

Editorial

Saturday, December 1, 2018

Today is World AIDS Day

The world over, this day has been designated the World Aids Day and is celebrated since 1988 to raise the public awareness about AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome), a pandemic disease caused due to the infection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and Government that HIV has not gone away - there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education. The day is celebrated by the government organizations, NGOs, civil society and other health officials by organizing the speeches or forums discussion related to the AIDS.

According to a 2012 UNAIDS report, globally there are an estimated 34.4 million people living with HIV/AIDS and out of this 2.1 million are children while the rest are adults: males and females, and 2.5 million are newly infected with HIV as of December 2012. Despite the virus only being identified in 1984, more than 35 million people have died of HIV or AIDS, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history. Today, scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. Despite this, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with the condition.

Manipur is one of the six high prevalence states in India with HIV prevalence rate among pregnant women attending ANC being 1.4% (Sentinel Surveillance 2006). Manipur with hardly 0.2% of India's population is contributing nearly 8% of India's total HIV positive cases. More and more interior and hill areas are affected and are yet to be covered. Interestingly, while the State AIDS Policy was adopted by the State Government on 3rd October, 1996 and became the first State in India to have a State AIDS Policy, a slogan on the webpage of Manipur Aids Control Society (MACS) reads "Let's aids each other to combat AIDS". It is also evidently clear from the figures given on the website that it has been a few years since any significant update or studies have been made regarding the current status of the state vis-à-vis the dreaded affliction.

While the picture on the state front is not satisfactory or inspiring to say the least, there are positive developments elsewhere which indicate that there might very well be a new hope in the fight against AIDS. A new clinical trial has been launched in South Africa Wednesday on an experimental vaccine that could prevent HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The latest trial is only the seventh full-scale human trial for a virus that infects more than 2 million people and kills over 1 million every year worldwide. According to a statement from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), HVTN 702 is the largest and most advanced HIV vaccine clinical trial to be undertaken in South Africa, where more than 1,000 people are infected with HIV in a day. The first participant of the new trial was enrolled on Oct. 26, and the results of the clinical trial are expected in 2020. The new study is based on an earlier trial - RV 144 - conducted in Thailand in 2009 which showed 31 percent drop in infections which, while not significant, paved the way for further investigations and improvements.

While the world is pressing forwards in the search for a cure to the dreaded disease, the best possible means for the public to stay safe is to be aware of HIV/AIDS, and to treat those living with the condition with understanding and empathy, for nothing works against the efforts to contain and control the spread of HIV/AIDS than to stigmatise and show them contempt. The state government and its implementing agency needs to monitor and update information and data regarding HIV/AIDS on a regular basis so that concerned public can get a better picture of the situation in the state.

Harnessing Solar & Wind Power, Strengthening Human Resource and Transparency of Accounting System Needed: N.K. Singh

Imphal, Dec 1

Inspite of Manipur getting close to reasonably high rate of economic growth, it still has number of important steps that need to be taken up for putting the State's economy in better trajectory. The steps are like harnessing the solar and wind power, strengthening human resource and keeping transparency of accounting system, said Chairman of 15th Finance Commission, Shri N.K. Singh told media yesterday.

First step is harnessing Solar Power and it is now available in the state as renewable sources along with Wind Power, which can be gainfully utilized by Manipur. In pursuit to strengthening of its rich human resource, particularly for increasing

the quality of education sector, establishment of more medical, nurses training and paramedic institutions are required as there is still short supply of the same in India and other parts of the world. By improving the quality of technical education like engineering institutions, youths and people of Manipur does not have to travel long distance for securing educational opportunities, Shri N. K. added.

The Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission furthered that the third step is improving the overall matrix of its finances, moving away from the era of depositing to public accounts. Making the accounting system more transparent and aligning the fiscal deficit

management trajectory within a time frame, say the next five years is really needed. In this context, the Government of Manipur presented a detailed memorandum to the Finance Commission and also submitted 25 projects for State's specific funding for infrastructure and social infrastructure.

