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HERITAGE EXPLORER

"LET KNOWLEDGE COME FROM ALL THE SIDES"

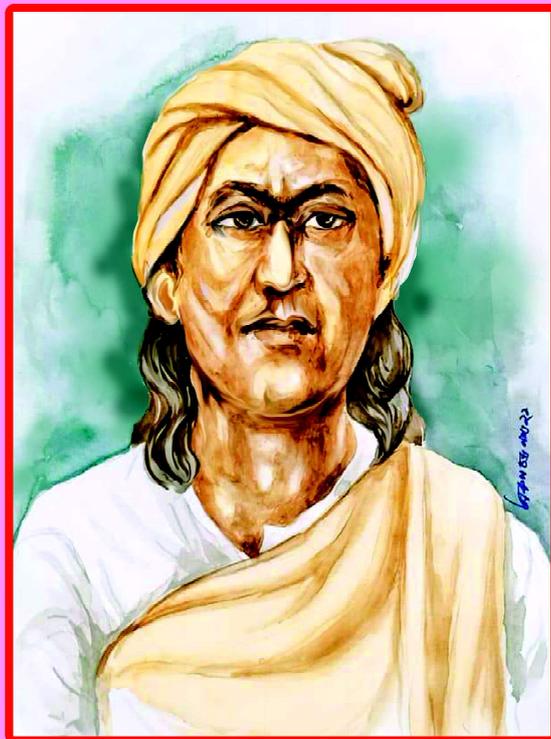
A Monthly News Bulletin

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Mera Hou Chongba Festival of Manipur

India's Unsung Heroes



Piyali Phukan was a freedom fighter from the state of Assam. He was the first Assamese to be martyred in the struggle for freedom from British Raj. His outstanding leadership in organising mass movements against the British posed a tremendous challenge before the British government that they eventually had him sentenced to death. After the Treaty of Yandabu had been signed between the British government and Myanmar, Assam came directly under British control. During that time a secret revolt against the company rule was led by Gomdhar Konwar. Piyali Phukan and his brother went on to be associated with Gomdhar Konwar through this rebellion. The British government detained most of the rebels, including Gomdhar, and imprisoned them. Therefore Piyali Phukan and his associates secretly assembled weapons during the period of 1829 to 1830 and planned a revolt again. They set fire to Kharghar and Sepoy's koth in Rangpur on March 25, 1830. Piyali Phukan was captured on the spot by the British and on July 26, 1830, Piyali Phukan and Jiuram Dulia Baruah were publicly hanged by the British at Sivasagar.

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Reviving NE Tribal Arts & Handicrafts

It is a well-known fact that the varied art and culture of the tribal communities of north eastern region of our country is unique in themselves. Unfortunately, they are on the verge of losing their popularity and demand due to the attraction for imported glamour.

For centuries, the Northeast has been a smorgasbord of various cultures, which is reflected in the rich array of art and handicrafts one can find here – from textiles, bamboo and cane products, jewelries, masks, wood carvings and earthenware etc. Assam and Meghalaya are renowned for their cotton and silk handloom products.. Most tribes have a unique weave and the patterns vary within clans of the same tribe. Birds, flowers and human figures are some of the popular motifs that are embroidered on these handloom products. Nagaland is renowned for its *shawls*, which are made of three pieces of cloth woven separately and then stitched together. The *shawls* are largely red, black and blue and are embellished with geometrical patterns consisting of squares, lines and stripes. The various tribes of Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram and Arunachal also have a rich and diverse tradition of textiles. Bamboo and cane, which are integral to the culture of the region. The forests of the Northeast are abundant in bamboo and the plant is used to make all kinds of items – from houses, furniture, cradles, haversacks, containers and mats to hats, jewellery, musical instruments and animal traps. Bamboo artefacts from the region have become increasingly popular and are now available across India. The Konyak, Phom, Khamti, Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa and Monpa tribes are renowned for their skill in wood carving. The Wancho and Morung carvings were traditionally of three kinds – those associated with head-hunting, those used to decorate young men's communal dormitories and funerary images. The Monpas are famous for their utensils, bowls, cups and ceremonial masks. The Aos make drums sculpted from wood, sometimes using just a single log from a tree trunk. The Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh are known for their exquisite wooden images of Lord Buddha. The Lepchas and Bhutias of Sikkim make *bagschok* (centre table), partition screens and chairs out of carved wood. The blacksmithy and metallurgical skills of the people of the

Northeast is visible in their exquisite weapons, tools, musical instruments and jewelries. The Angami and Rengma tribes of Nagaland are considered to be amongst the best blacksmiths in the region. They have a strong warrior tradition, owing to which they produce many weapons, most notably spears and *daos* (a kind of broadsword). Made from items as varied as gold, silver, beads, reed, bamboo, bones, feathers and insect wings, the ornaments prevalent in the region are quite unique. The tribes of Arunachal are skilled in the technique of using wax moulds to make brass and gold jewellery. The Nagas use glass shards and cowry shells to design necklaces and elephant tusks to make bangles. Mask making is an important cultural activity in Assam, Manipur and Sikkim. The masks, widely used in regional and folk theatres, are fashioned from terracotta, pith (Indian cork), metal, bamboo, papier-mâché and wood. The Dafla women of Arunachal and the Tangkhul, Poumai and Chakpa tribes of Manipur are renowned potters. Some of these communities make earthenware without a potter's wheel, using only their hands to fashion the clay. Terracotta craftsmen from Asarikandi in Assam have carved a niche for themselves with their one-of-a-kind style, which led to Asarikandi being branded an ethnic art in India. Sikkim is famous for its *thangkas* (religious scrolls depicting Buddhist mythology) paintings, carpets and blankets woven with sheep wool. In Manipur, a reed known as *kauna* is used to make double-weave mats.

It is sad that the unmatched creative skills of the tribes of north east are on the wane and their unique products are no longer patronized by the tribal communities themselves. They no more choose their necessities; the markets choose these for them. They seem to be not proud of their arts and handicrafts developed over centuries by their ancestors and prefer to embrace mass produced machine made commercial products. While the developed world and the people outside north east adore the tribal products the tribals prefer to reject them. It is time for them to revert back to their roots and uphold the glory of their very own arts and handicrafts.

Romen Chakraborty

Chief Editor

The Eternal Religion in perspective of Malsom Janajati of Tripura

Chandra Krishna Malsom
(continued from october issue)

7. Worship of God and Propitiation of lower deities:

In the traditional way of worshipping different gods, goddesses, deities, witches, spirits etc. the basic pattern of the main theme is almost same among all Janajati communities in Tripura. They perform puja to get rid of diseases, mishaps and misfortunes etc. in larger number but a few of them are of devotional (Bhakti) for attaining adorable favour of Gods and Goddesses out of gratitude for benevolent contribution to mankind, animals, insects, plants and other worldly animate and inanimate objects. The mantras are mostly found to be in Kokborok language which is popularly called Rwmchong (means language of human being) and only a few of them found in Halam, Malsom, Kuki (etc.) languages. According to traditional type of worshipping, the Ochai (priest) is requested to study case of diseases, mishaps or other problems by way of Thikwna-en (a cross-examination by chanting of mantras using essential components like turmeric, raw rice, dhup, flower etc). As soon as the cause is determined by the Ochai, the householder will have to prepare all the items required like Rosong (bamboo tube artifacts), plantain leaves, chicken, duck, pigeon, he-goat, pig etc. in accordance with the result of Thikwna-en before the Ochai officiate the puja.

The natural objects/elements and domestic animals varies in accordance with the puja. In this type of puja there is no idol of Gods or Goddesses. However, use of Muli Bamboo is common among the Janajati communities all over the state of Tripura. The most common natural elements/components of such puja are given below.

(a) Rosong (Wathop):

The Rosong (Wathop) is constructed with six (three pairs) green bamboo sticks of one cubit or more in length. In its construction, two pairs of bamboo sticks are fixed on the ground at the distance of about one cubit or little more and the another pair of sticks are tied to the upper portion of two pairs of stick which were fixed on the ground earlier. These bamboo sticks are designed by an Barua (assistance of the Ochai) according to the direction of an Ochai with the help of a scythe. The hollow of the the bamboo are covered with bamboo leaves.

(b) Takabet (Kaitebe):

Kaitebe in Kokborok is called Takabet in Malsom language. Kaitebe is a pair of flat bamboo pieces used as a stand for Zuthwi (Bamboo tube for wine) by installing them on ground in cross like X alphabet in English.

(c) Raikol (Nagri):

The image of the Nakri (Raikol) can be made in two ways. Generally a Muli bamboo (a variety of bamboo) piece of a certain length is designed according to the instruction of the Ochai and a small quantity of cotton is tied to the middle part of this bamboo stick and it is fixed on the ground. There are also certain restrictions regarding use of thread. For example, for the performance of the Burasa (Pavengpa) puja, both black and white coloured thread can be used.

