

Nongjin

A NAMA Quarterly Newsletter



Manipuri Phunga wari

Solving the energy equation in Manipur

Lai haraoba

Chakhum and recipe

Cartoon

and more....

“When the sun shines on the hill top of Manipur, then the fog on the valley will be cleared”

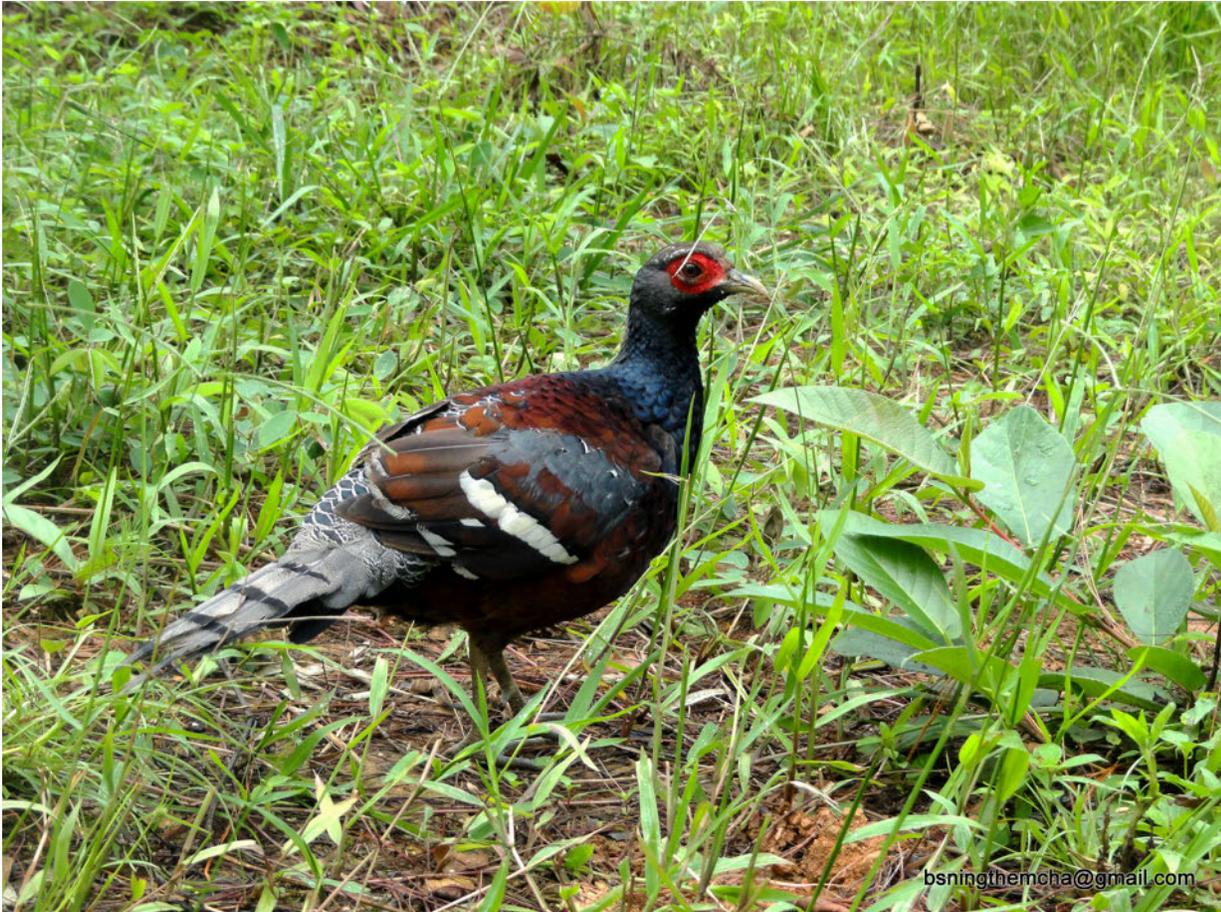
- Lalit Pukhrambam



“Bringing the community closer has been the main goal of NAMA, right from its founding more than twenty years ago and its successes in this endeavor are evident.”

- A.Surjalal Sharma

Nongin (Mrs. Hume's Pheasant) - The State Bird of Manipur



This wild bird was photographed near Manipur-Mizoram border by RK Birjit.

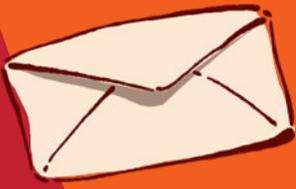


Our greatest happiness does not depend on the condition of life in which chance has placed us, but is always the result of a good conscience, good health, occupation, and freedom in all just pursuits.

Thomas Jefferson

Do you Know ?

- * Tamenglong has the highest rainfall in Manipur !
- * Uningthou is the State tree of Manipur !



