

## Editorial

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# Corporal punishment in Schools - a violation of Right to Education Act

Schools in Manipur, both private and government, often violate the right to education act 2009. The state government in 2010 notification ordered that "no child in the state of Manipur shall be subjected to any kind of physical punishment or mental harassment." The order came because the sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 17 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE) prohibits "all kinds of corporal and other punishments on the school children," according to the order. While the sub-section (1) prohibit physical and mental punishment, subsection (2) of section 17 entails that anyone violating sub-section (1) shall be liable to disciplinary action.

Cases of corporal punishment often come to light in Manipur. In 2015, a case of severe beating of a student in sixth standard by a teacher took place in St Joseph School, Sangaiporou. The incident, as reported, traumatized the student. In 2016, a sixth standard boy was beaten to death by school authorities in a residential school at Langol. The boy was beaten to death because the father could not pay the fees of the residential school. Last year, a class one student was hospitalized after a substitute teacher punished him with beatings in a government school at Churachandpur. When it comes to Standard Robarth, it has more stories to tell and more are expected to surface.

Standard Robarth Secondary School is one of the schools in Manipur known for corporal punishment. Last year, media reported that school authority of the said school thrashed a student severely because he found a bullet lying in the school premises and handed to a teacher. There was no investigation on the matter, neither child rights commission of this state nor government took interest in this matter. In 2014, 56 students tried running away from the hostel as they feared the corporal punishment meted out to the students residing there on regular basis. The matter started when students had complaint about the quality of the food they were served in the hostel. Only 26 students succeeded in running away. Students at that time raised complaints on the severe beating they undergo in their hostel at Standard Robarth. More reports of horrible physical abuses meted out to the children in the school have started surfacing both in social and mainstream media outlets after Babysana's case. The allegations include severe beatings and humiliation which scarred the students psychologically. In one case, a student was beaten by hanging with a belt. In another, a student with an injury on his arms was made to carry a bucket of water by a hostel authority which furthered the injury on the boy's arm. An ex student has also stated in social media that they were not given proper health care, she writes "if a person is not well and suffering from severe disease, instead of checking the condition of the student, the warden, who is a trained nurse, starts scolding the students and telling them to ask their parents." The cases that have surfaced are nothing less than torture of children in the school premises. Now, a girl was found dead in the school premises in mysterious circumstances with bruises on the body. This calls for serious contemplation on things that are going on in the school. The school authority is in clear violation of section 17 of RTE Act. Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MPCR) and Manipur Human Rights Commission (MHRC) must take on this matter.

The state must take the matter at hand seriously and with priority especially when state has a very bad record on child rights. In 2013, a member of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights commented that "the Government of Manipur seems to take little interest in the welfare of children. There has been unrestrained violation of child rights due to sheer negligence of the State government." The point is that one should not continue this sheer act of negligence. Given these poor records on child rights and the surfacing cases of violations of RTE Act in the schools, MPCR and the government must take initiative in this matter. The slogan of "education free zone" must not go in the direction where in the name of providing education, people start doing whatever they want freely. Hence, regulatory guidelines on these sectors are needed immediately.

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## Hinduism in Manipur

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Manipur is a state in the north eastern part of India with a population comprising of hill people and valley people. It became a part of India in October 1949. It was once an independent princely state. The history of Manipur can be traced back to very early times. There is history of small tribes ruling independently both in the hills and the valley. These small tribes used to fight with one another for supremacy. The powerful ones usually rule over the others.

In 33 A.D King *Nongda Lairen Pakhangba* ascended the throne at *kangla* as the first king of *Ningthouja* clan. He started the unification of the various tribes of the hills and the valley making way for a larger and united nation. The unification process was completed by the time of *Meidingu Charairongba* (1697 -1709). All these are recorded well in the old Manipuri Manuscripts (*Puyas*). All the small communities shared many common things in common such as religion, costumes, oral narratives relating to their settlement, house style etc. There was inter - marriage among the various communities and they used to live peacefully in the past. Geographically Manipur is divided into two regions - the hills and the valley. The people settling in the valley are called *Tam-mee* (Valley people) while the people settling in the hills are called *Ching-meet* (Hill people). There is history of hill people coming down to the valley and settling there while valley people went up to the hill and become hill people by settling there. During the time of the kings hill people and valley people was categorized according to the place of settlement. The various social categories like scheduled tribe, scheduled caste and general were made only after Manipur merged with India.

