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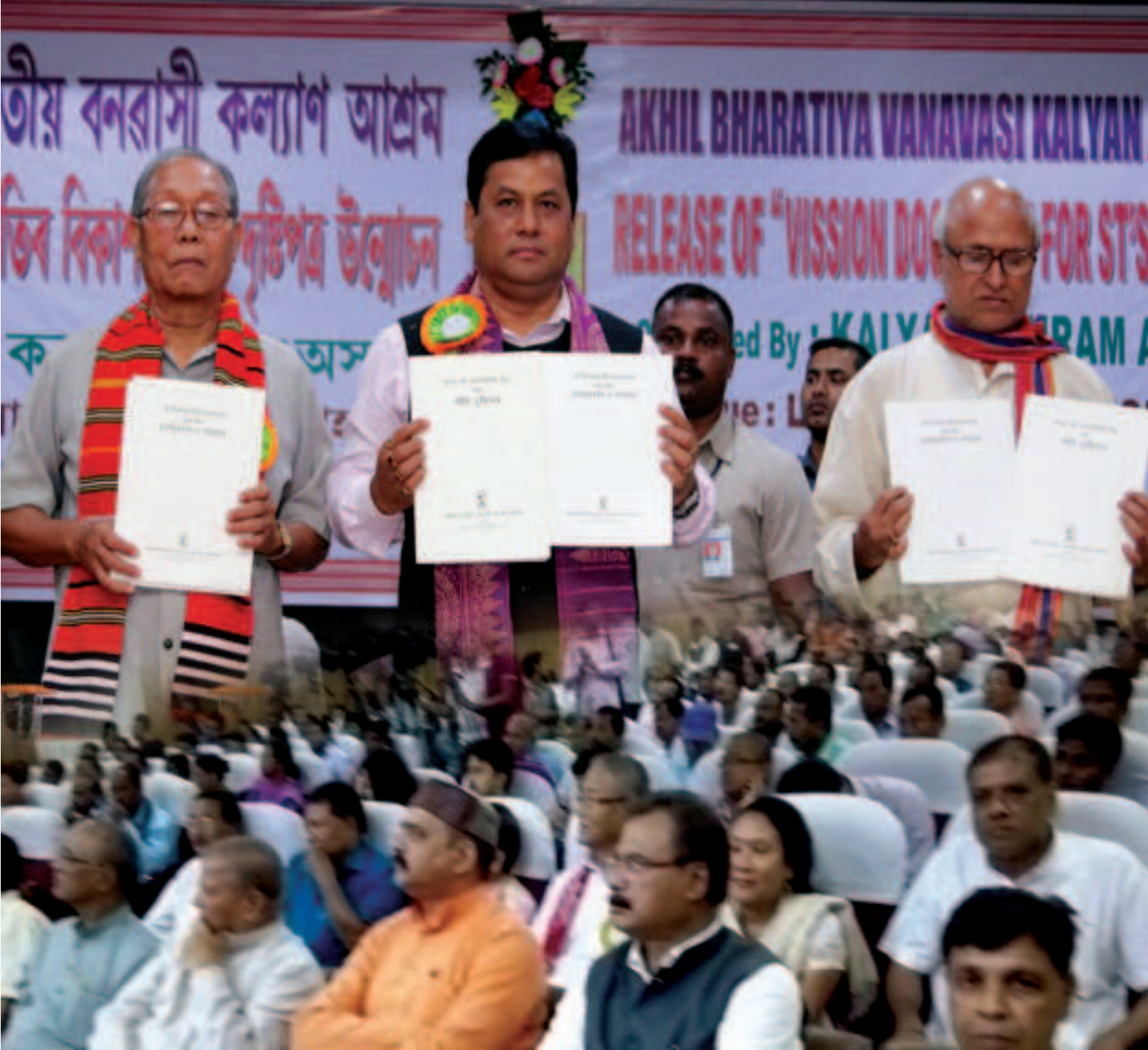
HERITAGE EXPLORER

LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES

A Monthly News Bulletin

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Vision Document Released by Hon'ble Chief Minister





1934-96

Famous American astrophysicist, cosmologist and prolific write; authored several science books, pioneered Exobiology, and promoted the search for 'Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence'. His world-famous book *Cosmos* was made into a TV show.

Dr. Carl Sagan

The Hindu religion is the only one of the world's great faiths dedicated to the idea that the **COSMOS** itself undergoes an immense, indeed **an infinite number of deaths and rebirths**. It is the only religion in which the time scales **correspond to those of modern scientific cosmology**. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of **Brahma, 8.64 billion years long**, longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the **Big Bang**.

Source: *Cosmos* : by Dr Carl Sagan, Random House, New York



1817-1862

Great American philosopher, writer, social critic and transcendentalist. His philosophy of 'Civil Disobedience' influenced the political thoughts and actions of successive generation of great figures such as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

Henry David Thoreau

In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita, and in comparison with which **our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial**.

Source: *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* : Walden

*

Whenever I have read any part of the Vedas, I have felt that some unearthly and unknown light illuminated me. In the great teaching of the Vedas, there is **no touch of sectarianism**. It is of all ages, climes and nationalities and is **the royal road for the attainment of the Great Knowledge**.

When I am at it, I feel that I am under **the spangled heavens of a summer night**.

Source: *Ancient Roots, Many Branches*
by Darlena L'Orange, Gary Dolowitz

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Nivedita – our everlasting guide

The month of October is very sacred and inspiring for every right thinking Indian, for we found our loadstar in Sister Nivedita, who was born in this month and also attained her 'Moksha' in this same month.

Born in Europe and reared in the religious environment of Christianity, she never felt free from the self doubts about her own religious beliefs since her childhood. However, her involvement in the 'Tractarian' movement that swayed the Christian world in the nineteenth century, appeased her hunger for spiritual contentment to some extent. Unfortunately this satisfaction did not last long for she started feeling suffocated when other invisible aspects of Christianity started revealing before her impressionable mind. She failed to reconcile herself with the religious intolerance towards followers of other faiths, lack of liberalism, the rigidity of religious doctrines, absence of heartwarming spiritual joy and above all the supremacy of the clergymen in all matters of the life of a follower. A question often arose in her mind, 'is not there any religion which is above the pastoral meanness, fully humane and liberal at the same time'. When Margaret Noble was passing through this phase of self-doubt, Swami Vivekananda appeared on her spiritual horizon to guide her to her spiritual destiny.

In 1895 Margaret Noble met Swami Vivekananda for the first time in London and her search for the messiah who can lead her to a total spiritual bliss, ended. She left her motherland and came to India, abandoned her name and became Sister Nivedita, 'the dedicated'.

As if to test the dedication and love for the humanity, Plague epidemic broke out in Calcutta. Abandoning the normal European instinct of maintaining distance from the unclean and afflicted Indians, that too during a dreaded epidemic of Plague, Nivedita joined the local volunteers to nurse the sick and the needy. Till the cursed disease did not die down, her zeal never faded and she worked day and night without a minute's rest. This was only a beginning. The next task she took upon herself was the holistic upliftment of the poor and the needy and emancipation of the Indian women. She started a school for women, both married and young, taught History, English and occasionally sewing & stitching. As a part of her mass awakening efforts, she started writing in various magazines, both national and European, started giving lectures on Indian Culture, United India, the Women of India, Ideals for women, India's problems and many other spiritual topics in elite institutions and not so elite platforms. Her in-depth knowledge of the Indian culture and spiritual wisdom, her total dedication to the ideals propounded by Swami Vivekananda and above all her immense love for India, the Bharat, endeared her to all irrespective of caste, creed or community. She wrote several Books, the most prominent among them was 'The Master as I saw him'. Her close relations with poet Rabindra Nath Tagore and internationally acclaimed philosophers like Rishi Aurobindo, Industrialists like Dadabhai Naorji and scientists like Acharyya Jagadish Chandra Bose and her love and affection for the revolutionary freedom fighters are well known. Speaking about her, Swami Vivekananda once told that, "India shall ring with her".

Nivedita's self-written epitaph for her last resting place in Darjeeling speaks unequivocally about her total dedication to India.

"Here rests Nivedita in peace
Who gave her everything to India."

It is true that she did not receive the Nobel Prize for service to the humanity or for women emancipation. Nether she was declared a saint by any of our religious institutions nor was acknowledged as a messiah of peace and harmony, but she was and continues to be a 'Devi', the Goddess incarnate for all of us Indians and all followers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Editor

Europe's Ancient Nature Worshipers, The Pagans

- York, Michael

As the Christian era slowly thaws, it's springtime for the indigenous faiths of the planet. A bubbly sort of euphoria has possessed the pre-Christian earth religions. They survived what to them has been a long winter. Today they meet and celebrate their rebirth, their roots and connections with each other and with Hinduism.

On November 24th, the 2nd Annual United Kingdom Pagan Federation convened at the University of London and proposed that Pagans not only become aware of the Pagan/Hindu overlap but take it another step establishing a recognized alliance. Author and Pagan Nigel Pennick addressed the spirited group of 300 stressing that for Pagans not being Christian or Muslim was insufficient. Paganism is a tradition in itself - one for which he feels Hinduism constitutes its Eastern extension. Pennick foresees the possibility that Hindus may come to accept Europe's Pagans as a European branch of Hinduism. He pointed out that Hindus in Britain tend not to be persecuted by the Assemblies of God and other Christian extremists because it is assumed that they have an "ethnic right". He added that Pagans are assumed to be apostate Christians and it is considered permissible - since the Justinian Reforms - to hunt them down.

Pennick called for an alliance between Paganism and

Hinduism. He cited discussions within Hinduism that all the Gods (Shiva, Ganesh, Kali, etc.) are part of the One and proposed that Paganism be absorbed into that discussion - especially with its Goddess-oriented sects. He added that Hinduism and Paganism have common roots - shamanic, ice-age, ecological, nature-worship, etc. and envisages that Paganism could become a part of the World Hindu Federation.

The meeting's setting was colorful. There were stalls marketing Pagan products from a range of different traditions. And everyone was glad the Fundamentalist Christian Coalition didn't disrupt the proceedings as they had done the year before.

Noted authoress Prudence Jones supported Nigel's proposal and further stressed that Paganism is very similar to Hinduism and Japan's nature-oriented Shinto religion as well.

The tack this bold idea now takes is uncharted, but Prudence and Nigel are not alone. Other indigenous faiths are also considering Hinduism as an ally as they reassert themselves in what some are calling a "Post-Christian era". Collectively, they feel Christianity buried them with a theology that masculinized God, separated man from Divinity and robbed the land of its sacredness. They promise the opposite: returning femininity to the Divine,

seeing Divinity in all and treating the earth as a friend, not an enemy.

