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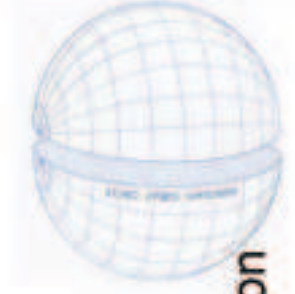


India's
contribution
to the rest of
the world

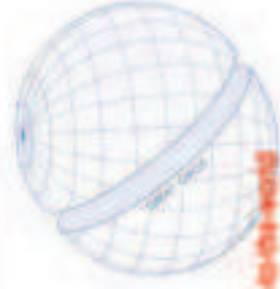
In India the first references to astronomy are to be found in the Rig Veda which is dated around 2000 B.C

The Calculation of Eclipses And The Earth's Circumference

Illustration: Aravind



The Heliocentric Theory of Gravitation



Courtesy: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/journals/india/india-contribution-to-the-world>

Contents

Editorial	4	Dima Hasao hosts Sngi Lum Lang Festival of the Jaintias	21
Message of Swami Vivekananda	5	Rabha Festival to promote tourism and culture	21
ARUNACHAL VIKAS PARISHAD CELEBRATES IT'S SILVER JUBILEE	7	English rendition of Ravana Bodh bhaona staged in Mumbai	22
Bharat Ratna to Bhupen Hazarika	9	New Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) For Arunachal Pradesh	22
Rima Das nominated for Best New Director	9	Chakaan Gaan Ngai festival at Dimapur	23
TRIBAL RELIGION AND SCIENCE- A CLOSE STUDY	10	Workshop on Biya Naam and Diha Naam held	23
Rongker of the Karbis celebrated	14	Junbeel Pathar hosts traditional Barter trade	24
Tagin community celebrates Si-Donyi fest in Arunachal	15	Clarion call to spread the message of Gita for world peace	25
REVIEWING TEA TRIBES' AND ETHNIC HERITAGE	16	Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra Maharaj remembered	26
Padma Shri awards to Manipur & Tripura geniuses	19		
Padma Shri to Surgeon Illias Ali and innovator Uddhab Bharali	20		

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Editor : Amarendra Brahma

Arise and Awake

The glamour of European culture and liking for their materialistic philosophy appears to be all pervading so far as our country is concerned. We have not only adopted their language and style of living but have also embraced their philosophy of wealth worship abandoning our own sanatan Dharma. Once we used to take pride in our original ancestors who were ascetics devoid of any earthly possessions, but now we appear to be closer to the beliefs of the west which claim Robin Hoods and other merciless strongmen possessing immense muscle power capable of subduing one and all. In the race for elevating our country to a higher pedestal we are mad about imitating USA and other advanced European countries forgetting our ideologically close countries of China, Japan and others. We also do not consider Germany and Russia worthy of imitation. All these countries are highly developed in the truest sense of the term without sacrificing their tradition and culture, language and ethics. The youths of these countries study in their mother tongue at the highest level, follow the ethics they have inherited from their forefathers.

The scenario depicted above is more prominent in the tribal areas of our country especially the northeast. The ethnic communities of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram who feel more comfortable to claim the land of their forefathers as a Christian state, have adopted Christianity and the western culture like fish takes to water. They have totally forgotten the religious faiths and beliefs of their forefathers. Most of them do not feel shy to denigrate the people of their own community who still practice their traditional faiths. They badly suffer from the inferiority complex and are ashamed of the heathen practices followed by their forefathers. Modern education and west oriented practices could not enlighten them to honour the culture followed by their ancestors through the centuries. This is mainly due to our wrong education policy and the success achieved by the Christian Missionaries aided and abetted by the self seeking politicians and political parties.

Today most of our younger generation are oblivious of the fact that the roots of Indian science and technology go far deeper than those of Babylonians, Mayans and Egyptians. The Rig Veda asserted that gravitation held the universe together 24 centuries before the apple fell

on Newton's lap. The Vedic civilisation subscribed to the idea of a spherical earth at a time when everyone else, even the Greeks assumed that the earth was flat. By the 5th century A.D. Indians had calculated that the age of earth was 4.3 Billion years old, whereas the western scientists could succeed in calculating the age of the earth as 4.6 Billion years, that too in the late 20th Century. India invented the modern numerals and conceived the zero, shunya, the concept of nothingness, without which mathematical science would have never come into being. The Sulba Shrutis, composed between 800 and 500 B.C. demonstrate that India had Pythagoras theorem before the great Greek scientist was even born. The wireless communication was actually invented by Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose but Marconi managed to manoeuvre it in his name. Indians invented Yoga, the universally accepted form of holistic health care. Name any field and you will find that in one way or the other, the Indians have a role to play. There are hundred and one examples of Indian superiority in the field of science, technology and other intellectual pursuits. Our tribal forefathers have similarly invented innumerable number of plant medicines, poisons, cultivation in difficult hilly terrains, techniques of preservation of nature and maintenance of bio diversity. In modern times India has proved its superiority in the field of Space, computer science, automobile engineering and engineering technology. In spite of these extraordinary heritage, our younger generation as well as general public stand like beggars before the western line up. We feel shy to declare our pride of achievement when the majority of the world population were roaming like nomads. Many of our own folks feel shy to shout Bharat Mata Ki Jai because they feel that it is only a slogan. When the entire world acknowledges the Indian superiority we the Indian question – are we really superior?

We should search our souls for an answer. Many of our ethnic tribes are trying to revive their age old customs, rituals and religious practices to salvage the world around us. Our superiority has attracted many adversaries since time immemorial and are still under threat from various quarters. If we fail to rediscover ourselves and the reason to be proud of, then our annihilation as Indians is inevitable

Editor

Message of Swami Vivekananda

Partha Pratim Mazumder

Every year since 1985, the Government of India observes 12th January, the Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda as National Youth Day. To quote from the Government of India's Communication, "it was felt that the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth." India is one of the youngest nations in the world, with about 65 percent population under 35 years of age. It is expected that by the year 2020, the population of India would have a median age of 28 years only as against 38 years for US, 42 years for China and 48 years for Japan. The youth are indeed the most dynamic and vibrant segment of the population in any country.

Swami Vivekananda once said, "Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be." He also said, "See for the highest, aim at that highest, and you shall reach the highest." His message was simple yet powerful. Vivekananda conveyed his ideas directly to the people, especially to the youth. His message broke through the shackles of caste and creed and spoke of a language of universal brotherhood. What he said captures the great importance of his ideas and ideals among the youth in our country today. He personified the eternal energy of the youth and their restless quest for truth. It is entirely fitting that

12th January, the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, is observed as National Youth Day to rekindle the eternal message of this great patriot and son of India.

Now the question is how to make our youth realise the relevance of Swami Vivekananda in these exciting and challenging times, when on the one hand people and nations are engaged in the noble task of developing the personality

and leadership qualities of the youth by involving them in various nation-building activities, while on the other hand there are challenges of hunger, poverty, unemployment, corruption and terrorism. Among the various ways which Swami Vivekananda suggested to rebuild the Indian society, Education was the primary means for empowering the people. He once said, "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion

– is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs." For him, education meant secular learning that built character and instilled human values in students.

According to Swami Vivekananda, "Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will



come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.”

The youth of India have great creative energy with the positive potential to take them to spiritual heights. If human creativity is a special quality, then the “Never say die!” spirit is its apex. Demographically, today’s India is at its youngest best and has the power to meet any challenge with the collective consciousness and effort of all people, especially young people. This is the perfect time when youth is alert and aware and provoked by the environment and lack of values. India is a nation facing incredible challenges. This is evident from the utter lack of safety and security for the girl child and women anywhere in the country and the impunity with which monstrous elements like rapists heap violence on girl children and women.

On the one hand, people can see such huge wealth and on the other, more than one-third of the people go without a second meal every day. We have examples of the very affluent as well as the extremely poor. And millions of our children have no access to education, even at the primary level. And we are still grappling with the issue of child labour. Swami Vivekananda delivered a lecture on the issue of difficulties in life. He made the plea for the need for nationwide renovation with the ideals of ‘tyaga’ or sacrifice and ‘seva,’ selfless service, the most imperative aspects of shaping the life of young people. The monk made the point that this way of life is what can be called ‘spiritual pursuit’. The brevity of human triumph and the impermanence of material wealth were of serious thought to this philosophy. What he challenged us to do was to give ourselves a noble reason to live, a lofty ideal to live for and a

higher state to reach within the boundaries of human existence.

The only qualification that Swamiji looked for in youngsters was to cultivate and nurture the ability to ‘feel’. He offered his potential ‘mantra’ and desired to take solid action so that those who wanted to go beyond just feeling could do so. The most influential P’s are: Purity, Patience and Perseverance. The P’s are the great traits that the youth of today are rich in and this is evident from their keenness to be part of positive change that will have impact on entire society. Purity is of thought and achievement. Patience is to understand the dynamic form and need to focus on the area for improvement. Today’s youth needs enormous perseverance to take part in the multifaceted challenges we face in today’s society. They need to place their efforts in the realities of livelihood, societal stages and political variety. And for these attempts to seriously address socio-political and ethical-moral issues, they need great perseverance. If not, one could easily get drained and unmotivated.