The Chairman of the Finance Commission assured to the Government for double digit growth of the economy by improving the per capita income of the State and for decreasing the poverty number in the coming years and to make Manipur best among the special category states of the country. It is in view of the importance of State's economy and the critical location for promoting the act east policy and

also the overall profile of the place. It may be mentioned that prior to the press conference, the 15th Finance Commission team led by its chairman, Shri N.K. Singh met and interacted with the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister who is also the Finance Minister, Council of Ministers and Bureaucrats of the State. The Finance Commission team comprises its member, Secretary, Joint Secretary, Deputy Director, Assistant Director and Economic Officer.

The 15th Finance Commission team arrived in Imphal on 29th November, 2018 and met with the representatives of different political parties, representatives of rural and urban local bodies and representatives of trade and industries

Contd. from yesterday

TROUBLED HOMELAND.....

By- Dr. Ph. Jayalaxmi

The poet is experiencing the displacement and seclusion for aligning to both the Indian culture and the native culture. Due to her hybrid vision, she questions her own stand and loyalty towards the land which is her identity. Due to her affiliation to the Indian soil she is loyal to it, in the same vein she gets disheartened to discern the predicament and bewilderment of her native people and cannot imagine the atrocities meted out to her people by the Indian government.

In the poems of Shreema Ningombam, Ema remains the only unyielding figure who bears the impact of trying history. She is the wretched mother who is the exemplar of strength, courage, and brave spirit. Mother is the metaphorical home or dwelling place to which the weary souls find their solace and consolation. She is the widow whose husband becomes the victim of the armed rebellion and fake encounters, and she is the daughter who falls prey to the hungry perpetrators. Ema is the worn-out mother who waits for long hours after the death of her sons. Ema metamorphoses into different roles in different junctures of history. She has witnessed the nauseating history which has engraved her bosom with the angst for the homeless and dispossessed people. She is the victim as well as the victor. Ema/mother is the recurrent motif in the contemporary poetry from Manipur.

Shreema Ningombam in her poem 'Mother' envisions the image of the lost mother/land/culture who she desires to salvage/reclaim. She searches for the lost mother among the crowd and in the carnivals but she is nowhere to be seen. There is an intense sense of awareness to reclaim the land or home that has been lost somewhere in the dark alley of violence. She juxtaposes the literal mother and the symbolic mother with the image of home. She writes:

I came home,
To salvage your grave,
Where I found,
The skull of my ancestor,
The nauphom of my ancestral kin,
A torn phanek stained with her primeval blood,

[Ibid., 67]

The imagery of 'Nauphom' suggests the belief system of the Meitei where the placenta of a new born child is put in a pot and buried in the backyard of a house. Inducing such image to the mind is an act of recollection of cultural past that has now been dwindled with the advent of urbanization. Therefore, the poet could see the fading away of the rituals and beliefs so she is in a

condition of poetic mourning where she grieves for the past as well as the future. Thus, she feels no pride to beget a child again in this unsettled situation as she could instinctively apprehend the bleakness of future generation.

With pride or with guilt I do not know,

Should I carry another mortal being in my womb?
I, a nameless mother wait and wait,
To mourn the death of my yet unborn.

[Ibid., 68]

There is sense of reclaiming the roots that is no longer there. Without the roots, the future progeny will fail to relate to the culture and belief system which is part of their ethnic identity. In the conundrum of violence, the poet becomes a nameless mother without her own entity and she has nothing to offer to her unborn child. She could prophesy the future that holds no meaning where only death is awaiting the child.

In the poem 'Rainbow', she with the heaving heart is nostalgic for her own childhood where she used to run behind the rainbow playfully and how she got accustomed to playing with pebbles and marbles. She remembers how the landscape evanescences in thin air due to the violence. When she is leaving her homeland for a prospective life, she says, the valley, where she has been born and brought up, seems to be calling her for the final settlement or truce. She remembered:

Green moors of this valley beckon me
Whenever I am exiled from this land
Like calling me for the last truce.