PAGAN (ism)

Paganus = rustic, peasant, heathen "HEATHEN", from Heath= "forested or uncultivated land"

The term "Pagan" was coined by the early Christians to designate a non-Christian. The Mediterranean peoples at that time followed a lifestyle and thinking very Hindu-like. Temples to Gods and Goddesses were many. Religious festivals filled the year based on an agrarian calendar. Mystery schools taught the metaphysics of healing, yogic disciplines and the belief that all life is sacred and interconnected.

According to the U.K. Pagan Federation, there are roughly 20,000 Pagans in Britain and 200,000 in Europe who call themselves Pagans, but possibly several million more - especially in rural life - who subscribe to Pagan thought.

PAGAN/HINDU

Similarities Belief In:

* Existence of Myriads of Non-Physical Beings From Natures-Spirits to Deities

* Karma and Reincarnation

* The Oneness of All Creation Pervaded by The Divine Force

* No Dogma: Final Spiritual Authority is Personal Experience

of Truth

* The Divine is Feminine and Masculine

* Decentralized Organization

* Chakras, Kundalini, Pranic Energy

* Inner, Non-Physical Realms

* Use of Ceremonial Worship to Invoke and Awaken Higher Spiritual Energies

Differences:

* Traditions: Hinduism is Indian; Paganism is Greco/Roman/Celtic

* Deities: Hindu: Siva, Vishnu, Shakti, Etc; Pagan: Coventina, Bridge, Etc.

* Temples: Hindu: Worship is Very Ritualized; Pagan Worship is Less Rigid

* Scriptures: Hindus Revere Established Texts; Pagans Follow Diverse, Inspired Writings

“Yes, Hindus are Pagans

Interview with Prudence Jones

Hinduism Today (HT): How do you envision Paganism allying with Hinduism?

Prudence Jones (PJ): To start, through conferences we could see our connections. The most important connection

between Paganism, Hinduism and Shintoism is they are not limited to a holy book like Islam and Christianity. Not dogmatic. All the indigenous faiths must talk to one another. They all obviously wouldn't [merge] because of differences of tradition, history customs, etc. But they must link because the legal system today has defined religion based on monotheism - with a Supreme Deity who has to be obeyed. I wouldn't want to make anything too formal yet, because we don't know each other. Perhaps what we need is a Worldwide Council of Indigenous Religions.

HT: Then you consider both Hinduism and Shintoism to be Pagan?

PJ: Yes. Basically, we want to show people how similar our faith is with Hinduism and Shintoism and the North American tradition. We have to stand up against this world decade of Christian evangelism - 19912,000 - out to convert everybody of an indigenous faith. Also for legal reasons, it might be useful to be able to say we are affiliated with a world Hindu organization. But we don't really want to become part of or join another religion, but rather affiliate. One reason - although we vastly appreciate the similarities - is that we don't want the weight of social history that both Hinduism or Shintoism have.

[We are enjoying] a new spiritual current and don't want to get tied down with traditions of Who is Brahman? and who's allowed in the temple on which days.

HT: What are the main Pagan beliefs?

PJ: European Pagan religion is the native, indigenous religion of Europe. Religions with doctrines, like Christianity, came later. We feel all the world's native religions have three features in common: One, they are all nature-venerating, seeing nature as a manifestation of Divinity. The second is their polytheistic approach - many Deities, many manifestations of the Divine. The third feature is they all recognize the Goddess, the female aspect of Divinity, as well as the male.

HT: What about karma and reincarnation?

PJ: Yes, not all Pagans, but most. We have no central authority that dictates what we have to believe because it has to do with experience of the divine, and forms in which you describe that experience will vary.

Prudence Jones is a spokesperson for the U.K. Pagan Federation. Her address: 21 Shelly Garden, Cambridge, U.K. CB30BT.

(<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=795>)

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world.

Never say 'No', never say, 'I cannot', for you are infinite.

- Swami Vivekananda

SISTER NIVEDITA

Bhagini (Sister) Nivedita (Bengali pronunciation: [sister niḌbediḌt*aḌ]) was born Margaret Elizabeth Noble on 28 October 1867. She was a Scots-Irish social worker, author, teacher and a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. She spent her childhood and early days of her youth in Ireland. From her father, and her college professor, she learned many valuable lessons like – service to mankind is the true service to God. She worked as school teacher and later also opened a school. She was committed to marry a Welsh youth who died soon after their engagement. Sister Nivedita met Swami Vivekananda in 1895 in London and traveled to Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), India in 1898. Swami Vivekananda gave her the name Nivedita (meaning “Dedicated to God”) when he initiated her into the vow of Brahmacharya on 25 March 1898. In November 1898, she opened a girls school in Bagbazar area of Calcutta. She wanted to educate those girls who were deprived of even basic education. During the plague epidemic in Calcutta in 1899 Nivedita nursed and took care of the poor patients. Nivedita had close associations with the newly established Ramakrishna Mission. However, because of her active contribution in the field of Indian Nationalism, she had to publicly dissociate herself from the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission under the then president Swami Brahmananda. She was very intimate with Sarada Devi, the

spiritual consort of Ramakrishna and one of the major influences behind Ramakrishna Mission and also with all brother disciples of Swami Vivekananda. She died on 13 October 1911 in Darjeeling. Her epitaph reads, “Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India”.



Meeting with Swami Vivekananda

In November 1895 she met Swami Vivekananda who had come from America to visit London and stayed there for three months. On a cold afternoon, Swami Vivekananda, on an invitation, was explaining Vedanta philosophy in the drawing room of an aristocratic family in London. Lady Isabel Margesson, a friend of Margaret, invited her for this meeting. Margaret described her experience on the occasion. A majestic personage, clad in a saffron gown and wearing a red waist-band, sat there on the floor, cross-legged. As he spoke to the company, he recited Sanskrit verses in his deep, sonorous voice. Margaret, who had already delved deep into the

teachings of the East, found nothing quite new in what she heard on this occasion. What was new to her was the personality of the Swamiji himself. She attended several other lectures of Swami Vivekananda. She raised a lot of questions whose answers dispelled her doubts and established faith and reverence for the speaker. She started taking interest in the teachings of Gautama Buddha, Swami Vivekananda as alternate source of peace and benediction. Vivekananda’s principles and teachings influenced her and this brought about a visible change in her. Seeing the fire and passion in her, Swami Vivekananda could foresee her future role in India. Swami Vivekananda felt extreme pain by the wretchedness and misery of the people of India under the British rule and his opinion was that education was the panacea for all evils plaguing the contemporary Indian society, especially that of Indian women. Margaret was chosen for the role of educating Indian women.

Travel to India

Responding to the call of Swami Vivekananda, Margaret decided to travel to India leaving behind her family and friends, including her mother. Mombasa, the ship bringing Margaret to India, reached Calcutta on 28 January 1898. On 22 February, Margaret visited Dakshineswar temple, the place where Ramakrishna did his sadhana. Swami Vivekananda devoted

the initial few days in building her character and developing her love for India and its people. He explained to her India's history, philosophy, literature, life of the common mass, social traditions, and also the lives of great personalities, both ancient and modern. A few weeks later, two of Swami Vivekananda's women disciples in America, Sara C. Bull, wife of famous Norwegian violinist and composer Ole Bull and Josephine MacLeod arrived in India. The three became lifelong friends. On 11 March 1898, Swami Vivekananda organised a public meeting at Star Theatre to introduce Sister Nivedita to the people of Calcutta. In his speech Swami Vivekananda said – "England has sent us another gift in Miss Margaret Noble." In this meeting Margaret expressed her desire to serve India and its people. On 17 March she met Sarada Devi who greeted Margaret affectionately as Khooki (i.e. my daughter).

Brahmacharya

On 25 March 1898, Swami Vivekananda formally initiated Margaret in the vow of Brahmacharya (lifelong celibacy) and gave her the name of "Nivedita", the dedicated one. She became the first Western woman to be received into an Indian monastic order. Swami Vivekananda said to her – "Go thou and follow Him, Who was born and gave His life for others five hundred times before He attained the vision of the Buddha." She later recorded some of her experiences with her master in the book "The Master as I Saw Him". She often used to refer to Swami

Vivekananda as "The King" and considered herself as the spiritual daughter (Manaskanya in Bengali) of Swami Vivekananda

Travels

Nivedita travelled to a lot of places in India, including Kashmir, with Swami Vivekananda, Josephine McLeod and Sara Bull and this helped her in connecting to Indian masses, Indian culture and its history. She also went to United States to raise awareness and get help for her cause. On 11 May 1898 Nivedita, along with Swami Vivekananda, Sara Bull, Josephine MacLeod, and Swami Turiyananda, set foot for the Himalayas. From Nainital they travelled to Almora. On 5 June 1898, she wrote a letter to her friend Nell Hammond exclaiming, Oh Nell, Nell, India is indeed the Holy Land. In Almora she first learned the art of meditation. She wrote about this experience, 'A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity...again open and disinterested state of mind welcomes truth.' She also started learning Bengali from Swami Swarupananda. On 13 November 1898, on the day of Kali Puja, at 16 Bosepara Lane in the Bagbazar area of Calcutta, she started the school. The school was inaugurated by Sarada Devi, in the presence of Swami Vivekananda and some of the other disciples of Ramakrishna. Sarada Devi blessed and prayed for the school saying – "I pray that the blessings of the Divine Mother may be upon the school and the girls; and the girls trained from the school may become ideal

girls." Nivedita went from home to home to educate girls, many of whom were in pitiable condition owing to the socio-economic condition of early 20th century India. Nivedita had widows and adult women among her students. She taught sewing, elementary rules of hygiene, nursing, etc., apart from regular courses. Collecting money for the school was not an easy task. She had to earn money from her writings and giving lectures and later she spent all to meet the expenses of the school. She took part in altruistic activities. She worked to improve the lives of Indian women of all castes.

Work during plague epidemic

During the outbreak of plague epidemic in Calcutta in 1899 Nivedita nursed and took care of the patients, cleaned rubbish from the area, and inspired and motivated many youths to render voluntary service. She inserted appeals for help in the English newspapers and requested for financial support for her plague relief activities. She also organised the day-to-day activities, inspected the work and personally handed over the written instructions for the preventive measures by moving around.

