

*Sunday Special*  
**Poetry Section**

**Life's heck**

By- Dr Nunglekpm Premi Devi  
Independent Scholar

When I'm hungry, there isn't any food left to eat;  
When food is ready, I am not eating and just left over;  
When I'm thirsty, there isn't a mouthful of saliva;  
When water's plenty, I ditch dirty with feet steps;  
When I have bicycle, I really don't know how to ride;  
When I need a bicycle, the bicycle isn't fixing properly;  
When I'm tired of standing, there isn't a seat to sit on;  
When I'm sitting on a seat, I usually give up for others;  
When I think of walking, there are too muddy road;  
Life's isn't beautiful, when you aren't plan timely;  
Life's heck, when I turn back seeing through.

When I'm ready to dance, there isn't a stag ready;  
When stage's ready set-go, I forget all the moves;  
When I'm feeling bore, there isn't any good day to start with;  
When I feel like crying, there isn't a tear rolling down;  
When I'm crying, there isn't any voice coming out noticing me;  
When I feel love, there isn't a one to hold to;  
When I feel bad of, there is lot of faking goodness;  
When I'm in a mood, there isn't responding good situation;  
When I'm lonely, there's lot of egos echoing;  
When I search for people, there isn't anyone in helping me;  
Living's a worry, when you aren't on time;  
Life's heck, when I turn back seeing through.

When I have plenty of money, there isn't any to use;  
When I need to buy, there isn't a single penny left with me;  
When I need make up kit, there isn't any to search for;  
When I need lipstick, there isn't one, red I substitute;  
When I need brow pencil, there isn't one, black I substitute;  
When I need combing, there isn't time, hurry hair doing;  
When my hair is ready, there isn't a perfect one to comb;  
When I'm too important activity, there isn't enough time to bath;  
When I'm fresh and ready, there isn't any meeting holding;  
Life isn't sweet, when you aren't holding sweeter;  
Life's heck, when I turn back seeing through;

**FLYING STAR AT YOUR LIPS**

By- Parthajit Borah

Gliding smile at your lips often  
troubled me asking the colour of spring.  
I smell your appealing eyes  
to flow my love sea .  
Sliding clouds silently winks behind  
the vastness of thoughts.  
Night is preparing fighting against the day with all the vigour.  
Heart is still drying in the hope of a downpour to drench my  
withered chest.  
Flying star swiftly falls at your lips  
Challenging all the periphery of heart.  
Echoes are fell in the ocean of profound  
silence for the rustling of pain.

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**The Story of 40 Pineapple Suckers :  
Beyond 70 Years of Pineapple Cultivation**

By -Gin Gangte

Comes September 6, all roads will lead to Khouabung District Council Constituency Headquarters in Hengle Assembly Constituency of Churachandpur District. Occasion. Celebration of the XIth State Level Manipur Pineapple Festival 2018! For the first time, the Chief Minister of Manipur, Pu Nongthombam Biren Singh would be gracing the celebration, writing a new golden chapter in the history of Manipur Pineapple Festival, and the first Chief Minister to be interacted with the 500 pineapple farmers in flesh and blood in the long 70 years of pineapple cultivation in Khouabung Region. Hopes are in the air and a new ray of vista and inspiration fills the hearts of the farmers' community, waiting the impending magnanimous blessings from the Chief Minister, for a better Manipur!

More than seventy years ago, just a little away before the dawn of India's Independence, to be precise in Circa 1947, a progressive farmer by name Pu Songpu Gangte planted just 40 pineapple suckers at Khouabung in Churachandpur District of Manipur. The 40 pineapple suckers that were planted 70 years ago have forever changed the history and destiny of Khouabung DCC area in particular and the state in general, revolutionizing pineapple cultivation as a livelihood alternative in Manipur. Pineapple, a tropical fruit famous for its "thorny crown" has been first cultivated in Brazil. Pineapple was first called "anana", a word derived from the Tupi-Guarani word "nanas" in South America, which literally means "excellent" fruit. Despite the fact that ananas had long been grown and eaten in South America, the explorer Christopher Columbus was still credited for the discovery of the fruit in 1493. He found it on the Island of Guadeloupe, which is now a French overseas territory in the Southern Caribbean.

Pineapple cultivation was introduced to India by Portuguese in 1548 AD.

