

Editorial

Imphal, Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Education for the educators

Technological advancements in the world today is increasing at a dizzying pace, and without proper training and preparation, it will be nigh impossible to keep pace with the present, nor will one be able to advance to the future. This is a simple and undeniable truth that needs no repetition. And if we are to ensure that our country, state or society is not left out of the ever developing civilization, we need to be sure that our children receives the best of education, encouragement and support we can provide under the circumstances, because they are the real future of our state and society. The emphasis here being 'good' and 'value based' education because today, just the knowledge derived from books and learning by rote becomes insufficient and redundant in equipping a child for dealing with the future. As a community, it is our obligation to help a child develop their identity and be a contributing factor to society. We must refocus on the idea that a child is the centre of our community. The present social turmoil and uncertainty being experienced has at its root the necessity for protecting the traditions and cultural identity of the various indigenous communities in the state, and the best way to go about it is to ensure that the children of today are given the necessary education. But is education alone the only prerequisite for a better future, both for the children themselves and the community or the society as a whole? More than the knowledge derived from the books, it is the sense of security, protection, values, social experiences and examples being set out for them which will be important factors in forming their personalities and perceptions of a future society which they will eventually be inheriting and developing.

In other words, Education is a basic human right and a significant factor in the development of children, communities, and countries. Opening classroom doors to all children, especially girls, will help break the intergenerational chains of poverty because education is intrinsically linked to all development goals, such as supporting gender empowerment, improving child health and maternal health, reducing hunger, fighting the spread of HIV and diseases of poverty, spurring economic growth, and building peace. It also fosters equality- both in terms of gender and communities. It is a way- perhaps the only way that can give positive and inclusive development- that still elusive goal the word over- a real and tangible shot.

Juxtaposing these established truths with the result of the high school leaving examination which came out yesterday, it would not be much off the mark to state that the much trumpeted and rather expensive efforts of the state government to usher in breakthroughs in the dilapidated educational scenario of the state, more precisely the state-run educational scenario has once again taken a beating and has proven to be an exercise in futility. Perhaps the solution to the protracted puzzle eluding the government's think-tank of 'experts', 'educationists' and 'academia' for so long lies with the nearest private schools churning out toppers year-in and year-out employing underpaid teachers. If this whole piece fails to make sense for 'them', then perhaps the last two words might give them a clue- effective implementation.

International Day of Biological Diversity observed in Tripura

ANI Gandhigram , May 25: On the occasion of International Day of Biological Diversity a seminar was organised by the Centre for Forest Based Livelihood and Extension (CFLE), Gandhigram in collaboration with Development Initiative for Sustainable Advancement (DISA). The main aim of the seminar was to sensitize farmers and students on conservation, sustainable livelihood development and to appreciate the concerned of children towards conservation. Various speakers delivered their lectures on the occasion explaining the importance of conserving biological diversity to save the ecosystem and Earth.

The speakers gave lessons and also motivated the gathering to save the nature by planting trees to keep human being saves on Earth.

An exhibition was organised on rare medicinal plants and the success of seed grading techniques on the seeds collected from jhum cultivation by CFLE in its campus where the students were explained the importance of these medicinal plants in traditional health care.

On May 22, the International Day for Biological Diversity is celebrated throughout the globe and this year the theme was "Mainstreaming Biodiversity; Sustaining People and their Livelihoods."

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Hijam Irawat and political movements in Manipur and the Surma valley

By : Dr R.K. Sanajaoba Singh

Hijam Irawat was the harbinger of political awakening in Manipur. The political awakening symbolised by the fourth session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (NHMM) developed into political movement and led into the historic Nupilan movement. Irawat spread his political movement not only in Manipur, but also in the Surma Valley (Surma Valley is the collective name for pre-independence Cachar and Sylhet Districts).