Message to NAMA Members

- From NAMA Executive Committee

It gives us immense pleasure to bring out NAMA quarterly newsletter after a long break. A dedicated NAMA team has worked very hard to revive the newsletter under the banner 'Nongin'. From various guest writers to new member introduction to Manipuri cuisines, the team has tried to cover many avenues in this edition. The same format will be followed in our future. A section on NAMA activities will cover a photo story of events completed in that quarter.

We would like to thank all the writers and editorial team of this edition. Without their contribution this issue would not have been possible.

We also request all NAMA members to share short stories and columns which can be published in our future publications.



Quarterly NAMA Magazine Editorial Team

Editors : Lalit Pukhrambam & Sapam Shyamananda

Guest Editor : Rekha Konsam

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Do you Know ?

Elvis's middle name was Aron.

Bill Gates began programming computers at the of age 13.

Leonardo Da Vinci invented scissors.

It took Leonardo Da Vinci 10 years to paint Mona Lisa.



Content

Message from Founding Member

- Dr. Surjalal Sharma

Bringing the community closer has been the main goal of NAMA right from its founding more than twenty years ago and its successes in this endeavor are evident. As always we seek to enhance the ways in which we share our stories and with this goal the NAMA Executive Team has taken up the important task of publishing the newsletter Nongin. In spite of the new social media of various forms such newsletters have crucial role in bringing our people closer and among these is the ability to extend the community worldwide. With the presence on the internet the reach of Nongin will be far and wide, and we are sure it will fly to more places to spread the message of togetherness and goodwill to all.

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NAMA Convention 2013

Manipuri Paorou

- * Cheng puraga cheng sing, fou puraga fou sing.
- * Sangana mi manghalli, Sanga na mi phahalli.

Do You Know ?

Khangkhui Caves – These four caves are located near Khangkhui some 11 kilometres (6.8 mi) south east of Urkhul on the border with Upper Burma. Archaeological excavations have found stone and bone tools as well as animal remains as evidence of Stone Age habitation of these caves.[5] The first evidence of Pleistocene man in Manipur dates back to about 30,000 BC. Other notable caves nearby include Hunding Caves, 11 kilometres (6.8 mi) south of Urkhul, Purul Cave in Purul and the Song Ring rock shelter at Beyang village in Tengnoupal.



Solving the Energy Equation in Manipur

By Rameshwori Loukrakpam

The author is a Ph D in Material Science, State University of New York at Binghamton, Currently pursuing Post Doctoral Research Associate in Technical University, Berlin, Germany.

Over the last 7 years of doing research on Hydrogen Fuel Cells for applications in automobile industry, I have been studying the green energy scenario which has given me an idea on how we can go about the uphill task of providing the energy needs of people in places like Manipur. For arguments sake, let's keep the socio-political factors on the side and deal with this at a later stage. Our main aim is going to be providing energy to every home, agricultural and industrial establishments, etc. and at the same time we need to put an end to the environmental degradation that currently to changing the whole ecology as well as climate of Manipur. Every big industrialized country have pushed for economic growth first and then worried about cleaning up their environment latter. I believe that in current perspective, China is a good example. But, why not learn from their mistake and we push for both at the same time, as global warming and climate change leave us with less time to correct our mistakes at a later stage. The major technologies available at our disposal are:

1. Photovoltaics or solar cells
2. Wind energy
3. Biomass
4. Hydroelectric
5. Newer technologies like solid-oxide portable fuel cells

As we can immediately see, none of these techs can provide what we need by itself, at least not at first. So, I am going to model our plan on the German renewable energy scheme. It is one of the best I have ever encountered with 20% of their total national energy consumption in 2011 coming from renewable energy (which took them only 1 decade to achieve) and targeted at around 80% in the next few decades. Our first task is segregating the areas in Manipur where each tech mentioned above will give the highest output. Photovoltaic solar cells are optimum for homes and small establishments. I have heard that some people in Manipur are already enjoying the benefits of solar cells. This is an investment which almost every middle class home can make. It can easily be integrated into the power supply line and batteries used with inverters already prevalent in Manipur. Setting up a few units on roof-tops of each house is not a big challenge. It's quite a sight roaming the German countryside dotted with houses and cottages very similar to what we have, covered with solar cells as the roof. I can only dream, right now, to see such a sight in Manipur. Some people might argue that we don't have sunshine all the time. Germany is one of the countries with little sunshine compared to India. If they can make it work, why can't we? Another feature which has immense possibility is Solar Parks. Open fields, buildings, mountain sides and any and all large

Manipuri Paorou

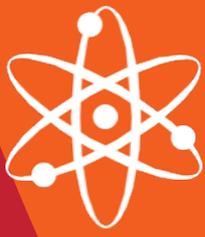
* Hei leiraga thang leita, thang leiraga hei leita.

