

Editorial

Saturday, July 27, 2019

The fools think we the people can be fooled easily

Manipur today is in dire strait once more with no custodian to look into the affairs of the public. The incumbent Chief Minister who always came forward to look into the problem of the people and who also tried his level best to look into the grievances of the people now is busy trying to protect his seat. The Cabinet colleagues who had dedicated their service for the poor in the last two years are seen nowhere in the state when people of the state need them. The MLA whom the people had elected remains silence except for one - Khumukcham Joykishan, to voice for the people, when a minor girl was mysteriously died in her hostel room. At present the farmers are shedding tears worrying their future due to scarcity of water. The daily wage earner, labourers who live on by mining sand and stones from the river bed now came to the street disturbing normalcy after the High Court had imposed banned on the mining of sand from the river bed. At this crucial time when people across the state are facing multiple problems, the government is equivalent to defunct as the ruling BJP MLAs are now busy fighting for power. Not only the BJP MLAs but also the Congress MLAs who are in the opposition also remain quite for reason best known to them. As stated earlier except for Congress MLA Khumukcham Joyishan, almost all MLAs, Ministers and even the Chief Minister are leaving the people of the state at their own to face the multiple problems of suspicious dead, drought like situation and cry of sections of people including teachers, surrendered militants among others.

Now, the prolonged unsettled issue of the NSCN-IM, is nearing solution and the BJP government will someday introduce the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), besides, it is likely that certain agenda of the BJP to make India a one nation and one religion country may also take up as the BJP led NDA government at the center is strong, very strong that they can now do anything like passing of the Bill to make the country strong but which hurts sentiment of many people from state like Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. No one can say when will this things happen that has the potential of burning the state but the way the ruling BJP MLAs keep continuing the fight for power and the taking up of the pending disqualification case of some congress MLAs who joined the BJP is a worrying factors for the people. It is likely that if the situation continues the center may have no other option but to kept the state Assembly under animated suspension and impose president rule.

Once president rule is imposed, the legitimate platform which could oppose any move of the center that could spark mass protest will no longer available. The only means will be going out in the street and shout like wild dog where any person could be hit by the merciless bullets of the Security Force.

The representatives who are putting a grinding halt to the functioning of the government should know that people of today are no fool in this age of high tech information technology. People know what you people are playing and for what at the cost of the live of the people of the state.

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Open Letter to the Chief Minister of Manipur

In this esteemed newspaper, I on behalf of the student communities I would like to draw the attention of the Chief Minister of Manipur to please kindly look into the Post-Matric Scholarship for the academic session 2018-2019 for the tribal students pursuing studies outside the state on priority basis albeit unstable financial position of state's exchequer as the scholarship is yet to be reimbursed to the respective students. It is unfortunate that it has become a trend for reimbursement of Pre-Matric and Post-Matric scholarships untimely for the past two academic years. The tribal students depend on the Scholarship for payment of fees, and other expenses of essential materials related to their

academic activities. To mentioned one factual context that is, the tribal students of Manipur pursuing Bachelors, Masters, M.Phil, and Ph.D. in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences across all the campuses of the institute are yet to submit their Post-Matric Scholarship to the Institute for the academic year 2018-19, as this scholarship is meant for payment of fees. Hence, the students' certificates of Bachelors, Masters, and M.Phil are withheld by the institute's authority, unless the scholarship is submitted their certificates will be withheld leading to detrimental of their career though how motivated they are to scale the pinnacle. Moreover, the withheld of certificates by the concerned authority is letting them

handicapped to pursue their career in which they are interested or intrigued upon and also it may even let the students undergo psychological trauma. Studying outside the state doesn't mean all the tribal students are from the sound economic family background. There are also students belonging to low economic background who solely depend upon the scholarships and fellowships provided by the government of India. And moreover, there are students with their outstanding performances got merit scholarships and fellowships for their higher studies to sustain their educational expenses and also supporting their siblings too.

Therefore, I would like to

make a humble suggestion to the state government and the concerned authority pertaining to any scholarships of the students, it must be a top priority and primary onus. Lackadaisical gestures of the state government on scholarship matters will implicate the students' career and the ramifications will only be a burden of the parents. Thus, your esteem office is requested to kindly look into this matter and takes the necessary action as soon as possible for a positive outcome. Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,
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Contd. from Yesterday Issued

Hinduism in Manipur

On the first day of Holi small huts of straw are made where the idol of Shri Gourachandra is placed and worship in the evening. After the puja is over the huts are burnt. After this small children would go from door to door for Nakatheng (asking for money). Besides this the unmarried ladies come out on the road, stopping passers-by by blocking the road with a rope and asking for donations. There is playing of colours, singing of holi hymns by old and young and Thabal Chongba at night (a kind of dancing to the music by holding each others hands). These are the various activities that take place during the five day Holi. Old people (both men and women) would offer their service to Shri Govinda, Shri Bijoy Govinda temples by singing Holi hymns. Holi is totally a mixed festival in Manipur. It is not celebrated in this way in other parts of the country. The name of the festival itself is different. It is called Yaoshangin Manipur. The tradition of Thabal Chongba dates back to the time of origin of this land. Burning of Yaoshang (straw hut) is associated with the story of Gouranga Mahaprabhu. Playing of Holi is related to Krishna and Radha. It is also related with the story of Holika (daughter of Hireinya Kaushipura) and Prahlada. All the Hindu festivals that are celebrated in Manipur are all modified according to the tradition and way of life of the place. So they all seem to have originated here.

