

Editorial

Friday, August 3, 2018

Haunted again with the issues which burn Manipur State Assembly

'Three words' which was signed between the NSCN-IM and the then interlocutor of the Government of India Mr. Padmabhaiya killed 21 people and burnt almost all offices of political parties in the state of Manipur. It was June 14, 2001, a day after the then Defence Minister George Fernandes of Samata Party, which was an alliance of the then NDA government headed by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpay, declared in a public meeting at GM hall here in Imphal that no such thing like extension of cease fire between the government of India and the NSCN-IM would extend to the state of Manipur.

The signing of the agreement of extending cease fire agreement 'without territorial limit' at Bangkok on June 14, 2001 showed that the then Interlocutor Padmabhaiya either have no respect for the Defence Minister of the Country or the defence Minister simply tried to fool the people of the state as the signing was done a day after he left Imphal.

If one recalled, the mass uprising following the signing of the agreement - for the first time in the history of Manipur the temple of democracy was burnt. The then speaker was humiliated by the angry mob and one MLA was half burnt as no one noticed him hiding at a corner of the Manipur Legislative Assembly office building when people burnt it.

This write up is a reminder of how sensitive is the issue which concerns the integrity of the state.

The signing of the Frame Work Agreement and the recent submission of report to the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha by the Parliamentary committee which signals partition of the state on administrative line of a specific ethnic community once more gear up the anger of the people as it was an issue which took 21 lives and burnt almost all political parties offices of the state.

Mass uprising of June 18 was when the NDA government led by the BJP was at the center. And simmering tension which provoked the major civil society organizations of the state today is also at a time when the BJP led NDA is in power at the center.

Life in Imphal and other other major district have been completely put to a grinding halt. Government offices and other establishment including banking have been paralyzed. Tomorrow will make no difference as another group called bandh in the same issue. That means two working days will put life in Imphal a dead state. It is only the police department which is busy during the bandh and all development works of the government and the private entrepreneurs as well as school children will be two days back comparing to other states across the country. The haunt of July - August has once more arrived.

Promises to make the state a bandh free by the present N. Biren Singh led government turns as a joke.

When I recalled, it was the mass uprising of June month against the extension of the cease fire to the state of Manipur that the Chief Minister of Manipur began his political career. His stand for safeguarding the state of Manipur made him peoples' choice and finally made a roadway to politics. It was again the Congress regime inability to handle the multiple issues of the state including the prolonged Economic blockade called by a frontal body of NSCN-IM that he left the congress party and joined the BJP and it was his fate that he became the Chief Minister of Manipur. It was not the choice of the BJP but rather his fates that make him hold the most top position of the state.

Well, the once upon a time lion (Meitei Nongsha) of the soil now is more like a lion of the circus which a master keeps controlling to perform as desire by the master.

Knowing that it is wrong to keep Prof. A P Pandey here in Manipur University he did not have the guts to urge the central leadership which is in the same political party in a courageous manner. He cannot argued the implication of Article 371(A) to all the Naga Inhabited region of NE states of Manipur. He can't present a bold statement on why the 6th Scheduled of the Indian constitution is not applicable to the state of Manipur even as the similar kind is being incorporated with the article 371(C) of the Indian constitution.

BJP's leaders always said that it is the country first, then come the Party. Our Chief Minister N. Biren Singh who is also a BJP member should follow the tradition of the BJP and even ready to sacrifice his position if Manipur is at the verge of distinction.

Tikendrajit: The Lion of Manipur

By: Dr. Lokendra Arambam

"I believe this Manipur affair must always remain a dark page of Indian history."

Sir John Gorst,
Under Secretary of State for India,
House of Commons, 16 June, 1891

Introduction

On the 13th of August, 1891, some one hundred and twenty seven years ago, after a great victory in the Anglo-Manipur war in April, the soldiers of the British Empire brought out the two heroes of Manipur, the 36-year old Yubaraj Tikendrajit, and the octogenarian Thangal General to be hanged in front of the conquered public at 5 pm at a place called Pheidabung, near the women's market. The scene was recorded by the British authorities themselves with the words,

"Gallows were erected on the Pologround and the sentence duly carried out. As far eye could see, the plain was white with women. In the Raja's days a criminal sentenced to death was occasionally reprieved if a sufficient number of women had appeared to intercede for him, and hoping that possibly the old custom might still prevail the women had assembled in their thousands. As the drop fell and the Senapati and Thangal General were launched into eternity, deep groan went up from the assembled throng" (R.K. Sanahal, 1973, P 239).