Cultivation of Indian culture

She took active interest in promoting Indian history, culture and science. She actively encouraged Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose, the epoch-making Indian scientist and seminal philosopher of science who is credited to have

discovered the wireless radio, to pursue original scientific research and helped him financially as well in getting due recognition when he was faced by an indifferent attitude of the British Government. Her identity as both a westerner by birth and a disciple of Swami Vivekananda enabled her to do several things that might have been difficult for Indians. She promoted pan-Indian nationalism.

Contribution towards Indian nationalism

Nivedita was a prolific orator and writer and extensively toured India to deliver lectures, especially on India's culture and religion. She appealed to the Indian youth to work selflessly for the cause of the motherland along the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. Initially Nivedita, like contemporary intellectuals from Europe, was optimistic about British rule in India and believed that it was possible for India and England to love each other. However, in the course of her stay, she came to witness the brutal side of the British rule, the repression and oppression and the division between the ruling elite and the ruled plebeians; she concluded that it was necessary for India to gain independence to prosper. Therefore, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to the cause of opposing the British rule. 1905 the British Government under Curzon initiated the partition of Bengal which was a major turning point in the Indian independence movement. Nivedita played a pioneering role in organising the movement. She provided financial and logistical support and leveraged her contacts to get information from government agencies and forewarn the

revolutionaries. She met Indian artists like Abanindranath Tagore, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Havell and inspired them to develop pure Indian school of art. She always inspired and guided the talented students of the Calcutta Art School to move along the forgotten tracks of ancient Indian art like Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and Surendranath Gangopadhyay. She exerted great influence on



famous Tamil poet, Subrahmanya Bharati, who met her only briefly in 1906. She influenced Bharathi to work for the freedom of women in the country, which he did all through his life. Nivedita designed the national flag of India with the thunderbolt as the emblem against a red background. Nivedita tried her utmost to inculcate the nationalist spirit in the minds of her students through all their daily activities. She introduced singing of the song Vande Mātaram in her school as a prayer. Nivedita provided guarded support to Annie Besant, and was very close to Aurobindo Ghosh (later Rishi Aurobindo), one of the major contributors towards early nationalist movement. She edited Karma Yogin, the nationalist newspaper of Aurobindo. The following piece is

from an editorial in Karma Yogin, written by Nivedita, which depicts her intense respect for India: "The whole history of the world shows that the Indian intellect is second to none. This must be proved by the performance of a task beyond the power of others, the seizing of the first place in the intellectual advance of the world. Is there any inherent weakness that would make it impossible for us to do this? Are the countrymen of Bhaskaracharya and Shankaracharya inferior to the countrymen of Newton and Darwin? We trust not. It is for us, by the power of our thought, to break down the iron walls of opposition that confront us, and to seize and enjoy the intellectual sovereignty of the world." Nivedita died at the dawn of 13 October 1911 at the age of 43, in Roy Villa, Darjeeling. Today, her memorial is located below the Railway station on the way to the Victoria Falls (of Darjeeling) with these words inscribed in her epitaph – "Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India". Her works included The Web of Indian Life, which sought to rectify many myths in the Western world about Indian culture and customs, Kali the Mother, The Master as I Saw Him on Swami Vivekananda, Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda on her travels from Nainital, Almora and other places with Swamiji, The Cradle Tales of Hinduisim on the stories from Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata, Studies from an Eastern Home, Civil Ideal and Indian Nationality, Hints on National Education in India, Glimpses of Famine and Flood in East Bengal—1906.

ABVKA's Vision Document released by Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal

The 'Vision Document for The Janajatis (ST's) of Bharat' prepared by the Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA) the parent body of Kalyan Ashram Assam released in a graceful program by Shri Sarbananda Sonowal Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam in a function at Lions Club Auditorium Chatribari.

On the auspicious day of 'Universal Brotherhood day' which is also symbolic of the cultural victory of Bharat's spirituality through the historic speech of Swami Vivekananda in Chicago function started with Assom Sangeet presented by Girls student of the Udalguri Girls Hostel of Kalyan Ashram. Sh Sonowal lighted the lamp in front of the image of Bharat Mata which was followed by Mantra chanting. While welcoming the Guest and dignitaries Advocate Sh Vinod Jain President of Guwahati Mahanagar Samitee of Kalyan Ashram Assam asked active cooperation from the well wisher and donors of the orgation. While addressing to the audience Sh Nagendra Nunisa President of Kalyan Ashram Assam threw light on the origin and development of the Kalyan Ashram as well as its social activities presently going on in the state.

The ABVKA is founded to bring all the janajati communities of our country at an equal & graceful level in all aspects such as educationally, economically, governance, service sector and

so on in context to the other sections of the society, to make them aware of their duties and rights and to nurture the feeling of patriotism in a proper channel. It aims at creating a sense of ONENESS among all the Bharatiyas – tribal, non-tribal, villagers, metropolitans, rich-poor etc. As the ABVKA is working for the all-round development of all the tribal communities of our country, it has conducted a series of seminars at different levels all over the country to develop a VISION DOCUMENT for ST's of India. Eminent scholars from various sectors such as leading universities, legal experts, social service sectors, Bureaucrats, Techno-crates & NGO's have participated in those seminars; from Assam 06 scholars had attended the national level workshop at Mumbai. It covers the sectors of Education, Health, Water management, Forests, Mining, Administration, and Reservation policies.

The All India Joint General Secretary of ABVKA Shri Vishnukant in his key note address highlighted the various issues related to the Janajati (tribals) and asserted that organization has been working for the last 65 years to improve the fate and welfare of the tribal people. He further stated that the principle of "Nation First, India First" is the guiding principle of the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram and all its service projects.

Highlighting the various issues related to the Vision Document, he said that the document is not an administrative guideline, but a reference for prioritization. He opined that only certain service projects by govt or other organizations shall not solve the perennial issues of the tribal communities, but there must be a clear vision, dissemination of the required information, prioritization of the measures and a strong will power among the establishment to bring out the required permanent solution. He also referred to the recently introduced share of profits issue with local-displaced people in way of royalty in MMDR Act 2015 and informed the house that the efforts of ABVKA led to policy intervention which has facilitated mobilization of a huge fund of more than six thousand crores through such royalties for the welfare of tribal communities, which is even more than the total budget of the Union Ministry of Tribal affairs.

Addressing the elite audience on the occasion as Guest of Honour, Chief Minister stated that the Vision document by ABVKA is in the larger interest of the state and Nation. Our society need to have a debate why the constitutional provisions for tribal are not materialized. Sustainable development must be ensured by exploring and exploiting the resources in our areas. We must not miss this opportunity to turn

(Contd. to Page 20)

Menacing Problem of Encroachment in Assam

- Dr Manmohan Das

In spite of having laws and a government with its administrative machinery, there have been growing cases of encroachment on the government vacant land, grazing land, wetland, chars, land of the Satras and forest area, and also the transfer of legally possessed land of the indigenous people, even within the tribal belts and blocks. Such illegal occupation of land is facilitated by the rampant corruption of the revenue officials, sheer inaction of the policemen and the tacit political patronage to the encroachers. This inaction to take stern measures to evict them promptly not only endangered the existence of the genuine indigenous people but also affected adversely the natural environment of the state. It is alleged in the field-based report of the Upamanyu Hazarika Commission appointed by the Supreme Court that the infiltrators from Bangladesh are the main group behind such encroachment. They are found to be most aggressive to occupy plots of land in Assam because of the obvious reason that the density of population in Bangladesh from where they have been intruding Assam is about 1,222 persons per sq km as against only 397 in Assam according to the Census 2011. Because of the vote bank politics, neither the government in the State nor in the Centre is serious enough to evict such encroachers, not to speak of their detection and deportation to their home country. The report further mentions the hideous data of encroachment into the government lands in different

regions of Assam. For example, the district administration of Darrang has admitted that about 77,420 bighas of government land have been encroached by the suspected Bangladeshi infiltrators. But no step has been taken so far by the government to evict the encroachers. The report also said that a section of government officials and politicians are involved in this nefarious design. Because of the help and cooperation extended by such a corrupt nexus, the infiltrators can easily enlist their names in the voters' list, get allotment in their encroached lands and all other kinds of facilities extended by the government to the genuine citizens of the State. Moreover, it is surprising to see that villages after villages of the suspected infiltrators have sprung up in the fallow lands of the government on both sides of the National Highways, thus enabling them to claim to be the permanent settlers of Assam. The administration seems to be totally indifferent to such pernicious encroachments. According to the data provided by the Press Information Bureau of the Government of India, forests, char lands, government grazing reserves, etc., have been encroached by the Bangladeshi immigrants. It is also expressed in the same source that 7790 hectares of Kaziranga, 800 hectares of Nameri, 1,700 hectares of Manas and 300 hectares of Dibru- Chaikhowa reserves are under encroachment. It is very unfortunate that the government has not taken any effective step to

evict such encroachers. The passive role of the State Government has been encouraging the land hungry Bangladeshi migrants to come over to Assam and easily occupy any kind of land without any restriction. It is alleged not only by the people and different organizations, but even by the Supreme Court and the Gauhati High Court that the governments' intention has been to capture a large number of votes of the migrants in order to have political power even at the cost of the indigenous people. As a result, thousands of hectares of lands have been encroached, settled and cultivated. Another glaring example of encroachment of lands is that out of 6.32 lakh bighas of land belonging to 865 registered Sattras, 6,792 bighas of 26 Sattras have been encroached. It may be mentioned here that the Gauhati High Court on March 27, 1997 in its historic verdict on a writ petition praying for eviction of the encroachers from the lands belonging to the Sattras, namghars, Kirtanghars and thans, directed the State Government to evict all such encroachers and also to provide security to all Vaishnavite institutions. Unfortunately, the government has been doing nothing so far to implement the High Court's mandate. The Hazarika Commission has pointed out that as it is not possible to transfer lands from tribal to non-tribal people or occupy lands within the tribal belts and blocks because of the Tribal Belts and Blocks Regulation incorporated as the

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Conversion of Northeast Tribal Society

- Prof T.R Gogoi

Tribal societies and tribal people are often more vulnerable to crises. These days they are being greatly exposed to vigorous agents of change in the form of development programmes. To them, such abrupt changes are a source of cultural shock, which usually causes inner conflict in tribal peoples' lives. Their simple societies fail to find an alternative in a short time. Unlike complex societies, these simple societies do not possess a mechanism to accommodate and absorb shocks during transitional phases. So they fall easy victim to missionary propaganda which promises an apparently attractive alternative. In static tribal communities, the internal dynamics of change get activated when the society becomes larger and more differentiated, and experiences more failures over a long period of time. People who experience inner conflict veer towards an alternative that comes in the form of conversion.

