

Editorial

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Vandalizing of fruit seller is about protecting the identity of Imphal

It is not about being communal but rather a protest against the disparities by government agency towards its citizens by dividing on communal lines. Preserving one's culture and traditions is what every community felt as their bounden duty to protect their identity. When felt insecure, the community in danger has every right to protest.

Much has been debated on the issue for demand for a permit system to the entry of non local in the state. The ongoing agitation demanding ILPS is about protecting and preserving the traditions, culture and identity of the people of the state. It is a legitimate right of the people to put up the demand as the Indian constitution too says that every citizen has the right to protect and preserve their own culture and tradition. After all the system is in force at some neighbouring states of Manipur.

Yesterday incident or say a democratic protest which was compelled to turn violent after authority fails to listen the plea of the JCILPS has been misinterpreted to monger communal hatred among Meitei people and the Mayang people. We already had experience about such technique being used in the past by government authority. But a closure look into what prompted the JCILPS volunteers taking the extreme form of agitation will make every right thinking people that the movement was not against any specific communities.

Some few days back after the issue for demand of ILPS remain quiet with the coming of a new government which had assured to introduce a legislation of ILPS type in the state, the JCILPS finally re-organised a protest by submitting memorandum to the government for speedy introduction of a legislation. The Women wing when inspected the condition of the Khwairamband Keithel Ima Market - the only women run market in the country, many male were found mixing the women vendors at some area. This is a direct threat to the traditions and identity of Khwairamband Keithel Ima Market. The JCILPS did not care about which communities that male vendor occupying seat in Ima Market belongs to but the Women Wing threaten serious agitation if they have not been driven out. What is coincidental is that almost all the male occupying women seat turned out to be non-indigenous people.

It's natural that the Students' Wing of the JCILPS would definitely stand against attaching of market shed in front of their school and that too by attaching to the wall.

Students, staffs and teachers of Bhairordan Maxwell Hindi Primary and High School, have been submitting memorandums time and again to shift the fruit vendors from the area as it disturbs the school environment. Media too witness series of protest by the school students and teachers.

The fruit vendors claimed to have license but the truth is that the license they procured is illegal as there is a Supreme Court order which said that no license for selling goods can be provided on the foot path. The 25 fruit vendors are being provided license for making stall on the footpath as well as on the drain. The waste produced from them had failed the school drainage and every rainy season students and teachers have suffered extreme hardship due to artificial flood.

The protest witness yesterday has a tendency to spark another mass protest, but could have been prevented if the law enforcers were ordered to deliver their services without disparities.

When the government seemed to be serious about encroachers government land why they still keep continuing protection to the illegal fruit vendors. Is it because these fruit sellers are Mayang from Mainland who is being protected by the fascist Hindutva regime or is it a mere negligence on the part of the administrators.

Human history has not been an amiable narrative of peaceful co-existence and development. Throughout the various epochs, many politico - cultural trends have emerged and disappeared with particular time periods, only to reappear again in a more subtle form and then proceed toward another transformation. A peculiar feature evident throughout has been the stark feature of dissent a resultant of various opposing, contesting (and unequal), asymmetrical forces, which in turn get expressed through various means - violent or otherwise. What is conspicuous is the culture in which dissent is suppressed, repressed subversion contained and opposition strategically anticipated, controlled and diffused by the dominant force working exclusively in the interest of the prevailing power structure.

