

# Editorial

Wednesday, April. 18, 2018

## Largest democracy in danger: Is the countrymen listening?

The pride of India, for being the world's largest democracy is slowly derogating its character with the entire conundrum of fascists Hindu who are trying to convert the entire country into Hindu Raj. The new regime governing the nation is giving no respect to 'Secularism' which is in the preamble of the Indian constitution.

The world's largest democracy remains dogged by the twin legacies of feudalism and colonialism. It's no wrong to say that citizens are treated like subjects. Elected representatives (except some few), who are meant to serve the people often act like feudal lords than representatives of the people.

Under this legacy, Global capitalists are invited to exploit the lands and indigenous labour of some of the most oppressed downtrodden people. Since India was built as a nation, after driving out the British Colonial rulers nothing is change to the life of the common people. Common people in India still suffer from exclusion, discrimination and abuse under its caste, class, ethnic and gender system.

What is more horrifying is the open secret agenda of the fascists Hindu Regime which is making all sort of strategy to convert the entire country into one religion one nation. It is indeed a direct blow to the Constitution of India. As these group is utilizing all form of powers including the executive as well the judiciary, no Indian at present have the gut to challenge such unconstitutional activities.

Rape of women including minor girl are politicized by dancing in the communal orchestra. Minority are forced to distort the history for the cause of fascist's goal. One clear example is the controversial speech of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh - at which he connected the erstwhile nation state Manipur with that of the Aryan Mythology. The writing of letter to UP Chief Minister by Manipur Chief Minister also took everyone by surprise. The agenda of the Hindu Fascists is being reflected to the recent changes seen after the BJP which is the brainchild of RSS came to power.

There are good Hindu, but this is the first time that the country is witnessing a group of Hindu followers who are fascists and feudalistic in character.

Back here in the state of Manipur, voice of the Indigenous Manipuri who have been struggling hard for revival of the Indigenous Meitei religion has been almost suppressed. The titular King who had once converted to Sanamahi religion now becomes a real *bhak* of Shri Shri Govinda. Many youth's leaders who had been advocating the merger of Manipur to the Indian Union on October 15, 1959 as illegal now are seen wearing sffron cap, khaki half pant and say nothing when the Mythology of the erstwhile nation have been insulted.

Saying so, it would be wrong to say that Narendra Modi administration is not doing anything for the country. Same way Manipur Chief Minister have also done many appreciating works and taken up schemes for the people. Only think matter is the amalgamation of the administration with that of religion. Being good does not necessarily mean that every people should wear the kind of shirt that the leader wear or every citizen eat what the leader eat. Let religion be separated from running the state.

Let's uphold the country's constitution by respecting the preamble.

## National & International News

### TN governor apologises for patting woman journalist's cheek following outrage

**Agency Chennai, April 18**  
Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit on Wednesday apologised to a senior woman journalist after he set off a firestorm by patting her cheek at a press conference at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday.

The apology came following a demand by journalists in the state after Lakshmi Subramanian tweeted a picture in which the governor is seen patting her cheek and expressed her shock at his behaviour.

In a letter to Subramanian, the governor wrote, "...I gave a pat on your cheek considering you to be like my granddaughter. It was done with affection and to express my appreciation for your performance as a journalist since I was also a member of that profession for about 40 years." The journalist took to Twitter to announce that while she accepted the apology, she was not convinced about Purohit's intention.

Banwarilal Purohit had patted the journalist's cheek at a press conference at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday that he had convened after a woman professor of Virudhunagar, arrested

for trying to lure college girl students into extending sexual favours for high variety officials, claimed she was close to Purohit. He dismissed all allegations and said they were baseless and tried to deflect tough questions from woman journalists.

But during the close of the conference, the governor patted the cheek of Subramanian, sparking outrage among journalists and politicians.

Subramanian said she was angered and agitated and described the governor's action as an uninvited gesture.

