

Editorial

Wednesday, December 12, 2018

Commemorating Nupi Lan Day

Today, the state is observing "Nupi Lan Day" commemorating the courage of the women folk of the Manipur, who rose against the oppressive and unconcerned attitude of the state authority. 'Nupi Lan Day' is the mass uprising Agitation by Manipuri Womenfolk 1904 and 1939.

Both the uprising are historic but the uprising of 1939 has political significance. The historic event which started as an agitation by Manipuri women against the economic policies of the Maharaja and the Marwari monopolists especially in regard to the unrestricted export of rice from the valley in view of the impending scarcity due to prospects of a poor harvest, later on changed its character to become a movement for constitutional and administrative reform in Manipur. The original demands of the women were confined to the banning of rice exports, but later included changes in the administrative set-up.

Perhaps it would be pertinent to reflect on the points of similarity between the event of 1939 and the present society to attempt a probable prediction of how things might turn out in the near future given the uncertainties and increasing feelings of disregard by the state authorities to the protracted sufferings and feelings of unprovoked challenges to the very existence of the public by a bunch of incorrigible trouble-mongers who, in the garb of nationalists and upholders of a 'unique' breed of humanity, are indulging in vandalism and self-indulgence by stirring up emotions of the naïve and simple public.

In a dramatic turnaround, the people of the state is scrambling for essential commodities of daily consumption almost all of which are now being brought in from different places outside the state. If there ever is another 'Nupi Lan' it would be for the means to import or bring in these essential goods. Funnily enough, the unfortunate irony seem to be lost to many at present including those at the helm of affairs of the state- that what was once a state of surplus have been reduced to one which depends on the produce of other states for survival. The focus for most public figures is on extolling the spirit and valor of the Manipuri women, and of respecting and upholding their high social status while nothing could be further from the truth if anyone cares to take a reality check.

The focus should not just be to maintain the 'status quo' as some 'experts and social commentators would so enthusiastically suggest. The focus now is to break away from the conventions and customs that have been holding the collective society back from reaching the potential the state has shown it possessed in abundance. Nupi Lan and other historic agitations have shown that there is no dearth of spirit and drive in the hearts of the people of the state. History has also borne witness to the high level of social and political consciousness of the people of the state. Perhaps the one prominent blot in the history of the state is the lack of true progressive leaders to lead the people and the state out of the social quagmire and political instabilities which has been reflecting on the overall dismal economy despite the tantalizing promises and possibilities. Or is it the case of too many 'self-styled' leaders confusing the public and confounding themselves?

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"NUPI LAN" The Courage and Ideal of Manipuri Women that nourish Manipur

By- Sanjenbam Jugeshwor Singh

Tonight is over, a day is gone, bind up the long fragile hair Devi (Ngasi ahing lelle, numita machat khare, samlangpunsinlu Devi efafaribadu). One 12th December is over, another 12th December is coming, have you forgotten Ema? These are the wakeup call words of the courage and ideals of Manipuri women by Lamyamba Hijam Erabot. Our Manipuri women started taking big strides independently with courage taking the ideals of "PANTHOBI" in the course of our History and civilization. In the course of our History, our Manipuri women has been unitedly and independently taking part in high level governance to save and led our society towards a progressive orientation. The clear example of this is the First and Second Nupi Lan of 1904 and 1939. Both the Nupi Lams of Manipur were the movements by the Manipuri women to save our society for a strong and healthy Nation free from any sort of flaws and defects. In many parts of our history the role taken by LINTHOINGAMBI, TANGJAKHOMBI, RANI GAIDINLU and LEIFOL who was right arm of Herachandra during CHAHI TARET khuntakpa to save from enemies should not be forgotten.