In the very old times Manipur valley was inhabited by the people belonging to seven clans who were commonly called Meitei or *Meeteis*. Besides them, there were other smaller communities also. With the passage of time these small communities merged with the bigger groups and become more powerful groups. On the other hand different tribes having common origin settled in the hills. These groups of people settling the valley as well as the hills were brought together as one united nation under the rule of the kings of *Ningthouja* clan. The different communities may be small in size but they have many things in common like religion and worship, language, costumes and many other things.

The *Meiteis* who form the major community have their own Creation Myth. Their creation Myth clearly shows how the various plants, living things including humanbeings were created. The Gods who took part in the Creation were considered as powerful Gods and they are worshipped till today. Every Meitei household keeps a sacred place for *Lainingthou Sanamahi* who played a major role in creation. Along with this a sacred place for Universal Mother Goddess *Ema Leimarel Sidab* is also kept separately. The *Meiteis* worshipped them both. Above this the *Meiteis* also worship *Pakhangba* as God of the world outside the household (*lamlai*). It is believed that *Pakhangba* is protecting the different lands by assuming different forms like Serpent, Python or dragon. The different forms of *Pakhangba* are called *Paphal*. *Lainingthou Pakhangba* is the younger brother of *Lainingthou Sanamahi* - the God who created the Universe and both are the sons of *Ariya Kuru Sidaba* (Supreme God). Other lesser Gods who helped in creation are worshipped as *Umang Lai* and Gods who are the guardians of the various directions. Such creation Myth is the root of Meitei religion. *Lai Haraoba* which is performed till today is a very important festival which depicts everything from creation till

stage by stage development of Meitei Civilization. The real identity of *Meiteis* can be established from *Lai Haraoba* only. The religions, customs, beliefs of the *Meiteis* are all based on Creation Myth. Rules for religious practices, stories of origin exist both in written form as well as in oral form. The *Meiteis* are fortunate to have all these records as they have their own scripts.

### Advent of Hinduism:

In the history of Manipur the strength and valour of the kings determined the boundaries of this land. The kings had good and bad relations with the neighboring lands. There was constant fighting, intermarriages, trade relations with the neighbouring lands from early times. Some of the neighbouring lands include *Takhel*(Tripura), *Mayang* (Cachar), *Tekhao* (Assam), *Khasia Jaintia* (Meghalaya), *Sylhet* (now in Bangladesh) and eastern lands like *Khaki*(China), *Pong*(San), *Samsok* (Awa) etc. Such relations influenced the culture of Manipur and brought about changes from time to time. This is clearly indicated by history. But the deep rooted religion of this land could not be totally changed. As for example in 1389 in *Saka era* (1467 A.D) Meitei king *Meidingu Kyamba* ascended the throne. Then in 1392 he invaded and conquered *Kabo Khyang* along with *Pong* King *Khekomba*. The land was divided between *Pong* King and *Meitei* King. The *Meitei* king got vast areas of land on the west of *Ningthi* river (Chindwin river). The *Pong* King also gifted the *Meitei* King a golden idol placed in a golden *Kwazok* (Container for betelnut, betel leaves etc.). A temple was constructed at *Lamandong* and the golden idol was placed there and worshipped. During the time of *Meidingu Kyamba* the Brahmin priests (18 in number) from *Takhel*, *Tekhao*, *Sylhet*, Bengal, Nepal and Gujarat came to *Minipur* and settled here. However they could not bring any remarkable change in the religious beliefs of the people. Slowly there was an influx of other Brahmins. The number of Brahmins who entered Manipur according to the manuscript *Bamboo Khunthoklon* are as follows: *Meidingu Kyamba* (1467-1508) - 18 in number; *Meidingu Nonginphaba* (1523-24) - 4; *Meidingu Chalamba* (1645-62) - 3; *Meidingu Mungyamba* (1562-97) - 1; *Meidingu Khagembba* (1597 - 1652) - 10; *Meidingu Pakkhomba* (1666 - 97) - 6; *Meidingu Charairongba* (1697 - 1709) - 13 ; *Meidingu Pamheiba* (1709-49) - 10 ; *Meidingu Chingthangkhomba* (1763-98) - 2; *Meidingu Gambhir Singh* (1825 - 34) - 6 ; *Meidingu Chandrakiti* (1835-44) - 2; *Meidingu Nara Singh* (1844-1850) - 1 ; *Meidingu Churachand* (1891-1941) - 5 . These Brahmins either came alone or with their families. Those who came alone were given women (Meitei/Tribal/Muslim) and they were allowed to settle after giving Meitei surnames. Those who came with their families were also given Meitei surnames and given permission to settle here. The surnames were specially created for the Brahmins. Of the 49 Brahmin surnames 7 had no longer existed as there was no heir left to continue the generation. Some others have also changed their surnames.

