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**Indigenous Faith Day Celebration, 2016
at Arunachal Pradesh**



India's contribution to the rest of the world

"India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most constructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only"

Mark Twain

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The Politics of Obstructionism

Ever since the Modi Government came to power, the power brokers of our country and the patrons of vested interest anti-national groups are trying relentlessly to destabilize the government and take over the control of the Government machinery to fulfill their ulterior motives. Taking advantage of the democratic set up and tolerant social norms of our country, these opposing forces are pursuing their single point agenda of opposition for the sake of opposition, for anything that is done to reverse the wrongdoings perpetrated by earlier Governments for last 70 years, especially those run by the single family led Congress party. It is most unfortunate that the so-called opposition groups manning our Parliament and State Assemblies, abetted by some pseudo intellectuals, could not find anything positive in what is being done by the present government. This proves that they were more comfortable with earlier dispensations because in past they were given free run for unlimited corruption, commission raj, Howala transactions, tax evasions, siphoning nation's wealth & depositing them in faraway foreign banks and many such sinister activities. To achieve back their comfort zone, it appears that all the birds of same feather have flocked together.

The latest addition to the agenda of opposition programme of the Modi baiters is the reform of the Uniform Civil Code vis-a-vis abolition of the system of "Teen Talaque" practiced by the Muslims in India. The Co-convenor of the Ahale Sunnat Val Jamaat Forum, Mohammad Altaf Raza has exhorted that the BJP-led Union government is trying to nullify the Muslim personal law which has been in practice even before India got its Independence. Md. Altaf Raja has conveniently forgotten that the unilateral triple talaque, which Muslims are made to believe is based on divine revelation, is nothing but a legal evasion devised by an acquiescent Muslim clergy at the behest of the Omayyad monarchs. This happened during the second century of the Muhammadan era much after Prophet Muhammad had passed away. It was done to bypass the true triple talaq as formulated in the Quran. Therefore,

this sacrilegious triple Talaq in one sitting, known as talaq-ul-bidaat in Islamic religious texts, in nothing but -a heretical Talaq. It ought not to have been on the statute of Muslim personal law. Therefore, the instant triple talaque as permitted by the Muslim personal law negates the road map of the true triple Talaq laid down in the Quran.

Interestingly, the observations made by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the country of great adoration for a section of Muslims of India, have observed that "Among Muslims, marriage is not a sacrament, but is in the nature of a civil contract. Such a contract undoubtedly has spiritual and moral overtones and undertones but legally, in essence, it remains a contract between the parties." The spirit behind this observation is that the nikahnama (Muslim marriage contract) is adaptable and is subject to scrutiny. It is relevant to note that the custom is criticised for being unilateral and biased against women, and is either banned or restricted in 22 countries of the world including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iraq,

The Government of India has taken the stand of opposing the practice of instant Talaque on the ground that it is against the principle of gender equality. A democratic and a socially responsive country like India cannot allow the lives of Muslim women to be ruined with triple Talaque, an arbitrary and unjust dispensation. Several women's rights groups have also expressed similar sentiments and have spoken out against the practice and its ill effects on Muslim women on various fronts.

It is now time for the Muslim Clergy, All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Ahale Sunnat Val Jamaat Forum and the likes to wake up. They have ruled over the fate of unfortunate Muslim women for too long. It is an universal truth that all man made things are destined to come to an end. If the non-sense and upright Modi Government sticks to its guns, the death knells of clergy domination are not far away.

Editor

THE NEW YEAR: ETIC AND EMIC PERSPECTIVES

- Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Time has undergone a great change and is passing through a rapid transition and transformation. People now a day hardly have any time for relaxation and merrymaking. They therefore seldom leave any opportunity to entertain themselves if it comes their way. The 31st December is such an occasion when people congregate and celebrate it according to their choice and liking. There is no recorded history of the celebrations associated with it but within a very short period of time this year-end celebration has transformed itself into a popular culture. Though such celebration originated in developed countries, mostly in the west, but it gradually spread out across the globe. The interesting aspect of this celebration is that there are no prescribed rules or norms for the celebration. Difference lies in the economy only. How to celebrate? Where to celebrate? All depend on the economic condition of the people observing it. Generally, it is celebrated as a prelude to the New Year Eve. However, there is a universally accepted calendar date for the occasion. On 31st December, the celebrations begin in the evening in accordance with the unanimous choice and style, economy, age and sex. The merriment reaches its crescendo when the Clock strikes 12.00 at midnight of 31st December. However, the celebration time varies according to latitude and longitude, continent and countries and does not follow the Greenwich time line. Local time reigns supreme on the occasion. In India also, the impact of westernization is clearly visible. Decorative lighting, singing, dancing to the tune of loud music, feasting, drinking, bursting of crackers symbolises the welcoming of New Year for a section of the populace. Most of the people arrange community feasts with choice delicacies. Others enjoy sumptuous dinners in their homes with family and friends supplemented by colourful television programmes. This is the story of Metros, Cities, Towns, semi urban pockets and some economically self-sufficient villages

Actually, the Gregorian calendar is uniformly followed across the globe. However, the name and the content of the New Year celebrations, month and date varies according to the cultures of different communities. In India, the differences are also

clearly visible. Among some communities, the month or dates are same. They are known under different names but the indigenous flavour show some resemblances. Vaisakhi, Bihu and Pahila Baisakh are celebrated by Punjabi, Assamese and Bengali communities near about the same period. Vaisakhi is the Punjabi New Year, a harvest festival where god is appreciated for His blessings and people pay their thanks to Him. The Bengali community celebrates with feasting. On the other hand, Bihu especially Rongali Bihu has a great significance among the Asomiya community. It is observed through an elaborate process right from the Goru Bihu, Manuh Bihu, Gosai Bihu and others. Bihu, as we know (Rongali, Magh and Kongali or Kati) is agro-based festivals emphasizing three different period of an agricultural cycle. Worshipping, paying respect towards the old and the aged, feasting, singing and dancing are key ingredients of Rongali Bihu, signifying advent of New Year

The New Year means a lot for people belonging to various communities. It is observed according to their own calendar and own ways. Puthandu is the new year of the Tamil people, celebrated in Chitteri, the first month of the Tamil calendar. On the last day of the year, they prepare a tray with various articles that are considered auspicious. In the tray they keep three kinds of fruits- mango, banana and jackfruit, areca nuts and couple of betel leaves, gold or silver jewellery, mirror, some currency, rice, coconuts and flowers. The motive behind this is to see, first thing in the morning of the first day of the New Year. It is popularly known as Kanni (auspicious sight). They believe that viewing an auspicious sight in the early morning on the first day of New Year will bring prosperity, peace and happiness throughout the year. Likewise Gujarati people celebrate Bestu Varas, Gujarati New Year, the first bright day of Kartik, first month of New Year and 'Ekam' is the first day. Gujrati people celebrate New Year after Diwali. Time frames of New Year celebrations in our country vary from one community to another

Multiculturalism is one of the important features of India. India is the home of diverse traditional

cultures and traditions. The impact of modernization and globalization has cast its influence on the indigenous way of life and practices but they still retain their own traditions that is unique and marker of identity. In the north eastern context, it is found that more or less every community celebrate New Year in their own way. The Galo community of Arunachal Pradesh celebrates Mopin festival, in the month of Lumi and Luki, a celebration of harvesting season, during March-April and the New Year. During the month of February, the Nyishi celebrate Nyokum Yullo. It is a prayer for welfare of all human beings, for peace, progress and prosperity. The Tangkhul Nagas celebrate Luiru Phanit festival associated with New Year and sowing. It begins in the full moon of the last week of January and continue up to March each year. In Assam, as stated above Rongali Bihu (mid-April) is the prime festival to welcome Assamese New Year. It is held in the month of Bohag (first Axomiya month according to Assamese calendar). Again, Baisagu is one of the most important festivals among the Bodo-Kacharis for welcoming New Year. It is held during same period as that of Assamese calendar. On the other hand, Karbis (a hill tribe of Axom) celebrate Ningkan Kimi (New Year) on 1st February, as per Karbi calendar, the Thangthang Niphail. The prime agro-based festival Ali-ai-ligang of Mishings (major plains tribe of Axom) is connected with New Year celebration. The people of north east are mostly agrarian. Most of their celebrations are associated with cultivation. They feel more relaxed and happy when their granary is full with grains. They believe that their hard work has been rewarded

by the almighty. They express their gratitude and respectful sentiments through various celebrations, festivals and exhibiting their rich socio-cultural heritage signifying their identity. It is evident that that the diverse ways of celebrating indigenous New Year by the ethnic communities of North East testify their unique ethnic identity.

The overwhelming influence of western culture and globalization has impacted different countries and populations around the globe adversely. It has seriously affected the indigenous culture. The present new generation feel more comfortable with the western culture. The New Year eve celebrations have become a popular culture for them. Feasting, merrymaking, dancing and indulging in loud western music has become a part and parcel of the year ending night. In Indian context, people have accepted this tradition but sometimes the new generation tries to enjoy and celebrate the occasion in an uncontrolled manner and crosses the limit and invite misfortune.

Nevertheless, Indian cultural heritage has withstood the onslaught of opposing cultures for centuries. Its undying uniqueness is reflected in Bihu, Vaisakhi, Pohela Boisakh, Puthandu and Bestu Varas. Indigenous communities celebrate New Year with in their own way. In north eastern context, the New Year celebration has its own meaning, time frame and period and the way of celebration varies according to community and their cultural traditions. Though 31st December and 1st January, is celebrated by all, but they still retain their own new year celebrations as a marker of their own ethnic identity.

