunthoulemba who had two sons. The elder brother stayed back in the hills and remained as the Kabuis, while the younger brother moved down to the valley and became Meetei.

According to the oral history of the Tangkhuls, Meetei, Thangal and Tangkhuls had the same origin. In the old language, Tangkhul was called Hingunwma, a name which is no longer used. One group stayed back at Makhen and they became the Thangals. Another group migrated and passed through Khongte, Kachai, Phungtham and settled at Hundung. There were two brothers in this group. One day the younger brother went searching for a pig and found that it had given birth to its young ones at a place bordering the hills and the valley. The place where the pig gave birth came to be known as 'Oknao-pokpi'. This place is now called 'Yaingangpokpi'. The younger brother asked his elder brother to let him live in the valley as it was fertile and had plenty of water. Thus he came to the valley and became Meetei. The three brothers met every year and presented gifts to each other so that they remained close to each other. This event has continued till date and it is now known as 'Mera Hoi Chongthoi'. The oral history of the Thangals is more or less similar to that of the Tangkhuls. The old name of Thangal is Koira. In the beginning after they came out of the cave, they stayed at Makhen. Then they changed places to Angkaipang and then to Angkailongdi. It is said that while staying at Angkailongdi, they could never reach 1000 families and the maximum number of families would always stop at 999. There are close historical relations between the Thangals and the Meeteis. The sacred place in the Thangal cave forms a part of the culture of the two. Legend has it that the Thangal cave is connected to Kangla through an underground tunnel.

The Mao people believe that Makhen is the first place to be settled by human beings. In their language, Makhen is called 'Makhrhiphi' the last place on earth where the gods talked with humans. Mao oral history says that god created woman who gave birth to three sons of god. The youngest son married a goddess and gave birth to three sons by the names of

Khephio, Choro and Shipfo. Shipfo also gave birth to three sons named Emepefope, Kolapope and Mikripipe. Emepefope remained back at Makhrhiphi (Makhen) and the others moved away. Mikripipe went south taking with him a food packet, eggs and yam because it was believed that the place where the yam germinated and the eggs hatched was a good place to settle. The place where the food packet was eaten was called Mikri Todu. 'Mikri' is the Mao word for Meetei and 'Todu' means the place where food was eaten. This group followed the Barak river and stayed at settled at Karong (also called 'Krafi' which means the place where Meetei got lost) for some time. When the group reached Karong, the Senapati river which flows from the north to south, meets the Barak river and then takes a sharp turn to the west. Because of this they got lost and didn't know where to go anymore. So they settled at Karong. From there they climbed a tall peak and saw the Imphal river flowing. They tried to find the Imphal river and on their way reached Senapati from where they were led by a big snake to the Imphal river. They followed the flow of the river and reached the Imphal valley. When they reached the valley, the eggs hatched and the yam germinated. They settled at the valley. The oral history of the Mao community invariably proves that the Maos and the Meeteis are related through origin.

The Paoma community is also another group that has its origin at Makhen. They believe that many other groups of people living in Manipur and Nagaland also had their origin and Makhen. There is a pear tree at Makhen which the Paomas legend says was planted by the first ancestor named Pou after he planted his walking stick to the ground. Pou is also called Shipgo by the Maos and the Angamis call him as Shapvo. The name 'Paoma' is also derived from the word 'Poumai' (pou = old, mai = people). Therefore, the Paomas are also called Shipgo by the Mao people. In the oral history of the Maos, Shipfo is the person who gave to the ancestor of the Meeteis. In the oral history of the Marams, god created the world and the first people were placed at Makhen. When the population of Makhen increased, they formed groups and migrated to different directions. Two brothers by the names of Tingisimara and Makikhangba also went out in search of new places to settle along with their families. The planted sticks of the *heimang* (Chinese sumac tree, *Rhus chinensis*) along their way as they went on their journey. They came to Maram and settled there for a long time. Later Makikhangba, the younger brother, went to live in the valley while the elder brother stayed at Maram. Those who went to the valley became the Meeteis while those who stayed became the Marams. The One thing we can know from the oral histories of these communities is that all these communities along with the