Birth Rituals:
Birth rituals that are carried out nowadays shows intermixing of old Meitei tradition with Hindu religion. In Meitei tradition during pregnancy the would be mother and father have to refrain themselves from doing certain things. On the fifth day after the birth of a child the mid wife (Chabokpi Maibi) performs a ritual for the long life of the new born in the morning. This ritual is called Epan Thaba. At dusk, the Brahmin performs Swasti Puja. He prays to the Destiny god Swasti Devi for the child's long life. The child's maternal uncle (mamma) will shoot

arrows. This is followed by the blessing of the new born by showering money and gifts. The morning ritual is Meitei tradition while evening's ritual is Hindu based.

Chakumba:
This is the ritual of introduction of baby to first solid food. The ritual is performed at 5 months for baby girls and at 7 months for baby boys. On this day the child is made to wear silver ornaments - anklets, bangles, neck chain etc. with traditional new dress. The ritual may be performed in a simple way without Brahmin, Priests or Astrologers. The child is made to taste the fish and rice just for namesake after offering it to the gods. Then the child is made to touch certain objects like book, gold, currency note, paddy etc. which are placed in front of him/her. This is done to see what the child would become when he grow up. With the coming of Hinduism the ritual changes a bit. In the Hindu temple, rice, sugar and milk are offered to Lord Vishnu for making Kheer (a sweet dessert). Then the kheer is given to the child. So it is either kheer or fish and rice which is given to the baby in this ritual.

Naming:
Naming of the child is considered very important as it is believed that if a child is not appropriately named then he might have short life or will suffer from illnesses. So priests are consulted before naming a child and the child is named after studying his birthday and month. For the Meiteis who follow Hindu religion they consulted astrologers for the same. The ritual is not held in a big way for majority of the Meiteis. But for the Chakpa community of Manipur like Andro the ritual is held in a big way by arranging feasts for the people of their community including the priests.

Mana Hutpa / Chura Karan:
This is the ritual of piercing of ear lobe. Nowadays it is performed in a bigger way. The piercing of ear lobe is done either on the 5th day after the birth of a child or any other auspicious day by calling a goldsmith. On the day of Chura

Karan the previous earring is replaced by a new one. Then a barber shaves off the head of the child. Fire worship (Yagya) is performed by the Brahmin for the child's well being. This ritual is done when the child enters 3 or 5 years of age with a grand feast.

Luhongba (Marriage):
Marriage is a compulsory ritual for the Meitei community and is being performed since early times. The coming of Hindu religion influences the ritual. The word *Shubb Vivah* is used for the Marriage ceremony. There will be *Sankirtan* throughout the ceremony. As the groom sits the bride would go round the groom for seven times. Marriage ceremony of early times is quite different from today's marriage ceremony. In the early times the elders of the bride and the bride groom after mutual agreement will perform a ritual called *Heijing Kharai Paba*. This ritual is considered equal to marriage. Marriage ceremony of the present day is almost influenced by Hindu religion. Marriage as mentioned in old manuscript like *Thawan Thaba Hiran*, *Panthoibi Khongul*, *Tutenglon*, *Nongban Pombi Luwaoba* etc. is quite different from today's marriage. Once *Heijing Kharai* is completed the groom need not go to the bride's place. The bride will be sent to the groom's place on an auspicious day with a dowry. For example, during the time of *Meidingu Charairongba* (father of *Garibiniwaj* Maharaja), when his daughter *Chakpa Makhaongambi* got married, the groom i.e. the King of *Samsok* (Ava) did not come. She was sent after the *Heijing Kharai* ceremony. In old manuscripts like *Panthoibi Khongul*, *Thawan Thaba Hiran* etc. we can find that the groom did not go to the bride's place. Today's marriage ceremony shows intermixture of Meitei religion and Hindu religion. *Heijing Kharai*, *Yumlai Laipot*, *Lamlai Laipot*, *Apok Asa* are all related with Meitei religion. *Sankirtan* is not at all related with marriage. The most important element of marriage is arrangement of offering for the gods is *Laipot* (for house deities and for deities outside the house)

which is to be arranged by both marriage parties and get exchanged. Other forms of matrimony like *Loukhatpa*, *Lai - Tin Thaba*, *Keinya katpa* do not involve *Sankirtan* but *Laipot* is a must. *Sankirtan* is only the manifestation of Hinduism. It was adopted later as it was believed that whatever is offered without *Sankirtan* were not accepted by Lord Vishnu.

Death ritual:
Sankirtan is also a part of death ritual. There is a difference in the activities performed by the Meitei priest and Brahmin for the ritual. Not only this, the Brahmin and the Meitei Hindus hold death rituals on different days. After one year another ritual called *Phiroi* is held and this will be the last death ritual. From the manuscripts we come to know that the people in the past bury their dead by putting in a coffin. After one year the dead body is dug out, the remains are cleansed and then buried again. This ritual is called *Lu Tengba*. Thus we can see intermixing of Meitei religion and Hindu religion in the death rituals also.

Hindu religion may have some influence on the various rituals but it cannot make them totally Hindu based. Hindu religion cannot replace Meitei religion. Till today *Sanamahi*, *Leimarel* is worshipped. There is no place for Hindu religion in *Lai Haraoaba*. *Lai Haraoaba* still signifies a pure Meitei Tradition. Now in Manipur many Hindu festivals have been replaced by Meitei festival. For example, *Durga puja* is replace by *Panthoibi Eratpa*(puja), *April 14 Cheiraoba* is replace by *Sajibu Nongma PanbaCheiraoba* etc. These changes signify the return of the Meiteis from Hindu religion to Meitei religion. The Meiteis never leave their traditional culture. That is why Hindu religion cannot replace Meitei religion. We can know this from the various rites de passage. All the Meitei rites still have the traditional element in them. If the various rites de passage are studied thoroughly only then we can establish the true identity of the Meiteis. (Concluded)

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