

Editorial

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Of politicians and thier electoral polictics

"LIES" no matter how big or small always crack the foundation of "TRUST". There were times when the candidates made false promised during election time and fooled the people to woes the voter. The moment they were elected they often forgot what they had promised to the people often led a live thinking that the general public who elected them are bunch of ignorant fools who can be driven at any direction. The sinister concept become phenomenon and now people (almost all) now started thinking that there is no true leader who deserve victory in any of the election. But as the hangover system still has to be followed and continue there cannot be a full stop to the ongoing process. Election is mandatory for a democratic country. And for that candidates are required. In-order to form government there again need political party and those candidates need to be attached to any of the political party to render their service with effective power.

We are not sure if God frequently surfaces in the form of man, as is commonly believed. But what we can be dead certain is the fact that his arch enemy Satan often manifests himself, especially in Manipur, in the form of politicians. These incarnations of Satan, who are now running amok with the people's sensibilities, have cast such a nasty spell on the state that it is well nigh impossible for the people who elected them in the first place, to retain even a semblance of sanity.

There could be no other logical explanation to the goings on in the political arena than taking refuge in the unnatural and the irrational. And for the teeming millions who had inflicted this handful of pests on themselves, there could be no other option but to bemoan their fate. The curse, call it the millenium curse, is well and truly upon us.

It would be an understatement to say that there is something very basically wrong with our polity. Things have now come to such a pass that our state of Manipur can neither move forward nor backward but remain painfully suspended in a maze of anarchy and disorder.

The scourge of politicians have indeed taken a heavy toll, not only of the riches but also of its psyche. The epidemic is now all pervading and has invaded the very roots of the country's integrity and well being thereby impeding its prosperity and peace. Whatever the party, whatever their ideology and hue, when it comes to pursuit of power and pelf, our politicians are at their wily best and very united too in their mission.

If only these characters demonstrate the same solidarity and zeal in nation building, things would have been much different. But alas, their penchant for self-preservation has always won over patriotism, their quest for wealth has always been at the nation's expense and above all their instinct for survival has always prevailed over the nation's.

They have always prospered even as the state disintegrated, and they are always in a position of strength, be it 'secularism or communalism' that is at play. But what about the 25 lakhs people who elected them? They are never in the reckoning.

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Manipuri Diaspora in Myanmar: Past and Present

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Early History
It was during the Bagan period in the Eleventh Century that the Manipuris started settling in Myanmar, the wife of king Kyan Sit Thar happened to be a Manipuri princess. The present-day polo or 'goolie game' which has its origin in Manipur was played during the time of king Bayiunaung (1551-81) who belonged to the Taunggoo period (Manipuris called it as Tongdoy). Many Kate horsemen served under this king. In the year, 1558, the king of Manipur, Meidingngu Chakamba offered his daughter to king Bayiunaung to forge an alliance. Many members of the Manipuri royalty settled in Taunggoo. Before and after 1648, war continued between the two neighbours - Manipur and Myanmar. In the year 1702, The Tongoo Dynasty of Awa (Present day Myanmar) sent emissaries asking for the hand of Meitei princess. King Charairongba of Manipur gave his daughter, Chakpa Makhaongambi, to the then Awa king. In the year 1732, the Manipuri king, Jayashree Garibaniwaj offered his daughter, Hmin Long Khang, to king Sa-ne in 1732. She had the privilege of enjoying taxes from Popa Town as a Popa Myozu. In the year 1738, Jaishree Garibaniwaj Maharaja marked the eastern door of the Kaungmadaw Pagoda, situated at Sagaing, with his sword. In 1735 Maharaja Garibaniwaj of Manipur collected costs and slaves from Myedu of Shwebo district after attacking it. He destroyed some villages and pagodas sending cavalry to the upper part of Myanmar. The Manipuri soldiers defeated Myanmarese soldiers. Again in 1738, he was camping near Sagaing. According to the order of Maharaja Garibaniwaj, Kaungmadaw Pagoda built by king Thalun of Myanmar was taken care of. The Maharaja entered the pagoda and put a sword mark on the eastern door of the pagoda. In the year 1749, during the reign of king Maha Dhammarajadipati, the Manipuri king (Jayashree Jitshaha, or Chitsai) gave his daughter to him. There she was conferred the title of Maha Devi. She, along with Princess Popa and her husband, the deposed king, was exiled to Hanthawaddy (Bagu) when the Mons occupied Inwa. Interestingly she was installed as a queen by the Mon king and the title, Thirizeya Mingala Devi, was given. In the year, 1757, King Alaungpaya took some Manipuris as captives and along with some others settled them at Sagaing and various parts of Amarapura district. He established a Kate cavalry with the number ranging around 2000. Siam (Thailand) was invaded by king Alaungpaya along with a Kate cavalry that had 500 horsemen. Again in December 1764 Myedu (Hsinbyishim) of Myanmar invaded Manipur and took some Manipuris to Ava (it was the capital city between 1364-1555 and 1629-1752) as captives and settled them around the outskirts of the city. King Alaungpaya developed a cavalry battalion out of Manipuri settlers. Then, king Alaungpaya invaded Siam (Thailand) with the help of 500 Manipuri cavalries. In 1780 king Bodawpaya brought some Manipuris from Manipur to Mogok for working in ruby mines. And again in 1812, this king brought more Manipuris and let them settle there. In the year 1769, a Sino- Myanmar War took place during the time of king Myeikun. A combined force of Kate horsemen, numbering around 500 and Myanmarese army, launched an attack against the Chinese. In 1780 king Bodawpaya brought some Manipuris from Manipur to Mogok for working in ruby mines. And again in 1812, this king brought more Manipuris and let