[Ibid., 67]

The poem 'Fading Landscape' explores the drifting apart of the bountiful nature which has been blighted by the human culture in the form of violence. The juxtaposition of the lost homeland and the new world that is not identifiable creates a space for analyzing the place and landscape as a social construct. The imageries of landscape suggesting environmental concerns have heightened the consciousness of the lost home with its serene beauty. In a way, it bridges a gap between what is lost and what is gained in the process of social interaction. It also highlights the rural and urban dichotomy and gives an objective to look at the past which we called home. Through the poetic creation, the poet desires to revisit the missing landscape and endeavour to remember the past but due to the disconcerted thought, she could remember her past in fragments. The fragmented images show the disconnection of thought and feelings which fail to capture in words. The poet's emotional flux of

mind oscillates between hope and hopelessness thus evoking the colours dark, bright, or grey in her poem. The image of owl of Minerva that is the symbol of wisdom fails to invest people with the knowledge, good judgment, perspicacity (insightfulness), and erudition. It shows the senselessness of violence that is 'ready to sting to death the gods among us' [Ibid., 70]. The turning of white dove to the colour red also signifies the loss of peaceful life.

The poem 'One Day Ema' shows the optimism of the poet about the freedom. The poet thereby using the metaphor Ema says that one day the motherland will fulfill her dream of having an emancipated life. She says:

One day, Ema!
It will rain
And you will unbind hair and wash it

.....

One day
Flowers will bloom
In your dark mystic bun
As if they were never plucked

.....

Kites will fly
In your blue sky with tails of freedom

With no one to harness them with a string

.....

I will garland around your neck
The wreath so painstakingly woven
As you walk past the triumphant crowd
One day, Ema
One Day.

Thus, the poet is showing that this land will get its due. This land will be crowned with the glory and liberty with the wreath on her head which is expressed in the image of a flower in the dark mystic bun. The flower imagery is often employed to show the mother/nature equation. Soibam Haripriya's poem 'Another Polish for My Nails' is a pun that refers to the black dot that has been put on a finger while casting one's vote. It sarcastically mocks at the false promises made by the corrupt politicians.

Promises and promises
Give it a miss
It's unsure
Why
You promised me the moon
And doted on my nails
The black stain of your promises
I live with the regret
Yet another five years

[Ibid.,]
This is how the corrupt politicians lured the voters with their false promises and the state has to experience hardships for another five or more year under their lies. The young people are

disenchanted by the manners of the politicians and the maxim 'politics is the last resort for the scoundrels' (Bernard Shaw) holds true for many years. It may seem derogatory but this is the harsh truth for the political scenario of Manipur. It demonstrates how democracy has been jeopardized by a handful of people who indulge in filth, corruption, deceitfulness, and treachery. Thus, the poet says: Secretly folding your promises Sliding it down

The box of dreams for another five years

Is lies and lies and lies

[Ibid., 67]

The poem 'Fragments', illustrates the disjointed picture of Manipur where the poet struggles to write about her native land but all the images, lines and words come in fragments and she could not see her land as a complete whole. She says: 'In you I see/ Fragments and only fragments/ The whole departed/ And so will the fragments' [Ibid., 86]. Another poem 'Joint Magazine Secy' talks about how numerous insurgent groups endeavour to attract the youths to join their groups. When the entire land of Manipur was trapped in the new wave of patriotism, it also captivated the young minds to plunge into the struggle for self-determination.

In conclusion, we could discern that the social and political turbulence in the society has a profound impact on the writers. Through their poetic mourning, they have grieved over the things that have been fallen apart due to chaos and disturbances. These young and talented writers have questioned the meaning of freedom which only brings death and uproar in the society. The inception of the strife between the Indian State and armed non - state entities of Manipur or the ethnic conflicts induces numerous set of circumstances like the gross violations of human rights and injustice. This political impasse has led to the questioning of one's subject position in their struggle for survival which only unfolds what T. S. Eliot has said in 'The Wasteland', 'a heap of broken images' (Eliot, 2006: 58) which illustrates the bleakness of future. Thus, their poems are the poetics of mourning and lamentation over the heart-rending loss of the golden era of harmony and belonging. Their poems are the poesies of fragmentation, despondency, uncertainty, absurdity, and uselessness of violence which could bring only large scale human mutilation. (Concluded)

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.