The crisis in Northeastern tribal societies has various dimensions. The causes may be different, but they nonetheless play relentlessly on the mind. The end result is the crisis that basically stems from an aspiration for change. As an analyst puts it, "Conversion consequent upon the crisis has a link with "tradition" and "transformation" and gets ultimate expression in

"Transcendence." Here is an attempt at understanding the

larger phenomenon of conversion with the Northeastern tribal society as a backdrop.

Tribal societies in the Northeast have been experiencing a diametrical division along religious lines. The conflict emerges when one part of a society embraces Christianity while the other part tenaciously protects the indigenous faiths and practices. The latter group draws upon, overtly or covertly, many Hindu organizations that are actively engaged in protecting indigenous and ethnological cultures. Conversion either to Christianity or to other religions like Buddhism, Islam or Hinduism is a large scale and widespread phenomenon today, especially in tribal and backward societies. These religious groups have well-defined and robust cultural identities, and their strong socio-cultural networks prevent conversion to any other faith. In contrast, tribal or backward societies are seen as lacking the inherent dynamics to beat back the onslaught of proselytizing forces. Conversion is mostly used in a narrow sense to mean religious conversion. Since the Northeastern conversion narrative is almost exclusively about Christianity, historical and ethno-historical studies have treated religious conversion — especially by Christian missionaries — as a component of colonialism.

The studies generally focus

on the forced assimilation of native people into Western ways. The goal of Christian missionaries often viewed as something not in the best interest of the convert. However, instances of forced assimilation leading to conversion are relatively rare now. Today, international organizations like UNO and the national governments in most of the countries promote individual dignity and protect cultural rights through legal provisions. Any type of coercion is despised and earns condemnation from all quarters, with the result that no open force can be applied for any type of conversion nowadays. So the question arises why are Northeastern tribal communities still converting to other faiths?

Conversion Through the Prism of the Sciences

The conversion of Northeastern tribal societies has various dimensions. That is a narrow sense as well as a broad one, both of which have to be properly understood. In the broad sense, it goes beyond mere religion; it is something with multi-disciplinary dimensions.

Conversion in syllogistic or traditional logic means interchanging the subject and predicate of a categorical proposition or statement. For example, the converse of the proposition "No men are immortal" is "No immortals are men" and that of "Some men are

mortal” would be “some mortals are man”. In mathematics the term converse is used for the proposition obtained by transformation. If AB implies C and AC implies B, it is rendered symbolically as ABCD transforming into ACDB. This operation may in some instance be rendered to the single converse of an A proposition (universal affirmative) in the sense of traditional logic. For example, the converse of “equilateral triangle is equiangular” would be “Every equiangular triangle is equilateral”.

What History Says

But conversion in the religious sense is a different kettle of fish. Conversion — primarily a Jewish and Christian term— points to phenomena that are associated with personal and communal metamorphosis. Conversion signifies the experiences induced in adopting or changing a religious belief out of conviction. This experience is not limited to any particular religion. Both Buddha and St. Francis turned from lives of pleasure to what they saw to be spiritual realities — Buddha through renunciation and St. Francis through poverty and love for the world.

In Bible, conversion is understood as the turning of man to God. It embodies divine action and human response. The conversions of Isaiah and St. Paul are typical in that they embody conviction of sin, forgiveness and acceptance of a mission. In the Old Testament, conversion is the end goal of all

preaching. “The Kingdom of god is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel” were the words with which Jesus began his ministry.

The Christian church has considered conversion to be its principal task. Such notable preachers as Peters, Paul, Chrysostom, Luther and John wisely have stressed it. Both Catholics and Protestants have agreed that the change brought by conversion — called rebirth, regeneration or faith — is necessary for Christian life. Catholics have held that this change occurs in baptism regardless of whether or not any experience of conversion is present. Protestants, on the other hand, have tended to believe that without such experience one has not become a Christian, irrespective of whether he has been baptized or not.

With the ecumenical movement in the 20th century, there has tended to be a lowering of barriers separating Catholics and Protestants. There seems to be the development of a common view that there cannot be complete conversion and rebirth without individuals having some relation to the sacramental life of the church.

Drawing the Final Lines

Conversion is well understood with reference to its three dimensions tradition, transformation and trans-cendence. Tradition encompasses the social and cultural matrix that includes symbols, myths, rituals and institutions. Transcendence refers to the domain of the sacred. Transformation, on the

other hand, is the process of change manifested though alteration in thoughts, feeling and actions of an individual. The emotional turmoil of adolescence and consequent changes has a reference to conversion and its attendant process.

That religious conversion has lately come to be considered a crisis in the North-east, has much to do with the advent of new narratives sweeping through much of India at present. But conversions have long been common in these states. Its roots go far back in time. Shortly after Independence, tribal societies in the north-east were exposed to modern forces by way of various planned programmes. These societies underwent widespread changes in institutions and occupational patterns, but this transformation wasn't followed by concomitant changes in social values, attitudes and outlook. As a result, tribal societies as a whole failed to put in place systems capable of timely handling of those emerging challenges. So a gap came to exist, which would in time irreparably divide north-eastern tribes on individual and community lines. What we see today — the crisis of confidence and the clash of narratives — is in fact fallout of what happened when modern forces made foray into societies poorly equipped to tackle the quick-blowing winds of change.

(<http://www.northeasttoday.in/conversion-of-northeast-tribal-society/>)

Pakistan Killing the Intellectuals and the History of the Baloch

An “identity crisis” looms before the Baloch people as Pakistan is killing their intellectuals and strategically suppressing their history, says a Baloch freedom activist, adding that they will “not let Pakistan take our cultural identity from us”.

According to prominent Baloch freedom movement activist Mazdak Dilshad Baloch, the lullabies of Baloch mothers “are the only source of history lesson for the new generation” of their people.

“As per Pakistani text books, Balochistan is a barbaric nation and Baloch people are barbarians who fight among themselves. That’s what they (Pakistan) teach their kids, a manipulated history of Balochistan” Mazdak told IANS..

The issue of manipulated history in text books was also raised in the Pakistan Parliament earlier this year, after the 12th standard Sociology books defined Baloch as “uncivilised people who engage in murder and looting”.

“There is total crackdown on journalists, lawyers, doctors, engineers and students. The figure of missing people has crossed 25,000 and about 25 Baloch journalists have been killed. They are killing our intellectuals, educated ones who could take us forward in the future” said Mazdak, who was in the Indian capital.

He said most of the Baloch leaders and intellectuals are either dead, underground or have fled Pakistan fearing for their life.

Terming the Pakistani media a “puppet” and Pakistan an “artificial nation”, the young activist who was in Delhi to garner support of Indians

for Baloch people, said, “Our history is being suppressed and this is part of their strategy. Baloch people are voiceless and Pakistani media can’t help us.”

“They are confining our 700-year-old history to 70 years which is not even ours. Our children are told that Jinnah was our founder, while it was Mir Miro Baloch who founded the kingdom of Balochistan in 1410”- Mazdak said, adding that while Baloch people love education, they resist the Pakistani syllabus.

“They teach us about Ahmed Shah Abdali. He was a great person in history and should be celebrated by Afghans. We have nothing to do with him, Sher Shah Suri, Mahmood Ghaznavi or Mughals. You can’t just snatch someone else’s history and make it your own.

“We have our own history, culture and lifestyle. You can see our clothes and carpets — they have the same pattern and geometry as were in Mehargarh (an ancient site in Balochistan). Our historic finger prints are still intact. Our culture and language is never dying and we will not let Pakistan take it from us, Mazdak said.

He also speaks of Hindu shrines in Balochistan including the famed Hinglaj or Nani Mandir. Hindus in Balochistan are not Indian or Pakistani, they are Baloch Hindus. We have been protecting and celebrating the centuries-old legacy. The town of Mastung, where I come from, has a Mahadev temple. We protect and respect them because it’s part of our heritage, he said.

All around the world mothers

would tell their children a fairy tale. But a Baloch mother while putting her child to sleep tells about how the forefathers got this land, this is how they fought and got martyred. So this is how the children there are brought up. This is how a sense of sovereignty is inherited in their blood, he explained.

Asked why he opposes the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a project that allows China to access the Gwadar Port in Balochistan from its western province of Xinjiang, the activist in exile called it a conspiracy to loot our resources.

We are not against economic activities or anything that would uplift the economic condition of the region, but for this they have to talk to Baloch, not the people in Lahore. It is a conspiracy to loot our resources as with this move there is no economic benefit to the Baloch people, he said.

Army and government of Pakistan only want our land and our resources. Saying that while they want to nurture a free Balochistan as a democratic, secular and & gender-balanced nation, Mazdak calls Pakistan an artificial country.

If they (Pakistan) teach correct history then people will ask why it even got separated from India, with which it shares history. Even ethnically and genetically they are same. This shows how ignorant Pakistan is and what kind of artificial country it is, he said.

(<http://www.madhyamam.com/en/interview/2016/aug/28/pakistan-killing-our-intellectuals-and-history-baloch-freedom-activist>)

Baluchistan: Baluch Movement gets New Fillip

The tenth martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Nawab Akbar Bugti, former minister and Governor of Baluchistan, was observed with shutter down strikes and demonstrations all across the world including Baluchistan, US, UK and other European countries. Reiterating their vow to continue the struggle following the ideology of their national leader, activists paid tributes to Bugti who sacrificed his life for the Baluch nation. After bringing up the Human Rights violations in Baluchistan in his Red Fort speech, Prime Minister Modi has been receiving a zealous and exciting response from the affected areas of Pakistan's state-sponsored violence. After different groups of Baluchis collectively observed the martyrdom day of Bugti, it appears that Modi's speech has given a united voice to the different factions of Baluchi freedom movement.

Baloch Republican Party which was at the forefront of organizing these events remembered the lifetime struggle and ultimate sacrifice of this leader under the auspices of various chapters in Europe and South Korea.

Who was Bugti?

Nawab Akbar Shahbaz Khan Bugti (July 12, 1927 – August 26, 2006) was the head of the Bugti tribe of Baluch people and a freedom fighter who served as both the Chief Minister and

Governor of Baluchistan Province. On August 26, 2006, he was brutally killed in a military operation. His killing led to widespread unrest in the area and a surge in the nationalist sentiment in Baluchistan.

Twitter response to PM Modi's I-Day Speech

Dawn (leading newspaper of Pakistan) @dawn_com. Former Afghan President (HamidKarzai) says India has every right to respond to Pak's provocations

Karima Baloch (Chairperson, Baloch National Front) @KarimaBaloch. Thank you @narendramodi for raising

Baluchistan's issue. Hope the world will follow and help us get our freedom.

