



# Irabot Day Observance 2016

New Delhi

30<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Organised by Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi

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*"Beyond the hills of Ang-go, On the outskirts of the twin village Tangbo and Shwedo there stands a memorial stone, And on it eternally inscribed, COMRADE I. SINGH DIED ON 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPT. 1951"*

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**Published by Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi**



**Hijam Irabot**

30 September 1896 to 26 September 1951

## Welcome Address

I, on behalf of Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi, would like to welcome everyone to the 120<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of comrade Hijam Irabot. 30<sup>th</sup> September is a red letter day in Manipur in honour of the son of the soil who had devoted an entire life for the cause of political freedom of Manipur and social emancipation. It has been 65 years since comrade Irabot had died. But subsequent generations continue to honour and remember him for the priceless contributions he had rendered to the society.

Irabot was a pioneer in diverse fields such as theatre, dance and art, sports, literature, socio-economic-political reforms, democratic agitations and revolutionary armed struggle. He had also taken up an arduous task of building common democratic platform across communities and regions. His song *thangol adu maya thangu thouna* (sharpen the edge of the sickle) still gives an impulse with revolutionary meaning to many. Some years back, someone asked me why one should commemorate the birth anniversary of comrade Irabot. At that point of time I was ignorant and had no proper answer to respond to the question.

But today, as I have gained knowledge and have gone through experiences, I hold dearly on *freedom*. This *freedom* is being inspired by the political writings and deeds of comrade Irabot. Honouring Irabot on occasions like this, therefore, is not merely a symbolic gesture of offering tribute to a legendary hero, but also to shaping collective memory towards invoking political understanding of the past and the present injustice and constraints prevalent in our society.

With these few remarks, I would like to once again welcome all of you who have gathered here today. The participants to the essay writing competition, jury members, spokespersons, staff of Kirori Mal College, invitees, event performers such as those who would recite poetry and songs, volunteers, well-wishers and other contributors. I welcome you all towards making Irabot Day Observance 2016 a grand success.

*Sunil Khomdram*

Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi

26<sup>th</sup> September 2016

## Keynote Address

Dear friends,

The global economic plunder by imperialism, which is being carried out through the instruments of state that are constituted and maneuvered by locally co-opted powerful sections, poses the biggest threat to economic livelihood, political rights and socio-cultural welfare of underdeveloped masses. The underdeveloped masses, which spread widely across territorial borders, are composed of exploited labours, marginal peasants and a larger chunk of populations in the oppressed nations.

In Northeast India, imperialist plunder is covered up by corrupted formalisation of bourgeoisie propaganda of 'development' and 'national security'. The propaganda had hegemonic effect towards making many to blindly subscribe to 'finance intrusion' and 'militarisation' as if these are the only option for better economy and individual prosperity. In practice, equitable prosperity across individuals and communities remain elusive for the underdeveloped masses: there is merely predominant form of trickle-down effect, that is, manifested in disproportionate distribution of 'Central funds' and 'grants' through corrupt channels, payment of wages, and accumulation of wealth by petty traders and other intermediary professionals.

While the economic plunder had to be speed up, the most distressing strategy of misrule to perpetuate plunder is suppression of democratic voices through brutal methods and proxy tactics. On the one hand there is heavy investments in militarisation and policing, and, on the other hand there is promotion of communal and counter-democratic forces, which combined to create mistrust and divisions among peoples. As a result, there is rampart violation of democratic rights (including rights to life and rights to economic prosperity) and communal or sectarian conflicts. All these have encapsulated the underdeveloped people under absolute subjective bondage and objective misrule and exploitation.

The Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi feels that comrade Hijam Irabot (30<sup>th</sup> September 1896 to 26<sup>th</sup> September 1951) was one of rare persons, whose understanding of capitalism, imperialist plunder, national liberation and social emancipation are still relevant in our time. He had selflessly contributed to the democratic movement against feudal oppression and for a post independent society that would be freed from subjugation, oppression and exploitation. His international outlook for democratic resistance, and extension of comradeship across territorial boundaries on the basis of common democratic agenda of the oppressed peoples need to be retrospectively to overcome the evils of chauvinism and sectarianism prevalent in the contemporary period.

On the occasion of the 120<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of comrade Hijam Irabot, the Committee hails him high and offers revolutionary salute. The Committee have invited peoples to join us in offering tribute to comrade Hijam Irabot. Our programme include poetry recitation, progressive songs, and a talk programme. We are grateful that Assistant Professor Ramananda Mayanglambam of Kirori Mal College have been quite helpful to us in getting a venue to host the programme. Some promising students have turned up to take part in the essay writing competition. We are encouraged by their enthusiasm. Beerjurekha Samom, Chitaranjan Taorem, Mutum Yoiremba and Shafikul Haque have consented to be the jury members of the essay writing competition. Many others have responded to recite poetry, to present songs and to attend the programme. We are grateful to them.

The talk programme on the theme *Comrade Hijam Irabot and His Understanding of Capitalism and War* is being planned with the hope to have a meaningful interaction on well informed and balanced understanding of the pertinent political economy and the distressful conditions structured under the existing political economic system. We have invited couple of resource persons on different themes. Some of them could not attend due to preoccupation with other works and some had sent regret, at the last moment, for their inability to attend the programme due to unavoidable personal exigencies. We are grateful that Assistant Professor G. Amarjit Sharma of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Convener of Forum for Understanding the Naga-India Conflict & Human Rights Mr. Lakpachui Siro, with Malem Ningthouja as moderator will constitute a panel for the talk programme. We are expecting constructive comments and questions from the audience to make the talk programme lively and meaningful.

In our midst are likeminded individuals who have contributed financially and in kind. Alphabetically Athokpam Amit, Meiraba Mangang, RK Devendro, Rojee Khangembam, Sunil Khomdram, Sushila Leishangthem, Wakhhaloi Ningthouja and Yaiphaba Khangembam. A team comprising Balbir Khuman, Herojit Wahengbam, Karnabir Thokchom, Priyobata Irengbam, Salam Mahesh Luwang and Samananda Aheibam is kind enough for transferring corpus fund from the sales of the book *Comrade Irabot and the Way Forward* to the organizing committee. All these supports have enable us to divert some amount of money to be used for the purpose of publishing a simple booklet entitled *Irabot Day Observance 2016*, which will be released in a short while and freely distributed to you.

With these few remarks, I wind up the keynote address and give way to the talk programme. I wish we all make a grand day today. Thank you.

Sd/-

**Chingtham Balbir Khuman**

Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi

## Irawat the Legend

*“Beyond the hills of Ang-go,  
On the outskirts of the twin village  
Tangbo and Shwedo  
There stands a memorial stone,  
And on it eternally inscribed,  
COMRADE I. SINGH  
DIED ON 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPT. 1951”*

The above excerpt is from the Freedom Fighters Records in the Manipur State Archives, Govt of Manipur, 1986. Yes, our beloved leader, the Son of the Soil, Hijam Irawat Singh, has left us a long long time ago but his legend has continued to inspire and mesmerise us even today. I am reminded of him in the midst of the present social turmoil of Manipur: a clear indication of the lack of a true and selfless leader like him.

Hijam Irawat Singh was born to Hijam Ibungohal and Chongtham Chanu Thambalngambi on Wednesday, the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 1896 at Pishumthong, Oinam Leikai in Imphal, Manipur. He lost his father while he was still a little child and his mother had to shift to Moirangkhom Sougajjam Leikai and took shelter there with her only little boy. He studied up to class VII (1913) at Johnstone School (present Johnstone Hr Sec. School). From there on he accompanied his cousin and went to Dacca (in Bangladesh) to stay with his well-off relatives. There he did manual labour to earn and support his education and studied upto class IX. He could not finish his matriculation though owing to his extremely poor financial condition. Irawat unfortunately lost his mother around this time (1915) and became an orphan at the young age of 19. He gave up his studies and went to stay at Tripura with some of his relatives. After some time, he returned to Manipur and stayed at a former classmate and friend's house whose father's name was Maibam Shamdem at Wangkhei Pukhri Mapan.

Though he became an orphan at an age when many of our youths today are still dependent on their parents for their daily needs, Irawat did not stray or become emotionally downtrodden. He was a brave young man who had a charming personality. He was always soft-spoken, modest, helpful and ever smiling with a limitless fund of humour as recalled by one of his colleague artiste.

Had such a child been born today into a poor family, raised by a single mother and orphaned at a young age, we would have predicted that he will be emotionally disturbed and lost. But Irawat's life - the person that he grew up to be,

the personality that he carried and the leadership style with which he swayed the people proves beyond doubt what the humanistic psychologists have emphasised - that we are all born with free will and it is up to us to decide to be the best person we can be and that we all have this choice no matter what the external or internal forces or circumstances might be.

Irawat's life has a big message for our youth today - to make the best choice in life and not to be disheartened by the unfavourable circumstances of life but to soar like an eagle and live for the people. Unlike our present society where youths have only one-sided development, Irawat spent his youthful days in the pursuit of games and sports, dance, drama, music and in writing. He played Kang, a traditional Manipuri game, and was said to be one of the best player of Wangkhei Kangkhut (Wangkhei Kang Club). He also played football, hockey and cricket. He was also very skilled at Sarit-Sarak (Manipuri Martial Arts). He was one of the founder of Town club which emphasized on sports in 1922. He also started Sahitya Sanmelan, Manipur Dramatic Union and Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1932 along with his distinguished colleague Khawirakpam Chaoba who became the convenor.

Upon my research on Irawat, I came to know that he had contributed a lot to Manipuri literature too. He was, in fact, one of the pioneers of the Manipuri literature and journalism. He edited the first Manipuri journal, 'Meitei Chanu' in 1922. He also contributed to the journal 'Yakairol' and other published in the 1930's. He published a handwritten and cyclostyled weekly called 'Anouba Yug' which was edited by himself. He was also a close associate of Manipuri poets during the Renaissance of Manipuri Literature. He composed a collection of 23 poems known as 'Sheidam Sheireng' dealing with nature, morals, stories from the Ramayana such as killing of Jatayu by Ravana, Rama's waiting when Ravana abducted Sita and questions of right and wrong. This was used as a textbook of class VII during 1940s. He wrote a biography 'Lokmanya Tilak' of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the freedom fighter from Maharashtra. He also wrote 'Mandalay Khongpham' - a travelogue based on his Mandalay visit and other essays as well. His first novel 'Muhini' was serialised in the journal 'Yakairol' in 1931. He also wrote a play, 'Gomati' and translated Bankim chandra's 'Krishna Kanta's Will' into Manipuri. He had also written a number of poems while in jail but these didn't see the light of the day while he was alive. They were published only in 1987 by Irawat Lairik Phongba Lup, Imphal under the title, 'Imagi Pujah'.

