

# Tai-Phake Language, Literature Facing Extinction Threat

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Margherita, Nov 1- What makes them unique is not just their rich culture and heritage. Traditions apart, the language of the Tai-Phakes has an international angle to it. The language bears close resemblance to the language of Thailand, a country with which the North-east seeks to affirm fruitful ties.

But in spite of all these and many more unique characteristics, the endangered language and literature of the Tai-Phakes continue to lose its ground and languish.

The problem, however, is graver in the context of its literature than its dialect.

The Tai-Phake tribe has a population of 5,000-odd people, mostly concentrated in Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts, and even though most of them can speak the language, the script is used by few and on rare occasions," said Moomten Toomten a member the Tai-Phake community an a resident of Margherita while talking to The Assam Tribune. He also underscored the urgency for preserving the Tai-Phake script for posterity.

"Already the number is dwindling and there is a knack among the students moving out of their villages or hometown to pursue quality study at an early age and it is then that they tend to lose touch with their mother tongue and its literature," Moomten rued.

Moomten, who now has moved to Arunachal Pradesh, foresees a tragic and early end to its literature, if nothing concrete is done.

Once that happens, performing marriage and other rituals in the traditional manner would not be possible.

Moomten informed that there are around ten villages dominated by the people of Tai-Phake tribes in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh.

Aichen Gohain, another resident of Margherita, felt that with some effort, the similarity between Tai-Phake and Thai languages could be effectively used to facilitate greater interaction, including study and research, between North-east and Thailand. "It can be an interesting subject for research, besides being a tool promoting bilateral transactions especially in fields like tourism and culture," he said.

Aichen also rued the lack of initiative by the Government towards preserving the traditions and language of the tribe.

"There is a lot to be done for this tribe, which always skips the eyes of the policy makers. If this trend persists, not only Tai-Phake, several other tribes and their heritage would be a thing of the past" Aichen pointed out.



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