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# HERITAGE EXPLORER

"LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES"

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Contents

Editorial	4	New Year Celebration of the Bodos	
<i>Buisu</i> - The New Year Festival of Tripuri People		- Nijira Brahma	17
- Dr. Atul Debburma	5	Vocal, Local and Global	
Indigenous Gods and beliefs of the Koch		- Dr Ranga Ranjan Das	19
- Kandarpa Koch	8	Integrate tradition with modern in education system: Pema Khandu	22
Bhagat Singh and Veer Savarkar: Through each other's pen	10	'Dekho Apna Pradesh' campaign launched to promote Arunachal tourism	23
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Bhakti Movement	13	Tripura exports natural rubber to Nepal	25
Remembering the 50th year of 1971 Bangladesh war	16	The seven Champions	
		- Dr. Uzzal Sharma	26

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## The effects of Myanmar imbroglio on NE

The recent developments in Myanmar consequent upon the military coup there, is a matter of great concern for north east for several reasons. Although, the movement for restoration of democracy launched by the people of Myanmar is a very right cause but basically it is an internal matter of that country. The ripple effect of Myanmar's volatile situation is ver stark in four northeastern States - Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, which not only share a 1,643 km border with Myanmar but has also strong ethnic ties with groups across the border. Incidentally, the impact of the unrest in the neighbouring country is felt more severely by Mizoram which shares a 510 Km long boundary with that country and has become a shelter point for more than 2000 fleeing Myanmarese. The dominant Mizo communities in Mizoram are ethnically related to the Chins in the adjoining Chin State in Myanmar. The Chins are also related to the Kuki-Zomi group in Manipur. Myanmar also has several Naga communities with affinity to Nagas spread across Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

The upheaval in Myanmar started on February 1, when Myanmar's Army generals suddenly suspended the country's experiment with partial democracy, taking over full charge of the reins of government and arrested President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi. In an illegal and unconstitutional action, it put the military in direct confrontation with pro-democracy forces. The peaceful Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) launched by the people of Myanmar resorted to massive protests and processions. It reached its zenith on February 22 when hundreds of thousands of people assembled in Yangon and other towns to demand the restoration of democracy and release of their leaders. In response, the military government, using emergency powers and displaying its expertise in quelling the rebellion started using diverse tools of suppression - water cannons and rubber bullets to live ammunition. There were considerable number of fatalities, large number of people were injured and detained. Strong statements emanated from deliberations on Myanmar at the United Nations (UN), Human Rights Council and G7. A dramatic moment came at the UN General Assembly's informal meeting when Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's pro-democracy ambassador, made an emotional plea to the UN "to take action against the Myanmar military". Although sacked,

he was backed by the UN Secretary-General's special envoy on Myanmar, who advocated "a clear signal in support of democracy". Within Myanmar a large number police personnel, mostly from the Criminal Investigation Department, Special Branch and Tourist Security Police besides the training centres, revolted against their masters and resigned from service since the violent crackdown in February. These policemen and large number of commoners have now crossed over to Mizoram to save their souls.

In addition to the problem of illegal influx into Mizoram from Myanmar the most disturbing development is the local support extended to the refugees from Myanmar. The student organizations, civil society and the state Government, all are bent on welcoming the refugees in the name of humanitarian support. Although the Government of India issued an advisory on February 25 to the chief secretaries of Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and the Assam Rifles to stay alert and take appropriate action to prevent a possible influx into the territory, but the state Government is practically opposing the move.

It is time for the people of Mizoram as well as Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur to calmly contemplate on the larger issues of their states in particular and the nation in general. Affinity and love for one's own ethnic groups is very much appreciable but these should not be the cause for irreparable harm to the country they claim to be their own. Unhindered influx will promote free movement of the insurgent groups and the terrorists, which in turn will escalate cross-border crime, including goods, arms and counterfeit currency smuggling, drug trafficking, and insurgency. The free movement will also pave the way for enemy countries especially the China to infiltrate our region to promote their expansionist designs. The Mizos and others should also take note of the challenges faced by Indian firms that have investments and operations in Myanmar. Respectable settlement of the displaced people of Myanmar is a desirable objective for which they should extend moral, physical and intellectual support to start with but the real wars shall have to be fought by the Myanmar's alone. We should not take up arms to fight for them, directly or indirect.

**Chief Editor**

# ***Buisu* - The New Year Festival of Tripuri People**

Dr. Atul Debburma

The change of year that follows to the next is not only known to human being but also to all the animals and other living things, even the plants could perceive the change of the year, that is why the flowers bloom, bear fruits. The animals realize the changes of the year, that is why birds chirp during changes of particular season, enjoy the arrival of spring. Some animals migrate from one region to another with the change of season which signals the changes of year. Tripuri people were basically agrarians, that is why they were very much dependant on weather and changes in the seasons. They were experts in anticipating the weather changes, arrival of monsoon etc. and in fact the experienced senior citizens of the community were highly capable of predicting the arrival of monsoon and their forecasts were not far off the mark than the modern satellite based predictions.

***Hari Buisu:*** The New Year festival of Tripuri people is Buisu. It is used to be observed with pomp and show for three consecutive days, these are '*Hari Buisu*', '*Buisu*', '*Bisikwtal*'. The first day of the festival is called as '*Hari Buisu*', this day is dedicated to the domestic animals. The domestic animals like cows, buffalos, goats, dogs, cats, etc which have served us for the year round without any refusal, are treated with love and respect on this day. The children would go out early in the morning to the nearby jungle to collect different types of the wild flowers and they would make garland out of it. The domestic animals are given bath early in the morning, they are garlanded with different flowers. A vermilion tilak is also applied by some families, specially to the cows. The animals are served with good feeds on the '*Hari buisu*' day and even if they do some mistakes by consuming household items they are allowed to go set scot free and forgiven for the day. The women folk prepare curry with 108 types of different vegetables on Hari Buisu day to be consumed by all the family members. It helps in curing much illness, as these vegetable of

108 varieties combination have different medicinal properties.

The women would take out all the earthen broken pot out of the kitchen and through it out. They would clean all the house and household utensils. At the same time they would take out all the new cloths from the traditional cane made almirha called 'Khutruk' which are preserved for various occasions and dry those in the sun. The ladies would take out mud from the pond, wet field or river etc and plaster the walls and floors of every room of the house with it. The women folk would arrange all the necessary ingredients and ancillary items for preparing various traditional cakes and dishes on these days.

***Buisu:*** The women would wake up early in the morning before the crack of dawn take bath and start preparing different kinds of cakes from different types of aromatic rices and different types of delicious curries. On the day of *Buisu* the family members remember the near and dear ones who had passed away in the previous year. They offer homemade cakes and dishes to the departed souls. The girls who have just married in the last year would come to visit their parents homes on this day along with their respective grooms. The near and dear ones are invited, a grand feast is served. The families of a para or hemlet would gather in *chokdiri* or village headman's home and have a community celebration of *Buisu* festival. Every household would bring their prepared dishes and they would mutually share all the dishes and cakes with each other and distribute to all those present in the gathering. The younger ones would go house to to house to taste different types of cakes. The elders would relish different types of homemade beverage to their hearts' content. They would dance and make fun throughout the day till they retire in the late evening.

***Bisikwtal:*** The New Year day is marked with new hopes and aspiration. They would make cakes and

prepare delicious dishes. The *Goria puja*, a form of Lord Ganesh begins this day that continues for seven days. The household would install *Goria's* idol in the middle of the courtyard and worship begins his worship. Among the Jamatiya sub-tribe, the community celebration of *Baba Goria* begins on this new year day. The young girls and boys would go from house to house to pray and dance in front of *Goria's* deity and take the alms/ offerings from the household that continue for seven days.

***The Buisu Day:*** The *Hari Buisu* is celebrated on the 2nd last day of Chaitra month of Indian religious calendar which roughly corresponds to 13th of April, *Buisu* on last day of Chaitra that is on 14th and *Bisikental* or new year on 15th of April.

***History of Tripura Era:*** There were more than 550 princely states in India at the time of independence; Tripura is one of the few states which had its own era. The Tripura Era was introduced by Hamtorfa alias Jhujharufa alias Birraj to commemorate his victory over large part of Bengal covering up to river Ganges in the year 512 Saka era. The Tripura Era used to follow the Saka era (SE) as it was the leading era prevalent at that time. The dates were same as that of Saka era but the new year is on the 1st of Vaisakh instead of 1st Chaitra of Saka era.