14-yr-old girl Discovers Magic of 'Om'

A 14-year-old has wowed city scientists with her discovery of the impact of the 'Om' sound in reducing fatigue. Anwasha Roy Chowdhury, a Class-IX student of Adamas World School, topped the recently held Science Congress organized by the state government.

Her findings that chanting of 'Om' increases oxygen level in blood and lowers carbon dioxide and lactic acid, which reduces the level of fatigue, were vetted by physics and physiology professors of Calcutta University and Jadavpur University. Debashish Bandopadhyay, head of the department of physiology, Calcutta University, told TOI,

"Anwasha's project is innovative; it's quite flawless and convincing."

An-we-sha, who likes to spell her name thus, since anweshan in Bengal means 'search', told TOI, "I found that sounds with a particular frequency, if heard or recited right, raises the level of neurotransmitters and hormones like serotonin, dopamine, DHEA etc. Because of their vasodilatory actions, the oxygen level in blood soars. It also produces less lactic acid and allows the person to act without fatigue."

(Contd. to Page 23)

Science and Religion

Dr Jyotsna Bhattacharjee

It is generally believed that science and religion are entirely different and there is no connection between the two. Science is connected with the phenomenal world while religion is involved in the noumenal world. Religion is very necessary for human life; it is an intrinsic element of human nature. Human beings need religion and it is an established truth. Religion implies a devotion to a Supreme Being who is supposed to be the final cause of the universe and this supreme entity gives significance and value to the fragile existence of humanity. In religion we find an emotional approach to the ultimate reality. But we cannot ignore the fact that this is an age of science and we cannot possibly accept incredible dogmas and exclusive revelations as the basis of religion. It is also an age of humanism. Hence the religions which are insensitive to human tragedies and social crimes do not appeal to modern man. Religions which make division, discord and disintegration and do not promote unity, understanding and coherence are not religions in the true sense of the term.

The general impression that the spirit of science is opposed to that of religion is unfortunate and untrue according to Dr. Radhakrishnan. He says that what is called natural theology is based on the study of the empirically observable facts and not on authoritative sources. Those who attempt to construct a theory of Ultimate Being from the assessment of the facts of nature actually adopt the scientific method. In the cosmic process of evolution it can be seen that there is a steady ascent from the inorganic to the organic, from the organic to the sentient, from the sentient to the rational life. Then the rational grows into the spiritual. The purpose of the cosmic process is to reach God, the Ultimate Being.

Science and religion are supposed to be entirely different. Science studies the facts of experience and its methods are observation and experiment. Science does not accept any spiritual Ultimate Reality which resides in a transcendental world. For

philosophy the method of intuition is very necessary to reach the Supreme Reality or God. The dictionary meaning of 'intuition' is "immediate insight" or "understanding without conscious reasoning". Intuition is generally regarded as opposed to reason, on which philosophic explanation is based.

There are some thinkers who maintain that it is intuition that alone is competent to give us truth in its entirety and reason, which proceeds by discursive and analytic method, can give us only partial views of truth and reality. Some rationalistic thinkers state that reason alone can apprehend truth and reality. But there are some rationalists who say that there is one kind of intuition which may be called "imagination touched with conviction". They say that this kind of intuition is responsible for the discovery of many of the philosophic and scientific truths, which are subsequently strengthened by logical and rational analysis. According to Bergson intuition is the only organ of grasping the reality which is dynamic and intellect which is discursive and dissenting in its mode of operation can give us only static aspects of it.

It has been said that religion believes in a Supreme Reality or God, who can be known only in transcendental experience or intuition. The scientists usually do not believe in a creator or designer of the world of experience. Regarding the origin of the world we have the theory of creation and the theory of evolution. Creation of the world with all its contents is perhaps as old as human thought. The world once created was supposed to continue in the same way. But in the nineteenth century Huxley and Darwin propounded the theory of evolution, which stated the facts of process and change. Since then evolution has become a matter of primary importance. According to the theory of creation our world with all its contents was brought into existence out of nothing at a particular point of time by God and since creation, the world with all its contents has remained just the same as it was at the time of creation. But the modern scientists

rejected the theory of creation and accepted in its place the theory of evolution, which is the gradual process of growth and development.

Herbert Spencer was a mechanical philosopher and he believed in the self-existence of matter, form, space, time and conservation of energy. He said that matter, life and mind are not three distinct factors in the universe, and life and mind are continuous with matter, which under the laws of evolution grow into more complex stages.

The theory of mechanical evolution states that the universe with its physical, organic and conscious contents has accidentally arrived at the present state as a result of a long course of growth and development from stage to stage and that the stuff from which it has developed consisted of gross unconscious matter. The principles which moved the entire course of development were only blind forces of nature. According to the mechanical theory of evolution, from the solar system down to the tiny flower, the entire existence is the result of a blind movement of the atoms and molecules without any meaning of their own or value for the totality of existence. The universe is moving, but nobody knows to where it is moving. A scientist would perhaps say that the universe as it is now and as it may be in future is the result of the operation of matter and force in space and time without any trace of mind or intelligence to guide it and without any end or purpose to achieve. If any conception or mind or intelligence is brought to guide the course of evolution, then it will be theology and not science.

The inadequacy of the theory of mechanical evolution to explain the nature, growth and development of the universe in all its aspects has led the idealistic philosophers to accept the Teleological theory of evolution, according to which the universe demonstrates reason and purpose. They point out that the universe, in its facts and events, exhibits design and purpose and adaptation of one to the other. Every event in the universe is caused by some material and efficient cause. But the wonderful design of the world points to a supreme intelligent designer who has planned the universe and guides the course of evolution to the

realization of values. Everything in the universe demonstrates the fact that there is reason and purpose behind the cosmic process. The mechanical interpretation of the universe rejects teleology, but it can be noted that teleology is not really antagonistic to the scientific and mechanical view of the world.

The idealistic philosophers, who interpret the course of the universe teleological, do not deny the material and efficient causes. They say that the Ultimate Reality of the universe is spiritual, but its nature is such that it realizes its true being through physical, organic and conscious states. Each of these states has its own laws, but all these laws only express different experiences of that totality of the Spiritual Being in which the meaning and value of all these different levels of self-expression are maintained and perfected. It follows then that matter and its laws must not be denied their operation and efficiency in the totality of existence, but they should not be allowed to usurp the meaning and value of life and mind, organization and reason. The totality of purpose unifies them all. Thus if mechanism and mechanistic explanations of the universe are exclusive and rational, the teleological explanations are inclusive and purposive.

We have to note that though science gives importance to matter and physical forces, yet they cannot possibly ignore the fact that mind is superior to matter. The spirit of science does not suggest that the ultimate reality is matter, since it is the human mind that splits the atom. So science itself demonstrates that mind is superior to the atom. The achievements of science stand as witnesses to the spirit in man. The nature of the cosmic evolution with its order and progress suggests the reality of an undying spirit. Albert Einstein, one of the greatest scientists observes in his book "The World As I See It", that the scientist's "religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work,

in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself free from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages”.

Dr. Radhakrishnan said, “Scientists are men dedicated, set apart. They have renounced the life of action. Their life as the pursuit of truth is service of God, who is Truth; Satya Swarupa, Satya narayana”. The dynamic character of the world does not indicate that it is mechanistic. The continuous changes have a purpose. The world is not a futile play of atoms; it is gradually proceeding towards an end. The end is the Absolute Truth.

In this sense it can be said that the goal of science and religion is the same. Both the studies try to reach the Truth. Hence there is perhaps no real difference between science and religion. The spirit of science leads to the refinement of religion. Actually religion is not magic, or witchcraft, quackery or superstition. It is not to be confused with outdated dogmas, incredible superstitions, which spoil the simplicity of spiritual life. Intellectual authority should be treated with respect and not merely as a tradition. Science requires us to adopt an empirical attitude. But experience is not limited to the data of empirical perception or introspection. It embraces Paranormal phenomena and spiritual states. All religions are rooted in experience and experience includes not only phenomena, but noumena as well. The Kingdom of Heaven is the highest state attainable by man. It is within us.

Some scientists do disparage religion and they do not believe in any Spiritual Reality or God. But all scientists are not atheists. Scientists and theologians pursue the same goal. Truth is the destination for both. They have a natural similarity, but they adopt different ways to reach the goal. Some intellectuals state that one cannot be a true scientist unless one possesses a spiritual bent of mind. Mind must have a higher state than matter and mind is spiritual which can immediately apprehend the truth with the help of intuition.

Albert Einstein has been acclaimed as one of the greatest scientists of the world. He was not a

believer in the conventional sense of the term ‘Spiritualism’. But in an intricate sense he was a believer, for he did believe in an all-intelligent Being, who inscrutably designs, shapes and maintains the phenomenal world. He once observed, “God does not play dice with the universe”. He revolutionized physics and other branches of science with many of his mind-boggling discoveries. His mind was simple and intuitive, which provided him with a special privilege in his quest for truth. Perhaps going beyond the cognitive knowledge, he could form an idea about what God could do to run the universe smoothly. He had once remarked, “We are in a position of a little child entering a huge library, whose walls are covered to the ceiling with books in many different languages. The child knows that someone must have written those books. It does not know who or how. He does not understand the language in which they are written. The child notes a definite plan in the arrangement of the books, a mysterious order which it does not comprehend, but only deems suspects.” Einstein perhaps was the only scientist who admitted with humility that conceiving the ultimate power called God from which all powers come and become operational, is an impossible task.