**The People's Festival:** With the aim of promotion of pineapple to the next level and focussing on empowerment of the farmers for sustainable development, and with the aim of finding a better and sustainable marketing avenues, the State Level Manipur Pineapple Festival was celebrated for the first time in 2008 at Khouabung DCC Headquarters in Churachandpur District. Since then, the festival is being celebrated every year, comes the "Season of Joy". Keeping in mind the "State Level" tag and respecting the spirit of the festival, the festival was celebrated in different places and locations over the years - be it at the state capital Imphal, Sendra in Bishnupur District, to name just few. It is noteworthy that the festival has been participated by hues in thousands over the years, aptly becoming the People's Festival. It is imperative here to mention that the State Level Manipur Pineapple Festival is much more than a festival, much deeper than the glamour of show and extravaganza or photo ops of VVIPs. The core agenda of the festival was, is and will always be a people's movement, a movement for grassroots development. A movement for progress. A movement for prosperity. A movement for "Survival of All". A movement for "Equal" footing. A movement for financial uplift of the farmers. A movement peace & brotherhood. A movement for the overall higher pitch of the State. As of date, there are 500 pineapple farmers registered with the

Manipur Pineapple Festival Committee, Manipur.

**Pineapple: A Case for State Fruit** Promotion of a product or anything that matters require "recognition". History has it that pineapple has been cultivated in Manipur for over many centuries. Added to this, pineapple is the largest fruits produced in Manipur - far ahead of Orange, Lemon or Passion Fruits. It is cultivated in almost all the 16 districts of the state.

Considering the need for promotion and recognition, and owing to historical richness and large scale production of pineapple in the state, coupled with 70 years of cultivation as alternative livelihood profession by large section of the farmers' community, it is desirable that "Pineapple" may be accorded the status of "State Fruit" and declaration of the same by the Government of Manipur.

**The 'First Blood' Cultivators:**

When Pu Songpu Gangte planted 40 pineapple suckers at Khouabung in 1947, it was soon followed by others as a profession, and the process of pineapple cultivation gradually spread to new areas, one after the other. Among those early cultivators were Pu Khamzathang Gangte, the late Chief of Bunglawn, Pu (L) Kamsoi Gangte, Pu (L) Nielgo Gangte, and others. They took to pineapple cultivation in a massive scale and the pineapple cultivation has spread it wings by becoming an alternative livelihood profession. May their souls rest in peace!

My father, the Late Chief of Bunglawn once told me that pineapple suckers were collected from Lakhupur in Assam. He said that he himself had collected pineapple suckers from Lakhupur and transported it by flight. They were the first one who planted the Giant Kew variety of Pineapple in Manipur, even though the Queen varieties were found in Thoubal area of the state. What is unique in their approach was that, the "first blood" cultivators have chosen pineapple cultivation as a livelihood alternative, which stands the test of time, for the last 70 years.

**The Manipur Experience:**

Locally known as "Lengthei" in Gangte dialect, which means the "King of all Fruits", pineapple has been cultivated in almost all the 16 districts of Manipur. This is clear from the fact that "Pineapple Festivals" are being celebrated in some part of the state or other, from time to time, apart from the "State Level" celebration. According to a survey conducted by the Manipur Pineapple Festival Committee, Manipur in August 2008, Churachandpur District is the largest producer of pineapple in the state, thanks to the large scale productions of pineapple within the jurisdiction of Khouabung District Council Constituency. There are about 400 pineapple farmers in Khouabung DCC alone with an area of over 1000 acres of land being under cultivation. As one takes to Khouabung DCC Headquarters, a lively sprawling pineapple farms, with all scenic beauty of the hills would mesmerize the visitors. A cynosure of all eyes, indeed!

The Giant Kew variety of pineapple, with all nutritious contents, has been known by many as one of the best pineapple in the world.

Comes August, the Giant Kew variety booms to its zenith turning the month of August as the "Season of Joy" for the pineapple farmers. While the size of the Giant Kew variety has shown appreciable looks, the average weight of one pineapple is about 3 kg. The harvest season of pineapple is high point of the year for the pineapple lovers and

farmers of the state. Seventy years down the line, yet all is not well and there are mounting problems being faced by the farmers' community. To begin with, transportation is always a headache for the farmers as there are hardly good and motorable roads within the periphery of the sprawling pineapple farms. In the absence of modern transportation, the farmers have to transport the harvested pineapple by traditional means, carrying the pineapple basket (pawlang) on their back. Secondly, marketing is another problem being faced by the farmers. With no semblance of large scale fruit processing industry hindsight in the state, pineapple have to be sold in open market only for human consumption, which limits the selling capacity and the price of pineapple are being compromised, much to the agony of the farmers. The Queen varieties of pineapple, which are harvested in the month of June is predominantly found in Thoubal and Imphal East.

