

Editorial

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Trollers, first understand why the MU community rejects the fact finding committee

A rumour to malign the image of the Manipur University Community that is standing tough on the irregularity and financial misappropriation committed by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. A.P. Pandey is being trolled by some vested interested persons through social networking site stating that it is unfair to punish the VC without an enquiry.

Well, a fact finding committee has been constituted by the MHRD and was rectified again putting a retired acting Chief Justice from the state.

In our editorial yesterday as well as in the news report, we in the Imphal Times have already disclosed what the MU community has been demanding. That was not the first time that this newspaper points figure on the possible way to end the prolonged impasse which has been hampering academic activities not only in the University but also to the 60,000 students of all the colleges affiliated to the Manipur University.

To make it clear to all those who are still confused to the demand of the Manipur University Community we in the Imphal Times once more reiterated the demands.

Well, an illness diagnosed at an early stage has 99% chance of recovery if medicated in a proper way. But it will only be 1% to 5% chance to save the person if the illness reaches at its critical final stage.

The MUTA's first move was a request to the VC to talk with the agitating students under the aegis of the MUSU which affected academic atmosphere of the University. The MUTA's latter stand to support the MUSU came only after the Vice Chancellor Prof. Adya Pandey's refusal to listen to the teachers' community which is also a kind of humiliation.

The resignation of Deans of schools, Heads of departments and latter a series of strikes was incited by the high handedness of Prof. A.P. Pandey.

49 days and that too at a time when students are well shaped their future prompted actions, and even people from outside the University supported the cause. In the meantime, college students started demanding their rights of study and police brutalities towards that democratic demand appeared as putting salt to the wound. Oinam Sital, General Secretary of DESAM miraculously survived after police personnel allegedly pushed him on a running heavy vehicle.

Shocked at the attitude of the central as well as state government, the MUSU called a 48 hours general strike which is being supported by all the people of the state.

Now, why the MU community stands firm not to support the so called fact finding committee needs to be analysed.

Firstly, the MU community wants the VC Pandey to be dismissed or if in case an enquiry has to be conducted than he should be either suspended or put on leave. The community also wants an enquiry committee constituted under the Commission of enquiry act headed by a ret'd. judge of a High Court. The fact finding committee was formed and added a ret'd. judge in addition to the two members which the community had earlier rejected.

The proposal of the state government to appoint a Pro VC also showed lack of understanding about the Manipur University Act by the Union Government. Pro VC as according the Manipur University Act should be appointed on the recommendation of the VC by the Executive committee of the University. These proposals clearly indicate the clear intention of keeping the VC Pandey intact in the office even at the time of enquiry where impartial investigation can never be expected.

Now the question arises is why is the union govt. standing for the incumbent VC whom every community of the institution has been demanding his removal? What is that power that even the government of Manipur fails to put proposal in an intellectual way by understanding the Manipur University act? Is there an agenda of the two governments to make sure that AP Pandey continues to hold the office of the VC of Manipur University?

ASPECTS OF PAMHEIBA'S RELIGIOUS CONVERSION AND ITS IMPACT: PERSPECTIVES ON CONSTRAINTS AND CONTRADICTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

By: H. Indrakumar

Introduction

Social theorists and academicians have now considered religion to be the socializing agent playing a very important role for social unity and harmony even though Karl Marx denied it when he rejected religion to be the opium of the masses in his communist showdown. Some take it as having norm of ideas and action which will help morally and spiritually connected with achieving higher values of the self. Some regard it as a means for salvation through highly spiritual austerity. Others take it as ritualism by means of which peace, security, prosperity etc. can be attained. When religion is explained into action in terms of securing or gaining human desire or lower level of desire, such as lust or craze, by means of using the name of godhead or deity, it is misconceived to the extent that the particular religion is involved in harmful and irreligious activities. What Pamheiba embraced fanaticism at the first instance of its letting loose by some Bengali refugees did not suit well the worthiness of being a benevolent native king. That he was too much accommodative and whimsical as to whether his autocratic decisions deserved any consideration for abrupt change in favour of sanskritisation or Ramanandi cult would be inconsistent with rulership and kingship tradition in the history of Meetei nationality. Religion must bear a holy concept otherwise it appears to take on malevolent or violent or mischievous acts discarding humanism or human values.

Historicity

The Meeteis had their own chequered history and got experienced a distinct entity being consistent with a national ethos. They were freedom loving people who could not be accustomed to toleration for imposition and domination. There was no social stratification by birth as seen in caste system in which functional classification into four varnas is strictly regimented. There was no high and low or the pure and the impure by birth. A cohesive social order prevailed discernible through interclan and intermarriage (except inter-clan) being gifted from the homogeneity of culture and tradition. Dynastic rulership and benevolent kingship with certain democratic norms was found recorded prevailing from early times. Faiths and beliefs were in line with ancestor worship which was the oldest pattern of religious system, just like Vishnu was the ancestor of the Vaisnava faith.

