

# Editorial

Thursday, January 10, 2019

## Ruining a leader: Is the middle man responsible

"Where a society has chosen to accept democracy as its creedal faith, it is elementary that the citizens ought to know what their government is doing." -Justice P N Bhagwati

Easier is said than done - the saying still stands true. Like the nail float in water with the plank, a rowdy sometimes saves his or her life from being spoiled. Saying so, it is always the wisdom of the captain of the ship that the crew managed to sail their ship to the destiny amidst storms and whirlpools. But then had the crew member lacks discipline Columbus could never have landed in America's soil to discover the country which becomes the most powerful country in the world today.

The state is more like a ship in the vast stormy ocean. In democratic state like Manipur, Chief Minister is similar to the captain of the ship. It is his wisdom that will sail towards a better direction. It is his command and qualities that will make his crew member follow rules and regulations frame by him. It is only at the time that all the crew members go by their respective assignment that the ship will reach destination. Similar, is with the running of the state, whether it goes upwards or falls, depends on the wisdom of the Chief Minister and his team.

But then, it is the Indian electoral system that stands as a hurdle to decide on which way to chose for a better society. Every elected representative needs a second thought to say no to his electorate. Particularly, the system practice in India showed that without some clique of strong supporters, it will become difficult for one to become Chief Minister as first thing that is important is to get elected as an MLA.

There may be hundred strategies to get elected. But one thing which is needed is to understand the sentiment of the people.

Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development. But sometimes the effort to bring good governance remains as a dream with the kind of hurdles from his supporters whom the man in the top post cannot deny as without them it will be difficult to get elected again.

Numbers of middle men including relatives are now the talk every people of the state. What more prove is required than checking the bank balance and the properties of these people in this 8 months? We have seen in the earlier days on how a pharmacist in the state health department became a millionaire just because he was a close relative of the then Chief Minister. Can anyone deny the fact that the pharmacist who became millionaire is a clean person because there is no evidence on how dirty is him?

Good leader falls, not because of his personality but because of those around him. Instead of advising to take on the issues which hurt the people of the state - an act just to get blessing is nothing but an act to end the career of the leader itself.

Coming back to what is going on in the state; everybody knows the amount being asked by these middlemen for the recruitment of Police constable, transfer of government post, re-engagement of top government officials, despite the fact that this government had promised the people that no more re-engagement of officers.

On the other hand some of the promises are still yet to be fulfilled as stated by the Chief Minister himself. The more the promises are delayed the more people will criticize.

Well, instead of defending, it is better checking the middlemen so that what has been assured remains true.

Let's make our state free from corruption.

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## "Humane Journey into the Nature of Human Culture: A Personal Narrative"

This article is the lecture delivered by Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti, Former Deputy Director, Anthropological Survey of India, Government of India General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, on the @nd Gangmumei Kamei memorial Lecture

Respected Chairperson, Distinguished Guests, Scholars, Friends and all the members of the family of late Professor Gangmumei Kamei,

Good Afternoon to everybody here. When I approached by Dr. Ram Kamei, son of Prof. Gangmumei Kamei, regarding the Second Annual Memorial Lecture which was instituted by the GK Foundation, I was immediately pushed back to my golden memories of personal acquaintance with Prof. Kamei (those days known as Kabui) during the early 1970s. It was possible through Prof. BK. Roy Burman, an acclaimed scholar of eminence in anthropology in the country as well as an ardent researcher on North-East India.

Within seconds of my meeting with Ram, I suffered from dilemma, whether I could do enough justice to this highly prestigious assignment. I hesitatingly accepted the invitation for the simple reason that it was no body than late Prof. Gangmumei Kamei with whom I had built up a solid personal friendship and academic bond.

Having agree to deliver this important Endowment Lecture. I landed into the second problem as to select the subject of my talk. I was already aware that the First Memorial Lecture was delivered by Prof. J.B. Bhattacharjee, former Vice-Chancellor of Assam University, Silchar, Assam and a pioneering historian of his time in the whole of this county with specialization on the history of North-East India.