Transcendental knowledge comes from intuition, which is being accepted as a valid means of scientific knowledge. There are numerous hidden truths, which cannot be discovered by normal methods. Highly developed minds realize them by intuition. Their view is somewhat similar to Swami Vivekananda’s conception that “Knowledge is inherent and to know is to discover and unveil”. According to him mind accumulates tremendous power and unravels mysteries in a concentrated form. He described concentration as “the only key to the treasure house of knowledge”. To substantiate his argument, he mentioned the discovery of gravitation by Isaac Newton (1642–1726) as an example. Newton instantly obtained the knowledge of gravitation from within himself with the suggestion of a falling apple. This extraordinary achievement places him in the class of intuitive scientists.

(The Sentinel, 04/12/2016)

The Chinese Dams on Brahmaputra: The Real Issues

- Pradip Kr. Bhuyan

There was much concern in the country, especially in Assam at the news that China is blocking a northern tributary of Yarlung Tsampo, - the 195 km long tributary, Xiabuqu River originating from the area close to Sikkim, by a dam under construction as part of Lalho Hydro Electric project in Xigaze prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The project will generate mere 42 mw of power and will irrigate 30,000 HA of land. The project will be completed in 2019.

Till now, the Chinese have commissioned the Zangmu Dam in the main Yarlung Tsampo (Siang / Brahmaputra located 140 km south-west of Lasha) in 2014. Salient features of the Dam indicate that it is a true Run of the River (RoR) Base load Generation Dam i.e. a naturally flowing river which is generating electricity. It has small poundage (reservoir) of 86.8 Mecum and power generation capacity of 510 MW only.

It is also in public domain now that China is building 3 more dams for hydropower development – Dagu 640 MW, Jiexu 560 MW & Jiacha 320 MW within a very short stretch from the Zangmu Dam. The fact that these 4 dams are within a short distance of each other indicates that the 3 dams which are under construction are also run of the River (RoR) Base load Generation Dams with small poundages and a flowing river. More such projects are in the pipeline. Fortunately, Hydro power projects cannot hold up water. In the case of the 4 Chinese Dams, water will flow without interruption as these are true RoR free-flowing hydro power projects as per salient features of the dams.

Coming back to the Xibuqu Dam of the Lalho hydro electric project in this northern tributary of Yarlung Tsampo, it is clearly a very small project which will generate only 42 mw of power. Cost of the project also indicates this – 740 musd (say 4923 crores). This project will not impact flow of Brahmaputra in any significant way. But, the project has a great significance as for the first time China will divert some water, however small may be, for irrigation of 30,000 HA of land. It signals start of a process of diversion of Yarlung Tsampo water for irrigation, navigation, water supply etc. i.e. for non-power generating activities.

Sword of Damocles – China's intentions

Three of the world's ten major rivers, - Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsampo), the Yangtze, and Mekong and other rivers like Huang Ho (Yellow River), Salween, the Sutlej, the Indus, the Arun, the Karnali flows out from Tibet Himalayas. Yarlung Tsampo (Brahmaputra) flows over 2000 km in Tibet before entering India in Arunachal Pradesh. When the Tsampo reaches its easternmost point in Tibet, it takes a sharp U-Turn known as the great bend which is the deepest and longest canyon in the World.

The Chinese has eyes in this part of the river to build a mega power station to produce 40,000 mw of power. Also, after power generation, some Chinese Engineers have dreamed to divert water from Tibet's Yarlung Tsampo to Xinjiang in the arid lands of North-West China through 800 km of canals and viaducts. The Mega project conceived by some academicians and engineers was first mentioned in a conference in Alaska in July 1986 as a probable project under Global Infrastructure Fund (GIF). The project as conceived now, plans to divert the Yarlung Tsampo water by a 15 km tunnel through the Himalaya from the starting point of the U-turn of the great bend to the other end of the big bend, circumventing 200-250 km of the loop and a drop of 3000 m or so to generate 40,000 MW of power from 9 cascading dams from the immense drop and to create a reservoir from where water can be diverted 800 km to the north to the arid regions. The project is termed as the Grand Western Water Diversion Plan (GWWDWP).

But the plan has failed to secure the backing of the Ministry of Water Resources and other key authority of China. Domestic and international environmental groups are also concerned. But certainly, going by China's penchant for mega projects, this looks like a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads, may be for decades unless taken care of by a bilateral agreement.

The reality of the situation:

It is time we in India, especially in Assam and Arunachal, realise a few facts about the realities

which are bitter pills for us. The truth is, China as the first riparian country, has a right to divert some water of Yarlung Tsampo for its own use for irrigation, water supply and navigation etc., apart from building hydro power projects (which does not hold up water).

But today, China – the upper riparian nation has apparently based its claim on a basis of ‘absolute territorial sovereignty right’ to do anything it chooses on Yarlung Tsampo, regardless of its effect on the other riparian nations.

As the downstream riparian, India is hoping to establish first user rights to stake its claim to an uninterrupted flow of Yarlung Tsampo waters i.e. for absolute integrity of the Yarlung Tsampo. GoI through its Ministries are planning mega dams on Siang over last two decades assuming full flow of Yarlung Tsampo to be available without any diversion by China, no doubt blinded from reality by its ‘policy of Power at any Cost’ from Arunachal Dams! The utter incompatibilities of such claims from both sides should eventually ensure a balanced agreement of views in the form of a bilateral agreement even though it may take decades of negotiation to arrive at.

A Bilateral Agreement

Prof. Dulal Goswami noted authority on Brahmaputra river system, in an interview with the Assam Tribune has advocated talks to settle issue of Brahmaputra with China, the first riparian country. Certainly it must be our goal. Water sharing agreements / arrangements are very complex and takes years of protracted discussions / dialogues. When political issues are entangled between the two riparian countries, the issues get complicated even further. In 2000, India accused China of not sharing hydrological data on the flow of Brahmaputra through the Chinese territory resulting in widespread devastation and flood. At least 40 people died in Arunachal. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in 2002 to coordinate data-sharing pertaining to water level, discharge and rainfall. In 2013, the two countries have established an Expert Level Mechanism on Trans border Rivers and signed a MoU on strengthening co-operation on Trans border Rivers under which Beijing is to provide water flow data during monsoon period. We now need to build from these premises to work out a comprehensive

bilateral Water Treaty over Yarlung Tsampo – as a vision of shared resources as the focal point of co-operation.

In this context it is pertinent for us to understand that, India is diverting water of Ganges and Teesta for its own use in a big way bulldozing serious concerns of Bangladesh as a lower riparian country. Similarly, India on its part need to recognize the right of China, as the first riparian country, to utilize the water of Yarlung Tsampo for power generation, irrigation, water supply etc. – the only issue is, how much? Once countries accept and realise the basic premises and become transparent in their policies, bilateral agreements are feasible based on this shared vision. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT) was developed and signed amidst very adverse relationship between India and Pakistan but the treaty itself is based on shared visions. The treaty has survived very strained relationship including wars between the two countries because the treaty was designed to manage conflict over a shared water resource which is beneficial for both the countries. The sharing of the Ganga waters between India and Bangladesh remained a subject of conflict for almost 35 years, until a comprehensive bilateral agreement was signed between the two countries in 1996 over the ‘Farakka Barrage diversion’ of water of Ganges.

Luit in Peril – Need of the hour

Our Luit faces great challenges and perils in the future from Chinese activities and also our own hydro power dams in the format, as peaking HEPs in Arunachal. But the need of the hour is not hysteria but a push for a bilateral agreement with China on Yarlung Tsampo water sharing. This is a matter of great urgency and GoI must pursue the issue with China with vigour. No one however should expect any quick result as these agreements are very complex and also because of the fact that China is in a position of great advantage as the first riparian country of Yarlung Tsampo which flows over 2000 km through its Tibet territory.

In this context, a bilateral agreement is the only option, which can safeguard our riparian rights over Brahmaputra, and we must vociferously and unitedly clamour and press the GoI for a continuing dialogue with China for a bilateral water sharing agreement as a priority agenda of the Government.

(The Sentinel, 14/12/2016)

Population Explosion - A National Problem

-Jitendra Prasad Baruah

India is the second most populous country in the world next only to China. India's population has since crossed 125 crores and in certain States, the growth of population is alarmingly high resulting in economic backwardness and high rate of criminal activities.

To check the rise in population we have to strictly follow the measures taken by the Government while taking care of the additional mouths to be fed. The people, mainly in rural and char areas, have to be educated and sensitized on the issue of birth control making them realize the gravity of the problem of increasing population. They have to be educated to adopt birth control measures offered by the Health Department.

In Assam, we have the problem of growth of unwanted population in both urban (slum areas) and rural areas. In rural areas, it is more acute because of the non-availability of required medical advice to make the people understand the necessity of family planning. The State is having a dwindling economy due to recurring floods and erosion with lakhs of indigenous people below poverty line. The State's population has increased to more than three crores of people and lakhs of them are unemployed. Assam is less developed in comparison to other States of the country and therefore, it needs restrictions in the growth of population. There has been an exodus of people in recent times from the rural to urban areas seeking jobs. Those who fail to do something to earn their livelihood fall prey to the bad elements and gradually become criminals, thieves, etc., causing problems to the society.

In Assam, we have seen that the growth of population is not proportionate in all the districts. There is abnormal increase in some districts including the char (sand bars) areas by the Brahmaputra. There are infiltrators from the neighbouring Bangladesh and they find easy access to the char areas taking advantage of the lack of surveillance and preventive measures. It is in these char areas mainly where there is unlimited growth of population. They are mostly illiterate and don't feel the necessity of limiting the family. They feel happy in feeding more and more additional mouths despite limited resources.

