

Editorial

Imphal, Tuesday, April 19, 2016

Hinduism matters

The arrival of Hinduism to the Manipuri Society during the 17th Century is the root of all this confused state of my mind. Various Manipuri scholars, historians and social activists had interpreted the entry of the Hinduism in their own views and perspectives. Some said it was the beginning of a new Manipuri civilization but some said it was an invasion. As found at some of the writings of social scientists - the arrival of Hinduism during the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba (1709-1748) had brought tremendous change in the religious practices of Manipur.

In his letter to his daughter Indira Gandhi, the first prime Minister of India wrote - Gods comes as a product of the fear of mankind. If scientists have succeeded in making a time travel machine, where we could go back to the prehistoric days, all sorts of confusions would have been solved. Even though we don't have the opportunity to go back to the past we could still culled the series of events that might have happened during the days. Scholars say - early people had to struggle hard for their survival. Professor Ratan Kumar Singh of the Manipur University while presenting his famous paper - "God in Manipuri Literature" in the Oxford Round Table Conference during April month in 2011 vividly explain the life our ancestors. As according to his presentation the early people were surrounded by hostile forces of nature and the environment. Their living conditions, to a great extent were influenced by the forces beyond their control. And they had a need to provide some explanations and accounts for the good and the bad things which happened to them along with those of the favourable and the adversaries. It is a very interesting fact that many of the forces were often personified and given name and personalities. This phenomenon was perhaps the first step for having beliefs and religious rituals. And consequently a number of gods and goddess representing the various elemental forces and qualities appeared.

The reason for bringing up this piece of write up is to remind that religions and rituals are the product of human civilization. Be it metisem Sanamah or the Hinduism or the Christianity - they are product of the human civilization.

May be our foremost ancestors might not have a god or a religion as they were yet to begin a civilization. The great grandparents of our great grandparents who were survived before the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba might have been following a religion which was counterproductive of their ancestors. May be, after force conversions or willy-nilly adoption, my ancestors, who were born after the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba have become Hindu. In course of time the Hindu rituals finds its way to the veins of the Manipuri society and become a part of it. The rich culture of the region which were flourished since Meitei civilization became into existence began to establish in a new outlook. These new traditions, along with the ancient indigenous traditions, were in existence simultaneously in Manipuri Culture. To the words of Professor Ratan - It was in some aspects we find a beautiful amalgamation of pre-Hinduism and Hinduism element in Manipuri Culture.

The rich heritage of Manipuri Culture and its recognition to the world community is the product of the ancient indigenous traditions streams through the newly invaded religion called Hindu. The Hindu that has been flourishing to the society this erstwhile kingdom is in no way a curse but rather a boon. Indeed the traditional Meiteism culture and the newly entered Hinduism adopted by our ancestors are the two sides of the same coin. There are beauty and respect to the rituals of Hindu and we have reason to feel proud to the rituals of my Sanamah religion.

Except that our looks sometimes made us guilty in identifying as Hindu while travelling to the mainland country.

One day with Rev. (Dr.) Valsion Thampu in Imphal

By-Ningombam Bupenda Meitei

On my birthday yesterday, I thought what I shall do to begin my day, and a moment of memorably beautiful time, spent with none other than the former Principal of my alma mater, St. Stephen's College, came back flashing in my mind's eyes and instilled a new motivation to pen on it to not only recall, remember but also to imprint the legendary - at least for me to begin with and extends to, perhaps, all - one day that I spent with such a great soul in none other than my own home city Imphal, the capital of Manipur. Loktak Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the North East India, at Moirang, a few kilometers away from Imphal, became the lone witness to discover my uncovering of the spiritual and truth seeking humble soul of the human being personified in the principal.

Rev. (Dr.) Valsion Thampu, who recently retired after completing his tenure as the principal of St. Stephen's College, Delhi, came to Imphal to meet the old stephanians, who were, and are, in the position of a senior Cabinet Minister, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, many senior bureaucrats and top police officials, of Manipur. Imphal was organizing an international event, the Sangai Festival, in later part of December, 2015 when he arrived. He was also accorded a warm welcome and escorted by the senior Cabinet Minister and the Chief Secretary to a function, held as a part of the Sangai Festival, attended by the state Chief Minister and a host of ambassadors and high commissioners. We, the stephanians of Manipur, including an Additional Chief Secretary and intellectuals, were expecting to dine with him, but we were also intimated about his planned dinner with other dignitaries who also had arrived for the festival. Later, he, also being overwhelmed by the love of stephanians from Manipur, left the dinner, hosted by the state, and joined the stephanians' dinner in a humble way where in a very calm atmosphere, old days' memories and discussions took place in such a way that he literally admitted, at the end of the dinner, that he had not seen such a pleasant exchange, in Imphal, with stephanians in his life.

