

Editorial

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Opposition's stand: a new turning point in Manipur's history

2 day of sitting is very short when the state is plaguing with multiple issues. Speaker's ruling to continue the session as it has been already adopted by the Business Advisory Committee faced strong opposition with members of the Congress party demanding review of the BAC meeting so that the session extends to discuss the burning issues of the state.

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh's statement at the beginning of the session also revealed the reality that the state is now in the frying pan with multiple issues among which some are outside the purview of the state government. Presenting his speech in the august House Chief Minister N. Biren Singh said that his government has been working all possible way to end the ongoing prolong impasse at Manipur University which now spread beyond the University complex. The leader of the House also presented reported one after another on how his government has been working days and night since the beginning of the strike stating that a team comprising of BJP leaders including himself he urged all concern to do the needful as per the desire of the Manipur University Community. He also presented how his government has been urging the central authority to bring a solution to the alleged boundary pillar dispute between along Indo-Myanmar border in Tengnoupal district of Manipur.

Everything he presented had already been published at many local dailies. Luckily under the initiative of the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly the speech presented by the Chief Minister was able to watch by all the people of the state as it was telecast live in Doordashan Kendra Imphal.

The speech delivered by the chief minister showed lack of understanding to the problems plaguing the state. Of course some common people who have never gone through the Manipur University Act or those who are not expert in the field of International boundary matter would have some sympathy to the Chief Minister. But to those who are dealing with the multiple issues it can be easily noted that the Chief Minister is desperate. His stand and bold statement turns out to be only another media stunt as important matters of the state are discussed thoroughly in the state assembly as the session is represented by elected representative of the state. When the Chief says that as the present issues including the MU and BP, are for the people all are welcome for discussion and should make no difference, it again turn out to be another tactics to fool the public as matters discussed and adopted at the assembly session decides the fate of the state.

When there are multiple issues which hurt the sentiment of the people, why the BAC is approving only two days sitting. Well, the Opposition have done their duty by urging the speaker of the house to review the BAC sitting so that it could be extended for more days to discuss the problems.

Many times almost all leaders talk about dialogue as the only solution. Debate over issues grinds the dirt and finally brought a conclusion so that the state prospers.

Using lathi, and tear gas shell (that too expired one) is not the solution. The real debate should be in the house and a two day sitting is a real insult to not only the opposition Congress Party but also to all the people of the state.

For the first time, since Imphal Times starts publication, the state witness the opposition walking out for the cause of the people in protest against the speaker's ruling.

The actual face of democracy is showing its true face. If the opposition stands firm that people across the country will feel the joy of living in a democratic country.

ASPECTS OF PAMHEIBA'S RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND ITS IMPACT: PERSPECTIVES ON CONSTRAINTS AND CONTRADICTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

By: H. Indrakumar

Contd. from previous issue

Idolatry

The Meeteis did not worship idols or deities. During the reign of King Khagemba an idol of Sanamahai was put inside the Wangoi Shrine. The next step after the Nongkhruing dip was the construction of temples and putting idols of deities inside them. The idols of Ram and Lakshman and Kalika were made and worshipped. The idol of Hanuman was made from a stone erected at Sanakeithel. The Meeteis did not even look back to the monkey because they took it nothing. The idol was put in a temple at Mongba Hanba forest and its name came to be known as Hanuman Thakur Panchamukhi and hence the name of Mongba Hanba was changed into Mahabali. Pamheiba ordered his officers to break into pieces the Sanamahai idol worshipped inside the Wangoi Temple. He committed such a measurable crime that his name is still now remembered with notoriety because criminalization of religion is the original brainchild of his for the first time in the native history. Since Pamheiba ignored deities, the result was no more than the self-infliction of God's anger. Eight sons of Pamheiba were facing death. Pamheiba, his consorts and Shantidas became injured. It was questionable why Shantidas and Pamheiba did not go to the Ram Temple to seek boon for healing. Rather they worshipped Lord Pakhangba and Godhead Sanamahai. Even then there were no signs of recovery from their decaying state. At the last moment they knelt down before Chingu and sought his blessing. When Khongngangthaba performed the ritual properly Lainingthou (Godhead) had already blessed and hence cured. The broken idol of Lord Sanamahai was again reconstructed and brought to Uphonpat Temple one Harinaran Thakur was entrusted to worship with authorized custodian. Behind the scene of idol worship there was a hidden technique that many people especially the Meetei irrespective of devoted or not would throw into the temple with offerings which would be the sources of income or earning without any labour. Idols in the temples earned income for their custodians and spent easy livelihood. I mean to say that idols are not religion itself and there is something above idols and worship.