**The Khouabung Experience:**

Even as Khouabung DCC area is the largest producer of pineapple in Manipur, the area has been unfortunately one of the most "neglected" area in terms of development and governance for nearly half a century. Although Khouabung has given the state a pride of place in the field of pineapple cultivation, on the other hand, the government is yet to deliver it's due to the people. Decades of apathy and lackadaisical approach of the successive governments all these years have resulted in Khouabung DCC as the most "backward" area in the whole of Manipur. Notwithstanding the fact that the people of Khouabung area worked and toiled through thick and thin, braving the mercurial sun and rains. A true reflection of their grit and determination in upholding the spirit of "dignity of labour", they have chosen the profession for the last 70 years, giving an "alternative" livelihood mission, pioneering a profession since India's Independence.

Even as Khouabung area is the largest producer of pineapple in the state, giving Manipur a rightful place in the arena of pineapple cultivation in India, howsoever, Khouabung is one of the most "backward" and "neglected" area till today by successive Governments, one after the other. It's high time that the Government compensate "more than 50 years of apathy and negligence" by delivering "justice" to the people whom they have been "swearing" to serve them.

**Basically, there are three "Es" which can transform and take Khouabung, unchallenging and undisputedly the "Capital" of "Pineapple" and its surrounding areas to a giant new leap forward as under:**

**1. Administrative Empowerment:** Khouabung and its surrounding areas may be able to see the light of development and taste the fruit of India's freedom by "Empowering" them with necessary administrative machineries. This can be achieved by creating Khouabung as a "special" zone and establishing Government's administrative wing such as Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) or at least creation of Khouabung Sub - Division for speedy progress and holistic development. In such scenario, the Government representative, say the ADC or SDO can best deliver the Government's agenda at the grassroots level, resulting in transforming the "backward" area to a "model" colony or region of Mother Manipur.

**2. Infrastructural Empowerment:** Khouabung area is still lacking in basic infrastructural amenities, though they have been the largest producer of pineapple in Manipur. Towards this end, the role of Government is imperative, with setting up of "Fruit Processing Centre" to yield added value of pineapple, leading to economic booms for the farmers and pushing up the state's GDP higher-up, besides generating hundreds of employment avenues in toto. A cold storage for preservation of the seasonal fruits through all seasons may also be set - up to help the farmers in yielding better returns.

**3. Financial Empowerment:** There are no basic financial institutions in Khouabung area till today. Although there are about 500 pineapple farmers who worked and toiled through day in and day out, however, they are denied financial saving sans financial institutions. The much talked of "Financial Inclusion" is still a wild dream for the farmers of Khouabung area as there is not a single banking sector in the area. Opening of financial institutions such as State Bank of India (SBI) may be given top priority.

**The Final Call:**

Seventieth year of Pineapple cultivation and a decade of grassroots movement, in the form and style of Manipur Pineapple Festival, howsoever, it is sad but true that there has been lack of zeal and enthusiasm from the Government to promote horticulture crops and the farming community per se. In the midst of changing political dynamism, there is however a silver lining of hopes for the future. It is, therefore, interesting to note that the success of India's Act East Policy, particularly in the case of Manipur will solely rest with the success of horticulture crops and availability of indigenous products for outside exports. With the People's Chief Minister in Pu Nongthombam Biren Singh leading at the front and a hard-working Minister for Horticulture & Soil Conservation, Pu Thounaojam Shyamkumar actively pursuing the goal, there is a glimmer of hopes for the future. Towards this end, an administrative mechanism that links the Government and the people of Khouabung Region is the need of the hour.

**Post Script : A New Ray of Hope**

In recent years, there is a strong movement currently taking place among the farmers' community for better and healthier production of pineapple. Under the initiative of the Manipur Organic and Mission Agency (MOMA), there are 500 farmers in Churachandpur District alone taking up organic farming as a mission, of which 200 farmers will be getting Organic Certification next year. The paradigm shift from "fertilizer" to "organic" farming would be a great boost for the farmers in the long run. The recent major development in the corridor of the State's Horticulture & Soil Conservation in airlifting one metric tonne of organic pineapple to Delhi has raised a new hope and vista for the pineapple farmers of the state. It is hope that the expansion of pineapple market in the form of "export" will definitely help the farmers' community in yielding higher income, which has been otherwise in dormant for the last 70 years.

*(The writer is a journalist and Founding Honorary Secretary of Manipur Pineapple Festival Committee, Manipur. A Master's in Political Science and a recipient of "Jewel of India" Award, he has been honoured with the degree of "Doctor of Humanity" (Honoris Causa). He can be reached at gingangte@gmail.com, Facebook @ Gin Gangte / Twitter @ GinGangte)*