Irawat was also a lyricist. He had a deep faith in the revolutionary potential of the toiling masses and his ideas affected the thoughts and feelings of every progressive Manipuri of the time. His poems and songs called on the people to unite, to free the country from colonial yoke. He also translated into Manipuri

songs like 'Thangol Adu Maya Thangu Thouna, Hey Lou- uba' and 'Houro Awaba Ahingi' which were originally composed in Bengali by his artiste colleague Hemango Biswas whom he met in Sylhet jail.

Irawat also acted in Bengali plays (1915-20) and played the role of 'Kumud' in the first historical play in Manipuri, 'Nara Singh', in the year 1925. His participation in modern Manipuri theatre as an artiste both in male and female roles was highly appreciated. Another memorable role that he played was that of Chandra Singh in the social play of S. Lalit Singh, 'Areppa Marup' (inseparable friend). In the Manipuri version of the play, 'Devala Devi', he played the role of Baladeva. Besides these, he acted in other plays like Sati Khongnaang, Birmangal, etc. It is said that he identified himself with the character so completely with superb acting that the audience would forget it was a play and get deeply engrossed. Such was his charisma as an artiste! The true reflections of his internal feeling was manifested for the first time in the symbol of 'Manipur Dramatic Union' - 'two ploughs kept across' which was innovated by himself.

As recalled by Hemango Biswas, in 1944 District Kisan Sabha Conference, Irawat was in the presidential chair. There was a cultural programme at the end of the conference wherein the tea labourers of 'Atharaitila' were presenting a Jhumur dance. He recalled that at the peak of the dance, Irawat left the presidential chair and joined the dancers, making no mistakes in step and rhythm and continued till the end. Indeed, it is no wonder that later in life he was actively involved in the movement of Indians' Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA) in many parts in Assam and Tripura.

Irawat's versatile personality and his growing popularity caught the attention of the royal family of Manipur. He was given Rajkumari Khomdonsana Devi, the daughter of Chandrahas, the elder brother of Maharajah Churachand in a pompous wedding. He was appointed to the post of a member of the then Sadar Panchayat, the highest criminal court of the time, by the Maharaja and gave him some land and other facilities. In 1924, he attended a meeting in Calcutta just after Mahatma's release which maybe said to be his first contact with the national movement. He pledged himself to work for and serve his people. Remembering his hard days in school as a youth, he devoted to the spread of education in Manipur. Primary schools sprang up all over the hills despite the unsympathetic attitude of the state officials. He worked hard to learn the laws and was always anxious to reform them so that the inequalities might be eliminated. Though holding a high post as a member of the Panchayat, he mingled around with the common people and started getting acquainted with the malpractices and exploitations under the feudal system. He was unhappy with some serious practices of those days like the

practice of holy and unholy ( amang asheng), unbearable taxes levied upon the common man like Chandon Senkhai ( tax on applying chandan), Khewa, Matu and other oppressive practices such as Peon Chakthak (feeding of petty officials without compensation), Dolaising ( palanquin carrying duty ), Yarek Sentry, Patsen Mashul (catching fishes in the fields and lakes without the permission of the middlemen or the contractors), taxes on crossing bridges, etc.

Right from his youth, Irawat could not stand any injustice. During his school days at Johnstone, he was against punishment and canning of students. One day a teacher of the school flogged one of his class-mates roughly and kicked him. He could not bear such ill treatment meted out to students by the teachers and stood up against it when nobody dared to. Irawat immediately organised a strike in protest against the inhuman and cruel practice and demanded to ban such practices. This incident maybe said to be the first students' strike in the state. He revolted against inhumane torture and exploitation, an act which is differentiated from the hooliganism of the present day which are fuel by politics to an extent. Irawat carried this spirit of fighting against oppression even while holding a high post at the Sadar Panchayat. He couldn't bear the tyrannical practices meted out upon the common people and so he emerged as the leader of the oppressed classes. He didn't lose time to stand up and formed the Manipur Seba Committee and established as 'Praja Mandal' to fight against the corrupted and oppressive feudal rule of the time.

The practice of Amang Asheng (Mangba Shengba or Ritual Cleanliness) which was carried out by the Maharaja and the Brahma Sabha required the people to pay certain amount of money (Rupee) for the revocation of excommunication. The value of Rupee was very high those days and many couldn't afford it. An excommunicated person could not even be cremated according to Hindu rites. Irawat organised a social service group called the Seba Committee and dug out the mortal remains and cremated them under his leadership with all the rites and rituals. Would any of our present leaders even dare to think of doing this? He led the people to resist and fight against such malpractices and injustice and it invited the wrath of higher and orthodox authorities upon him.

The 'Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha' was initially established in 1934 as a countermeasure to Christian missionary influence with the Maharaja Churachand as the president. Irawat was made the vice president. This may be said to be a diplomatic tact to distract Irawat by the Maharajah. In its first session on May 30, 1934, which was held at the palace, the Maharajah presided the meeting and delegates from Bengal, Tripura, Burma and Manipur attended. The second session was held at Silchar in 1936, the third session at Mandalay in Feb/ Mar, 1937

which was attended by Lalit Madhab Sharma, Bankabihari Sharma and Irawat. The third session made a call to the Manipuris to acquainted with the Meitei script. This call has been accomplished today with the first matric exam on Meitei Mayek conducted this year (2016). Truly a visionary he was! In the fourth session which was held at Chinga, Imphal in 1938, the Maharaja didn't attend and Irawat presided over it and the word 'Hindu' was omitted from the name of the organisation for the first time. It thus became a political organisation under the name Nikhil Manipur Mahasabha and it adopted many political resolutions for the first time like asking the British to quit Manipur State Darbar, full responsible government in Manipur based on Adult Franchise, release of Rani Gaidinlieu from prison, abolition of Manipur State Darbar, etc. When these resolutions of democratic nature and against feudal levies were sent to the Darbar, it expectedly debarred state employees from being its member. Irawat resigned his membership from the Sadar Panchayat Court along with one Elangbam Tompok Singh, a clerk in the Revenue Department. Undoubtedly, these two were the real heroes who stood the test of the time and sacrificed personal comforts to carry out the works of the organisation for social cause. Thus, Irawat became the president of the Mahasabha with Tompok as the General Secretary. That was the turning point of Irawat as a full-fledged political worker and an organiser.

In the cold winter of December 1939, a man-made famine broke out in Manipur due to the indiscriminate export of rice and price rise. Starvation was prevalent everywhere and compelled the women folk from all over to gherao the Khwairamband Bazaar and agitate against export of rice. This is now known as the second Nupi Lal of December, 1939 in the history of Manipur. Even after the agitation, the export of rice was not banned. So, on the following day of December 12, 1939, the women folk again gathered around the bazaar in agitation and this time they seized all the cartloads of rice and paddy kept for sale to the Marwaris and were taken to the Police station. The women folk carried out all these not in ease though for they were charged with lathis, butts and bayonets over by the armed sepoy. Several women were injured, six of them very seriously.

Irawat was not in Manipur when the incident took place. He was in Tripura and was asked immediately to return and lead the mass movement against which the 4<sup>th</sup> Assam Rifles had been let loosed. He came back as soon as possible and went straight to the hospital and met the wounded. His presence motivated and encouraged the people giving a new ray of hope. He soon organised 4000 volunteers for picketing trunk-roads out of Manipur to stop the rice exports. Finally, the government was forced to ban the export of rice and all the then eighteen rice mills in Manipur were closed down.

The agitation was widespread and a civil disobedience followed wherein the people stopped paying all feudal levies and revenue. Irawat led the masses and addressed public meetings with inspiring and strongly worded speeches. It was the dawn of a new political party called Praja Sammelani with Irawat as its president. At a meeting held at Police Bazaar on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1940, some radical members of the Mahasabha led by Irawat formed the new political party Praja Sammelani. He also formed the Mahila Sanmilani, the women's wing. Apart from the banning of the rice export, the struggle for the constitutional changes was carried out with Vande Mataram on their lips which were part of Manipur's contribution for India's Independence (Poorna Swaraj). On this day, he delivered a speech condemning the government's atrocities and called out the people to join together and resist such oppressions. He was accused by the government that his speech was of seditious in nature and thus he was arrested from his house and sentenced to three years in jail in March 1940 under section 124 (a) of the Indian Penal Code. In Manipur jail, he organised a movement for better treatment as the jail conditions were bad and primitive and won many demands of the prisoners. Due to his popularity in the jail and the situation prevailing outside, sensing the danger, the authorities ultimately transferred him to Sylhet Jail.

It was during his stay in the jail that he came into contact with many communists and communist literatures. For the first time he came in touch with communist ideology of Marxism-Leninism. He was greatly attracted by the ideology as he himself had always stood up for the oppressed classes and was against the feudal oppression even while he was in Manipur. So, he soon applied for membership to the Assam province committee and became a member while still in the jail. He truly believed that socialism was the only means to cure all social, political and economic ills, and for the genuine emancipation of the toiling masses.