Burning the Puyas

Shantidas never stopped thinking about various devices to harm the Meeteis. He told the king that the native religion was so unique that the Ramanandi cult could not be accomplished as well as the idol worship in the temple failed to attract the kingdom massively. So the next step was to destroy all the Meetei scriptures including its literature in order to introduce the devnagari script for the victory of Shri Ram. Pamheiba's harsh order was not easily forgotten by the people that those who disobeyed his order could not be escaped without getting punished heavily. He ordered to collect all the books and scriptures and pile up at Kangla Utra. All the collected Puyas were placed on the pyre and Pamheiba lit the pyre. Most of the Puyas dealing with Meetei religion, culture, tradition, custom etc. had been blown along the pyre. Shantidas and Pamheiba whispered that the Meetei religion must surely return to their original place as most of the Puyas had been blown to different directions. The 'Maichous' passionately smiled with tears for a while.

Throwing Skull Bonus into the Ningthi Shantidas knew that his religion could never last long. Though some books were burnt down, most of the important and valuable Puyas had already been borne out of the pyre. From the next day of the ceremonial burning of the Puyas it was ordered that any dead person should be cremated in the crematorium just like in the same manner as the Puyas were burnt down which has still now been in vogue. The Meeteis had three forms of disposal of the dead body, disposal by water, by air or space and by land or surface. Cremation was for the first time introduced after the Puyas. All

the dead bodies were not allowed to perform in Meetei tradition. All the graves were exhumed and the bones were taken out of the grave and throw into the Ningthi River. In these circumstances, Chingu Khongngangthaba, who had been in charge of the Priest successively from the period of pamheiba's grandfathers came to the palace and revealed.

"Now all the people would be subjected. If the skull bones are thrown into the Ningthi River the Meetei will be subjected under the Avas. It is not to do under the enemy's order. If you dig the skull bones up opening the burial, you will be getting the same return. I will tell one thing. The kingdom will be plunged into deep sorrow as all the Meetei scriptures are being burnt down. O King Ningthem, little child! Even though a few nominally small books are burnt yet Meetei scripture dealing with history and tradition has not been burnt. All has been blown away to different directions. You have got things done at your own discretion for sometime since dipping pledge was taken before you by holding valuable nongkhruing branch. You continue your devices for some period of time in accordance with your own whim. O Ningthem! Do listen! For your cause Ningthem, the holy Scriptures (Puyas) will have to be preserved throughout almost Meetei lane and passages. O Ningthem today I do speak! The journey of a time has arrived. All the Meetei lunularies are quite bowed and all of them have avoided the Nongkhruing Pledge not to eradicate Meetei tradition. I am also to negotiate for some time. Look wide open your eyes! O Ningthem if you are crazy about the alien cult you won't live long."

Chingu Khongngangthaba's Revelation

Thus when Chingu Khongngangthaba revealed prophecy Shantidas became confused raising his eyebrows. He taught discipline and demeanour but Pamheiba being thoughtless and childish glared angrily. He said that the guru's order must not be breached. Saying this Pamheiba collapsed just jumping over Shantidas. The tried their level best but did not get any idea. Shantidas chanted various occult mantras but his condition became more and more difficult and serious. The colour of skin turned odder whether he would die or not was unknown. Shantidas knelt down and bowed in front of Chingu Maichou requesting him to only once save his laithiul Ningthem Pamheiba as he had no means at all. Chingu Khongngangthaba said "O alien monk! I will tell on one reason. I know what you request with tears since, our Meetei tradition of taking charge between old and new arrives. As the Lord Almighty's will proves to suffer from some time now on, I'll save your life. As the God disposes, Pamheiba's life will also be spared." Immediately Pamheiba stood up like waking up from a deep slumber.