***Attempt to Christianize Tripura Era:*** There was an attempt to Christianize the Tripuri people's New Year celebration Buisu festival by some group of people. A false research was done to discover New Year day of Tripura era by some group, which found that the New Year day of Tripuri people was on 22nd of December. The conspiracy was to merge three days of Buisu celebration with X-mass celebration on 25th of December and indirectly compel the Hindu Sanatani Tripuri people to celebrate X-mass. There was no historical record, cultural evidence or religious proof of celebrating Tripuri New Year on 22nd of December. It was arbitrarily decided and shrewdly planned to fix just three days before Christmas so as to merge with it.

***Tripura Era follows Saka Era:*** There are plenty of records to prove that Tripuri new year falls on 15th of April each year other than leap year on which

it corresponds to 14th of April. The simple way to find it is search in the royal historical records of Tripura which are available in different libraries. In most of such historical records two dates system were used to be inscribed simultaneously. These records are some 300 years and above years old. Here are some proofs:

(1) In the Rajmala third volume, the royal chronicle of Tripura, (page no.85) a copper plate is mentioned, in which the king Govinda Manikya donated a portion of land to a Brahmin. There the following dates were inscribed 1594 Son, 1081 Tripura Era date 7th Falgun. The SE and the Tripura Era used the same date and month.

(2) In the fourth volume of Rajmala king Govinda Manikya's another copper plate of land donation had been mentioned. (Rajmala-Vol-IV, page-132). The date mentioned is 'Saka 1599 son 1089 Tripura Era 11 Aswin'. It also proves that the Tripura Era followed same date and months of SE, though the era is different.

(3) Another evidence from the king Kalyan Manikya dating 1650 AD also directly proves that Tripura Era followed same date and months of SE. (History of the land system and managements by NC Debbarma page-149).

(4) In one more such undisputed evidence the Saka Era, Tripura Era and Bangabda or Assam Era having the same date and months can be proved from the book "History of Tripura" by E.F Sandys. He had compared the various calendars and its months and dates. There is record for Tripura era, Saka era and Bengali era.

There are numerous examples which provide evidences that Tripura Era and the SE had the same counting months and dates in the past. But after the calendar reform of 1957, the date counting were divided into two systems, one for Civil calendar and the other for religious calendar, which resulted difference between the SE and Tripura Era dates and months as Tripura Era follows the religious calendar.

***New Year of Tripura Era:*** From the historical records it has been proved that the Tripura Era and SE followed same months and date, but SE New

Year was in the months of Chaitra whereas that of Tripura Era was the 1st of Baisakh. It can be proved by the following record.

There is one clear cut document which definitely proves that the new year of Tripura Era was on 1st of Baisakh. The list of school holidays 1906 AD of Royal Tripura government states that 1st Baisakh is holiday due to New Year day of Tripura Era.

**Cultural Heritages :** The Bisi or Buisu is a festival of Tripuri people which is celebrated in the 1st of Baisakh. It is nothing but the New Year celebration of Tripura era. Bisi means year and Buisu means New Year festival to welcome the year ahead. The Bisi or Bihu is also celebrated by all the tribes of the north eastern states, as the new year festival. This fact can be substantiated by the following facts.

1. The Bodo also celebrates Bisi as Boisagu, to mark the new year arrival. It has been stated by Thomas Pullopillil and Jacob Allukal in the book 'The Bodos-children of Bullum Buther', "Boisagu a corruption of two formations Bosorni Agu meaning beginning of a year of new year. A great social festival is celebrated in the month of Baisakha (mid of April) for seven days beginning from the days of chaitra sankranti...."

2. Similarly many other tribes also celebrate the New Year arrival festivals Bihu in the 1st of Baisakh. These includes dimasa, various tribes of Naga, the Mizos, the Chakmas, the Mogs, the Arunachali tribes, the Manipuris, the Ahoms and many more. This is illustrated in the book 'Folk Lore of North East India, by Kamal Narayan Choudhuri. There he had mentioned as follows: "Thus it becomes clear that Bihu is originally a Shan and Mongoloid festival which has undergone a process of assimilation and refinement."

3. The fact that the new year festival in the Baisakh month is not of the Bengali people trade mark which many of Tripuri people presumes, for which these western minded people are propagating and accordingly wants to translocate the Tripura Era's New Year to 22nd of Dec. But it is from this Indo-Mongoloid people that it has been assimilated to the Bengali culture. This theory had been accepted by Dr. Amalendu Mitra in his book 'Rarher Sanskriti o Dhormothakur. '

4. Another documents of 1837 AD also indicates that the new year of Tripuri people was in the middle of April which falls in the 1st of Baisakh. One Englishman Robert Collin mentioned it clearly in his book, 'The journey to India' as follows:

"Hilly Tripura was springly sonorous in the middle part of April. Its people were very merrymaking, singing, dancing to observe their great festival of New Year. They were so homely and pleasures I never witness." (My Journey to India page-120 by Robert Collin).

So from the documents stated above it is clear that the *Bisu* or *Buisu* of Tripuri or the *Boisagu* of Bodos was originally the new year celebration of the greater Bodo/Borok people in the month of Baisakh, not of Bengalis, as propagated by many of our foreign influenced Tripuri brothers. On the contrary Bengali speaking people have assimilated our culture into their own.

**Historical back ground of the Tring :** Tring is a booklet which is compilation of opinion regarding the New Year of Tripura Era, was composed in the year 1994 by some over enthusiastic groups who wanted to change Tripuri new year. The Tripura Era was used in all the official works during the royal rule in Tripura, continued during post independence till mid 70s but discontinued due to obscure reason. Many distinguished persons of Tripuri people from diverse field were interviewed and sought what should be the New Year day of Tripura Era, in order to revive Tripura Era and in all opinions of 21 persons were collected. The opinions of these people can be classified into seven categories and it is given below:

1. So called BE 1st Vaisakh-14/15 April as Tripura Era New year - 5
2. SE 1st Vaisakh -22/23 April as Tripura Era New year - 7
3. Either 1st Vaisakh of BE or 1st Vaisakh of SE as Tripura Era New year - 2
4. Any day between Kartik-Agrahayn as Tripura Era New year - 2
5. No comment about it - 3
6. 1st Pous-15th Dec. as Tripura Era New year - 1

(Contd. to Page 9)

# Indigenous Gods and beliefs of the Koch

## Kandarpa Koch

The Koch tribe finds mention in the Rig Veda. It is also known that Koches belong to Tibeto Mongoloid race. They have their own ethnic culture, custom and belief.

Over the centuries, they believe in nature God and pray to the stones to call the rain which is called 'Longthay wai'. God of stone mostly seen worshipped in the Harigaon village Noksadam which is located near Rangira valley of South West Garo hills and also the Koches believe in Non-Aryan spirits largely. There are also some God and Goddesses which are worshipped in each and every villages viz., Pabuni, Baus Puja, Kamakhya Puja and Kani wai. The puja rituals are done along with singing traditional songs, dancing and playing traditional instruments. The songs and dances are widely categorized as 'Halang' or 'Biya chai' (Wedding songs), 'Kammata' or 'Hoko' dance songs (Funeral songs), Pabuni dance songs, 'Haba haoni' dance songs for the Jhum cultivation and so on. There is need for a well-versed ethnologist having a depth knowledge of Koch history, language, culture and customs to decipher the meanings of the renderings. In a society with so much diversity and differences the youth should encourage to promote the culture, take action and bring positive changes to preserve the traditions especially the method of rituals should be documented which is strongly needed. In today's digital age current scenario is that globe has become so small where it is very easy to learn, access and experience different cultures and traditions through books and internet. But in case of Koch tribe their culture is not properly recorded yet and less known to the globe. Many research scholars say that no community can survive without language, customs and beliefs. Koch tribe has cultural heritage but because of the less population they are branded as the endangered community in the world.

Koch culture was developed from the indigenous beliefs and customs. So this its rich cultures and heritage need to be preserved. There are some villages which are following the culture since time immemorial are Harigaon, Kumligaon, Ghachura, Taktaki, Monjuri, Patijhora, and Chandabhui, Salbari, Pora Khasiya, Halchati, Babedpara, Merengapara, Sankarpara, Khalpara and Haldibari etc.

The Koch king Naranarayan and Chilarai of Cooch Behar built the Kamakhya temple at Nilachal hills in Pragjyotishpur in 1565. Now this is one of the most important place of pilgrimage for the Hindus around the world.