Nawab Brahmdagh Bugti (President, Baloch Republican Party) @BBugti. We appreciate the statement of PM of India, world's largest democracy and being a responsible neighbour. India should intervene in Baluchistan. People staged massive agitation in Sui, Dera Bugti, Jafarabad, Nasirabad and other locations in Baluchistan. According to reports, protesters were seen carrying Indian flags and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pictures along with those of the Baloch martyr and freedom fighter Akbar Bugti during the protests. The Baloch Republican Party's United Kingdom chapter held a seminar paying tribute to Shaheed Bugti.

A large number of Party activists, UK citizens and Baluch leader Sardar Bakhtiar Khan Domki participated and expressed their solidarity with Baluch people. In another major protest in Europe, the Party Chief Nawab Brahmdagh Bugti, other activists and a large number of German citizens organised events in Germany. Addressing the gathering through a video message, Nawab Brahmdagh Bugti said that China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was being built on the dead bodies of Baluch civilians who opposed the project that goes against their will. BRP Germany Chapter also held a protest after the event in Leipzig. The protesters highlighted human rights violations and military operations in Baluchistan and chanted slogans against China and Pakistan for oppressing the Baluch nation.

The people of Baluchistan hope that India will support the Baluch cause. It has now been espoused on Twitter with the hashtag

India for Balochistan. Meanwhile, BJP assured the people of Baluchistan of its support and castigated Pakistan for brewing unrest in its largest province. It also urged the international community to build pressure on Islamabad to take steps to address the grievances of the Baluchi people.

(<http://organiser.org//Encyc/2016/9/5/Report-Baluchistan-—Baluch-Movement-gets-New-Fillip.aspx>)

Solung Across Arunachal

Solung, the popular and main agricultural festival of Adi community was also celebrated with traditional gaiety and religious favour in various parts of the state. Addressing the festive revelers in Solung Festival celebration at Solung-Mopin Ground here on Thursday, the Chief Minister Pema Khandu gave a clarion call to promote 'one Arunachal, one Identity' for peace and harmony. He said that the need of the hour is to send the message of 'one Arunachal, one Identity' to rest of the world.

"Unity in diversity is our strength. Let us make this diversity strength by bonding together in peace and cooperation with mutual respect and love for each other", said Chief Minister Pema Khandu. Arunachal is a place of multi-tribes and a potpourri of varied cultures, Pema said and appealed to all to make this diversity strength by learning to live together in peace and perfect harmony as members of one big family.

While calling to preserve culture and tradition, he said, "In the pursuit of materialistic world and individual life, we must not let our cultures and traditions erode away."

"It is our responsibility to preserve our rich cultural heritage and to pass it on to the next generation," he added. He also emphasized on imparting moral education to the children and mooted for evolving a mechanism to impart education on indigenous cultures and traditions. He called upon all community based organizations to come forward

and suggest the government in evolving such a mechanism.

The Chief Minister exhorted the youths to concentrate on studies and not to sway away from the mainstream. He called upon the elders to guide them in right direction especially during their growing stage. Education Minister Honchun Ngandam said that festivals bind us together and bring unity, peace and cooperation. Without culture, we cannot form a society. Therefore we have to protect and preserve our rich cultural heritage, he said, adding that education can be used as a tool to preserve the culture, festivals and traditions. Likar Angu, Chief Engineer WRD (WZ) emphasized on preservation and promotion of rich cultural heritage. "We must adapt to the changes but it should not be at the cost of original cultural fabrics," he opined, and called for transmission of the local dialect, genetic traits and indigenous beliefs to the younger generation in its original form.

Tapi Gao, president, Solung Festival Celebration Committee, Itanagar narrated the Solung mythology. On the occasion, Solung Souvenir, "DiigokRoli" (The call of the dawn) was released by the Chief Minister while an Adi Audio Album, "Gi:Di Tapung Roli" was released by the Education Minister. Varieties of cultural programme including folk dances Pemi-Nobo, Nuni Pipi Yoyo Gaga and Delong Kiine apart from Solung mega dance and Adi modern dances added flavour to the celebration. Earlier, Solung Festival was inaugurated by

Pema by performing Taku-Tabat, an offering ceremony at festival altar. Among others, Dambuk MLA Gum Tayeng and ABK president Kangir Jamoh were also present.

BOMDILA: Solung festival was also celebrated at district headquarters Bomdila on Thursday with pomp and show. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Japu Deru exhorted the people to stay rooted in their own culture, traditions and preserve them for the future generations. Deputy Commissioner Sonal Swaroop reiterated the importance of maintaining unity and living in perfect harmony among the community members for peace, progress and prosperity.

ROING: MLA Mutchu Mithi, who joined the Adi brethren in celebrating Solung at Gidii Notko Midland here, expressed the hope that the festivity will usher in good harvest, peace, prosperity and happiness for all. Lower Dibang Valley Deputy Commissioner Ravi Dhawan exhorted the young generation to preserve their rich cultural heritage. Solung Celebrations Committee, Roing president Tobang Pertin said that Solung, like other festivals of the state, is also an agricultural festival and it is celebrated for bumper harvest and well being of humanity. Secretary Nibang Pertin called upon the community members to showcase their age old traditional attire. Other attractions of the festival were folk dance and colorful cultural items. Superintendent of Police S. Sain, ADC Ruchika Katyul, ZPC Sipi

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Funye (Fish Festival): An Unique Tradition of Chakhesangs

- Ms. Velavolu Theluo

Nagaland, a land of mountains and deep valleys, is inhabited by more than 17 delightful tribes. The land is also known as land of fairs and festivals as celebration of festivals in Naga society extends throughout the year, with each tribe celebrating their own set of festivals.

After getting the good harvest, we the Chakesang people go in festive mood as feasts and festivals are the most fundamental elements of our lives. All the celebrations are the part of offering prayer and thanksgiving to bountiful nature. Farming is the main occupation and paddy cum fish culture is commonly practiced in terraces and wet land farming. This ensures the practice of Fūnye since the olden days. Every household rears mostly mud fish in their wet paddy fields. Farmers raise the fishes in their wet rice terraces. A small pit is dug out in the middle of the rice field and fish fingerlings are put in the fields. When the water is drained out from the fields before harvesting of the paddy, fishes move in to the pit. Usually farmers get yield of about 60 – 80 kg fish and 20 quintals paddy per hectare in paddy cum fish culture.

Khilūvatū or Fūnye (Fish Festival) is celebrated right after paddy harvest. So after getting good harvest of paddy we use to celebrate Fūnye and enjoy the beauty that the seasons have bestowed on us. It coincides with the observation of Vatō/Kevāketō (grain-gather) and Kh)yītī (Partaking the first grain from Barn/ Container with thanksgiving to the

deities) in the month of Ngéhā (November). Fūnye is a unique and rare festival as hardly any other society celebrates it. Initially, this Fūnye is practiced by the Chokr- sect of Phek District but now practiced by all Chakhesangs sects. 15th November is set for its celebration for the convenience. As Almighty has bequeathed with all the good setting necessary for higher yield, so after harvesting good yield of paddy and fish, gratitude is expressed by the community in the form of celebration. Programme start with thanksgiving prayers to God for his generosity and bountifulness. As water signifies richness and fish is regarded to be clean and holy because it lives in water as well as traditionally, fish also signifies money and wealth, so it is offered during celebration. Thus, partaking fish with the first grain of the new harvest is believed to bring good fortunes.

Every household equally participates in the celebration with reared/unreared fish. Normally people go for fishing in morning and they bring the fishes to home. After fishing people dress nicely, gather at village center and there they organize feast, dances, songs and traditional sports like; long jump, high jump, wrestling, climbing on bamboo that is smoothed and lubricated with lard (pig fat) etc. The curry prepared from fish and rice is eaten during the celebration. People exchange their curry and ShīdzØ (grain-brewed wine) with friends, near and dear ones, and also offer to the old and needy people. This

way the Chakhesangs carry their unique culture and tradition that is the integral parts of a society's richness and pride.

Novel on Apatani Tribe of Arunachal wins UK Award for Historical Fiction

Stuart H Blackburn's novel "Into the Hidden Valley", explores the impact of the colonial history of British India on Apatani tribal settlement in Arunachal Pradesh, has won the M M Bennetts Award for Historical Fiction 2016 in the UK.

The award was presented to the American author at the HNS Conference in Oxford. The novel dramatises the colonial encounter between the British and Northeast tribes. Many of the main events described in the novel are either true or based on true events.

Blackburn revealed that he first became interested in the Tibeto-Burman- speaking tribes of Northeast India when he went to Arunachal Pradesh in 1999. He did various stints of research in the Apatani valley, recording oral stories and documenting ritual ceremonies.

He is also the author or editor of 16 books on Indian culture and folklore, mainly in South India and Northeast India.

Currently, the novel is available on Amazon. It is also available from Speaking Tiger Books in New Delhi, who published the Indian edition.

(<http://sevendary.com/apatani-tribe-arunachal-wins-uk-award-historical-fiction/>)

Japanese Students in Nagaland to learn traditional Naga lifestyle

Mokokchung: In what can be defined as a wonderful opportunity for cross cultural learning and sharing of the ways of life in two completely different worlds and cultures, a 7-member team from Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan are on a two-week study tour to Nagaland during which they will be staying at Mopungchuket village under Mokokchung district and the state capital, Kohima. The visiting team from Japan comprises of 6 University students and a Professor. They arrived at Mopungchuket village on August 18. The team is being hosted by the Mopungchuket Village Council and their tour is being facilitated by the Sustainable Development Forum Nagaland (SDFN). During their stay at Mopungchuket, the visitors will be engaging in and learning the traditional ways and life of a typical Ao Naga village, village governance and

administration institutions, community land-use and resource management systems, cultures and traditions of the community, arts and crafts of the community, challenges and opportunities of the community, and overall development challenges and pathways of Nagaland, among other things. The visitors' experiences and observations are expected to be reflected in journals and academic documents that may open windows of opportunity for future collaboration, learning and progress.

The team will be leaving Mopungchuket on the morning of August 24 for Kohima where they will be staying for another two more days. During their stay in Kohima, they are expected to visit the War Cemetery, State Museum, Naga Heritage Village Kisama and Dzulakie. The visiting team is led by Dr. Takano Takako,

Professor at the Department of Centre for International Education. She expressed gratefulness to the village community for hosting her team. She also expressed appreciation for Amba Jamir, founder Executive Secretary of SDFN who she has known since early 2000s, for making their visit possible. The students from Waseda University, Tokyo include Koisi Yoshitaka, a student of Literature, Yoshida Yuto, a political science and economics student, Miki Nakamura, a student of the School of Liberal Studies, Natsuho Muraoka, a student of Humanities and Social Sciences, Saki Matsuoka, a student of International Law and You Haichao, a Chinese national from Shanghai studying Political Science and Economics at Waseda University.