Of late, the State's Health Minister has stated that in 11 districts of Assam, the Muslims are a majority. The question is: How this could happen? Obviously, this is due to the Bangladeshis who have infiltrated into these districts clandestinely and are settling comfortably taking advantage of government apathy and lackadaisical attitude in checking illegal entry to this country.

There has been a controversy over the uniform civil code for all Indian nationals, an idea mooted by the Central Government and a Bill is yet to be placed in Parliament for discussion. But the Muslim Personal Law Board leaders have already started raising objections against it. It is obvious that those Muslim leaders manning the Muslim Personal Law Board try to control and influence the Muslims all over the country the way they like ignoring the sentiments of some of them and defying the Law Commission or Government's endeavour for a uniform civil code for all Indians irrespective of caste or religion. There should not be any objection or controversy over the issue of a uniform civil code.

It is not that only the Hindus will limit their families with one or two children and other communities, especially the Muslims, will have the choice of unlimited number of children by indulging in the practice of bigamy or polygamy. India being a secular state, it upholds and protects the rights of all sections of the society irrespective of caste or religion but cannot afford unlimited growth of population in a particular community defying government advice to limit the same.

It is a fact that in certain districts of Barpeta, Dhubri, Nagaon, etc., of Assam, there has been abnormal rise in Muslim population where Hindus are outnumbered. This has been due to the failure of the successive governments both at the Centre and the State during the period of more than last two decades in detecting and deporting the foreign nationals as per the provisions of the Assam Accord. On the other hand, retaliating against the move, some Muslim miscreants, of late, have started demolishing Hindu temples and houses in Bangladesh to force the minority to flee to Assam through its porous borders despite the Bangladeshi

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India Conveys Concern to Bangladesh

India has expressed its concern over rising attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh. The issue was raised at the two-day 18th Home Secretary Level Talks between India and Bangladesh held here on Monday the 5th December, 2016. The Indian delegation was led by Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi while the Bangladeshi delegation was headed by their Home Secretary Dr. Md. Mozammel Haque Khan.

Sources said that Indian officials also sought Bangladesh's help in nabbing a few wanted militants of the Northeast. The boundary dispute in Tripura also figured in the talks.

Significant though was that New Delhi expressed its concern at the growing incidents of attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh. India had earlier also taken up the issue at diplomatic level. A number of Hindu temples were demolished and Hindus attacked with latest incidents of burning down 20 houses belonging to Hindus, said sources.

During the meeting, security, border and other bilateral issues were also discussed. Anti-terror cooperation and sharing of intelligence also figured during the talks. The last such meeting was held in November 2015 at Dhaka in Bangladesh.

India also raised growing activities of terror groups like ISIS and increased presence of Jihadi groups in Bangladesh and some Indian states and how to jointly tackle them were discussed threadbare.

India also flagged the menace of smuggling of cattle, narcotics and arms through the porous Indo-Bangladesh border and is expected to find out ways to check them. Bangladesh sought India's cooperation in nabbing its most wanted criminals, especially those who were involved in war crimes and assassination of Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

(The Assam Tribune, 06/12/2016)

Pakistani Hindus Oppose Forced Conversations

On 30th November, 2016 Pakistan's Hindu community has criticised religious political parties for opposing the Minorities Bill, 2015, that criminalises the forced conversions. The bill was recently passed by Sindh's provincial assembly. Pakistan Muslim League-N lawmaker Ramesh Kumar commended the Pakistan People's Party government in Sindh for setting the minimum age for religious conversion at 18.

"People are issued a CNIC and driving licence at 18 and are allowed to vote after they are 18. In Sindh, the age at which someone can be legally married is also 18, because before that age an individual is considered a child," Kumar was quoted by Dawn as saying.

He said that girls belonging to religious minorities were kidnapped in Sindh and forcibly married, mostly to seminary students, and that they have no choice but to adapt to their new lives. "After this law, conversions before the age of 18 will be considered a crime," Kumar said.

Members of the civil society said that the incidence of forced conversions was increasing

across the country, particularly in Sindh, and that the bill will go a long way to help the minorities in Pakistan.

"Conversion is a basic right as marriage is, but just like forced marriage, forced conversions are also a violation of human rights, and is against the teachings of Islam as well," said Krishan Sharma, Chairman of the REAT Network Pakistan (Rights of Expression, Assembly, Association and Thought Network).

Sharma said that Hindus in the region have historically converted to Islam or Christianity and that they have carried their family names after conversion as well.

All the provinces should adopt similar laws to protect minorities from forced conversions and forced marriages, he said.

The two larger religious political parties, the Jamiat-e-Islam and the Jamiat Ulema Islam-F, are opposing the new law which was recently enacted in Sindh. They claim the law is part of a conspiracy to make Pakistan a liberal and secular country.

(The Sentinel, 01/12/2016)

Violence Against Women – The Reality

- Dr Tapati Baruah Kashyap

The assassination of the Mirabel sisters of the Dominican Republic on November 25, 1960 was an eye-opener for the whole world. These three courageous sisters – Patria, Maria and Minerva – who were also known as Las Mariposas (meaning, the butterflies), stood firm against the oppressive dictatorial regime of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic till their assassination on May 25, 1960. While that incident created a worldwide sensation, it was in 1999 that the United Nations decided to designate November 25 as the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women and decided to observe a whole fortnight beginning November 25 every year as a period of activism against gender violence across the globe.

Women experience various forms of violence, some of the most common being dowry death or harassment, mental and physical torture, sexual abuse and trafficking. Domestic violence is a bitter reality of women's life as violence within the home is generally directed against its female members. Domestic violence against women is generally associated with physical, sexual and psychological abuse and torture of women. The roots of domestic violence include dowry, money, alcoholism and poor education, male chauvinism, ignorance and many other socio-economic as well as cultural reasons. In India for instance, despite the introduction of the Domestic Violence Act of 2005, various forms of domestic violence are still accepted in many societies as part of the 'culture'. Many women continue to suffer domestic violence as part of life and fate and thus continue to be silent victims of it.

With the increase of awareness relating to women empowerment and rights, protection measures for women are also increasing. It is true that reporting of violence has also increased because of awareness and introduction of several new laws. But the fact remains that the number of incidents are also on the rise. Innumerable women, who silently suffer from assaults and abuses in their daily life within the four walls of their homes across the country, however, are yet to get protection and justice in order to lead a happy life.

While the global scenario continues to be alarming, a close look at the situation in Assam also

rings a number of alarm bells. The latest Crimes in India (2015) report released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) said that the rate of crimes against women is the second highest in Assam among all the States of the country, with Delhi holding the top position. It says that while 56.3 crimes were committed against every one lakh women across the country, in Assam it was 148.2 crimes against every one lakh women in 2015, the Delhi rate being 184.3. The States that followed Assam down the ranks are Telangana (83.1), Odisha (81.9), Rajasthan (81.9), Haryana (75.7) and West Bengal (73.4). This is an eye-opener, especially because there is a general tendency of people taking pride about the 'better' status of women in Assam. Two districts of Assam – Barpeta and Dhubri figured among 12 districts of the country where more than 2000 crimes against women were registered during 2015.

Among the other States of the North-east, Nagaland holds the distinction of having the least crime rate (8 per lakh women), with the rate in the other five States shown as: Manipur (20.8), Meghalaya (24.5), Mizoram (30.9), Arunachal Pradesh (62) and Tripura (68.2). If one looks at the total sexual offences committed, then out of 1,30,195 reported in the country in 2015, the North-east contributed 7,988, the State-wise break-up being Assam (1,733) Tripura (609), Meghalaya (231), Arunachal Pradesh (186), Mizoram (141), Manipur (133) and Nagaland (53).

In addition to these statistics – there are more details of crimes against women in the Crime in India report – definitely paint a very gloomy picture of women's status and security in our society. All human rights including women's rights are indivisible and universal. In spite of numerous policies and programmes for the protection and uplift of women, the fact remains that hundreds of women still continue to suffer. It appears that there are some serious lacunae in the system and the society which have stood as hurdles in the way of these policies and programmes.

It has been nearly a quarter of a century that India had signed the UN Convention on Elimination of

(Contd. to Page 19)

Bangla Hindus Protest in US Over Persecution

Bangladeshi Hindus residing in US organised a peaceful protest in front of the White House to urge the outgoing US President Barack Obama to help protect and bring an end to the “persecution” of religious minorities in the Muslim-majority country.

“We believe you are a person of great sensitivity and resolve, and would find the situation in Bangladesh with respect to the minority communities deplorable. We would like to request you, if it is possible, to convey our anxiety regarding Bangladesh to the next administration,” said a memorandum submitted by protesters to Obama yesterday.

Organised by Hindu Buddhist Christians Unity Council, USA dozens of protesters conveyed their deep concern regarding the allegedly passive role of the Bangladeshi government in coming to the rescue of the affected or in taking legal measures against the perpetrators.

“The destruction of Hindu households and temples, the usurping of Hindu lands and occasional killing and rape has become a norm in the present day Bangladesh. In fact, in recent weeks, the news of two more premeditated attacks was documented but no actions were taken by the authorities to assist

or support the victims and their families,” the memorandum said.

Last month, the same organisation had held a similar demonstration in front of the Trump Towers in New York.

“President-elect Donald Trump had attended a charity event before the election to raise funds for the terrorism. Bangladeshi Hindus who are victims of terrorism. I am sure, he would take up our cause too,” said protester Sitangshu Guha.