In ancient pre-colonial times, the intervention of women on behalf of the victims of state, liable to capital punishment, could be pardoned, in deference to the high respect paid to the women of the land. The women of the land could intervene in serious matters of truth and justice, if they considered the state ignored traditional values of compassion and grace in the exercise of power. The congregation of some five thousand women on that day had held the edges of their *innaji* (scarf) spread in front, silently seeking pardon for the two leaders. This did not happen.

The other more dramatic detail of the scene was also that Yubaraj Tikendrajit, the hero of the 'rebellion', walked up the scaffold with no sign of emotion, his face resolute and firm. The old Thangal General, however, simply refused to move. He had to be bodily lifted on the scaffold by the guards! When the ropes were tightened round their necks, and the planks underneath their feet were about to be pulled, the old man burst out in a loud laughter! Thus ended a theatrical demonstration of the power of the empire, their firm capacity to punish those who resist them. The tears in the eyes of the women and their groans ended a long chapter in the history of the freedom and independence of the Asiatic state of Manipur, which came to a close with that episode.

Not much of us till this day, could fathom the intricate workings of the mind of the old statesman and soldier which produced the resistant gesture and sarcastic laughter at a critical moment in his some fifty years of relentless sacrifice and service to his cherished motherland. It must have come from the accumulated experiential memory from a lifetime of sheer struggles and vicissitudes for the cause of the kingdom to retain its freedom and dignity amidst friends as well as enemies. He must have felt the irony of it all, when a powerful friend and ally, the British, gradually turned into a foe and emerged as a cruel conqueror at the end! Both he and his protégé the Yubaraj shared sheer intuitive suspicion of the schemes and manipulative designs of the British, and the arrogant and haughty manners of the European officials. But for the sake of friendship and obligatory gestures to their support in the anti-Burmese

wars, Manipur had gone all out to help the British become the master of the ferocious tribes of the North Eastern regions. When the British Empire conquered Burma in 1885, with help from Manipur in logistics and human resources, the existence of Manipur as free country in the red map of the imperial geography was no longer tenable. In his prison cell before the hanging, Thangal must have also remembered the anecdotes of the great political agent James Johnstone (1877-86), requiring Manipur's support in the Naga and Burma campaigns, where Thangal virtually led the expeditions. He must have also remembered the personal enmity between himself and the British political agent, that when the latter was undertaking a horse-riding exercise in the morning, the native soldiers of Manipur under Thangal was organizing a shooting practice. Johnstone nearly missed a bullet that whizzed past his neck. The furious Johnstone complained to the Maharajah Chandrakirti about the incident and for immediate booking of the criminal. When the old general was summoned before the king and the complaining arrogant agent, the old man quietly replied to him, "If you ride in the line of fire, you must expect to be shot!"

Making of a Prince Warrior Tikendrajit, born on the 29th December, 1855, Saturday, as the fourth and only son of King Chandrakirti's fourth queen Chongtham Chanu Koueshwari Devi, revealed signs of his future potential. As a mark of the auspiciousness of his birth, a *yajna* was performed at the precincts of the Hiyangthang Lairembi (equated with the Goddess Durga), with milk from 108 cows offered to the Goddess. As a youth reared in the highest traditions of the classical polity, he was offered the best values and experiences of the Manipuri nobility. He was trained in the fighting arts of the warrior race, in the study of the *Huyen Lallong* (art and strategies of war), sword and spear training was given by Yengkhoiba Chaoba, a veteran soldier. At the age of 12 years, he became a champion horse-riding and an avid Polo player. His teacher in the art of horsemanship was Bedam Singh, a veteran of the *Sagol Lanmee* (Cavalry Unit, which used the poisoned sling-spear 'Arambai' in the wars against the Burmese in the early 18th century). The relevance of the cavalry was gradually reduced due to the increasing importance of gunpowder and musketry. But upkeep and management of the equine population were still necessary, since the horse was a status symbol of the ranked nobility, which had been institutionalised since the seventh century. Again the game of *Sagol Kangjei* (originator of Polo), which had its mythical origins in the state was still a vital spiritual engagement for martial training, health as well as chivalry. The training in horsemanship and related games were for enhancement of the culture for development of the codes for war and chivalry in the act of war. Tikendrajit's endearment with the horse was so overpowering that not a single horse in the royal stables was left unharnessed by him.

Mr and Mrs Grimwood who were posted in Manipur after James Johnstone (1877-86), were friends of the Yubaraj. Mr Grimwood played *Sagol Kangjei* with the

Yubaraj, and participated in hunting and other past-times. He was aware of the development activities the state had organized under the supervision of the Yubaraj. Both husband and wife were aware of the tremendous popularity of the Yubaraj. After an exciting and exhausting game of this horse-hockey, the Yubaraj presided over the award ceremony of the players, giving prizes to them. And at the end, a play of humour and fun named 'Phagee' was exposed to the public which continued late at night. The intimate relationship between the centres of power and the public was noticed under such performances.