Do you Know ?

Months that start on a Sunday will always have a Friday the 13th.

Hawaii was originally called the Sandwich Islands.

Tokyo was once known as Edo.



Solving the Energy Equation in Manipur

By Rameshwori Loukrakpam

surfaces has the potential to be converted to solar parks which can, in theory, supply energy at a larger scale for small establishment and businesses. Basically, we can make each unit self sustaining. Next we come to Wind energy. This is basic geography; Manipur is surrounded by hills and we have small hillocks around Imphal too. I grew up near Bhamon leikai near Baruni Ching and Thangmeiband near Cheirou Ching. This can potentially supply energy for people living in hills as well as serves as another power source for small establishments even in the valleys or wide open spaces like agricultural fields for irrigation. Biomass/Biofuels is one of the biggest potential areas for energy source everywhere in Manipur, regardless of hills, valleys, sunshine or wind. This also brings us to the environmental effect of waste disposal. We generate quite a lot of biodegradable waste and due to a horrendous waste management, have not been utilized. There is not segregation in waste whatsoever and hence burning of leaves along with plastics happened every single day in Manipur. This has been the hardest thing for me to watch in the last 10-15 years. When I was younger, I loved the fresh air and sparking ponds and canals near the roads around Singjamei, Bhamon Leikai, Wankhei and Kongba road.

Now, when I go back once a year, all I can smell is plastics burning in the air. Each and every one of us is to blame for this. We always say we need to boost tourism in Manipur and our selling point has been her beauty. We are currently in the process of destroying what we hold most dear, the intrinsic beauty of our homeland. Let's start looking at the solution. First off, waste segregation into biodegradable and non-biodegradable. I am happy that some of us have started thinking along these lines. We need make this a mass movement. A recycling plant and a biomass plant is an absolute necessity right now. Why is it so easy to mobilize us Manipuris for bandhs and strikes and not for this? I vote for involvement of schools, colleges, students, teachers and local clubs, not just as awareness campaigns but for a more hands-on approach. And of course, the hydroelectric power source! However, since this is in government control, we can only hope that it will improve over the years. And finally, portable solid oxide fuel cells are probable energy sources with enough power density to support homes, small establishments and even villages/townships. Although, this has been commercialized before, it is not used widely.

Chingda shatpi ingellei chinnadana kenkhiba ho kallak-e de;
Eina kenge kenbara malangbana humbagi kenbani ho Kenbani de;
Malangba eis keidoude leirangna leikhok loibagi kenbani Ho kenbani de.

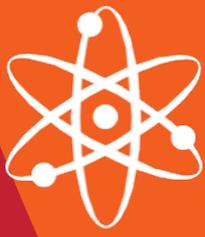
Do you Know ?

Dreamt is the only word that ends in mt.

The first letters of the months July through to November spell JASON.

Spiders are arachnids and not insects !

Stewardesses is the longest word that is typed with only the left hand.



Solving the Energy Equation in Manipur

By Rameshwori Loukrakpam

We have to look for a way for engineering, production and distribution according to the markets in India. As a plan for the future, I have a dream that one day; we will be able to have a world class research facility in Manipur. There are countless Manipuris working around the world and also in Manipur who have the expertise to perform extremely well in research and development. Maybe we can find a way for local production of the materials and units ourselves with time. I think it is time now to form a Green Energy Cooperative, designed at providing energy as well as helping conservation efforts of environmentalists in Manipur.



As an economist friend wisely said to me, no enterprise should lose money. We can chalk out a plan how to manage different parts of this project and how can make this enterprise successful. Persons from different fields with a wide variety of knowhow have to come together; engineers, scientists, economists, environmentalists, etc. I have tried to understand this problem in my small capacity and I appreciate feedback and a possibility of starting a hands-on effort. We all have busy jobs and little time but I am hoping to get back to India in a few years and start this program in earnest. I am hoping to find like-minded people on the way to work with.



We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.

Mother Teresa

Do you Know ?

Honey is the only natural food which never goes off.

The only continent with no active volcanoes is Australia.

There are only 4 words in the English language which end in 'dous' (they are: hazardous, horrendous, stupendous and tremendous)



Sandrembi – Cheisra

A Manipuri folk tale

Renarrated by Rekha Konsam

Once upon a time in the Meitei kingdom, there lived a man. He had two wives and from each wife he had one daughter. His first wife begot him the pretty Sandrembi while his second wife bore him Cheisra. Sandrembi and her mother were simple and kind hearted while Cheisra and her mother were ugly and wicked. One day the man died leaving behind the two women with their young daughters. The two women carried on their activities as usual. However, Cheisra and her mother very soon started scheming to rid themselves of Sandrembi and her mother.