(<http://thenortheasttoday.com/japanese-students-in-nagaland-to-learn-traditional-naga-lifestyle>)

Sikkim's Sushmita Rai wins Bronze at World Martial Arts Masterships, 2016

Sushmita Rai from Mazitar, East Sikkim won a Bronze medal at World Martial Arts Masterships 2016 which was held at Chenzou, South Korea today. She was among the 12 member team who were representing India in the International event. Sushmita Rai had also won the Silver Medal last year in the Asian Kickboxing Championship 2015 which was held in Pune, Maharashtra. ((



Along with Sushmita Rai, another National Kickboxing Champion from Sikkim, Phurba

Sherpa had also participated in the event.

Sushmita Rai hails from the

village of Bhasmey of Majhitar, East Sikkim under West Pandam Constituency. Currently, she is pursuing her Bachelors in Arts from the Sikkim Government College, Tadong-Gangtok. She is also engaged as a Coaching Instructor of Rey Valley International School. Phurba Sherpa the current National Champion from Sikkim is also selected for Asian Championship to represent India

(<http://thenortheasttoday.com/sikkims-sushmita-rai-wins-bronze-at-world-martial-arts-masterships-2016/>)

Meghalaya Kids Shine in National Yogasana Championship 2016

Shillong, Sep 16, 2016 : Two kids from Shillong made the state proud by securing the 6th and 13th position in the 29th National Yogasana Championship 2016, held from Sept 10 till 12 at Sailen Manna Stadium, West Bengal.

In the age group of 6-10 years old amongst girls and boys, Ekaparnika Das managed to secure the 6th position while, in the age group of 10-15 years old, Bikran Biswas secured the 13th position.

Addressing media persons, Chinmoyee Gupta Roy, Coach of Meghalaya Yoga Association while lauding the efforts of her students for their success, said that these kids displayed a spirit of competition and rose above all challenges even as she

maintained that it was a tough competition with over 80-85 participants in each age category.

She informed that around 20 states from across the country had participated in the championship. The total strength of participants from Meghalaya taking part in the championship is 10 both boys and girls.

According to her, the students selected to participate in the championship were chosen based on their performance during the State contest in Meghalaya. "The people of the state are more aware of the benefits of taking up yoga as there has been an increase in the number of people learning yoga in the state," she observed.

Lamenting on the lack of support from the state government, she said, "Even though the government is spending a lot of money celebrating Yoga Day every year in the state, however, till date we are yet to receive any support from the government."

Roy learned her trade in the art of Yoga from the Hitman Physical Institute located at Jail Road and is currently imparting the knowledge towards her students for the past 5 years now. "When I first started teaching yoga 5 years back, I had only 3 students however at present I have more than 40 students learning yoga," she said.

(<http://thenortheasttoday.com/meghalaya-shillong-kids-shines-in-national-yogasana/>)

Muslim girl from Kudla takes yoga to Saudi Arabia

MANGALURU, Sep 13, 2016 : She is the only Muslim certified yoga instructor in Jeddah. Hailing from Belvi, a small town near Moodbidri, Fatima Shaikh Abdul Majeed is making yoga popular among the people of Saudi Arabia.

"However, initially, it was not easy to convince people to take up yoga. People found it difficult to accept it, although they thought it to be an out of the box idea. Later, when they realized the positive outcome of yoga in getting a healthy mind and body, they included it in their lifestyle, said Fatima, a commerce graduate, who has been in Saudi Arabia all her life as her parents are settled there.

Remembering her first attempt at teaching yoga in her first class, she said, "It was a flop and people rejected it. But, my colleagues gave me the motivation to try again and eventually, it gave positive results."

Fatima said that she had limited knowledge about yoga during her school days. I developed interest in it gradually and became curious to learn more. Three years ago, I enrolled at the Avishkar Yoga and Holistic Centre in Bejai and learnt more. Whenever I get time, I try to learn more about advanced yoga techniques," she said.

She conducts classes only for

women and says that these women get some time for themselves to open up. "From teenagers to senior citizens, now, everyone comes to my fitness studio to learn the art."

"I don't teach any yoga asanas which has chantings as I believe only the ancient Indian science is a healthy exercise. There is a misconception among people that our religion has many restrictions especially for women. But in reality, it allows us do what we want to as long as we don't cross our boundaries. It gives women a lot of respect," she adds.

(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mangaluru/Muslim-girl-from-Kudla-takes-yoga-to-S-rabia>)

Bernadethe Khongsngi the Success Story of a Lady Farmer from Meghalaya

Shillong, Sep 17, 2016, Paulami Dutta :Bernadette Khongsngi's story is that of hope, of women's empowerment and inspiration. Today she is a leading lady agriculturist-entrepreneur of Meghalaya. Bernadette's story is otherwise like millions of other women in India. This one housewife and mother of seven children is married to a teacher. Originally from Sohra they later shifted base to Umran.

Bernadette initially tried her hand at traditional crops grown in the region such as paddy and ginger. She also tried her hand at poultry, raising pigs, brick making etc. While working on these things without much success Bernadette came across an advertisement about a government scheme to support farmers to build greenhouses made of polythene. Bernadette was selected as a floriculture beneficiary under the Technology Mission in 2002-03 and was provided with one low cost shadehouse, 6000 bulbs of Gladioli, 5000 Liliams, Amaryllis,

Carnations and Hyacinth. With the greenhouse and resources in place Bernadette

Fondly called Kong Ber, the lady has now put an end to other activities such as poultry and brick making and is fully dedicated to growing more flowers. In 2004 Bernadette along with five of her friends formed SHG called Kyntiewlang Women's Group. This group has now expanded and grows strawberries etc.

Bernadette has set up Sloan Flower Nursery cum Vermicompost as well as to potted plants and seedlings. She has also taken up the cultivation of Anthurium, Leather leaf, Heliconia, Roses and Strawberries. Bernadette's nursery is located on the national highway which also gives the advantage to showcase her flowers and potted plants and tourists passing by as well as people from the city regularly stop to buy her plants. With the proceeds from her sales, she has constructed a small showroom to house her more exotic pots and

foliage plants. She had also started a PCO when the mobile phones were not so much in vogue.

Bernadette has had the hunger to grow and innovate and realizing the demand for potted plants she also travels to nurseries in Assam and sources exotic plants and works her magic on them. Apart from that she participates in seasonal flower shows organized by the Regional Rural Training Center (RRTC). Her average per day sales range from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1000/ and Bernadette has supported her seven children through school and college and has even provided them with a computer. Bernadette also hopes to open a small tourist shop where people can relax and enjoy a cup of tea, sample her flowers or buy them.

Bernadette is also inspiring women of her region to work and loves guiding them. She is indeed an inspiration for us.

(<http://www.nelive.in/meghalaya/business/bernadethe-khongsngi-success-story-lady-farmer-meghalaya>)

(Contd. from Page 10)

ABVKA's Vision Document Released by Hon'ble Chief Minister ...

our society into a well developed society. The Chief Minister thanked the ABVKA for the noble venture of preparing the Vision Documents for the Schedules Tribes and hoped that it would definitely serve as a reference guide in formulating the gov't's policies and programs.

Referring to the proverb that a Journey of a thousand steps starts with a single step, he said that the present initiative of developing the vision document shall definitely bring out the expected results in the coming years.

The programme anchored in

a lucid manner by Sh Premji Khajanchi, Member Guwahati Mhanagar Samittee of Kalyan Ashram while Sh Brajen Bora Joint Secretary of Kalyan Ashram Assam gave vote thanks and the programme ended with Vande Mataram by the girls student of Udalguri Girls Hostel.

Tripura claims top literacy slot at 97.22%

The Tripura government on Thursday claimed that it has surpassed Kerala and Mizoram to become the highest literate state in the country by achieving a literacy rate 97.22%.

Education minister Tapan Chakraborty said Tripura achieved this feat in the mid-term annual assessment of states submitted to the Union HRD ministry. As per the 2011 census, Kerala and Mizoram had a literacy rate of 94% and 92% respectively against Tripura's 87%.

"We are on a mission to achieve 100% literacy before the next census in 2021," he added.

Addressing a gathering chief minister Manik Sarkar said the

state's literacy movement has been completely a voluntary effort of a cross section of people to achieve 100% literacy for the last two decades. He added that the Left Front government has planned to bring all literate people under skill development programme for ensuring their livelihood.

Sarkar said when most states joined the race of abstract model of development to achieve high GDP, Tripura silently strived to ensure that every child in the state goes to school. "The programme was not just implemented to make the state literate but to ensure that all citizens have a certain basic minimum level of education," added the chief minister.

Chakraborty said the state's total literacy drive was launched for people aged between 15 and 50, who have lost the chance of having formal education. A special programme called improved pace and content learning (IPCL) was designed to provide basic education to such people after the third Left Front government came to power in 1993, he added.

Besides opening up new schools and colleges, the government had targeted to open an anganwadi centre in each village to ensure 100% enrolment of children, said the education minister. He added that the government provided midday meal in all schools with eclectic menu to attract more students.

(Times of India, 09.09.2016)

(Contd. from Page 11)

Menacing Problem of Encroachment in Assam

10th Chapter of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886, such a provision should also be extended to the areas inhabited by the nontribal indigenous people. But what we see in reality is that large areas within the tribal belts and blocks have also been either occupied (vacant areas, forests and wetlands) or transferred from the poor tribal cultivators to the nontribal people, mainly the land hungry infiltrators. As a result, the Bodo and several other tribes have now become minority and the non-tribals, mainly the Muslim infiltrators, have become majority within the BTAD areas. That is why the ethnic clashes in Udalguri in 2008 and in Kokrajhar in 2012 had happened in which the

Bangladeshi infiltrators in a planned way killed hundreds of indigenous people and destroyed houses and other properties. Thus peace has not been restored yet in the BTAD areas. Similarly, the Muslim infiltrators now have become majority in the Tiwa tribal belt of the Morigaon district which can be clearly seen if we observe the present population composition of the Nelie, Mayong and Pabitora areas. So the Hazarika Commission report has rightly suggested that in order to safeguard the existence of the indigenous people, importance should be given on providing land rights to them and on the other hand the infiltrator/encroachers should be deprived of land rights

in any part of Assam. The cut-off year of the land rights in Assam must be 1951, the year when the first NRC was adopted. Besides the encroachment menace created by the infiltrators, large-scale encroachment on the lands of Assam by almost all the neighbouring States has become a growing danger to the security of the people and the territory of Assam. In this way, the patronizing role of the earlier governments in the case of encroachment by the infiltrators and its weak and passive role in defending the territorial integrity of the State have been jeopardizing the existence of the indigenous people of Assam.