Protecting Bangladesh from falling into the lap of ISIS is the “most pressing priorities”, said Jay Kansara of the Hindu American Foundation.

“Because if Bengal falls to extremism, then there would be no recourse to that,” he said in his brief address to the protesters, which included women and children.

The memorandum alleged that the present Bangladesh government occasionally spouted words of secularism, but in reality was following a path of ethnic cleansing that was instituted by Pakistan almost seventy years ago.

(The Assam Tribune, 13/12/2016)

Hindus have Lowest Level of Educational Attainment

Hindus continue to have the lowest level of educational attainment among other major religions of the world despite having made substantial educational gains in recent decade, a latest Pew research said today.

“Hindus have made substantial educational gains in recent decades. Hindu adults (ages 25 and older) in the youngest generation analysed in the study, for example, have an average of 3.4 more years of schooling than those in the oldest generation,” Pew said. However, Hindus still have the lowest level of educational attainment of any major religious group in this study which is topped by Jews.

Globally, the average 5.6 years of schooling and 41 per cent of Hindus have no formal education of any kind. One-in-ten have post-secondary degrees, the report said.

At the same time, despite large gains by Hindu

women across generations, Hindus still have the largest educational gender gap of any religious group, said the report titled ‘Religion and Education Around the World at Large’ released by Pew Research Centre.

In its report, running into 160 pages, Pew said Jews are more highly educated than any other major religious group around the world, while Muslims and Hindus tend to have the fewest years of formal schooling.

Drawing on census and survey data from 151 countries, the study also finds large gender gaps in educational attainment within some major world religions.

“For example, Muslim women around the globe have an average of 4.9 years of schooling, compared with 6.4 years among Muslim men. And formal education is especially low among Hindu

(Contd. to Page 16)

Triple Talaq – A Cruel Social Custom

Fuelling the raging debate over whether constitutional guarantees extend to Muslim women, the Allahabad high court has said that triple talaq or the practice of Muslim men getting an instant divorce by saying “talaq” three times is “cruel”.

In an observation while dismissing a petition on November 5, Justice Suneet Kumar said the view that “the Muslim husband enjoys an arbitrary, unilateral power to inflict instant divorce” does not tie in with Islamic laws.

These observations were made public on Thursday. Justice Kumar said that personal laws of any community cannot claim supremacy over the rights granted to the individuals by the Constitution that provides for equality and non-discrimination. “Women cannot remain at the mercy of the patriarchal set up held under the clutches of sundry clerics having their own interpretation of the holy Quran. Triple talaq has been deprecated and not followed by all sects of Muslim community in the country,” the court said, adding that Muslim women “continue to suffer bias”. “India is a nation in the making; geographical boundaries alone do not define a nation. It is to be, amongst others, on the parameter of overall human development and how society in particular treats their women. Leaving such a large population to the whims and fancy of personal law, which perpetuates gender inequality and is regressive, is not in the interest of society and the country. It impedes and drags India from becoming a nation,” Justice Kumar observed. Unfazed by the Allahabad High court observations on Triple Talaq, Muslim organisations continued to oppose any interference in the Shariyat law. The All

India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), a party in the Triple Talaq case pending before the Supreme Court, said the Constitution allows the Muslim community freedom to practise religion. A host of top clerics maintained that in the current case, the high court has made just one observation which will have no influence on the case related to the issue in the Supreme Court.

“To begin with, the HC has said the Constitution is supreme and article 25 of the same gives Muslims right to freedom of practising our religion,” said Maulana Wali Rehman, AIMPLB general secretary. “Our stand is very clear on the issue that the court should not interfere in issues of Shariyat,” he added.

Member of AIMPLB’s Executive Committee Zafaryab Jilani said the HC observations were an opinion of the HC judge with no judicial bearing on the matter pending before the SC. “Our stand in the apex court is very clear—though Triple Talaq is undesirable and condemnable if initiated on frivolous grounds, divorce comes into effect as per the Shariyat,” Jilani said.

Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawwad said the controversy over Triple Talaq should have been resolved through dialogue among all stakeholders including the government. Jawwad said the issue of Triple Talaq was not a matter of Shariyat law and it was added later on.

“Issues related to any religion have to be dealt with by the experts of the religion who practise the same,” said Maulana Salman Nadvi of Nadwatul Ulema. *(The Times of India, 09/12/2016)*

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Hindus have lowest level of educational attainment

women, who have 4.2 years of schooling on average, compared with 6.9 years among Hindu men,” the report said.

“On average, Hindu men have 2.7 more years of schooling than Hindu women, and just over half of Hindu women (53 per cent) have no formal schooling, compared with 29 per cent of Hindu men,” the report said, adding that even in the youngest generation of adults in the study, Hindu women are considerably more likely than Hindu men to have received no formal education (38 per

cent vs. 20 per cent).

The vast majority of the world’s Hindus live in India (94 per cent) or in the bordering countries of Nepal (2.3 per cent) and Bangladesh (1.2 per cent).

“In these three countries, Hindus tend to have low levels of education; in India, Hindus average 5.5 years of schooling, while in Nepal and Bangladesh they average 3.9 and 4.6 years, respectively,” Pew said.

(The Assam Tribune, 14/12/2016)

Adhaar Registration Made Compulsory for in Arunachal

The Arunachal Pradesh has decided to frame a stipend policy for the students and to make Adhaar registration compulsory for them. The decision was taken in a high level meeting held here on Wednesday chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein which was aimed at streamlining the process of the disbursement of students' stipends, an official communiqué informed today. The meeting also decided to examine all the Central schemes and stipends that provide higher rates to tribal students and to propose strategies to be converged. A committee of secretaries was constituted under the chairmanship of Commissioner of Education to formulate the Stipend Policy at the earliest.

The Deputy Chief Minister asked to form the new Stipend Policy within the current financial year so that it could be implemented from the next session. Mein said that it has become pertinent to streamline the disbursement of stipend to check draining out of government resources. He informed that the step was being taken in line with the streamlining of

wages of the labourers that was done during the time of former Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu to link the payment of wages with Photo Identity.

Planning Secretary Joram Beda, Secretary made a presentation on department-wise details of stipend holders, requirements of fund and budgetary allocations. He also highlighted about the Centre's stipend/scholarship schemes through a power point presentation.

Education Minister Honchun Ngandam, Parliamentary Secretary (Education) Bamang Felix, Parliamentary Secretary (Planning) Chow Zingnu Namchoom, Commissioner (Textile), Marnya Ete, Secretary (Education) Bidol Tayeng and Directors of School Education, Higher Education, Health, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary, Fisheries, Textile & Handicraft, Social Justice Empowerment & Tribal Affairs and Skill Development were also present during the meeting, the communiqué added.

(The Times of India, 09/12/2016)

Bru Repatriation Issues – Can it be Resolved?

The Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF), apex body of Bru refugees lodged in six relief camps in Tripura, has revived their demand for a separate Autonomous District Council by filing a writ petition in the Supreme Court.

The writ petition, which called for creation of a separate Autonomous District Council for the Bru community, is a reversal of the letter written by the Forum on May 4, 2016 to Union Ministry of Home Affairs, in which it said that it was no longer pressing for autonomy for the community.

The MBDPF, in the petition, appealed to the apex court to direct the Government of India to establish an Autonomous District Council for the Bru community in accordance with Article 244 (2) of the Constitution read with the Sixth Schedule.

State Home department officials expressed concern, saying the petition, if admitted by the apex court, might again derail the proposed repatriation process.

However the Special Secretary for the Ministry of Home Affairs' Internal Security, MK Singla, today

said that he hoped that the Bru repatriation process would be implemented from next January. Mr. Singla held talks with State Chief Secretary Lalmalsawma and top Home Department officials in Aizawl on the Bru repatriation issue.

The MHA official said the preparation for the Bru repatriation from six relief camps in Tripura was satisfactory. Lalmalsawma also said the Mizoram government had completed its duty in identifying the residents of the State in the relief camps and that the preparation for physical repatriation was a continuing process.

The State government officials, who conducted the identification in the Tripura relief camps during November 2 to November 23, identified 32,857 people belonging to 5,413 families for physical repatriation.

The proposed physical repatriation, scheduled to commence from November 30, could not, however take off due to different reasons.

(The Assam Tribune, 6 & 07/12/2016)

Elections and the Khasi Value System

Patricia Mukhim

No matter how far human beings have progressed some values remain unchanged. The Khasis have a set of aphorisms from wise elders (Ki jingsneng tymmen) now translated to English by Bijoya Sawian, which are supposed to guide their behaviour. These exhortations hold good even today because they touch the core of our being. Earning an honest living by the sweat of one's brow (kamai da ka umsyep), or the Khasi belief that life on earth is for earning righteousness through right living (kamai ia ka hok), etc., are some basic values which encompass a human being's earthly sojourn. These values preceded Christianity. They were like light posts that guided our lives as a largely agrarian population. With the advent of Christianity and its Ten Commandments based on the Jewish laws, the Khasi value system seemed to have been subsumed and subsequently lost in the cacophony of implanted religions.

When the Khasi speaks of "ka burom, ka akor" (personal honour and etiquette) she includes in those four words the entire range of human behaviour which will not degrade her human person. Alas! The Khasi value system has eroded very rapidly. Hedonism seems to be the order of the day. It seems that politics as it is practiced in this country has corrupted the Khasi mind completely. Today people have learnt that candidates in the electoral fray are ready to pay money for their votes. Earlier on, there used to be a sense of guilt and shame to negotiate with candidates about money for votes. Today no one even blinks while talking business with those who come begging for vote. "Give me money and I will give you votes," is the standard conversation today. The niceties have long since gone out of our vocabulary.

