

Editorial

Saturday, October 19, 2019

An Introspection to the Shirui Lily Festival

Over 30,000 tourists – both foreign and domestic visited the Shirui Lily Festival, being organised by the state government for the third time. This is a record stated by Commissioner of Tourism Government of Manipur while addressing in the closing function held today at TNL Ground in Ukhrul district Head Quarter. She also stated that the number is double from last year , which indicate that the number of visitors in next Shirui festival may be more and People in Ukhrul have to prepare for their stay.

Today the much anticipated extravaganza conceptualized to preserve the only flower Shirui Lily that bloom only in the Shirui Hill of Ukhrul district besides showcasing and promoting the diverse socio-cultural heritage and the rich traditional wealth of the state will be concluded. The best part is that Internationally acclaimed rock band “Extreme” is performing today evening.

That the State Government spared no expenses and efforts to gain an impression to the visiting tourists would be an understatement. Most places of Ukhrul district particularly the Ukhrul town were witnessed transformed within an incredibly short span of time into one which can be compared to any other mid-sized or tier II cities in the country- well almost, with the support of the people.

Despite the best efforts and undoubtedly noble intentions which had made tremendous improvements in the public facilities and certain infrastructures, a closer look into the activities brings to light various clear indications of the haphazard and rushed nature of it all. With the kind of booms the state need a lot to take up in Ukhrul district .

If previous instances are any indications, we will be seeing a change in inertia and a visible drop in enthusiasm making the whole efforts an exercise in futility. The incredible potential for attracting tourism in the State has been well known and even documented. From the enchanting misty mountains to the incredibly beautiful ethnic handiworks and crafts, from the inherently hospitable people to the excellent climatic condition, the unbelievably beautiful and mysterious caves and lakes- this small state has it all, and in no small measures.

This naturally endowed land has been wasted and neglected for centuries, our inability to see the big picture, occupied as we are in finding ways to secure our own personal lives through means fair or foul being the main reason. With the air connectivity with our neighboring Asian countries a reality now, it would be an act of utter foolishness not to cash in on the euphoria and enthusiasm such a development has created. Without going into the details of the nitty-gritty of tourism and it’s pros and cons, it is an undeniable truth that with proper planning, timely and effective checks and due diligence, tourism would only improve the economy, change the perceptions of the local people towards the visitors and their way of life, adopt a more tolerant view of things and most importantly help in propagating our cultures and traditions throughout the world.

For all these to happen, basic infrastructures and basic amenities must be put in place and make the whole state a tourist friendly one. A lot more needs to be done to be where we want this State to be from where we are now. Only a dedicated, committed and sustained effort can make things possible. Working in fits and starts will get us nowhere.

Registration Certificate lost

I, the undersigned, Puyam Chanu Linthoi, do have declared that, I have lost my original registration certificate bearing registration No. 7405 of 2011 issued by BOSEM on the way between Lalambung Makhong Takhellambam Leikai and Khwairambam Keithel in Imphal West on October 5, 2019.

Finders are requested to hand over it to the undersigned.

Sd/-
Puyam Chanu Linthoi
D/O Puyam Tomcha Meitei
Lalambung Makhong Takhellambam Leikai

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Achoubi in Love: A story (about ponies) lost in transition from inspiration to execution

By- Cecil Thounaojam

Achoubi in Love is a documentary film by Meena Longjam on the theme of protection of indigenous ponies, and it was screened at Mass Communication Department of Manipur University on 11th October, 2019. She conceived the idea after witnessing a dead pony on the road in a horrific condition. It broke her heart, she cried that night, even wrote a poem, and then decided to make a documentary on it to bring the attention towards the conservation of this endangered species. No doubt, the inspiration came from the right place of compassion, but, while in the process, the film seemed to have shifted its focus from the ponies to the humans. What started as a project to center the ponies in the conversation, became a glorified sympathizer for humans, pushing the ponies aside.

The only time that the film focused on the ponies was a few clips where it showed dead ponies on the road with flies on them. It was just a random shock value without any reality check or focus on how did the ponies end up there.

The film revolved around Achoubi, an old woman, who “owned” ponies because she was fascinated with and passionate about ponies and horse riding. It showed Achoubi conducting various rituals for ponies as humans do for other humans. This and other acts of humanization of nonhuman animals (here, ponies) were praised and glorified without delving deeper into its ills and wrongs. Moreover, the film also failed to highlight the selected humanization of a few ponies that only added values to human desires, be it for passion or polo. Apart from humanization, one can also see the meitei feminization of ponies in the official poster of the film where a pony was dressed as a meitei woman. Even the filmmaker said during the post-screening discussion that she was fascinated by how Achoubi “treated her ponies as humans.”

It celebrated the same old outdated idea of mirroring the dominant community for the marginalized community to be treated with respect. Moreover, the film did not show the other side of the humanization of nonhuman animals - how it harmed the ponies and the limits of humanization.

There was no mention of harms and health hazards or casualties caused to ponies because of using them in sports like polo or horse riding, carrying a whole load of a human body and continuously being ridden for hours



with braces on their head. Another avenue it left unexplored was about those ponies that were not beneficial for polo or horse riding. What happened to the ponies that were considered unfit or no more fit for polo or horse riding? If the concern was protection of ponies, then why so many ponies, except for the ones used for polo or horse riding, were stranded on the road? If the love for ponies existed only because of their association with the sports or regardless of the human desires to use them? These were a few questions that the film failed to touch upon.