Swami Vivekananda believed that working for any social change required massive energy and spirit. Hence, he requested the youth to amplify both their mental energies and physical fitness. What Vivekananda wanted from the youth were ‘muscles of iron’ and ‘nerves of steel’. Today, the youth are exceptionally responsive and they just need to be encouraged in their quest for justice for common benefit. Swami Vivekananda was and is not only the medium; he is himself the message as well for the youth of India.

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It was felt that the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth.

ARUNACHAL VIKAS PARISHAD CELEBRATES IT'S SILVER JUBILEE

Arunachal Vikash Parishad celebrated its Silver Jubilee functions on and from 12th January, 2019 to 14 January, 2019 in the Jollang campus of the Himalayan University in a befitting manner with delegates from far and near. Along with the Silver Jubilee functions a Karyakarta Pranta Sammelan was also held for the orientation of the Pranta Karyakartas.

On 12th January, 2019 delegates from various districts and outside the state reported at the sammelan venue. After their registration and completion of other formalities they were greeted with a cultural programme.

The next day's programme began with yoga display by Art of Living, Itanagar, followed by the inauguration of the Sammelan with mangalacharanam followed by welcome address by Shri. Jomnya Siram, Vice Chairman of the Organising Committee. Key note

activities of the AVP towards socio-cultural development of different indigenous communities of the state. He also commemorated the contribution of the AVP's first visionary President Sri Golgi Bote Talom Rukbo Ji. The Hon'ble Governor urged upon the karyakartas to promote cent percent Nation First Spirit amongst the people and advised them to preach as well as practice patriotism for the nation. He also suggested that preserving and maintaining rich cultural heritage of the State is most essential. While stressing on the need for women empowerment Sri Mishra said that empowering the women in education, health and societal matters will ensure better life style of households.

The Hon'ble Governor released two documentary films on 'Nocte Marriage Ceremony' and 'Mishmi Birth Ritual system' and AVP Annual Calendar on the occasion.



address was delivered by Sri. Sandeep Kavisankar Ji, joint Organising Secretary, NE Bharat. While inaugurating the Silver Jubilee Celebration and Karyakarta Prant Sammelan of Arunachal Vikas Parishad, the Chief Guest His Excellency the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh Sri B.D. Mishra appraised the

The inaugural function was attended by a large number of AVP workers, including All India and North East Bharat Shardha Jagaran Pramukh, former Karyakartas from outside the state, former full time workers within the state, part time workers, special invitees and cultural troops from various communities

as part of silver jubilee celebration. The inaugural function concluded with vote of thanks offered by Shri. Gyati Rana Ji, General Secretary of the Organising Committee.

After completion of formal inauguration programme, there was a reporting session from districts with regard to activities performed and to be performed in days to come. Wherein, it is found that majority of the districts have put their efforts to bring paradigm shift in the socio-cultural development of the indigenous people of the state. The districts' reporting was chaired by the President AVP Sri. Techi Gubin Ji. Afterwards there was a sitting on AAYAM basis viz., Health, Shiksha, Khel Kud, Prachar Vibhag, Mahila, Hitraksha, Shardha Jagran, followed by the speech from Ramesh Babu Ji- All India Shardha Jagaran, Pramukh on subject related to Shradha. He explicitly stated about the shradha in human being for eternal peace and togetherness which was chaired by Sri. Tasom Tasung Ji, Shardha Jagaran Pramukh North East Bharat and finally the second day programme paused with a colourful cultural programme.

The day two i.e., 13th January, 2019 was devoted to various issues on socio-cultural development of the people of the state such as awareness on health, education, religion and so on and accordingly decided to work dedicatedly towards over all development of the ethnic groups of the state.

The third day i.e., 14th January, 2019 of the sammelan started with speeches from the district representatives based on inspiring story which have had happened in their respective districts. The session was chaired jointly by Sri. Bai Taba Ji, General Secretary - IFCSAP and Sri. Pai Dawe Ji, President NIFCS. Many of the districts discussed on the incidents that happened during their working with people of the state and many more have shared a worth mentioning inspirational stories. Soon after completion of the presentation from district representatives, there was a speech from Former General Secretary, Kalyan Ashram Ma. Gunvant Singh Kothari Ji, who enlightened the delegates about Kalyan Ashram and its activities for the service of society and was worth listening for the delegates present in the hall His speech was really a source of inspiration to the karyakartas of the AVP. The session was chaired by the former President of AVP Sri. Nabam Atum Ji.

Later, a group wise bethak was arranged which were chaired by the respective heads of the AYAMS viz.

Shradha Jagaran by Sri. Ramesh Babu & Sri. Tassung Ji, Office bearers by Ma. Gunvant Singh ji, ex-full time workers group by Sri. Sandeep ji and full time/ part/ vistarak workers by Sri. B. K. Dubey ji, Organising Secretary AVP. The respective heads of the group were briefed on various matters associated with proper functioning of the organisation in their respective areas.

Finally, the closing ceremony of the Silver Jubilee and Karyakartas Prant Sammilan began with welcome address by Sri. Shawa Sonam Vice President AVP followed by reporting on the sammelan by Shri. Tai Tagak Ji, Hon'ble Advisor to HCM and President, Organising Committee and a key note speech from Ma. Gunvant Singh Kothari Ji, who narrated about the unity in diversity and diverse culture and tradition of the tribal people of India. He was of the opinion that the tribal culture and tradition must not be interfered by other people. He has also narrated about the faith and beliefs of the indigenous people which is closely associated with nature. He appealed to the people of the state to codify the tribal customs and customary laws for preservation of their rich culture and tradition. Sri. Techi Gubin Ji, President - AVP then delivered his Presidential speech which was followed by the speech of the Chief Guest Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri. Pema Khandu Ji. He felicitated the karyakartas for their contribution in the development of the state. The Chief Minister also released the Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee celebration and a Nyishi Calendar on the occasion. While addressing the gathering, Mr. Khandu appealed to the people on preservation of the tribal dialogues. He also urged every tribal family to speak in their own mother tongue with their kids so as to carry the legacy of their rich cultural heritage for the younger generations. He said that the essence of culture can be found in the language, so when a tribe losses its language, it loses its innermost being i.e., soul and the spirit. The Chief Minister expressed his sincere regards for the selfless services rendered by the AVP and promised all helps for such yeoman services.

The closing ceremony of the programme was attended by a large number of public leaders, leaders of community based organisations, full time workers, resource persons, former karyakartas, existing AVP workers, ABVP karyakartas, special invitees and cultural troops. Finally the three long day sammelan came to an end with Vote of thanks offered by the Joint Secretary, Arunachal Vikas Parishad.

Bharat Ratna to Bhupen Hazarika

Sri Tej Hazarika, the son of the legendary singer-composer, who lives in the USA, stated in an e-mailed message that in the songs of his late father Bhupen Hazarika “blueprints for the youth and future of India can be discovered.” He further stated that the government’s decision to confer Bharat Ratna on his father is a victory for humanity, diversity and India’s secular character.

Sri Hazarika, reacting to the conferment of the country’s highest civilian award to his celebrated father, said that, “In his songs he celebrated the richness of indigenous people not only of the Northeast but all of India and he advocated their inclusion in the Indian experience as essential to the success of Indian civilisation as a whole.”



Rima Das nominated for Best New Director

Renowned film Director from Assam Rima Das has once again been nominated for her film ‘Bulbul Can Sing’ for the category of Best New Director in the 13th Asian Film Awards, 2019.

‘Bulbul Can Sing’ is an Indian drama film in Assamese language directed by Rima Das. It was screened in the Contemporary World Cinema section at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival. The cast of the film is Arnali Das as Bulbul,

Bonita Thakuria as Bonnie, Manoranjon Das as Suman, Manabendra Das and Pakija Begum.

Bulbul is an exuberant young woman, most happy when she’s hanging out in the fields with her friends Bonny and Suman. The three teenagers while begin to define their own identities, they find themselves increasingly clashing with the age-old rituals set down by the villagers. Bulbul is attracted to a boy for the first time but her mother warned her to be modest and should behave. Suman is bullied for not conforming to what his peers expect of a young man. For Bonny, the pressures of the community become unbearable.

The other contenders for the award include Yeo Siew Hua for A Land Imagined, Phutti Phong Aroonpheng for Mantra Ray, Shinichiro Ueda for One Cut of the Dead, Oliver Chan Siu-Kuen for Still Human and Bai Xue for The Crossing. The main event for the awards ceremony will be held on March 16, 2019.