If we look at the historic period of Garo hills there was a person known by the name of Gara Bhuyan. He was a permanent Koch descendant from the foothills of Garo hills. According to Marak (Dr) Julius L.R, the author of the book named 'Garo Customary Law and Practices' he mentions that "The Kotchu or Koch dialectical groups inhabit western hills of the district adjacent to the river Jinary. There are some sprinkling of Kotchu population in the south western parts of Garo hills having close linguistic affinity with the Atong sub dialectical group. They have some linguistic and cultural similarities with the Atongs, they are group greatly influenced by Hindu religion and culture. Kotchus also closely resemble the Awes in dress and custom. It is difficult to ascertain why they claim to be other than Awes. There is a fable that a certain ancestor talked so distinctly as if he was talking like a Kotchu. Thus the name has been applied to his descendants ever since"

Koch tribe also finds mention in the ancient mythological scriptures. The tribe is quite old in India. The Garo hills dynasty of Garura are often referred to in Ramayana. The name Dikki and Bandi was adopted from the name of the God Rama and Laxmana. According to Dr. Julius L.R Marak the book

of 'Balpakram the land of Spirits - Garo Mythology' (P.77) he said " If we compare Dikki and Gitting, Bandi and Sore as told in the epic lores, we have similar and identical characters found in the Ramcharitamanasa". Sibendra Narayan Koch (Koch Ratna) also mentioned in his article titled 'Garo hills in the age of Ramayana' that "There is one more likely source of the origin of the term Garo which has not been explored so far till this date. This is Garo from Garura is a name of Hindu mythological bird. In Mahabharata bird Garura is described as Kamrupi Bihangam is not known. Bihangam means bird in Sanskrit. Kamrupi Bihangam means the bird of Kamrupa. Kamrupa is situated in the East. By calling the bird Garura as Kamrupi Bihangam, the author appears to have intended to mean that Garura is the bird of the East".

According to researchers in 'Social Folk custom of the Koches in West Garo hills district of

Meghalaya' it is stated that "Before coming to the subject matter it is necessary to discuss precisely the origin and migration of the Koch beliefs of Garo hills. The Koch community is one of the unique groups among the permanent inhabitants of Meghalaya. It is believed that they are more ancient than the Garos" and have been living in Meghalaya for thousands of years. ❖

### References

1. Marak Dr Julius LR - Garo Customary Law and Practices.
2. Marak Dr Julius LR - 'Balpakram the land of Spirits- Garo Mythology' (P.77)
3. SN Koch the article name 'Garo hills in the age of Ramayana' Souvenir of Silver Jubilee celebration MKA in 1994.
4. Dr Sudipta Dutta(Bhomik)- Folk custom of the Koches in West Garo hills district of Meghalaya

(Contd. from Page 7)

## ***Buisu - The New Year Festival of Tripuri People***

7. Any day between 15 Dec to 15 Jan of Christian Era - 1

(BE=Bengali era, SE=Saka era)

From the analysis of the above tabulation it is obvious that most of the distinguished persons gave their opinion regarding Tripura Era New Year in favour of 1st Baisakh of so called BE or of SE. As per the historical records, we know that the date and months were exactly same among the SE, Tripura Era and BE. Most of these persons interviewed were probably unaware of these facts that is why they differed, but as we know it now that the dates and months between SE, BE are now different because of calendar reform, practically all of the dates were same. If we analysis the booklets opinion, one can find that 14 out of 21 people favoured 1st Baisakh-(15th April) as New Year of Tripura Era. This opinion of distinguished persons can also be considered to take a decision about the New Year of Tripura Era and in a largest democratic setup of the world like ours, the majority's opinion should have

been accepted, which is 1st baisakh-(14/15th April). But this fact was also over looked just to favour the western culture and the compilers of the opinion fixed the New Year date of Tripura Era undemocratically on 22nd of Dec, just 3 days before the Christmas to coincide with it.

This is nothing but the desperate attempt to wipe out and exterminate the 5000 years old Tripuri Civilization, culture, custom, religious and historical heritages from the face of world. But the people of this ancient state Tripura did not sit idle and watch as silent spectators of the conspiracy. Many educated and intellectuals protested against the vested interested western people motive. There have been many argument and placement of records and documents through the news papers, booklets and leaflets were distributed to reveal the truth of Tripuri new year and the people were ultimately made aware of their culture and now people are again spontaneously celebrating their new year Buisu in the month of Baisakh. Truth alone triumphs! ❖

## Bhagat Singh and Veer Savarkar: Through each other's pen

Freedom fighters Bhagat Singh and Veer Savarkar have on many occasions referred to each other's works and have even written about each other extolling and supporting each other's fight against tyranny of the colonial forces. Their own works are a testimony to this.

"World-lover is the hero whom we do not hesitate a little to call a fierce insurgent, staunch anarchist - the same heroic Savarkar. Coming in the wave of world-love, he used to stop walking on the grass thinking that the soft grass would be mowed under the feet."<sup>1</sup>

The above quote about Savarkar is from the martyr Sardar Bhagat Singh! Bhagat Singh Ji's article titled "Vishwa Prem" has been published twice in the issue of "Matwala" on 15th and 22nd November, 1926. This quote is an excerpt of the same article. "Our ultimate goal is universal brotherhood. Nationalism is only a step to get there," Savarkar has said many times. This article states that this was not only known to Bhagat, but was also acceptable to him. Such a description of an externally hard but extremely tender inner heart of Savarkar has hardly been seen elsewhere.

The special thing is that Savarkar was under house arrest in Ratnagiri on the condition of not participating in politics in those days. Bhagat has not written a word of criticism over Savarkar's decision to accept this condition. We can say that these two revolutionaries understood each other's hearts and minds very well. Then in March 1926, while writing about Madanlal Dhingra and Savarkar in Kirti, Bhagat Singh says<sup>2</sup> -

"The impact of the Swadeshi movement reached England as well and Mr. Savarkar opened a house called 'Indian House'. Madanlal also became its member. One day, Mr. Savarkar and Madanlal Dhingra were talking for a long time. In a test of daring to give up his life, Savarkar pierced a big needle into his hand by asking Madanlal to lay his hands on the ground, but Punjabi Veer did not even say ah. Tears filled the eyes of both. The two hugged

each other. Ouch, how beautiful that time was. How invaluable and indelible that teardrop was! How beautiful that match was! So glorious! What should we know about that emotion, what cowardly people who are afraid of even the thought of death, know how high, how holy and how revered are those who die for the sake of the nation!

From the next day, Dhingra did not go to the Indian House of Savarkar and attended the Indian students' meeting organized by Sir Col. Wylie. Seeing this, the boys of the Indian house got very agitated and started calling him traitors, even traitor, but their anger was reduced by Savarkar saying that after all he had tried to even break his head to run our house. And due to his hard work, our movement is going on, so we should thank him! Well, some days passed quietly.

On July 1, 1909, there was a meeting at the Jahangir Hall of the Imperial Institute. Sir Curzon Wylie also went there. He was talking to two other people that Dhingra suddenly pulled out a pistol. He was put to sleep forever. Then after some struggle Dhingra was caught. What to say after that, there was a worldwide cry!. Everyone started abusing Dhingra wholeheartedly. His father sent a telegram from Punjab and said that I refuse to accept such rebel, rebellious and murderous man as my son. The Indians held large meetings. There were big speeches. Big proposals moved. All in blasphemy. But even at that time Savarkar was the hero who favored him openly. At first, he offered an excuse for not letting the motion pass against him that he is still on trial and we cannot call him guilty. Finally, when the vote was taken on this proposal, the Speaker of the House, Mr. Bipinchandra Pal, was saying that if it is deemed to be unanimously passed by everyone, then Savarkar Sahib stood up and started the lecture. Just then, an Englishman punched him in the mouth and said, "Look, how straight the English fist goes!" A Hindustani young man put a stick on the head of the Englishman, and said, "See, how straight the Indian club goes!" There was a noise. The meeting was left in between.

The proposal remained unpassed. Well! “

In 1926, Bhagat Singh wrote an article for the Punjabi Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. He says, “... Muslims lack a great deal of Indianness, so they do not understand the importance of Indianness in all India, and prefer the Arabic script and the Persian language. The importance of being one language of all India and that too Hindi, they never understand, so they keep on praising their Urdu and sit on one side.” Later in the same article, Bhagat Singh says, “We want the Muslim brothers too to observe their faith but become Indian in the same way as Kamaal Turks are. This only will save India. We should look at the questions of language etc. from a very large point of view, not by making it poignant (religious) problems. “These ideas presented by Bhagat Singh are not only in line with Savarkar’s views, but also according to the” Bunch of thoughts” of Shri Guruji.<sup>3</sup> It has been proved that Bhagat Singh published an English translation of Savarkar’s book “1857- War of Independence” and propagated it among the revolutionaries.<sup>4</sup> Some authors have claimed that Savarkar and Bhagat Singh met in Ratnagiri, but there was no unquestioned confirmation.<sup>5</sup>

According to Gandhiji’s follower YD Phadke, Bhagat Singh drew inspiration from Savarkar’s “1857”, but ignored Savarkar’s “Hindupadapada Shahi” book.<sup>6</sup> But now it has also come to light that Bhagat Singh also took inspiration from Hindupadapada Shahi. He notes citations from several authors in his prison diary. It includes only seven Indian authors, but only one of them is Savarkar whose more than one quotes have been included by Bhagat Singh in his diary. And all the six out of six quotes are from the same book, Hindupadapada Shahi. They are as follows:<sup>7</sup>

1) Sacrifice was adorable only when it was directly or remotely but reasonably felt to be indispensable for success. But the sacrifice that does not ultimately lead to success is suicidal and therefore had no place in the tactics of Maratha warfare (Hindupadapada Shahi, Page 256).