One day, the two women went fishing together to the nearby river. Sandrembi's mother had a good haul and her fishing basket got filled with fishes. Cheisra's mother did not catch any fish. Haul after haul she caught snakes in her fish trap. She filled her fishing basket with the snakes instead of fishes. As evening approached, the women decided to call it a day and head back home. On their way back, they decided to take rest for some time underneath a large fig tree. The tree was laden with luscious fruits waiting to be plucked. Cheisra's mother climbed up the tree to pluck the delicious fruits. When she reached atop, she picked the choicest fruits and offered to drop them for her companion.

She asked Sandrembi's mother who stood at the foot of the tree to open her mouth so that she can directly drop the fruit into her mouth. Unsuspecting of any ulterior motives, the older woman did as she was told. She opened her mouth and was rewarded with a sweet juicy fruit. Cheisra's mother repeated her offer again, telling her to open her mouth and close her eyes for another fruit. Sandrembi's mother expectantly complied. She closed her eyes and opened her mouth but instead of the tasty fruits, Cheisra's mother dropped the snakes from her fishing basket. She was bitten and died immediately. The poor woman's body was thrown into the river and Cheisra's mother went back home with the dead woman's fishing basket that was filled with fishes. The night was approaching but Sandrembi's mother had still not returned. Seeing that her step-mother had returned alone from fishing, she enquired to her about her own mother's whereabouts. Her stepmother told her that her mother had refused to come back with her and that she was still fishing in the river. The young girl was worried but helpless. That night, in her dream, she saw her mother telling her, 'my dear daughter Sandrembi, Cheisra's mother has killed me and thrown my body into the river. I have turned into a turtle.'

Manipuri Paorou

* Cheng puraga cheng sing, fou puraga fou sing.

* Sang-gana mi manghalli, Sanga na mi phahalli.



Sandrembi – Cheisra

A Manipuri folk tale

Renarrated by Rekha Konsam

Come to the river tomorrow early in the morning and fetch me. Keep the turtle in a pot hidden away for five days. On the fifth day, I shall resurrect once again as your mother’.

Early the following morning, Sandrembi could not wait for the sun to rise. She set off at the first light of dawn to fetch the turtle. She hauled her fish trap but caught fish instead. She persevered and found the turtle after several attempts. She took great care so that no one would notice it. Her stepmother saw her coming back from the river and asked how many fishes she caught. Sandrembi was scared of her stepmother, but replied that she had caught none for she did not want her stepmother to know of the turtle. The wicked stepmother was furious and angrily ordered her to go and prepare their meal. Inside the kitchen, Sandrembi quietly took out an earthen pot, filled it with water and kept the turtle hidden in it. Cheisra saw her in the act and reported it to her mother. The two made a plan to kill the turtle. Cheisra cried that she wished to have a turtle for her lunch. The stepmother ordered Sandrembi to cook the turtle that she had carefully hidden away in the pot. The poor girl was helpless. She cooked the turtle in a pot.

As the fire burnt in the hearth, she heard a voice call out to her. It came from the cooking pot. It called out, ‘Sandrembi, it is up to my legs now’. Hearing the voice, her heart went out to it and she pulled out a few burning logs unable to go on with the cooking. Her stepmother thundered at her, ‘what are you doing? Do you not know that your sister is crying with hunger?’ she then called out for Cheisra to slap Sandrembi for her disobedience and put the fire back on. As Sandrembi resumed cooking, the voice called out again ‘Dear Sandrembi, it is now reaching my waist. After a while, it called out that it had reached its chest, neck and finally it died. Cheisra and her mother ate the cooked turtle but Sandrembi refused to eat it. After the meal, the left over bones and shell were thrown away in the backyard. Sandrembi’s mother appeared in her dream again that night. She instructed her daughter to gather all the bones and shell of the turtle that had been thrown away. She told her to wrap them in a piece of cloth and store it away in a basket. After seven days, she would resurrect as her mother once again from the bones. Obediently, Sandrembi did as she was told. She collected the bones and shells, wrapped it in a cloth and stored them away in a basket and eagerly waited for the seven days to get over. Her excitement knew no bounds.



Sandrembi – Cheisra

A Manipuri folk tale

Renarrated by Rekha Konsam

On the sixth day, she could not contain her excitement anymore and decided to take a peek. She opened the cloth wrapping and soon as she did so, a little sparrow flew out of it. Sandrembi cried helplessly.

