

Editorial

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

The crumbling Manipur University: Is there an agenda?

Fortunately, there are some products of the Manipur University who continue to remain there as either Assistant Professors or contract faculties. But, to be precise among the faculty members most are scholars who completed their higher education from universities outside the state or abroad. Saying so, much improvement to the society has come after the establishment of Manipur University in 1980. Be it in politics, economics, societal status or Human Rights issues, Students or faculty members from the University were the one who brought up the issues in the right directions. It is their hard works that suggestions on how development could be brought up could be delivered not only to the government but to the common people of the state. University, where students learnt their higher studies could be another temple of the society similar to the State Assemblies or the Parliament which has been considered as the temple of democracy in a country like India.

ProfDrew Gilpin Faust of the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College, Dublin in his magnificent speech on the role of University had stated that Higher education generates broader economic growth as well as individual success.

Having understood its importance the numbers attending universities in India doubled in the 1990s, and demand continues to surge. India's Human Resource Development Minister has stated that India needs 800 new institutions of higher education by 2020 in order to raise the age participation rate—the percentage of college-age population enrolled in institutions of higher education—from 12.4% to 30%.

In our state too Manipur University, which has been paying a significant role in the running of the University has been upgraded as a central University and, the government having felt the need to establish more Universities now passed Bill for setting up of two more Universities. Indira Gandhi National Tribal University is already functioning and Dhanamanguri University is also likely to start functioning soon.

At a time when the government of the people, by the people and for the people have started taking up good initiative giving priority to the improvement of the higher education, it is most unfortunate that the Manipur University is now in crisis, crippling the academic atmosphere and putting at stake the careers of the students.

What is more unfortunate is the silence of the state government as well the Governor of the state over the recent development. Manipur government may not have its complete jurisdiction over the matter of University which is now a central University but the Governor of the state is the Chief reactor of the University. Any uncontrolled situation in the university which involved the Vice Chancellor should be intervened timely. And the state government too should not remain a silent spectator to the issue which is going on in the University, for it is the state government that will finally get bad name for everything that is happening to sabotage the image of the University.

Now, Imphal Times had exposed the genesis of the uproar in the University in our yesterday issue and it is not that people inside the University who are stakeholders did not know what has been happening but were not courageous enough to voice against it. In Manipur University, students are not allowed to take extra sheets for writing examination. They are provided limited set of answer sheets containing only 22 pages. No reaction so far has come to the report of the Imphal Times either from the Vice Chancellor Office or from the University faculty's side as everything reported is true.

If Imphal Times report stands true than its time that the state government interfere either by sending report to the concern authority for removal of the Vice Chancellor, or if in case the report is felt as unfounded made up one Imphal Times welcomes all sort of legal action as the team is ready to face it for the cause of the University.

Now, considering the fact that is going on is being sideline by the state government, there is a reason for believing is the authority (government) has some agenda on the University? A matter much needed to ponder by each and every citizens of not only Manipur but by all Indian citizens.

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Our Common Crisis: What are We to Do? (Part-3)

BY- NIKETU IRALU

With June 10, 2018 just 5 days to go Imphal Times is reproducing the series of lectures delivered by different eminent personalities on the Arambam Somorendra Memorial Lecture on the day every year organised by the Arambam Somorendra Memorial Trust .

All developing societies face an extraordinary problem in their struggle to grow. It is well described in "10,000 Years in a Lifetime" by Sir Albert Maorikiki, the first Foreign Minister of Papua New Guinea (PNG). He was born on one of the remote islands of the country where, as he said, Stone Age practices still prevailed. He found his way to a primary school run by missionaries, then eventually to Universities. He became one of the first graduates of the University of PNG just when the country became an independent nation. He was made the first Foreign Minister of the new nation. At the UN in New York he had to move with his counterparts some of whom came from the most advanced nations of the world. Fairly soon, as PNG is a member of the British Commonwealth, he became Sir Albert Maorikiki, knighted by Queen Elizabeth.

In his memoirs he described the overwhelming challenge he and his people had to face to bring their society up to the standard required to survive in the world. They kept failing and are still in desperate crisis. His people had to learn in a very short time crucially important and difficult processes of administration and development that people in advanced societies had learned over many generations by trials and errors. His people could not learn anything properly. The result was their development lagged way behind and problems multiplied, increasing the burdens of the Government and the people manifold.

We too are plagued by this crisis and our society has become stagnant and explosive at the same time due to incompetence, ignorance, mismanagement and corruption preventing speedy development. These failures and shortcomings are examples of defective or wrong responses to challenges of change, the common problem of most developing societies. Our failures and blunders are not because we are worse than others but because we simply have too much to learn in too short a time, made worse by our weakness for instant success and enjoyment.