The Meeteis possessed keen senses of identity and integration and which was why such native sensation of indigenization and homogenization had brought in all historical times all the inhabitants under one roof of nationalism. The stability and continuity of Meetei system got disturbed badly when casteism or for the most part of it, Hindu fanaticism plus despotism loomed large gradually injecting into the social fabric pollution, untouchability, uneatibility and segregation. It all began with Pamheiba's scheming of religious conversion process under the advice of his guru Shantidas Goswami and that sanskritisation as in the words of Prof. MN. Srinivas, continued unabatedly with royal patronage. Had it been the already sanskritised land of the Mahabharata's Manipur, King Pamheiba needed not to have taken to religious conversion because a Hindu King would not necessarily take to task with such new devices as he adopted for a Hindu convert. It clearly shows that Pamheiba was utterly desirous of transforming Meetei 'Leipak' into a Hindu land called Manipur just like

R.C. Majumdar would prefer to write on "Farther India" or "Greater India" while dealing with some Southeast Asian countries. The forthcoming episodes will also tell upon the historical necessity for fallacious tendencies and dialectical contradiction.

The historical connection with the Hindu fanaticism that Pamheiba acclaimed in a volatile manner had created untold misery and loss of Meetei order. The Meetei society as destabilized with de-indigenisation and homogenisation. Since the imposing conversion devices brought in stratification, discrimination, alienation and pollution, all these struck into the kinship and affiliative pattern of relationship resulting in psychological disturbances and sociological imbalances which the Meetei Yek Salais had never so experienced in the past. The 18th Century religio-cultural accretion entering into a new deal did bargain for annihilation of Meetei nationality with a bitter taste of consolation and toleration. Eventual moments of conflict situation of an identity crisis broke out orienting towards undue polarization into the pure and the impure and the high and the low being usually practised as Hindu import. King Pamheiba's conversion to Ramanandi cult followed by a forceful conversion evidently led to dialectical contradiction between two differing ideologies, viz., Meeteism and Hinduism. The Ramanandi cult was an old Hindu faith which was very much popular in Bangali society where Tulsiada's Ramayan became a household word in Bengal. Pamheiba did not possess subtlety of mind to make distinctions between Meetei Religion (Lichat) and Ramanandi cult or Brahmanism. From the very boyhood he did not learn anything about his own native culture, history, ancestral glories, tradition, religion and royal code of conduct and behaviour. His actions and thoughts were always guided by his guru Shantidas who by nature crooked and notorious used to be instrumental in instigating series of contradiction. Lord Pakhangba wished to leave for heavenly abode (Pakhangba Nongkalot) as the sanctity of religion was no more visible. It is very interesting to look into all these religious matters to detail a critical analysis by using some available materials and tools so that an attempt has to be made to draw a prospective conclusion from this inference.

The Tempter in the Guise

Pamheiba was born on Saturday of 'Poinu' 22, 1690 and ascended the throne at the age of 20 in 1709. 'Cheitharol Kumpaba' and 'Ningthourol' differ his date of coronation in that the former recorded on 23rd of 'Thawan' whereas the latter on 23rd of 'Langban'. He was also known as Mayamba at the time of coronation. The few Hindu immigrants who came intermittently a little earlier in successive rulers did never pose a menace against the native system. There were no records of neither by the Hindus nor by the Muslims to have plotted against the rulers with subversive activities in the pre-Pamheiba era. The tempest blew along with the appearance of Shantidas Goswami or Mahanta who came a long way from Sylhet and took refuge under the hospitality of king Pamheiba. Chinghu Khongnangthaba predicted that seven Saturs (Thangia) would be coming during his period. It means that Pamheiba could not protect himself and his kingdom from the forthcoming misfortunes. Shantidas was very much jealous of Chinghu Khongnangthaba who was the Chief Priest and so the

former began to tempt the young king to take pride in becoming an autocratic ruler. He treated Pamheiba just like his own son pretending or assuming filial affection. Pamheiba changed his mind so abruptly that he could not make up his mind to be worthy of being a Meetei king as his ancestors were all the more worthy of sustaining Meetei values and tradition. The closeness of relationship between the two and its very outcome being contradicted against Meetei norms would be foolproof to a proverbial verse which was known to few scholars only. This verse applied to Pamheiba:

"Paonam hiten mapanda, feita hitang masumanga, tarei shelpung yebadi, wanglel pungjao fubadi, Sana liklai marugi Tupi maru thabadi houdedo, senpi mukaklei maruna thabadi houdedo."