Prison Diary of Late Lamyamba Nk Sanajaoba

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Late Nongmeikakpam Sanajaoba popularly known as Lamyamba Sanajaoba is without question accepted by one and all as the pioneer of investigative journalism in Manipur. He took active role in the formation of Pan Manipur Youth League (PANMYL) in the year 1968. In 1969, he became the founding editor of the monthly journal, 'Lamyamba', brought out by PANMYL. Lamyamba emerged as a total diversion from the existing publications and periodicals of those times, as it pioneered the investigative journalism in Manipur. He was imprisoned in August 1969. Many said, he was arrested for lampooning the then Chief Commissioner of Manipur, Baleswar Prasad as 'Looter of Palace Gun', 'Amuraba Alibaba' (tr., Blackie Alibaba) in his write-up at Lamyamba Journal, and a publication brought out by PANMYL titled, 'What is wrong in Manipur' on charge of sedition. Athokpam Tomchou, a well known playwright, who was with him together at the prison said, all of them, who got arrested in the same month of August, were charged under the same First Information Report (FIR) charging them with various sections relating with 'sedition' and 'waging war against the state'. They all arrested under FIR 350 (8) 69/ US 395/397/431/436/ 120B/IPC and 11 West Bengal Security Act & 25 @ Arms Act. NK Sanajaoba, along with some of those arrested in connection with sedition and waging war against the state was accommodated at Room No. 1. 'Raghu Gunda' of Singjamrei Kshetri Leikai, greatly famed for his notoriety, imprisoned in connection with the criminal activities, was a ring-leader of all the prisoners. All of them fear him and was under his control. Even those who were years senior to him reverently called him 'Tamo' out of fear. It was at his room that Sanajaoba and Tomchou together were accommodated. Prisoners were served fish curry every Friday. The fishes meant for jail inmates, before being taken to the Kitchen room of the prison, considerable quantity of it used to be part off by Raghu and stoked alive for his personal consumption and nobody objected. He ate it daily either fried or cooked at the kerosene stove in his room. NK Sanajaoba, being his locality elder, also, at his insistence used to have meal with him sharing his prepared fishes. All of them were freed after spending about 15 days in Jail. One Sanasam Joychandra from Chingamkha was killed in firing by CRPF personnel in connection with the agitation for demanding statehood during the visit by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In its immediate aftermath, all of them including Sanajaoba who recently got released were again arrested under non-bailable warrant. Most of them were accommodated at Room no 12 together with some of the convicted Meitei State Committee rebels. Since Raghu was no longer in the prison, they also ate what was being served for all. The meal served was pest ridden badly odoured filthy Usna Rice for storing long in the godown. Fish curry was served every Friday. Otherwise it was Dal most of the time though vegetables were occasionally served. If at times, new prisoners were sent in at the evening, the cook of the prison, just to make it sufficient, poured water at the vessel of the cooked dish. At that time, Ibomcha 'Mijaba' (tr., M-eater) of Meitei State Committee, along with some other convicts cooked food for the prisoners. The quantity of meal for a prisoner was just a bowl each of rice and dish. It seemed after having such food

in the prison, a strong motive for protest and reformation was born in the minds of Sanajaoba. It afterwards came to greater light in the subsequent events. As first step, uncooked rice was distributed to each room in the morning before cooking. That was done so that prisoner could screen out the stones and pest from the rice grains for their consumption. Sanajaoba stored those stones and pests screened out from the rice in an empty Vicks Can and kept it safely with him. He later showed those pests and stones to the Jail superintendent when he came for the inspection visit and protested with a demand for providing quality food. The Superintendent, before he went, assured stating, 'Yes, I'll look into the matter'. Even then, nothing happened and there was no improvement. At that time, there was a trend of abusing the new-comer prisoners by asking their reason of imprisonment or by giving any flimsy ground. In the process, new-comers were physically assaulted, made to sweep broom and wipe the room and clean the toilet. Sanajaoba objected such act and afterwards it was no longer done. All the prisoners respect Sanajaoba. Those others imprisoned in connection with 'revolutionary case' were also respected. Tomchou and Sanajaoba, together decided to try writing by bringing in pen and paper, since they thought, they were going to serve jail time long term as they got arrested under non-bailable warrant. At that time, prisoners were forbidden from writing and possessing pen and paper. There was a criteria for providing specific number of blank paper to 'A' and 'B' Class political prisoner. But they were classed in 'C' category together with the ordinary prisoners. So, pen and paper was forbidden to them. So, Tomchou and Late Sanajaoba decided to write secretly. Writing had been the heart and soul for both of them. At that time, Tomchou, as scriptwriter, had already to his credit about four stage plays and ten courtlyard plays. Sanajaoba treated Tomchou with great affection and love. The pseudonym used by Tomchou in his writings as pen name, 'Atom Luwang' was coined by Sanajaoba while they were together in the prison. That way, they started well set for the writing. One ink fountain pen was bought for him. And the paper was brought in by the convicted prisoners who were less censured by the jail staffs. As for Tomchou, at the day of his appearing before the court, some ball pen refill were brought in by inserting it inside the fly-chain of his pant. And a pen was made by putting the refill inside a 'Langchak' (tr., Bobbin). But he still doesn't have any paper. Somehow, he had to find ways. He wrote a script of the play diagonally superimposedly against the parallelly printed letters of the Science Reporter copy with a red colour refill. That script titled, 'College Girl' was (Courttyard) played by the yesteryears famous comedian, Oinam Babu and his party. After that, another play titled, 'Ningsinbidraba Ningthemcha' (tr., Forgotten Ningthemchas) based on the life of Ningthem Herachandra was scripted. Another Drama titled, 'Keishumshang' based on his experience in the prison was also scripted. So, he altogether wrote three scripts during his prison life. Sanajaoba too wrote many essays for his 'Lamyamba' periodical. Sanajaoba and Tomchou slept together in the same bed. Their bed was laid cornermost so that it would not be sighted at the vigil of the jail staff. They also persuaded the fellow inmates for not disclosing about their writing to the jail staff. They also

distributed cigarettes and bought tea at the canteen for the fellow inmates to win over them. After some days, Late Nongmaithem Pahari, who needed no introduction and Late Dr. Manimoham also joined in as prison inmates. They were arrested under FIR 350. That time, N. Pahari was still an employee of All India Radio. Dr. Manimoham runs a homeopathic Clin named 'Rapid Care' at Masjid Road. Dr. Manimoham was a person who played a major role for the emotional integration among the people (hill-valley) of Manipur as an activist of Manipur Cultural Integration Conference (MCIC) under the leadership of Late Maharajkumar Priyabarta. Pahari and Manimoham was also accommodated at the same room, Room no. 12 with Sanajaoba and Tomchou. Pahari, since already well acquainted with Sanajaoba, three of them including Tomchou share the same bed. At that time, Pahari must be around 35/36 years of age. He seemed slightly senior to Sanajaoba. Pahari also treated Tomchou endearingly after knowing that he is a playwright and also sings popular song in his college life. In the night time, Pahari spend his time singing at the request of the fellow inmates. Songs sung by Pahari at those times were 'Ho Ema Poknafam Ema Nangumbi Yaode Ema', 'Khonglam Laman Singamlo', 'Ahingda Khongbi Ho Tamna', etc. There was one humorously interesting anecdote about N. Pahari. The prisoner inmates in the jail were paraded and herded like poultry and let to enter one by one, after noting them, by the jail warder. That day, the total inmates for Room no. 12 was 28. The following day, the warder, Luigam came and unlocked the key. He was a havildar belonging to the native hill community. He started parading some prisoners and counting them. Those arrested in 'revolutionary case' were excluded from the parade. They were counted in their respective bed. That day, the total number count was only 27. Havildar Luigam must have panicked as one number of inmate was less from the preceding count of 28. The difference in the number count was because Tomchou with his diminutive physical stature went unnoticed as he laid down between physically broad statured and tall Pahari and Sanajaoba. Luigam from the doorstep of the room said, 'Ojha Pahari, the number of prisoner inmate is less'. It seemed Pahari must have realised the situation. He instantly stated, 'Eigi nakandei sirane' (whether the one besides me). Tomchou also just pulled out his head from inside the blanket. Seeing that, the Havildar went saying, 'ok, ok, everyone please take rest'. Afterwards, they laughed remembering the incident. There was one jail staff whose name is Kondum. He worked as a typist clerk. In the night time, he used to share the meal and slept together with the prisoner inmates. Sanajaoba persuaded Kondum to secretly bring out a copy of jail manual from the staff cupboard. It contained the rules and regulations which were to be followed in the jails of Assam and Manipur. Tomchou and Sanajaoba hurriedly hand copied the contents of the manual in a night and returned to Kondum. Sanajaoba became more agitated and dissatisfied after reading the jail manual. More importantly, the manual clearly mentioned the quality and quantity of food to be provided to the prisoners. Sanajaoba clearly noticed that all those provisions in the manual were not complied and followed by the Manipur administration. To sum up, a prisoner should supposedly be given a meal costing Rupees Seven at the rate

of those times. But it seemed, they were served with a meal costing only Rupees Three. It came to know that the prisoners were deprived of their due rights. Earlier plead to the Superintendent also doesn't pay any heed. This time also, some of them led by Sanajaoba made a verbal request to the jailor. But it proved futile. From that, Sanajaoba decided to take steps for hunger strike. That day, they, including some RGMs) were to produce before the Lamphel DC Court for remand. That morning, they all have decided to not have meal. Doing so, they all have turned up to go court without having meal. They all have walked out of the jail inner gate and paraded near the outside gate for boarding the vehicle. Since, those who went to court the previous days said they were not properly checked, Tomchou also joined in the parade, tucking in two completed scripts in his stomach. But that day was so unfortunate that, Jailor Saranthen Nodiachand was found sitting in a chair taking sun-bath near their parade. Since he was present, jail staff started screening them one by one. Tomchou suddenly got alarmed, thinking that he would surely be caught this day. Continuingly thinking, what means should he find, he tried to stand at the last. Just at his back, there was one cupboard for keeping guns. He then steadfastly pulled out the scripts and kicked it underneath the cupboard. Nobody took notice of it. Then, all of them after getting thoroughly checked, lifted the vehicle. After the vehicle started, he could still properly see scripts. Anxiously thinking whether it was him alone who was seeing it, they reached the court. After reaching the DC Court, they all sat together in a room. In the meantime, Yambem Tijendra, the editor-in-charge of Lamyamba was just sighted outside from window. Sanajaoba steadfastly pulled out a bunch of paper and throw it outside the window. Tijendra picked it up and went away. Tomchou was awestruck thinking how Sanajaoba managed to brought it unconcealed despite the rigorous check. Just after Tijendra went, Jailor came in a Jeep vehicle and Sanajaoba was isolated in a room and thoroughly checked. From that, it could be comprehended that, either there was something in relation to the hunger strike going on in the jail after they went or it was suspected that Sanajaoba possesses something in writing about the misdeeds of the government. And Tomchou, thinking of the scripts he kicked in underneath the cupboard, spend time anxious and restless. After they were remanded at another date, they returned to jail. Tomchou felt a sense of relief when he found the script still there lying intact. During that moment, clerk Kondumba just came out. Tomchou terrifyingly told Kondumba to collect the scripts and bring in when he comes. Saying so, he passed in the inner gate and enter the jail. After reaching jail, they could feel that something had happened. The authority already have come to know why the prisoners were fasting and who their leader was. Also, it came to know that the authority recovered some of the writings of Sanajaoba which he kept in hiding. It later came to light that it was due to the undercover jail staff among the fellow prisoner inmates. That was a very shameful day for Sanajaoba and other prisoners. It was because all hunger strikers were herded to the kitchen and made to have their meal. They all ate unwillingly. Sanajaoba was publicly shamed for instigating hunger strike in the prison and also for writing 'Larei Lathup' (tr., Inconvenient Truth) in the 'Yukhal Marunda' column.

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