(The Assam Tribune, 01.09.2016)

Musical power and not Muscle power is the need of the hour..."Ishanya Symphony"

- Shruti Bujarbaruah

With a noble message of "Musical power and not Muscle power is the need of the hour", a musical audio MP3 CD album titled "Ishanya Symphony" has been launched on 27th August 2016 at Guwahati.

The Chief Guest of the function was Assam's Cultural affairs Minister Nabakumar Doley, who released the musical treat "Ishanya Symphony" Album audio MP3 CD and the compendium of lyrics-Booklet published, first of its kind in Devnagari script. He also released another audio CD produced by Samskar Bharati Assam Prant, songs rendered in Asamiya language. The title of the CD was "Jayatu Janani" organized by Ms. Babita Sharma from Guwahati.

First of its kind in Poorvanchal region (all seven Sisters States viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim) the music album of patriotic songs from North East is produced by a Pune based Public Trust called 'Samshodhan Dnyan Vichar Pratishtan', was organized at the Vivekanand Hall in Guwahati on Saturday the 27th August 2016.

The album was released in the august presence of Shri Swantranjan, Akhil Bharatiya Boudhik Pramukh, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Dr. Umesh Chakrawarti, Assam Prant Sanghchalak, who graced the occasion.

Dr. Sharad V. Khare, Director of

the Vivekanand Institute of Social Sciences Research, Pune and Veteran actor and a renowned artist in Assam, Shri Pranjal Saikia, who is also the President of Assam Unit of Samskar Bharati, presided over the function.

Minister Naba Kumar Doley delivered his short but thought provoking speech. In his speech, he gave much importance to the need for arranging such a programme. He congratulated all the singers gathered from different states.

"Development of the tribal communities leads to the overall development of the society, and therefore, as the Culture Minister, I will always try my best to do for the development of such communities"

He highly encouraged all the singers who travelled all the way from Assam to Pune to record their songs. He also congratulated 'Samskar Bharati of Assam Prant' for arranging such a wonderful programme.

Explaining the idea Dr. Sharad Khare said that it was an idea initiated by RSS Sahsarkaryavaha Dattaji Hosbale and Shri Bhagaiaji which was executed by the Pune based Samshodhan Dnyan Vichar Pratishtan, Trust.

Dr Khare told that the songs, its lyrics, the lyricists did belong to RSS thought and the theme, and It took two years for its completion.

Dr. Khare further maintained that Poorvanchal was a very strategic region esp. in the context of international relations. However given the region, music and not muscle power could bring about social harmony and peace, albeit it has to be tried. The 23 Jana-Jati communities in their youth have shown the way. Now it needs to be pursued relentlessly.

13 young artists to the audience in the Hall who had come all the way to Guwahati from far away Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and far-off district places in Assam too.

Nationalism, Bharatmata, Dr. Hedgewar and Shri Guruji's inspiring life for all mankind, were the scintillating themes of the songs and music rendered in the Album, Dr. Khare submitted.

The artists who performed in the music album were introduced and felicitated in the function.

The performers are namely- Ms. Malini of Karbi, Oyien Pertin from Adi of Arunachal Pradesh, Ahungle Palme from Zemenaga, Sarvashri Balaram Phangcho from Karbi, Dwaimalu from Bodo Land, Dharanidhar Bordoloi, Tapan Bordoloi and Burman Pater from Tivalalung, Saurabh Chinte from Missing, Roman Kemprai from Dimasa, Sahil Bay from Karbi, T. Dineshwar Singh and Jeevan Singh from Manipur, Chiranjeev from Garo Hills, Neeranand from Khasi Hills and Mrs. Mallika Thakuria Das of

Golpara District, who had contributed Rabha songs in the Album, was the following attraction in the programme.

Six artists from various Jana-Jatis who had come all the way, rendered enthralling melodies live, their contribution which they had made in the Album for the enjoyment of the audience now present in the Hall.

All the artists present were presented with specially designed trophies/ mementoes for their contributions in the Album at the august hands of the Minister Shri Naba Kumar Doley and other dignitaries on the dais.

In his speech, Assam Prant Sanghchalak Dr. Umesh Chakravarty highlighted the role played by the tribal communities in our society. "It is a great step to make them realize that they too are indivisible part of the society", Dr. Chakravarty submitted. He further maintained that music has always been the most effective medium to win the

hearts of the people. During the period of Vaishnavite Movement in Assam, Shankardeva used music as an instrument to bring all people, irrespective of caste and creed, all together. He also sang two lines of a 'Borgeet' composed by Shankardeva. He also said that the new generation should listen and learn such 'Sangha Geets' which are replete with patriotic feelings, motherland, inspiring lives of Dr. Hedgewar and Golwalkar Guruji. Dr. Umesh Chakravarti specifically made a mention of Dr. Sharad Khare, the producer of the Album, and his thoughtful initiative in organizing the Album with his tireless enthusiasm and fervor in our social life. He congratulated him.

In his presidential address, Shri Pranjalji Saikia, President of the Assam Prant Samskar Bharati, mentioned that this is the first time that artists from the entire 'North-East States' came together on one common platform. He appreciated Dr.

Khare's effort to make it possible. It is not an easy task to bind all the tribal communities together with a musical bond. He also said that tribal people are musically very rich. Music is in their blood. But most of the time, due to some reasons, they don't get exposed. He thanked Dr. Khare and his entire team of performing artists for giving these young artists such a golden opportunity to expose and enhance their talents in the field of music and art. He emphatically advocated the need of the life-long 'samskar' upon the youth in the society in order to fight all the evils of corruption in our nation. Music will do the function with the primacy of Sangh samskar imbibed upon the minds of the young-ones in India and 'one India programme'.

This function was hosted by "Samskar Bharati, Assam Prant, Guwahati.

(<http://www.newsbharati.com/Encyc/2016/9/16/Ishanya-Symphony-CD-released>)

Assamese Actress Shares Screen with Sonakshi Sinha in "Akira"

Popular Assamese actress Urmila Mahanta will be seen sharing the screen with Bollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha in the movie **Akira** which was released this month. Urmila is an alumna of Film and Television Institute (FTII), Pune, and has worked in Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam films. Mahanta had been acting in plays since her childhood and won many awards. She has also featured in several television serials such as Murder and Tejimola for Doordarshan (NE), which were followed by

appearances in various critically acclaimed short films including Aaliya, that won the Special Critic Award at the 2012 Mumbai International Film Festival. Ms. Mahanta was also seen in Assamese singer Tarali Sarma's album Henguliya.

Among the short features Urmila has worked in include- Their Story, Seng Kurthy, Makkhi, Fishing Surmai, Let me Twist, Lipstick, Chataak, Thow. She has also worked in the popular Indian crime series 'Patrol', 'Savdhan India' and 'CID'.



(<http://thenortheasttoday.com/assam-assamese-actress-shares-screen-with-sonakshi-sinha-in-akira/>)

Statue of Martyr Durga Malla Unveiled at Baksa

Balidan Divas was observed at Khairani in Baksa district recently to commemorate the martyrdom of Major Durga Malla of Azad Hind Fauz, who was hung by the British on August 25, 1944 in Delhi for his anti-British activities during the Freedom Movement. Under the aegis of Durga Malla Smriti Sangha of Khairani, Balidan Divas was observed with a two-day programme to pay tribute to the Gorkha martyr. The observation was marked by a mass cleanliness drive, drawing contest, sapling plantation programme, quiz, games and sports, open meeting and many other programmes at

Pagladiyapaar LP School.

A statue of Major Durga Malla was unveiled by Loknath Upadhyaya, chairman of Gorkha Development Council. A seminar entitled, 'Contribution of Gorkhas in Nation-building and National Security' was chaired by Netrabhushan Khadka.

The open session, chaired by Raghunath Sarma, was inaugurated by Krishna Bhujel, vice president of Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangha (BGP) and was attended by Baksa Deputy Commissioner Mahadananda Hazarika, CK Shrestha, eminent writer and one of the founders of BGP from Kalimpong, Professor

Bhabani Prasad Sarma of Bongaigaon College and others released the souvenir of the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, CK Shrestha said that Balidan Divas is observed to pay tributes to all the martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle along with Major Durga Malla. He added that although a statue of Major Durga Malla has been erected in the Parliament premises in New Delhi, much remains to be done to familiarise Major Durga Malla like other martyrs of the Freedom Movement at the national level.

(<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=sep0216/state053>)

(Contd. from Page 16)

Solung Across Arunachal

Elapara, IMCLS president Enju Linggi, officials from NHPC, ACLS and ABK's district unit president, HoDs and general public of Lower Dibang Valley attended the celebration.

JAIRAMPUR: Solung was celebrated here on Thursday with traditional fervour by the Adi-Galo community of Jairampur. MLA Laisam Simai, who attended the festival, applauded both the communities living in Jairampur for keeping their culture alive despite being handful in numbers and far away from home. He also lauded them for pioneering the cultural preservation method as well as serving the state and the locals as government officials in Jairampur. He appreciated the humble efforts put up by handful of people to preserve their culture in far off land and advised the locals to learn from them



regarding cultural conservation. Simai also suggested bequeathing strong cultural legacy to the posterity that has the history of succumbing to the pressure generated by modernity. In order to attract the youths, he ideated the concept of cultural modification to match the taste of time. "By disappointing and neglecting the youth population we are only paving the path for cultural disappearance, we must be careful while scripting the changes and concentrate on the concepts that will attract and keep them hooked," Simai said. HoDs and Panchayat leaders also

enjoyed the celebration.

TEZU: Solung was celebrated at Amik Ringiya Hall, Tezu with great enthusiasm and traditional fervor. Local MLA, Dr. Mohesh Chai, who attended the festival, called for preservation of age-old culture and traditions that have passed down from generation to generation. Festival brings unity in diversity and bonds of friendship among the local inhabitants, he said, and appealed to all to participate in such celebrations irrespective of their caste creed and religion. Dr. Chai also urged people to maintain communal harmony for peace and prosperity. Festival Organizing Committee Secretary Otem Apum read the mythology of Solung.

(<http://www.arunachaltimes.in/solung-across-arunachal/>)

Russian Court Declared Bhagwad Gita Legal! Dismissed the Christian Appeal for Ban!