Journalists got together and drafted a letter reminding the governor that what he had done was a non-bailable criminal offence. "As the Constitutional head of our state of Tamil Nadu, you have crossed the lines of not just basic courtesy but also those of law," a letter collectively written by the journalists to the governor said.

"Even if your gesture is paternal in nature, touching a lady without her consent is a crime under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act, 1998," the letter further stated.

**By: Moirangthem Shantikumar Singh**

The white warhorse charged through the throngs of sword wielding enemies. Throwing his head high in the air and neighing loudly, well equipped with quiverful of Arambai darts on both sides of the horn of the high saddle, the king's mount understood his master's decision to charge by instinct. Galloping across the sprawling space of Kyangkhampat, he had tested the spirit of man and horse against an unforgiving environment and merciless enemy. "Riding a white horse across Kyang land, the king fought his way with sword outstretched through the battle of Samjok" (Cheitharol Kumbaba, the Royal Chronicle). It was King Khagemba who crossed the mountain fastness of the low lying western ranges of Burma and extended the sway of Manipur up to Chindwin River, across Kyangkhampat in 1607 which later substantiated Manipur's claim over the Kabaw Valley after the end of Anglo-Burmese War in 1824-26. Along with grit and determination, the king showed an incredible certainly and faith leading the wave of Manipuri horsemen. The Manipuri cavalry horses, having trained in the melee of the polo field and game, were primed to follow the king at a gallop towards the enemy lines. The white charger which he rode in the campaign was given a divine attribute and perhaps it was since then that white steeds acquired divine spirituality in the state. In Manipur, only white ponies are used for special occasions like Lai Loukhatpa (calling up the Gods) as mount for deities.

The hilly kingdom of Manipur owes much to the prowess and vitality of its legendary pony for its survival as a nation amidst the turbulent upheavals of nation building which churned the fringes of South Asia up to the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A collateral event was the massive centrifugal human migration in Asia originating from the steppe region of East Asia which was further facilitated by a systemic evolution of primitive transport systems based on the domestication of animal. Although the prey animals like donkey, old world camels and horses were hunted for food, they were also brought into the human niche as means of transport. They were first employed as draught animal to pull carts and as well as ploughs. As people began to domesticate horses they learnt to control them for riding both in war and peace. The moment people could ride on horseback comfortably, they started using them for satisfaction of another basic instinct-to fight. Thus cavalry was born.

Over the ages the steppe regions of Mongolia became the cradle of horse culture. They raised horses for food as well for hunting. The Mongol military machine founded by Genghis Khan based their invincible power on the strategic use of cavalry potentials. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongols who were primarily horse-archers used the hit-and-run tactics with devastating effect combined with mastery use of the element of surprise. Kublai Khan, Genghis Khan's grandson and founder of the Yuan Dynasty while continuing the empire building exploits of the earlier Mongol emperors, added a new theatre of war to his campaigns and launched a series of targeted campaigns and launched a series of targeted campaigns into southern Asia which affected the history of Indo-Burma region including Manipur.

In Burma, the Mongols were victorious, but eventually abandoned the campaign. In 1277-

## Manipuri Pony A Cavalry Horse Par Excellence

78 Kublai Khan invaded Burma and installed a puppet government. The Mongols being an army of entirely cavalry, inspired the local potentates on its ability to easily dictate the positional, flow of the battle, particularly feigned retreats, which could easily fool an enemy into a foolish charge and become a victim of a barrage of Mongol parting-shots. The same technique was used by the galloping Manipuri raiders who feigned a retreat, threw metal tipped Arambai backward and then encircled the arrowed enemies from the flanks—a nightmare for the demoralised Burmese whose fidgety skyward looks scanning for the dreaded arrows were lampooned in the Manipuri folk tale as the Nongthak Yengba Awa (ever sky looking Burmese).