TRIBAL RELIGION AND SCIENCE-A CLOSE STUDY

Dr. Chittaranjan Mishra

ABSTRACT

Both science and religion are based upon a never ending search for greater knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Science investigates the natural world while religion deals with the supernatural and spiritual world. Religion is a spiritual science and sometimes told as indigenous science whereas modern science is a material one. Religion is a structured belief system with a system of rituals for expressing worship and obligation but the specific rituals used by the science to verify the secret knowledge granted to them by reason are called the scientific method. The outlook of the science is rational believe in experiment and observation while religion is a matter of faith and felt on existence of some invisible. Sometimes science is also not able to fully comprehend the mystery of the universe and does not have all answers when it comes to the business of life, so believes on some invisible power. Science provides physical comfort whereas religion provides mental peace. Both are progressive, nothing is stand still or static in business of research. One is body other is spirit or soul, so both are complimentary to each other.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The historical texts of the earlier European officers like Mr. Andrew Sterling, Mr. W.W. Hunter, Mr. John Beams, Mr. George Toynbee, Mr. Amos Sutton, Capt. Macpherson, and Mr. John Campbell were just informative communicators to the Government regarding the state of the affairs of tribal Odisha. No specific attempt was made for any analytical study of the tribal society and culture except some works of Mr. E.T. Dalton and Mr. F.G. Bailey. In the pre-independence period number of Indian scholars like Sri Rajendralal Mitra, Sri Manmohan Chakravarty, Sri Rakhil Das Banarjee, Sri Kasi Prasad Jayaswal, Sri P.Mukherjee, Sri S.N. Ray, Sri Pyarimohan Acharya took considerable interest in Odishan History. But surprisingly they continued within the political, socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of Odisha bypassing the tribal culture. Similarly in post-independence era the scholars like Sri B.C. Ray, Sri

M. N. Das, Sri N.K. Sahu, Sri K.Majumdar, and Sri K.M. Patra etc. have substantially contributed to the growth of Odishan history but incidentally they have also restricted their studies to certain extent.

METHODOLOGY

During my research work I visited a number of tribal villages and came across a number of tribal people. I also attended, witnessed, participated and enjoyed a number of rituals, fairs and festivals of different tribal communities of Kandhamal district to enrich my collection. After keen observation of the tribal culture I discovered the indigenous science prevailed in their different practices and living style. To complete the task and to fulfil my desire I discussed with a number of tribal senior citizens of this district and collected some data. I have gone through the books "Man, the Gods and the search for cosmic wellbeing" by Ms. Barbara M. Boul, "The Tribal Culture of India" by Sri L. P. Vidyarthi, and "Meriha Slokas" by Sri Sitakanta Mahapatra but did not find any scientific observation in it. To find out the science behind their faith a humble attempt has been made in this article.

TRIBAL RELIGION

Religion is "a particular system of faith and worship". "A pursuit of interest followed with great devotion", originally in the sense Obligation, Bond and Reverence. It is a faith or belief in the existence of God or Gods and the activities that are connected with their worship.¹

Naturalism or worship of nature is the first religion in human history. Human beings worshiped the elements of nature out of obligation and fear. They came to realize the contributions of earth, water, forest, mountain, sun, moon, air, fire, river and stream etc. for their existence. Without all these elements human existence is impossible. They also witnessed the cruelty of nature during calamities. They worshiped the nature as Gods hoping to get mercy and strength.² So nature worship is the most primitive form of the religion in human history and tribal are the only community in the world who used

to practice this primitive form of the religion. The Kandhas of Kandhamal district has no exception of this. They have a strong believe that supernatural power takes abode in all the animate and inanimate objects exist in the world. The high mountains, the river, the earth, thunder and other objects of the nature act with the supernatural power or impersonal power. This power acts both for good and evil.³

Tribal religion lacks idol worship and do not believe in reincarnation but practice of polytheism is prevalent among the Kandhas of Kandhamal district. They worship near about 84 deities. All these deities have their own respective departments and areas of influence, effect and control as well as nature of actions. Some deities held responsible for their village, general health, rain, grain, cattle and so on. In it one finds magic, religion and ritualism all in one. In it there is no distinction of utility and religious sanctity. Mostly, the later depends on the former. The tribal religion is not merely a particular part of the tribal life, but encompasses life in its entirety. The religious and social activities of the Kandha people are closely inter connected.⁴

Certain tree species are worshiped by the Kutia Kandhas as the abode of deities such as Bademara (*ficus religiosa*), Pipadimara (*ficus scandens*), and Eju pipada mara (*Ficus religirsa*). They also worship Tambumara (*syzygium cumini*), Maskamara (*Mangifera indica*), mardimara (*Terminalia tomentosa*), Baenamara (*Terminalia bellirica*), Sargimara (*sharea robusta*) and Bambomara as the nomenclature of some areas depends upon the abundance of a particular plant or tree grown there. Again some clans and children are also named after some trees or plants, as Timaka clan is believed to be originated from Bamboo by the Kutia Kandhas.⁵

Desia Kandhas also worship Dharani Penu, Tana Penu, Saru Penu, Suga Penu (Chua or stream), Turki Penu (God of fertility), Dalkhai (Laxmi Puja), Goddess of wealth, Pijeri (ancestors) and Penka (Ghost) during different festivals and rituals.

The tribes of Kandhamal believe that they are fully surrounded by a number of Gods, deities or superpowers and spirits residing in all the places where their people are. So to them, the whole tribal village and its vicinity are sacred. All animate and inanimate objects of the nature, along with some

invisible superpowers and spirits are believed. A group of powerful forces which controls and influences the happenings in the community. They are very brave but also very God fearing in nature. They believe, that their Gods, deities, spirits, superpowers are Omni form, Omnifarious, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient.⁶

Their religious beliefs and superstitions which were extremely mysterious provide a necessary clue to understand the man-nature and spirit complex. The Gods and Goddess, the forefathers, malevolent and benevolent spirits are worshiped with equal bias and respect and kept in good humour.

Hinduism has always been an environmentally sensitive philosophy. No religion, perhaps, lays as much emphasis on environmental ethics as Hinduism. It contains the earliest messages for preservation of environment and ecological balance. Nature, or Earth, has never been considered a hostile element to be conquered or dominated. In fact, man is forbidden from exploiting nature. He is taught to live in harmony with nature and recognize that divinity prevails in all elements, including plants and animals. According to M.K.Gandhi, the nature has sufficient resources to fulfill the need of human beings but not the greed. It is so because the Divine reality is present as Prana /Shakti energy, power, in every electron, particle, atom, and cell and in every manifestation of matter. It is its very fabric. Just like the sparks of a fire are of the same essence as the fire they were issued forth from, so is the entire creation, of the same essence as the Divine. The rishis of the past have always had a great respect for nature. Theirs was not a superstitious primitive theology. They perceived that all material manifestations are a shadow of the spiritual. The Bhagavad Gita advises us not try to change the environment, improve it, or wrestle with it. If it seems hostile at times tolerate it. Ecology is an inherent part of a spiritual world view in Hinduism.⁷ So ancient seers of India were preferred to live inside the forest in the lap of the nature to maintain an eco-friendly and a hygienic life. Likewise tribes are maintained such an eco-friendly life inside the forest, which provides them hygienic and healthy living with affluent oxygen and livelihood.

Hinduism contains numerous references to the worship of the divinity in nature in its Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Sutras and its other sacred texts. Millions of Hindus recite Sanskrit

mantras daily to revere their rivers, mountains, trees, animals and the earth. The earth can be seen as a manifestation of the goddess, and must be treated with respect. In Atharva Veda where the Prithvi Sukta says, "Earth is my mother, I am her son". He sees Mother India as part of Mother Earth. India is the land of sacred geography.⁸ Thus Vande Mataram or Bharat Mata Ki Jai comes naturally to any Hindu of whatever persuasion. In The Ramayana it has been described that when Sriram got victory over Ravana of Srilanka, Bibhisana and Laxman requested Sriram to be the permanent inhabitant of Srilanka as its king and don't desire to return to Ayodhya. But Sriram said:-

"Api swarnamayee Lanka na me rochate Laxman
Janani Janmabhumischa Swargadapi Gariyasi"
(Valmiki Ramayana, Lanka Kanda)

Tribes of India also worship Earth in the name Dharani Penu, Tana Penu, Darni penu, Maati Maa (earth Goddess) by offering mahua wine and animal sacrifice.