From time to time the Brahmins entered and settled in Manipur. It was only during the time of king *Pamheiba* that the Brahmins were recognized as high class of people who were assigned with the task of performing religious duties. During the time of *Meidingu Khagembba*, *Subika* - the book on Astrology which was solely based on Hindu religion was even written in Meitei script.

*Meidingu Charairongba* was a king who reigned for 13 years from 1697 to 1709 A.D. He died at the early age of 37. His reign first marked the dawn of Hinduism in this land. He was an

ardent follower of Meitei religion in his early years. He made the artisans to cast the statues of *Panthoibi* and *Lainingthou Sanamahi* on Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Poinu* in 1621 in the *Shaka era* (1699 A.D.) and on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of *Enga* in 1700 A.D. respectively. On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> of *Engen* (1700 A.D.) king *Charairongba* consecrated the temple of *Panthoibi* and on 21<sup>st</sup> of *Enga* in 1624 in the *Shaka era* (1702 A.D.) he constructed the temple of *Sanamahi* and consecrated it on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> of *Hiyangei* 1704 A.D. The statue of *Lainingthou sanamahi* was placed in the newly constructed temple at *Apong Ingkhol*. From 1707 A.D. the king turned towards Hinduism. He reconstructed a temple dedicated to Lord Krishna from Friday 19<sup>th</sup> of *Kalen* in 1707. During his time a Brahmin named *Banamali* came to Manipur from *Jaganath Kshetra*. The king readied himself to get baptized by this Brahmin to *Sakhya* religion. The Brahmin was given the surname *Guruarbam*. The Krishna temple stands till today at *Bamon Leikai* and is known by the name *Guruarbam Mandop*. But the king could not spread *Sakhya* religion. *Meidingu Charairongba* died on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> of *Engen* in 1709 A.D. at the age of 37.

*Meidingu Pamheiba* ascended the throne on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of *Thawon* in 1709 A.D. He wanted to fulfill his father's wish of spreading *Sakhya* religion. So he got himself baptized into the religion. *Shakya* religion was also called *Nimandi Relidion* and they were the worshippers of Lord Vishnu and his incarnation Lord Krishna. *Vishnu Upasana* is also called *Vaisnavism*. In the manuscript called *Sanamahi Laikal* it is written that *Meidingu Pamheiba* who ruled Manipur was baptized by *Gangadher*, the son of Brahmin *Banamali*. In 1716 A.D a Brahmin named *Shantidas* came to Manipur with two followers *Bhagawan Das* and *Narayan Das* to spread *Ramandi* religion. *Shantidas* was a native of *Narsingha Tilla* of *Shrihatta* District (now called *Sylhet*). *Pamheiba* abandoned *Sakhya* religion and turned towards the new religion called *Ramandi*. He was baptized into this religion by Guru *Gopal Das* in 1639 *Shaka era* (1717 A.D) in the month of *Mera*. *Ramandi* religion was the religion of Lord Rama worshippers. *Shantidas* enlightened the mind of king *Pamheiba* about the difference between these two Hindu religions. *i.e. Nimandi* and *Ramandi*. He explained thus - *Nimandi* religion is the religion of an ascetic. Its follower has to renounce all worldly pleasures and wealth. This religion belongs to the pious and the saintly people. Such religion is inappropriate for a *Kshetriya* warrior the king. Instead the king should worship the Lord of *Ayodhya* - *Ramachandra*. Such exposition is clearly written in *Sanamahi Laikal*.