As time passed, the young girls grew up. Sandrembi grew up to be a fine young woman. One day when the sisters were on their way back from the river, the king happened to pass by their village. Cheisra was wearing fine clothes and carried a gleaming brass pot while Sandrembi was dressed in worn out clothes and carried an earthen pot. The king was struck by Sandrembi. He teased her saying that he liked the lady with the earthen pot and not the one with the gleaming pot. He asked her to give him water from her pot to quench his thirst. She declined the king asking him to take water from her sister instead. The king persisted saying that he wanted water from the earthen pot and not the brass pot. Saying so, he took off on his horse. When the two sisters reached home, Cheisra told her mother what had happened that day. The next day when the sisters went to fetch water, Cheisra was dressed in the shabby clothes of Sandrembi and carried her earthen pot while Sandrembi herself was dressed in Cheisra's fine clothes and had her gleaming brass pot.

The king returned again that day. He went up to Sandrembi and once again asked for water. As she put out her hand to offer water, the king snatched her by her hand and rode off with her on his horse. He took her to his palace and made her his queen. The following year, they were blessed with a beautiful baby boy.

Back in the village, Cheisra and her mother were burning with jealousy over Sandrembi's good fortune. They hatched a plot to get rid of her. One day they went to the palace and invited her for a meal. Sandrembi accepted the invitation. Following the wishes of her husband, the king, she left her young son at the palace when she went to visit her natal home for lunch. Her stepmother and Cheisra made a show of welcoming her. They invited her to make herself comfortable in her old home and offered clothes to change so that she could enjoy a relaxed meal with them. The three of them ate together. After the meal when Sandrembi prepared to return to the palace, she saw that Cheisra had put on her clothes. She told her stepsister that she must now head back as it was getting late and her baby would be crying for her. Cheisra took the clothes off but instead of handing it over to her, she threw it under the bed. Sandrembi bent down to get the clothes out but as she did so, her stepmother and Cheisra poured boiling

Entire ignorance is not so terrible or extreme an evil, and is far from being the greatest of all; too much cleverness and too much learning, accompanied with ill bringing-up, are far more fatal.

Plato

Do you Know ?

The 3 most common languages in the world are Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and English.

The Eiffel Tower has 1,792 steps

Employees of the Vatican pay no income tax.



Sandrembi – Cheisra

A Manipuri folk tale

Renarrated by Rekha Konsam

hot water over her. And so Sandrembi died. Her soul took the form of a dove and flew away.

Cheisra dressed herself in Sandrembi's clothes and went back to the palace to take her place as the queen. The king noticed the changes in his queen and asked her, Sandrembi, what has happened to you? You look awful, your eyes are all dark and shrunken and your heels are cracked. What has happened to you?' Cheisra, who was disguised as Sandrembi, replied, 'O King! I cried the whole day remembering my beloved parents who are no more, hence my eyes are dark and shrunken. I was worried that my baby must be crying for me so I came running, hence my heels are cracked'. Time passed. One day, the king's gardener heard the strange cries of a dove perched on a nearby tree while he was working in the gardens. It cried out, 'O gardener, go and tell the king. Tell him that his Sandrembi has now turned into a dove and is sitting on a tree, does he not realise that it is not his real queen by his side but the wicked Cheisra in disguise?'. The gardener went to the king and told him about the strange cries of the bird. The king rushed to the garden to see the little bird. He said to the dove, 'If you are my beloved queen Sandrembi, come to me and pick the rice grains on my palm'. The dove flew to

the king and pecked at the grains. The king took the little bird and kept it in a golden cage in his room. That night, Sandrembi appeared in his dream. She told him to keep the dove for seven days and that on the seventh day she would come back to life as his queen once again. The king went out hunting one day before the seven days were up. Taking advantage of his absence, Cheisra killed the bird and cooked it. When the king returned from his hunting trip, he found the golden cage empty and became furious. Cheisra tried to calm him down. She tried to explain to him that the dove had to be killed because it was dangerous, for it had tried to bite the young prince. So she got it killed to prevent further harm to the prince. The king ordered Cheisra to throw away the dish prepared from the dove. A mango sapling came up at the place where the dish had been thrown away. The king took great care of the plant and the sapling soon grew into a big tree. Soon, it bore one big fruit. One day, the gardener plucked the ripe fruit and took it home. The first day when he wanted to eat the mango, he could not find a knife to cut it. The next day when he came with a knife, he could not find the mango and so it went on for seven days. On the eighth day, unknown to the gardener, the fruit turned into a returned, he found a variety of

To conceal anything from those to whom I am attached, is not in my nature. I can never close my lips where I have opened my heart.

Charles Dickens



Sandrembi – Cheisra

A Manipuri folk tale

Renarrated by Rekha Konsam

delicious foods laid out for him. He searched his house to see who had prepared it but he could not see anyone because the young woman had hidden herself in a dark corner of the house. Every day when the gardener returned home he would find an array of delicious food laid out for him. This went on for some days. Finally, he decided to find out for himself. He hid himself near his house and came out of his hiding place when the young woman started preparing the food in the kitchen. The young woman turned out to be none other than Sandrembi. She told him what had happened. The gardener rushed to inform the king who sent his guards immediately to bring Sandrembi to the palace. The king decided to test the two women – Sandrembi, who had turned to her human form from the mango, and Cheisra, who was disguised as the queen Sandrembi. The two women were given a sword each and called to challenge each other. All the people gathered to witness the event. Cheisra hurled the sword and tried to stab her stepsister but the sword did not even scratch Sandrembi. When Sandrembi struck Cheisra, she was wounded and died immediately. The crowd cheered and accepted her as their queen. United once again, the king, the young prince and Sandrembi lived happily ever after.