(d) Khawng:

It is a bamboo strip which has designs like flowers on both sides and bent into arcs. Both the ends of these bamboo strips are fixed to the ground. This Khawng is required for Sangrongma (Sangrounu)

puja, Ganga Puja, Kerpuja, Marriage Ceremony etc.

(e) Par-rui (Khumtrwng):

Khumtrwng (Par-rui) is a garland of flower used during puja of different gods, goddesses, deities and spirits.

(f) Zuthwi (Langkhang/Chupkhang):

The Langkhang and Chupkhang are used in all Pujas. During the time of Pujas, the deities are offered water and rice bear (Zu) through these Langkhang and Chupkhang. In Malsom language, it is called Zuthwi.

(g) Dip:

In making of a Dip, a bamboo piece of a certain length is first of all stripped vertically into flat pieces and then one flat strip is designed in its both sides as leaf-like flowers. The designs of this bamboo strips are fashioned to look like flower.

(h) Kharouma (Tharuma):

It is a bamboo piece of one cubit length and is fixed on the ground, before the image of the deity. The hollow of these bamboo pieces are covered with bamboo leaves.

(i) Maicham (Khoulung):

It is a small size bamboo basket required only for the purpose of Burasa (Pavengpa) puja.

(j) Thapna:

The two flat bamboo pieces which are fixed on the two sides of the Chartangmani (Robol char'te) are called Thapna.

(k) Robol Char'te (Char-tangmani):

The Char-tangmani (Robol Char'te) is made during the time of Ganga Puja (Tui keltan) to satisfy Twibukma (Goddess of water, Tuikhorinu). In its construction four bamboo pieces are fixed on the ground first and then six flat bamboo pieces are arranged at the top of these four bamboo poles. At the center part of the bamboo poles, one platform is also made with flat bamboo pieces which is called Changni.

(l) Khultrwng:

Khultrwng is a kind of garland made of thread using the fiber of jhum cotton with seeds. It is used as an important component/elements during puja of different Deb-debi. It is found to be widely used by the people belonging to Tripuri and Halam community in Tripura.

Besides, many puja components are left out like Khoribem (basket for witches), Sapok (Khanchwi), Baihul (Rice powder), Bhai-ru-ul (rice cake), Zuha (rice bear swap), Rakzu (Chuwak), Asendang (use of clothes as curtain, purdah), Pawn-rwthing (Dhuti cloth), Rwsaphak (Risa, garment used for breasts cover by tribal women) and so many.

After performing the puja, if the result is bad, he has to find out which deity is dissatisfied. In this matter, the house-holder demands to know the result of the puja with a cup of rakzu (rice bear) to the Ochai. This asking for the result is called Semarwthang in Malsom language and Semaswngmwng in Kokborok language of Tripuri people. The revealing of the result by the Ochai is known as Sema aichow (Sema samwng). Sema rwthang is the ritual of ascertaining by the Ochai, the fortune or misfortune of the man who offers the Puja. In this process the Ochai picks up a handful of rice. He decides from beforehand what will be the fare of the man if the number of rice grains in his hand turns out to be odd or even.

If the result is bad, the Ochai has to find out which god has to be appease for the desired result. Here again the same process of counting a handful of rice is gone through to find out the identity of the aggrieved deity.

It should be mentioned here that the Doi (Mantra) of the Pathwnpek (Robol) is common to all the Pujas with a change of the names of the deities who are to be worshipped. In the worship of the deity of water only the name 'Twibuk kalki raja' is mentioned in the place of the name of the four deities of the Pathwnpek e.g. Ang Hinya Dou Sakha Twibuk Kalki Raja.

In the Puja of a full flooded river the Ochai utters the only name 'Tarangini Ama' in the place of all the names of deities. The name Tarangini Ama means a full flooded river in the language of the Ochai. In case of Pujas where animal sacrifice is involved the same Doi(Mantra) is used only with a difference. In such cases the name of the sacrificial animal is mentioned in place of the name of the articles or Naibadya. It should be noted here that the various animals which are sacrificed in a Puja have special names in the language of the Ochai. The specific names of the animals according to the language of the Ochai are as follows.

Sl.No.	Name of the animals/birds in English	Name of the animals/birds in Ochai dialect
1.	Fowl	Anapakshi raja
2.	Duck	Balihansa raja
3.	He-goat	Anabwba raja
4.	Sheep	Birsinga raja
5.	Pigeon	Urupakshi raja
6.	Buffalo	Krongmali raja
7.	Pig	Surabhi

The extract drawn from the Doi(Mantra) of the Lampra puja as uttered by an Ochai has been given below along with its English translation.

Part-I : Doi(Mantra) in Kokborok Language:

Ang Hinya dou ! Sakha Sri Akatha, Sri Bikatha
 Ama Twibuk, Ama Sangrong,
 Nirok se Ama phaidi.
 Uttor Tongbw, Dakshin Tongbw
 Pube Tongbw, Paschim Tongbw
 Raj Singhasan rwkha.
 Achuk Phaibai jadi dou.
 O, takle Chasmai Rwkha, Nwngsmai Rwkha
 Yak Suzaknai Twi Rwkha, Yak subai jasidi.
 [Twi Kisa Kisa Hawo Lukhlai Yaksu Rwkha]

Part-I : Doi(Mantra) : Translation in English:

The Ochai utters—
 These are not my words, Sri Akatha, Sri Bikatha
 Maa Twibuk Kalkiraja and Maa Sangrongma.
 Please make an appearance in my humble urge.

Be you in the North, be you in the South,
 Either in the East or in the West.
 The throne has been laid out for you.
 Please do take a seat.
 For your pleasure, I have placed food and drinks.
 And water too, for washing your hands.
 Please do wash them.
 [The priest now pours some water on the earth
 and performs certain acts to signify the washing of
 the hands.]

Part-II : Doi(Mantra) in Kokborok Language.

O, Takle Yasu-bai Jakha ba
 Nwsa Phona(Bwmwng) Kwrwija Fanw,
 Bikhwra Khangwra ja Phano,
 Nirag-no Khulum Asajawani Bangwi
 Niragni Thani Kisa Kai Jawani Bangwi
 Nirakni Thani Masa Jawani Bangwi
 Chukya Phanw Tukuya Phanw.
 [Niragno Mairum Kisa Batasa Kisa Thalwi Kisa
 Khe].

Part-II: Doi (Mantra): Translation in English:

All right it's over now.
 When your son (here the worshipper)
 Albeit poor and of humble origins,
 Incapable of great pomp and show.
 Pays his obedience
 In order to invoke you.
 And please before you.
 Some requests, some prayers
 Though he can hardly afford it.
 Offers you some rice, a few bananas.
 Please do partake a little of the humble offerings.
 [The priest carries out certain acts which signify
 the terminal of the meal.]

Part-III: Doi (Mantra): In Kokborok Language.

Chasmai Rojajawoi
 O Thagwi Thagwi Phanw Chaja Baikha.
 O Takle Chabajak-kha, Nungbai Jak-kha.
 Yak Subai Sidi, Bukhuk Subai Sidi.
 O Takle Yak Subaikha ba, Bukhuk Subaikha ba
 Swrasa Phanle Lengla-lang Bai Jadi.

[Pasa/Chaswmai Roronai tei Nani Nok Borokni
Hamari
Nai-owi Mwtai-rokni Thani Ochaini
Kabokmwng, Koimwng tei Samwng]

Part-III: Doi (Mantra): Translation in English:

In order to increase the general welfare of the
householder,

The priest propitiates and pleads with the deity,
God that never deals a bad blow.
Keep him forever free from pain and diseases,
Please see to it that there is never cause to weep.
Wail from stomach disorder,
And cold or languish in fever.
I pray to you, O Omnipotent God.
On behalf of your affectionate son,
I preside over puja for this household.
Keep it forever free from your wrath,
And shield him from the king's displeasure.
[Water is scattered on the ground.]

Part-IV: Doi (Mantra) in Kokborok Language.

Dou,
O Danda Kwrwi Dasha Kwrwi
Aya Kwrwi Achi Kwrwi,
Kungtwi Kwrwi Mwktwi Kwrwi
Hener Kwrwi Sakron Kwrwi
Akasa Kwrwi Khasa Kwrwi
Baban Kwrwi Rwai Kwrwi
Kulum Kwrwi Kwma Kwrwi
Rajdandha Kwrwi Debdandha Kwrwi
Hwnwi Tong Rojadi Hwnwi Kobokmani Bangwi
Nwsa Phanani(Bwmwng) Bangwi, Ang Bach-o.
[Twi Malunai]

Part-IV : Doi(Mantra) : Translation in English:

Now, that you have finished your food,
Please do wash your hands.
Now, I pray you, indulge in some rest.

Part-V : Doi(Mantra) in Kokborok Language.