2) Fighting the Marathas is like fighting with the wind, is to strike on the water. [Hindupadapadshahi, 254]

3) that remains the despair of our age which has to write history without making it, to sing of valorous deeds without the daring abilities and opportunities without actualising them in life [Hindupadapada Shahi, 245–4]

4) Political slavery can be easily overthrown at any time. But it is difficult to break the shackles of cultural domination. [Hindupadpadshahi, 242-43]

5) No freedom!, whose smile we shall never resign. Go tell our invaders, the Danes, “That’s sweeter to blood for an age at thy shrine. Than to sleep but a minute in chains!”, Quoted by Savarkar, the lines of Thomas Moore (Hindupadapada Shahi, 219)

6) “Rather get killed than converted”, This was the prevalent call among Hindus at that time. But Ramdas stood up and exclaimed!, “No, not thus. Get killed rather than converted is good enough but better than that. Do not get either killed nor get violently converted. Rather, Kill the violent forces themselves and get killed while killing to conquer in the cause of righteousness.” (Hindupadapada Shahi p.141-62)<sup>8</sup>

The depiction of the science-based nation of socialist Hindustan presented by Bhagat Singh is very close to Savarkar’s science-based Hindustan. His support of Nehru’s rendering that he accepts science by keeping both the Quran and Veda apart reminds us of a similar rendering by Savarkar.<sup>9</sup> In the entire 750-pages of his writings, Bhagat Singh has not criticized Savarkar, his Hindutva, or his acceptance of british conditions. Nonetheless, he has criticized the rioters who support the killing of Muslims in favor of Hindus. (Kirti, June 1928), but they are not intended for Savarkar and do not apply to Savarkar either.<sup>10</sup> Bhagat Singh’s aide Yashpal has said that Savarkar brothers were our leaders in the revolutionary movement.<sup>11</sup>

Both Savarkar and Bhagat Singh have written articles on the Kakori case, Ashfaq is not mentioned in the first articles of both. Savarkar has written another article on Ashfaq later. Bhagat Singh has mentioned Ashfaq in his second article. Revolutionaries like Madanlal, Ambaprasad, Balamukund, Sachindranath, Kuka are the subjects of the writings of both Savarkar and Bhagat Singh.

Savarkar had written an article condemning the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai on 20 December 1928. Lalaji died of injuries sustained in the attack. Saunders was killed by Bhagat Singh and his companions to avenge this. Mahatma Gandhi described it as a cowardly act. Savarkar wrote an article on 19 January 1929, criticising Gandhi ji's statement. At the same time, he also wrote a famous article on the literature of Lalaji.

Savarkar has mentioned Bhagat Singh and his companions several times in his literature. An article published in Savarkar's *Shraddhanand* titled "The Real Meaning of Terror" was published by Bhagat Singh and colleagues in *Kirti* in May 1928.<sup>12</sup> An article written by Veer Savarkar in support of Bhagat Singh and companions was titled 'Armed but tyrannical.' A similar article on the name of the bomb's philosophy was published by Bhagat Singh and Vora on January 26, 1930.<sup>13</sup> Phadke says that with such articles Savarkar was instigating sparks in the hearts of the youth. On October 8, 1930, Savarkar's aide Prithvi Singh Azad and Bhagat Singh's aide Durgababhi shot at a sergeant in Mumbai.<sup>14</sup> This resulted in an increase in Savarkar's term of detention. On 23 March 1931 Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged. At that time Savarkar composed a poem in their memory.

The saffron flag was always hoisted at Savarkar's house in Ratnagiri. His home address could be identified by this only. However, on 24 March, a black flag was displayed at Savarkar's house. It was not difficult for the government to understand it. Singing this poem, the children of Ratnagiri took out a procession on March 24, when Savarkar went to a village called Varvade. He returned on March 25 and hoisted the black flag. Savarkar published an article remembering Bhagat Singh within four months. The occasion was that of Nepali movement.<sup>15</sup> Other companions of Bhagat Singh, Shiva Varma<sup>16</sup>, Vora etc. have also written about the influence of Savarkar on the revolutionaries<sup>17</sup>. ❖

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## Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Bhakti Movement

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or Shri Chaitanya (1486—1534) was a saint and a devotee of Krishna of eastern India. He advocated Bhakti or pure love and devotion for Krishna. He also popularized the Hare Krishna mantra. Devotees consider him an incarnation of Krishna. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mode of worshipping Krishna with ecstatic song and dance had a profound effect on Vaishnavism in Bengal. He was also the chief proponent of the Vedantic philosophy of Achintya Bheda Abheda. Mahaprabhu founded Gaudiya Vaishnavism (a.k.a. Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya). He expounded Bhakti yoga and popularized the chanting of the Hare Krishna Maha-mantra. He composed the Shikshashtakam (eight devotional prayers).

### Mahaprabhu and Bhakti Movement

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu promoted devotion to Bhagwan Krishna by constantly chanting his name. This appealed to the ordinary devotees as it did not call for much learning. Although a well-read man, he wrote little as he was of the view that unalloyed devotion alone leads to Krishna and not bookish knowledge...

During the 15th century Chaitanya, also called Gauranga because of his fair skin, and Vishvambhara, promoted the sankirtan (chanting) movement in praise of Krishna in Bengal. He was also called Nimai as he was born in a hut under a neem (margosa) tree at Mayapur, in Navadvipa (Nadia). In sankirtan, the climax is called mahadbhava (highest feeling), the devotee loses consciousness of his surroundings while chanting Hari's name; he laughs and weeps like a mad man. Chaitanya was sometimes considered mad because of the zeal with which he chanted Krishna's name. This spiritual ecstasy is considered the ultimate in bhakti. Chaitanya proclaimed that to achieve Krishna, Vedic knowledge was not required; what was needed was pure love for God. He said, "One who has attained love for Godhead chants and dances spontaneously and naturally, not caring for the public. To spread the sankirtan movement,

Chaitanya sent his disciples to Vrindavan while he travelled in Bengal and South India. "Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Hare Rama, Hare Rama..." is the principal chant of this Vaishnava Sampradaya. The Rama here stands for Balarama, Krishna's elder brother, and not the Rama of Ayodhya, the son of Dasharath. In this sampradaya, Krishna is the supreme Godhead and Golok is his highest spiritual abode. Chaitanya prescribed chanting of Hari's name as the best method to attain moksha in Kaliyuga. Although he criticized mayavadi philosophers (those believing in Adi Shankaracharya's philosophy), this had not prevented Chaitanya from visiting the Kashi Vishvanath Mandir in Varanasi.

### Bringing back Hindus to their faith

Apart from promoting Krishna worship, Chaitanya carried out the medieval version of re-converting Hindu converts to their parental faith. Two brothers, Rupa and Sanatana Goswami, became his disciples. These two learned Brahmins, when in the service of Nawab Hussein Shah of Bengal, had to put on a Muslim dress and adopt alien manners. Formerly, they were known as Dabir Khas (prime minister) and Shaka Mallik (private secretary) due to the nature of their work. The Nawab, himself a Hindu convert was previously known as Subuddhiray, relied on them for administering the kingdom. The Nawab spent most of his time in hunting as he cared less for his kingdom, thanks to the loyal services of the Brahmin brothers. But after the Brahmin brothers converted, the ruler felt helpless because they gave up their administrative duties. The Nawab tried to put obstacles in their way, but they managed to negotiate their way through and succeeded in joining Chaitanya. Bengal came firmly under the heel of Muslim invaders in Nimai's time.

Mayapur (Navadvipa), where the saint (Chaitanya) was born in 1486 to Pandit Jagannatha Mishra and Sachi Devi, maintained its reputation as a centre of traditional learning despite the political

upheavals that shook Bengal. After the destruction of Nalanda and other seats of learning in eastern India, Navadvipa provided shelter to scholars from those places.

Nimai was a good student, and he mastered grammar at Pandit Gangadas's pathshala. Then he studied logic under Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, a formidable advaita philosopher. He soon turned out to be a great logician. His fellow student, Raghunath, was very ambitious and aspired to be a famous logician. Once Chaitanya effortlessly solved a proposition in logic set by Sarvabhauma, over which Raghunath had been wracking his brains. He soon found in Chaitanya a competitor who would outshine him. Raghunath had written *Didhiti*, a commentary on logic. Chaitanya himself wrote a commentary on logic. After reading that, Raghunath wondered in Chaitanya's presence as to who would care for his work in comparison to Chaitanya's. The latter set at rest Raghunath's fears by throwing his commentary in the Ganga.