The political movement undertaken by Irawat may be periodically categorised as follows:

I. Pre-Second World War political movement in Manipur,

II. Political movement in the Surma Valley,

III. Post-Second World War political movement in Manipur.

I. PRE-SECOND WORLD WAR POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN MANIPUR

Two events served as the preparatory stages for the emergence of the political awakening and political movement in Manipur. The first is the resistance movement launched by Laikhuram Khagendrajit Singh inspired by the satyagraha movement of Mahatma Gandhi. During the movement against water tax, Khagendrajit founded the Nikhil Manipur Praja (NMP) in 1932. The movement resulted in the arrest of nine leaders out of whom six including Khagendrajit were given jail terms. On their release from the jail in April 1936 Irawat met Khagendrajit and discussed the emerging political scenario. This period of Khagendrajit's social movement may be characterized as the proto-political period of social movement.

The second event was the social reform movement, a natural sequel to the intellectual and cultural initiated by Irawat, which was only a prequel to the people's political movement against the British paramountcy. Conceived during the Mandalay session of the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha (NHMM) on 28 February, 1 and 2 March 1937, the social reform movement had its epitome in the movement against the Brahmasabha, chaired by the Maharaja. After his return from Burma, Irawat combined with Khagendrajit and launched a movement against Amang-Asheng - a practice of ex-communication enforced by the Brahmasabha. Just after the movement against Amang-Asheng Khagendrajit and all the activists of the NMP joined the NHMM.

In the fourth session of the NHMM a momentous metamorphosis in the perspective and objectives of the organization occurred. The communal qualifier 'Hindu' was removed from the nomenclature of the organization. The other momentous transformation was the taking up of political struggle by adopting the demand for responsible government. The session strongly condemned the repressive measures against those people in the states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Dhenkanal etc. who carried on agitations for fulfilment of their demands. The Mahasabha also demanded the establishment of a legislative council for the attainment of a representative form of government. The fourth session also passed other political demands also. On the economic condition the Mahasabha resolved that in order to improve the economic condition and to enable to control the market an all-Manipuri Khadi Sangha be established by starting khadi pratisthans in the villages of Manipur and by propagating khadi culture.

In February 1939 the NMM forwarded an English translation of the resolutions passed in the fourth session to the President, Manipur State Durbar (PMSD) for consideration and necessary actions. The PMSD promptly responded by banning all state servants to take part in the NMM

orto assist in any way. Maharaja Churachand cut all off all connections with the NMM. Most of the state servants who were members of the NMM voluntarily resigned from the Mahasabha. Only two persons, viz., Hijam Irawat Singh and Elangbam Tompok chose to sacrifice to their official positions for the people's cause. Irawat resigned from his post of Sadar Panchayat Member and gave up his wife's landed property. Tompok resigned from his post clerk in the Revenue Department.

In November 1939 Irawat as the President of the NMM submitted an outline of the legislature to the Maharaja and the Government of Assam. The outline envisaged a unicameral legislature of 100 members of which not less than 80 were to be elected and 20 to be nominated by His Highness, corruption-free election and voting secret ballot and several other features.

In the year 1939 Irawat had become an activist of the Indian National Congress. Before the outbreak of the Nupilan in December 1939, Irawat paid a visit to Silchar on 12 November and stayed there till 14 December 1939. Achintya Bhattacharya says, "...Com. Irawat paid a visit to Silchar in order to assess the political situation and the Congress policy of those days... Congressmen organized a reception for him and there in the reception I met him for the first time. He was clad in khaddar and he donned a Gandhi cap as was customary in those days." Irawat also visited the Jaroiolla village. He presided over a meeting held in a mandapa near the house of Thauojam Chandrashwar. Nikunja Goshai, a local leader of the Congress delivered speech. In the said meeting Irawat spoke against the imposition of the arbitrary rule of the British Imperialist power.