Dou,
O Takle Nwsa Phanani(Bwmwng) Bangwi
Ayuk tobokha Thaluk Tobokha
Dhan Tobokha Jon Tobokha

Mai bo Tobokha Khul bo Tobokha
Dou,
Nwsa Phanani(Bwmwng) Kosong Khwngchurwi
Lokorwi

Kebeng Pholok Tongrwoi, Noksing siniya
Chana Chabaiya Nungna Nungbaiya
Rimwng Siniya ni Bangwi
Chamwng Siniya Charwoi
Ayuk Barey Thaluk Barey, Dhan Barey Jon Barey
Ayak Kwchang Thaluk Kwchang
Jala Jala Mala Mala Khwlaiwoi
Tinini Salsimi Tongrojakdi Dok, Baba.
Mairum Tangwi Sema Nailaha Thikana Nailaha

Part-V : Doi(Mantra) : Translation in English:

Grant him a long, healthy, happy life.
Whether in quantities large.
Let his family members augment, prosper.
Replenish his stock of cotton and care of corn.
Now, let your son possess such a physique.
His breadth be equal to the beam of his ceiling.
Let his house stock so much food and clothing.
Give mental peace that he may dwell.
Happily from the day onwards, O God!
[The priest meditates with a handful of grain and
satisfies himself to whether the result is favourable
or not.]

Part-VI : Doi(Mantra) in Kokborok Language

O Takle Chabaikha Nungbaikha Tai Lebo
Lenglakha Ba,
Je nirog Thangwani Muchungkhe Thangbai Jasidi.
[Twi Kisa Kisa Lu Khwai Bidai Rohokha]

Part-VI : Doi(Mantra) : Translation in English:

Now, it comes the time to bid farewell to the deity
worshipped.
The priest utters—
Now, that you have partaken of the refreshment.
Rested, you can return to your original place
That you choose for dwelling or anywhere.
[Farewell is bid by scattering some water on the
ground.]

*(To be continued in
December, 2021 issue)*

Chronicle of Taxila

Prasanta Kumar Kalita

Taxila, now in the Punjab province of Pakistan, is located at a distance of 30 km from the city of Rawalpindi. Taxila was undoubtedly one of the most famous educational centers in ancient India. *“Notwithstanding the power and wealth of Taxila in ancient days, the information we possess regarding the history is singularly meagre, being drawn in the main from the accounts of Greek or Chinese writers, or laboriously pieced together with the help of coins and a few rare inscriptions. The name of the city was Takkasila or Thakhasila (in Sanskrit Takshasitla), which the Greek and Roman writers transcribed as Taxila.”* (Page No.9, A Guide to Taxila by John Marshall, 1918).

Vedic literature, such as the Satpatha Brahman, mentions that the philosopher Uddalak Aruni traveled to Gandhara. According to Buddhist literature, Aruni and his son Shwetaketu were educated in this city. Taxila is mentioned in Panini’s Astadhyayi, written in the fifth century BC. According to the Ramayana, Rama’s brother Bharat had two sons named ‘Taksha’ and ‘Puskal’. Bharat defeated Gandharva and replaced one son at Taxila and another at Puskalavat. This is mentioned in verse 10 to 16 of Chapter 101 of ‘Uttarakand’. Taksha was the first ruler of Taxila. In verse 20 of the

third chapter of the Adi Parbha of the Mahabharata, it is mentioned that Janmejey, the son of Parikshit, took possession of the city of Taxila. It was in this Taxila that ‘Jonmejey’ performed the serpent sacrificial fire. There is not much information about ancient educational activities in Taxila. But from the 7th century BC, Taxila became famous as a center of learning and was able to attract scholars of Rajagriha, Babranashi, Mithila etc. The city was famous for its philosophers during Alexander’s time, but surprisingly, the source of Taxila’s educational activities is nowhere to be found in any source other than Jatak. *“That Taxila at this time and during the centuries immediately following enjoyed a great reputation as a University town, famous for the arts and sciences in the Buddhist Jatakas; but, apart from this fact, virtually nothing is known of its history prior to invasion of Alexander the Great.”* (Page No.9, A Guide to Taxila by John Marshall, 1918).

Political ups and downs:

In the sixth century BC, the Persians invaded and occupied Taxila. Then Indo Bactrians in the second century BC; Scythians in first century BC; Kushans in first century AD; Yueh-Chis in fifth century BC; and after that Huns occupied Taxila. In the midst of

such frequent political upheavals, there is no record of Taxila’s academic work. Such constant foreign invasions prove that the city was very prosperous. This has definitely had an impact on education as well. However, every foreign invader set up the head office of the administration in Taxila.

Impact of foreign aggression on education

Consequential evidence suggests that school and college curricula were influenced by the subjugation of Persians and Greeks. Evidence from script shows that the Brahmi script was replaced by the foreign Kharoshthi alphabet because Taxila was in the possession of the Persians. The Scythians and Kushans all have no evidence of their own reform or civilization. The Indo-Bactrian rulers, on the other hand, were the inheritors of the prosperous Greek civilization. Having ruled for more than a century, they were able to exert their influence on the education system of Taxila. To help the administration in this long period of time, there was definitely a need for staff with knowledge of the Greek language. It is possible that special classes were arranged for the acquisition of knowledge of Greek language literature. In this way the educated

students got the opportunity to serve under the administration. Among the 'sippa' taught in Taxila, it can be assumed that the technique of making Greek coins and sculptures was part of the curriculum. Until then, it can be said that there was no preconception against the foreign culture of the local people. Greek plays were performed to entertain some Greek princes and princesses. Surely some of the Indians have learned the knowledge by studying the Sophocles and Euripides. Some of the people in the society had acquired knowledge of Greek language as it was the language of all the winners. However, it cannot be said that Taxila traveled towards Greek civilization. In contrast, many Indian-Greek conquerors soon became immersed in the Indian language and culture due to their distance from their country's civilization and culture.

"It may be observed at the outset that Taxila did not possess any colleges or university in the modern sense of the term. It was simply a centre of education." (Page No. 109, Education in Ancient India, Aletkar, 1944).

Hundreds of students from all parts of North India came to study under the famous teachers of Taxila. Unlike today's teachers, not all teachers of that time taught on the basis of the curriculum prescribed by the university. Each teacher organized an institution in a private residence with the help

of their own meritorious students. There was no coordination among the different teachers as it was not controlled by one monarchical power. There was no disagreement among the teachers of different subjects due to the erudition of each teacher in his own subject. Although there was no set time frame, it usually took eight years to have basic understanding of a subject. It was not allowed to proceed to the next higher stage until the students have acquired a thorough knowledge of the subject matter. The students did not receive any degree or certificate as no examinations were conducted.

Taxila's story is mentioned in various stories of Jataka. The Sotsom Jatak mentions that 103 princes from different parts of India were trained in archery under one teacher. From the ruins of Taxila it is not possible to say that there was any large-scale dormitory or lecture halls that could accommodate 500 students.

In the 6th century BC, Taxila was unrivaled as a center of learning. Transportation at that time was very difficult and dangerous even though students from far and wide like Varanasi, Rajgarh, Mithila, and Ujjaini came to Takshasila. Students from Kuru and Koshal countries were sent here to study. The situation was such that the parents were overjoyed when their sons returned home after receiving his education. This is because while they were still alive, the son was able to get an education and return

home. Not much is known about the famous teachers of Taxila. King of Koshal, a contemporary of Buddha, Prosenjit was educated in the capital of Gandhara. Kautilya, a minister of Chandragupta Maurya, author of Arthashastra who destroyed the Nanda dynasty of Magadha was also a student of Taxila. 'Jibak', an illegitimate child of Bhimsara, studied medicine and surgery for seven years under the auspices of the world-renowned Taxila School of Medical Sciences. It is said that 'Jibak' cured Emperor Bhimsara of Bhagwand's disease. As a result, he was appointed a physician to the Buddhist Association.

'Jibak' was able to cure King Pradyut of Ujjain from jaundice. Jibak was famous for his surgical prowess. There is also a story about a rich merchant who suffered from head poisoning and consequent infection being tied to a bed for long. This patient was cured by scalp surgery by removal of the worms accumulated at wound site.

Student accommodation:

The students came to Taxila only for higher education. The students who came here were around 16 years old. According to the general rules, students had to live in the teacher's house. Financially well-off students had to pay for the meals at the time of enrollment. Students from wealthy families, like the prince who came from Varanasi to study, used to arrange their own

accommodation. The poor students worked in the teachers' quarters during the day and were given special classes in the night.