Friends, by now you can easily assess the way I have been subjected to a mental constraint before finally settling down to my job, though I am thoroughly aware of my intellectual limitations and inadequacies. At this stage, to begin with, let me first pay my high regards and tributes to late Prof. Gangmumei Kamei, a high profile personality of this part of the country, who was equally placed on a much higher academic pedestal throughout India.

When I was first introduced to Prof. G.K. he was a bright young scholar pursuing his academic research in addition to teaching history in Manipur University. His basic interest was in the area of social formation in North-East India with a special reference of Manipur in particular. His valuable contributions (books and papers along with various important addresses) would profusely and eloquently speak of them. Apart from this, he was vigorously involved at one stage in the 'action programmes' for development, specially of certain hill regions of the state, through the Institute of People's Action (IPA), established in Awangkhum in early 1977, by way of evolving a method in participatory research.

What I observed in him was that he was carrying always a fresh and inquisitive mind to know things around with special emphasis on the people at large for an intimate understanding of their total living conditions. On the one hand he was academically disposed to serious enquiry into their varieties of socio-cultural and politico-economic networks and cultural interactions, on the other he was politically disposed to the cause for their development. In a sense, it could be re-framed as a tripod, namely society, economy and development.

For my presentation today I consider these three important components and club them under culture. Throughout my professional life I have undertaken

various kinds of field studies with an anthropological perspective over a varied and divergent field situations covering tribal communities - food gatherers to settled cultivators, rural non-tribal peasant communities - both in dry and wet cultivation areas and urban communities - in the mainland as well as in the island situation. On the whole I will make a quick journey here across these broadly designed categories of human population, primarily in the form of a narrative as briefly as possible.

I had been to the Andaman Islands between 2002-03 and had the opportunity to visit the Jaroa tribe. They are one of the four negrito tribal groups living in the Andamans. The Jaroa are considered as one of the most backward primitive tribal groups in the country living in the west coast of south and middle Andamans. They are fully engaged in hunting and gathering of food from the available forest resource base. By and large they are basically wandering groups of population without having any permanent settlement. They roam around the jungles almost naked without cloths, but invariably with bow and arrows in hand. Their practice of archery starts from the early age.

Around the time I visited there they were roughly estimated having total of 250-300 heads. The scholars who studied them intimately found that they are apparently organised along a nuclear family at the root and then are integrated with the local and territorial groups. They recognise themselves as the 'Ang' and the outsiders as the 'Eenen'. They call their hut or settlement as the 'Chadda'. In spite of their virtual isolation in space a time they demonstrate quite remarkably certain markers of cultural excellence, creativity and wisdom. Their skill in using bow and arrow, their perception about the waves of the ocean and accuracy about navigability with the indigenously built canoes, their knowledge and efficiency about extraction of honey and other forest produce from the deep jungles, their workmanship in preparing the iron blade used in the arrow shaft, their method of preserving smoked meat taken out of the hunted wild pig, their memory of identifying a person immediately whom they had seen much earlier and so on have been the subjects of scientific investigation by the interested researchers for a long time. For a comparison they may be placed between the less know, less contacted and still hostile the Sentinelese tribe on one side and more exposed and frequently contacted the Great Andamanese and the Onges on the other. The last two groups use some cloths provided by the agency of the Government mainly. These four negrito tribal groups of Andamans live at different levels of contact with the administration of the concerned department of the government. Three instances could be interesting in explaining this situation. The entire world receive a message very recently that a foreign visitor who tried to reach close to the Sentinelese faced the hostile group and was killed with arrows. A few years back I met a Great Andamanese boy in full uniform at the Port Blair airport, who

was flown to New Delhi for taking part in the Republic Day parade. The third instance took me by surprise. Two Great Andamanese ladies one day suddenly entered my office room at Port Blair to demand for some job for them. I wanted to know from them the actual cause for such demand. They replied in Hindi that they were not being looked after well according to their need for sustenance of life. They expressed to me that their earlier wandering life in the jungles was rather better than this sedentary life provide to them by the government who failed to fulfil their expectation.