During that time with the onward march of Fascism, he became restless and when the Japanese reached the borders of Manipur, he gave out a call for the defence of the Motherland against the aggressor. In fact, he wrote a letter to the Maharaja of Manipur stating his concerns and requested to give him free scope to mobilise people in support of anti-fascist war and to let him and other political prisoners free from the jail. In his own words he expressed, "*Even from behind the prison bars, I feel that if fascism be victorious today the world civilisation and culture would be at stake, the freedom movements of the people of all lands would die forever, smaller nations and minorities will suffer the most under the vile yoke of fascist regime.*" He was against any sort of collaboration with the Japanese and the INA, perhaps, because he was a new convert to Marxism-Leninism. He was influenced by the Soviet-CPI propaganda that the war was a "People's War" to

rescue the 'Fatherland of Socialism' i.e., the Soviet Union from the wicked Fascists. He saw the Japanese only as Fascists and the INA as the Fascists' collaborators. So Irawat didn't seize the War as a golden opportunity to end the British Raj in Manipur. Nevertheless, the British authorities saw in him and the Praja Sammelani as a threat to their war efforts. He was released from the jail in the latter half of 1943 but as he was detained from entering Manipur and even after the war ended, he stayed in Cachar. He started organising the party and Kishan Sabha in Assam and Tripura. He also attended the ninth Kisan Conference at Netrakona as a delegate from Assam in 1945.

With India's independence and the overthrow of the British Raj there was a fresh breath of air and this had reached Manipur too. Finally, Irawat was able to return to Manipur. Upon his arrival, he started organising a number of mass organisations like the Praja Sangh, Krishak Sabha and also the communist Party. In order to unify the struggle of the hills and plains people, Irawat called a meeting of representatives of nine parties and associations of the tribal people on 30th November, 1947, which came to a common understanding about their various demands. This I would say is the act of a true son of the soil, a selfless leader unlike our many present generations leader fuelled by their selfish drives and greed trying to take advantage of the various diversities we have in our state. The first Great Patriots' Award for the year 1986 was posthumously awarded to Irawat on the Patriots' Day, the 13<sup>th</sup> August 1987 for his supreme sacrifice for the great cause of our people and Motherland with the spirit of patriotism and peaceful co-existence

Irawat also won the first election held in Manipur in 1948 conducted under the Constitution Act of 1947. He was among the five candidates who won out of 23 candidates put up by the Manipur Krishak Sabha party. He contested from the Utlou Assembly constituency. It was around this time that Sardar Patel was going ahead with the proposal of forming a north-eastern frontier province under the name 'Purvanchal Pradesh' including Manipur, Cachar, Lushai Hills and Tripura. There was a strong protest in the state against this and thus the government banned all meetings. A protest meeting was organised by Irawat and his followers on 21<sup>st</sup> of Sept 1948 at Manipur Dramatic Union Hall, Yaiskul. People from all over the state started coming there. The police attacked the procession where several members of Krishak Sabha and Praja Sangha from the eastern part of Imphal Valley were proceeding on foot to the reach the venue of the meeting. One such clash took place at Pungdongbam wherein a police officer was killed. Irawat was at his residence preparing to go for the meeting when all this happened. On the pretext of this incident, ban orders were passed and arrest warrants were issued against Irawat and many other leaders of Krishak Sabha.

Thus, Irawat and other leaders went underground. Despite the government's announcement for a cash reward of Rs. 10,000 on Irawat's head, he couldn't be arrested and he continued his work from underground. It is said that when the British paramountcy was about to lapse in India one Reginald Coupland, Professor of Constitutional History of India at Oxford University, had written to the Political Agent of Manipur to keep the hill regions of Manipur as British Territory like Hong kong under colonial rule, and to this Irawat vehemently protested and stood for the territorial integrity of Manipur comprising both the valley and the Hills as an independent state.

During his underground period, under the influence of sectarian line followed by the party, many armed struggles were going on even in other states including Manipur. Thereby the government set up police camps in all the villages. Irawat in order to get help to this movement was sent to Burma to contact the guerrillas functioning there. He started his journey in the hot summer of May, 1950, and stayed there for almost a year doing works for liberation for his motherland. He tried to seek help for his cause. At that time Civil War was going on in Burma (now Myanmar). The Communist Party of Burma under Thakin Than Tun, the Burmese Communist Party under Thakin Soe, the People's Comrade Party, the Karens, Mons, Shans, Arakanese, and a host of other armed groups were fighting among themselves and against the reactionary regime of U Nu. There he met all the revolutionary leaders and convinced them to unite against the common enemy and a tripartite unity conference of the CPB, BCP and PCP was held on June 1951. Irawat also convinced them to materially help and support the Manipur's Struggle. After his mission in Burma, Irawat decided to return to Manipur to his parent unit. But unfortunately he was attacked by Typhoid fever when he reached the twin Burmese village of Tangbo-Shwedo and died on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1951 after a short illness of just five days. He was no doubt given a funeral with military honours by the Burmese guerrillas.

Hemango Biswas (Irawat's colleague and friend) recalled that when he went to a village nearly 8 km from Imphal to attend a rural cultural gathering in 1955 which was organised by the Kisan Sabha, none believed that Irawat was dead, "Irawat will come", was the general feeling. He said he was moved to tears when he heard a song on Irawat sung by a soprano in the traditional *KhullangIshei* in a doleful tune.

*Irawat, our beloved leader  
Manipur wants you to come back  
You have sacrificed everything for us*

*You have suffered for us  
Oh! You come back.*

It is said, 'You are not rich enough until you have something which money can't buy.' Hijam Irawat Singh our versatile leader, the son of the soil, the visionary leader of Manipur might not have accumulated wealth and properties like the leaders of our present day, but he would be the richest man because he got something which money can't buy and that is the love, respect and admiration of his people. His deeds and sacrifices will be remembered for ages to come. He will live forever in the hearts and mind of his children, his people. He is a legend and legend never dies.

**Ms Joyshree Usham,**  
M. Sc. Applied Psychology, B. Ed.

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**IRABOT DAY MEMORIAL LECTURE**

**Education in the Valley  
and the Hills Areas of Manipur**

It is, indeed, a great honour for me to be here before you to share a few thoughts on education issue in Manipur State on this auspicious "Irabot Day". Considering my limited knowledge of Comrade Irabot's life and work, I am not qualified to speak on this occasion. However, I have accepted the invitation with humility to share some concerns I felt as a young Naga scholar who is doing research in the field of education and a scholar coming from the State where Comrade Irabot came from.

The emphasize on literacy campaign is soon going to end as in few years time from now India will soon cross 90 percent literacy. The focus will now shift to higher education. But before we move on to higher education; primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels of education cannot be neglected. It is only with strong foundation, at the lower levels of education, that will guarantee success at the higher level of education. The quality of secondary and senior secondary levels of education thus become critical in so far as the success rate of student getting admission in various professional courses and in reputed higher education institutions are concerned. However, looking at the quality of secondary and higher secondary levels of education in most part of the State, especially in Hill Areas, relatively there is no sign of progressive improvement. Rather, most of the hill based schools are trailing at the bottom, taking performance at the board examinations as an indicator.

This would mean chances of students from hill districts getting admission to BE/ B.Tech, MBBS, BBA, B. Sc. (Hons), BA/LLB, B. Com, B. Sc. (Agri), etc. are getting slimmer year after year. Not to mention of high level of competition in most of the reputed higher educational institutions in India for admission. Meaning, even if we complete higher education, possibility of getting decent job will become very slim because of the inability to enroll in various professional and reputed higher education institutions. Certainly, this will lead to increasing number of educated unemployment in the State, which is evident now from the recent government report on the number of unemployment that has crossed 7 Lakh.

The data (Table 1.1) can be said to fair in terms of senior secondary school distribution amongst various districts in Manipur with the exception of Tamenglong district. In the Hill Areas, say, a district like Ukhrul seems to be fairly represented in the state higher secondary education establishment. However, if we look at the number of students and teachers and other quality parameters, the Hill Areas are lagging far behind. (See Table 1.2).

**Table 1.1: Higher Secondary Schools  
under the State Education Dept. District Wise**

Sl. No.	Name of the Districts	No. of Hr. Sec. level School	Hill/Valley Areas
1.	Imphal West	11	Valley
2.	Imphal East	6	Valley
3.	Bishnupur	5	Valley
4.	Thoubal	7	Valley
5.	Chandel	2	Hill
6.	Tamenglong	1	Hill
7.	Senapati	4	Hill
8.	Churachanpur	3	Hill
9.	Ukhrul	5	Hill
10.	<b>Manipur</b>	<b>44</b>	

UDISE: 2014-15

For instance, in the last year 10+2 examination, the total number of students that appeared in the examination from five government senior secondary schools in Ukhrul District was only 150 students. Compare this with two government senior secondary schools such as T.G. Higher Secondary School and Johnstone Higher Secondary School of Imphal West district. These two schools had 1722 students that appeared in the 2015 Examination. The stark difference can be witnessed even in the examination performance. The pass percentage of the five government higher secondary schools from Ukhrul district was only 15.3 percent whereas for the two government school in Imphal West district was 56.09 percent. In the 2016 examination out of 150 students that appeared from Ukhrul Hr. Sec. School only 5 students passed the exam. Ukhrul district ranked as the lowest performing district in the state and the only district that shows no improvement from last year board examination (See Table 1.2). With this trend where are we heading towards in realizing increasing numbers of student graduates with high quality higher education? The efforts to improve access to quality higher education seem to have limited only for

**Table 1.2: Percentage at Senior Secondary Level Examination**

Name of the Dist.	Students appeared		Students Passed		Pass Percentage	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Ukhrul	906	988	515	427	56.84	43.22
Tamenglong	491	636	363	432	73.93	67.92
Chandel	982	1047	485	673	49.49	64.28
Senapati	3304	3425	1479	1662	44.82	48.53
Churachanpur	2000	2181	1454	1802	72.70	82.62
<b>Total Hill Areas</b>	<b>7683</b>	<b>8277</b>	<b>4296</b>	<b>4996</b>	<b>55.92</b>	<b>60.36</b>
Imphal West	7607	8384	4975	5663	65.44	67.55
Imphal East	3408	4347	1675	2472	49.15	55.83
Bishnupur	1692	1594	684	743	40.43	46.61
Thoubal	4352	4332	3481	3737	80.06	86.27
<b>Total Valley Areas</b>	<b>17059</b>	<b>18657</b>	<b>10815</b>	<b>12615</b>	<b>63.34</b>	<b>67.62</b>
<b>Manipur</b>	<b>24742</b>	<b>26934</b>	<b>15111</b>	<b>17611</b>	<b>61.07</b>	<b>65.39</b>

Source: Annual Examination Report from CHSEM, 2015

some and not for all members of the society.

Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate various factors that might have negative contribution to creating huge gap within the same management and government system. Some of the factors discovered in field surveys are the lack of adequate quantity and quality of teachers and basic infrastructure. The biggest and oldest government higher secondary school in Ukhrul district has no Physics lecturer for a complete academic year whereas school like T.G. Higher Secondary School had 12 Physics lecturers, although both the schools are under the same management. In such a situation how can we expect student to pass in the board examination? Last year (2015) data shows that the 5 government higher secondary schools in Ukhrul district could not produce a single student that could pass in the science stream. This is in sharp contrast to the aforesaid mentioned government schools from Imphal West district that had the record of 700 students who had cleared the board examination in Science stream.

A strong school level foundation had a direct relationship to the higher level of student getting enrolled in the higher education institutions. This is evident from the increasing number of student enrolment in higher education within the

**Table 1.3: Higher Education Student Enrollment in Manipur University**

Sl. No.	Year	No. Student Enrolled
1.	2010-11	30,950
2.	2011-12	36,569
3.	2012-13	41,608
4.	2013-14	52,494
5.	2014-15	55,743

Source: Administrative Report, Dept. of University & Hr. Education, 2016

State. Thus, Manipur has the second highest student gross enrolment in higher education in India (Table 1.3). For a state with a mere population of 28.56 lakh population, enrolment of 55,743 in higher education can be said to be very high. However, referring to Table 1.2 and the increasing trends of number of hill students seeking admission outside the state (more than 300 students from Ukhrul took admission in the University of Delhi in 2016), it would not be wrong to say that the enrolment in the State higher education institution is mostly from the valley students. Furthermore, if we do quick study on the location of 73 higher education institutions, more than 40 odd institutions are located in the four valley districts. This would mean that the valley areas have good system in place to absorb all those students who want to pursue higher education but not in the position to study outside the state. The minimum opportunity is comparatively absent for the poor students in the hill areas. The disparity becomes evident. We are noticing an increasing advancement of higher education for a particular section of population who are located in clusters of government sponsored educational institutions and other facilities. This facility is either unavailable or structurally neglected by the system in the hill areas. Since the hill areas are predominantly inhabited by 'tribals', the structural neglect amounts to keeping the concerned sections of population in a situation of deprivation and injustice. It is high time that all the stakeholders including students' union, civil societies organizations, leaders of the community and all the concerned individuals to sit down together to chart out the best possible solution to the current structural injustice and disparity in education pertaining to those in the hill districts.

Quality education, whether it is at school level or at university level must be available for all students irrespective of geographical location, ethnicity, caste, gender, class, etc. The State and society that is unable to address this concern will eventually create a negative situation marked by emigration of students from their home district or state. Perhaps, there is high level of student emigration from the Hill Areas of Manipur State. This trend has a negatively contributed to an alarming

trend of wealth drain. A rough estimation of wealth drain from Ukhrul would substantiate the point. In fact, Ukhrul, which is a very low income district have been paying huge expense for higher education outside the State. Taking the current number of 300 undergraduate students in the University of Delhi alone, with average monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 per student, the annual expense comes to Rs. 30,00,000. When they have to live three years to complete graduation the corpus expense comes to Rs. 90,00,000 Lakh. If we add up those students who have finished three-year degree course and are pursuing Masters Course the amount crosses Rs 1 crore a month. This is a huge financial burden for a small and economically unsound district like Ukhrul. When one further add to this a vast chunk of students pursuing education in other universities and cities such as Bangalore, Pune, Chennai, Mumbai, etc., the drain of wealth through emigrant students easily crosses Rs. 2 crore for the district. The questions that we need to ask is: what will be the end result? The number of emigrant student turned job seekers getting favourable employment outside the State is very small. Therefore, regular and healthy repatriation to repay the drain of wealth and improve financial condition remain quite uncertain. On the contrary, number of families undergoing through difficult monetary crisis due to imbalanced drain of wealth is increasing year after year. Many families are indebted in financing higher education outside the State.

Can we say this situation is a natural problem that had to be single handedly handled by a concerned individual or a family or a community or a district? Where does one locate the 'self' in this entire mechanism of wealth drain due to systematic neglect and deprivation in the education sector by the seemingly democratic government? Should the neglected region or the worst affected community fight a struggle alone? Can we say this situation or the problems is only for one particular community and district and not for all those who have voted in favour of the regime? Taking the education disparity as an example, can this trend, if continued, help peoples in building sustainable development and peaceful co-existence?

And finally, to the supporters of Comrade Irabot, let us reflect on how he might have responded to this concern.

Thank you.

**Lakpachui Siro**

Convener,  
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## **Legitimacy of Illegitimate History: Historical Difference at the Margin of Ethnonationalism<sup>1</sup>**

The present article suggests that the increasing invention of culture and small histories at the local level is not necessarily against the larger global historical changes. Instead, the invention of local culture and histories is with respect to the regional historical change. Much of the regional historical change has been anchored by the politics of ethnonationalism. However, there has also emerged more cultural and historical inventions within a region. Attempt to understand this invention of local culture and history at the margin of ethnonationalism is the focus of the present study.

This study takes the case of history writing and identity assertion of the Khoibus, living in the Indo-Myanmar border area, on the side of Manipur. They have been asserting their independence as a tribe for quite long times. Khoibu tribe is mostly inhabited in the state of Manipur. It needs to mention here that whether it is an independent tribe or a sub-group of a tribe is a point of contention. It has been considered as a sub-group, not tribe, of the Maring tribe in Manipur. This is a status of clan in a tribe, which the Khoibus contest. They have asserted as tribe and, hence, to be recognised as a separate scheduled tribe under the Constitution of India. This has led to clash between Maring and Khoibu. Here I do not go into the discussion of whether Khoibu does constitute an independent tribe or not. Rather what appeals me is the nature of assertion of its own identity as a tribe vis-à-vis the larger regional historical changes that have bearing on the boundaries, identity and history of people who usually falls at the margins of ethnonationalism.

What could historical difference mean to a group of people who resist to belong strictly to any of the larger ethnic groupings in North East India (Kuki-Chin, Naga and Meitei). In this context, as the communities have asserted their identity based on their historical and anthropological knowledge, there is a need to clarify forms of history writings: of the trained historians, on the one hand and socio-cultural organizations, ethnic group's representative bodies etc., on the other hand. Our focus is on the later category, which may not strictly fall under the category of trained historian.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, however, it is pertinent to discuss the issue of legitimate and illegitimate history; for there may be argument that history writing of the Khoibus, led by Khoibu Union, is not a legitimate history. Going by the trend of scientific history writings or the conventional history writing, Khoibus' history would be illegitimate. It is important, however, to discuss how this issue of legitimacy

is decided among the agencies of the ethnic organisations. The problem, hence, in our context is that at many levels the issue of legitimate and illegitimate is decided within the ethnic politics itself. Two important areas are working in the present study: analysing Khoibus' ways of writing own history to make sense of their culture, identity and boundary; and secondly, attempt to make sense of such history and historical difference within the larger debate of historiography.

### **Cultural and Political (In)visibility of the Khoibu**

In studying cultural identities of numerically smaller tribes<sup>3</sup> in the region, one seeks to describe them as the Naga or Kuki-Chin or tribes culturally closer to the Meiteis in the valley. The reference point of their identities is always the larger grouping of many tribes. During an interaction with a scholar of tribal studies, it was claimed that the Khoibu - Maring can be understood culturally as "Old Kuki" or in the words of H. Kamkhenthang, former joint director of Tribal Research Institute, Manipur the Marings are "culturally Kuki and politically Naga" (as expressed through my interview). This understanding of cultural and political identity as either Kuki or Naga is not merely a colonial derivative but also a post-colonial re-appropriation of these categories to negotiate tribes' political status vis-à-vis the other community like Meitei or among tribes themselves. However, the problematic part of this understanding of cultural and political identity is the limitation in understanding emergence of smaller histories and identities of the smaller tribes (in Manipur). Small is both in the sense of number and visibility as group in the politics of identities.

Are there already stable Naga or Kuki identities that prevent any possibility of defining historical difference that challenge such identities? We feel that there has been neither a fixed generic identities (like the above two) nor the impossibility of defining historical difference outside such identities. Although there has been fixation of identity, this involves continuous negotiation across the groups. In such a situation, margin of the ethnonationalist culture and history is an interesting location not merely to look at the politics of ethnonations, but also the possibility of looking at the historical difference that does not belong strictly to the ethnonationalist groupings. Manipuri's experience of ethnic nationalism appears to suggest that these affinities have already been shared within the ethnic group. Often the sharpening of ethnic divides in Manipur is seen as the political expression of deep-seated cultural differences. Yet the boundaries between the groups appeared to have been marked long before political mobilization of people on group identity takes place. Perhaps, the statement about the Khoibus as the "culturally Kuki and politically Naga" can be understood through this nature of political mobilization.

While exploring the contesting identity discourses in Manipur, the cultural boundaries between the Kuki and Naga or between the Naga and Meiteis appear to be existed long before the conflicts among these communities started. It is because of this assumption of cultural affinities, already been shared among the constituent units, that tribes like Anal, Moyons, Monsang, Marings etc. are being claimed as 'Old Kukis' or Naga Tribes.

However, tribal cultural and political orientations change with their mobility and geographical location in which they inhabit. The Khoibus despite their historical fact of genealogical linkages to Haka, Falam, and Tedim Chins in the Indo-Mayanmar region, they appear to forget these links. One would interpret this forgetting as a result of the influence of Naga nationalism because the area where they are inhabiting not only shared a geographically contiguous territory with the Tangkhul in the north (Ukhrul District of Manipur), but also the areas south of the Ukhrul district have been under the influence of the Tangkhuls to propagate the ideology of Naga nationalism.<sup>4</sup> But what fails to notice here is that culturally the Khoibus also share with the Meiteis in the valley. The Khoibu till now preserve their cultural relationships with the Meitei King. Legend tells that they are called Khoibu because they were the supplier of honey to the king. They also claimed that the original Meitei script is with the Khoibus.