Higher education and curriculum

Taxila is said to have been the center of contemporary intellectual life. It has been said earlier that only higher education was imparted in Taxila. After acquiring knowledge at the secondary level in other Institution, the students came to Taxila to acquire knowledge on a particular subject. According to the ancient rules, a child's primary education was completed by the age of eight, and secondary education was completed by the age of twelve or more. Therefore, at the time of coming to study at the university, the age of a student has reached twenty years. Taxila's fame spread all over the place as hundreds of students from all over the country flocked here, ignoring the comfortable life and home security. Parents who sent their children from home had to accept many sacrifices because of the dangerous and uncertain journey. It is mentioned earlier that Jibak came here to study medicine and surgery and many other princes came to learn archery. In addition to that, the three Vedas, grammar, philosophy and eighteen types of sippa (Silpa or Craft) were included in the special curriculum of Taxila. These included –

- (1) Medicine and surgery
- (2) Mathematics (3) Archery

- (4) Animal Husbandry
- (5) Astronomy (6) Astrology
- (7) Forecasting
- (8) Accountant
- (9) Business
- (10) Agriculture
- (11) Transportation
- (12) Magic (13) Snake Art
- (14) Resource Management
- (15) Music
- (16) Dance and Painting
- (17) Blacksmith
- (18) Carpenter.

There were no racial barriers in the selection of subjects. The Kshatriyas studied the Vedas with the Brahmins and the Brahmins did not have any obstacle in learning archery with the Kshatriyas. There is also the example of the son of a royal priest of Varanasi being sent to Taxila for archery. The curriculum was not changed during the entire period of education. However, for religious, political and social reasons, the curriculum was changed as required during Taxila's fifteen hundred years existence. It has already been mentioned that the Kharoshthi script was used instead of the Brahmi script during the invasion of all the Persians in the 6th century BC. The curriculum also changed during the arrival of the Greek-dominated Indo-Bactrians in the second century BC. Most of the natives understood Greek. The teachers had open mindset and therefore did not object to learning from new sources.

The birthplace of Buddhism, which was born in the middle of the 6th century BC, was a long way from Taxila. Therefore, at first, its effect was not seen in Taxila. It was able to retain its place as a center of Vedic learning. However, with the gradual increase in the number of students from the East, Buddhism gradually entered the curriculum. With the birth of the Mahayana sect in the second century, Buddhism was able to draw special attention to Taxila. The inclusion of Buddhism in the syllabus did not mean the propagation of Buddhism; it was intended "to enable the scholars studying at the place to disprove effectively Buddhist teaching" (Page No. 15, Universities of Ancient India by D.G Apte).

Emphasis was given on equal practice equivalent to discussion in all subjects like science, arts and crafts. In addition to this, emphasis was laid on imparting complete knowledge on every subject and on the maturity of the learner.

Students of all castes except Chandals were able to enroll. Acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge was the key to education. The purpose of successfully completing education was not for livelihood. This is because it was not considered a problem in ancient India. Despite the lack of written information sheet, it is certain that the enrollment process was not easy. In fact, the teachers were longing for a good student and prayed for such a student. One such prayer

when translated stands thus, “O creator, just as water flows to the lower level, just as months pass incessantly, so many Brahmacharins (Young pupil) come to me.”(Page No. 20, Universities of Ancient India by D.G. Apte)

The practice of fees collecting and teaching was strongly criticized at that time. The act of exchanging knowledge with wealth was considered ungodly. There were special restrictions in the scriptures against those who taught students in exchange for money. The Manusanghita says that such teachers are not fit in the same line. Teachers who took money compulsorily were punished according to the rules of the time. The educational institutions did not face any financial crisis as all the necessary materials were readily available. Attracted by spirituality, sacrifice, selfless service and profound knowledge, the wealthy people extended various helping hands to the teachers. Even financially backward students were able to complete their education with equal benefits. It is true that as a token of gratitude to the teacher, the students gave their best *Guru Dakshina*. But the amount of *Dakshina* was not enough to cover the cost of education.

There is no information about the educational activities of Taxila since the beginning of the Christian century. In the first century, the Kushans ruled for 250 years. The Kushans did not have

much interest in education. However, it can be said that the quality and glory of Taxila remained intact till the reign of all the Kushans. After the Kushans, for a very short period of time, the Yueh-chis occupied Taxila. During their rule, Taxila suffered the most. In the early part of the 5th century, the Chinese traveler Fahien did not see any educational activity in Taxila during his travels. The Huns arrived in the middle of the 5th century AD and the already dying Taxila sank into oblivion. When Hiuen Chang visited India in the 7th century, had nothing left in Taxila. Thus, Taxila, considered as an excellent center of learning, was immersed in the womb of the past.

Note

Kharosthi: The Kharosthi script, also spelled Kharoshthi or Kharosthi was an ancient Indian script used in Gandhara (Now in Pakistan and Eastern Afganistan) to write Gandhari prakrit and sanskrit. It was used in Central Asia as well. An abugida (which is a writing system that is neither a syllabic nor alphabetic script, but somewhere in between it has sequences of consonants and vowels that are written as a unit, each based on the consonant letter. Vowels must be written down as well, but they are secondary). It was introduced at least by the middle of the third BCE, possibly during the fourth century BCE, and remained in use until it died out in its homeland around the third Century CE. It

was also in used in Bactria, the kushan Empire, Sogdia (Sogdia or Sogdiana was an ancient Iranian civilization) and along the silk road, where there is some evidence it may have survived until the seven Century in Khotan and Niya, both cities in Xinjiang (officially Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region or XUAR, is an autonomous us region of the people’s Republic of China, located in the northeast of the country.

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Sister Nivedita: A Monk turned Freedom Fighter

Shailendra Kumar Pathak

Freedom fighter, Shri Hemachandra Ghosh (As mentioned in “I am India” by Prof Kapila Chatterjee) once stated that “.....it was Nivedita who captured the fire of patriotism set alight by Vivekananda. She not only caught that flame, she also scattered the sparks of Indian patriotism and nationalism far and wide, across the length and breadth of India. Wherever Nivedita went, in any city or province of India, her fiery speeches and heroic calls to the Indian people spread the message of Swamiji, his ideals, his patriotism. Side by side, she spread the ideals, the culture, the glory of India, too. To speak frankly, we got to know Swami Vivekananda better through coming in contact with Sister Nivedita. I was with Swamiji for a very short time. But I have been with Nivedita for a much longer period. Through Nivedita, we got to know Swamiji better and through her India also better. ...What I feel about Nivedita is – Sister Nivedita played two important roles in spreading the message and deeds of Vivekananda – one was the role of Mahadeva, the other, that of Bhagiratha. She absorbed the terrific force and power of Vivekananda in her own person, and at the same time she carried the mighty current of that force and directed it along proper channels like Bhagiratha.”

When Swami Vivekananda visited the West, he had nothing except the great treasures of Hindu wisdom. His speech at World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, attracted many new disciples, friends, money and recognition to spread the march of Hindu culture, glory and ideals worldwide along with the awakening of heroism, nationalism and patriotism among common people of India.

On cordial invitation from Mr. E. T. Sturdy, and

Miss Henrietta Müller whom Swamiji had met in America, he visited England. He succeeded in making a deep and lasting impression upon those whom he met. Miss Margaret Noble was one of them whom Swamiji later christened as Sister Nivedita. She met Swamiji for the first time in November, 1895. His magnetic personality and spiritually impregnated lectures aroused Margaret’s dormant spiritual aspirations and desire to serve humanity under his guidance. Nivedita was an inquisitive and argumentative kind of lady and filled with intense desire to educate people, serve humanity and fulfill her spiritual quest.

Swami Vivekananda’s lectures and personality made her deeply convinced about the wisdom of Vedanta and Bharatiya culture. She expressed her intention to join his mission. Swami Vivekananda, frankly put forward all possible difficulties if she joins his mission but he simultaneously highlighted her strengths also. In his reply to letter from her on July 1897 he wrote:

“Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially.

“India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.”

Margaret finally decided to dedicate herself at the feet of Swami Vivekananda and came to India in 1897. She was initiated into the order of brahmacharya by Swamiji on March 25, 1898 and conferred new monastic name ‘Nivedita’ which means ‘Dedicated’. The purpose behind adopting her

to Swamiji's mission was not merely to add just one more disciple but to transform her completely in to Indic tradition. She internalised the Vedantic vision and practiced Vedanta making contributions to all walks of life.

Sister Nivedita was born on October 28, 1867 in Dungannon County Tyrone, Ireland to Mary Isabel Hamilton and Samuel Richmond Noble. Her grandfather, John Noble, father, Samuel Richmond and her maternal grandfather, Hamilton, were revolutionaries and prominent figures of Irish freedom struggle. Therefore, she carried the legacy of revolutionary ideas.

Swami Vivekananda toured Almora and Kashmir regions during May to October 1898, Sister Nivedita accompanied him. It was a lifetime learning experience for her to understand the vastness of India and to witness the plight of people under British rule in Bharat. This tour had a transformative impact on her mind. During this tour she observed that Maharaja of Kashmir wanted to donate a piece of land to her Guru to set up a Mutt and Sanskrit College but the British government refused to grant the permission for the same. This turned her into a revolutionary. She realized that Indians can't lead a humane life without putting an end to British rule in India.