MERIAH SACRIFICE

Meriah sacrifice or the Human sacrifice was a barbarous and inhuman practice prevailed among the Kandha community of Kandhmal district, which is now substituted by buffalo/pig sacrifice called by two other names 'Kedu' and 'Jhagidi' respectively at the interference of British authority. The rite of human sacrifice was explained by linking it to the supposed belief of the Kandha that human blood will make the turmeric redder in colour. It is a wrong conception but scientifically the tribes meant to fertilize the earth.⁹ The flesh and blood cut away from the Mariah, used to be buried in the fields to increase its fertility. Though their practice was inhuman but the science and scientific knowledge behind it is not wrong. Primitive society does not favour individual freedom of thought rather for group welfare. 'Turki Penu' (garbage mound) worshipped as God of fertilization at the outskirts of the village is another example of their knowledge of fertility of earth. They gathered garbage of their village at a particular place at the outskirts of the village and worshipped it.¹⁰

The Rig Veda (1.6.3) states: - by the first rays of the rising sun, the universe is stirred; the shining gold is sprinkled on the smiling buds of rose; the fragrant air is filled with sweet melodies of singing

birds, the dawn is the dream of God's creative fancy.¹¹ So Hindus worship the Sun God and offers water after their bath, by this they cooperate in the evaporation act of the Sun God. Tribes of India also worship Sun God as Dharmu Devata or Bela Penu.¹² They have the knowledge that the Sun is an important source of energy.

Hindus worship and accept the presence of God in nature. For example, many Hindus think of India's mighty rivers such as the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Brahmaputra, and the Kaberi etc. as goddesses. In the Mahabharata, it is noted that the universe and every object in it has been created as an abode of the Supreme God meant for the benefit of all, implying that individual species should enjoy their role within a larger system, in relationship with other species. Tribes of India also realize the importance of water in their life so they worship the sources of water like spring, stream and chua (a well like structure) in the name Suga Penu or Gangi Penu and every year they clean the sources of water for their future use.¹³

In the Mahabharat, it is described that the worship of Gobardhan Giri or Gobardhan Mountain as a token of obligation by Lord Srikrishna. Likewise the nearby mountains of Hindu villages are worshipped every year by the Hindus as it provides them wood, leaves, fruits, forest products, grass for cattle rearing and its role for rain. So also the tribes of India worship the mountains of their nearby villages as Saru Penu Laka (Mountain God worship).¹⁴

Dharma, one of the most important Hindu concepts, has been translated into English as duty, virtue, cosmic order and religion. In Hinduism, protecting the environment is an important expression of Dharma. A number of rural Hindu communities such as the Bishnois, Bhils and Swadhyaya have maintained strong communal practices to protect local ecosystems such as forests and water sources. These communities carry out these conservation-oriented practices not as "environmental" acts but rather as expressions of dharma. When Bishnois are protecting animals and trees, when Swadhyayis are building Vrikshamandiras (tree temples) and Nirmal Nirs (water harvesting sites) and when Bhils are practicing their rituals in sacred groves, they are simply expressing their reverence for creation

according to Hindu teachings, not “restoring the environment.” These traditional Indian groups do not see religion, ecology and ethics as separate.¹⁵

A well-known Hindu preaching “Tain tyakten bhunjitha” has been translated, “Take what you need for your sustenance without a sense of entitlement or ownership and sacrifice for others.” Enjoy the natural resources with renunciation. Likewise the tribes of India used to cultivate the rabi crops which needs little water to grow and in the time of harvesting they left a portion of crops of the field for wild animals to eat.¹⁶

Tribal people adopted two types of treatment to cure diseases. One is ‘Mantra chikistha’ (Which Craft) and another is Ayurveda treatment or ‘herbal treatment’.¹⁷ Ayurveda (Ayu+Veda), the science of life, is a complete health and medicine system based on nature and its regenerating forces. Traditional people have a potential source of knowledge for herbal medical science in areas such as biodiversity. They know the medicinal value of thousands of trees, plants and veins available in their nearby forest and use them for different diseases. Science is always remaining part and parcel of the social process. An ethno scientific approach can reveal the richness of wealth and knowledge that the diverse communities of India have been holding close to their bosom against the endless waves of time. To promote these traditional technology both government and private sectors whole hearted effort is highly essential.

World’s indigenous religions have three features in common: they are nature-venerating, seeing nature as a manifestation of Divinity; they are polytheistic and recognize many Gods, many Manifestations; they recognize the Goddess, the female aspect of Divinity as well as the male. The Indian tradition is strongly Cosmo centric, where man lives as part of a system in which everything is related to everything else. Creation and destruction take place simultaneously. Materials and energy move from organism to organism. Matter is arranged in precise order in every organism, but in death this order is followed by disorder: cycling of materials through organisms brings order once again. But today, rapidly drifting from our traditions of sustainable use and coexistence, we seem to be entering a man-centered world that implies the decimation of nature.¹⁸

This materialist paradigm has dominated the modern world for last few centuries. Western philosophy, on the other hand, treats man and nature as separate entities believing that the former has the prerogative to exploit the latter. Thomas Carlyle in Signs of the Times says, “We war with rude nature; and by our restless engines, come off victorious and loaded with spoils. So the tradition of maintaining sacred groves and sacred trees vanished from most countries, due mainly to the rise of dogmatic religions like Christianity and Islam, which advocated faith in one god and were explicitly for the eradication of ‘pagan’ practices. The underlying theme in Semitic religions is that of a chosen people who have been divinely granted ownership of the earth and all living things, and permission to exploit them. The Semitic perception that humans have more “dignity” than animals has gone a long way into the enormous decimation and extinction of non-human life on our planet not to mention the massacre of non-believing human beings. Hindu philosophy has always had a humane and dignified view of the sacredness of all life, and that humans are but one link in the symbiotic chain of life and consciousness.¹⁹

The current deplorable environmental crisis demands a spiritual response. A fundamental reorientation of human consciousness, accompanied by action that is born out of inner commitment, is very much needed. One of the measures that could help a great deal to fulfill this need is to regenerate and rejuvenate basic values of Tribal religion and propagate them.

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Rongker of the Karbis celebrated

With the Kurusar (priest) chanting prayers and offering animal sacrifice to appease the Karbi deities seeking their blessings for the welfare of the village and its protection from evil entities and natural calamities, the Karbis across Karbi Anglong observed Rongker recently.

Usually the ritual is observed in the beginning of the year for peace, prosperity and a good harvest in the village by propitiating the deities. The community believes that non-



observance of the ritual will invite misfortune upon the village and its inhabitants.

Rongker festival is a yearly religious festival of the Karbi community which is performed by every village. Every village has an allotted place for performing Rongker. Every year, villagers across the entire district form a committee to overlook the observance of the Rongker puja.

Tagin community celebrates Si-Donyi fest in Arunachal

Sri Paramananda Chayengia, Chief Executive Member of Mishng Autonomous Council (MAC), Assam recently made a fervent appeal to all Tani group of people of Arunachal Pradesh and the Mishngs of Assam to come together since their languages, practices and rituals are very much common, so that they can initiate a joint campaign to obtain a global identity.

Addressing huge gathering of Si-Donyi Festival revellers at Si-Donyi Jaaring in Naharlagun near Itanagar, he said that “we are born from the same root with same blood lineage with full faith in Donyi-Polo though separated due to social or political reasons”. Without mincing words he stated that “Our common language can be developed as a modern one for our global identity.” Acknowledging the thunderous applause of the gathering he lauded the impressive participation of younger generation which, he said, proves that “there is no threat to our identity”. “Respecting me during this festival by Tagins amounts to respecting Mishng community”, he said while recalling that he was born, educated in Arunachal Pradesh as his father and mothers were serving in this state during 1960s for which he is physically and mentally linked to this Himalayan state.

In his speech Sri Chayengia stated that though alien cultures had posed a serious threat to the age-old cultures, language and practices of the Mishng community, but they have now realised that they would lose their identity soon if bold steps are not taken to conserve and preserve their identity. He recalled that during a meeting at the initiative of MAC at Itanagar in December last attended by representatives of various local indigenous communities, a Coordination Committee was formed

with Sri Tonyi Pertin as Convenor to unite all Tani groups.

Sri Nabam Atum, Chairman of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, who attended the meeting as Guest of Honour stated that the indigenous people of Arunachal Pradesh will continue to face threat to their identity until and unless they strengthen their cultures and religions. He lamented that the younger generations are turning their back to the rituals and religious practices and concentrating more on merrymaking aspects for which the rituals are slowly dying. He stressed on immediate documentation of all age-old rituals of all tribes of the state before the senior priests leave this mortal world with their



invaluable knowledge.

Earlier, Sri Tameng Kamsar, Secretary, Si-Donyi Festival Celebration Committee Capital Complex (SDFCCCC)-2019 highlighted the mythology of the festival celebrated since time immemorial. He stated that the belief, faith, cultural fabric and philosophy of Tagin life, handed down by the forefathers and the priests through folklore, hymns and oral form from generation to generation forms the base of the spiritual knowledge of the community.

In the course of the meeting young and old attired in their best costumes performed traditional dances to appease Si-Donyi for bestowing peace and prosperity on the community.