“When the sun shines on the hill top of Manipur, then the fog on the valley will be cleared”



- Lalit Pukhrambam
NAMA Convention 2011, New Jersey

Tamo Surjalal has pointed out in his speech that Manipur is a Sports Power House of India, in spite of Manipur's miniscule size of the total Indian population (~0.1%). Manipur is also excelling in other fields of Arts, Science, Culture and Drama. Nonetheless, these contributions come mainly from Individual efforts and we are lacking a collective achievement for the communities as a whole.

I put the title of my talk as “Socio-Political and Economic History of Manipur – Three pillars to Integration and Harmony”. I compiled 5 slides as talking points since I am not good speaker (Internet Sources, excuse me if I could not cite them appropriately). I will spend a couple of minutes in each slide to discuss current and past socio-economic and political story of Manipur. This is a complex issue but needed to be highlighted.

Slide 1. I thank NAMA committee, and New Jersey and New York families for organizing such a beautiful function. When I was asked to say a few words about Manipur, I said yes. But, I was not sure what to talk about. We all read about Manipur news through Kangaonline, E-pao and other internet sources. . The news we read are certainly not of a progressive society, at least to me.

They are filled with political and official corruptions, police brutality, paramilitary forces and insurgent encounters, caught in the crossfire – innocent citizen killing and extortions, economic blockade of highways, market and business closings, HIV/AIDS, Children of HIV/AIDS and Gun Victims, and all kinds of conflict among the different communities living in Manipur. Manipur is a beautiful place full of charm, beauty and a pleasant climate. Nature has bestowed us this beauty, but the people have spoilt it. The socio-political and economic history of a nation or society is complex and that of Manipur is more complicated. But we have to confront it to find a solution. I am not a sociologist or an economist – just a teacher and lover of Manipur – so my knowledge is not deep.

Slide 2. Manipur is located at the north-eastern part of India neighboring Myanmar (Burma) to the east, Nagaland state in the north, Assam in the West and Mizoram State and Myanmar in the South. Manipur is a hilly place with a central valley (~20% and mass). The peoples of Manipur are of various ethnic groups – Kuki, Naga, Meitei, Pangal, as well as Indian and Nepali. The people practice various religions – Sannamahi, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Jews. Therefore, religious tolerance and respect for each

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- Lalit Pukhrambam
NAMA Convention 2011, New Jersey

ethnic group should be practiced and name calling among the people groups should be avoided. The hill districts are resided by different tribes while the valley accommodates all groups of the populace and dominated by Meitei. Most economic, political and social activities of the state are localized in the valley. Hills although occupy eighty percent of the land, the population is sparse and terrains are not fully accessible in many places. Therefore, most economic development occurs around the capital city of Imphal, which has been a source of resentment for other peripheral communities, especially the tribal population in the hill. The social frontal organizations and politicians should pay attention to the development of peripheral towns and socio-economic advancement of the people. This will ensure the sense of belongingness to the state at large, and also will attract citizens from neighboring states and country to Manipur towns for business, which will contribute to Manipur economy. Politicians should give a serious thought on this aspect.

Slide 3. Manipur is a agricultural society – more than 80% of the population are engaged in agriculture and there are very few business and industrial opportunities for employment. Therefore, government

jobs are in high demand. The developmental evolution of a society begins with agriculture. This is especially true for the tribal communities and villagers, who solely depend on the land for livelihood. Therefore, we should pay attention to the development of agricultural technology and methods and welfare of the farmers and villagers – who are marginalized and less influence on socio-political affairs. Next step is to create an intellectual society, which is essential for advancing forward to a modern and globalize community of Materialism. Manipur unfortunately jump into the Material society directly from the primitive agriculture based economy to industrialized material world during the World Word II and after joining India. Without the intellectual society step, people are not able to discriminate what is essential and what is a luxury. Materials are unlimited but without proper education and reasoning power we deep in to corruption and power hungry for personal gains. This is the sad (his)story of Manipur today. Each person is for his own, and each community does not believe other community and vice versa. We are suspicious of outsiders and classify each other in terms of – Us and Them. We need to pay attention to the education of children of Manipur as a whole, not just rewarding a select few

“When the sun shines on the hill top of Manipur, then the fog on the valley will be cleared”



- Lalit Pukhrambam
NAMA Convention 2011, New Jersey

toppers in the exams. Sending our children to other states for primary and secondary education will lose Manipur's money, and mostly the children will lack emotional connection to the people and land when they are away from childhood. People never forget where they were born but they love and identify themselves to the place where they grew up in their early life to teens. World class schools are needed for our kids to compete globally from their own homes.

