

Rituals of Sekrenyi Fest

Endowed with colours, songs and dances, old traditions in Nagaland find its way to the hearts of the people even as every consecutive season dawns with a reason to celebrate. The 'Land of Festivals' reminds one of the rituals that were long practiced and passed on to generations by forefathers, before civilization came to being.

But even with modernity taking shape, there is a frequent brush with culture in this part of the world. There is pomp and gaiety going alongside 'display of rich culture, a recent one seen during the Kohima Road Show cum 'Sekrenyi', the premier festival of the Angami tribe.

Also called 'Phousanyi', the festival of purification follows a series of rituals that lasts for 10 long days. It begins with 'Kezie' rite which means 'sanctification' and involves cleansing the house after which men folk, from the oldest to the youngest who is able to understand participates in 'Sekre' ritual.

During this period, menfolk go to the village water source to bathe themselves while women were not allowed to draw water from the well set aside for Sekrenyi rites. They also make a new hearth and cook their own food, all untouched by women.

Young men put on two new shawls called 'Mhoushii' in white colour and the black 'Lohe'. They sprinkle water on their breast, knees and on their right arm, the process of which is called 'DZUSEVA' meaning touching the sleeping water and signifying that all their troubles and misfortunes have been purified by water.

The ceremony of 'Sekre' is performed for the main purpose of obtaining strength during war as well as to solicit good fortune during hunting, to gain wisdom and be victorious in Games and to ensure good health for the oncoming year.

Then, begins the ritual of 'Geizie' which requires an unblemished rooster with well formed legs, wings and comb. Every male in the household are given roosters of different sizes according to their age and .consequently, the roosters are sacrificed.

The third day after 'Sekre' comes 'Theprunhie' where spears, shields and shawls worn during the 'Sekre' period are taken outside the village gate and shaken off as a sign of doing away with any illness and misfortune. This particular ritual completes the act of purification after which the festival is marked by singing and feasting.



An Angami troupe participating during the Sekrenyi festival

'Thekra hie', they say is the best part because it involves the young people of the village sitting together, tuning themselves to old folk tunes and feasting on local brew and sumptuous meat.

The men-folk go hunting on the seventh day and is thereafter marked by a more significant ceremony that includes towing of bridge or gate. During the entire process of observing the Festival, no one is allowed to go to the fields and work.

These acts of purification are however, not strictly followed in the present day. But keeping in mind treasures of the past, there is merrymaking in the form of traditional songs and dances, feasting and display of rich cultural practices.

Generally, Sekrenyi festival falls on 25th of February as was marked during the Kohima Road Show in the state capital of Nagaland this year under the theme "Confluence: Past and Present". Greatly fascinated by the ongoing, Governor Nikhil Kumar had lauded the State Road Shows coinciding with the premiere festivals of the districts as a great platform for showcasing the rich cultural heritage and costumes of the people.

Chief Minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio had also rightly exhorted "Let us live today with the life values of our forefathers in our standards".

Truly there is something fascinating the old way of life. We have been left a beautiful legacy, of culture and traditionDeeply rooted with festivals these are promising things to go by.

Zadeng (bass), and Mercy Miller (drums) began their inspirational journey in 2004. Their debut performance in 2004 won them a prize and that too at the national level. And since then, they have come a long way with a debut album in the making, numerous high profile concerts under their belt and the emergence of a truly international sound.

Rewben Mashangva, an eminent folk musician from Manipur committed to promoting folk blues while always singing for a social cause. A singer who enthrall with his voice and the message of his songs, he has performed in India and abroad carrying forward the true tradition of folk songs that is heard in the hills of the Northeast.

The Northeast Window-April 2010



Heritage Explorer

THE ANCESTRAL ETERNAL FAITH & CULTURE IS OUR HERITAGE

VOL. X, NO. 2. MAY 2010

A Monthly News Bulletin



RNI. Regd. No. ASSENG/2002/6891 Dtd.25-06-2002. Postal Regd. No. PNR/GH-094/2009-11. Dtd. 22-09-08.



Birds need you this summer.

Summer is at its peak. It has already crossed 37°C. Many birds die in summer due to lack of water. Place water pots for thirsty birds in Terraces, Compound wall & Balconies.

A photograph of two small birds perched on the edge of a shallow water pot.

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Subscription may be sent by M.O. to :
Circulation Manager
Heritage Explorer
7, Jalan Market, M.G. Road.
Fancy Bazar, Guwahati-781001
(Mention Pin Code No. along with full postal address)

Rs 60/-	1Year
Rs120/-	2 Years
Rs 300/-	5 Years
Rs 600/-	10 Years
Rs 1100/-	20 Years

Bank A/c : Heritage Foundation,
No. 3213 0001 0009 3631 at PNB, Guwahati

Published & Edited by:

Shri Amarendra Brahma, on behalf of
Heritage Foundation

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e-mail: ourheritage123@yahoo.com
Printed at: Sati Printers, S.C.Road, Athgaon,
Guwahati- 781 001 (Assam)

Articles on **Eternal Faith and Culture** and different Socio-Cultural movements in Northeast are invited for publication.

Manipur for Christ!