I had such a remarkable time with him by having been blessed with an

opportunity to take him and showed my city, Imphal, which is also thousands years old's cradle of Manipuri civilization. I went in a morning to call on him to a hotel, where he, and other diplomats and the Chinese ambassador to India were also staying for the Sangai Festival, and found his room locked. On my way back to the hotel's lobby, I met him and saw him walking back to the hotel after having a round, on foot, of the localities surrounding the hotel. He smiled and shared the joy of having a morning walk in such a beautiful place, bestowed with such a naturally favourable weather. I then escorted him to the historic 2nd world war's aerodrome, which is no more in use now, at Koirengi, Sainik School Imphal, Don Bosco Imphal, world war cemetery at Deulahlad, Imphal, *Ena Keithel* (the world's only women's market) and Kangla Fort. After his speeches and interacting with the students and teaching staff of the two schools, Sainik School Imphal and Don Bosco Imphal, I took him to *EnaKeithel* or Mothers' Market ('Ena' means 'mother' and 'Keithel' means 'market' in Manipuri) from where he bought *Chak Hou* (black rice). He also bought Manipur's pine apple for his way back home. From Imphal, we headed towards Moirang, the ancient place where *Khamba Thoibi* - an epic love story of ancient Moirang - of Manipuri Literature was recorded. At Moirang, around 45 km from Imphal, we had a lunch on the top of a hillock, which houses a tourist centre with restaurants and cafeteria, on Loktak lake. After having the lunch, we went to Indian National Army Memorial at Moirang to remember Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Azad Hind Fautz's arrival to Moirang with the help of Japanese troops. The journey which began from around 8am in the morning ended by around 5pm. Later in the day, Impact TV, a media channel of Manipur, interviewed him.

It was over a lunch with Rev. (Dr.) Valsion Thampu on Loktak Lake, which is also known as "the mirror of Manipuri Literature", that I could sense and feel his simplicity, honesty and humanity in its noblest and humblest way. When I showed him the city and its surroundings, I took him as the principal of my college, but slowly, in the long



distant drive away from Imphal and going towards the purest waters of Loktak Lake in a serene air with Mother Nature, I started acknowledging his inner self and it was essentially an engagement with his inner realm that has not compelled, but rather impelled me, to write this piece of mine. He was very clear in his mind that his stay in Imphal was to get away from the media projections of him in New Delhi. He wanted peace not only from media, per se, but was also in search of inner peace, far away from the world of materialism, to delve into the universe of spiritualism. Thereby, he, despite my reminder to him of his mobile phone being kept in his hotel room, told me that he did not want to be disturbed by the phone calls. It was in our informal conversation that I came to know his initial childhood upbringing as a Hindu child, who used to visit temples for religious prayers and rituals, and later he imbibed Christianity. His mother played a significant role in shaping his mind, heart and soul since his childhood days. His morning assembly speech at Don Bosco Imphal was full of emotions and humane values that he deeply stressed himself as an "orphan" and hailed those with parents being so privileged. It was his oratory, imbedded with moral values of mankind, that did enthral not only the senior students but also the primary class' kids, who not only smiled while listening to his talk but also even replied to his engagingly moving questions to them, of the Roman catholic school. It was indeed, the lunch that gave