Slide 4. We blame most of the problems faced in Manipur today to the lack of Economic Development. However, we forget that Social Harmony and Political Stability are the engines that drive for economic development. We have to work on all three pillars of social development, simultaneously. One cannot live without the other. There arises the need for close interaction and communication between societies and ethnic groups in Manipur – people to people contacts are necessary. People's dialogues should be initiated and continued, not only at the comfort of GM Hall or Imphal Hotel but also, to the hill tops at various districts, towns, and villages. Meiteis being the majority community has a bigger role in the process.



Slide 5.

Some of the highlights and discussions above, provide a clear and present danger in Manipur, and immerges a hopeful co-existence of all communities prosper side by side, holding hands and moving forward. There are more reasons why Manipur should be together than tear apart to pieces. Forces that pull us toward disintegration are I. first social (tribal-nontribal, hill-valley, Hindu-Christian-Muslim), II. second political (Valley centric policies) and III. third Economic imbalance. These issues need to be addressed in a long-term.

“When the sun shines on the hill top of Manipur, then the fog on the valley will be cleared”



- Lalit Pukhrambam
NAMA Convention 2011, New Jersey

When the sun rises on the hill top of Manipur NAMA 2011



Then the fog on the valley will be clear

strategy and conscious. We need to pay attention to the marginal population. Like in most cities in India and the US, Imphal being the capital city of Manipur will always be ahead of other towns and district headquarters. That is not the fault of Imphal or Meiteis. This is the history of Manipur and its people for millennia. However, Politicians both in the Hill and Valley need to pay attention to the development of peripheral towns. “When the sun shines on the hill top of Manipur, Then the fog on the valley will be clear”.

Rekha Kansom is pursuing her doctoral research at the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi university. A graduate of Miranda House, she has completed her M.A. and M.Phil under the same department. Her present research addresses the festival of Lai Haraoba celebrated among the Meiteis with special reference to the context of Manipur.

Inputs for the article are drawn from personal experience and from the author's fieldwork

Beginning from late spring till the onset of monsoon, the call of the *pena** in the morning and the boisterous beat of drums in the evening reverberate across the valley of Manipur. The wafting music officially announces the season of the Lai Haraoba festival. Various neighbourhoods gear up to make their festival a grand event. The Lai Haraoba festival is held in honour of the umanglai deities whose shrines are spread out across the Meitei inhabiting areas – from the hills and the valley of Manipur to the pockets of Meitei settlement beyond the state. At these shrines, the festival is held for several days. It may last for a minimum of three days to more than a month. For the duration of these days, the neighbourhood wears a festive air.

Growing up in one such neighbourhood, my childhood memories are interlaced with Lai Haraoba festivals in my neighbourhood in which I used to participate with my friends. The dancing drums would be beating more than a month prior to the festival as people practice dance presentations. For those few days of the festival, the ground of the neighbourhood umanglai shrine would become the centre of activities. In the mornings people would bring in offerings of flowers, fruits, rice grains and assemble to listen to the divination of the spirit mediums. The evenings were the high point of the festival. At the first beat of the drum at around 3.30 in the evening, we would start getting ready and by the third beat several people would be assembled at the compound of the umanglai shrine. The Lai Haraoba was my dance school. It introduced me to the basics of dance before I even knew what Meitei jagoi (Manipuri dance) was. It was special because I got to wear my embellished velvet blouse and set it off with flowers on my hair. This idyllic nostalgia is, however, accompanied by blood stained memories of a young man shot in broad daylight. The splash of blood on the bamboo frames, the wail of the victim's mother in her bloodied *phanek*** and a deserted procession on a stormy night remains a part of my Lai Haraoba memories.



Figure 1: glimpses of the festival

*pena** : An indigenous fiddle instrument that is inseparably associated with the Lai Haraoba

*phanek*** : The sarong or lower garment worn by women

Aside from my idyllic nostalgia, the blood stained bamboo frames reminds me of the social context in which the festival is celebrated.

Origin of the Lai Haraoba:

The Lai Haraoba is an important religious festival of the Meiteis. It celebrates creation. In the Meitei belief, the universe was created under the command of the Supreme Being. Known by different names such as Tengbanba Mapu, Sidaba Mapu, Atiya Guru Sidaba, he is the source from which all manifestation begins and to which all ultimately return. The spirit beings are the first to be created followed by different orders of living beings before human beings are finally created. Aseeba is the deity assigned with the task of creation. With the aid of several other deities, he completes the task despite obstacles. At the completion of the task, they get together to celebrate at the hillock of Koubru reminiscing their activities in creation. The festival of Lai Haraoba is said to have its roots in this festival of the deities celebrating **creation***.