REVIEWING TEA TRIBES' AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Assam, has been a favorite destination for many groups for settlement due to more than one reason since past as evinced in historical narratives. A sizeable number of population belonging to different socio-ecological and ethnic background remained in Assam who were brought here by British tea planters to engage in their flourishing tea gardens for capitalizing growing demand of unskilled labour arose due to lack of interest of locals for keeping aside age old own agro-based economic practice sufficed solely upon wet rice cultivation during colonial period from various parts of the country like central, eastern Indian places like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar present new states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, etc. The tale of their migration in various phases under different patronage and divergent push factors compelling them to leave native land has been exclusively recorded in the pages of history. It testifies most of them stayed back while a small section returned back as soon as contract period was over. The existing population perhaps provides an actual idea about their departure in real sense. Nevertheless, the remaining population has become part and parcel of greater Assamese society undergoing various phases of socialization, transition and transformation over the last centuries or so besides maintaining own group identity and developing a composite identity. It is one of the rare examples of assimilation of diverse groups: ethnic, linguistic and cultural in the same ecological setting and emerged as a new identity through a process of adaptation and re-organization with occupational category as 'tea tribes'. Many noted scholars pointed out that they has got the opportunity to come close through common working place and living conditions at tea plantations and also compel them to give up own customs and traditions and exhibit a complex process of adjustments, emergence of new language as lingua franca by intermingling of Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Bihari, Oriya, locally known as sadani, having phonetically impression of Maithili and Magadhi 1. Linguist also asserts the presence of

various linguistic elements among them: Kolarian speaking people like Munda, Kharia, Santhal and Ho, Dravidian speaking groups like Malpahariya, Oraon, Kondh and Gond as well as groups speaking Oriya, Bengali and Hindi 2 . Empirically, it is established that tea tribe population comprises both tribe and caste component in terms of ethnicity. Various groups include Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Gor, Kharia, Mahili, Tanti, Pator, Bhumij, Baraik, Ganjhu, Rajowar, etc. Sanjay Kumar Tanti revealing the records from Deuram Tasa pointed out some detail list of groups consisting tea tribe population: Munda, Santhal, Orang, Savara, Bhuiya, Pahariya, Malpaharia, Parja, Gour, Kandh, Baiga, Kharia, Asur, Kol, Bhil, Khabar, Karua, Garait, Bhumij, Ghatowal, Bhakta, Ganju, Baraik, Chik, Kawor, Bauri, Khadal, Kumhar, Keot, Kondher, Koiri, Kahar, Kaxari, Koya, Rajowar, Turi, Suri, Bagti, Modi, Charag, Hajam, Rajak, Duchad, Tangla, Pasi, Teli, Bania, Bhat, Saxa, Rajput, Gaur, Gowala, Baroi, Pradan, Mohanti, Mahli, Kurmi, Panika, Pator, Tanti, Hari, Chamar, Ghaxi, Dom, Komar, Paik, Desua, Bedia, Jatpadra, Telegu, Patuwa, Mali, Kixan, Bamon, Jalaha, etc.

However, they are more in number that varies in records of various scholars. Nevertheless their scale of contribution is immense not only in economy but socio-cultural milieu by enriching divergent cultural heritage of this part of region. Tea industry of Assam has appeared in the global tea map due to their prolonged and consistent efforts. It is revealed that 'tea happens to be the biggest industry in the state which also engages substantial manpower. Despite some hard times endured by the industry in recent years, it still remains a hugely rewarding venture, and a lot of credit for this goes to the tea workers. It is impossible to perceive the tea industry without the sweat and toil of the workers who left their original land more than a century ago and made Assam their home. Their role in the industry apart and the 70 lakh odd tea tribe populace inhabiting the State have assimilated with and enriched the composite Assamese heritage' 4. Geographically, tea is grown in both in the Brahmaputra, Barak plains

and district like Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur and providing opportunity to produce 55% tea within India and about one sixth (15.6%) in world. About 17 % of workers in Assam are engaged in tea industry where 50% are women. It is estimated that 12.5% of the total population depends on this industry for their livelihood .

Popularly known as 'tea tribes' though there is divergent nomenclature to designate them as sah jangosthi, sah bagisar janagosthi, ex-tea garden labourers (praktan sah sramik) and also 'adivashi' by various authors in their narratives and writings. The ex-tea garden labourers' is somewhat more interesting and reflection of exigencies to that extent how much they adjust to the soil of Assam disassociating with the previous work in tea gardens. Various villages creep up in the nook and corner of Assam adjacent to tea gardens where their settlement process started long back adopting new mode of economic life by practicing wet rice cultivation and other subsidiary means of economy. It was during 1999, I accomplished a field visit to village named Duwarapathar, adjacent to tea estate whose name is not came at this moment but close to Naharkotia, near Namrup in Upper Assam. That village is resided by ex-tea garden labour communities. Since it was very early days of learning the genesis of empirical research, it was not possible to penetrate the entire ethnographic scenario as beginners but certain aspects are still afresh. Attempts are made to reconstruct their society and culture from the faded memory. The village has marked differences with their traditional Bagan lines where quarters of permanent staffs are arranged accordingly as provided under facilities of garden authorities. It was more or less Assamese villages in terms of availability of space in the front and backward with bamboo grooves and other trees. Cowshed is observed due to their acceptance of wet rice cultivation by acquiring own land. It still afresh, in my memory that they are very kind and hospitable in nature. As beginners we had to conduct door to door survey to generate information with the help of structured questionnaire. It was very fruitful to have an idea of the entire society from holistic perspectives. Their family, marriage pattern, educational standard, economies are assessed through the data collected from it. No doubt they are recognized as ex-tea garden communities, but still some of them are engaged with

the tea gardens at different levels. We met Mr Labin Kurmi, a person who was working as Labour Supervisor in the neighbouring tea garden, and also a renowned actor in theater, plays and also made in appearance in cinema. Many of the villagers had taken various other jobs both in government and private sectors including L.P school teacher, peon and working as landless agricultural labourer, and petty traders. It is observed that they maintain mark proximity with their neighbouring Assamese society in terms of social and cultural interaction. Many elements of socio-cultural norms of Assamese Hindu society percolate down to their socio-cultural fabric though they are successful to retain own socio-cultural heritage in one way or the other. Durga puja and Kali puja was not celebrated in their village but they never hesitate to exploit the joy and wonders of such religious vigor that used to taken place few kms away from their villages. Lakshi puja is celebrated at household level with depiction of some artistic skills symbolizing the goddess of wealth. It was more or less rudimentary form of alpna and rangoli leaving imprint of beliefs and practices. They also informed about their traditional dance and drink. The use of lalparia sari by women in jhumur dance, is significant whether haria (traditional rice beer) has still prevalent in that village context, is not sure. In another context, beyond early field experience, I have seen the joy of tea garden labourers' in weekly payment days at Helem bagan bazaar, within the jurisdiction of Misamari police station under Amtola G.P of Sonitpur district, a weekly market held for 3 hours on Saturday. Man, women and girls used to come in group to procure other accessory items apart from the consumers' items facilitated by garden authorities. These are the two real experiences apart from various interactions with the members of the communities during different phases of academic and research journey. In urban localities, two of my close friends with high education are engaged in jobs under government of Assam. They have shared many information regarding their society and community. But the problem is that due to upbringing in urban localities and little contact with their parental abode they find difficulty to provide the real scenario. However, various researches, write-ups, available literature has wonderfully carve out and depict the various spectrum of socio-cultural heritage of tea tribes. It encompasses not only their tradition, beliefs and practices rather specify oral literature which is still going on. Sukdev

Adhikari 6 has brought forth various important components of intangible heritage of tea tribes carrying out empirical research. His work is one of the comprehensive and in depth work pertaining to tea community in recent times. Accomplishment of his work is found through various genres of oral literature as well as depiction of folkways. Classification of folksongs into various divisions like labour (kamjariker gana), marriage (sadiker gana), domkos, jhumur, lullaby, prayer songs like sahra, tusu, fagua, story and other songs, are interesting. The labour song, he cites, 'bane gale banphul pain a, suga he, bidese jaba, gams bisiye bhat khaba, suga he', is the reflection of adverse circumstances under which they were compelled to migrate in Assam. There are lots of other issues that need to be addressed but three important aspects such as jhumur, karam and tusu puja, possess specific significance in socio-cultural fabric. Jhumur as a part of performing folk art is not only a form of songs and dance rather it is soul for the entire community that transform their mood and sentiment to a different level. Associated with karam festival as actual performance context and listening playing of their indigenous musical instruments like dhol, madal, bangsi, kortal accompanied by jhumur songs, they cannot resist and control themselves as expressed and cited by Adhikari: " dhol-madal xuni ninda nai mor sakhe dhani, hame awali dhani, nase awali dhani, xunike bajana bhai, hame awali dhani, nase awali dhani, xunike bajana, gaye rangin saree, hate kinkini suri, samakat hiya mor, xunike bajana bhai, hame awal dhani, nase awali dhani, xunike bajana ". Further, execution of duties through meaningful way, the basis of karam, an agro-based festival, is another hallmark of tea tribe identity and culture. Another important festival tusu puja, held in January, mainly during magh bihu, has also part of their common heritage .