Chaitanya became a well-known scholar at a young age; he opened his own school of grammar and logic. He was married to Lakshmi by then. But he was so immersed in devotion to Krishna that instead of teaching, he would chant Krishna's name and encourage the students to do the same. The vexed students protested at first but later relented and joined in the chorus themselves.

When he was eighteen, Chaitanya met Ishwarpuri, who was writing a book on the love of Radha and Krishna. On being requested, Nimai agreed to be a collaborator. Another momentous event in Chaitanya's life was his meeting with Keshav Kashmiri, a distinguished interpreter of the scriptures, on the banks of the Ganga. The scholar recited some shlokas in praise of Ganga at Chaitanya's request. To his surprise, Nimai picked one or two verses from the middle and asked the scholar to interpret them. Keshav was amazed at Nimai's phenomenal memory. The admiration was, however, short lived when Nimai pointed out grammatical errors in the composition. Eventually, Keshav accepted the mistakes and acknowledged Chaitanya as his guru.

The chant of 'Haribol' which became the signature of Chaitanya soon attracted devotees, some of whom were prominent people of Nadia. One of them was Nityananda (also called Nitai), who later became the chief disciple of Chaitanya. After some time, Chaitanya's wife died of a snakebite. Sachi Devi arranged a second marriage, this time with Vishnupriya. Chaitanya decided to become a sannyasi at the age of 24 in 1510. His mother agreed to the proposal, but it came as a bolt from the blue to Vishnupriya. After a great deal of persuasion, she gave her consent. An advaitin, Keshav Bharati, initiated Nimai into sannyasa. From then on, he came to be known as Krishna Chaitanya. Thereafter, it was a life of ceaseless wandering for Chaitanya. He undertook a pilgrimage to places connected with Krishna, chiefly Vrindavan, in the Mathura-Agra region in 1514. Previously Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had sent Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami to discover the holy sites mentioned in the Bhagavat there. Then they were joined by others who came to be known as shadgoswamis: Rupa, Sanatana, their nephew Jiva, and others.

Chaitanya's wanderings brought him to Puri where he again met Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, who began to instruct him in Shankara's teachings. It was a self-appointed task he undertook. He told Chaitanya that he should know Vedanta, if he wished to succeed as a sannyasi. Out of respect for Sarvabhauma's age, Nimai politely consented. When Chaitanya started refuting Shankara by quoting from the Puranas, the aged scholar became impressed and wrote a composition called *Gaurangashataka* in praise of Chaitanya; it was during this visit that King Prataparudra Deva became a disciple of Chaitanya. At first Chaitanya refused to meet him, as he was against pomp and pageantry. But all this changed after the Odisha king became an ardent devotee. Sarvabhauma finally became a Vaishnava and a disciple of Chaitanya.

The Puri visit turned out to be a memorable one. But at one stage Chaitanya could not tolerate certain things because of his strict moral code and wanted to leave the place immediately. His disciples, however, prevailed upon him to stay back.

His next trip was a pilgrimage to the south, where he learnt most of the southern languages. During the southern sojourn, Nimai met Ramananda Raya, a governor in the Vijayanagar empire, on the banks of the Godavari River in Rajamahendravaram (Rajahmundry), in Andhra Pradesh. Nimai at once recognized in him a realized soul. He embraced him and that was the beginning of a lasting association. Chaitanya asked Ramananda to expound the divine love between Radha and Krishna, which he did. In the end, Chaitanya himself manifested as Radha and Krishna, but told him not to tell it to others as they might take him to be a mad man to make such a claim. It is said Chaitanya succeeded in converting Karnataka to the Bhakti tradition.

After the southern trip, Chaitanya visited Maharashtra, a miracle occurred when he was at Pune while on the shore of a lake. A mischievous fellow pointed to the lake and said, "Look there is your Krishna." Without a moment's hesitation, Nimai jumped into the lake and very nearly drowned. After

Chaitanya was rescued, the spectators started to beat the prankster. Chaitanya saved him from their wrath by saying he had done nothing wrong as Krishna is to be found everywhere. This was possible for him as he would always be in a heightened state of spiritual fervour.

Chaitanya finally returned to Puri in 1516 and stayed there for 18 years, where he spent his time in worshipping Bhagwan Jagannath. He would become ecstatic while worshipping Jagannath. Finally, he entered the sea at Puri, never to return. At such times, he took the sea to be the Yamuna at Vrindavan.

Shri Krishna Chaitanya was an eminent proponent of the Gaudiya Vaishnava School of Bhakti Yoga, that is, loving devotion (madhura bhava) to Krishna based on the philosophy of the Shrimad Bhagavata and Bhagavad Gita. He established Gaudiya Vaishnavism in East India. Though a great scholar he wrote only two beautiful works. The first has only eight verses and is called Chaitanyashikshashtaka, and the second is called Jagannathastotra. ❖

#### Quotes from Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

- ⇒ *The vedic literatures composed by the Mahamuni Vyasadeva are evidence of all spiritual existence. Only through these revealed scriptures can all conditioned souls attain knowledge.*
- ⇒ *The essence of all religious principles in the age of Kali is chanting of the holy names of the lord. One cannot be delivered by following any other religious principles.*
- ⇒ *The word Brahman indicates the complete Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is Sri Krishna. That is the verdict of all vedic literatures.*
- ⇒ *In Vedic literature Krishna is the central point of attraction and His service is our activity. To attain the platform of love of Krishna is life's ultimate goal. Therefore Krishna, Krishna's service and love of Krishna are the three great riches of life.*
- ⇒ *The conditioned soul cannot revive his Krishna consciousness by his own effort but out of causeless mercy, Lord Krishna compiled the Vedic literature and its supplements, the Puranas*
- ⇒ *In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, is the incarnation of Lord Krishna.*
- ⇒ *Regardless of time or place, one who chants the holy name, even while eating or sleeping, attains all perfection.*
- ⇒ *Be more humble than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, always offering respect onto others and never expecting any in return*

## Remembering the 50th year of 1971 Bangladesh war

The 70-day-long BSF's 'Maitri Cycle Rally' to commemorate the 50th year of the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war victory covering a distance of around 4,000-km along the frontiers of five Indian states culminated in western Mizoram on Wednesday. The 'Maitri Cycle Rally' comprising 13 cyclists of the Border Security Force (BSF) began on January 10 from the Panitar Border Out Post (BOP) in South Bengal and ended at Silkore BOP in western Mizoram on Wednesday, a day coinciding with the celebrations of the 101st birth anniversary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is called the "Father of the Nation" in Bangladesh.

BSF Spokesman Ashok Kumar said that such a 'Maitri Cycle Rally' was organised for the first time to promote and strengthen the bonds of friendship and to enhance the mutual cooperation and trust between the BSF and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB). "This would also create a sense of security and confidence among the people living along the international borders and impart messages about the ill effects of drug abuse and border crimes among others," said Kumar.

During the 70-day journey, the 13 cyclists of the BSF were welcomed by the BGB officials, border residents and school students in many places all along the borders of India and Bangladesh. Various colourful Mizo ethnic and traditional dances and functions were held at Silkore BOP in Mizoram to celebrate the culmination of the rally.

BSF Director General Rakesh Asthana, Mizoram police chief Shashi Bhushan Kumar Singh, BSF's Additional Director General (Eastern Command) D.K. Boora, BGB officials headed by Brigadier General Mohammad Zakir Hossain among others were present at the closing ceremony. The commemoration of the 50th anniversary year of the 1971 Bangladesh war was decided at the five-day 51st Director General-level talks

held in Guwahati on December 22-26. During the year-long commemoration, former BSF officers and personnel, Bangladeshi Mukti Yoddha (freedom fighters) and important personalities would be felicitated and the celebrations would culminate on December 16 this year.

Tripura frontier Inspector General (IG) Susanta Kumar Nath said that the 70-day cycle rally covered around a 4,000-km distance along the frontiers of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Nath said the BSF has always maintained good relations with its counterpart BGB. He added that to enhance the cooperation and goodwill, six "BSF-BGB Maitri Football Matches" would be organised in Tripura, West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. The first match was held at Belonia, southern Tripura on Thursday. On the occasion, dog shows, band display and other events were also organised.

The Tripura government has also developed a big memorial and park at the border village of Chottakhola — 132 km south of Agartala — in memory of the Indian soldiers and Bangladeshi freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives during the liberation war. Five Indian States — West Bengal (2,216 km), Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Mizoram (318 km) and Assam (263 km) — share 4,096 km long borders with Bangladesh.