She started a school for girls in Baghbazar area for which the holy mother Sri Sarada Devi performed the opening ceremony on November 13, 1898. Sister Nivedita organized a team of youths and engaged herself in relief operations, sanitation and scavenging during the epidemic of plague in Calcutta in March 1899. To raise funds for her school Nivedita went to England and America in mid-1899 on a lecture tour. During her visit to

Boston, she met the great Indian patriot, Bipin Chandra Pal. She faced a lot of resistance from the British Imperialists and the Christian Missionaries. British Government blacklisted her name and censored her letters.

After the death of Swamiji on 4th July 1902 she went on a nationwide tour in response to the invitation of her disciples and admirers. On Oct 20, 1902 in Baroda, she met Sri Aurobindo- the brain behind the nationalist movement in Bengal. Nivedita attracted thousands of young men and women during this tour. She was among the five

members of the political committee appointed by Aurobindo Ghosh to unite the small and scattered groups of rebels in to a single organization. She used to organise sunday get-togethers of scientists, artists, journalists, nationalists and revolutionaries at her home and prominent among them was Barindra Ghosh, the younger brother of Rishi Aurobindo.

Nivedita condemned the appointment of the 'University Commission' to strangle the national education system in 1902. She spoke strongly in support of the resolution moved by the famous revolutionary, Anand Mohan Bose against British government's decision to divide Bengal in 1905 in her public meetings. She was a prolific writer and used to contribute articles for Prabuddha Bharat, Sandhya, Dawn and New India. The plan for revolutionary newspaper "Yugantar" by Aurbindo, his brother Barindra Ghosh and Swami Vivekananda's younger brother Bhupendra Nath Dutta was made at Nivedita's house on March 12, 1906. She was also inspiration behind 'BandeMatram' by Bipin Chandra Pal and Bala Bharath by Tirumalachari. She ensured the uninterrupted publication of Yugantar when Bhupendra Nath Dutta



was imprisoned and also helped in collection of funds for paying fine of Rs 10000/.

Sister Nivedita not only helped revolutionaries at home but also abroad. She went to England in 1907 and started publishing the reports of meetings and interviews with British parliamentarians. She helped number of revolutionaries like Bhupendra Nath Dutta, Tarak Dutta in exile and collected funds for uninterrupted publication of revolutionary journals from abroad and their distribution.

Sister Nivedita was a multifaceted personality. Swamiji's rigorous effort of her transformation process transformed her into a patriotic Indian. She merged her identity with spirit of Bharatiyata. She became deeply involved in Bharat's freedom struggle. When she came to know about sacrifice of DamodarChapekar and his brothers, she decided to go and meet the mother of these heroes. On arriving at the Chapekars' home, she observed that their heroes was above and beyond the any grief and regrets

She beautifully penned down her experiences in numerous literary works like 'Master As I saw him, Kali the Mother, The Web of Indian life, Cradle tales of Hinduism, Footfalls of Indian history, Civic ideal and Indian nationality and Hints on national education in India etc. These works reflect her deeper understanding of the glorious past of Hindu culture, ancient knowledge and wisdom.

Sister Nivedita had become deeply involved in Bharat's freedom struggle. When she came to know about sacrifice of DamodarChapekar and his brothers, she decided to go and meet the mother of

these heroes. On arriving at the Chapekars' home, she observed that their heroes was above and beyond the any grief and regrets when she returned to India in 1909, she found that most of her fellow revolutionaries had been jailed. Aurobindo was pursued by the British too, so he went into exile. Thus, the responsibility of running two prominent revolutionary papers "Dharma" and "Karmayogin", was shouldered by her.

She ceaselessly worked for the people of Bharat and this affected her health adversely. When she realised she would not live long, she donated all the money that she had got. On October 13, 1911, she took her last breath and the dedicated daughter of Bharat Mata went to eternal sleep forever. Her memorial inscription in Darjeeling rightly describes her life and work: "Here Reposes Sister Nivedita Who Gave Her All to India."

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The whole history of the world shows that the Indian intellect is second to none. This must be proved by the performance of a task beyond the power of others, the seizing of the first place in the intellectual advance of the world. Is there any inherent weakness that would make it impossible for us to do this? Are the countrymen of Bhaskaracharya and Shankaracharya inferior to the countrymen of Newton and Darwin? We trust not. It is for us, by the power of our thought, to break down the iron walls of opposition that confront us, and to seize and enjoy the intellectual sovereignty of the world.

Manipur celebrates Mera Houchongba

Mera Houchongba, the festival of oneness and brotherhood among the people of different ethnic communities of Manipur was celebrated with pomp, gaiety and traditional fervour at Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple, Haying Khongban on Wednesday with Chief Minister N Biren Singh as Chief Guest and Rajya Sabha MP Sanajaoba Leishemba as Functional President.

Mera Houchongba, the festival of oneness and brotherhood between the hill and valley people of Manipur, is observed on the 15th day of Mera (October in Meitei calendar). The celebration was jointly organised by Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple Board and Ultra Shanglen Sana Konung (Royal Palace).

The celebration was also attended by State Planning Board Deputy Chairman, L Rameshwor Meetei; former minister, RV Mingthing; All India RSS PRO, Sunil Despande; Assam Zone pracharak, Pramukh Ashokan Kusaliyat.

The programme began with rituals such as Mera Men Tongba, Thaomei Thanba, Yenkhong Tamba and Pot Lannaba (exchange of gifts) between hill and valley people that symbolises long lasting brotherhood. The ritual function was conducted at Sana Konung, Kangla and the formal function was held at Lainingthou Sanamahi Temple where various cultural programmes were showcased. CM Biren Singh exchanged gifts with RV Mingthing while Sunil Despande exchanged gifts with Tangkhul Naga Long former President Hopingson Shimray. Sanajaoba Leishemba also exchanged gifts with Ningthoupham village chief, BK John Thangal. During the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the restoration of good relations between hill and valley has been a main priority of the BJP-led government as this age old relationship cannot be broken by any forces. He also accused a few

politicians who purposely tried to disintegrate the unity of the state for their personal interest. In his speech CM Biren Singh said that “It is now time to discard the sense of disintegration and work together for a united Manipur and India. Different organisations and institutions celebrate the festival independently at different locations. However, the present state government had convinced them to come together to organise it as a grand festival in 2017. Since then, the festival has been celebrated as a state level function,”

This year, the celebration has been toned down due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. However, it could not be called off in totality considering its significance in building up fraternal bonds among different communities, he added. Recalling the day when hill people came to Imphal to distribute edible items during the crucial time of COVID-19 pandemic, Biren said that it was an unforgettable moment that was meant to take forward the strong relationship between hill and valley unchanged. RV Mingthing stated that the state could bring immense development if there is unity and integrity between hill and valley. People of the state should focus on maintaining this aged old relationship. He also appreciated the Chief Minister for being able to implement the Inner Line Permit system during his period. He pointed out that hills and valleys can never be disintegrated as they are interdependent in cultural and ritual activities. Lai Haraona festival of Meitei is one such example.

It may be mentioned that Mera Houchongba, the centuries old festival of Manipur, reminds the strong bonding of brotherhood between the hill and valley people of Manipur. It has been observed on the 15th day of Mera (October in Meitei calendar) since time immemorial. The day was declared a state holiday by the then governor ON Shrivastava

Social Aspects of Festivals of the Adi Tribes

Dr. Taking Gammi

The social aspects of festivals celebrated on different occasions and the concept of different dances that are performed during the festivals observed by the Adi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh are unique in themselves. I feel proud to present a glimpse of the festivals celebrated by the Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh inhabiting the West Siang District, Lower East Siang District and Upper East Siang District including those who are now scattered over various parts of the state.

The Adi communities comprise Minyong, Padam, Pasi, Pange, Karko, Simong etc. They have a common ethnicity linguistically, culturally and traditionally though Siang Valley is inhabited by various Adi communities with their individual major festivals as Solung in Adi Minyong, Mopin festival in Adi-Galo, Dongin festivals in Adi-Bori etc. Festivals are the medium of demonstrating cultural tradition in which different tribes and races have their own traditional ideologies, concepts and stories. Siang valley, the heart of Arunachal Pradesh with many rivers and tributaries endowed with greens meadows, chirping of bird, blossoming flowers, snow-capped mountains of the upper region bounded by MacMohan Line with fertile valleys and plains at the lower belt. Various communities celebrated various festivals but the studies presented on articles will be based on various unexplored wonderful festivals of Adi Minyong villages. The most accepted state-wise festival is Solung festivals which are celebrated in the beginning of the beautiful Autumn season after the end of monsoon rains. The Solung festivals are of two types one is the general Solung festival and other is the local Etor Solung festival. The wonderful festivals are described below:

General Solung Festival:

It is celebrated in the first week of September

annually for 3-4 days when the agricultural produce ripens and are ready for harvesting and is intended to propitiate divine Kine-Nane (goddess of prosperity), Sedi-melo (god of creation), Donying-Bote (super ancestral parents) and Donyi-Polo (Super natural power). In the Solung festivals there are preparation of Rice Beer called Apong in local dialects, as medium of bringing out inner happiness and to forget all sorrows and pains. The Mithun is sacrificed at the already constructed Solkong (wooden post constructed for hanging and strangling mithun by roofs fitted on neck region and pulled by male persons). Elders and prominent peoples retell the traditional stories and there are merry-making, ponung dances led by Mhiri (dondai/spiritual leader) who by singing solung balladic song narrates all the legendary traditional stories as to how all living forms came into existence and about present day world. There are cultural programme with other traditional events with distribution of mithun meats as Solung feast to every house and Solung Dobo-Tomnam (dinner and Lunch party arranged by the Solung festival followers as part of their thanking to God) and propitiatory rituals are performed on the binnyat (where all ritual practices are performed). The womenfolk dress in traditional solung dress and perform solung ponung and all male members enjoy Apong meat and gossip amongst themselves during the dance performances. On the last part of the festivals the defensive materials available in every house is displayed which are supposed to drive away all the evil spirits and protect the soul called Ekop-Taktor in local dialects. Solung is essentially an agricultural, socio-cultural and religious festival.