I am trying to bring a point home which needs some introspection and re-examination. At a given point of time, space and cultural milieu the four negrito primitive tribal groups of Andaman islands share a differential level of human existence. The last two groups have marginal populations strength, the Great Andamanese having 26 and the Onges having 100 approximately. Despite substantial funding by the Government for their welfare and development the result has been far from the desired or declared goal. At this state let me bring another example of the kadar, a food gathering tribe living in Kerala and Tamil Nadu states. They are found in the adjoining hill ranges of Palghat district in Kerala and Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu in the Western Ghats region of South India. By physical appearance some of them closely resemble the physical characters of the negrito tribes of the Andamans. But there are some differences also which I observed during my visit to these areas during the year 1977. Based on 1971 Census population figures the Kadar numbered around 2000 spread over various hill ranges belonging to these two states. They were exposed to the external society as well as market network mainly through the introduction of plantation work and connectivity of road transport. A good number of them were engaged as plantation labourers under the private contractors from the plains. Unlike the classical hunter and food gatherer of the Andamans, the Kadsar still remained substantially dependent on forest collection. They were sliding back and forth between a wandering and a semi settled life. Though some permanent settlements were provided by the government, they still preferred their leaf huts of temporary nature. After the contact with the outsiders they have accepted to use cloths and dress. They have been used to cooked food. So far the knowledge of forest ecology, including flora and fauna, is concerned they appear well acquainted with all these surrounding environ. They demonstrate excellent craftsmanship on various items made of bamboo. They create wonder with only simple cutting instrument in hand. They have also been subjected to systematic exploitation as the collector of minor forest produce. They have never been suitably paid back against their rich volume of collection of honey, cardamom, cane, bamboo etc. They were even physically exploited by some outsiders in earlier generations which is now reflected from their phenotypical appearance.

I will now draw upon the example

of a plains Scheduled tribe, namely the Santal, living in many areas basically belonging to the eastern regions of our country such as West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa. They have also largely migrated in other parts of the country such as Assam and Andaman Islands. I will base my observations from some villages in the Burdwan district (now Bardhaman), West Bengal, where I had undertaken a study on Socio-cultural Context of Agricultural Farming during 1972-73. The Santal, among other cultivators of land, were a formidable tribal group to have engaged themselves fully in agricultural activities. Most of them were agricultural labourer, some of them were share-croppers and a few among them also owned very nominal amount of land. They were appreciated by all sections of the villagers as hardworking good cultivators as well as skilled agricultural labourers. Further, their way of community life including their collective participation in various rituals and festivals were also a point of reference to other sections of the village people. Their aesthetic sense as reflected in the colourful outer muddy wall of the thatched hut, their expressive dance and musical chores, melodious use of bamboo flute and indigenously made drum attract anybody's immediate attention. Coming down to the mundane level one could easily notice their poverty stricken condition in daily life. This was apparently linked with the endogenous modes of agricultural production which slowly accommodate the exogenous exploitative mechanisms with the emergent changes in the technology of agricultural production. Let me now mention in a broad sweep my first hand exposure to human landscape in the hilly terrains in certain North-East India regions dominated by the practices of shifting cultivation (Mizoram), orchard cultivation (Meghalaya), terrace cultivation (Nagaland), settled cultivation in the valley regions (Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh). In all these instances I observed during the late 1980s to early 1990s some kind of ordered response of the local tribal inhabitants to their immediate environmental milieu. They are variously integrated to their respective socio-economic traditional systems, cultural identity mechanisms and political control institutionalized by local self governance. These elaborate societal processes have been gradually evolved over time and the participating people have adapted them through generations. My narrative so far is based on limited observations made among the people mentioned or on the areas covered. They mainly present a tribal milieu. I noticed that the people engaged at their root of primary production have more often than not subjected to a common framework of the modern market network with the resultant negative impact on the primary producers. The various development programmes have been more pronounced than achieved as per the declared goal. The self sustained food hunters and gatherers of the Andaman Islands or the externally connected wandering Kadar of South Indian forests or the shifting cultivators of North-East Indian regions, or the cultivators in the valleys and plains, in spite of being differently placed in their respective life situations, have faced more or less a common fate of systemic economic deprivation. (To be contd.....)