One must find that tea labour and ex-tea labour population form a multiethnic scenario within themselves not by forming a common lingua franca rather exhibition of festivals like tushu puja, manasa puja, gram puja, karam puja, jhumur dance, etc, to a certain extent and also shows some tendency to re-assert own identities within. Oraons, one of the populous tea tribal group, has formed its' own literary body in the line of other ethnic literary bodies of Assam who has not working for development of literature but also raise voice for socio-economic concerns for own society: All Kurux (Oraon) Sahitya

Sabha (AKSSA). It is a premier literacy and cultural organization of the Oraons which was constituted to protect, preserve, popularize and promote the language and culture. It is pertinent to mention here that the Oraons call themselves as 'Kuruxar' that is, 'people who belong to the Kurux-speaking group' and Kurux is their language. However, Oraon is used in all government records and administrative purposes and history reveals that they are aboriginals inhabiting in the central tribal belt, considered as third largest tribe after Santhals and Gond in India. In one of their biennial state level conference in recent past, there was lots of issues and concerns regarding protection of language which is one the verge of extinction revealing it as 'carrier of a culture and tradition which remains hidden in songs, folklore, proverbs, if language forgotten, the culture and tradition of the people will also disappear' 8. Further, a different set of process of revival of ethnic heritage is also found among other groups in recent times. No doubt the process of culture contact and assimilation has made them to adopt new cultural trait in the midst of changing socio-cultural environment, but the new generations' approach is significant who are always in search of their root. During 2018, it is quite surprise to find the report on celebration of Samrat Asur Hudur Durga from a place Deosri (Tibitola) inhabited by Santhal populace along the Indo-Bhutan border of Chirang district of Assam. Samrat is recognized as a legendary king among the Santhals world view. Actually, this puja was not celebrated from the remote past rather it was going on for the last three years only during the period of durga puja to remember their King Asur Hudur Durga. They believe that Goddess Durga killed their King Asur Hudur Durga as 'mahisasura' during this festival. It starts on mahanavami and ends on vijaya dashami. The hallmark of this puja is that they keep the idol of the Asura King under a tree in some isolated place after the puja instead of immersing it in water bodies. It is also reported that in West Bengal, this puja is celebrated in hundreds of Santhal dominated pockets with pomp and gaiety. This celebration in Assam is only a part of remembering their legendary king by offering floral tribute to his idol and seek the blessings from their traditional deities- majhi than, jaher than and kudam nayeke'.

One cannot ignore the contribution of tea tribe communities in diverse facets of Assam. Not only provided an added dimension towards economic

empowerment, rather enrich the store house of cultural heritage of north east in general and Assam in particular. In spite of that they are lagging behind in all the sectors that are reflected in their present socio-economic condition. The problems are manifold and recognized as a vulnerable section of society due to gross backwardness in terms of economy compelling youth to move other states for availing economic opportunities, illiteracy, health and education yielding other negative consequences as evinced in superstitious beliefs and practices and rift between management and labour. Consorted and holistic efforts, execution of various plans, programmes, policies in its' true spirit beyond politics not only strengthen them economically, but empowering new generation with ideas and innovation to revive and preserve their rich ethnic heritage that is at verge of extinction.

END NOTES

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Padma Shri awards to Manipur & Tripura geniuses

The state of Manipur was made proud by Ms. Laishram Bombayla Devi by winning the coveted award of Padma Shri for her distinguished service in field of Sports (Archery). Congratulating her, tyhe Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur, Sri N Biren Singh wished her all the best for her future endeavour. Ms. Devi is amongst the nine leading sportspersons from nine disciplines including Ms. Prashanti Singh (Basketball), Ms. Harika Dronavalli (Chess), Sri Gautam Gambhir (Cricket), Sri Sunil Chhetri (Football), Sri Ajay Thakur (Kabaddi), Ms. Bachendri Pal (Mountaineering), Sri Sharath Kamal (Table Tennis) and Sri Bajrang Punia (Wrestling) who have been awarded the fourth highest civilian award of our country.

From Tripura, famous art-music-flute (Rosem) artist, Sri Thanga Darlong (96) was nominated for the Padma Shri Award. Sri Dharlong, who hails from Kailashahar, was acknowledged with National Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 2014, followed by Academic Fellowship Award in 2015 and the state

level Vayoshresta Samman in 2016.He was also honored with the Centenarian award. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tripura Sri Biplab Kumar Deb congratulated Sri Darlong, an exceptional musical genius from Tripura, on his achievements on twitter. The Chief Minister wrote 'Heartiest greetings to Thanga Darlong ji on being conferred the Padma Shri Award.' An exceptional musical genius from Tripura, Shri Darlong has made exemplary efforts for nurturing the indigenous culture of North East especially the art of playing Rosem musical instrument.

The Padma Shri awards are announced every year on the occasion of Republic Day. This year, the President of India Sri Ram Nath Kovind, approved conferment of 112 Padmas. The list comprises 4 Padma Vibhushan, 14 Padma Bhushan and 94 Padma Shri Awards. Out of these 21 awardees are women, 11 person from the Foreigners /NRI/PIO/OCI category, 3 Posthumous awardees ans 1 transgender awardee.

Padma Shri to Surgeon Illias Ali and innovator Uddhab Bharali

Conferment of the Padma Shri Award to Surgeon Dr Illias Ali and Grassroot Innovator Shri Uddhab Kumar Bharali made Assam proud once again.

In the words of Ms. Tora Agarwala, the thoughts shared by the awardees on receiving the award are appended below.

Two persons from Assam — one who has been tirelessly working to curb the rising population in the state and the other who is known for his ingenious innovations — have been awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award given in India.

Since 1993, Dr Illias Ali has travelled on bullock carts, motor bikes and country boats from tea gardens in upper Assam to the hills of Karbi Anglong to the char chaporis (riverine islands of the Brahmaputra), convincing people of the poorest, most backward regions to adopt family planning and birth control measures.

“Many years ago, I read the book *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich. It said, if we don’t diffuse this ‘population bomb’, the earth will be destroyed. That left an impact on me,” said Dr Ali, who is also the Chairman, Population Foundation North East. Dr Ali says that the only way India can progress is if the country prioritises the issue of population. “Like Indonesia and China, even India has to take serious measures,” said Dr Ali, who is also known for speaking out against polygamy and child marriage. “But the journey so far has been rife with hurdles. Especially among the Muslim community in Assam, who consider children as ‘Allah’s daan,’” said Dr Ali, who then went from village to village, quoting verses from the holy Quran. “I told them what is the point of giving birth, if one does not have the resources to take care of the children.” On receiving the Padma Shri award, Dr Ali said, “I am happy the government has recognised this war I have been

fighting. Now the responsibility is to cater to the population which exists. To ensure that they have basic food, education and are healthy and happy.”

Even if it’s something as mundane as deseeding a pomegranate, the motto of Lakhimpur’s Uddhab Bharali, innovator of more than 150 techniques, is to make a tough job simpler. The innovator, who finished his 150th innovation on January 25, is known for his ingenious contraptions: garlic peeling machine, paddy thresher, cane stripping machine, brass utensil polishing machine, passion fruit juice extractor, trench digger, to name a few.

But the 57-year-old has also dedicated his life to serving Persons with Disabilities — apart from making tools (for those who require “assistance beyond a wheelchair”) that can be used by them, under his financial care are seven families, who face such difficulties. “Apart from that, 25 families — who are extremely poor — are under my care, and I run a destitute home too,” said Bharali.

This drive to do philanthropic work is rooted in Bharali’s own childhood — in 1988, he dropped out of engineering college in Chennai because

his family, under a debt of 18 lakh, couldn’t afford to support his education. That is when he came back to Lakhimpur and got involved in the innovation sector.

“Many people start their journey from ‘zero’. I started mine from minus 18 lakhs,” he said, admitting that he has always been a somewhat “eccentric person” since childhood. “I would always ask what people considered the most absurd questions.”

On receiving the Padma Shri Award, Bharali says it is an honour that such an issue is getting national recognition. “Very few people are in the line of innovation. It gives me inspiration to keep working,” said Bharali, who received President’s award for Grassroots Innovators in 2009.



Dima Hasao hosts Sngi Lum Lang Festival of the Jaintias

The Jaintia community living in Dima Hasao district of Assam celebrated 'Sngi Lumlang – a post harvesting festival at Jatinga with all customary zeal and traditional fervour on Monday xthe January 7, 2019.

The day-long-programme began at Jatinga football field with hoisting of organisational flag by North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) EM Amendu Hojai in the presence of huge gathering. This was followed by a welcome song, dances and a series of colourful cultural programmes.

The programme was also attended by EM Flamming Rupsi Shylla, Meghalaya MLAs Marcos Marak and SJC Momin, Major Ajay Singh Rathore of 11 Assam Rifles, Captain Rituraj Singh of 11 Assam Rifles and other dignitaries.

