

Editorial

Monday, July 29, 2019

Of faith and failed justice

For now, the brief and promising flirt with 'unprecedented development' which was used with much hype and success during the last election and the subsequent emergence of the BJP as a power in the state stands truly over. The internal strife within the coalition ruling party diverting precious time and effort which should have been utilized in improving the governance of the state bears testimony to the fact that the elected representatives of the people of the state has more important and different pursuits than the aspirations of the common man. The mushrooming number of Civil Society Organisations, public groups, clubs and joint Action Committees is the most accurate indication of a system gone dysfunctional to the point that these associations and organizations are felt necessary to try and patch the ever increasing cracks in social administrations and public management.

The recent unfortunate death or rather murder of a young student inside the school hostel of Standard Borbarh is not a one-off incident nor is it totally unexpected. It is a result of the defunct implementing agencies of the state government failing to take up timely and adequate measures in earnest. It may be recalled that in May of 2014, 26 students who were residents of the school hostel fled the hostel who revealed atrocious acts by the school authorities such as brutal physical beatings, mental harassment and public humiliations for insignificant faults of the students on a regular basis. A press conference was even held regarding the incident at the AMSU office. Unfortunately and tragically, none of the stakeholders in the lives of the students including the parents and state authorities took serious note of the situation and the result is for all to see right now. How many more deaths and murders would it take for the state administration to look into such reports and more importantly, place guidelines and implement measures to ensure no such heartbreaking incidents ever happen again by finding the culprit/s and setting an unforgettable example of swift and tough justice.

Another aspect of the state administration that has proven to be an abject failure in light of the unfolding incident is that of the state police and its investigative credentials. The demand by the Joint Action Committee formed on the death of Babysana along with various other supporting civil society organizations to hand over the investigation into the death to the CBI and not the state investigative agencies speaks of the massive trust deficit of the people towards the police and its activities. They are viewed not as protectors of the common man but rather as a symbol of control and intimidation by the government and if this mindset is to be changed or if the state government has the slightest concern to address the declining situation, a long and sustained effort on the part of the state police department and the state government in general needs to be put in. It would not only be impractical but also humiliating for the state services if each and every criminal case is to be referred to the CBI.

In order for criminals and potential wrongdoers to take notice of the strict laws and swift actions which will deter them to a great extent, the investigators needs to be well trained and diligent, not to mention the necessity for maintaining a high degree of personal and professional integrity which has been in question till now. Unsolved crimes, unsuccessful prosecutions, unpunished offenders and wrongful convictions have brought the criminal justice system to disrepute and these loopholes needs to be addressed and rectified at the earliest before the whole system is taken over by the increasingly frustrated and impatient public- an alternative and a distinct possibility far worse than anything. The onus is on the government. It may very well disregard the warnings at its own peril.

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times' can be sent to our e-mail : imphaltimes@gmail.com. For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-2452159 (0). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

“NACHOM/ NACHOMLEI”

(A small posy composed of selective flowers used traditionally by Meitei Community)

-S.Bhubol

Shintha Handlooms & Handicrafts



By “Nachom”, it historically signifies a single or bunch of a few but already identified flowers popularly growing in this land of Manipur and it is adorned mostly by women with placing in the upper part of ears and nape or braid or on tips of well trimmed hairs. There is still debating on the origin of “Nachom” while it is believed to have introduced during the mythological period of Goddess Nongthang Leima who was taken as incarnation of Goddess Panthoibi and since then it has been popularly worn by women from the time of historical emergence in and after 33 AD and thus it has been a living tradition of Meitei community till today.

It is said that during the time of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba (33 AD) aromatic flowers were used in adorning his consort Laisna's coronation costumes. The Govinda Nachom today is a popular nachom and it appeared out when the royal families of the Meitei had converted into Hinduism and started to worship Shree Shree Govinda at Govindaji Temple at the Palace of Manipur. This special kind of small posy known as Govinda Nachoms are used to offer adoring prayer to Lord Govindaji (Shree Krishna) and Radha every day. These Nirmalas (after-flowers offered at the Lord), are taken as very deep prestigious to the women. Hindu women are always eagerly waiting for these blessed flowers and used to keep very carefully as things of boon. Whenever they put on this Nachom, they take it as symbol of protection of Lord Govinda even if these flowers are completely dried. Nachoms are generally composed of Takhellei and leaves of Tulsi and sometimes leaves of the plants like Petruklei and Leitaklei.