It is true that the general tendency among many of the small tribes has been their assimilation or absorption to the bigger neighbour. However, one needs to go beyond this. How do the smaller tribes while being assimilated to the bigger neighbours negotiate their cultural autonomy? Many interpretations concerning the process of assimilation suggest loss of cultural autonomy. Culturally invisibility of certain group of people becomes apparent when the possibility of their cultural autonomy being negotiated while remaining under the fold of the bigger tribe is not explored. Cultural invisibility does not mean that one does not have culture, but the condition that disallowed this culture to flourish makes that culture invisible.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the political and cultural invisibility of the smaller tribes in general and Khoibus in particular, generation of ethnographic works have ignored this blindspot of invisibility. R.K. Das's work<sup>6</sup> on the Maring tribe ignored the impending crisis within the Maring society. The then office of the Dewan of Manipur State in its letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> June 1949 had recognized the Khoibu as an independent tribe. However, the Government of India in its Amendment to the Constitution (Schedule Castes and Schedule tribes List Modification Order) 1956 dropped Khoibu from the list of schedule tribes. While R.K Das's work mostly confined to kinship system, religion, etc he ignored the assertion and problem of recognition of the Khoibus as different tribe. Similar is the work on Maring tribe by P. Binodini Devi.<sup>7</sup>

While these works mostly look for an orderly social structure, they ignore the problematic parts within the social structure. If there is any attention to crisis within the structure, it is treated as the sign of modernisation that these crises are merely the problems created as a result of transition of a tribal society—economic integration with the larger society and increasing state's control through local village level administration are particularly mentioned as main factors. Khoibu and Marings conflict cannot be simply sidelined as the problems within the Maring tribe. Khoibu was earlier recognized as the independent tribe by the then Dewan of Manipur in 1949. It is a problematic part of the larger historical and political changes that is responsible for the non-recognition of the political and cultural rights of the Khoibus....

### **Constructing Khoibu's Identity Through History**

Documenting Khoibu's history is not a case of writing history by a historian but the Khoibu Union. The khoibu union is taken as the representative of the khoibu interests. However the study does not consider the representativeness of the said union. Rather the questions are mostly directed towards the writing of a history as mode of asserting group's identity of a marginal community in Manipur. Khoibus while writing their own history evolved themselves as an agent of empowering the community itself. Here is the case of writing history neither by a historian nor someone/ some organization outside the group. Such writing reflects that the group is conscious of the need for such writing to assert themselves as an independent tribe. Moreover in making themselves conscious of the surrounding they themselves get reconstituted. Hence there is a semantic shift in the assertion of Khoibu identity—the shift from the 'Maring Khoibu tribe' to 'Khoibu tribe' and from a 'sub-group' to an 'independent tribe.'

These are reflected in the writing of the Khoibu Union. In it Khoibus claim that their identity has been misunderstood: 'Khoibu people are immediate neighbour to Maring people in terms of habitation. As such there is frequent social interaction between the *two tribes* (italic mine). Religious fellowship, social activities like games and sports etc, are jointly organized. There are inter-marriages between the two tribes. However, the lingua franca between the two tribes is the *Meiteilon* (Manipuri). By this reason or the other the khoibu people are often called "Khoibu Maring".'<sup>8</sup>

The Union further claims the distinctiveness of the Khoibu. It describes: 'Khoibu is a tribe having its own distinctive culture, custom, language, genealogy, history of origin, migration, settlement, socio-political and religious organization. Khoibu people have Christian Worship Hymnal and Bible written/translated in their own dialect.' That the Khoibu is a full-fledged tribe is also attempted to prove

by mentioning the characteristics. It writes, ‘the Khoibu tribe bears some distinct characteristics such as: Head hunting, common dormitory for both male and female youth term as “Yakhang” in the Khoibu dialect, socio-political system in the village level/village republic, a large quadrangular or hexagonal shield use in war or battlefield, settlement on the high lands, a crude form of agriculture practice for livelihood, every Khoibu village has a well-defined territory, population and independent internal and external policy exercised by the chief, assisted by the village council consisted of different clans, and common land ownership.’<sup>9</sup>

The Khoibu traces its genealogy in the myths handed down by their ancestors....

Though the myth of cave origin is not confined to Khoibu, the above myth still signifies how the present Khoibu relates with the past. But Khoibus do not relate with their past simply because there is a past. A more serious reason is that they attempt to locate themselves within the ‘dislocated world’—dislocation, in the case of Khoibu, may be taken as the existential crisis, that are reflected in not allowing to name themselves, and establish an identity for themselves....

Khoibu also reconstructed their identity through the migration myth. The history of migration of the Khoibu is traced from their settlement in the Indo-Myanmar border....

According to their history, the Khoibu people were said to have experienced their best and prosperous life under the reign of Mikhongpa in the Inthee Basin, Angoching Range and Yoomadung Hills, in the present Indo-Myanmar border. However their tragedy started when Awa (the Burmese army) invaded their territory. They fled to Maring villages. Interview with a khoibu resident of Kakching Lamkhai in Thoubal district of Manipur revealed that the Khoibus recalled their memories of suffering under the Burmese armies because of the similar suffering at the hand of the Marings. Hence it is their experience with the Maring that led the Khoibus to recall lives under the Burmese rule and how they migrated to the present settlement.

In defining themselves as ‘Khoibu’, the Khoibus register the problematic side of the ways in which Maring tribe<sup>10</sup> is representing them. In this act of defining, there is an attempt to give a message that they stand at equal par with the rest as an independent tribe, not as a constituent member of the Maring tribe. In this way the Khoibu community seeks cultural distinctiveness from the rest of the neighbouring tribes or communities. Khoibus claim that they have all the basic characteristics to be called as a tribe. The characteristic like ‘head hunting, dormitory system, settlement on the high lands, village chief, village council etc’ will be found in the other tribes as well. But at the same time it seeks to cut off the continuity with the

rest by asserting the difference or asserting ‘its own distinctive culture, custom, language, genealogy, history of origin, migration, settlement, socio-political and religious organization.’ Hence the affinities with, and distinctiveness of the Khoibus from their neighbouring tribal communities are asserted simultaneously.

.... ‘Khoibu’ as a name for a said group of people is also an important element in the assertion of the Khoibu identity. An interview with one of the respondents in a Khoibu village in Thoubal District (Manipur) revealed that they were not allowed to call as Khoibu. He further said that once he was severely beaten up for identifying as Khoibu when a group of Marings came to see him. Khoibus explain how the term ‘Khoibu’ came to their lives and how they would like to be called: ‘[A]s our forefathers have been handing down our accounts orally from generation to generation; we called ourselves “Uipo”. The term “Khoi-pu” is derived from the version of “Khoi” which means bee and “Pu” is derived from “Akapu” which means owner. Therefore Khoibu means the people who own bee, beehives, and honey in the indigenous land of Khoibu territory.... Though we called ourselves “Uipo”, we officially represent as Khoibu to avoid any confusion of our identity.’

That the Khoibu as a subject has to constantly negotiate his own history and identity is borne by the immediate reality where the Maring still claims that the Khoibu is the constituent part of it. The active role of agency that the Khoibu Union played by writing its own history is also manifested in its ability to create crisis within the Maring society. To give an instance of this crisis, a controversy was created within the Maring Student Union when the Khoibu represented as a separate unit to the Naga Student Union Delhi and submitted historical facts about the Khoibu to Naga Student Union Delhi and Naga Student Federation (NSF). The convener of the Maring Marnorap Delhi argues: ‘[T]hat, it was absolutely a matter of surprise and disappointment to all the Maring people when some of our dear brothers and sisters claiming themselves as Khoibu Students, had raised, without any prior information to the authorities concerned, as issue of affiliating themselves to NSUD (Naga Student Union Delhi) as a separate Khoibu Unit apart from Maring Marnorap Delhi (MMD). If such demand is granted without prior consultation with the apex bodies of Maring viz. Maring Uparup Assembly (MUA), Maring Literature Society (MLS) and Maring Students’ Union (MSU), it would lead to the provocation of misunderstandings and social unrest amongst the Marings regarding the history of Maring identities—social, cultural, literature etc. .... On this account, the letters and historical facts about Khoibu submitted to NSUD and NSF, should be first and foremost referred and approved by the MUA, MLS and MSU.’<sup>11</sup>

....Thus as far as Khoibu is concerned it is worth mentioning that ‘where

a particular category of identity has been repressed, delegitimated or devalued in dominant discourses, a vital response may be to claim value for all those labelled by that category, thus implicitly invoking it in an essentialist way.’<sup>12</sup>

### **Liminality & Fluidity in Khoibu’s History**

Khoibu’s history does not come out of a vacuum but out of its experiences with the Marings, locally and with the dominant concepts of communities—Meitei and Naga identities. Hence the history of Khoibus is the culmination of the efforts to define and represent themselves within a contesting ethnic discourses.

Despite the contesting ethnic discourses in Manipur, Khoibus are still preserving the cultural affinities with the Meiteis. Cultural sharedness between the Meiteis and the Khoibus is represented by a ritual dance of the Khoibus called *Haichingbawng*. It is considered as one of the most important dance ritual, celebrated every year in the full-moon night during the month of October. It is on this day that another popular festival of Meiteis called *Mera Houchongba* falls. *Haichingbawng*, performed for granting good harvest to the Khoibu community is considered as the representative of brotherhood relationship between the two communities.<sup>13</sup>

According to the beliefs of Khoibu elders, there were three brothers whose names were Khoibu Mathangson, Tarao Yaima and Manao Naotingkhong (who was the king of Manipur). Further it is believed that younger brother went to the valley area from where he started ruling and the others were at the hills. In order to remember or to show good fortune of the younger brother, the Meitei King used to light flame by burning the twigs of pine tree at the top of bamboo pole on the day of festival called *Merahouchongba*. And it is only after seeing this flame that all girls of Khoibu started the ritual dance called *Haichingbawng*. The significance of these cultural festivals is not merely because there were such stories/myths, rather the importance of these festivals are widely popularised at present to unify the hill tribes and valley communities. These festival are widely popularised by the valley based Meiteis’ socio-cultural organizations called HERICON and AMESCO.