In the midnight while Shantidas narrated the Ramayana to Pamheiba. All of a sudden, a thunderous explosion like heavy lightning was fallen. All were panicky. The guru also frightened. All used to enter to witness and that all were found weeping. Pamheiba's two sons, Shyamsai and Anantasa were inflicted with dementia. Priests and priestesses from all corners of the kingdom tried their level best but in vain. As though flowers, fruits, lights were offered and worshipped propitiating Salalid Sidaba Mapu, whose omen was in evidence. All attempts were useless. Shantidas was also unaware of what to do. All remained frustrated and helplessly baffled. Thus everybody spent the whole night with heavy burden of deep sorrow and grief. Whenever suffered from worry, illness and affliction the alien monk surrendered to nobody except Chingu Khongngangthaba. When Pamheiba and Shantidas politely requested him for mercy, he advised Moirang Lalhamba, his younger Maichou to heal. Accordingly Lalhamba went to the palace where he chanted prayer and

worshipped Ida Leimalid Shidabi and Lainingthou Shidaba and sprinkled with prayer the holy water on the ailing princes and they were cured in no time.

Danger often comes in battalion. It came to be the turn of Shantidas the deceiver who had loaded more than enough faults. He collapsed while he was alone in his room and began to utter demented words. Within a short while sorts of divine infliction inflicted all over his body. Foul smell lingered. Nobody wanted to be near him. The king became more anxious. The king's guru was pushed through the foothill of the Nongmaiching Hills. There he took an Andro widow as his wife and spent a family life. Pamheiba called him back from the foothill as he was seen in the dream of the former. He was not yet recovering from the infliction, intensive and extensive search began for curing this. None could be found out. At last he went to Chingu and requested him to shower blessings upon him by disclosing the means of curing his innumerable afflictions. He sought politely the blessings of the divine scholar. Chingu Khongngangthaba told Shantidas to go to dip into Purup Soubi Pond. He went alone to dip but Iphouthou Pakhangba appearing in the form of Taoliloi with golden horns emerged like a thunderbolt from the pond. Shantidas ran off with fright and collapsed before Chingu. Taking the cue politely from the kind and generous Chingu, Shantidas came back to Purup Shoubi Pond and bowed down with folded hands! "Meetei elder Khongngangthaba has taught me and, as your servant, know nothing and save me." As he politely submitted in a fit of trembling and shivering voice, all his afflictions vanished. His life was saved many times by Meetei religion but he did not leave his religion though this could not save him from the jaws of death.

Manipur Enthralled

Shantidas proposed to give a new name to Meetei Kingdom. He told the king that the Godhead of the kingdom was adorned with diamonds and jewels, and that not an ordinary land being ruled by diamond-studded godhead would be properly named as Manipur (Mani means Diamond, pur means place). Pamheiba agreed happily. From that day onward the name of Meetei Kingdom or Meetei Leipak had been changed into Manipur which was declared under Shantidas's order. He was very happy to name a land and became fruitful of his expectation. What he desired was also to change the name of the birth place of the Meeteis. As the motherland Meetei Leipak was named in an alien tongue like Manipur (Bengali), the alien culture was to be followed. When the sanskritised name Manipur was adopted, later in the subsequent periods, Hindu School of thought composed of Hindu and Hinduised elites, like the Drahma Sabha became gradually active whereas no such parallel elite group belonging to Meetei School of thought came into existence till 1930 and 1945 when the Apokpa Marup and the Meetei Marup were formed at Cachar and Manipur respectively.