Shantidas posed himself before the king as monk (Sanyasin) who renounced the worldly pleasure for the sake of salvation. He told Pamheiba that Lord Sanamahi brought him in Poierei Meetei Leipak which was a land of deities, a difficult land to deal with. He requested the king to keep him employed in the palace so as to perform rituals as a priest for better controlling the shrines of deities and spirits. He further demanded that Pamheiba could become a shining sun amongst other counterparts of the world and hence he could alone be the happiest king with ten consorts to be served. Shantidas grew envious of aesthetic principles of traditional Meetei faith and belief system. He always sought after royal hospitality in order to gain royal favour. He began to think of turning the kingdom into a Hindu Kingdom. He advised his two disciples, Narandas and Bhagavandas to manage the cause of indulging in royal romance and hence sentimentalizing the whole palace affairs especially amongst the king's consorts. It was in this juncture that he had committed to deliberately criminalize a forbidden dogma. He demanded the king to take the whole kingdom to Ramanandi faith so that the old pattern of ancestor worship should be replaced by this new faith. However Ramanandi cult might be new to the Meeteis yet it was the oldest faith of the Hindus. This fact was not known to the king as he ran short of wisdom and foresight while yielding to Shantidas's temptation.

Nongkhung Pledge

Stern steps had been taken up in terms of mass arrest and imposing punishment in order to accomplish religious conversion. Chinghu Khongnangthaba could not remain a spectator to all such untoward change in religious ethics. Chinghu had revealed for the future without any reservation, he was the principal priest of Priest Council (Maru Shanglel) and all other priests gathered around him to take his advice. He was ever accompanied by supernatural beings each and every hour. There was no place where he could not reach and there was nothing which he could not do. He was a holy man, a Saint, a Supernatural Being in human form. This was the reason why he was known to be Chinghu reverently to all, he came out publicly and made known to the people that the religion which was not acceptable to the Meetei people themselves and should not be given forcefully.

On Wednesday of 'Wakching' 15, both Shantidas and Pamheiba took bath in the Lilong Irong and after this holy dip Pamheiba was initiated into Ramanandi faith by giving him diksha and wearing threads as per Hindu ritualism. According to Cheitharol Kumpaba, it was on Thursday of Hiyangei 1, 1737 the king, then called Maharaja Pamheiba and 300 other persons including officers initiated into the faith with rituals of wearing threads. All those converted persons

who had a holy dip in Lilong were all ordered to dip again into the Kangla Nungcheng on the midnight of this day. This holy bath came to be known as Nungkhung Iruppa. The crisis deepened and grew graver. Those who resisted were tortured to take dip and hence Nungkhung Dip. Those converts had been compelled to take a pledge that they should die in bloodbath if they abandoned the new faith. Chinghu Khongnangthaba reminded the king whom he called Ningthem that it ought to be prohibited to abolish Meetei traditional faith and belief by using force and coercion. The king could not be escaped from its dire consequences. Chinghu was quite right and true to the conception of modern democratic principles. His ideas carry democratic message in today's state of affairs. He warned Pamheiba that the religious conversion promulgated oppressively and despotically would stay for a short period only, because massive appeasement for all would be quite impossible. The king ought not to get self-satisfied. The moment Chinghu reminded Pamheiba of the popular verse of Paonam Hiten, Shantidas all of a sudden fell unconscious at Nungcheng. Chinghu said that the alien monks were no more than the refugees begging for alms and, he wondered why such refugees and beggars were allowed to occupy positions of responsible and respectable status like capable of entering into forbidden palatial compartments, such as bedroom. He regretted that the king did not come to his senses hence the alien monk enticed him to the extent of his self-satiation, and which was why the kingdom entered into a sad state during his tenure. It is for the first time in Meetei history that the Pamheiba era remains to be the most remarkable one in which the Hindu connection paid its heaviest price ever to push Meeteism to the background and get lost in the guise. Aristotle long ago in the 13th century BC predicted that foreigners and immigrants should not be given any responsible or favourable position in the echelon of government and his conception was very much related to laying down of certain causes of revolution or change or attack against the authority. Any new corner should not be patronized or be neglected.

The conversion process continued. Many more were taking a dip in Kangla Nungcheng just after the Lilong dip. Oinam Sarei and Sembang Khutlei were reported to have absented themselves from the dip. They were brought before the king and asked why they did not obey his order beating them with scores of lashes. They replied that they did not like to live dependently on alien culture destroying Meetei wisdom and conscience. It was also made known to the king that Meetei spirit and wisdom would be weakening if the alien religion was adopted. Pointing to Pamheiba, Chinghu declared that Nongkhung Pledge should be valid only for seven generations and Meeteism must return just a day after the completion of seven generations. The king and Shantidas also agreed and promised with an undertaking. In an earlier event Chinghu Shantidas prostrated before Chinghu requesting him for allowing the king to fulfill whatever he desired. Chinghu knew everything to be happening in future. He advised the king to expel the wicked whoever might be a monk or so. He foresaw a catastrophe coming as the Saturn, known to be Satan to the natives, cast his evil eyes to demolish a lively civilization by inflicting misfortune for seven generations as well.

(To be continue)