Yet the increasing popularisation of such festival in popular domain does not guarantee equal relationship among the ethnic groups. Interviews with the Khoibu residents revealed that the decision of the Khoibus to seek affiliation/belongingness to larger Naga or to seek cultural affinity with the neighbouring tribes is not measured by how much it shares with others in terms of cultural beliefs systems.<sup>14</sup> Rather it is decided by how much it can secure by being in some relationships. The emphasis or reinforcement on cultural similarities is only the result of that strategy to give security to its own people. The possibility of having good relationship with the Meiteis is however dampened by the divide between the tribe and non-tribes.<sup>15</sup>

Khoibus might have problems with the Maring tribe or other bigger tribes, but they feel that in the existing politics of region their security lies in affiliating culturally and politically with a larger tribe. This fear is further strengthened by the persistence of the divide between the tribes and non-tribes in Manipur. Despite the development of secular politics in the valley among the various socio-cultural organisations,<sup>16</sup> there also emerge highly non-secular tendencies. In recent times the valley of Manipur witnesses the emergence of different socio-religious organisations preaching *Sanamahi* religion (based on the pre-Hindu beliefs systems) as the core of the Meitei’s religious worldview. These organizations have increasingly imposed compulsory learning of Meitei *mayek* (Meitei script) in the high school. They demand abolition of the Bengali script, which has been the main script among the Manipuris.<sup>17</sup>

Interview with a Khoibu resident at Chandel district in Manipur had revealed the problems of imposing Meitei script in school by the above organizations. According to him, it is in fact the Khoibu who really preserved the real Meitei script, and said that the script that is claimed as the real one by the Meitei is wrong. He even quoted the traditional Meiteis’ secret book called *Puyas* to seek the authenticity of Khoibu’s claim. In claiming themselves, the Khoibus felt sidelined by the emerging debate on script, which does not recognize this fact of preserving the script of Meiteis.<sup>18</sup> Similarly another neighbouring tribe called Anal in the Chandel district expressed the fear on the increasing religious activities in the valley by a socio-cultural organization called *Sajal*.<sup>19</sup>

In the face of increasing uncertainty with the Meiteis, Khoibu appear to seek security by affiliating culturally with the neighbouring tribes. The myth of cave origin, and its (myth) inclusion in the history writing of the Khoibus has in fact served this purpose. The Khoibus feel that they are culturally close to the neighbouring tribes like Anal, Mayon, Monsang and Lamkang who also have the myths of cave origin. For instance Anals have the myth of cave origin. Anals’ ancestors were believed to emerge from *Khul* or cave. The ancestors were Hanshu and Hantha. It is said that a tiger killed anyone who came out of this cave. Later the ancestors befriended a bird that they promised free feeding in the fields in return for their helps. The birds divert the attention of the tiger. In the mean time they escaped from the cave.<sup>20</sup>

What is intended to derive from this reference is that by making myth as a part of history writing, the Khoibus make a strategy to ascertain cultural affinities with the rest of neighbouring tribes, yet they do not fail to emphasise their distinct identity.<sup>21</sup> It can be further interpreted that though Khoibus need separate identity, ultimately the security of the smaller tribes lays in its affinity the other neighbouring

tribes or bigger tribes.<sup>22</sup> This affinity is established through a skilfully worked out cultural similarities with the other tribes. It is in this project that the myth of cave origin serves a useful purpose. Fieldwork in the Khoibu village revealed that despite the fact that Khoibu shares cultural similarities with the Meiteis, the Khoibus still feel the needs for belongingness to larger Naga identity. But sometimes these needs are not out of one's choice rather by compulsion. But it should be mentioned that not all cultural elements are emphasised in these similarities. They also feel urgent to emphasise the distinctive identity of the Khoibus.<sup>23</sup>

### **Khoibu History & Debate on History writing**

...While the above analysis has shown that history writing by the khoibu is very much the result of their understanding with the present reality, their history may be, to the professional historians, considered as lesser important. For, to the trained historians, it is conceived within a community circle, among the non-trained intellectuals—whether traditional or modern educated. This is further because of the larger dominant perception of the so-called 'other history' that it is colored with the notions of sectarianism, secessionism, etc. that do not prepared us for either democracy or citizenry practices. It is because of this perception that this 'other history' is considered as history, which is not based on the deployment of the 'reason in public life.'<sup>24</sup> Now this perception can be problematic in two ways: one is that it has generalized the characteristics of 'other history', and secondly it has argued against the use of tradition/ mythic past in the public life.

The first problem can be seen in the words a scholar: 'When community sentiments of pain and hurt become the ground on which we rework our past, when we rewrite history to cleanse it of all that we seek to disown, then we are witnessing a practice of rewriting that is disturbingly problematic. These are moves that attack the very discipline of academic history.'<sup>25</sup> This is exactly what is meant by the claims of professional historians that any expressions of community sentiments of pain and hurt in public life are nonsensical or is not based on the deployment of reason in the public life.

This is where the tasks of the historian, especially trained historians, are limited in their engagements with the issue of emancipatory politics, especially of the weaker sections of the society. This non-engagement on the parts of the trained historians may be because these politics have all sorts of prejudices, no authentic evidences, facts or documents. Further this may be because community beliefs/traditions if displayed in the public life are merely beliefs of some community, which does not have any scientific basis.

If the history writing of the Khoibu doesn't stand the tests according to

what professional historians perceived of history, their history also faces the problems of recognition from a dominant ethnic ideology. That the history of Khoibu needs approval by a certain dominant civil society organization is proven by the fact that when Khoibus submitted their historical facts and documents to the Naga civil society organizations like Naga Students' Union Delhi and Naga Student s' Federation, it was the Maring organizations like Maring Uparup Assembly, Maring Literature Society and Maring Students' Union that disputed the manner of representation to Naga bodies. The Maring organizations contested that they should approve these facts about the Khoibu before given to the higher Naga bodies.

One can feel from this episode that it is largely the socially and politically dominant bodies representing dominant ideology, which decide what is to be called history. We normally called certain events and deeds as historic but we care less about the question as to who decides this adjective 'historic', who nominates these events and deeds as historic, lastly, why any event or deeds should be regarded as historic and not others?<sup>26</sup> Hence, in our context, it is the dominant Naga ideology that determines the legitimacy and illegitimacy of history.

The mythic past of the Khoibu remains in the form of oral records. But it should be mentioned here again that the question of what constitutes as right documents/evidence to be called as khoibu is very much restraint by the non-recognition of those evidences by the Maring tribe. So what constitutes as right or wrong evidence or document to be called as separate Khoibu tribe is very much depend how far the Maring tribe allow the Khoibu to assert themselves as an independent tribe. Further Naga apex body like Naga Hoho (an apex body of all the Naga representatives from different constituent tribes) decides what constitutes a right history or evidence.

In conclusion, the present study suggests that the assertion of the Khoibu identity from the Maring tribe is not merely a case of conflict between the two. Again the case study of history writing by the Khoibus is not merely a case of constructing identity through history. Exploring history writing by the Khoibus is a case of how the marginal community articulates their identity within the contesting concepts of community of the Meiteis and Nagas in Manipur. In Meitei's search for historical and cultural affinity with the tribes and the Nagas' negation of the concept of Manipur as community, the idea of community appeared to be defined long before political mobilization of these dominant identities occur.

***G. Amarjit Sharma***

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***Notes and References:***

- <sup>1</sup> This article is an abridged form of a bigger article under the same title which is published as one of the chapters in the forthcoming book entitled *Fixity and Fluidity: History, Politics and Culture of North East India*, edited by Lipokmar Dzuovichu, G. Amarjit Sharma and Manjeet Baruah, (Inhouse publication of the Centre for the Study of North East India, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi).
- <sup>2</sup> Chatterjee distinguishes two forms of history: old social history and new history. Partha Chatterjee, 'History and the domain of the popular', *Seminar* 522, February 2003.
- <sup>3</sup> We take smaller tribes synonymously with the marginal tribes.
- <sup>4</sup> During my fieldwork in the Chandel district I was told that most of the tribes in the district become Naga through the Tangkhul pastors.
- <sup>5</sup> Similarly the Pathans even after being merged with the Baluch identity maintained their identity autonomously in different settings. See Fredrik Barth, 'Pathan Identity and its Maintenance', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, (Bergen-Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, London: George Allen & Unwin), 1969, pp. 117-134.
- <sup>6</sup> Rajat Kanti Das, *Tribal Social Structure: A Study of the Maring Society of Manipur*, (Delhi: Inter-India Publication).
- <sup>7</sup> P. Binodini Devi, *A Monograph on the Maring Tribe of Manipur*, Directorate for the Development of Tribal and Backwards Classes, Tribal Research Institute, Imphal, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> Khoibu Union, *Historical Background of Khoibu Tribe*, Unpublished privately circulated small booklet among the Khoibu mostly
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid
- <sup>10</sup> Maring is one of the recognize tribes of Manipur. State's classification of the Maring tribe has included Khoibus as the constituent group of the Maring tribe. Khoibus, however, has recently asserted as an independent tribe struggling for their recognition in the state classification of tribe.
- <sup>11</sup> Maring Student Union, *Souvenir*, 2004.
- <sup>12</sup> Craig Calhoun, (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, (Blackwell Publishing), 1998, p. 17
- <sup>13</sup> See K. Paomei, 'Haichingbawng, A ritual Dance of Khoibu Community', Paper presented in a Seminar on Intangible Cultural Heritage of Manipur, 2005, June 20-22, Organized by Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manar Sangraharaya, Bhopal & Department of Arts & Culture, Imphal.
- <sup>14</sup> This is supported by the perspective of ethnic group as organizational type, given by Fredrik Barth. Barth says that there is no simple one to one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features

that are taken into account are not the sum of objective differences, (or similarities), but only those which the actors themselves regards as significant. Hence the basic orientation of any group is determined by the socially effectiveness of those orientations. See Fredrik Barth, 1969: 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Group and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, (Universitets Forlaget and George Allen & Unwin), 1969.