To illustrate what I mean by this crisis of response that our people have to

wrestle with I shall share here the story of three rat families who used to live in the garden of the property in Shillong where my family and I have been living for over 14 years now. A few years ago Mrs. Helen Nichols-Roy who owns the property engaged a contractor to construct an underground water tank in the vegetable garden. One morning a monster of a Larsen & Toubro bulldozer and excavator arrived and roared into the garden. Its steel arms broke the branches of the trees in its path as if they were dry twigs. The fencing and the stone terraces were all flattened. It then started to dig. At this point we and our neighbours watching the awesome operation discovered that three rat mothers were trying to cope with a terrifying crisis which they hadn't obviously encountered at all until just a few minutes earlier. Their nests behind the stone walls had been torn apart. In each nest were tiny pink baby rats wriggling helplessly, oblivious of the fact that their survival chances were nil. Their shocked mothers frantically dashed about to protect their babies getting drenched in the rain. Then to the dismay of all watching the tragic drama, our two cats dashed across and ate up all the rats. My wife's outraged scolding screamed above the noise to her cats was in vain. The mother rats must have realized they would be eaten next by our opportunists cats. They dashed off with their tails up in the air into the bushes beyond the garden area. The father rats were nowhere to be seen. As I watched the rat mothers running away from the scene of incomprehensible shock and horror that had overtaken their village, the thought crossed my mind that what I was seeing was actually the experience of the majority of my people. Are not the majority of mothers in our villages and towns completely at a loss to know how to protect and save and raise their children? The crisis of many of them becomes all the more overwhelming because their husbands so often are totally unhelpful. In such a society people begin to think that to be opportunistic like the cats is normal. Only a minuscule few in our society who have become obscenely rich

through ruthless corruption may think they are managing to handle change. But in reality they are disastrous examples of unsustainable solutions. Alas, they are the high profile role models in our society, and so many come to think to be shamelessly selfish is quite normal. Is it surprising our society is what it is now?

Can we do anything that can make a difference in our situation is always the question. It should be asked to keep us realistic. From my own experience I know that if we simply decide to be "The change you want to see in the world", as Gandhiji put it, more things happen in unexpected ways than we can imagine or understand. There is a verse in the Gita that says we are to do what we know is our duty leaving the results in His hands. There is more in this truth than we realize.

I shall cite two statements of conviction and commitment given to the world from the Middle East.

The first one: Landrum Bolling was a scholar, journalist and a widely respected worker for peace between Israelis and Arabs. He wrote, "The real issue, significant for everyone, is whether the sterile negative of today's life in the middle east, by which all men are imperiled, can be converted to a pattern of human co-operation not yet known or seen among men. This is not sentimental nonsense if we can believe that there are not hopeless situations, but only hopeless men."

The second one: In the third week of May this year the highly popular annual Euro- Vision musical extravaganza was held in Norway. An Israeli actress-singer and a Palestinian Arab actress singer sang together in the competition projecting their common dreams for their peoples. They were not strictly from within Europe. But that was not questioned by anybody. They did not win the first prize but they stole the show by their vibrant presence and their sheer courage in taking a common stand. They said they were taking part in the contest to signal to their own peoples and to the world their conviction that "There must be another way" and it could not be abandoned, the way of

"acknowledgment of one another's right to exist", apologizing for the wounds and hurts inflicted to one another and "sharing" in the building of a common future. They were demonstrating what converting the "sterile negative of today's life" in their devastated region to human co-operation would entail.

If there is to be another way, a better way, in all situations of prolonged disorder, distrust, vengeful hatred, despair and violence, the "sterile negative" in situations like ours in our region also has to be addressed with the seriousness that the problem deserves.

"Sterile" according to the dictionary means, "barren, fruitless, incapable of producing offspring, results, ideas..." Is not this barrenness, this pervasive sterility that breeds despair and evil, one of the explanations of our crisis also?

We should know in what ways we are a part of the sterility and learn simply to end it for the sake of our common future we must build together.

I shall conclude what I have tried to convey by restating the main points of my talk:

The quality of our response to the challenges and needs in our crisis decides the quality of our people and our society. This dictum of history allows no concessions.

Evil is born and it becomes malignant when normal human failures and shortcomings, or mistakes and wrongs done, are denied, defended or justified because of pride, fear or selfishness. Hurts not transformed are then transferred causing wider damage. "The most terrible process of all is not the war-making that takes lives and villages and towns, but the irrevocable damages to the majority who survive. The killing may stop ... But societies undermined by distrust, and burdened with criminalized economics do not recover". (Martin Wollacott, writing in 1998 on the disaster that overtook the former Yugoslavia).

Sustainability of our ideas and plans for solutions to our problems depends on our acceptance of reality and the ethical, moral soundness of the values we live by.