Love, peace, harmony and some other impressive meanings being associated with Nachom such as a fully grown woman's agreeing or disagreeing to a man's proposal, reservation, reluctance, joy and freedom, are associated to the traditional use of Nachom. Although “Nachom” is a literary term used to representing a rich tradition coming out as a beautiful cultural facet in times of history of Manipur once an Asiatic tiny nation-state before it entered into the fold of Union of India in 1949 ‘Nachom Tradition’ had been associating so interestingly as indispensable part in the cultural lives of Pakhang- Leishabi (youthful unmarried men and women) representing their states of romantic behaviors but unfortunately this rich tradition has been diminishing day by day in respects of its practice, value and taste in the impact of alien modern material and luxurious things etc.

There is popular believe that the use of Nachom was practiced with plays of the Lai Nurabi Taret (Seven Goddesses) and the Laibungdou Mapan (Nine male-Gods) under the instruction of Sitaba Mapu (the Almighty God) as to implement His thoughts for formation of plants and animals including man and woman and corresponding tasks on earth etc. Nachoms were said to have worn by the Goddesses to beautify themselves and to communicate with the male-Gods and others. The same practice is still seen in the present day Lai Haraoba Festivals which was believed to have originated from the above dances of Gods and Goddesses and at which festival the Amaibeas (priestesses) do unfailingly wear Nachoms. It is further reflected today in the paintings of most images of goddesses like

Nongthang Leima and Panthoibi and others the wearing of Nachoms. And, there is still seen in worshipping of goddesses called “Ima Taret Laikhuramba” (prayer to seven goddesses) and in it there offers seven kinds of fruits and seven kinds of flowers (Heiram Taret Leiram Taret Katpa) with additional seven flowers all red in colours called Lei Angangba Taret that is specially meant for use as Nachoms by the seven goddesses (Lairembees). As Nachom tradition transcends a rich tradition, its use is described by cultural scholars as “Meina Wai Tangna Sam”.

NACHOM COMPOSITION & MEANINGS:

The commonly used flowers for Nachoms are the indigenous kinds like Takhellei, Sanarei, Nageshor, Atal Gulap, Khongul Melei, Petruk lei, Leihao, Kusumlei, Tulsi, Chigonglei, Malika, Nageshor and Melei etc. A Nachom is usually made up of a single flower or a bunch of three to five flowers. Atal Gulap (Rose) is used in the “Lai Haraoba” by the Amaibeas (priestesses) and in the “Lu Hongba” (Marriage Ceremony) by the ritual singers (isei sakpi sing) and the bride's care-taker (keina sennabi). In the early “Likon Sannaba”, the spinsters (Leishabees) wore beautiful and popular Nachoms made mostly of two to three flowers by selecting and combining ones from seasonal flowers in patterns like 1. Sanarei and Takhellei, 2. Petruk lei, Takhellei, and Ambrajita (black) and 3. Single Malika. Interestingly, the Nachoms used by the Leishabees (unmarried young women) were always concerned to their admired Pakhangs (bachelors/gentlemen) participated in the Likon Sannaba, who all came from different parts of neighboring or distant villages and why it was because the flowers were used by the Leishabees as messengers expressing their minds and used to conveying it to approaching Pakhangs (gentlemen) in the way that during the Likon play while flirtations were all happened in between and among the participated males and women if the woman went out by dropping the flower Sanarei from her Nachom it meant that she accepted the man's proposal and if not, likewise leaving behind intentionally of other flowers by the spinsters (Leishabees) had been taken as expressing many meanings. And it is described in the following what responses and meanings had been used to expressing in places of occasions and meetings when a woman happened to drop her Nachom lei to letting the insisting and approaching male ; if the woman happened to drop off from her Nachom.