# New Year Celebration of the Bodos

Nijira Brahma

Bwisagu is one of the most cherished seasonal festival of the Bodos of Assam. The Bodos call this colourful festival as Bwisagu, which means the start of the 'Year' or 'Age' and 'Agu' means starting or start. Hence, Bwisagu is the starting time of the year. It is observed on the first day of of the first month of the Bengali year (first week of the month of Baisakh). It is a time of merriment and festivities continues, in general for 7 days.

The first day is meant for the "Mwshau" or the "Cattle", on which cows are bathed in the rivers or ponds. The ds and second day is meant for the "Manshi" or "Men" but starting with the worship of gods and goddesses. The third day is for "Saima" meant for dogs, The fourth day is meant for "Oma" or "Swine", the fifth day for "Dao" meant for fowl. The sixth day for ducks and other birds, the seventh day is meant for receiving relatives and friends.

House cleaning, battle rites, worship of Bathou and offering of eatables to their ancestors, wearing of new and washed clothes, receiving and visiting relatives, friends etc., may be said to constitute the formal part of the festival. Worshipping of Bathou

is done on the second day of the festival. There is also the ceremony of eating of fowl cooked with bitter herb known as "Khungkha" or other wild vegetables of different taste. They offer it to the visitors also.

Merry making is the integral part of this Bodo Festival. Music and dance becomes a regular feature. Young men play on the "Siphung"(flute), "Kham"(drum), the four stringed "Serjã", and beat out rhythm with a piece of split bamboo called "Thãrkhã", girls dance in bands and play on the Jew's harp called "Gongonã" and small cymbals called "jotha". Young boys and girls attired in their traditional costumes, go from house to house singing Bwisagu songs, accompanied by several musical instruments. The folk songs associated with the Bwisagu are called Bwisagu Khuga Methai.

The main features of "Bwisagu" festival can be classified as follows;

- 1) Mwasou Thukhoinai or bathing of cattle.
- 2) Worshipping the gods and goddesses.
- 3) Worshipping the ancestors.
- 4) Colourful folk dances and songs sung by the boys and girls.
- 5) Women folk make pithas and larus.(traditional food)
- 6) Gwkha gwkhwi janai (mixtures of wild herbs or vegetables, collected by the young women)

## Rites performed during Bwisãgu :

The Bodos perform certain rites on the occasion me the Bwisãgu festival.

To destroy the eggs of the snakes they



produce a particular tune on the flute, the tune is called “Santravali”. The snakes community is believed by the Bodos to be the foe of the human beings and all other creatures, and anni-hillation of snakes is considered an act me general welfare.

Perform pujas to the deities.

Worship to their ancestors

Bid farewell to the old year.

Pay respect to the Gurus and elderly persons.

Exchange Love and Affection.

Dance and Sing songs.

Worship of God (Burāh Bāthou Mahārājā) with hope of more and more production and growth me cultivation.

On the seventh day bid farewell to “Bwisagu”.

The names of the twelve months of the Bodo calendar are based on the names of the Nokkhotro (lunar mansions); locations of the moon with respect to particular stars during the lunar cycle. The new year of the Bodo calendar starts with the month of Baisakh, followed by the other months like jet, asar, sawan, bhadro, asin, karthik, ogren, poush, mag, fagun, and then ends with the month

of shaitro.

Names of months and their approximate lengths (similar to Bengali calendar) followed by the Bodos:

1. Baisakh - 30/31 days

2. Jet - 31/32 days

3. Ashar - 31/32 days

4. Shrabon - 31/32 days

5. Bhadro - 31/32 days

6. Ashin - 30/31 days

7. Karthik - 29/30 days

8. Ogran - 29/30 days

9. Poush - 29 /30 days

10. Magh - 29/30 days

11. Falgun - 29/30 days

12. Choitro - 30/31 days

Bwisagu festival is an integral part of the Bodo people’s life and culture. The festivals play the peacemaker of every community. It promotes love and spreads sense of oneness and brotherhood among the people. Hence it is every person’s duty to preserve this festival in their original form and grandeur. ❖



# Vocal, Local and Global

Dr Ranga Ranjan Das

Vocal, local and global-these three terms caught eye as a publicity tagline for a media house in the premiere city of Guwahati-the gateway to Assam and the north east. These three terms has lots of ramifications in the contemporary times. In this endeavour attempt is made to contextualize over a recent experience while attending a book release function in a premiere venue during last February, relevance of the month of April with celebration of rangali bihu in multidimensional perspectives and its' consequences. It briefly highlights the role of a particular venue-sacred complex of media houses - mostly vocal; discourse of creative literature in local dialects and rangali musings in global and post-corona phases. It means that the space for voices of media houses, release of books written in local language and glorious era of Assamese literature; and Bihu and its' essence going global after a gap of one year.

Guwahati Press Club, being the epicentre of media has been occupying a key role for the media houses both print and electronic medium since long time past. It was established in 1971. It is situated at the heart of the Guwahati city, with added features of being located near the Ambari Archaeological site, on the main road connecting Textile Institute, Directorate of Handloom and Textiles, Archaeology, Cultural Affairs and Rabindra Bhawan, Museum as well as library services. It is the epicentre, in the sense that it reflects the glorious heritage of media for the entire north east in general and Assam in particular. There are facilities of organizing meetings and interactions with small gatherings in a small hall. Though, small and compact, but it has larger impact for the print and electronic media. The hall is always been active in meetings and any event open for all with certain rules and regulations. The rare photographs, present in the hall, depicts the socio-political and cultural journey of Assam. One can

easily locate precious photographs of the cultural icon of Assam. The rare photograph of Bhupen Hazarika, in his musical and film journey, his association with legendary singer Md. Rafi, community life of north east - feasting at Changghar (pile dwelling house), images of fauna of Assam-like river dolphin, movement of elephant herd, agricultural life, community fishing, pictures of M.F.Hussain, Seema Biswash, Atal Bihari Bajpai, their visits to Assam, images depicting socio-political life reflecting the concern of Assam. These materialistic aspects, apart, the press club is more than that. We know the the role of press and media in the contemporary times. It plays an important role of fourth pillar for a democratic country. In Assam, press has been playing the most crucial role since post-Independence period. The political history of Assam has shown tremendous shift from one party to the other, where Congress has emerged as major ruling parties until some brief interruption due to students' movement and formation of the Axom Gana Parixad, the main regional party of Assam. After a prolonged effort, the Bharatiya Janata Party succeeded to gain the trust of the people of Assam and came to the power. That is a history. The club is really a witness for the socio-cultural and socio-political history of Assam. There are various issues and challenges that Assam has been facing like the issue of massive infiltration from Bangladesh effecting the demographic scenario, problems relating to tribes and ethnicity, flood and erosion, separatist movements, issues relating to CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act), implementation of Clause 6 of Assam accord etc. These issues are raised from time to time apart from other issues on the platform of the club. As election is round the corner, the people of Assam readies themselves for the same. It will be interesting to see the verdict of the populace, as two more regional parties are also in the fray during the

next election. Guwahati Press Club is vocal for all the issues, challenges, problems that Assam faces through the pain and hard work of the journalists who are really the torch bearer of the fourth estate of democracy.

The next discourse is about an event I had the privilege to attend. On 7th February, 2021, it was an opportunity to be part of a book release function on the invitation of a publication house. This exercise of release of books in Assamese language was quite a learning experience. Views, opinions and observations from the academicians, scholars had brought forth various hidden aspects of creative literature. It is due to the fact that out of four books released during the event, three were based on poems and only one novel. These books were brought out in print by Rampur (an important area of South Kamrup in Assam) based publication house Paragjyoti Prakasan under the supervision and initiative of Dipak Sarma. The authors are: 1) Pramod Thakuria (originally hails from South Kamrup, now settled in Satribari area of Guwahati city, retired Deputy Commissioner of Guwahati Municipal Corporation); 2) Subanti Deuri's (originally from Sibsagar, now settled in Guwahati) and 3) M. Samsul Alam Bhuyan.