In Jaintia language Sngi Lumlang means "get-together" or "togeth- erness" which is being celebrated every year since 2012.The festival also signifies the rich cultural heritage and retains the

customs and traditions of the Jaintia Community. The January 7 was declared as a local holiday by NC Hills



Autonomous Council on account of Sngi Lumlang festival since 2013.

Rabha Festival to promote tourism and culture

To promote tourism and the rich culture of the Rabha community, a Rabha Festival was held in Ujan Rabhapara village of Bongaigaon on January 6, 2019, Sunday.

The festival was organized by Stylo Event Management team. Ms. Tarali Upaddhaya, organizer of the festival, said that the festival would be held in Bongaigaon district for the first time. "Ujan Rabhapara village is located in the Kakoijana Reserve Forest. Most of the people of the village belong to the Rabha community. This area is full of natural beauty and is famous for Golden Langurs. The area

has much potential to attract tourists with its rich culture and natural beauty. Hence, to promote the rich culture and tourism potential, this event was organised. The response was very good."

Ms. Upaddhaya further informed that to attract people to this festival several stalls of traditional Rabha garments and ornaments were set up. As a part of the festival traditional Rabha folk dance were performed and sight-seeing trips were organised.. Ethnic food of Rabha community was another attraction. Trekking, Kite flying and Fishing etc. added unadulterated ethnic colour to the festival.

English rendition of Ravana Bodh bhaona staged in Mumbai

Prajanmya Unmesh, a socio-cultural organisation of Jamugurihat in Sonitpur district successfully staged Ravana Bodh bhaona in English at the SIDCO Exhibition Centre Auditorium in Mumbai recently in cooperation with the State Government's Department of Culture.

It may perhaps not be out of place to mention here that this is the second consecutive time that a bhaona from Assam was presented in English. Speaking to this Correspondent about the presentation, Sri Arup Saikia, who directed of Ravana Bodh bhaona, said that his objective was to propagate the universal vision of Srimanta Sankaradeva in front of the world. Hence, this endeavour in English. He also mentioned that he wanted to present bhaona before the people in the metros.

Sri Saikia, it may be mentioned, hails from Sangiachuk village of Jamugurihat in Sonitpur district. "Though the bhaona form was presented in the Brajawali language by Srimanta Sankaradeva along with some of his compositions like Borgeet and Ankia Naats of the Vaishnavite tradition, we decided to make it in English in order to show how rich Assamese culture really is," Saikia said.

Significantly, only English language was adopted, but the theme of the bhaona, especially the musical

instruments like khol (drum) and taal (cymbal), compositions and dramatic feelings associated with bhaona were kept intact. The direction part was done by Arup Saikia himself while Smt. Girimallika Saikia and Smt. Gitimallika Saikia acted as coordinator and production manager respectively. Sri Bablu Hazarika discharged the duty of the Assistant Director. The other cast members who enthralled the audience by their quality performance were Badya Sutra – Dipandita Deka and Pragyashri Bhattacharya, Ram – Pratyush Plaban Neog, Sita – Madhusmita Deka, Bali – Niyor Hazarika, Tara – Garima Baruah, Mohini – Baishali Goswami, Mandudari – Lipimoni Borah, Laxman – Manab Jyoti Rajbonshi, Indrajit – Uddipta Saikia, Marich – Amit Saikia, Sugriv – Pranjal Saikia, Hanuman – Partha Pratim Tamuli, Mayabanta – Prianku Pratim Baruah, Gayon – Manoj Borah, Bayon – Manabendra Baruah, Gunjan Kakati, Music – Murchana Kakati, Dawarnill Baidya, flute – Bitupan Borah, choreographer – Likhak Nath etc.

Prajakta L Verma, Joint Managing Director of Urban and Industrial Corporation inaugurated the show by lighting the ceremonial lamp and lauded the initiative of Arup Saikia and his crew members. A number of eminent intellectuals, critics, litterateurs, scribes and writers attended the show.

New Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) For Arunachal Pradesh

On January 10, 2019, Thursday, speaking at a function at Yingkiong in Upper Siang district, Shri Pema Khandu, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh reiterated his government's commitment in improving the education sector and informed that due to continuous efforts of the government the Centre has sanctioned seven new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) for the state. The Hon'ble Chief Minister informed that the new KVs would come up at Kurung Kumey, Dibang Valley, Namsai, Upper Subansiri, Anjaw, West Siang and Upper Siang districts of the state soon.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister also visited the under-construction building of Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya at Ramsing village, near Yingkiong, the district headquarters. He thanked the villagers for

donating the land for free for the school. He also appreciated the quality of work being carried out for school building which is being constructed with an estimated amount of Rupees three crores. The Chief Minister further stated that the school needs more infrastructures such as Principal quarter, Staff quarters, Boundary wall, Science lab and Auditorium for which, he promised to sanction additional fund of Rupees eighth crore within the financial year 2019-20. Shri Khandu urged the executing department to carry out the work on a war footing so that the new school building is ready within this year and that classes for the next academic session begin from this new building. At present the school is being run from a temporary site

Chakaan Gaan Ngai festival at Dimapur

On January 17, 2019 Chakaan Gaan Ngai, the post-harvest festival of the Rongmei people was celebrated with Mr. Tovihoto Ayemi, Advisor Power, Government of Nagaland and Chairman, DPDB Dimapur as special guest at Chungaizaeng Rongmei Colony, Burma Camp Dimapur. The festival was organized by Rongmei Council Nagaland under the theme 'Celebrating culture and identity.'

In his speech Mr. Ayemi urged the gathering to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of Rongmei people who are indigenous people of Nagaland, Manipur and Assam. He said that Chakaan Gaan Ngai which is the post-harvest festival is an occasion for forgiveness, peace and prosperity. It is also time to introspect the shortcomings of the past and to look forward for a better future. He also averred that the PDA Government is a pro-people government and is concerned about the wastage of government funds in maintaining VIP culture and instead suggested to invest in development of the state.

Earlier, he unveiled the inaugural plaque of the Rongmei Customary Court. The programme started with a prayer offered by Mr. Pouhourei Gangmei, Pastor Rongmei Baptist Fellowship Chümoukedima. Mr. G Chingkhiulung, President Rongmei Council Nagaland welcomed the gathering and delivered the

Chakkan Gaan Ngai greetings.

The festival was marked by traditional way of igniting new fire, cultural dances, display of drum beats, indigenous games and sports and evening extravaganza. Mr. John Dangmei and Mr. Kachekmunlu Gangmei were adjudged Mr and Miss Chakkan Gaan Ngai 2019 respectively.

Similar to Dimapur, the Gaan Ngai festival was also celebrated at Sangaiprou, Imphal East on January 22, 2019, in which the youths and elders enjoyed the festival with much pomp and gaiety.

Taking part in the festival, Sri Narengbam Samarjit, Chairman and Managing Director of Salai Holdings Private Limited expressed that Gaan Ngai is a beautiful festival of Kabui community which will remain alive in the history of Manipur for generations to come. Maintaining that Salai Holdings will extend all possible help in promoting the festival, Sri Samarjit informed that his company and North East India Development Party (NEEDP) have extended a grant of Rs 50,000.00 to the village authorities for organising the Gaan Ngai festival this year. In the course of his speech Sri Sapam Kunjakishore, State Unit President of North East India Development Party expressed happiness in taking part in the festival adding that the party is not taking any political advantage by taking part in the festival.

Workshop on Biya Naam and Diha Naam held

On January 1, 2019 Gaurisagar Sarbajanin Puja Mandir Committee organized a six-day long workshop on Biya Naam and Diha Naam at Gaurisagar Sarbajanin Durga Mandir in association with Gaurisagar Udoysi Mahila Samaj, which successfully concludes on January 6, 2019, Sunday. A closing ceremony was held and Dr. Dipa Goswami, Associate Professor and head of the Department of Sanskrit, DCB Girls' College, Jorhat, graced the function as a guest of honour. In her speech, she said that Biya Naam was a powerful

and integral part of Assamese folk literature. She lamented that the girls of the new generation hesitate to sing these evergreen songs.

"Due to globalization, we are going towards a stage whereas if we throw away our tradition, ideology and culture, we will not be able to survive as Assamese," she said. Sri Jatin Borah, Smt. Deepali Rajguru, Sri Munin Borah, Sri Padum Kr Saikia and Sri Rajib Dutta, Secretary of Gaurisagar Press Club, were present as resources persons.

Junbeel Pathar hosts traditional Barter trade

The second day of the historic Junbeel Mela started in the morning of January 18, 2019 at Junbeel pathar near Morigaon with the inauguration of the unique 'barter system of trade' by the Morigaon MLA Sri Rama Kanta Deuri.