Our elected MLAs/MDCs therefore reflect their constituents. A constituency that believes the role of the legislator is to make laws and to provide them good governance, for the collective good usually throws up a credible candidate. A constituency whose voters are largely corrupt and selfish and sell their votes for short term gains will throw up corrupt MLAs/MDCs. It always takes two to tango. So before blaming the MLA who then becomes a minister and works ceaselessly at filling up his/her

coffers, let's look at our own character flaws. What is the quality of our local village heads? If they are non-partisan and if they wish to enforce their diktat that anyone receiving money for their votes would be ostracized, I am sure the business of votes for money would be drastically reduced. Every constituency has some leaders who usually accept money from candidates for mobilizing voters and volunteers. It's a good time for making money. In this highly polluted political climate how can we expect change in electoral behaviour?

Many refer to Meghalaya as a Christian state. I have a problem with such labels because we are a secular country. Moreover, this is a rebuke to Christianity because the most corrupt MLAs/ministers are also practicing Christians. It would in fact be more appropriate to say in our context that "Christianity hides a multitude of sins." If Christianity was giving the correct messaging how is it that regular church goers are also serious offenders whether it is in politics or the bureaucracy or business. The three are in fact inseparable. Christianity therefore is being used only as a badge of honour. It has ceased to challenge wrongdoers because those are also the main contributors to the church. One wonders whether Christianity has in many ways become the placebo for dulling our conscience. We are at a point in time when right wing politics is gaining ground. Several write-ups have appeared from members of certain churches castigating those in the current ruling dispensation in Delhi for curtailing our liberal spaces. It would have been much more beneficial for those same people to clean up the mess in their respective congregations and be more introspective, rather than engage in finger pointing. How much has the church contributed in building up a culture of political consciousness and ushering in a clean election campaign in Meghalaya? I have stated times without number that the churches have the largest number of captive audience Sunday after Sunday. Why is the behaviour of this audience unchanging?

Obviously Christian values are not taken seriously by church members. Hence they continue with their waywardness the moment they step out. This is what afflicts our political culture. It is time now to reclaim the native tribal values and rekindle

these in our people. Perhaps the scourge in our society today is because we have abandoned these values which once brought social integration. Religion seems to have disconnected us as a society. To completely disregard the rich traditions laid down by our forebears is to throw away the most valuable weapon we have in our personal battle towards true enlightenment.

Ironically, we Khasis speak about tradition as if it is the most important thing in our lives next to breathing. So what did our tradition teach us? Did it teach us corruption? Did it teach us extortion? Did tradition teach us rent-seeking behaviour? So why is tradition paraded as a coat of arms only for claiming certain rights and privileges and not as a guide to societal behaviour? The reason why anything becomes a tradition is because A: It is useful, and B: People like it. The corruption creeps in when this becomes inverted, and humanity ends up serving a tradition. This is what has happened to the Khasi society today.

We are now at the cusp of the next election and as always there is a lot of moaning and groaning that we are not getting the representatives we need to build a vibrant Meghalaya in this 21st century. The people we wrongly call 'leaders' are not worth their salt we say. Those in the Government are busy feathering their nests. Those outside it don't have a sense of direction. The state is in a sort of political wilderness whether one looks at the kind of Education imparted or the Health infrastructure in place. MLAs are simply enjoying their Rs 2 crores a year bonus which they use to buy votes at the far end of the five year tenure. This is political corruption

at its worst since no MLA till date in the MUA-2 Government has given an account in black and white of how the Rs 2 crores, MLA Scheme money has been spent. Mind you in 5 year tenure each MLA gets Rs 10 crores. Multiply this by 60 and it's a whopping Rs 600 crores of public money used as a personal pocket money.

The MLA Scheme is meant to speed up the creation of public assets such as roads, bridges, footpaths, water supply systems, community halls, community toilets, to help repair schools etc. It is certainly not meant for buying chairs and tables or plates and pots and pans to be distributed to individuals. Our people were never so shameless as to expect their kitchen utensils from the MLA. But that is how low we have sunk. And the MLA is to blame because this is how he/she is bribing the electorate. And we the voters are allowing it to happen because of our reticence and our disinclination to ask pointed questions from our MLAs.

So are we ready now to ask for a full disclosure from every MLA about how the MLA fund of Rs 2 crores annually has been spent? And are we ready to ask the MLA to give the expenses incurred in black and white and then do a physical check to see if the claims are authentic? If we still hesitate to ask these questions then it is pointless to want change in the political system. It will not happen. Merely wanting change without working hard to bring that change is a pointless exercise. We will only be wasting our breath! So are we ready for action?

(<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2016/12/02/elections-and-the-khasi-value-system/>)

(Contd. from Page 14)

Violence Against Women – The Reality

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. The Convention, which is considered to be the passport to equality, emphasizes the fact that women rights are human rights. It also made mandatory for the signatory States to undertake appropriate legislative and other measures to eliminate discrimination against women and for guaranteeing them the human rights on the basis of equality with men. In spite of numerous national and international corrective and protective measures, women however continue to bear the brunt of violence.

It is evidently clear that the lives of a large number of women – whether living in well-to-do families or below the poverty line – continue to remain unchanged in spite of these ambitious women-friendly programmes. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) failed to achieve 100% realization, women across the world now look forward to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), officially called 'Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' in order to see better days ahead.

(The Assam Tribune, 14/12/2016)

Karmapa's Arunachal Visit and China's Reservations

Reacting mildly to India allowing Tibetan spiritual leader Karmapa to visit Arunachal Pradesh, China today expressed hope that New Delhi would refrain from taking any action that might complicate the boundary dispute. The 17th Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje last week visited Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as a part of southern Tibet. Replying to a question on his visit, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said, "China's position on the East section of the China-India border is clear and consistent. We hope India can abide by relevant consensus and refrain from any action that might complicate the boundary question." "To ensure the peace and stability of the border areas and sound and stable development of the bilateral relationship serves the common interest of the two sides," he said.

Asked whether China has lodged any protest with India in this regard, he said China and India are in "constant communication on this".

"The Indian side is clear about solemn position when it comes to boundary question," he said.

The 17th Karmapa during his first visit to Arunachal Pradesh toured West Kameng district and preached to the Tibetans at Gyuto Monastery

at Tenzingang before leaving for Kalaktang.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijju had thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for doing away with the restrictions imposed in the previous eras and for facilitating the Karmapa's visit to any part of the country and elsewhere.

China's reaction to Karmapa's visit appeared far more guarded and mild compared to its response on India granting permission in October this year to the Dalai Lama to visit Arunachal Pradesh. There is also no direct criticism of Karmapa unlike the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing calls a separatist and a politician in the garb of religious leader.

China routinely objects to visits by the Dalai Lama, Indian leaders as well as foreign dignitaries to Arunachal Pradesh. On October 24, China took exception to the visit of Richard Verma, the US envoy in India, to Arunachal Pradesh.

The border dispute between India and China covers the 3,488-km long Line of Actual Control (LAC). India asserts that the dispute covered Aksai Chin area which was occupied by China during the 1962 war.

(The Assam Tribune, 06/12/2016)

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Population Explosion - A National Problem

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's assurance of protection of Hindus in that country.

At present there are countless problems like unemployment, floods and erosion, etc., in the state where the people, especially in rural areas, are suffering tremendously with little government help. Under such circumstances, will it not be suicidal to allow the settlement of the Bangladeshis in our State? We have not yet been fully able to provide food and shelter to our own people who are the victims of natural calamities. There is therefore the extreme need to contain population explosion by adopting all available measures as is done in neighbouring China which has the distinction of being the world's most populated country and has enforced strict laws in

limiting the family irrespective of religion they follow.

It has become necessary now to enforce laws in India to check the growth of population and to deport the foreigners if we have to develop economically. India is a big country and the onus therefore lies with the Central Government in enacting and enforcing family planning measures including prohibition of child marriage throughout the country.

There should not be any misunderstanding on the issue and all the people, irrespective of religion or culture, should adhere to family planning measures to make India progress.

(The Assam Tribune, 06/12/2016)

Manipur Observes Nupi Lal Day - The Women's War Day

Manipur Monday remembered the courage of Manipuri women who fought against the British and the traders while observing "Nupi Lal (Women's War) Day.

The state function was held at Nupi Lal Memorial Complex here in Imphal. Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh, his deputy Gaikhangam along with the council of ministers, MLAs and high-ranking officials paid rich tributes to Nupi Lal.

Recalling the historic women's agitation of 1904 and 1939, the Chief Minister said, "We need to recall history and follow the path of the courageous Manipuri mothers so that we can make a strong and prosperous Manipur where there will be love, integrity and peace." He said that the moral strength and courage of the women who stood against injustice and exploitation will remain a shining beacon forever in the history of Manipur. The struggles of the womenfolk against the British colonial rule have carved a distinct role of Manipuri women in the history of the state, he added. Referring to the restive situation of the state, Singh said that violence has no place in a democratic state. People and civil societies should not indulge

in violent activities while pressing to fulfil their certain demands from the government.

While stating that everybody has the right to voice their concerns and grievances to the authorities in a peaceful and democratic manner, the Chief Minister said that such grievances can only be resolved through dialogues and discussions instead of indulging in spreading hatred and apprehension amongst the public which will always prove futile. Negotiation through talks is the only way to resolve an issue, he added.

The state level observance function was marked by staging of a play based on historic Nupilal (Women war) played by women artists only and presentation of theme songs by the women.