After Nagaland and Mizoram, now it is Manipur which is all planned to be offered at the feet of Jesus Christ and whole of its population should be brought under Church influence! Let it be politics, the thoughts and the social psyche, every thing be controlled by church and its policies!

Most of the tribal people of Manipur are already converted to Christianity. Now it is the turn of all the rest, may they have an ancient culture of Vaishnavite cult or whatever, they are being converted unabated.

Now it becomes a fashion for many of the communities to say "we are not Hindus". They don't even put a pressure at their thought line, what actually 'Hindu' means! No body actually bothers of it.

When a child join his school and come to the lessons of history, he/she is taught that, after the name of the river 'Sindhu' in the west of our country, the people of the west named this land 'Sindhusthan' or 'Hindusthan' as they pronounce 'Sa' as 'Ha', same as the people of Assam. And, this become the name to this great country 'Bharat' and its people as 'Hindu'. Even the Indian Muslims who visit Arab countries for 'Haj yatra' they are being called as 'Hindu Muslims' there. It is only a terminology given to the people of India which have nothing to do with religion.

Religion have a very narrow sense which is a set of beliefs and a particular way of worship; while in India "Sanatan Dharma" regulates each and every aspects of human life which is least concerned for 'Religion'- the way of worshipping Gods and Goddess and upto the Supreme Power. Ours' is mistaken as 'Hindu Religion' by the historians; and the other religionist to differ their own from the natives religious followings.

Manipur is slowly coming under the grip of church. Its programme 'Echo night' was convened by Sumpa Hamangte and Namethaai Thimai on 6-8 oct. 2009 at the seminar hall of MBC center, church of Imphal. Many of the church leaders and Pastors were invited to deliver lectures there. Most interesting is its colourful poster which was published with a CROSS at the center with 'Manipur is for Christ' as its main slogan. What dose it mean? Is it to influence the social psyche of people in Manipur? They erect cross and statues of Jesus on the road side, construct church at prime location of cities to feel people their presence.

Should the people of this country allow the States, one after another, to be offered at the feet of Christ or should they follow the path of Eternal Religion or 'Sanatan Dharma' which is the core of the society of this country!

Time: The Hindus were Right

- MSN Menon

(I am not a scientist. But the achievements of the Hindus fascinate me. - Author)

The Hindus were right in most of what they said that time moved in cycles, that creation and dissolution constitute an eternal process, that there is rebirth, that the earth moves around the sun, that the universe will last for a Kalpa and so on. In all these, the Hindus were mostly right, but the west was always wrong.

The engagement of the Hindus with time and space is the oldest. They were the pioneers of space Sciences. Cheiro, the great astrologer and palmist writes: "To consider the origin of the science of astrology, we must take our thought back to the earliest days of world history... to the consideration of a people the oldest of all -- to the Hindus."

We have evidence that Kanauj was a major centre of learning even before the Vedic age. It was called the, "Centre of the Universe", which shows its status as a major centre of space studies. Vishwamitra, the great rishi or the Vedic Age, belonged to Kanauj. He was author of one of the Vedic books.

There was a good deal of speculation on various matters in those days, but the Hindus and Greeks were the only people curious about the origin of the universe, therefore of God too.

The Greeks were the only people in the west interested in the universe. But they were indifferent to history and time. The Hindus were thus the only people who were curious about the universe and therefore of God. But the Greeks jumped to the conclusion that as time moved in cycles, there was no point in studying history.

Today the world recognises the great contribution made by the Hindus to mathematics and astrology. Karl Sagan, the famous nuclear scientist, had nothing but praise for the Hindus' contribution to cosmology. He says: "It is the only ancient religious tradition which talks about the right time cycle."

Look at the naivety of the Europeans! According to the Genesis the world was created 5,000 years age. Da Vinci believed that the world would come to an end in 4006 AD in a universal flood. There were Christians who believed that the world was coming to an end after a thousand years of Christ's mission on earth. They took to the hills of Rome to protect themselves! Zoroaster reckons that the world would last for 12,000 years.

But Hindu time scale is unimaginable. The life of the universe is reckoned 4.32 billion years. It is made up of yugas, which move in cycles. There are four yugas - Sat yuga, Treta yuga, Dwapara yuga and Kali yuga. Kali yuga is the shortest.

The scale of this myth is indeed staggering. It has taken the human mind more than two thousand years to come upon again with a similar concept. In the meantime the Christian missionaries, have made fun of the Hindu concept.

Buddhists and Chinese also see time moving in cycles. Buddhists say the universe is transient in a state of continuous flux. The Buddhists' time starts with a pristine Utopian society, gradually decaying and reaching its nadir of sorrow and suffering. But they hold out the promise of renewal.

There is no idea when the Indian civilisation began, but I believe it must be 15 thousand years ago. It was the most advanced civilisation at that time. Naturally the Indian civilisation spread allover the world, both in East and West.

The most thoughtful criticism against the Hindu theory of cyclic time came from St. Augustine, known for his "City of God." He argued that idea of Christ returning to be crucified again and again would make the salvation theory into a cosmic puppet play.

But it is seldom realised that the linear theory is even worse. In a linear time, there can be no purpose. A purpose has to be realised. But if a purpose is realised there is an end to what it has set out to achieve. In an infinity time cannot end.

(Date: 18.04.10)