- <sup>15</sup> Such divide continues even after efforts of the Meiteis' civil-society organizations to bridge the gap between the hills tribes and valley non-tribal population.
- <sup>16</sup> However the secular tendencies among the socio-cultural organizations are also doubtful as far as their intentions are concerned. I have dealt this problem in the Chapter II of my thesis, 'Culturalism in the "Search for Affinity": Meitei Discovering Affinity with the Tribes', with special reference to some of the socio-cultural organizations' efforts to look for affinity with the hill tribes. It was shown that though these organizations sought to bridge the gap between the Hill tribes and the Meiteis through public rituals, it is always the Meiteis' worldview that is propagating.
- <sup>17</sup> Recently a public ritual called '*puya mei thaba ningshing numit*' (day of remembering the burning of *puyas*, *holy books of Meiteis*) was celebrated in Imphal, with huge publicity. It is claimed that the process of Sanskritization that started in Manipur in the 12<sup>th</sup> century had stopped the spread of Meiteis' traditional religion and script. It was during the height of Vaisnavism in Manipur that these sacred books called *puyas* were burned down in order to propagate the Hindu religion.
- <sup>18</sup> This perception of being sidelined is in fact become a reality when I interview a publicity secretary of AMESCO, a socio-cultural organization in Imphal that works towards bridging the gap between the Hill tribes and Meiteis. I questioned about their organization's approach to the recent conflict among the Khoibus and Maring. I was disturbed by the report that they are infact trying to bring the Maring tribe more closely to Meiteis, because this tribe has in the recent times been closer to larger Naga's collectivity, which according to their perception is more threatening to Manipuri integrity. Further as far as the Khoibu is concerned the organization takes for granted that khoibus are already closer to Meiteis, which, I feel, do not help anything in distancing the fear of being threaten by the Maring youths for asserting as an independent tribe.
- <sup>19</sup> Local people's perceptions sometime equate this organization with RSS, though ideologically they differ. They are equated in terms of using religion as an instrumentality for certain socio-cultural goals and the ways they function

with lots of followers, having particular dress code for all them. *Sajal* spread out in different directions of Manipur, having their branches in different places.

<sup>20</sup> See Kabui, Gangmumei. 1985: *Anal a Transborder Tribe of Manipur*, Mittal Publication, Delhi-35. The myths of cave origin also found among the neighboring tribes like Mayon and Monsang. For these myths also see Directorate for Development of Tribals and Backward Classes, Government of Manipur, 1981: *Folk Tales of Mayon-Monsang*.

<sup>21</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has talked about historiography as a strategy. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV, Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Oxford University Press), 1985.

<sup>22</sup> This need for coming together among the tribes can be interpreted as the phase of 'simultaneous reinforcement and reinterpretation of traditions.' B.K Roy Burman wrote ideas about this phase when he talked about the Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in the late fifties and early sixties. The Gallong, Padam, Minyong and cognate tribes who have traditions of origin from a common ancestor—Aboteni—moved closer to one another. There was a bid to give positive content to their common identity. The old myths and legends started to be looked upon in a different ways. The differences were glossed over and common elements were highlighted. However my study marks some differences from what B.K. Roy Burman had talked about the 'reinforcement and reinterpretation of traditions' among the Adi tribes. For the Khoibus what is more important at the moment is to assert its difference from the Maring tribe. However it has to simultaneously negotiate for belongingness to another larger category, say in our context similarities with the rest of the neighboring tribes for it still perceives the threat from the other neighboring non-tribal population or may be from the other tribal collectivity like Kuki-Chin group (but former threat perception is clearer in the context of Khoibu's assertion). In addition to that the Khoibu needs to decide its belongingness in larger pan-tribal collectivity. So in our context 'reinforcement and reinterpretation of traditions' takes a different route. Another difference from B.K. Roy Burman is that the needs for sharing certain commonalities do not arise mainly from the extension of the market economy into the tribal areas. In our context, it is rather the perceived threat of cultural homogenization from the non-tribes' socio-cultural organizations, mentioned can be made of Meitei script movement in the valley and the spread of socio-cultural organization like *Sajal*. For B.K. Roy Burman's ideas, see Burman, B.K. Roy, 2002: 'Challenges and Responses in Tribal India', in M.S.A. Rao (ed.), *Social Movements in India, Studies in Peasant, Backward Classes, Sectarian, Tribal and Women's Movements*, (Delhi: Manohar), 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Fredrik Barth said that cultural difference could still persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence. See Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Group and Boundaries, The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, (Universitets Forlaget and George Allen & Unwin), 1969.

<sup>24</sup> For detail on how Enlightenment tradition had influenced the Historiography see Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (ed.) *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, (Basil Blackwell), p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya, op.cit. p. 18

<sup>26</sup> Ranajit Guha, 'The small voice of history', in Shahid Amin & Dipesh Chakrabarty (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, (Oxford University Press), 1997.

## Wither finance intrusion and war on people

Good afternoon friends

My warm greetings to strategic friends, tactical friends, progressive individuals and democratic forces who have gathered here today...

I want to begin with this remark that this day is remarkable. The topic of this public seminar *War on People* is really remarkable... This day is also remarkable because we have conglomeration of speakers and crowd from diverse political, professional, organization and national backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> This day is remarkable to me because we are being brought together by prevailing distressful conditions prevalent in the sub-continent. I again repeat that this day is remarkable because we are here not for merry making in praise of a fascist regime.

Over the years, particularly in the last few months, we have seen escalation of carnages in the sub-continent perpetrated by the men in uniform who are supposed to be security guardians of the people. The Indian foot troops... whether military or paramilitary or police or underpaid auxiliary contract agents like the SPOs, Salwa Judum or whatever forces they have given name to; mostly recruited from lower class for lump sum monthly salary, are being exposed to some kind of civil war fronts. I say again that this people, these... foot soldiers are in-secured. They are living with frustration. They are living with war hysteria in Kashmir, in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and other areas where structural oppression is being enforced deliberately with muscle powers. They are exposed.

I am talking about the soldiers who are being exposed to the war front. The soldiers recruited from the lower ranks. I am speaking on behalf of them little bit, mentioning about their plight. They are there to obey the instructions of the rulers that live on their blood and labour for profit. These helpless foot soldiers, to defend themselves and to protect their salary and promotion, are being converted into oppressive and killing machines. They are being indoctrinated with draconian laws to indulge in widespread carnage upon democratic forces, patriotic sections and the masses that are defending economic and democratic rights. They also suffer losses. And they also created lots of losses and destructions. And these soldiers, many of them, are also crying due to pain and frustration ...

At the same time the carnage inflicted Kashmir is crying. The subjugated and oppressed Northeast is crying. Oppressed and displaced masses in the Special Economic Zones are crying. Exploited labours are crying. Pauperised peasants are crying. There are only cries. Cries of suffering and cries for justice. I should say

that, but one thing is very clear to us, the rulers that have designed these cries are not crying. They never cry. They enjoy the carnage. They enjoy the war. They glorify the war and share war booty among themselves.

And, of course, we are not here, to glorify them. Our gathering today is remarkable because we are here to condemn this carnage. We are here to oppose the war that is being waged in the name of the Indian nation, security and development. We are here to share with the pains and frustrations of the soldiers who have been misled into war of aggression on civilians. We are here to share the pains and cry of our people who are being subjected to a war condition that is being waged against their will. Our gathering is remarkable, because this is how we should begin our journey to build a powerful democratic force, to bring real development, peace and democracy in the subcontinent.

When it comes to Northeast regions, particularly Manipur and the surrounding regions, I should say that an extensive war front has been opened up under the policy banner of Look East Policy, which is now being rechristened as Act East Policy. Let me tell you friends. Look East Policy is not an absolutely foreign trade orientation. It has a lot more to do with ... Well, India's security and commercial interest with the South East Asian countries is remarkable. But Look East Policy is a hype created by the Indian State and its protagonists that covers up the actual geographical space and the mode of operations encompassing the North-eastern region. LEP should be seen as an integrated whole where the Northeast is always involved. The *Northeast Vision 2020* published by the Indian State substantiate my point.

My argument is that Look East Policy has created a vast geographical hub comprising the entire Northeast into some kind of Special Economic Zone of absolute territorial control, economic exploitation, political subjugation and, of course, carnages in various forms. What becomes inherent with LEP is the visible increase of foreign capital intrusion and economic plunder by big market forces. All these become symptomatic which are to be seen in terms of infrastructural components of what I would like to call aggressive projects to control hydro-energy power, carbon reserves, precious stones, minerals, forest products and, of course, market and labour. The components that have been tremendously enforced include railways, dams, mines, and forests resources (extortive kind of farming) and all other infrastructure components related to roadways, trade related buildings and commercial hubs. All these have brought about destructive changes on landscape, in the cultural ecology of the people, in the demographic harmony among the people (which have also created cultural insecurity) and finally income disparity and underdevelopment.

This policy comes along with heavy militarisation, policing, proxy wars and suppression of democratic voices. Therefore, when one looks into LEP, we also have to relate it with militarisation and increasing amount of policing. It is against this backdrop that I try to locate Armed Forces Special Powers Act, National Security Act, Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, Seditious Act and all forms of other repressive laws. These laws became legal instruments that give constitutional validity to an oppressive policy and very aggressive developmental projects. These legal instruments provide the law enforcing forces to unleash a very distressful reign of terror with impunity... in the name of defending India's national security, development, and, of course, peace, or say, they call it law and order. It is against this backdrop that there is violation of democratic rights, economic inequality, denial of proportionate and sustainable development, obstructions to political peace and social justice. This has led to widespread culture of impunity and, you know that, cycle of violence by the law enforcing forces at the grass root become self-propellant.