Local Etor Solung:

This is a village level Solung festival celebrated

as agricultural festival with no specific schedule after sprouting of cereal crops and fencing the area to protect the crops from damage. In this festival men folk after completion of fencing the community crop fields comes together with ponung songs with some jungle leaves called Tan-Atne (leaves suppose to be of good fortunes). The woman prepares and readies Apong in every houses and fetted the men folk with Apong and they dance together at the Dere House (house for common activities where Divine protector of village dwells).

Unying or Aron Festival:

This is one of the most important festivals as beginning of many festivals. It is normally celebrated in the month of January and February as Religious, Agricultural and socio-cultural festival before beginning of cultivation of Kharif crops and after sowing of seeds before onset of spring season. The festival gets starts at a suitable time when village elders shout around the village for initiation of festival, preparation of Apong (rice-beer) and collection of Ekkam (big size oval leaves found in Adi area) for every houses. The persons of traditionally high status and rich people ready to sacrifice male Mithun with sufficient horn etc. Large quantities of Apong are mixed together to have in huge quantities to distribute it to every houses of the village) on the first day house having male pig boar sacrifice and distribute to kith and kins. All the men and women dress in traditional dresses and materials are collected and ready for large size Sotkang to sacrifice 2-3 numbers of male Mithun at Grainary house. On the sacrificial day male members wear all traditional dresses and at the sacrificing time Mother of the house throw white rice powder on Mithun and distribute Apong to all the person present and elders of the Clan open the carcass and exprints into prices and part and distribute cooked and raw meat to each and every house with proud practices. Father of the house sings or narrates mythological balladic songs descended from Donyi-Polo for the welfare and prosperity of the mithun on their way into the Donyi-Polo.

“ATO DONE NO, TURUNG DONE NO
DONE LUGONG-E, GOKJI DAKLANG KA,
TARUNG LUGONG-E, GOKJI DAKLANG
KA

PODI ANIE GITE PE, DONYI –ANIE GITE
PE,

TAPUM LELAM-E, KAMTAKSADAK
ANGKA

DONYI ANE E GITE POBE PE,

DONE PONA DE NEJI DAKLANG KA,

ARUNG PONA DE, NEI PONA DE NATJING
DAKUNG KA”

The mithun sacrifice at the Unying/Aran festival are prayer to reach into the door of Donyi-Polo for the better fortune and prosperity for mankind and bless that they should not walk on wrong way and eat wrong grasses and wish for healthy life. The thorax region of the Mithun are kept to give it to the matrimonial relation house called Sobo-Soling as symbol of respect to the Loving Bohu (bridegroom) then heads are used for displaying at the house. The Shoulder portions are given to the beloved married sister’s house and there are ponung-Neneng and culture with the Lege portion given to the other village’s friends. After Etting Tinam powder rice is distributed to every house of the village.

Minyong Sanam :

After Unying festival the people of the village are not allowed to go out of the village for 2-3 days. So, for permission to move out of the village, after 2-3 days a programme is organized where all the children are traditionally dressed and gather together at the community Dere Lawm with a display of traditional dances. Elders of the village narrate some songs and all the people gather together for common happiness and play together and enjoy Apong.

Giden Kiruk Festival:

It is a hunting festival celebrated for 2-3 days. Before they go for hunting a deadly poisonous

material is prepared and it is pasted at the end of the arrows to kill wild animals. Blades of arrows are also sharpened. It is compulsory for all the males to stay on the male dormitory, Dere for strict practices and are not allowed to stay with the women. At the hunting day young boys are directed to drive away the wild animals from one hill area and old experts get ready with weapons to kill animals to prove masculine instinct (pourusarwa) and the competition between Merams (village is divided into halves for convenient) continues. At the last all the meats are shared and enjoyed together with Apong.

Rabbung And Tapu Dance:

It is male war dance to drive away evils and to protect the society as part of courage boosting dance. Fire woods are collected by community members and males are dressed with swords, weapons, and caps and decorated with white hen feathers for attraction of dance. It is a male programme for 2-4 hours in the evening at Dere where large number of spectators are present.

Gene Dance:

It is a war-dance for restoration of souls of the village. In these war dance Gene or Roja are built in circular fashion with sacrifice of pigs and hens. All the members of each house come here and throw rice and dance together in war dress. In the evening spiritual Dondai perform ponung song and can predict gestated deliveries child to be male or female. It is normally held in the dusk hour.

Kombi Festivals:

Kombi festival are of two types one is Uyi-Kombi i.e. for evil spirits and the other is Tanyi-Kombi for welfare of human being. In these festivals long bamboos are arranged into obliquely erected manner and decorated, Sacrifice of animals, preparation of rice powder, boiled roti and Apong is also important part of Tanyi Kombi. It is offered to Divine Kine Nane (goddess of prosperity) for

her blessing after seeding.

Mopun Festival:

In this festival Mithuns are sacrificed for Divine Kine Nane after sprouting of crops at the direction where crop fields are available.

Taku Festival:

It is powder rice boiled roti festival after sprouting of crops where Apong, Roti and Fisher are offered as part of thanks to god and goddess and are distributed among others.

Agam Festival:

It is a fermented white rice festival before harvesting in the summer seasons where unseen Bonying (friend) are suppose to come at each friend's house and owners are supposed to give hospitality and in return unseen friends will give prosperity.

Yageng Festival:

This is a festival of thanks for good harvest after hard work in cultivation and is celebrated with merry making.

All the Festivals are of Merry-making, intermingling of Universal fraternity with colourful dances and traditional stories where Soling Abang narrates all human beings are sons of god, and all creatures are child of God. The Adi people believes in Donyi-Poloism and age old legendary practices descended traditionally from generation to generation, where festivals, stories and ponung narrates Donyi-Polo as ultimate God in which Donyi-Polo literary means Sun and Moon alone, but it is a reflection of belief based on truth and enlightenment, Kine-Nane (Goddess of Prosperity), Sedo-Melo (God of Creator), Gumin-Soyin (God of Protector) etc. Each of the festivals are a sweet gift of God which is practiced with true religious faiths which makes human being a superior race and dominant creatures.

Significance of Damodarian philosophy in present day Scenario

Dr. Tridib Kr. Goswami

Damodardev is one of the four Gurus of Assam who played a vital role in spreading the Neo-Vaisnava Dharama. He was born in Nalasa gaon of Nagaon District in the year 1488 and in the year 1598 left this world in Baikunthapur Sattrā. His father Satananda and mother Susila were initially inhabitants of Hajo, but later on they started to live at Nalasa of Bordua. Satananda had a friendly communion with Sankardev, and consequently Damodardev got a tremendous opportunity to be a part of the Neo-Vaisnava Dharama. Damodardev had been instructed by Kalpachandra of Navadip and went through fourteen Shastras, 18 puranas and the Geeta and Bhagawada and enriched the Vaisnava tradition. After Completion of Study, Damodardev went to Monikuta of Hajo with his parents and brothers. There, they lived for a few years and afterwards went to Chandratipur of Barpeta with his father.

Damodardev was junior to Sankardev by 39 years. But Sankardev could realize the inner spirit of Damodardev and besides Bhagawada recitation; he was requested to do a series of works for the Brahmins, who he respected a lot. Later on, Damodardev inspired Bhattadeva for literary works. As a result of this inspiration Bhattadeva could transfer himself to Baikunthanath Bhagawad Bhattacharya.

The religious philosophy of Damodardev is totally different from other contemporary Vaisnava Gurus. This philosophy can rightly be considered as 'Damodarian philosophy' which believes that the works of life revolve continuously. We can easily perform religious activities. No pre-fixed rule can control us. So the religious path prescribed under Damodarian philosophy is undoubtedly easier to follow than others.