Earlier in the morning, hundreds of women braved the cold foggy morning to participate in the Nupilal Ningshing Lamjel (Nupilal Memorial Run).

Participated by 1000 women aged 40 years and above, the run was flagged off at the Nupilal Memorial complex around 7:30 am and ended at the Singjamei supermarket complex.

(<http://www.nelive.in/manipur/news/manipur-observes-women%E2%80%99s-war-day>)

Manipur Observes Third International Sankirtana Day

In commemoration of "Sankirtana: Ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur", the state level organising committee celebrated the International Sankirtana Day at the Maharaj Chandrakirti Auditorium in the palace compound here on December 8, 2016.

Chief guests, dignitaries and Sankirtana performers paid floral tribute to the 31 Sankirtana gurus. In all 150 mid-aged Sankirtana performers were conferred awards as recognition for their contribution towards Sankirtana by Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh.

The representative list of the eighth session of the UNESCO Inter-Governmental Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan, held from December 2 to 7 sought to create awareness about the intangible heritage of a community, provide recognition to its traditions and how it is reflected in the community's cultural diversity. The Inter-Governmental Committee

consists of 24 representatives from state parties elected by the General Assembly.

Sankirtana is maintained by the Sangeet Natak Academy. It encompasses an array of arts performed on religious occasions and reflective of the various stages in the life of the Vaishnav people of the Manipur plains. It is practised at the centre of a temple, where performers narrate the lives and deeds of Krishna through song and dance. In a typical performance, two drummers and about ten singer-dancers perform in a hall or domestic courtyard encircled by seated devotees. The dignity and flow of aesthetic and religious energy is unparalleled, moving audience members to tears.

Sankirtana brings people together on festive occasions throughout the year, acting as a cohesive force within Manipur's Vaishnav community. It establishes and reinforces relationships between

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Remembering the Peerless Warrior

Bharat Mata is really fortunate to have sons like Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Ram Prasad Bismil, Subhash Chandra Bose and galaxy of many who for their love of their mother land even sacrificed their life. These revolutionaries were quite influential in the India's struggle for independence and inspired many. One such mountainous personality is Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma one of the greatest freedom fighters of all time to whom we owe this independent nation we are currently living in.

Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma was a great warrior and invincible fighter who fought the powerful British in a heroic battle at Chisobibra, Garo Hills of Meghalaya. The brave warrior is remembered by the people of Garo Hills, Meghalay on 12th December every year. In this regard, 'KADAKKA JARAKGNA': Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma Martyrdom Day Committee, Tura organised Martyrdom Day and observed with due solemnity and with greater public participation the 144th death anniversary. The programme was attended by dignitaries from all walks of life that included Numol Momin MLA from Karbi Anglong, Assam as chief guest, Pranjal Saikia as guest of honour, Dilas Marak as president of the organising committee, Bhupendra Hajong and Bernard N Marak as Secretaries of the Committee. Among the other

dignitaries who attended the programme included Rightious N Sangma (MDC), Isamail Marak (MDC), Kurosh Marak (MDC), Mahiram Hajong, President, All India Hajong Welfare Association, Anil Hajong, Anil Hajong, Vice President, Meghalaya Hajong Welfare Association, Nidhuraam Hajong, Ex MLA, Mahendraganj, Pramod Koch, BJP Secretary and Ranjit Rabha Ex MDC. The function was also attended by Shri Shamananda Brahmachari, Barkona Ashram.

Garo Hills witnessed first of its kind programme as thousands of people from all over the region including Garos, Rabhas, Hajongs, Koch, Nepalis, Bengalis and all other communities assembled at Tura to observe the day with great enthusiasm. People from villages from the remote corner of the region turned up and participated with great enthusiasm. The programme was marked with a flavour of great patriotism, national integration and showed perfect occasion and exhibition of unity in diversity. The gathering included children, youth, women, senior citizens. The programme was marked with release of Garo traditional calendar, a beautiful tradition dance was also performed by young Garo boys and girls. People took procession in a ceremonious manner from Chandmari field to Captain William point at Hawakhana with a portrait of Pa Togan Nengminja Sangma.

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Manipur Observes Third International Sankirtana Day

the individual and the community through life-cycle ceremonies. It can also be regarded as a vibrant practice promoting an organic relationship with people.

The whole society is involved in its safeguarding, with the specific knowledge and skills traditionally transmitted from mentor to disciple. Sankirtana works in harmony with the natural world, whose presence is acknowledged through its many rituals. The viability of the element has been ensured by social support that has kept the art alive through centuries. The celebration was graced by Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh, Mr. T. Mangibabu Singh, MLA and Chairman, PDA, Dr. Ng. Bijoy Singh, MLA and Chairman, Manipur Pollution Control Board, Y. Surchandra Singh, MLA, E. Chand Singh, MLA and L. Nandakumar Singh, MLA and Chairman Organising Committee as the chief guest, guests of honour and president respectively.

(The Sentinel, 09/12/2016)

Nagaland Vision 2030

Coinciding with the culmination programme of the annual 10-day Hornbill Festival, Nagaland Governor PB Acharya unveiled the 'Nagaland Vision 2030', an ambitious vision document envisioning Nagaland in the next 15 years, at Kisama, near Kohima, last night.

"A well governed, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous State with a sustainable and diverse economy, where a skilled and healthy population with equitable opportunities for growth, success and happiness live, work and play without fear in a safe, clean and green environment," states the opening lines of the Vision statement in the 111-page document.

The Vision 2030 document is a roadmap, charting a course to guide the development and planning processes of the State in a 15 year perspective plan so that a dynamic economy can emerge.

The document envisages to chart a course to develop Nagaland where all the inhabitants have equitable access to the fruits of modern society wherein the State creates conditions favourable for the all round development of the people, fully integrated to the economy of the country and the world leveraging its unique geographical location

to realise the benefits of the Act East policy.

It envisions inclusive development covering all districts of the State with generation of employment opportunities for all sections of the society especially of the educated class.

Acharya lauded the efforts of the State Government in bringing out the vision document. "Let's march ahead with dignity and confidence to work out the vision into a reality. Let our vision 2030 lead us to a self-sufficient, strong, prosperous, peaceful and respectful Nagaland-Golden Nagaland," he stated.

Chief Minister TR Zeliang said, "Through this vision document, we are charting out the broad contours of our visions and dreams for the future of the State for the next 15 years or so. It outlines our visions on creating employment opportunities for our youth, on women empowerment, on improving the income and standard of living of the people in general, on improving connectivity within the State and with the neighbouring countries."

The Vision 2030 document envisages a transformation of the State's economy from one that is largely subsistence agriculture oriented to a market oriented economy.

(The Assam Tribune, 12/12/2016)

(Contd. from Page 6)

14-yr-old girl Discovers Magic of 'Om'

"In the last decade, the body of research on workout music has swelled considerably, helping psychologists refine their ideas about why exercise and music are such an effective pairing. But this specific finding on the 'Om' sound is impressive," said Rina Venkataraman, secretary, state science and technology department.

"No one has ever pin-pointed on the 'Om' sound and conducted such comprehensive experiments on its use," Dipankar Das, senior scientist, state science and technology department, said during a workshop conducted on 165 students who were shortlisted for the statewide Science Congress recently.

It all began when Anwasha visited Uttarakhand,

where she "found some priests carrying water from Bageshwar to Kedarnath, covering 68km every day, without tiring. The priests sang a tune all along. There was no way she could reproduce the same mantra for her experiments. So Anwasha started looking for a similar tune.

"Finally, a tune with 430+ Hz frequencies clicked. In five experiments in various laboratories, I measured the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels of 17 adults (all on the staff of BITM) while listening to the tune for 30 minutes, and there was an increase of oxygen level and decrease in carbon dioxide in their bodies," Anwasha said.

(<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/14-yr-old-girl-discovers-magic-of-Om/articleshow/56041337.cms>)

Mythology of Podi Barbi

- Omen Bayor

In the beginning, when the first plant sprouted from the ground of the Earth, it unfortunately dried up and fell down. When the trunk of this tree was split up as firewood by the youngster of Miti -Mitang a strange worm found inside, which they reared as a pig in a pigsty. In due course the worm grew up to be a huge swine which then escaped from the pigsty and started devouring the crops of the Miti -Mitang (people). Therefore with the help of their two white dogs (Kipung) namely Tebo and Rebo they tried to recapture the escaped pig, but they did not succeed in capturing it in spite of chasing it to all the corners of earth. Finally it was cornered in the place called Kate-lige where it was shot with arrows at Dunging Ge Harling Dingo (the place where the pig was killed).

Now, the Miti -Mitang's youngsters instructed the birds and animals to retrieve the pig's body from the water. The first to go in was the langur which failed, followed by the birds Pesu Yanggu and then Ngudo Gapo (coppersmith barbet). But former came unsuccessful with its chest feathers turned white: the latter came out with red marks in its forehead and bottoms which stays to this day. As a last resort the spider was instructed to spin a Web and trawl the waterfall but when it pulled out, instead of the pig a strange round object was in the net. The people of Miti-Mitang carried it everywhere but nobody could identify it and they finally went to the land of Busu-Yaa. The Busu-Lomang and Lomong moved it round and round whence the musical sound of the PODI (cicada) emerged. They enquired where it came from, in reply to which it said that it wanted to stay in the Rock (poling/Eling) of the high mountains of the North and it's wish was granted. There, it gave birth to an offspring called Poling-Libar-Barbi. Since then the name are together used as PODI BARBI for the mountain cicada. Thus, other plant and animals that live on the mountains are also named after poling and podi-Barbi is considered as its genealogical hierarchy.