The first Nupi Lan of 1904 took place after Manipur was under British Colonial rule. That was sparked by the angry Manipuri women against the order by the then British Assistant Political Agent Mr



Dunlop to fetch teak from Burma (present Myanmar) and construct his Bungalow by the men from Imphal after it was burnt. Manipuri women agitated against this order and stop the construction of Bungalow, making the order null & void. This was first and successful movement by Manipuri women against the British Colonial rule. The second Nupi Lan took place in 1939. It was the beginning of a wider and bloodshed movement to root out the British Colonial rule from Manipur. It was during second World War between Allied Forces and Axis Power. To face the strong aggression of Axis Power (JAPAN) from South East Asia, British (a partner of Allied Force) stationed their armies at Kohima, Shillong, and various other parts of Assam. To feed their armies, the rice from Manipur were taken away in trucks loads by British in conspiracy with the selfish

Marawari traders. Because of which, even this time of harvesting period no rice were available in Khwairamband Market to fetch. The angry mothers of Khwairamband market started agitation against this. On 12th December 1939 they gherao the Darbar President and British Political Agent Mr Sharpe. They brought him at the Telegraph office and forced him to send telegraph to the Maharaj Chirachand, who was at Naddweep at that time. The commandant of 4th Assam rifle Maj. Bulfinch who came to rescue the Darbar President along with the soldiers attacked our mothers with bonnets (Sangin) and sticks. To face this aggression bloods were shed from the soft and tender bodies of our mothers. The bloods from the bodies of our mothers turned into manure of our land, because of our

mother's blood British and Imperial rule was defeated thus stopped exporting rice from Manipur. This movement turned into a political movement to free Manipur from British Colonial rule. This movement was oriented by hijam Erabot. As a result of this Nikhil Manipuri Maha Sabha was split into two. In a public meeting held at Yaikul police Land, Erabot said, "JUST FOR A HANDFUL OF RICE WE WERE GIVEN TWO HANDFUL OF BLOOD" so "REVENGE FOR BLOOD WILL BE BLOOD." For his statement, he was arrested and kept in Sylhet jail and did not allow him to enter Manipur for long time. Thus the second Nupi Lal which was accompanied with the bloods of our mothers will remain in the memory of every Manipuri so long as our food rice exist on this Earth. This is not the end of role taken by our Manipuri women. Our mothers have been struggling to save our youths from the intoxicants (like drugs, alcohol etc), from the fake encounters due to AFSPA which gave birth the movement of MEIRA PAIBI, NISA BAND etc. Our mothers of other days were illiterate but they fought for our cause without any arms showing the lights of our future generation, their role, courage and ideals are much higher than the present highly educated women. Simply celebrating "NUPI LAL" every year on every 12th December without the true spirit shown by our aged old mothers will have no meaning. So let's follow the foot print of our mothers for a better future.

POLICE OR HUNTERS: HUNTERS ARE BEING HUNTED IN MANIPUR

Bijo Francis, Executive Director, Courtesy - Beyond the Horizon

Counter revolution, in the name of hunting down armed rebels, has perverted into systematic custodial murder of suspects or civilians. For all reported crimes allegedly committed by military and paramilitary forces, they enjoy certain impunity under Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Police are not legally covered under AFSPA, but they could evade fair investigation and judicial conviction through devilish tricks. In short, criminals in the cover of uniform—for personal spoils, awards, promotions and glory—they behave almost akin to lawless hunters who would forsake humanity in their craze for 'games'. Having bypassed Common Article 3 of Geneva Conventions, 1949, in respect to captured armed rebels; all the targeted unarmed or civilian 'games' are denied the constitutional rights to physical integrity, security and life. But every dog had a day! The modus operandi of state terrorism became exposed from time to time on the occasion of gruesome incidents such as Operation Blue Bird (1987), Manorama Rape and Murder (2004), July Fake Encounter (2009), and etcetera. When the July Fake Encounter became exposed, immediately, the powerful hunters got fortified with protective covers at the cost of a sacrificing lamb, who turns out to be constable Mr. Herojit. The gallant hunter was trapped by his superiors to be judicially convicted for the crime committed under their order. The matter does not end there. Herojit refused to be hunted alone. Accordingly, Herojit made series of public confessions admitting to crimes and detailing the modus operandi.

He wanted a fair investigation against the superior officer who had ordered him to kill Sanjit. However, he became frustrated with the alleged indifferent attitude of police department and the High Court of

Manipur. On 5th January 2018 he filed a petition to the Supreme Court of India, to advance his cause. Things beyond the horizon March 2018 March 2018 beyond the horizon become complex and fishy. There is strong suspicion that, while Herojit will assist the Supreme Court in hunting the powerful hunters, the powerful hunters may hunt him down, in pre-emption, to destroy evidence. As for now, we are pleased, for public information, to reproduce a recent document that explains the current development in regards to the case. The following is the text of the document dispatched by the Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong, dated 16th January 2018, reference number AHRC-UAC-005-2018, addressed to Mr. L.M. Khaute, IPS, Director General of Police, Manipur (India).