them settle there. During the reign of Marjit Maharaja (1813-1819), king Bagyidaw of Myanmar invaded Manipur and the Seven Years Devastation took place in Manipur during 1819-1826. During the Seven Years Devastation, king Bagyidaw brought some Manipuris to Myanmar by promising job opportunities. Under two instances, each numbering 30,000 of Manipuris were taken to Myanmar in the year 1820 and 1821. Gambhir Singh Maharaja of Manipur built up Manipur Levy with the help of the British and expelled the invaders from Manipur.

Manipuris settled in Myanmar at different places according to the suitability of their vocation. Those settlers were - skilled weavers, carpenters, painters, goldsmiths, rowers, soldiers, cavalry, indigenous physicians, priests and astrologers etc. The existing Myanmar Manipuris who had settled there since early times participated in many happy and sorrow moments of Myanmar as Myanmar is their motherland in their hearts. Myanmarese Manipuri women brought fame to their adopted country and also helped it economically. Untouchability, caste system, social ostracism and assimilation to other communities have contributed to the slow extinction of the Manipuri community in Myanmar.

Ethnonyme used by the Myanmarese for refering to Manipuris

Manipuris are referred to by different names by the Myanmarese. Those Manipuri Brahmins are referred as 'Paona' while non-Brahmins are recognized as 'Kate'. The reason behind Manipuri Brahmins being called Paona was that they served as 'Purohit' (Priest) under the king of Myanmar. The original word 'Purohit' came to be used as 'purna'. Due to non-availability of the intonation 'r' in Myanmarese vocabulary since earliest times, 'Ponna' was used for 'Purna'. But it is pronounced as 'Paona' instead of 'Ponna'. The Manipuri Brahmins served as the priests and counsellors at the royal court and also practised the art of astrology.

Places settled by Manipuris

Manipuris remain scattered in and around different parts of Myanmar, such as - Kachin state, Yangong division, Sagaing division, Shan state, Ayeyarwaddy division etc. Some of the old villages have vanished. Even the names of the settled areas remain forgotten by the new generations. Some of the existing Manipuri villages have been absorbed into Myanmarese society.

Manipuris have settled at Myitkinya, Bhamo etc. of Kachin state. Different places of Mandalay division remain populated by Manipuris. Manipuris at present are settled around of Mandalay (Mandalay was the capital between 1857 - 1885). Just to the eastern side of the site is Nandawsae.

The word Nandawsae in Myanmarese does mean that it is on the eastern part of the original capital. Just to the western side of it is Minde-e-kin village. Those Manipuris settled at Myintut are the descendants of Manipuri cavalries that settled in this locality.

The word 'Myin' is for horse and 'Tut' is for army in the Myanmarese language. Around 15 km from Myintut is the village of Aheneitaw. The word 'Aheneitaw' stands for a village inhabited by very skilled medical practitioners. Most of them are the descendants of those Manipuris who were forcibly taken to Myanmar to serve as medicine men. Just to the south-western side of the past capital arc villages - Kha-Kshetri, Awang Kshetri, Bamon Khunja (Paonasu), Kshetri Khul, Ningthem Purohit Khul (those inhabitants were serving Myanmarese kings as purohits), Lairikyengbam Leikai and Myint Mo Geve etc.