me a moment to proactively ask him questions on ethics, values, philosophy and law, humanity and concerns of the college and nation, besides his childhood and life. It was a natural flow of exchanging dialogue, in which I found the inner being in him which is essentially very peace loving, soft hearted and full of human emotions which are deeply sensitive. He is honest from his heart and he could even ask his own critic, "why do you write against me?", but the critic really needs to understand him in the form his inner self, and not necessarily all the times as the principal, though "former" now, of the college. My dialogue with him was not with the principal, but with human being, per se, in him and it was a bliss interacting with such a soul who loves peace, harmony and understanding with Mother Nature in the presence of none other than Mother Loktak Lake. Media too is mostly critical of his administration as the then principal of the college, but hardly a presentation of his mankind, humanity and love for peace has been put into light. What is also important in life as a human being is also to understand the human being in that person, whether he holds an office of eminence or not. The words of a stephanian Rev. (Dr.) Valsion Thampu - "Let's not talk to each other, instead let's talk to each other" - shall remain an aptly matured philosophy of his. He shall be remembered for his purity of heart, search for inner peace and quest to grow bigger and leap higher on the ladder of spiritualism. (Ningombam Bupenda Meitei is a poet, author and orator)

Press notification

There will be no power in the area fed by the Singjamei & Canchipur Feeder on 19th April 2016 from 10.00am to 4.00pm because of the installation of two new 25KVA DTRs in Singjamei Mayeng Leikai & Kakwa Pechu Lampak for the Street Lighting purpose.

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National and International News

In Kashmir's Violence-Hit Handwara, Army Bunkers Removed

Handwara, April 19: Bulldozers tore down army bunkers this morning at Kashmir's Handwara town, a week after a young cricketer and two others were killed in firing by security forces.

Four bunkers set up 23 years ago in the north Kashmir town were razed by the administration. The army, which had refused to move out of the town, relented after "negotiations with the administration and the an intervention at the highest level at the state government and army command," sources say.

As the main bunker came down in the heart of the town, locals immediately put up a banner naming the square after Nayem Bhat, a 19-year-old cricketer who was killed in the firing last Tuesday. The clashes began with allegations that a soldier had molested a schoolgirl. The police say the security forces opened fire when a mob surrounded a bunker and threw rocks.

The deaths in Handwara led to more clashes and protests in other parts of the Kashmir Valley. A 15-year-old boy was killed in Kupwara.

Yesterday, the moment curfew was relaxed in Handwara, hundreds of people came out on the streets to pull down the army posts.

Confronting massive public anger, the army had refused to remove its posts saying they were strategically important for troops involved in anti-insurgency ops.

The army suspects a plan behind the protests that are unusual for Handwara, an area where the influence of separatists is practically non-existent.

The schoolgirl at the heart of the turmoil told a magistrate on the weekend that a boy harassed her and locals instigated the protests. Her mother, however, alleges that she is under pressure and has been illegally detained at the police station since last Tuesday.

A shopkeeper, Hilal Ahmad Bandy, has been arrested for allegedly circulated the molestation rumours that drove a mob against the army. Responding to the locals' demand, the administration promised to remove the army bunkers but protesters refused to back down until the structures came down. (Courtesy: NDTV)

7 Killed, 327 Wounded In Kabul Attack, Claimed By Taliban

Kabul, April 19: A powerful Taliban truck bombing followed by a fierce firefight left at least seven people dead and 327 others wounded today, officials said, a week after the insurgents launched their annual spring offensive.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack near government offices, which sent clouds of acrid smoke billowing in the sky and rattled windows several kilometres (miles) away.

The brazen assault in a densely packed neighbourhood marks the first major Taliban attack in the Afghan capital since the insurgents announced the start of this year's fighting season.

"The latest toll shows at least seven people have been killed and 327 others wounded," health ministry spokesman Mohammad Ismail Kawoosi told AFP.

"Most of those wounded are civilians and many are in a serious condition." Security officials said the loud explosion was triggered by a truck bomb, expressing concerns that other bombers may still be on the loose.

The Afghan interior ministry denounced the attack as a "war crime", pledging to track down the perpetrators.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed their fighters had managed to enter the offices of the National Directorate of Security, the main spy agency.

Afghan officials dismissed those claims, saying that the target of the attack was a government office responsible for providing security to government VIPs.

Pitched gun battles were ongoing near the building, which was cordoned off by security officials as ambulances were seen rushing to the scene.

The Taliban are generally known to exaggerate battlefield claims. "(We) condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attack in Puli Mahmood Khan neighbourhood of Kabul, as a result of which many of our countrymen were martyred and wounded," President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement.

"Such cowardly terrorist attacks will not weaken the will and determination of Afghan security forces to fight against terrorism." (Agency)