In one of my recent articles I mentioned about a book fair and glorious development of Assamese language and literature. The Assamese script and literature is at the apex of its' development where masses showed more interest in the various genres of creative literature along with narratives related to exploration of glorious heritage of this region. Let us delve into the particular event that reveals two important genre of Assamese intangible cultural heritage: Ghoxa and Lokageet. What is it? Ghoxa are some of the verse set in lyrical tune created by our saints like Sankardeva, Madhavdeva, etc. Rendering of such verse transform a place more pious and sacred. Deepika Khound, a eminent poet started the proceedings with Ghoxa. Lokageet (in Assamese, referred as folksongs) is the popular songs of the rural folks mostly circulated in oral form and popular to a particular region. In Assam, apart from other

classification, there are two region specific classification made due to exponent of two artists: Hasti kanya famed Pratima Pande Barua (Goalpara region) and Rameswar Pathak (Kamrup), popularly known as Goalparia and Kamrupi Lokageet. Riju Sarma enthralled the audience with a Kamrupi lokageet, 'Kun koinai kande ghate oi...' (related to women, whose bride is weeping by the bank of a river) in the gathering. The core part of the event that I personally felt were the speeches delivered by three eminent personalities: Dayanand Pathak, Malina Devi Rabha and Biren Singha. There were other speakers. The atmosphere created through first deliberation is highly scholastic and a learning experience. Dayanand Pathak, having a academic background of English literature expressed quite nicely about the significance of the book released and their larger impacts. In his view, compilation of poetry book is increasing day by day. He interpreted it as a positive development for creative literature at the same time a reflection on the contemporary family structure. Through poetry, the poet actually tries to communicate with the readers and convey inner feelings generated through day to day life practice. In a broader meaning, we have witnessed broken families. People become more lonely. Earlier we had joint family system. There were many people with whom we could exchange our feelings. Life has become more individualistic and materialistic. There is nobody to listen to other's woes. We choose to write poem to express our inner feelings. This is one important aspect that he brought forth. That particular poet criticized the poems written in a simple manner. In this particular aspects, Pathak reserves his own notion and assert that poem should be understood by all from the great scholar of literature to the common man at the grass root level. It is a wise and scholarly observation by Pathak. In this regard he cites the examples of noted poets of Assam like Raghunath Choudhury, Nalinibala Devi who composed simple poem that can be easily understood by all. Understanding poetry needs overall knowledge of history, sociology, economic conditions, etc. Conceptualizing some definition of poetry, it states that there should be revolution within

heart, poetry also refers criticism of life. In the present situation while emerging poets' are trying to communicate, it is our duty to respond with a positive manner. Another important aspect that was brought forth that 'it is often not necessary that we always communicate through words'.

It is necessary to emphasise that there are changes in the concept of poems. A sculpture or an architecture, made of stone may emerge as a poetry. His view is realized when a internationally famed sculptor artist occupying the dias as special guest delivered most philosophical concept of artistic creativity be it a poem or a sculpture. Biren Singha, need no introduction in our region. He emphasised on the inner beauty of any creative expression which is essential for social acceptance. We actually live in two worlds, one earthly while the other is the world of imagination. For him loneliness and silence is required for perfect creativity. Another speaker Malina Devi Rabha appreciated the efforts of Subanti Deuri, as women. She observed that woman has multiple responsibilities as wife, a daughter in law, as mother. After discharging all responsibilities, woman can make time for own to create.

The Assamese literature, at present times, is passing through a golden era where literate masses has come together to create new arena for creative writing. In addition to Axom Sahitya Sabha, various literary organizations within and beyond Assam are coming up on a regular basis. There are monthly literary sitting (sahitya baithak) in nook and corner of Assam where various forms of creative genre are carving out a wonderful niche.

During the same period, in the middle part of February, this year, the melodious eco of Kuli, (Cuckoo) is heard in the urban vicinity. It means the advent of a new season-the most elaborate bihu festival is round the corner. We look back with sadness at the year gone by when corona outbreak really destroyed the joy of the new year and Bihu. It affected the entire artist fraternity who really wait for bihu season, stage shows and performances. The markets in around bihu was badly affected. Out of three Bihus, bohag or rangali bihu is adored globally,

Bihu songs and dance performances forms an important component of Assamese identity. The internet platform makes it easy for reaching global audience. Artists from Assam are regularly invited to perform in various countries resided by Assamese diaspora across the world. The impacts of consumerism and globalization is visible in every aspects of traditional communities across the world. Bussiness hubs are always in the hunt to extract benefits out of tradition. Multicultural companies has developed an inherent interest in bihu in one way or the other. Bihu, which was basically a folk festival associated with Assamese peasantry, a seasonal occasion of rejoice by singing and dancing, transformed into a popular festival, where people across all sections show immense interest. Transformation from folk to popular, festival and reaching the global audience through association of weavers and garment industries is something extraordinary. The only sad thing about this proliferation is that the gamosas (traditional towel with white and red strips in the border) that were earlier hand woven by Assamese weavers at handloom have been hijacked by machine weavers from outside the state. Besides that imitation gamkharu (bangle), keru, golpata (necklace), kopou phul (orchid) from China is flooding the markets of Assam. Gamkharu, keru, being part of Assamese traditional jewellery are essential part of female bihu dancers. These items, if manufactured in other countries, are really a threat to our traditional craftsmen and also a violation of community intellectual property rights. To be frank Rangali bihu has gone global but is on the verge of robbing our own unique identity.

Although the soulful melodious call of the cuckoos is heralding the coming of the New Year and the Rongali Bihu, but it is also an wake up call for us. The frenzy of electoral politics is also, to a certain extent, vitiating our emotional attachment to our ageless tradition and culture. The discourses at the press club, the literary exercise and bohag meets apart we must steadfastly remain rooted to our very own culture. We must be global in outlook but at the same time nothing should sway us away from being vocal for our local traditions and culture. ❖

## Arunachal CM inaugurates maiden indigenous knowledge-system school at Seppa

There is a need to integrate the traditional with the modern in the Education sector, said Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu while emphasizing that modern education cannot be ignored and should go hand in hand. He said this while inaugurating the first indigenous language and knowledge-system school of the State in East Kameng on Saturday.

The school is located at Rang Village, situated atop the hill overlooking Seppa, the district headquarters on Saturday. The first of its kind school – Nyubu Nyvgam Yerko – is a formal institution for indigenous language and knowledge system which literally means ‘Nyubu’ (priest), ‘Nyvgam’ (person having wisdom and knowledge) and ‘Yerko’ (learning institution). Describing it as a historic day, Khandu said that the first-of-its-kind school in the State would go a long way in promoting and preserving indigenous traditions, culture and language.

He lauded the initiative by the Donyi Polo Cultural & Charitable Trust and said it was the need

of the day in view of rapid modernization. He also appreciated Pai Dawe, who donated the land for establishment of the ‘Gurukul’ type school. Khandu suggested that the lure to build concrete buildings for the institution be avoided and traditional houses preferred. “Need not have RCC buildings except for teacher’s quarters. Let the kids learn in an environment that is their culture,” he advised.

Khandu expressed gratitude to all elders of the society who have preserved and passed on the indigenous culture through generations. “Now it is our responsibility. We cannot let go our identity which is our indigenous culture. If we do, Arunachal Pradesh will lose its identity,” he cautioned. Reiterating that his government is committed to preserve indigenous culture of the State, Khandu said with that in aim the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) was established.

He informed that friends and people from other north-eastern States called him to congratulate on

*(Contd. to Page 24)*



Arunachal CM Pema Khandu inaugurates maiden indigenous knowledge-system school at remote Rang Village in Seppa

## ‘Dekho Apna Pradesh’ campaign launched by Arunachal tourism

Arunachal Pradesh on Monday launched the ‘Dekho Apna Pradesh’, campaign in an attempt to promote tourism within the state to heal the damage caused to the sector by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu flagged off the campaign in presence of Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein and Tourism Minister Nakap Nalo from the DK Convention Centre here.

‘Dekho Apna Pradesh’ is a brainchild of Khandu conceptualized in line with Prime Minister Narendra

sector but also create awareness on the diversity of the state bringing in unity,” he said.

In the first phase of the campaign, stakeholders like tour operators, home stay owners, transporters, hoteliers, bloggers, will travel on different tourist circuits of the State in groups. “I may not be wrong if I claim that even not all stakeholders, especially the tour operators, have visited all tourist places across the State. Therefore, we are facilitating them to travel to other districts in the first phase of the



Modi’s ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ campaign.

As Arunachal Pradesh is geographically a big State, Khandu urged that those who have seen little of the state must visit places other than their work place or residency.

“I bet not all of us have visited all the tourist places of the district other than our own. Ours is such a vast state and there’s so much to see and learn of other tribes, culture and places. This campaign is to encourage our people to visit other places of their own State. This will not only benefit the tourism

campaign,” informed Khandu.

He further said that this would not only let the stakeholders gain first-hand knowledge of the places they visit but also get acquainted with local stakeholders and even land up with business deals.

Khandu requested the stakeholders to come back benefited from the 10-day visit and encourage local people of their respective areas to explore places within the state.

“This way people will become aware of their state and at the same time contribute in their revenue

generation,” he said.

He also requested all the stakeholders to create awareness within the locals in hospitality etiquettes. “We have to teach our people to be good hosts, change our mindset of looking at every new face with suspicion and to have welcoming attitude towards all. Unless we do this, no amount of campaign will succeed,” said the Chief Minister.