Contribution of Bhattadev to the growth and development of Assamese prose literature is undoubtedly remarkable and the person behind this is none but Damodardev. And this is properly established by Bhattadev through his writing. Twenty-four books of Bhattadev have been published. Out of those Katha vagawada, Katha Geeta, Katha Vaktiratnawali, Guruleela, Damodardev Charita, Santayoshamit, Sri Sri Krishna Leela Kirtana, Ghosavatra and Prasangamala are remarkable.

It is unfortunate that the literary contribution of Damodardev were not properly preserved and may be gathering dust somewhere. It is heard that Damodardev penned a book of four hundred borgeets known as 'Geetawali', but these could not be traced.

It is informed that in Assam, there are four hundred and fifty Sattras of Damodarian philosophy, but most of these Sattras exist in name only; practically they do not have any activities. 'Daxinpat Sattrā' is considered as the premier sattrā established by Damodardev but a section of people prefer to consider Jokholabandha Sattrā for this elite status. Regarding this no particular reiteration could be obtained from the Sattrā Related books of Assam. Written documents and discussion or the life works of Damodardev and his philosophy are not available anywhere. On the other hand, his philosophical thoughts were not allowed to flourish in the other parts of India and are confined within a group of people in Assam. The main cause behind this is the introversion of the follower of this philosophy. In Assam, at present Sodou Asom Dev Damodar Sangha, Kamrup Jila Dev Damodar Sangha, Loka Sanskriti Adhyan Kendra, Asom have been trying to initiate efforts to focus the

philosophy of Damodardev. But these activities are not enough. To achieve this the Damodaria Sattras of Assam should play a pivotal role. Since our childhood, we have been observing that the philosophy and activities of Damodardev have been discussed and practiced in our Sattras (Sri Sri Krish Mishra Sattras, Marangial, Majarbari, Nagaon: Assam). Activities taken by the other Damodarian Sattras of Assam, should be rejuvenated properly. Only then, the philosophy of Damodardev, will cross the boundary of Assam. Another important fact which has been noted is the neglectful attitude of the historians of Assam and India regarding the life and philosophy of Damodardev. In the history of vaishnavite movement in Assam, or in India, we do not encounter any initiative for proper evaluation of Damodardev. The followers of Damodardev give equal importance to the other Gurus of Assam but in return, they do not get it from the other side.

To spread the life, work and philosophy of Damodardev and to make it popular among the people of Assam and India, we should take some steps, which are as below:

1. Study and research on the life, works and philosophy of Damodardev.
2. Translation of his works in English.
3. Publication of his books properly.
4. Literary works of Damodardev should be discussed frequently among the people of Assam.
5. Proper highlighting of the Damodaria Kirtan.
6. Realization of the Damodarian philosophy and place it among the other philosophical thoughts of the world.
7. Publication of Children book on the life of Damodardev.
8. Take necessary steps to spread the philosophy of Damodardev in Assam and in the other states of India.

9. Arrangement of State level, National and International Seminar on Damodardev.

10. Publication of an Annual Journal in Damodardev (with ISSN No)

11. Compilation of already published articles on Damodardev.

12. Establishment of a University Sri Sri Damodardev Vishwabidyalaya.

13. Find out the works of Damodardev scattered among the Sachipat of Assam. (For this, a person should be engaged)

14. The portrait of Damodardev should be finding and it should be distributed among the people of Assam.

15. A Comparative study between the philosophy of Damodardev and the other Vaisnava Gurus should be made.

16. A documentary on the life and works of Damodardev should be released.

17. The life and works of Damodardev should be translated to the other regional languages of India.

18. Establishment of center for Damodarian Studies.

19. The disciples of Damodarian Sattras should be registered.

20. Publication of Several volumes on the Damodarian Sattras of Assam. Covering all its pros and cons.

21. Find out the cruises – if the people of Assam, have been at traded by the Damodarian Sattras, if not why?

22. A Wing of lady should be established.

23. Yoga should be considered as a compulsory study in the Sattras.

The Damodarian philosophy is not a philosophy of books; it should be a guiding philosophy of our life.

Traditional Textiles: Need for preservation

Dr. Jayanta Deva Sarma

The textile tradition is as old as civilization. It takes a significant role in understanding the culture and history of mankind. Its relationship with man is as like the body and soul. It warps not only the human body but also culture at the same time. It reflects the cultural need of the population at a given space and time.

In Assam, the textile is an indigenous traditional craft and is the exclusively prerogative women. They have been practicing weaving universally from very past irrespective of their cast and creed affiliation which opposite to the other state of India. In this province, the craft 'textile' never considered as a commodity and the weavers weave cloths specially in leisure time to meet their household requirements. The Assamese women have good capability in ornamenting of cloth with various designs.

This area is the land of confluence of different ethno-cultural groups; which has its own cultural background and distinct history. The ethnic groups have their respective speciality as well as peculiarity in weaving and designing. The design and costumes generally symbolize the cultural identity of each group. These groups always maintain a separate identity without being hostile to another. They peacefully co-exist together and form a homogenous culture, which reflect in the commonness of the textile design amongst the different cultural groups. The assimilation of different cultural tradition is a process which started from an unknown past in silent manner. The textile records this process in a visual form.

The ethnic groups of this region always shows predilection towards certain colour and design in their clothes. The type of costumes, their wearing style, colour and motifs used may identify the cast, race,

creed, marital status, age, sex of a person. It expresses the cultural aesthetics and mind of an individual. So, one group may easily be identified from other on the criteria of their dresses.

The traditional design of this region is an anthropologist delight. It is a reflector of the cultural uniqueness and aesthetics of the people of diverse races. It makes a script of ethno-history on fabrics in floral language. So, collection and careful preservation of traditional design will have immense importance. These intricate and brilliant designs have already been replicated in outside of the state. Nobody have hold and authority over these traditional and ethnic designs. Any producer or artisan from anywhere can pick-up these design for their commercial use. Under this circumstance, it is essential that the textile design should be registered and preserved under the provision of intellectual property right before it inclines towards the waves of commercialization.

With the change of time, the ideas or thoughts and philosophy undergo changes that are also reflected on the motifs. The economic changes bring qualitative and quantitative change in the life and culture of the people. For this change, some new elements of textiles have intruded in the Assamese culture. It has transformed identifiably more in urban area in comparison to rural settings. In rural area, the textile has yet been not lost its traditional elements; it continues more or less unchanged and distinct.

Due to rapid development of modern science and technology, the traditional textiles have suffered a setback. The craft hand-woven textiles totally may disappear in course of time if appropriate steps are not taken now. It is observed that, the modern techniques pitched in the traditional setting and it

brings about drastic change or displaces the traditional motifs. The modern textile designs have always a tendency to displace the traditional ones. It gives discontentment to the people who in their mind harbour a space for their tradition. The sentiment of people is to preserve and to promote the original one in their day to day existence. So, there should have an effort to innovated new one and to record original one.

On the other hand, the changing life style of people is going to diminish the tradition in such a manner that, most of the products of traditional material culture are becoming the objects of museum. The textile tradition is not differing from that incident. It is gradually swayed by the waves of commercialization. Various modern elements of textile have now made inroad in the culture of Assam. For example, the dyeing art and craft exercised traditionally from various dye yielding plants obtainable in this State are gradually vanished from sight. Such way, the traditional practice of men-folk in making of looms and their accessories with locally available bamboo and wood is disappeared. Different synthetic dyes and machine made plastic and iron appliances now came from outside the State. At this moment, different indigenous costumes also disappeared and modern dresses entered amongst the people. So, it is the need of time to preserve the indigenous traditional textile and design as they constitute the base of Assamese culture and society.

An Appeal To Writers

Contribution of original articles on Education, Religion, Philosophy, Culture & Traditions, History and other interesting but enlightening subjects are invited from Authors and readers for publication in its forthcoming issues. The articles submitted should not be too lengthy and should be written or typed on one side of A4 paper.

For Contact:

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Manipur : ‘Black Rice’ of Kakching Gets GI Tag

The Black Rice of Kakching have recently been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag under agricultural products of the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act of 1999.

Taking to Twitter handle, the Manipur Public Works, Power, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, Information & Public Relations, Administrative Reforms, Textiles, Commerce & Industry minister Thongam Biswajit Singh shared the news of GI Tag been granted to the indigenous crop.

“The Black Rice of Kakching gets added to the list of GI tagged products! The 1 District 1 Product under #PMFME scheme to select, brand & promote one product from each district of the country & convert them into an export hub, that is transforming the #Manipur’s agricultural sector!” – tweeted Singh.

Black Rice is famous for its high nutrient value and gluten-free nature along with its use in traditional medicinal purposes.

It is pertinent to note that ‘Black Rice of Kakching’ is the fifth agricultural product from the Northeastern state which attained the feat.

The other four crops include – “Sirarakhong Hathei Chilly”, or “Tamenglong Orange”, “Black Aromatic Rice”, “Kachai Lemon”.

A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.

Therefore, in order to function as a GI, a sign must identify a product as originating in a given place.