Burning of Kangla

While Pamheiba, Shantidas and other courtiers and officers were visiting the Loktak Lake and Fubala, a horseman messenger from the palace rushed to the spot and reported that the Kangla palace was burning. The moment Pamheiba arrived not a single sound of weeping was heard. The king's palatial residence had been burnt to ashes. Kangla being burnt along with the ground emitting glaring heat, all the royal glammers including the queen spent the whole night at Sana Keithel. The alien guru sprinkled water from his jug but the fire began to burn like wildfire. Shantidas being shameful used to barricade with mud around Kangla. Water was poured fully but the tempo of fire had increased. All the people there were broken up. Shantidas became confused and helpless and finally ran to Chingu. Both Pamheiba and Shantidas shamelessly requested surrendering to Khongngangthaba to kindly extinguish the fire. As the King's guru was known to have been defeated Chingu Khongngangthaba said: "the Kingdom cannot be allowed to lose, this

naked fire will be extinguished now. The barrier was broken open. Khongngangthaba penetrated his hand into the burning fire and put the fire out. "O great fire burning up! All the seven Satans coming from the west had been kept expelled beyond the Maklang Khong in the Kangla Passage. The fire I see through my eyes has been extinguished. The fire which is burning inside will be burning without making it known to anybody else. The time for putting the internal fire out is not a matter of just present day. A time will come when the Meetei progenitor reconciles Kangla with the knowledge of the origin of Yek-Salais, and when the foreigners are expelled from the Kangla region, the fire internal will be extinguished. As though it can be extinguished it will not be allowed to do so since the western culture is being adopted during your time. Let I am compelled to do as such you should die and your jewel chain should be broken into pieces."

Pamheiba with his guru requested kindly to abstain from raking up internal fire.

An Evaluation

Religion is a factor for overthrowing the whole superstructure of Meetei society. The Ramanandi faith has made Pamheiba and Shantidas fanatics and emerged to be a cult figure under his despotic regime. If both of them knew the Ramayana values properly, the fatal journey of Meetei towards a negative direction must not have been taken off. The Sanskritisation process continues till today and it can be easily evident from the following facts:

1. Nongkhruing Dip is performed as per old dip like in the Ganges.
2. Brahmanical practice of wearing sacred thread with diksha (God's name).
3. Conversion of Yek-Salais into gotras means Meetei origin goes to Brahman ancestor.
4. Idolatry, construction of temples and idol worship patronized by Hinduised king.
5. Stamping mud (chanden) on the forehead and other parts of the body
6. Meetei names are changed into Hindu names.
7. Meetei scriptures called the Puyas, like the Hindu Puranas are destroyed so as to erase Meetei origin.
8. Throwing of skull bone into the river is practiced as a mark of submissiveness.
9. Burning of dead body is introduced with the ritual arrangements as done in the burning of the Puyas.
10. Krishna cult, Vaishnav cult, Gauriya cult and several other cults follow successively.
11. Brahmanism is more predominant than Hinduism.

From these historical facts it can easily be understood that a despotic character can take religion in his own hands and do whatever he likes in the name of religion without considering its merits and values. Chingu Khongngangthaba perceived the situation all and prophesied an apocalypse during which the Meeteis would regain the lost vigour and vitality. He kept all these in time capsule. Langtailol, Ngamtailol, Kaipilol and a few other treatises deal with the future. Few other scholars (Maichous) also wrote such treatises for future generation. The Nongkhruing Pledge for seven generations was over and hence regeneration and reconciliation took place. Chingu Khongngangthaba is still with us because his predictions came true. He was the most prominent scholar with divinity who saved Meetei Leipak from the complete ruin in the hands of the fanatics and despots. He is guarding Kangla, the holiest of the holy abode of Lord Sidaba. A stature of about six feet with bright and fair complexion wearing white turban and white clothes covering the whole body Chingu Khongngangthaba stands vigilant at the foot of Utra tairen tree in guarding and commanding gesture. All the crises and problems can be resolved if we go by the sayings of Chingu and there is nothing to disbelieve in this proposition

(To be continued)

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