Tikendrajit along with other princes and princesses of the court were indeed trained in the keeping of the traditions and cultures of the land from the traditional wisdom teachers called 'Maichou' which had their own institutions, later named 'Pandit Loishang' in the 18th century. Those scribes and scholars were also warrior citizens selected from the administrative divisions called the 'Pana', which as a geographical and cultural unit were divided into six since early times. The warriors from the *Panas* voluntarily served in the state militia known as 'Lallup' to undertake public service activities like dredging and fresh digging of river courses, constructions of bridges and canals and spent ten days in forty at the service of the court for military engagements during the time of war and public activities. The royal princes and princesses were educated in the royal activities to be performed for the welfare of the land, the principles of which were four in number. First of all, they must be aware that the land should not

have incidences of ailment, disease and death (*Asee Ana Thoktaba*), secondly, those in the realm of power must ensure that there was abundance in rice and fish (*Chak-hong Ngahongba*) in the land. The third factor was that the land's door should be closed from attacks by beasts and warrior nations (*Saathong Lanthongthingba*), and finally, the population of both sexes should enjoy sanity and equilibrium (*Nupsee Nupa Pukning Loushingthopka*). The princes who were to be anointed as kings of the land should also perform certain other compulsory welfare activities for the land in material terms. First, it must be understood that Manipur had a unique succession system in kingship which was quite different from that of other states and neighbouring territories. There was no laws of primogeniture in Manipur's succession theory. Three traditional factors were important for the prince to be chosen as king. First, the viewpoints of the elders in the traditional council (*Phamdou Humpumaree* - 64 elders of clan representatives), were an important factor considering the principle of the ancestor- veneration prevalent as custom in the practice of the indigenous Meitei culture. The second factor was the choice from the ladies of the court, who played both supervisory as well as assistive roles in the day to day governance of the land. The women had had their own court (*Pacha Loishang*) to take care of women's affairs in the state. The third factor was the choice of the people in general who were very pro-active in the affairs of state.

(To be contd.....)

An open letter to the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur

Dear Hon'ble Sir, Mr. N. Biren Singh

Kindly allow me to write a few lines and questions for good governance and for your strong being as a leader of the people as well. Of course it is true that you are facing a very critical situations like N.C. Framework agreement with Govt. of India, Conflicting Border Pillars with Myanmar shutdown of Manipur University. Now time is very crucial. The mindful courage and a strong will power are essential to solve the present issues. Among them to my mind the issue of the Manipur University is the biggest and burning one as it concerns the youths the productive force of the society and the children the future generation. However the great the issue may be it can easily be handled by a courageous strong man with a high caliber of illogical capacity since it is only involved with a man of arrogant attitude verse the students the teachers the staffs of M. Varsity supported the local and state level organization and the guardians and the parents of all students communities in Manipur. It is fact that Manipur University is in Manipur even though it is under the control of central government. Beneficiaries are mostly from Manipur and other neighbouring northeast states. Hence one may raise many questions in the interest of the people of Manipur and the state government as well. Can be questions are:-

1. Is state govt is a mere puppet of the Central Govt?
2. Is it not becoming an issue of one person (V.C.) VC Students Communities in particular, the people at large?
3. Is it not a funniest and a most foolish version put by one MP.Mr.Palel in the Parliament i.e Manipur University is the Den of Insurgents? it is a wonder how can he says like that who knows that MP might even see Manipur and know its Manipur. His version may be purely based on hearsay alone. More surprising to me is how Dr.Meino Singh remain silent to that version of humiliating words to the students communities of Manipur. I would like to say that is a tol of unintelligent MP in India Parliament. Sorry to say so.
4. What for the Minister and MLAs representing the people of Manipur? Why are they silent looker while the children of Manipur suffer? Their Children might have been study outside the state. Are they not worth to love the students and children of Manipur?
5. Is it imaginable that the Ministers and MLAs are afraid of that one person (VC) or the HRD Ministry?
6. Why they are so timid and coward of the HRD Ministry who favour one person only?
7. Is it not time to raise your voice and do necessary action to save the future generation?
8. Why not put a concrete proposal for action to end the issue of M.Varsity instead insisting (=request) the Central Govt. (HRD Ministry)?

Hon'ble better be a strong man and die rather than to live as a puppet and coward of someone else. Excuse me for expressing a motherly feeling. It is for your good.

God bless us all

Humble yours
Manjaradevidasi
(N.Mangi Devi)

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