1. Sanarei which meant she was living with parental care taking as Gold (mama mapana sanagum lina touribini) and but leaving behind

her such parents she is dedicating herself to the a stranger like him;

2. Kusumlei is meant as the girl's living under strict parental care (Mama mapana kupsen sennaribini) and not to be approached to;

3. Atal Gulap signifies her Complete Dedication (Atat akham leitana sinnajare) to the man;

4. Takhellei the queen flower of Nachom bears the meaning of freshness, activeness and completeness etc (Taru taruba, mapung fana nungaba), and it was taken as derivative word from ‘Tek khat Lei’;

5. Khogulmelei is taken for expressing the idea of saying the approaching man her real origin and history before settling things of romance (Khongul hanna Likho);

6. Petruklei which indicates living in small and humble position that needs to be cared of by the approaching man (pikna lejabin cheksinna loubiyu);

NACHOM FOR ARTISTIC CRAFTS, TECHNIQUE & ECONOMIC VALUES:

Nowadays, Nachoms cannot be worn any time at wish as the flowers are not available in plenty as earlier and some of the plants have become endangered that call for protection.

But interestingly all these kinds of nachoms, can now be crafted from the waste-cocoons almost looking similar to original ones. Some artisans of the state can earn good incomes by crafting nachoms from cocoon-shells and among them one Huirongbam Shanti Devi from Thongju Pheijaleitong Pari-I is prominent artisan in this field. She can earn Rs 15,000/- to 20,000/- per month by shelling nachom crafts.

As for technique, the cocoons are de-husked by boiling processes and reeled off the inner silk threads and finally the piecer usually waste-cone/shell. These waste cocoon cones are used as raw materials of making the Nachoms. The left out cocoon cones are dried in the shade and the properly dried ones are soaked to lukewarm water to be congenial to their flattening and cut in thinned sheets with scissors according to the desired shape and size resembling the petals and calyx of Nachom flowers and leaves of plants. Then they are dyed with suitable colours, e.g., green in case of leave, red and pink in case of flowers, etc. They are carefully tied and fixed together and the stalk with white cotton thread. The same technique is also employed in every small posy either Kundo Pareng or Samjirei Nachom etc. The practice is always needed expertise and skilled hands.

7. Leihao is meant for independence and single not to be sought for anything if being used by girls on single hair's tip and if it is done by widows (Lukhrabi) indicates her fully believing and still dedicating to her deceased husband and also fully attending to her husband's family and taking care of her progenies and so not to be interfered by any male for love in its midst;

8. Nageshor shows the woman's living in single with strict integrity and sustainability and not liking to involve in any affairs, and etc etc.

In kinds of Nachom, there are Govindaji Nachom, Lai Haraobagi Nachom, Ras Leclagi Nachom, Likon Nachom, Umang Lai Haraobagi Nachom and others. In Govindaji Nachom, which is made up by selecting from among the flowers of Tulsi, Chigonglei, Takhellei, in Likon Nachom, that is composed of mostly by choosing from Petruk Lei, Takhellei, Ambra jeeta, Sanarei or by using single Malika; in Umang Lai Haraoba Nachom, where it was mostly used of Atal Gulap signifying the user's total dedication to Almighty (Atat akham leitana sembiba mapuda kaittokehare). Nachoms can be adorned in three ways such as (i) keeping it in the ears, (ii) Keeping it in the braid and (iii) keeping them on tips of hairs. Married women put on Nachom on the right ears unmarried ones wear it on the left ears. Nachoms that are kept on ears can be given to others as gifts of love and harmony but nachoms keeing on the top and by the side of the braids (Sambul) cannot be given as gifts. Nachom can be used by youthful girls to signifying their freedom of living under parental cares.



CONCLUSION: “Nachom” is taken as part and parcel in traditional lifestyles of Manipuri Meitei Community conveying beautiful meanings of its uses and the kinds of flowers. Thinking on its importance and having the wish to sustain its tradition, the few weavers/craftspersons are producing different kinds of Nachoms using the waste cocoon cone as endeavoring to preserve its beautiful tradition and in the same time there is economic potential by transforming the waste cocoons to wealth along with performing skills of crafting flowers in actual looks of flowers. It is time for the concerned department of Handlooms & Textiles to promote the crafts of Nachom making in thinking the line of preserving the prolonged tradition of Nachom cult as well as to promote the emerging artisans towards their sustainable livelihood.