While there were mentions of ponies dying on the roads as a result of eating plastic and garbage, it did not explore how did these ponies end up there. The lack of sanctuaries, urbanization, and unavailability of grasses that the ponies could eat was in a few clips but it never went beyond mentions. It also did not touch upon the facts that while some ponies were humanized, the same were animalized (treated like “animals”) during horse riding or on the polo ground. The rest of the ponies not in polo or not humanized at home for various human desires, were still victims of their animal status.

On the contrary, the film laid its focus on the passion and obsession of humans on owning and riding ponies and playing polo. The toxicity of this passion and obsession on ponies was hidden under the garb of human’s love for the ponies. While the film explored the financial difficulties of Achoubi and difficulties she and other humans facing taking care of the ponies, it missed the part of how it impacted the ponies.

On top of it, the focus was extended to how polo had put Manipur on a global platform and its promotion by the government without actually addressing the harms caused to the ponies by the lack of relevant government projects and the irrelevant government (developmental) projects. In its entirety, the film made a reference of ponies yet the ponies and their issues were absent.

This was pretty evident when the post-screening discussion had an echoing celebration of Achoubi’s passion and diligence. The idea born out of care and compassion for ponies ended up in addressing the interest and struggle of humans in most of the parts. Maybe due to lack of research or maybe not. As a result, the story conceived from the right place was lost in its transition from inspiration to execution.

The taste of SINGJU: Manipuri traditional snack that bridge love bondage between new lovers of yesteryears

My uncle Ningthoujam Binoybhusan (who had left us all for heavenly abode), was a man of typical character who always wanted everyone to be happy with his words of humours, took me to meet his girl friend. That time I may be just around 6 or 7 years old but rare incidents or events happened during childhood still continue to live in my memories. From the place where I was staying, Singjamei Chingamakha is just around 10 minutes cycle ride. Renowned Theatre director cum artist Ghamashy Kshetri (late) was his best friend those days and they together would roam most time to find their life partner. I was like a doll to them and they would prefer taking me to their bicycle most time. My aunty whom he made his life partner stayed at a place in Singjamei along with her father. The two of them communicate with just by looking at each other and myself being a small kid don’t have any problem going near to my uncle’s girlfriend. I recalled this because I still remember that it was Singju that connect them. One day my aunty would called me and handed me a well pack Singju for my uncle and his friend and another day my uncle would asked me to pass a well packed Singju bought from my Leikai. Keishamthong Elangbam Leikai here in Imphal, the place where my father shifted and settled, was once known for the best SINGJU. Originally family is from a far flung Village , around 60 km but took around 4 hours to reach due to dilapidated road condition. The situation however is different today, some of my brothers used to attend office here in Imphal by staying at my village (Kakching Khunou).

It’s nearly forty years and the trend of Singju being the bridge of love bond between boys and girls are history now. Youths of today may not know the significance of SINGJU between relationships of boys and girls , even during my teenage I had never share Singju with my beloved wife when we date

before getting married.

Well, R.K. Shyamsunder, a retired govt. employee, now around 80 years old, narrated on how the old lady at Kwakeithel Heinoukhongnembi prepared Singju, on his first date with Jashumati, his wife.

“Those days, there were no restaurants, dating with girl friends were done at the side of small “Lukmai” (small vendor run by old ladies) and Singju is the best item we enjoyed most”, Shyamsunder said recalling his youth days.

Like Shyamsunder, Singju is associated to the love life of almost all boys and girls of his age. These days Singju has been replaced by



From the diary of Editor

chicken chowmen, momo, fried rice etc etc. which are not our indigenous food.

Singju is a typical traditional snacks or dish. It is a mix-vegetable salad type items and is still popular among the people of the state, if not an item anymore for dating between boys and girls.

The taste of Singju from locality to locality is different. There were times, when youths roamed from place to place to taste the different variety of Singju.

Days are gone and not many Lukmai run by old ladies are seen, as it has been replaced by mushrooming Restaurants where boys and girls can date. Because of the dying culture, youths of today

may not be aware of the kind of Singju varieties.

In December 2017 an organisation called “Singju Yokhat Lup” formed by a group of likeminded youths which works for promotion of this Manipuri Traditional food item organizing a unique festival called “Singju Festival” at Lamdeng Makha Leikai ground in Lamshang Assembly constituency.

In this 12 days festival, the organizing committee is inviting all special “Singju” makers sure that any visitor can experience the taste of varieties of “Singju”.

Convener of the Festival committee, Rakesh Naorem deserves all credit for his effort to remind today’s generation that for some of us our parent secret meeting was all possible by Singju.

GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR SECRETARIAT : GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

NOTIFICATION Imphal, the 17th October, 2019

No. 2/5/2019- GAD (Pt) : In continuation of the Government Notification No. 2/5/2019- GAD , dated 25th September, 2019, the Schedule for sponsoring of the candidates by the employment exchange office for recruitment of Stenographer Grade -III in the Manipur Secretariat , Genera Administration Department is extended till Saturday, 26/10/2019.

2. The Schedule regarding submission of form by the candidates at the Lounge of Manipur State Guest House , Sanjenthong , Imphal will remain the same as per earlier Notification i.e. Thursday, 31/10/2019.

Sd/-
Asem Rangina Chnau
Under Secretary (GAD)
Government of Manipur