During this time there were constant wars. *Meidingu Pamheiba* was also planning to attack on *Awa* (Burma) as revenge for the injustice done to his sister *Chakpa Makhao Ngambi* according to the wish of his late father. With such thoughts he preferred to choose *Ramandi* religion over *Nimandi* religion. Later on he waged war on *Awa* (Burma) and *Takhel* (Tripura). In these wars he emerged victorious. With his victory his faith in *Ramandi* religion became much stronger.

*King Pamheiba* felt that his subjects should also follow him in embracing *Ramandi* religion as it was the duty of all the subjects to follow their king's footsteps. So he tried to forcibly convert his people into the

new religion by leaving their old Manipuri religion. But the people had deep rooted sentiment for the old Manipuri religion. So the conversion was not completely successful, even though there were some changes. *Shantidas* knew that the mentality of the people would not be easily changed so he tried different ways to deal with the situation. He even destroyed many valuable treasures. Some of the changes he introduced were -

In the month of *Langban*, 1723 A.D he destroyed the shrines of *Umang Lai*. On the full moon day of *Hiyanger* Friday, Brahmins were allowed to enter the Meitei temples of *Lainingthou Nongsaba*, *Yumhei Lai*, *Panthoibi* and *Taibangkhaiba* to perform the various religious rites.

- On Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> of *Lamta* 1724 A.D the king gave the order to dig out the buried bodies of the dead and the skeletal remains were collected and burnt and the ashes were thrown into *Ningthi* river. From this day onwards the *Meiteis* started cremating their dead.

Before this the *Meiteis* did not cremate their dead. Instead there was practice of burial of dead bodies. In the next year the grave would be dug out again to collect the bones. The bones were thoroughly washed and then put in a pot to perform the last rites. This was called *Mang Chanba* or secondary burial. For the kings and the noblemen the skull was covered with gold or silver and buried again. There is written record about such practices in the book called *Thawan Thaba Hirian*. Moreover, gold covered human skulls were dug out from *Plidou Ching* and *Chirao Ching* of *Thangmeiband*. Burial sites at *Sekta* were excavated and preserved till today. Nowadays cremation replaces burial. Then on the completion of one year instead of secondary burial a death anniversary called *Kumon Phiroi* is being observed.

- Another significant change was that the title given to the *Meitei* king i.e. *Meidingu* was replaced by *Maharaja*. (During the time of *Meidingu Khagembba* the king was even addressed as *Lainingthou*.)

- Then rearing of pigs and fowls in the household was prohibited. People were fined if they did so.

- On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> of *Phairel* 1725 A.D *Ningthem Pukhri* (Royal Pond) at *Wangkel* was dug.

- *Ningthem Pukhri* was opened on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> of *Kalen* 1726 A.D.

- Near this big pond, temples of Krishna and *Kalika* were placed. Till today the temple of *Kalika* stands on the northern side of this pond and is being looked after and worshipped by the *Sarem* clan. On the western side of this pond a temple dedicated to Lord Rama was constructed and it still stands today as Temple of *Ramji Prabhu*.

- In the month of *Enga* all the *Umang Lai* (Ancestral Gods) were collected and buried at *Mongba Hanba*.

- On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of *Engen* seven temples belonging to *Lainingthou*, *Panthoibi*, *Laiva haiba*, *2 Lamnapi*, *Soraren* and *Huidonpokri* were destroyed along with the images or forms which were worshipped.

- On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of *Enga* 1729 A.D the stone placed at *sana Keithei* was moved to *Mongba hanbar* sculpting a Hanuman statue.

(This stone was believed to possess special powers and was being worshipped at the market. *Meidingu Chalamba* who ruled from 1545 A.D - 1562 A.D brought and kept two possessed stones at the market place. Out of these two one was used to make *Hanuman Thakur* statue which was worshipped later on as *Hanuman Thakur*.)

During this time, with the falling of misfortune in the land and instability in the minds of the people for their unwillingness to leave old religion and accept new religion, there was utter confusion.

(To be contd....)