By-Anonymous

Sea Of Depression

I never knew how dreadful the world can be. How fearful you can be to drown in the sea of depression, the waves pulling you deeper and deeper. You see lights, but they're just too far away. You give up hope. You let sadness take you, sweep you, bring you into a world of oblivion. All the color, joy, and laughter drained out of it. How funny that this can happen, not by one person, or two, but by none at all. Maybe one day the lights will come closer. Being lonely is a terrible thing. I never knew of this world, at least not until now.

I slid my backpack off feeling a sense of dread. "It's another other year" I thought, casting my eyes around the unfamiliar territory of the new room. "It all starts with July, another year of school I will have to endure. But this year won't end up like the last." I made myself try to believe it. I really did. One year ago I moved into California from out of state. I found myself in the 4th grade with no friends. I eventually started to make friends but they weren't what I was looking for. I wanted a best friend. One I could pour my feelings to, to consult with, someone to spend my recesses with. I didn't find one. Everyone had their own cliques and had no room for one more. The tears came every night that year. "This year" I thought, "5th grade, this year I will try harder to make a best friend." I was going to make one because I needed one. I was starving for one. That promise, they were just empty words.

As the bell rang I looked around. I saw familiar faces but they gave me no comfort. I sat down in a desk and looked up at the teacher. "Good morning class" said the teacher happily, "today we will be doing a get to know each other activity. Look to the person sitting next to you and talk about your summer. Have fun!" I looked to the person on my left. She was a small Asian girl with a smile only known as fake plastered on her face. I didn't care. I locked eyes with her. "You," I thought to myself, "are my new best friend."

It was now September and I have gotten to know the little Asian girl pretty well. Her name is Katie. I learned some things I didn't want to, she already had a best friend and she didn't want another one. I didn't care. I was willing to do anything for a friend. But I also learned one more thing, she put every person in her own social pyramid. Going from best friend, to close friend, then friend, and finally kind of friend. I was in her friend rank. This way of sorting friends is terrible. It causes conflicts. It made me feel like I was never good enough. I eventually started to rise on her list. I stopped at close friend. "Never good enough." My heart beated, pumped that message through my veins, made me forget who I am.

January now, and frost still lingers on the grass not wanting to give way to spring. My chest rattled as I drew in the freezing air. I thought of this as I wrapped my arms tightly around

myself, keeping me warm. Shivering, I sat on the cool stone bench during recess with Katie and her best friend, Sage. Another girl named Evy also was here as well. The three of them always hung out together, apparently knowing each other since Kindergarten. Evy was the only other girl besides Sage that was on Katie's best friend list. Yet Katie always seemed a lot closer to Sage. My thoughts were rudely interrupted when Katie asserted,

"Hey Savanna can you please go away?"

"Yeah we have to share secrets." Evy interjected, backing Katie up.

"Okay," I mumbled. Tears started to prick my eyes as I walked away. This was not the first time this has happened. As I was walking I realized something, Evy was in the same boat as me. She was trying to fit in with a group. Except she was in a nice shiny sailboat and I was in a raft hanging on for my life. I held back a sob, waiting for the waves to pull me deeper and deeper.

Months later, now April I was outside during recess playing foursquare with Katie, Evy, and Sage when a boy by the name of Ax came over and questioned,

"Can I play with you guys?"

"No," Katie replied.

"Go away," Sage called.

"Yeah, Why can't you play over there?" I said pointing to one of the other four square courts completely in motion. As soon as the words flew from my mouth I regretted them. Ax

walked away, head down trying not to let anyone see the tears rising in his eyes. Moments later the bell rang. I started walking back to the classroom with a sag in my step weighed down by the words I uttered. Katie and Sage didn't seem to be affected at all by what they said. Joking around and laughing. I quipped my pace and caught up with Ax. "Hey, I'm really sorry for what I said, it was rude." He didn't raise his eyes to look at me but nodded ever so slightly. It broke my heart to see the damage I caused, my head clouded with shame. "What have I become?" If he didn't forgive me it was okay for that day, I became a bully.

From that day on, I realized I was so desperate for a place to belong I was blind to everything I did or said. I ignored the danger signs, and my feelings. From then on I recognized that if I was hurting other people, Katie or a place to belong was just not worth it, even if it meant I was going to be lonely. The fear and sadness of drowning into the Sea of Depression made me ignorant to the fact that I have already drowned. I was already in that terrible world of lifelessness. But life went on and eventually in a year or so later I found real friends even a best friend. These events have shown me how valuable friendship really is. The Sea of Depression was left behind and I am now sailing across the open waters of the Sea of Hope. If there was one thing I learned from the whole fiasco, is that sadness is dangerous.