There is Dal Dale and Latthamar villages (the latter is known as Konjengbam Leikai) just near Amarapura (it was the capital of Myanmar from 1783 to 1823) of Mandalay division. A little distance away from Amarapura is Shrigam or Senga Manipuri village and also Gaave (Myanmarese know it as Yekyi pauk) village. Before reaching Sagaing, there is a Manipuri village known as Shwekyet by the Mandalay road.

There is another Manipuri village called 'Hyip-kathe' (supplementary residents) in Mogok which is situated to the northern side of Mandalay. In 1780 king Bodawpaya settled Manipuris at Mogok to use them for ruby mining. And again in 1812 the king added another 45 families, and had to settle them there. There are more of Kate (Manipuri) villages near Kyatpyen due to an increase in their population.

In 1916, one written silver scroll was found near an old pagoda in Kathe (Manipuri town). In that scroll it was written that in 1785 the right of ruby mining was in the hands of so - Thungyi of Kathe, Mogok. The Kathe town is adjacent to Kyatpyen. In 1783, during Bodawpaya's time, Manipuri captives were used in the ruby mine. The place was known as Myaukyar by villagers during those days. They have identified themselves and the villages as Kathe for a long historical period. Lots of beautiful folk tales and man-made stories for those Kathes and Kyatpyen, settled around Mogok, were written in the parabaiks of Myanmar from an early time.

Date Dale, a Manipuri village, was at Nan Sayet (next to the palace on the eastern side) and it shifted near Amarapura after the British conquered Myanmar. There were around eight villages at Amarapura and Zecho is one of them. The word 'zecho' means 'cheap market' in Myanmarese language. Lots of silk clothes woven by Manipuris were available at this market. But, now-a-days, no sign of this market is

left. Manipuris have settled at Yangon division also. The localities inside it arc - Ma-oo-Gone, Yae-mayae, Kama Yut, Mandalay street Pannazo and Pogodong etc. There were not less than four villages in Sagaing division (it was the capital of Sagaing division during 1315-1364) and the remaining villages are Moza (Bamon Leikai) and Kate zu etc. Besides, Manipuris settled at Swebo and Katha villages of Sagaing division.

Manipuri settlements are also found along the Ningthi river, and the areas sandwiched between the river and the boundary of Manipur. The villages are - Homalin on the northern side, Kenta, Tekshikhong, Sayachan, Tanal, Miyudik, Maksha, Kondong, Kanjiwa (Tamu), Nanfalong, Nantank, Samjok, Tayong, Molai, Aungchantha (inside Kaliwa) and Natchaung (inside Kalemyo) etc. The appearance of the Manipuris or Kates who have settled on along river bank of the Ningthi (Chindwin) river have changed a lot after the Second World War.

Some of them abandoned their original villages and settled around Moreh. Till 1968 there were around fifteen Manipuri households in Kanjiwa which is situated inside Tamu. But, now, no sign of the village is there. There is a Manipuri village named 'Katejuwa' near the Inle Lake of Shan state. The word Juwa means village or villages in Myanmarese language. There are Manipuri villages at Basin and Hinthada of Ayayawaddy division.

There is a tradition of using two names among Myanmarese Manipuri-Kates and Kate-Paonas. The first name is given by the family themselves and the second name is of the Myanmarese language. The Manipuri name is used in the family and among Manipuri circles. In order to get opportunities in education and service, there is a compulsory tradition of adopting a name in the Myanmarese language.

There is no surname in a Myanmarese name. 'U' is prefixed before name of a male Manipuri elder while 'Daw' is prefixed before a middle-aged woman's name. Myanmarese Manipuri girls prefix their names with 'Ma'. Those Manipuri-Kates and Kate-Paonas settled around Mandalay, Amarapura and Sagaing know their surname and gotras. Some of the Manipuri-Kates settled along the river banks of the Ningthi (Chindwin) river know their surnames and yek-salai (clan).

The custom of division among Myanmarese Manipuris into Brahmins, Kshetris and Sudras was prevalent strongly among the Manipuri society. Untouchability and discrimination based on religion still exists. Since the formation of a Manipuri society about 250 years ago, untouchability and discrimination have become causes for shrinking the original population of the Manipuris.

Around 1917, some Manipuris of Ahneiktaw socialized with the populace of some other communities and they were ostracized for visiting a temple of Ningthem Purohit. It means that they have become untouchables so they are not allowed to be a part of them. Even relatives became victims of this practice. Fear, shame and anguish forced them to embrace Buddhism. After that they started mixing with those who follow Buddhism. It became one of the causes of forgetting their mother tongue. In this way the Manipuris merged with Myanmarese social system. Today they have forgotten that they were