Citing tourism as one of the best sectors for investment, Khandu made a call to well-to-do businessmen, entrepreneurs and youths of the state to invest in tourism along with agriculture and allied sectors. He added that returns will be good and fast as these sectors are the future of the State.

Reiterating his push for high-end tourism in line with that of Bhutan, Khandu stressed on quality in service with authentic information. He said all tour operators along with District Tourism Officers and Tourist Information Officers should be well equipped with the history, culture and importance of all tourist places in their jurisdictions.

“Whatever information you pass on to visitors must be authentic. Tourists should not leave the State loaded with misinformation,” he cautioned.

Assuring that the State government is committed to promote tourism in Arunachal Pradesh, Khandu

gave details of the schemes like Chief Minister’s Paryatan Shiksha Yojana (CMPSY), Chief Minister’s Paryatan Vikas Yojana (CMPVY) and the Chief Minister’s Advanced Certificate Course (CMACC).

Under CMPSY youths from the Hospitality sector are sent to reputed institutes for training, while under CMPVY, a value-added subsidy scheme, funds are granted for opening home stays, restaurants, bakery, food courts and adventure sports. Under the CMACC, youths are trained in adventure and allied sports for which government has tied up with the Dirang based National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS).

“Under CMPVY about 200 youths have benefited in establishing home stays and adventure sports centers while 100 have availed subsidies to open bakeries and restaurants. Further, so far about 225 youths have been trained for adventure tourism under the CMACC,” informed Khandu.

Under the first phase of the ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ campaign, 60 participants divided in 3 groups (A, B & C) would embark on a 10-day journey of various tourism circuits of western, eastern and central Arunachal where they would learn more about the area’s culture, heritage, food habits and most importantly its tourism aspects. ❖

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*(Contd. from Page 22)*

## **Arunachal CM inaugurates maiden indigenous knowledge-system school at Seppa**

the decision. “People from our neighboring States called and congratulated me. Many of them have lost their indigenous identity and went off so far that it is impossible to come back. We Arunachalees have woke up at the right time,” said Khandu. He appealed to the indigenous leaders and elders of the society to come out and suggest ways for the department to function for preservation of culture and languages. Claiming that Nyubu Nyvgam Yerko is a right initiative, Khandu expressed belief that institutionalization of cultural education is need of the hour. “Being a Monpa, I follow Buddhism. My culture is safe as it is institutionalized. We learn and earn degrees in Buddhism. Therefore, we need to

establish institutes that teach our kids their respective indigenous culture, heritage, language, way of living and take pride on it,” he said. He thanked the VKV (Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya) group for taking up the responsibility to impart formal education to the inmates of the Nyubu Nyvgam Yerko. Assuring all assistance to the school, he informed budgetary provision of about Rs 3 crore has been kept for its development and upkeep. Earlier on the day, Khandu inaugurated the newly established Operation Theater while Union Minister of State (Independent) for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the ICU of the District Hospital at Seppa, the communiqué added. ❖

## Tripura exports natural rubber to Nepal

After Bangladesh, Tripura, which is the second largest natural rubber producing state in India after Kerala, has exported it to Nepal, Rubber Board officials said on Monday. Rubber Board official Arunabha Majumder said a 18 tonne rubber sheet produced in Tripura was imported by a shoe manufacturing company at Biratnagar in Nepal. "The consignment was flagged off on Saturday and is likely to reach its destination in a week through the Bihar-Nepal border route," said Majumder, who is the General Manager of the Rubber Board promoted marketing company 'Manimalayar Rubbers Pvt. Ltd'. Many years back Tripura had exported the natural rubber to neighbouring Bangladesh, he added. Manimalayar Rubbers Pvt. Ltd, which has branch offices in Assam's Guwahati and Tura in Meghalaya, has been extending marketing support to the producers since 1997.

At present, Tripura is cultivating natural rubber in 85,500 hectares and produces 62,000 tonne annually. More than 1.5 lakh families are directly and indirectly associated with rubber cultivation in the State. According to the officials of the Tripura Industries & Commerce Department, more than 90 per cent of the total rubber produced is sent outside the State, earning nearly Rs 600 crore annually as the state has no rubber-based industries.

"Transportation of rubber and rubber sheets outside the hilly north-eastern region is a big bottleneck. Ferrying of the natural rubber through Bangladesh or exporting it to the neighbouring country is not possible due to various restrictions imposed by the Bangladesh government. The Bangladesh government only allowed transportation of raw rubber (latex) not in the form of sheets through their country or to export. Technically, carrying or export of raw rubber is very difficult," said an official of

the Industries & Commerce Department.

Rubber Board officials said the seven north-eastern States cultivating rubber over 1,90,000 hectares annually produced 1,11,700 tonne natural rubber. According to the Board officials, after Tripura, Assam is cultivating natural rubber in 58,000 hectare area and produces 31,000 tonne rubber annually, followed by Meghalaya with 17,000 hectares and producing 9,500 tonne, Nagaland's 15,000 hectares producing 6,100 tonne and Manipur's 4,200 hectares producing 2,000 tonne. Two Bangladeshi nationals repatriated after years of medical treatment in India also cultivate natural rubber in 4,070 hectare and 5,820 hectares and produce 1175 tonne and 880 tonne respectively. Industry body, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA), recently announced that it would invest Rs 1,100 crore to undertake rubber plantation over an additional 2,00,000 hectares in north-east India in the next five years. Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal while participating in a recent virtual seminar thanked ATMA for agreeing to invest Rs 1,100 crore in this sector. ❖



# The seven Champions

Dr. Uzzal Sharma

An old man and an old woman had a son. But the father died while his son was yet a child, and the mother brought up her boy by begging from house to house. When he was big enough he begged his mother to let him engage himself as a cowherd. But she said, "As long as I live, I must not let you undergo any trouble." But the brave boy would not listen, and went and took service as a cowherd. But the other cowherd boys would not let him go out herding with them, and hated him, and beat him, in spite of the help of a good old man who took him into his house, so, being unable to stay any longer for grief and anger, he went away into foreign lands.

And as he went his ways, he met Simli Bir, the hero of the simul tree, and when he saw him he said "Ah! here is a hero indeed, seeing that you bear a whole silk-cotton tree on your shoulder." But the other replied "Whom do you call a hero? I am no hero at all. If you want a real hero, look out for Gila Charan." But the lad said, "As for Gila Charan, why, I am Gila Charan." On which Simli Bir got leave to go with him. And as they went they met Dhop Bir, and to him, they said "You are something like a hero. Why you are carrying a whole dhop tree all by yourself." But the other said "My brothers, of what account am I? The man they call Gila Charan, he is a hero if you like." Then Gila Charan said, "But I am he." On which Dhop Bir said "Let me come with you too."

And, so saying, he too joined the party. And in like manner they were joined by other four champions, namely, Mustard, Monkey, Ocean, and Fire, six in all, besides Gila Charan.

And when they had gone some way, one of them went into the house of a Rakshashani to beg fire for cooking. But when the old wretch saw that

it was a man, she desired to devour him, and to that end lay still, pretending to be ill, and said to him in a weak voice "The fire is quite close to me. Come and blow it up!" and when he came close, she gave him a kick and sent him flying into a pit; and, seeing that he did not come, another champion went on the same quest and was treated in like fashion. Then Gilâ Charan guessed that something out of the way had happened, and went there himself; and, perceiving that the old woman was a vampire, took her by the throat and shook her well. But she cried "Do not kill me, and I will show you where your friends are." Then the old woman got a ladder and released the two champions from the pit. Whereupon they killed her and went on their way rejoicing.

And presently they came to a place where Rakshashas dwelt. But, not knowing this, they left Simli Bir to cook rice and the rest went hunting. And when the rice was ready, two Rakshashas came and gobbled it up, so when the rest returned, hungry, for food, Simli Bir said he was very sorry. He had quite forgotten to cook, being very busy watching a beautiful white butterfly. But Gilâ Charan at once saw that was only a pretext. So he bid the rest go, and, staying behind, himself cooked rice afresh. On which the two Rakshashas came up roaring, and said: "Here, my son, hand over that rice." "But," said Gilâ Charan, undaunted, "we are hungry ourselves and have no rice to spare!" "What!" cried they "shall a scarcely weaned child speak to us like this?" and they ran at him to eat him. But he seized them by their necks and threw them a field's length. And when they attacked him afresh, he slew them with his sword. And in like manner each of the Birs slew each his Rakshasha, and then each married a fair Rakshasha girl, and lived happily ever afterward.

And that's all!



**Koch Community of Meghalaya**



**Tripuri Community Youths in their traditional attire**