September 3, 2016: Russian court has dismissed a call to ban an edition of the Hindu holy book Bhagwad Gita, in a case that triggered protests in India.

Prosecutors in the Siberian city of Tomsk wanted the edition to be ruled "extremist". That would put it in the same category as Hitler's Mein Kampf.

The Russian foreign ministry said it was the commentary on the text, not the text itself, that was under scrutiny.

The edition – Bhagwad Gita As It Is – is used by the Hare Krishna movement.

A lawyer representing the movement in Tomsk, Alexander Shakhov, welcomed the judge's decision, saying it "shows that Russia really is becoming a democratic society".

The controversial commentary on the text was written by A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the movement, whose full title is the

International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Hare Krishna followers in Russia saw the case as part of efforts by the Russian Orthodox Church to restrict their activities.

India voices concern

The trial began in June and had been due to conclude on 19 December, but it was delayed until 28 December at the request of the Russian ombudsman for human rights.

But neither the ombudsman Vladimir Lukin nor his Tomsk colleague Nelli Krechetova was present in court for Wednesday's ruling.

On Tuesday India's Foreign Minister, SM Krishna, complained to the Russian Ambassador to India, Alexander Kadakin, about the Tomsk prosecution.

Mr Krishna said Indians had reacted very negatively to the alleged infringement of Hindu rights in Russia.

The Bhagwad Gita, one of the most popular texts for Hindus, takes the form of a conversation between the god Krishna and prince Arjuna.

Earlier this month Indian MPs demanded the government protect Hindu rights in Russia, shouting: "We will not tolerate an insult to Lord Krishna."

Ambassador Kadakin, quoted by the AP news agency, distanced himself from the Tomsk prosecutors, saying "any holy scripture, whether it is the Koran, Bhagwad Gita, the Bible, Avesta or Torah cannot be brought into court".

The Russian translation of the book was at risk of being placed on the Federal List of Extremist Materials, which bans more than 1,000 texts including Mein Kampf and publications by the Jehovah's Witness and Scientology movements.

(<http://indiaarising.com/big-news-russian-court-declared-bhagwad-gita-legal-dismissed-christian-appeal-ban-hindu-book/>)

India Successfully Test Fires surface-to-air missile 'Barak-8'

Bhubaneswar, September 20 : India on Tuesday successfully test-fired the most advanced surface-to-air missile 'Barak-8', developed jointly with Israel.

It was launched at 10:13 AM from a mobile launcher at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur in Balasore district.

The 4.5-meter missile weighs around 3 tonnes and can carry a payload of 70 kilograms.

The system also includes a

Multi-Functional Surveillance and Threat Alert Radar for detection, tracking and guidance of the missile.

Barak-8 was successfully test fired twice on June 30th and once on July 1st.

According to reports, the missile swung into action after getting a signal from the radars to intercept a moving aerial target supported by an unmanned air vehicle 'Banshee' over the Bay of

Bengal and more tests of the missile will be carried out today and tomorrow.

As a precautionary measure, Balasore district administration had made adequate arrangements to temporarily shift 3,700 people residing within the 2.5 km radius.

The fishermen were also advised to not venture into the sea during the launch.

(<http://www.business-standard.com>)

OF CROWS AND OWLS

Once upon a time, all the birds - the swans, cranes, parrots, cuckoos, owls, peacocks, doves and the rest of them - decided to meet. They had to discuss a subject of most Importance. Unfortunately, no crow had joined yet, but they could not wait any longer.

They debated, "Garuda, who is the king of all birds, is always busy in serving his master. He has neither the time, nor the interest to bother about us! There is no point in having a king who does not protect and remains at the position of the king only as a namesake".

And so the birds discussed, "Let us choose a king amongst us"

On this, they started looking at each other; suddenly the features of owl attracted everybody. He was powerful, had impressive features, and most importantly he could see at night, when they were most unsafe. They agreed that the owl would be an apt king for themselves.

They shouted, "The owl should be our king! Let us prepare for the coronation at once!."

As decided, the birds collected 108 holy roots, water from the holy rivers, and prepared a lavish and highly decorated throne. They even spread the ground in front of the throne with tiger skin. The Brahmins, they had invited, started chanting from holy books, while the birds beat drums, and beautiful maidens blew conches and sung songs of joy. With a map of all the continents and oceans drawn, the owl was prepared to be crowned.

At the moment the owl was

being accompanied to the throne to be crowned, a crow arrived. He asked curiously, "Please let me know the reason of this great gathering, and lavish celebration!"

The crow was indeed known for his smartness, and the birds decided to explain and take his opinion.

The birds explained, "O Crow, Garuda has no time to bother about us. So, we have decided to denounce him as our king and have elected the owl to be our new king. Since, you have just joined, please provide us with your opinion also"

The crow smiled and replied, "In my opinion, I should advise against crowning the owl as our king!"

He continued to explain, "The owl is blind by the day. And look at him. Why have an ugly king, when the birds are known for their beauty. We have the peacocks, swans, nightingales, pigeons and so many more who look so beautiful. And look at him, he looks so cruel with his crooked nose and squint eyes. How would he look if he was angry? I certainly advise against crowning him."

The other birds started considering his points, and the crow continues with his arguments, "And what do we gain from electing him as our king? We already have Garuda as our king. The mere mention of his name would keep our enemies away! It is not necessary at all, for us to elect a new king and denounce Garuda!"

On hearing his logic, the birds started pondering, "His arguments are right. The entire reason of our

meeting serves no purpose. Let us think awhile and meet some other time."

One by one, the birds started flying away. Even the Brahmins and beautiful maidens started to leave. The crow was still sitting on the branch of a tree. Unable to understand the commotion, the owl and his wife were still waiting to be crowned king and queen.

The owl asked his wife, "What is happening? Why is the crowning ceremony yet to begin? Why have all the birds left?"

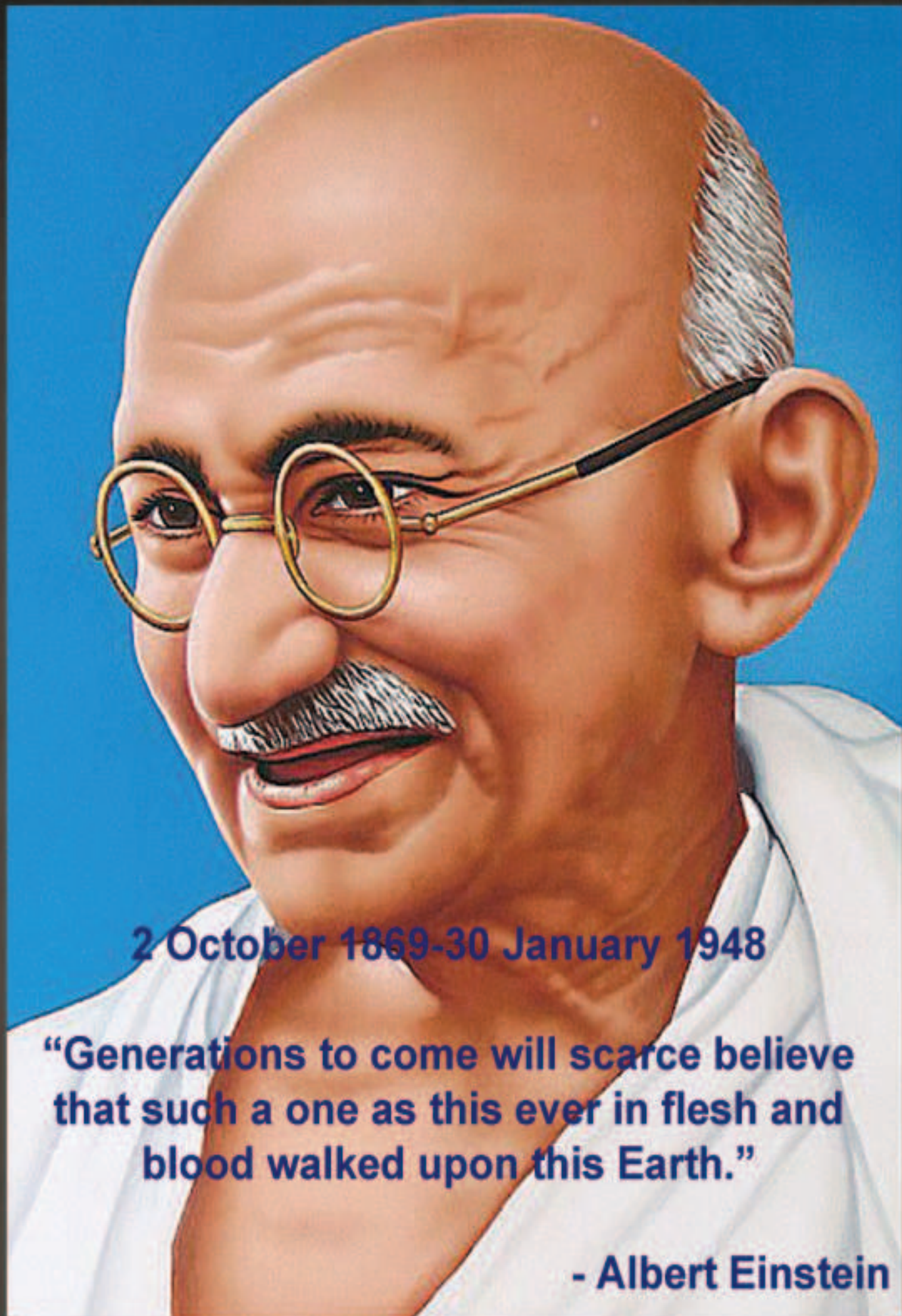
His wife replied, "As I understand, the crow put an obstacle in the crowning ceremony. He persuaded all the other birds to fly away. Only he, with ulterior motives, stayed behind. We should return home, too."

On hearing this, the owl got very disappointed. He shouted to the crow, "You are a wicked bird. I did not harm you in any way, and yet you put obstacle to my crowning ceremony. From today, I end all friendly relationship with you. From now onwards, our kind and your kind will be nothing but enemies."

The owl left with his wife, to return to his home. The crow was left alone.

With everybody else gone, he decided to leave too. While flying off, he thought, "Why did I speak my mind? My advice to the birds was not required. It is because of my advice, that crows will always have the mighty owls as their enemies."

The wise indeed say: Keep your counsel to yourself and thus stay away from trouble.



2 October 1869-30 January 1948

“Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this Earth.”

- Albert Einstein



Solong, the popular and main agricultural festival of Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh

