

Editorial

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To be a good man

The one simple thing that could make much of almost everything much easier and smoother, yet seemingly impossible to accomplish is the act of becoming a good person.

It would indeed take a much greater strength of character to own up our mistakes and short comings, and still greater willpower to refrain from deliberately committing acts we consciously know is wrong and false. The few fortunate ones who have the grit and will to transcend these urges are acknowledged and respected.

On the other hand, a new breed of "Go-Getters" who would not stop at anything to achieve their goal is on the rise the pressures of present day society helping in developing and pruning such mindset to perfection. They are the restless, hyperactive and aggressive ones who do not cater to emotions and aesthetics. Modern parents and guardians are increasingly urging their wards to adopt the letter approach towards life in order to carve out a place in the society that invariably results in a level of respect-respect that again is dependent on the earning capacity, the social circle adopted and living status maintained. Increasing compulsions for security in terms of food, shelter and a step towards a more secure future could be the factors that prompted the collective thinking towards adopting such an attitude towards life.

But then, does that mean the adage "All is fair and love and war" will be made true? Is our life becoming a daily struggle, a battle-if not a war, we are destined to wage every single living day of our lives? Where does that leave us with any room or opportunity for improvement not the financial kind, but a more rounded and holistic, as a person?

The present developments in the society-particularly that of mindless atrocities and lack of considerations that is becoming rampant would be a spill-off of this new approach towards life. The struggle for security-for the basic necessities of life has become the all-consuming tryst for wealth which invariably leads to the thirst for power and influence. Greed takes over everything else, making our lives worse off than when we started. What then could be the panacea for these aberrations that has come to plague our lives of late? The answer lays within us common knowledge which just needs to be acknowledged, and more importantly to act on. Putting up a façade of make-believe and a show of benevolence and righteousness will not absolve anyone of the crimes and wrongs.

This is of utmost importance for everyone, and more so for those who are donning the role of public representatives who we are following. Concepts like beauty, peace and harmony can only be experienced if we can rise above our petty urges and look at life-that of ourselves and the ones around us in a different and totally new perspective one that does not have anything to do with wealth, power or fame.

"The earth has enough to satisfy man's needs but not man's greed". Mohandaskaramchand Gandhi.

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Social Dynamism of Hinduism in Pre Pamheiba's Period

Dr M. Kaoba Singh

It is a fact that Manipur has got geographical nearness to Burma and South China. The earliest reference to Assam-Burma route is found in the accounts of Chang Kieu, on the basis of which Pelliot has shown that from 200 BC onwards there as a regular route of land to China through Assam, Upper Burma and Yunnan. Pelliot has described two routes from Burma through Manipur. It is evident that Indian cultural colonisation touched almost in many countries of the South-East Asia particularly in Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Cochinchina, Annam, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Bali and East Indies.¹ Since Manipur located as a neighbouring country of the Southeast Asian countries, there is a question of the existence of Hindu influence in Manipur in the early period. In this regard, Saroj Nalini Parratt observes that a different approach to the question of early Hindu influence may be made through the contact, which the early Manipurians had with the neighbouring Hindu peoples. She accounted in her book, Religion of Manipur, with certain amount of reservation of the authenticity of a text called "Chingurembi Khonglup" which claims Hindu influence as early as the second half of the 17th century.² According to this text the Meitei King Naotingkhong (663-763) married western princes called Chingurembi. The text goes on to list certain persons who are said to be her attendants. They are: Lakhi Nara, Ram Nara, Lokhon Das, Tulasi Ram, Tulasi Ram, Han (goldsmith), Han Nara (a groom), Tapa, Akhul Tao and Kathou on the basis of this text. Jhalajit Singh also considers that cultural contact was established with Manipur and Western side of India as early as the 7th century AD.³ However, the date and accuracy of the Chingurembi Khonglup is yet to be established and it is very doubtful, in the absence of confirmatory evidence (particularly the royal chronicles and other archaic sources), that the claim to such Hindu influence can be accepted.

Another account, which claims to be a documentary evidence to prove that Hinduism existed in Manipur long back in the 7th century, is the

"Phayeng Copper Plates". The plates were collected by W.Yumjao Singh, an enthusiastic archaeologist. He translated these plates from archaic Manipur and published in 1935 under the title, "Report on Archaeological Studies in Manipur Bulletin No.1. The plates relate to the reign of King Khongtekcha 1763-74AD. Yumjao recorded the contents of the plates in full in which there are ample of evidences regarding the worshipping of Siva and Durga in that period. However internal incidence from the Phayeng plates themselves makes a controversy of its authenticity. After examining the character and language written in plates, Saroj Nalini Parratt and Prof Gangumei Kabui suggest that the plates are not more than a century old from the year of publication. W.Yumjao himself also gave its composition, as around 1830 AD.⁴ Unfortunately, the plates are not available at present, if so, it can be examined through scientific means.

The dawn of the 15th century constituted a significant landmark in the history of Brahmin migration in Manipur. The famous King Kyamba (1467-1508AD) initiated to implant the first influence of Hinduism in Manipur. According to the Bamon Khunthok, which seems to give probably or fairly accurate record of Brahmin migration, maintains that during the period of Kyamba many Brahmins from different parts of India, Gujarat, Kanpur, Nandagram (Uttar Pradesh), Mathura, Shrihatta, etc. entered to Manipur in successive waves, settled in different parts of Manipur, received royal patronage and married local women whose off springs became the progenitors of many Brahmin families of Manipur to-day. Besides, the Brahmins, Kshetrimayums also began to pour into Manipur. All of them absorbed into and became an integral part of the Manipuri society.⁵ For the first time in the history of Manipur, a Hindu god, Visnu began to be worshipped when the King of Pong gave the image of Visnu to Kyamba at the time of concluding a friendly treaty after the conquest of Kyang in 1470 AD. The image of Visnu was installed in a brick temple at Lamangdong and started to worship by requisitioning the service of Bhanu Narayana who

took shelter in a Manipuri house in Lairik Yengbam Leikai. Since then Lamangdong came to be known as Visnupur and the descendants of Bhanu Narayana as Phurailatpam. Kyamba's brick Visnu temple is in the state of ruin, but still remains as a protected monument. The cult of Visnu made a strong appeal to the Kings of Manipur from the time of Kyamba. The image is seen riding Garuda and holding a conch, a chakra, a mace and a lotus in four hands.⁶ After Kyamba, Khagemba (1597-1652) also contributed to the progress of Vaishnavism. He accompanied the image of Visnu on the back of a white horse on an elephant when the king goes from place to place.⁷ Though the Kings of Manipur inclined towards the worshipping of Visnu, there was no popular following to this cult. In this regard, Saroj Nalini Parratt boldly stated that before Charairongba there was no clear evidence of Hinduising influence. The Royal chronicle, Cheitharol Kumbaba also does not give us specific mention of Hindu deities during the time of Kyamba and Khagemba. She admitted that the turning point in the religious history of Manipur awaited the reigns of Charairongba and more specially of his son Garbiniwaj.⁸ King Charairongba was the first Manipuri King to be formally initiated into Vaisnavism through a pious Brahman named Krisnacharya alias Rai Vanamali who came from Sweeta-ganga puri with some of his companions in 'Mera' of the year 1703. The Cheitharol Kumbaba records the initiation ceremony as: In the year 1626 Sak (1704AD). The month of 'Sajiphu' began on a Saturday. On the 5th day, Wednesday, King Charairongba and those who were to take the sacred thread fasted on that very same day. They took sacred thread on the same day.⁹ Vanamalis descendants were called Guru-Aribam Charairongba presented a village, a hill and 100 acres of rice field to the Guru as Dakshina. He also constructed a brick temple of Krishna at Brahmapur-Guru Aribam Leikai. It remains intact.¹⁰ Although the King himself formally took the sacred thread, he did not attempt to

establish Hinduism as the state religion, nor did he neglect the worship of traditional deities. Thus, Hinduism concentrated only to the royal families and the nobles.

Following the footsteps of his father, Garbiniwaj adopted Vaisnavism through a preacher of the cult called Gopaladas in Mera in the year 1717AD. The form of Vaisnavism he adopted was Chaitanya's school of Vaisnavism in which the worship of Lord Krishna was the main theme.¹¹ While the king was following this cult with much enthusiasm and interest, a slightly different form of Hinduism was slowly making its headway through a great missionary. Santidas who arrived in Manipur on Sunday, the 3rd day of Sajiphu in the year 1716 AD along with two of his disciples, Bhagavandas and Narayandas. He was a resident of Nara Singh Jilla in the Sylhet district. He came through the Ngarum Changiel road (Tongjei Maril) and entered into the valley of Manipur. When he arrived at the capital, he halted the night at the royal guard hall. Having got the information of his arrival, the king cordially received him. Being satisfied with the behavior of the king, the Gossai started slowly to insist the king to adopt Ramandi as the kings of Manipur were the descendants of the great Pandava hero, Arjun through Babrubahan, the Rama cult fitted well from other faiths. The king at first refused to adopt the new faith on the plea that he had to consult with his countries over the matter.¹² Ramandi preached by Santidas including his brother Manshai and his son Shyamshai.¹³ But Santidas was not a mean preacher. He insisted the king fervently by augmenting various arguments for softening the adamant attitude of the king towards his faith. Santidas's persuasive manner of argument at last won the heart of the king, and, as such, on the full moon day of Wakhing, Wednesday in the year 1729 the king initiated to the Ramandi cult. After a short span of time he was addicted to the new faith and remained as a puppet into the tip of his Gurus finger point. He accepted to what the Guru said in entirety.

(to be continued)

Communal Harmony and Integration

After 70 years of independence India is still facing three basic challenges of minimising disparities eradicating discriminating and avoiding alienation. The reasons are not far to seek. India being a big country of big communities, tribes and sub-tribes speaking different languages and dialects has multi-social customs and festivals and religious faiths. The development programmes and projects, if not implemented under equal facilities and balances and prospects for the people as per geographical regions, the economic disparity will prevail. Similarly the Manipur state situated in the North East Region will not be an exception to it.

During the last sixty eight years development works are confined mostly in urban areas rather than the rural areas. Road communication is also not good as compared with the urban areas. Electricity work was not adequately available in rural and different hill areas. This has led to the disparity between rural and urban areas in many respects of development and progress. That dissatisfaction of the rural and hill areas is the hurdle towards promotion of harmony. Hence the overall development process for improving the living standard of the poor rural people

will be affected to a great extent. Non Government Organisations and local clubs and other organisations of different communities have to be approved to take part in the development works programmes. Change of thoughts and joint efforts have to be made for general upliftment of economic standard. All the concerned Govt. agencies have to be contacted for taking up all feasible development programmes which can give direct and quick result to the local residents. Constant contact and interaction among various communities are encouraged by all possible ways in order to create sense of awareness and maximum sharing in the social responsibilities and effective motivation. Our unique composite culture based on social harmony and integration could be survived through indomitable will of the nation.

Manipur is abode of more than thirty six tribes seven scheduled caste, Muslims, Nepalese Biharis, Bengalis, Marwaris, Punjabis and Meiteis who account for sixty per cent of the population there is not elements of social discrimination among the various communities except the recent anti-India feelings incited by the underground elements and anti-social groups. Never in our long history the communal riot had never

flared up between the Hindus and Muslims. But recent conflict between the two major tribes, the Nagas and the Kukis caused mainly by the utopian concept of Greater Nagaland at the aegis of NSCN-IM. The majorities Meiteis with a liberal attitude towards every section of society will have to make themselves involved in all social aspects of economic and administrative treatments. Youth camps are the best means for promoting harmony and emotional integration and as organising camps in various places where many communities led down can give ample opportunity for associating together among themselves. Inter community marriage is a good step towards sharing common bondage of lone and fraternity, constant contact and joint sharing in the joint concern of manifold complex issues will surely minimise callous misunderstanding.

The tendency of the minority government to keep in isolation under the old conditions of frustration could only be minimised through frank and open mind in all dealings for economic and social welfare indiscriminately until and unless the balance and equitable prosperity could be brought about among the communities no

harmony and integration could be promoted. All the major decisions towards the common cause of the country and state Government or Non-Government Agencies should be made on the basis of peoples welfare, political and geographical consolidation without winning the heart of the public cannot be sound policy of integrity. India is the home of secular democracy; every person should be proud of being an Indian in the mainstream of the country. If so regional integration based on emotional mind and moral integrity will work 'well towards end of abstract vision. The most constructive element of unity and communal harmony is to be enhanced at any cost through massive middle class levels too. It is quite appropriate to remember few words of Indira Gandhi - "Every Indian has the right to demand its right full claim; but it should not infringe into the right of other community".

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