Some examples:-

Poling>Lingbar>Barbi>(podi-Barbi>, poling>Linghar>Benno (Taking,)>Linghar> Benbo (Takin), Poling > Linghar Harde (soyer /Sheep),

Poling > Linghar > Sambing (a mountain rodent), Poling > Lingde >Dapo (a mountain bird), Poling > Lingo > Ngopo (Tragopan), Poling > Lingke > Kebi (a type of rodent), Poling > Lingro > Roo (a type of rodent). Each of them chooses the places of its habitats afterwards.

Then, Gopung-Goye (sp. Tosena Fastiata) of Miti -Mitang plains (Sinu > Nun go >Gopung > Goye) sent a Proposal for marital relationship to the Podi-Barbi . On acceptance, Podi-Barbi started putting on the finest ornaments like Alu, Ralung, Ini, Tadok, Singdu-Yerge, Gasi-Gajap, Tayen, Ragda, Ug -Bulu and also the blessings for wealth, happiness, crops and prosperity in the new place. On leaving her home in the mountains, grief overcomes her and Podi-Barbi started to cry and all the birds and animals of the mountain cried with her. On her way she halted three days on the higher plains of the Yali-Yanang (Dwarf Mountain Bamboo) and when she left them, they dried up in grief too. Next she halted three days in the lower slopes amongst the Tami (Finger millet) Taye (Pearl Millet) crops. On her departure, these too dried up. Now when Podi -Barbi approached the land of Tani (Humans) they greeted her with beer, food and sacrifice of Mithun as well as merriment , singing of jain, Bari and Ponung. They requested her to bestow Tanis with blessings of health, good crops, peace and prosperity and self-sufficiency.

THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF AS WELL AS THE REASON FOR THE CELEBRATION OF PODI-BARBI FESTIVAL BY THE THREE COMMUNITIES OF ADI i.e LIBO, RAMO AND BOKAR.

From there Podi-Barbi went to the land where grew the Kokam (a plant) and next where Henchi trees grew. Here the Gopung-Goye came up from Miti -Mitang to greet her but the poisonous smile of Omo from the high mountain killed the Gopung-Goye. Finally, when Podi-Barbi reached the plains of Miti -Mitang she could not bear the heat and while taking bath in its lake to cool her was drowned. Thus, every year Podi-Barbi comes down from the snowy mountains to the plains never to return, up from the plains to the hills but never reaches the higher mountains.

Indigenous Faith Day at Jonai

The Indigenous Faith & Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP), in collaboration with Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang (Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) and other sister organisations, observed the Indigenous Faith Day at Jonai on 1st December, 2016, the birth anniversary of Talom Rukbo (Golgi Bote), founder of Donyi Poloism.

Thousands of Donyi Polo believers from Arunachal Pradesh and Assam came out in their traditional dresses this morning and took out a car rally along the National Highway-52 before assembling at the Jonai Mising Kristi Bhawan for a meeting.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Mising Baane Kebang President and Chairman of the Mising Autonomous Council (MAC), Parmananda Chayengia rued the “drastic changes” in the social rules in tribal villages. He said the Mising council is according priority to research and documentation of the traditional culture of the indigenous tribals.

Chayengia stated that the MAC has sanctioned Rs 15 lakh for the Donyi Polo Cultural Research Centre at Akajan, Silapathar. It has also granted a sum of Rs 3 lakh for the construction of a Donyi

Polo Gangging (temple) at Mikmang in Dhemaji district.

He stated that the Murong okum (community hall) in Mising villages was a judicial centre at one point of time, which has declined in importance with the passage of time. He urged the Adi and Mising tribes to preserve their age-old indigenous faith and traditional behaviour in order to keep their ethnic identity intact.

Pasighat-East MLA Kaling Moyong, in his address, stressed the need of preservation of the tribal tradition and cultural ethos.

Among others, MAC executive councillor Raju Medok, renowned Adi litterateur Kaling Borang, Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang central committee secretary Tagom Tasung and ZPM Tonggeng Panyang also spoke on the occasion and urged the Yelam Kebang executives to instill a sense of Donyi-Poloism among the minds of Adi and Mising youths.

Representatives from Adi Mising Baane Kebang, Adi Baane Kebang, Mising Students' Union, RSS, Bidya Bharati and members of different Gangging committees also participated in the programme.

(The Assam Tribune, 02/12/2016)

Indigenous Faith Day Celebration Report 2016

On 1st December 2016 the Indigenous Faith Day was celebrated in all the circles of upper Subansiri district followed by a mass procession, cultural & public meeting. On this occasion at Daporijo headquarter Sri Dikto Yekar Hon'ble MLA Cum Parliamentary Secretary Art and Culture graced as Chief Guest, Sri Tapiop Ramsing Principal, Govt. Hr. Secondary School Daporijo as Guest of Honour and Sri Goverdhan Yadav coordinator Human Right Law Network as a Special Guest. At Nacho Headquarter the celebration was graced by Sri Taga Eka EAC and Sri Rukdam Jeram, Agriculture Officer as Chief Guest & Guest of Honour respectively.

At Baririjo, the celebration was graced by Sri S.Timba DPO as Chief Guest. At Doga Lomdak

Circle Puchigeko the celebration was graced by Sri Talo Mugli, Ex Minister as Chief Guest. On this occasion several workers, priests and sponsors were felicitated by Sri Puluk Lida, President IFCSAP Dist. Unit and Advocate Pandit Lamlin Secy, IFCSAP. Well come address was given by Sri Giamluk Gumja games & sports Secy, IFCSAP district unit and Vote of Thanks was offered by Er. Tabu Dignium, Vice President. In the course of concluding speech Sri Porsha Lote, a Social Worker of the locality announced that he will donate one Mithun for the next year's Indigenous Faith Day and also appealed to all the public to extend co-operation for preservation, protection and promotion of our own rich heritage and culture followed by our forefathers. The function concluded with prayer song.

The Cunning Mediator

Two partridges (quail-like birds) lived in a certain tree in the jungle. While one of them lived on the branches, the other lived inside a hole at the foot of the tree.

They became good friends, and they would spend long hours with each other telling each other stories and events of their lives. In this manner, the partridges spent their time in happiness.

One day, one of them went away with some more partridges in search of food.

As was usual, when he did not return back even at sunset, the other partridge started worrying. He thought, "He has not done this ever. Why has the partridge not returned home today? Has been trapped by some hunter? Or maybe even killed? I cannot live without me. I am certain there is some reason why he has not returned even at nightfall."

He did not return even the next day, or the day after. For several days, the partridge kept worrying, and then gave up hope of his friend's return. "And so, I spent several days worrying.

On nightfall, a hare came to the tree and observing an empty hole at the foot of the tree, took shelter inside. Since, the partridge had given up hope, he did not object to the hole being occupied by the hare.

After a few days the partridge returned. He had gone to a place where there was plenty of food to eat. He had grown fat, but remembering his dear friend, he thought of returning.

On his return, when he found that a hare had taken over his house, he objected strongly, "Hare! This hole is my home, and you have taken over during my absence. This is very unfair of you. I demand you to leave immediately".

The hare disagreed, "This place is mine now. I am not leaving. I found this hole empty, and therefore made it my home". Thus, they began to quarrel.

The partridge understood there was no point in quarrelling with the hare, and said, "Hare! You seem to lack the basic ethics. Let us approach someone holy and knowledgeable. Let someone well-versed in holy books decide who is right, and thus, who shall have the right to occupy the hole."

The hare agreed, and as suggested they went to look for a holy man to settle their dispute.

Meanwhile, a wild tomcat became aware that they wanted to settle their dispute through a holy man. He quickly posed as a learned animal. He held a blade of holy Kusha grass in his paw and stood on the bank of a river, where he will be quickly spotted.

Standing on his hind legs, with his eyes closed, he started chanting.

When the partridge and the hare came across him, the hare said, "He looks holy, and a learned person. Let us go and seek his advice."

The partridge agreed but said, "Yes, let us seek his opinion. But he is a wild cat by birth, and a natural enemy for both of us. We should be careful, and speak only from a distance."

As decided, they came to the wild tomcat, but stood at a distance, "Holy person! We have a dispute amongst us. Will you please settle our dispute and advice us who is right in accordance to Holy Scriptures. If you decide that one of us has sinned, you may as well eat him!"

The tomcat replied, "O my friends, I have denounced the violent life as it leads to hell. Non-violence is the very essence of true religion. I shall not harm any of you. However, I will hear both of you and settle your dispute with the knowledge I have gained."

Both the partridge and the hare were impressed. The wild tomcat continued, "But I am old, and cannot hear you from that distance. Fear not! I do not even harm a lice, bug or a mosquito. Come close, and explain the reason of your dispute. I shall make the most just settlement."

With all these sayings, he won the confidence of both of them. Both the partridge and the hare came near him and sat close to him to explain the reason of their dispute.

This was the very opportunity that the tomcat was looking for. As soon as they sat beside him, he jumped and seized one of them in his teeth and the other with his claws. He killed both of them and made a meal out of them.

The wise indeed say:

Beware of a rascal who pretends to be holy.



Pa Togan Nengminza fought and died for his own motherland and community. This brave warrior is remembered by the people of Garo Hills on the 12th of December every year. Till today, the Meghalaya Government is also celebrating 12th December as "Togan Nengminza's Day"



Manipur Observes Nupi Lal Day - The Women's War Day





Indigenous Faith Day Celebration, 2016
at Arunachal Pradesh