Dispatch from Asian Human Rights Commission

The AHRC has taken note of crucial information regarding the grave revelations made by Head Constable Thounaojam Herojit Singh regarding the manner in which extrajudicial encounter killings and operation take place in Manipur. This region of India is heavily patrolled by the military and local police officers, and custodial deaths and instances of torture are common, with 12,000 deaths and 4,000 torture cases being reported by the NHRC [National Human Rights Commission] between 2001- 2013; the true number of un-reported cases is presumed to be much higher.

According to Herojit, he was personally present when a large number of persons were extra judicially killed by the Manipur police during 2003- 09, and these killings were done on the direct orders of superior officers. He states that he had maintained by hand, 3-4 diaries containing details of the incidents and on whose orders the killings were ordered. According to his affidavit on

record in the Supreme Court, while was filed on Jan 5, 2018, he states that these were fake encounters and he maintained in the 3-4 diaries serial wise details of the encounters in which he recorded (i) the name of the victim, (ii) his age, (iii) parentage, (iv) address, (v) place of occurrence, (vi) date of the killing or arrest, (vii) remarks such as "killed" or "done" or "arrest" and; (viii) the call sign code of the superior officer who gave the order to kill." According to the affidavit, these diaries were seized by the CBI [Central Bureau of Investigation] from the government quarters at Manipur Police Commando Complex at Minuthong, Imphal, sometime in 2010 in the presence of his family members. He alleges that these were seized without taking his signature on the Seizure Panchama and without giving him a list of the diaries seized.

He goes on to state that he fears that the diaries will be destroyed, and he was motivated to make the affidavit so that the diaries are produced as evidence before the Supreme Court and so that he can contribute to the investigation. Despite repeatedly requesting the CBI officer to record his statement as he was present during these fake encounters, this wasn't done. He also fears for his life and safety and in April 2016, he narrowly escaped an attempt on his life.

This affidavit has been filed in the ongoing Writ petition no. 129 of 2012, Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families Association (EEVFAM) vs. Union of India, in which the second petitioner is Human Rights Alert.

Herojit first confessed regarding his role in fake encounters in January 2016 when he spoke to the media regarding his role in the 2009 killing of an unarmed Manipuri boy named Chungkham Sanjit Meitei, who was killed at a chemist shop, allegedly on the orders of Additional S.P.A.K. Jhalajit. Herojit confessed to killing the young boy, a suspected member of the rebel group People's

Liberation Army (PLA). He also confessed to having killed well over 100 people in fake encounters, face to face. Feeling deserted and used by the police force that he served, he was seen as a liability as he was a witness, and he was driven to confess after his home was raided by his colleagues and he was detained at the police station for 5-6 hours, questioned about links to insurgent gangs.

In July 2017, India's apex court passed a historic judgment in the case Extrajudicial Execution Victim Families Association (EEVFAM) & Anr. UOI & Ors reiterating the primacy of rule of law and that there can be no justification to bypass it. The SC [Supreme Court] ordered that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) set up an independent Special Investigating Team to enquire into the allegations of 'fake encounters' in Manipur. The orders comes after the Court had earlier passed a judgment in July 2016 holding that any allegation of the use of excessive or retaliatory force by 'uniformed personnel' must be enquired into, along with a direction to the petitioners to provide adequate documentation. The AHRC calls for your swift action in this case given the serious nature of the confessions of Head Constable Thounaojam Herojit Singh.

The AHRC calls for the diaries seized by the CBI to be produced in the Supreme Court immediately, and the statement of Herojit Singh must be recorded under S. 164 CrPc to aid the ongoing investigation in extrajudicial encounters in Manipur. As Herojit Singh is a whistle bower, who has made serious allegations against his superiors, he must be given protection so that his and his family's safety is ensured while the investigation is ongoing. The AHRC is writing a separate letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, calling for her intervention in the matter.