The Brahmin and his Servant

Dr. Uzzal Sharma

Once upon a time there was a Brahmin who lived with his servant. One day, they decided to visit the Brahmin's mother-in-law's house, and accordingly, they started their journey. The Brahmin gave his servant a bunch of plantains and other things to carry, and told him "Now, mind you don't eat those plantains, because I can see just as well behind as I can in front." And, so saying, he marched ahead. The servant got hungry in the midway, plucked one of the plantains from the bunch, and holding it out to his master's back, ate it. And this he did again and again till all the plantains were gone. And when the Brahmin asked what had become of the load, the servant said "You told me you could see behind as well as in front. So I showed you each plantain before I ate it. And you never said anything."

So the Brahmin went his ways speechless. Presently they stopped to cook their midday meal, and they had got with them a few Kawai fish. But the Brahmin gave only one to his servant and kept the rest for himself. And when he was about to eat, the servant asked innocently: "Oh! Brahmin, do Kawai fish swim about singly or in shoals?" To which the Brahmin said: "Why, in shoals, of course." So the servant said, "Then my fish had better go with yours." And, saying so, he threw his fish on the Brahmin's mess, which was defiled. So the Brahmin got no dinner, and the servant ate the whole.

A little later they came across a number of simulu trees. Seeing them, the servant asked his master "And what do they call these trees, master?" And the Brahmin (being an educated man) said "These are sirmolu." But the servant said "Not so, not so! These are ximulu," and offered to bet five blows that it was so. And, meeting some cowherd boys, he asked them what the trees were. And when they said "ximulu" he gave the Brahmin five blows without further question.

Next, they met a drove of goats. "And what may these be, Brahmin, these animals that are grazing?" And the Brahmin said, "These be called chag." But the servant cried "Not so, not so! These are chagali." And the result, as before, was that the Brahmin was worsted and got five more blows.

And next, they came across a flock of paddy-birds, which the Brahmin called "Bog," but the servant "Bogoli." And again he was worsted and got his five blows.

And when they have now come near the Brahmin's mother-in-law's house, and the Brahmin has become very hungry, he sent his servant on ahead to beg them to get supper ready. So the servant went on ahead and bade the Brahmin's mother-in-law cook a duck and put lots of plantain ashes, which the Kacharis uses as salt, well knowing that his master disliked its acrid taste. So the duck was cooked with plenty of alkalies.

And when the Brahmin arrived, his meal was set before him, and he was so hungry that he had to eat it whether he liked it or not.

And so in various ways, the Brahmin was put to shame by his servant. So he wrote a long letter to his brother, and, putting it in his servant's hand, bade him deliver it. But he went a little way until he met a man who could read and write, and he bade him tell him what was written in the letter. And the man read him the letter, which was to the effect that the brother was to kill the servant. On this, the servant tore up the letter and bade his friend write another one, saying "Dear brother, on receipt of this letter marry my servant to my niece without delay. I shall not be able to come to the wedding."

Taking this letter, the servant went to his master's brother, who was much vexed, but dared not disobey. Accordingly, though reluctantly, he married the

servant to his daughter.

And, when the master came to see if his servant had been disposed of, and heard what had happened, he set about to kill him. But his niece got to know of the matter and told her husband, who got a calf, and, binding it hand and foot, put it by her in her bed. And in the night the Brahmin came, and thinking the calf was his niece's husband sleeping by her side, killed it. And when he found out his mistake in the morning and learned that he was guilty of cow-killing,

he bade his niece's husband go and bury the calf in all haste. And the servant dragged the calf into the garden and buried it with its tail sticking out of the ground. Meanwhile, the Brahmin set to work to get himself purged of the offense of cow-killing, and summoned the villagers to a feast without telling them why. And when they were all seated, the servant ran out into the garden and hauling at the calf's tail, called out "The Brahmin didn't kill a cow, Oh, no! and all that were present criticize the Brahmin.

Medicinal plants to boost NE economy

Proper utilization of the medicinal plants available in the North East can help a great deal in boosting the economy of the region and orders have already been issued for research on the medicinal plants, said union Ayush minister Sarbananda Sonowal. He also said that traditional Indian medicines have become very popular worldwide and the government of India has also given priority to it.

Talking to the Assam Tribune, Sonowal said that many medicinal plants are available in the Northeastern region and proper utilization of those has not yet been done. He said after taking over as the minister in charge of the Ayush Ministry, he has directed the Central Council for research in Ayurvedic sciences to carry out a thorough scientific study on the medicinal plants available in the North East.

Sri Sonowal pointed out that the region would be benefitted if all the medicinal plants available are properly identified and utilized. The farmers will also be able to go for plantation of such medicinal plants in a big way, which, in turn, will reduce the problem of unemployment to large extent, he added. Sri Sonowal further added that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government of India has laid stress on all forms of traditional treatment and yoga. He said that the market for

traditional medicines has touched Rs one lakh crore and India is exporting such medicines even to the United States of America and other advanced European countries. The credibility of the traditional treatment is increasing not only in India but worldwide and many private companies are now involved in the preparation and export of such medicines.

The minister revealed that steps have already been initiated for improving the infrastructure of the hospitals involved in treatment through traditional medicine and new hospitals are being set up in different parts of the country. He added the Government Ayurvedic College in the state will be developed as a centre of excellence and an amount of Rs 4.50 crore has already been released for the purpose. New Ayurvedic hospitals are also planned in other parts of Assam and the region as a whole, he said.

He also stressed on the fact that the last International yoga Day was observed in 200 countries of the world, which proved the increasing popularity of yoga. To boost the popularity of traditional medicine and Yoga the Government of India has therefore put in place a separate Ayush ministry, which will not only benefit the people of India but also the entire world..

A Nostalgic Journey of a Leader Prof. Biswajit Basumatary

The sudden demise of a great visionary and mentor, Prof. (Dr.) Biswajit Basumatary, created a national vacuum in the professional leadership which may not be filled in the years to come. Almighty fixed his death on October 03, 2021 at 11:40 pm due to post covid effect. Prof. (Dr.) Biswajit Basumatary was born in a humble family at Langhin, Manikpur, Karbi Anglong, Assam on April 1, 1964. He can best be viewed as distinctive kind of fusion of an academican and Sports par excellence. Prof. Biswajit Basumatary was a self-made man who came from very humble beginnings, and remained a humble person all his life, an able administrator, a great coach and teacher, passionate mentor, a disciplinarian, a warm human being whose heart and home were always open to others, a very fine family man and a pious soul. This combination among the physical Educationists is the rare. The testimony to such a great characteristic can be realized from his qualification, i.e., Bachelor in Physical Education (B.P.E.), Master Degree in Physical Education (M.P.Ed), M.Phil and Doctor of Philosophy in Physical Education (Ph.D). He completed his Msc in Sports Management from Sheffield University, United Kingdom.

He worked as Lecturer/Assistant Professor since 1992 to 1995 at Pondicherry University, he was not only a distinguished alumnus of LNCPE, Gwalior but also serve the Institute since 1995 to 2010 as Associate Professor and he also remained Professor and DEAN of Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education, NERC, Guwahati since 2010.

His contribution for the society will be tribute to the celestial as was his long cherished desire. He was the president of Krida Bhartiya, Assam and Janajatiya Pramukh of Kalyan Ashram, Assam and initiated for the welfare of indigenus tribal population of India. He acted as chairman of the Organizing Committee for 21st National Janajati Sports Meet 2018 in Assam

at premises of Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education, NERC, Guwahati. He worked in many Karyakarma under Kalyan Ashram Assam with extreme devotions, sense of sacrifice and utmost responsibility.

His pioneering research in the area of sports contributed in Major Project as a Research Investigator and member with Indian Throwing Olympic Team held at 2016 Rio Olympic, Brazil. As an outcome his students created Asian Records and Broke Indian records and qualify Tokyo Olympics 2020.

He visited many countries as a subject expert and Presenter in International Conference i.e Pre Olympic Congress, 2016, Rio Olympic, Brasilia, Brazil, and International Conference in Mauritius University. He was also the external examiner consecutively for 4 years for Department of Physica Education, Mauritius University, Mauritius.

His alma-mater proudly counts him amongst selected few who held many prestigious positions, such a Professor, Directors, HoD's at different Universities and Institutions. He was the member of selection committee for appointment of Assistant Professor/Professor/ Director of Sports at different Universities i.e., Delhi University, Dibrugarh University, Vishwa Bharti University, Shanti Niketan, Rajiv Gandhi Univesity, Arunachal Pradesh, NCTE, Shillong, Jiwaji Univesity, BHU, Varanasi and LNIPE, Gwalior and Guwahati that inspired and created outstanding set of life of many youngsters.

With the passing away of Professor Biswajit Basumatary, the Institution and the nation has lost a teacher, mentor, a warm human being, a brilliant and par excellent open hearted person in the field of Physical Education and Sports. His versatility and zeal to work for the cause of profession and society is a message for all of us.



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