While Irawat was in Cachar, the Nupilan or the Women's Uprising had broken out on 12 December 1939 at Imphal. The absolute dependence of Manipur's economy on agriculture and the escalating rice export led to acute rise in the price of rice resulting in great hardship of the Manipuri people. At the same time, many Manipuri people could get the news of Mahatma Gandhi's satyagraha movement from the office of the NMM at Nagamapal, Imphal. Inspired by this news, many womenfolk approached the NMM regarding a women's movement against the rise of the price of rice to be launched and requested them for intellectual guidance.

On 12 December 1939 a multitude of women picketed the PMSD as well as other officers of the government at the Telegraph Office demanding the immediate stoppage of rice-export. A confrontation between the agitating women and the sepoy of the Assam Rifles ensured resulting in the injury of 20 women, five of them seriously. On receiving telegram to rush back, Irawat arrived at Imphal on 16 December 1939 and assessed the prevailing situation, particularly the role of the NMM.

The NMM was not in a position to guide the women's agitation as it was a divided house. On 7 January 1940 when Irawat proposed a resolution for launching a massive people's movement as a sequel to the women's uprising, he was in a minority. On the same day, Irawat organized a public meeting at Imphal. In his historic speech, Irawat observed that it was not an agitation of the women but a movement of the people. He appealed to the people not to pay land revenue to the state government as long as the British ruled in Manipur, to utilize the hills and the lakes without any payment, etc. Irawat thus showed the Manipuri people the path of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. The assembled people endorsed all resolutions proposed by Irawat. A political organization named Manipur Praja Sammelani

was formed to execute the resolutions.

Irawat was arrested by the State Military Police from his residence in connection with the speech he delivered on 7 January 1940. The Manipur State Durbar tried him under Durbar Criminal Case No.4 of 1940 and sentenced him to three years' Simple Imprisonment.

While Irawat was in jail, the Nupilan went on upto January 1941. The Manipur Praja Sammelani launched the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. On the day the Manipur State Durbar sentenced Irawat the women vendors called a hartal in the market and strew the cloth-wares of the cloth-shops on the street. As the Political Agent and his police force could not control the situation the Maharaja himself went to the market and brought the situation under control.

After staying about a year in the Imphal Central Jail, Irawat was transferred to the Sylhet Central Jail. II. POLITICAL MOVEMENT IN THE SURMA VALLEY

In the Sylhet jail Irawat had a new experience of the interactions of the Gandhin thought and the Marxist-Leninist thought. Congress leaders of Assam, viz., Anun Kumar Chanda, Rabindra Aditya, Dakshina Ranjan Gupta etc. and Communist leaders, viz., Achintya Bhattacharya, Radharanjan Deb., Chanchal Kumar Sharma etc. came to be lodged in the same jail. In the jail there were arguments between the Congress and the Communist prisoners regarding the character of the Second World War and about the

possible victory of the Allied Powers. Thus, Irawat could study the points of difference between the Congress and the Communist Party on the national and international questions.

Irawat could study the principle of Marxism-Leninism from the literature provided by his communist co-prisoners. He freed himself of the ramifications of deep Vaishnavite and Gandhian conceptions to accept the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. He was attracted most by the way of the problem of nationalities was solved in the Soviet Union and the CPI Programme in this regard was to his liking. Thus, Irawat made his choice and effected his philosophical and political transformation in the Sylhet Jail. Irawat was released from the Sylhet Jail on 20 March 1943. Although released from the jail he was banned from entering Manipur in view of his being a member of the Communist Party for the duration of the Second World War.

Irawat's activities in the Surma Valley were multi-faceted and manifold but were linked organically. His activities in the Surma Valley may be categorized as follows :- (i) Political and kisan work, (ii) Cultural activities, (iii) Women's organization.

(i) **Political and kisan work**
 Communist leaders of Sylhet consulted with central and provincial leaders (i.e. Bengal Provincial Committee) and decided that Irawat should stay and work in the Manipur-dominated areas of the Surma Valley, particularly in the Cachar district.. **(To be contd.....)**

JCILPS supporters gherao Political Parties Offices in Imphal demanding implementation of ILPS in the state