Meeteis are in fact very close to one another and have the same origin. Studying the culture, music, dance and religion could also give more evidence in this advocacy. There are also other communities in Manipur whose oral histories say that they also originated from a cave. The Aimals call cave as 'chilinglu'. The story of the time when they lived in a cave is still sung in songs. It is said that they tried to come out of the cave by moving the stone at the entrance, but they couldn't. Then they used a pangolin and a cow to dig out a tunnel underneath the stone and thus they came out. After coming out of the cave, they lived in many places like Mongmangli, Rangrengbung, Runglewaisu and then they came to Manipur. They worship pythons as a god. The Kharom community also has a similar history. It is said that they also once lived in a cave which they call 'Khurpui'. A big python ate whoever came out of the cave. So they made clothes with designs of a python and then they could come out of the cave by deceiving the python. The place of Runglewaisu is also found in the migration route of the Kharoms. They are also fire worshippers like Andro. *Lai Haraoba* is performed. Their god is in the form of a dragon, very similar to god Pakhangba of the Meeteis. In fact, their oral history has stories of god Pakhangba marrying a Kharom girl. They also worship the god Sanamahli by building shrines inside their homes, a tradition followed by the Meeteis also. The oral history of the Chiru community is also similar to the Aimals. They entered Manipur through Aikhpai and Runglewaisu. Before the advent of Christianity, they had a form of religion which is similar to those of the other close communities. The clothes are a group of people who also has a similar history saying they once lived in a cave. Their traditional attire, religion and culture bear lot of similarities of those of the Meeteis. The Clothes were once called as the Purms and they inhabit many parts of Chandel district.

Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Chongloi, Hangersing, Chothe, Doungel, Giye, Gange, Haokip, Hmar, Kon, Kipten, Lungdim, Lamkang, Lunkim, Changsem, Lenthang (Teleyen), Mangleo, Kolen, Langum-Lang-el, Minem, Maring, Mate, Moyon, Monsang, Paite, Shitlou, Louvom, Singait, Shime, Tarao, Touthang, Vaiphei and Zo communities are together called the Zale'a-n-gam group as they have similar histories of origin and are also closely related in terms of language, dress, and culture. In the study of the oral histories of all the communities in Manipur, it is found that they all have some similarities in the origin. An overall perspective shows that they could be of the same origin.

Courtesy: Centre for Manipur Studies, Manipur University

National & International News

91 missing in China landslide, rescue efforts on

PII Beijing, Dec 21: At least 91 people, including 32 women, have gone missing after a massive landslide struck an industrial estate in China's Shenzhen city, prompting government to step up rescue efforts in one of the country's worst urban disasters. The 91 missing included 59 men and 32 women, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted officials as saying. As it was being regarded as one of China's worst urban disasters, hundreds of tonnes of mud from a crumbling mountain engulfed 33 buildings and triggered an explosion at a gas station in an industrial park in Shenzhen, including a nearby 1,500 people, including firemen, police and health workers are involved in the rescue operations, searching the debris for trapped victims. The rescue headquarters said they have detected signs of life at three separate locations of the site. Rescuers were battling unfavourable geological conditions to save those trapped under the debris.

"The site is quite narrow and is located on a ramp, so it is very difficult for vehicles to enter. We have to go there on foot," said Ao Zhouqian, an official of Shenzhen's fire control department. Rescue efforts were being hampered by a series of obstacles, including rain, low nighttime visibility and the large amount of mud, Ao said. The landslide buried 33 residential and industrial buildings, officials said. A statement on Weibo, China's micro-blogging site akin to Twitter, from the Shenzhen municipal government said the landslide also triggered an explosion at a nearby gas station. A nearby section of the West-to-East natural gas pipeline exploded after the landslide struck the Hengtaiyiu industrial park at around 11:40 AM which resulted in amassing of more than 100,000 metres of debris. Videos on China's social media showed vast amounts of mud pouring into the city. The mud slid slowly down as it approached the main area of the estate getting time for many people to escape.

Rescuers evacuated over 900 residents from the site by evening. A resident living about 4 kms away from the site told Xinhua that he heard "a loud explosion" yesterday. "It must be a big accident, as I could hear the sound from so far away," he said. An employee with the Luxiu Technology Co in the park said power supply in the company suddenly went down around noon. "I saw red earth and mud running towards

the company building. Fortunately, our building was not hit, and all people in our company were safely evacuated," he said. The mud has covered an area of more than 60,000 square meters with an average thickness of 6 meters, according to geological experts at the site. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang have ordered immediate rescue efforts and prevented secondary disasters.

NC youth leader shot dead

ANI Rajouri, Dec. 21: A member of the Village Defence Committee (VDC) in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir allegedly killed National Conference (NC) youth leader Ishaiyaq Ahmed late on Sunday night. Ahmed was shot dead by the accused after the duo indulged in a fight over the distribution of ration in the district. The victim's relative said that it was

a painful situation for the whole nation and added that the people were not safe in the state. Locals held a protest in the area and blocked the Rajouri-Poonch national highway demanding action against the accused. The protest was called off after police administration officers promised to take action against the accused.