Later, inspired by the dazzling success of the Mongol and Manipuri cavalry, the Imperial Court of Burma decided to maintain a similar force in the form of Cassay (Manipuri) Cavalry permanently in the Burmese military setup. Of the 3000 cavalry strength of Myanmar, 2000 were Manipuri "Cassay Horse" who were press-ganged into the Myanmar army after the Burmese conquest of Manipur in 1758 (Alaungpaya defeated Manipur). In the Burmese-Siamese War of 1759, Alaungpaya used 2000 strong Manipuri Cassay Horse which almost led the Burmese to a victory but for the untimely death of Emperor Alaungpaya himself, shortly after the start of the campaign. In 1764 again, the full strength of the Manipuri Cassay Horse were deployed on the Siamese border when a rebellion broke out in Manipur and threatened the loyalty of Manipuri Cavalry. Hsinbyushin, the commander of the Mynmaese army, instead of risking the depletion of the fighting potential by withdrawing the powerful Manipuri Cavalry, decided to lead an expedition to Manipuri himself and put down the rebellion. However, the simmering conflict within the ruling clan of Manipur became full-blown and the warring princes fled to Cachar en block abandoning the fate of Manipur to the Burmese for a period from 1819 to 1826 – notorious in Manipur history as Chahi Taret Khuntakpa (Seven Years' Devastation). During this period thousands of people including artisans, weavers, craftsmen of all sorts were deported to Burma, and the valley was left nearly empty for years. They also formed the new Cassay Horse with the captive soldiers, an elite cavalry regiment that supplied some of Ava's best polo players.

Michael Symes in his book, An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava writes in 1800, "All the troopers in the kings' service are natives of Cassay, who are much better horsemen than the Birmans... They ride, like all orientals, with short stirrups and a loose rein; their saddle is hard and high and two large circular flaps of strong leather hang down on each side, painted or gilded according to the quality of the rider." The king emperors of Burma gainfully used the Cassay Cavalry in most of their crucial exploits making it well known as an Asiatic player.

With the advent of firearms, the cavalry – regarded as the elite of the oriental force – gradually looked out of place, a throwback from the bygone era. The waves of galloping horse ridden by men lunging swords were cut down at a distance by the relentless fire of British muskets. Though the Burmese cannons fired balls only, the British fired exploding shells which could hit the ground and the splits slice through the body of the pony easily. The horses made easy targets and carnage was all that could be achieved. The changing technologies of the

war made the old cavalry formation redundant.

However, during the first Burmese war when British strategists sponsored a Manipur Levy of 500 soldiers for their ally, the Manipuri Princes, they had the hostile tropical jungle in their mind. They further sanctioned two squadrons of Manipuri cavalry as a support group. The British on their own had failed twice to reach the Burmese location in Manipur, leave alone driving them out of Manipur. Their advance was impeded by thick forests and jungle.

Horse and ponies were developed throughout the world to carry out a specific purpose. The Manipur Pony was primed to be a partner in the survival game with their masters in the hostile Asiatic jungle. They were trained for speed and stamina. The average height of between 11 to 13 hands with sturdy, strong and sure footed legs made them conveniently suitable for jungle warfare. The Manipur Pony is one of over 300 breeds of horses and ponies of the world. The Government of India recognises it as one of the five indigenous breeds of horses and ponies of India. Most of the ponies in South Asia like Manipur Pony, Shan Pony, the Java Pony, Batak and Sumba of Indonesia have similar external appearance. They seem to have similar mixed ancestry and not a part of the original fauna of their respective areas but a collective descendant from the Mongolian Horses and ancient Chinese stock, carrying different traits depending on the environment where they are bred and reared. After being a protagonist for myths, fables and legends for thousands of projected years, the Manipuri Pony finally emerged in the history on the pages of Cheitharol Kumbaba as a white charger mounted by the king Khagemba in his exploits in the western frontier of Burma in 1614 B.C.