As per tradition, the indigenous age-old barter system of trade began early this morning in the presence of about 4000 hills people from Karbi Anglong district and some from outside the State like Meghalaya. The hills people bartered some essential items such as ginger, lac, indigo, mats etc., to procure various traditional cakes, rice powder, dried fish etc., from the plains people. With the food items procured from the plains people, the tribals will celebrate their Magh Bihu. Gova tribals celebrate 'Uruka' on the third day of the Junbeel Mela.

Another significant event of the occasion was community fishing at 'Junbeel', the natural water body after which the Mela has been named in which all groups join together. This community fishing at Junbeel is an important component of the mela, which is conducted subject to permission by the Gova Tiwa Deo-raja Rajdarbar. It plays a big role in fostering the spirit of friendship among different communities.

While inaugurating the barter system of trade, Morigaon MLA Sri Rama Kanta Deuri appealed to the hills and the plains people to preserve the ancient culture through this historic Junbeel Mela. The Deputy Commissioner of Morigaon, Sri Rituraj Bora released a souvenir named 'Junbeel' at a function organised on the occasion. Various ancient cultural programmes were performed by the ethnic groups in the function.

On the concluding day, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal along with Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the temporary 'Gova Deoraja Rajdarbar' at the Mela ground. The mela is of ethnic

and socio-cultural importance as this becomes a common meeting ground for the different hill tribes of the country and the people of the plains.

In the course of his closing ceremony speech, the Hon'ble Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal vowed to make the Junbeel Mela a global tourist attraction with adequate assistance from the government. He said that Junbeel Mela with its barter system had the potential of turning itself into a major tourist attraction. He also announced Rs. 1 crore from untied fund for the promotion of Junbeel Mela. He also said that the three-day Junbeel Mela, which turns into a confluence of humanity, gives an opportunity to present the diversities and strengthen the

harmonious co-existence of the State. Chief Minister Sonowal also said that his government was duty bound to protect the interests of the indigenous communities of the State. He, therefore, appealed to All Assam Students' Union (AASU) along with other intelligentsia to lend their full cooperation to look into full implementation of Clause VI of the Assam Accord which would



ensure safeguarding the interests of the ethnic communities of Assam. He also said that the previous governments, both in the State as well as in the Centre, only paid lip service to the interests of the people of Assam and nothing concrete was done on ground. However, the present Central Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi took keen interest for the protection of the rights and privileges of the people of Assam.

It is however disappointing to note that no scientific research on the ethnic customs and socio-cultural aspects of the Mela has been taken up so far. It is hoped that many historical aspects of the socio-cultural life of the tribal communities will come to light if proper scientific research is initiated.

Clarion call to spread the message of Gita for world peace

Swami Tapananda Giri Maharaj, President and the Chief Priest of Shankar Math Kolkata paid his august visit to Silchar recently to attend the 4th Annual Foundation Day of Silchar Shankar Math and Mission and the 110th birth anniversary of Swami Jyotirananda Giri Maharaj.

In his sermon Swami Tapananda stated that “The only way to establish peace in this world torn by malice, hatred and ill will among people irrespective of caste and creed as well as community is to spread the message of Gita. This is the way to end the continuous conflict and clash,”

A host of saints and sages of the Shankar Math and Mission as well as other religious organizations from Bangladesh, Tripura and Kolkata graced the ceremony, most prominent amongst them were Swami Sambhidananda, Swami Mrinmayananda Maharaj, Swami Suryanandaji Maharaj, Swami Swaprakashananda Brahmachari, Swami Anilananda Giri Maharaj and Swami Prabirananda Brahmachari. Sri Atin Das, noted poet, writer and columnist from Silchar was also present on the occasion as Guest of Honour.

Under the patronage of Sri Subhash Mitra, Srimanta Vigyananda Brahmachari of Shankar Math and Mission Silchar coordinated the overall programme lasting two days. The highlight of the programme was thought provoking speeches, messages and sermons which underlined the core theme of peace and tranquillity, the need of the day.

In their enlightening sermons during the Hindu Dharma Sammelan, the learned spiritual luminaries conveyed that our duty “is to follow the tradition of sanatana dharma which implies the worship of truth and its quest for peace. Message of Gita is to be adopted in order to seek emancipation from the materialistic way of life. Gautam Buddha forsook all comforts and luxuries of life to become a saint. Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to spread the message of Hinduism across the world. Mahanambhrata Brahmachari who continued to speak

about the universal essence of the dialogue between Krishna and Arjun attracted a large number of foreigners around the world who also sought refuge in the message of Gita.

It is worthy of mention here that the number of foreigners from different countries is taking keen interest in reading not only Gita but also Ramayana and Mahabharata where they discover the true essence of life. The Kumbha Mela at Prayagraj has attracted as usual thousands of lovers of Sanatana dharma. These overseas devotees are also adopting Hindu way of doing tarpan and asthi visarjan, besides other rituals. They are also now seen going around temples and other religious Hindu establishments with the sole objective of seeking and getting peace of mind and body. Shankar Math’s main mantra is to preach and teach from Gita and keep alive the traditions of Veda and Upanishads.

It is significant that Hindu culture and tradition is being assiduously kept aloft not only by Shankar Math but also by Ramakrishna Mission, Bharat Sevashram Sanga, ISKCON, Gauriya Math as well as other Hindu organizations. Against the backdrop of looming threat to human civilization, this holy congregation called all Hindus to unite and remain awake. It is with this objective that Shankar Math which has 18 branches in this country and many more around the world, particularly America, Europe, Arab and Asian countries, is working hard. If Hindus are united, this will be in the best interest of mankind around the globe.

All the holy figures present expressed their anxiety that youths are neglecting their religious duties in the name of studies. This has to be reversed. They should be encouraged by their parents and guardians to come to shrines and holy places. The highlight of the two long programmes was cultural presentations as well as humanitarian work like distribution of clothes and blankets among the needy and poor.

Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra Maharaj remembered

The 3 day long 279th birth anniversary of Shri Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra Maharaj, the proponent of Goudio Vaishnab Sampradaya and the pristine Manipuri cult and culture concluded at Silchar recently with grace and solemnity. It was a packed function which started with the hoisting of flag and prayer. Sri L Manglemba Singha, former senior librarian of Cachar College in his welcome speech spoke about the significance of the day. Sri O Churamani Singha, the retired Principal of Gurucharan College, threw light on the achievements of Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra. In his key note address, Sri L Tejamani Singh, President of Zila Leibak, Silchar, spoke about the illustrious life of the great Manipuri king.

He added that in the annals of Manipuri kingship history, the name of Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra is held in high esteem. During his life span of 58 years, he ruled the Manipuri kingdom for about 40 years. During this period, he had to face the Burmese invasion as many as 13 times, but successfully repulsed them and protected the integrity and solidarity of the state. He was baptized in Madhwacharya sect of Goudiya Vaishnab cult by his celebrated guru Premananda Goswami in 1778. After being initiated into the cult, he introduced the Ras culture in Manipuri way of song and music as well as costumes in Manipuri tradition as per the tenets of Ras-Panchadhya of Bagabattam ten chapter, particularly the 29 and 33 cantos, containing 172 slokas.

Before he embraced the said cult of Vaishnab Sampradaya, the cult of Ramanadi (belief in one God) was prevalent in Manipur. Madhwacharya cult, on the other hand, is the belief in more than one God. It was Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra who retained the

worshipping of pristine Manipuri cult and cultures at par excellence. During his lifetime, Sri L Tejamani Singha pointed out that Madhwacharya cult was modified by the great Vaishnab avatara Gouranga Mahaprabhu. This cult gave the message that since dharma, artha, kama, moksha is not the sole way of attaining nirvana, the only way of emancipation or mukti is prema, complete surrender to God. It is called the medium of nibritti. It is on the basis of this teaching and preaching that all Manipuri sankritana and other prayers are elevated towards prema.



Sri L Tejamani Singha described Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra as the very incarnation of Narattom Thakur since his mortal remains were washed away by the rising tide. For his many attributes, the Manipuri scholars have compared him to King Yudhistira for virtuousness, Brihaspati for intelligence, King Sibi for generosity, Kamadeva for beauty, Bikramaditya for magnanimity, Lord Vishnu for forgiveness and Lord Shiva for boons. He is also like the bird of paradise as described by Manipuri intellectuals.

The 3 day long programme was enlivened and enriched by national seminar on 'Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra and Vedic Culture', cultural presentations by Manipuri ballad troupe, as well as other variety attractions. Of significance is the participation by a host of scholars who presented their papers on Rajarshi Bhagya Chandra and Vedic Culture'. Mention has to be made of Dr Sumit Basu from Shantiniketan, Dr Arjun Sen Sharma from Assam University, Dr Y Manidhan Singha from SS College Hailakandi and Dr Khumanthem Sabita Devi from Manipur College, Imphal. It was divided in two sessions which were chaired by Prof. Bihari Singha and Dr K N Chand Singha.



Gaan Ngai festival of Zeliangrong



Arunachal Vikas Parishad Silver Jubilee Celebration