Our speakers who have spoken before me have emphasised on the manner how the law enforcing forces have taken law into their own hands. The situation seems to be similar everywhere across the sub-continent wherever structural injustice and restive tendencies exist. On records, we already have 1528 documented instances of fake encounter. In January, this year, a killer cop confessed to me, before he made it public, that, he had killed 133 people. That individual had killed, that killer cop had killed 133 persons just as a game. Imagine! He was authorised to do so, informally, by the higher officials. In fact, this man was responsible for the July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009 fake encounter in the heart of the capital in broad day-light. The matter was covered up by the Chief Minister of Manipur and the Home Department. However, *Tehelka* came up with photographic evidence of the situation and people resisted and the matter was exposed. After CBI inquiry, this man was suspended along with ... other team mates. But then why would he confess now? This man began to feel insecure. He thought that he would be killed by superior cops as the case is nearing to an end. ... he thought that confession could either save him or expose the whole modus operandi of secret killings being commanded on him by superior forces. He thought that he had killed for the sake of the country but, later on, he had realised that he was just a pawn. When he was suspended no help has been coming from the government. No help has been coming from the higher officers. He had to live a very miserable livelihood. He realised that to save himself and to avenge for the crime that he committed, he confessed. The case is still pending in the high court.

What I would like to say is, ... structural injustice and killing, fake encounters and sufferings, all forms of oppression go together. These are symptomatic of an

aggressive and unjust war that are being perpetrated in the name of the country, in the name of nation, in the name of development and peace. And the war had to be halted if there had to be development, peace and democracy in the sub-continent.

I can only trust myself and the like-minded comrades who had been fighting for justice for democratic rights. I think, we have to build a powerful democratic forces on some common strategic and tactical agenda. Otherwise, we are all going to be losers.

Long live democratic struggle! Thank you

***Dr. Malem Ningthoja***

Campaign for Peace & Democracy (Manipur)

***Note:***

Reproduction from seminar speech delivered at the public seminar on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September at 2 pm at the Constitution Club, Rafi Marg, near Central Secretariat Metro Station, New Delhi. Organised by MATIDARI: Forum for People's Right to Land, Life and Dignity.

<sup>1</sup> The public seminar was addressed by D Raja (National Secretary, CPI and MP, Rajya Sabha), Felix Padel (Anthropologist and Activist), Isha Khandelwal (Lawyer, JagLAG), Jagmohan Singh (General Secretary, APDR), Kamal Shukla (Editor, Bhumkal Samachar), Malem Ningthouja (Chairperson, CPDM), Mohammad Shoaib (President, Rihai Manch, UP), Mrigank (CPIML (New Democracy), N Raghu Ram (Professor, GSSIP University), Prakash Ambedkar (Bharipa Bahun Mahasangh), Rajeev Yadav (General Secretary, Rihai Manch and PUCL), Rinchin (WSS), Shivani Taneja (WSS), Vara Vara Rao (founder, Virasam and President, RDF), Vernon Gonsalves (CRPP) and Vira Sathidar (actor, 'Court' and activist).



## The Rich and the Poor

The rich will speak and talk  
 The poor will listen  
 In the end  
 The rich will go for dinner parties  
 The poor will go to work  
 In the same fields  
 Where their fathers were exploited  
 And the rich writes the history books

*Akhu Chingangbam*  
 Imphal Talkies Band

## Jananeta

Panthou saklaba epa o,  
 Atangbani eereipak asigi,  
 Mani ni sanaleipak asigi,  
 Fanglaroi mapok taret lak sida,  
 Jananeta ni nangdi jananeta;

Eeramdam sigi lamyamba ni nangdi,  
 Eereipak sigi luchingpurel ni nangdi,  
 Samaj sigi sebari ni nangdi,  
 Sahitya gi saknaiba ni nangdi,  
 Jananeta ni nangdi jananeta;

Tolla taraba singgi mapa ni,  
 Satra singgi luchingba ni,  
 Sinmi singgi khongloi ni,  
 Ema singgi mapari ni,  
 Jananeta ni nangdi Jananeta;

Nungai yaiphaba bu tung oina,  
 Chahi kya ni meeramda,  
 Chahi kya ni keishum sangda,  
 Chahi kya ni narak mongsongda,  
 Khunnai asigi damak, kathoklaba,  
 Jananeta ni nangdi jananeta;

Lamyamba hainabu kousira,  
 Luchingpurel hainabu kousira,  
 Panthou hainabu mingthon sira,  
 Jananeta ni nangdi meeyam sigi jananeta.

*Shashi Meetei*

## Meeyamgi Luchingba

Laklabada September 30<sup>th</sup> na  
Nungsinhalli eikhoigi pukningda  
Mareibak majatigi khanbada  
Thawaina pontha oi,  
Khomnung Sawa tankhraba  
Meeyam gi luchingba Jana-Neta Irabot

Khongchai Lan Kabui lannadi loiraklabada  
Chara chengna tang-sinlak  
Chakkhum meina mei-mutlak  
Meeyamgi di luchingba oi  
1939 poinugi nini panba leibak pokpa numit  
Meetei nupi meeyamgi  
Amata oiba khollao  
Mapanda cheng thabiganu  
Konda cheng takpiganu  
Cheng gee kon thambiganu  
Nupi eikhoina sujage  
Lairaba praja chaba fangdre  
Chak tangle chara helle.

Ariba singhashan muthattuna  
Anouba sashan lingnabagi damak  
Changsinbada ningtam lan-hou  
Loilam leingak-ki mayokta  
Laokhiba chingtam pumbagi amata oiba khollao  
Sarkargi huk-kum ngasidagi ellaroi  
Meeyamgi yeknaba British chatkhro  
Chatkhro meeyamgi ee chuppa kangbu  
Hankhro chatkhro  
Chingtam eikhoi amatani

Loumee singgi ningtamba pigadabani.

Ngasisu nakong singja khudingda yeiri  
“Thangol adu maya thang-ngu thouna  
Hey lou-uba chatlu chatsi echal inaosha  
Loumee gi leibak semlurasi  
Loukhao matam oiraga- khaoni sana phou  
Meenai yotling kokkani- sana leibak emagi  
Thangol adu maya thang-ngu thouna”.

Sandokhre sana chingdol wangma lanna  
Sakna sonnari seithanari  
Mafam khuding sin thunga  
Meeyamgi di luchingba Irabot  
Emagidi Mapari Jana-Neta Hijam Irabot.

*Priyobata Mangangcha*

## Ngamok

Abokki ngamok chakhidare  
Kwairambal kabok poklamdre  
Ngabongkhao mashak kaokhare  
Phigae mashak naidare.

Phigae nairambi enekhoi  
Ngabongkhao purambi makhoido  
Moreh karbar touramle.

Kwairambal chidai amada  
Kabok poklambi aboksu  
Moreh maru yonlamle.

Hai, sonlabi abokna  
Kabok poknaba chengmakhei  
Nongchup nungshitna humkhare.

Sitlakpa nongchup nungshitta  
Eramdam mamang maning hotrong-ho  
Moibung kambagumna kamlakle.

Lousinba ngamde paoroudo  
Kabok chaningna thiruba  
Moreh maruna chindamle.

*Chingtham Balbir Khuman*

29/09/2016

## Mng ama

Kanagi plane-no pairiba  
Hathu hathu nnghouroidabagumna!  
Hngsira, kadaidano,  
Kadomdagi lakpano!

Pao ama taa-lakpra,  
Awa leipak loikhre haiba!  
Irabati khongnungda haigatkhiba  
Ningthi eekhaida kaakhiba  
Jap-sipahi-singna —

Chatkhiduna ningthi wangma  
Nongpok Bharat-Burma lambeeda  
Youkhramalle Manipur sana leipakta.

Bomb top ki gulina —  
Mee makup makup pai nungsitta.  
Nungsitna pukhiba ee marikna  
Churak-ee nong oina leipakta.  
Mee makup makupna eeda tottuna  
Leikhom thok-ee meesana.

Anganggi thabakna oinakhre  
Sipahisinggi chan,  
Sanggin-gi thinfam.  
Nupigi hakchangna  
Kabakthang shoori mathou yengfam,  
Sanggin maton chang yengfam.  
Nongchop europeta,  
Nongpok Asiada.

Macha mawa kainarabagi nupeesingna  
Makhut yanduna chei thawai sokna  
Awabagi tengtha-khonjen,  
Khonjendu nungsitna purak-ee,  
Bhumdhya, lohit, arab samudra wangmada  
Ching pat turel kaya landuna.

Oon-gi leipaktagi purak-ee  
Himalaygi wangmadagi.  
Adu faobada eengde,  
Eengde, oonsu mei onkhre.  
“Holliba swarda mee makup”  
“Thkliba eesingda ee marik.”

\*\*\*

Eidouna mee kayana,  
Asigumba mngsi mngligaba  
Chekpan manungda.

*Hijam Irabot*

## Gratitude

Dear Friends,

We are able to make this day a grand success, as a result of collective effort by several individuals, who in their respective capacity have contributed in various ways. It is worth expressing gratitude to all the contributors.

At the outset, I, on behalf of the organising committee would like to thank all of you who have gathered here today. You have spared your valuable time in making this *observance* a grand success. All those who have taken part in the essay competition, poetry recitation and song presentation have played important roles in making the day lively. The Jury members have laboured a hectic exercise to ensure the selection of the best three essays. The panelists Dr. G. Amarjeet Sharma and Lakpachui Siro and moderator Dr. Malem Ningthouja have offered a marvelous thought provoking session.

The committee is thankful to the following persons for their contribution in money and kind: (1) Sunil Khomdram, Sushila Leishangthem and Wakhalloi Ningthouja for cash award to the best three essays; (2) Yaiphaba Khangembam for mementos to the jury members; (3) Ningthoujam Meiraba for gifts to those who have recited poems and presented songs; (4) Rojee Khangembam for mementos to the organising committee members; (5) R.K. Devendro for mementos to the panelists and carry bags to the participants; (6) Athokpam Amit for refreshment and bearing the expense of the booklet, and (7) Ojha Ramananda Mayanglambam of Kirori Mal College for helping in making this room available to us.

The committee would also like to mention the name of the members of the Irabot Day Observance Committee who have worked hard to organize this *observance*. The members are, alphabetically; Chingtham Balbir, Guneshor Khwairakpam, Herojit Wahengbam, Karnabir Thokchom, Malem Ningthouja, Priyobata Irengbam, Sadandanda Thokchom, Salam Mahesh, Samananda Aheibam, Shamurailatpam Jotish, Sunil Khomdram, and Sushila Leishangthem.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for making a grand day.

Thank you.

*Guneshor Khwairakpam*

Irabot Day Observance Committee Delhi