The galloping groups of ponies, crisscrossing the mountain fastness from the Chindwin River of Burma in the East to the Surma Valley of Cachar in the West, became a nation's pride and a neighbour's envy. For the ponies Hemmed-in mountain belt became their own territory frequented by themselves as per the whims and potential of reigning kings both in offensive and defensive mode which averaged to a minimum of once every five years from 1647 to 1749. Burmese history mention that the border area of Manipur had been their territory and the kingdom was tributary to Burma under Bayinnaung in 1551-81. But from the moment Manipur cavalry emerged in its history, Manipur became the sorrow of Burma. From the time of Khagemba, the Manipur cavalry continuously raided the territory of the great empire of Burma. The resourceful plain of Kabaw Valley fed by the perennial water of the Chindwin became a source of easy plunder for Meitei kings for years till Alaungpaya made a final call in 1819.

A Burmese historian writes, "...for decades fierce Manipuri horsemen had been raiding up and down the valley of the nearby Mu River, torching villages all around, ransacking pagodas and stealing away captives. Led by their rajas Jai Singh and Garib Newaz and riding the stylish little ponies for which they would later be renowned, the Manipuris defeated again and again the soldiers dispatched to stop them."

It was the Mongol whirlwind conquest from the time of Genghis Khan to Kublai Khan

that churned Asia and beyond and spread the dominant gene of the Mongolian wild horse in the nooks and crannies of Asia. The latter's infamous sack of Pagan Empire, supplanting it with numerous kingdoms of different racial groups including eastern Shan kingdom of Pong as the next door neighbour of Manipur changed the face of Burma and its neighbourhood. He was young and only 27 years old when King Kyamba of Manipur sacrificed a Sandang (wild bovine) at the foothill of Khari Hill seeking blessing for a victory over the Kyangs in the Kabo Valley. The year was 1470 and his ally was Choufa Khekhomba, the Shan ruler of the Pong kingdom on the western bank of the Chindwin River. The Pong king was forty-seven. Kyamba and his ally vanquished Kyangkhampat and divided the area between themselves.

The saga of Manipur cavalry with a chronicled time line starts with the advent of Khagemba at Kabaw Kyangkhampat in 1470, reaches the pinnacle with the lightening sack of Sagaing by Garinibwaz in 1738 and ends with the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Khagemba's equine experience starts with Mayang Lan – his battle with Muslim mercenaries of Bengal who were in the service of the king of Cachar. The captured Muslim mercenaries included grooms and riders who were made to settle down in Manipur.

The stories of Pangal Sagonsenba (Muslim Groom) and Pangal Sajikhpha (Muslim Grass Cutter) are very common in Manipuri folk tales. Now the king's stable had expert grooms and trainers. The king's mounts were watched very closely by the men assigned to look after the ponies – Sagonsenba, the grooms, but the majority of the horses in the king's cavalry were not so lucky. Taken from farms and fields all over Manipur, the majority of the war ponies had never been further away than the Mapan Kangjeibung, Manung Kangjeibung and various grazing grounds in Manipur. However, with the increase in frequency of cavalry exploits in Burma and Cachar the number of veterans among war ponies increased like their master. The personal mount of the kings like Kartik Thaja of Raja Nara Singh was given special status as Sagon Yaisa with prescribed rituals. Kartik was already a war hero having seen conflict in several battlefields proudly carrying his master, the brave King Narsingh, on his back: the horse was made of the same fibres as his owner.

Alaungpaya's treatment of Manipuris during the period of "Seven Years Devastation" was extremely brutal; but "he was only doing unto his people" – Burmese historians write. Notwithstanding the probable jaundiced view point on any chauvinistic historian, the records say that the exploits of the Manipuri kings in their external ventures had always been ruthless and unsparring. The kingdom of Manipur was a tiny state with a minuscule population compared to its adversaries like Burma and other surrounding neighbours.

What it lacked in size and number had to be compensated with swiftness and intensity. GE Harvey writes, "Living in an obscure valley, knowing nothing of the outer world, they thought themselves heroes, able to take their pleasure of Burma when they willed. They did not realise that Burma was several times the size of their country, that they were laying up for themselves a frightful vengeance (Seven Years' Devastation) and the only reason vengeance seemed never to come was that Burma happened to be under an incapable king". (To be contd..)

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