The umanglai deities are the deities who were part of the process of creation. There are other stories about how the festival originated. The **Chakpa**** people of Andro hold the bancestors who happened to sight the festival of the deities

While hunting for a deer, the quarry led them into the deep recess of the forest where they chanced upon the gathering of deities. They stood mesmerised, watching the deities intently in their hidden place. Later on, they tried to replicate the

acts of the deities, and that is how the Lai Haraoba came to be celebrated by them.

The name 'Lai Haraoba' is said to have been derived from lai hoi laoba, the cry of 'hoi'. It refers to the segment in the creation story when the Supreme Father opens his mouth and shows Aseeba an image of the various creations that would inhabit the newly created universe. Amazed by what he sees, Aseeba utters a cry and tries to drive them out. Deriving from this cry, the festival celebrating creation is said to have taken its name as Lai Haraoba referring to that moment of revelation.

The dance rituals of the Lai Haraoba:

The rituals of the Lai Haraoba are not uniformly observed but show significant regional variations. Hence, there have been attempts to classify them into different types. Despite these variations, the rituals of the festival can be grouped into three parts: lai eekouba, haraoba rituals and the lairoi. The initiatory rituals of lai eekouba on the first day invite the presence of the divinities for the occasion of the festival while the

Creation* : There are several stories of the origin of the Lai Haraoba, this is one of them.

Chakpa ** A sub-section of Meitei people, the Chakpas further consists of sub-groups each of which inhabit different pockets of settlement spread out along the foothills. The Chakpa village of Andro is situated east of the Imphal valley.

lairi rituals on the last day bids farewell and concludes the event.

The haraoba rituals are held in between the two sets of rituals. The description here is confined to the Kanglei Lai Haraoba, the type that is observed in and around the Imphal area. Most umanglai shrines remain closed throughout the year. For the event of the festival, the doors would be ritually opened and the sacred paraphernalia arranged accordingly. The images of the deities would be adorned with new clothes and fineries taken out from storage to decorate it.



Figure 2: image of an umanglai decorated for the festival

The first day of the festival is a relatively quiet affair. On this initiatory day, the rituals of lai eekouba invite the presence of the deity at the shrine for the occasion of the Lai Haraoba. Through the eekouba rituals, the deity is drawn up from a nearby water body. The ritual paraphernalia is then infused with the presence of the sacred which qualitatively sets it apart in time and space from the mundane every day. The glamour and gaiety associated with the Lai Haraoba is downplayed on the first day but from the second day onwards, it takes centre stage in the evening rituals. In place of the simple white attires of the previous day, the white costumes of the maibis are colourfully embellished with sparkly accessories and lovely flowers. They don on their sharong to perform the intricate dance rituals. This red-bordered knee length skirt worn atop the white lower garment is a special costume associated with the dance rituals of the Lai Haraoba. The different segments of the dance rituals bring out different aspects of the creation story.

Laiching jagoi: Creation begins with the creation of the deities who then shape the layers of the skies and the layers of the underneath. The evening dance rituals of haraoba commences with the maibis dance indicating the beginning of creation.

It also draws out the sacred from inside the shrine to the performing area for the day's rituals. Laibou chongba: Human beings are then created. Inside the womb, the different parts of the human body are constructed and the baby is born in the tenth month. The birth is rejoiced. As the baby grows, the satisfaction of his needs have to be met – shelter, clothing and carnal desires. Construction of house, cultivation of cotton and fishing follows.

Chungkhong litpa: lai sanaba or the play of the male and female deities around the poles of the canopy after which the sacred is deposited inside the shrine.

Each day of the Lai Haraoba ends with the in-gathering rituals. The deities are put to sleep with the recitation of a naosumba (lullaby) by the pena player. The shrine doors would be closed until the next morning when they would be woken up by the yakeiba (awakening) recitation and another day would begin. The lairoi rituals close in the sacred time and space that the festival had opened up. It signals the end of the break and resumption of life back to the mundane. The deities are not put to sleep, instead they are given farewell.



Figure 3: Glimpses of the dance of Lai Haraoba

The decorated assemblage of the deities that had been set up for the festival would be dismantled and the sombre image of the non-festive brought back. The shrine is prepared for the slumber until the next year when it would be opened once again and the cycle of creation thus renewed.

Concluding thoughts:

Writing on a festival that celebrates creation and emphasizes continuity, my thoughts as I wrap up this piece are not about a conclusion but about continuity. My association with the Lai Haraoba is not a tryst but a journey, a journey that started with my girlhood and continues into my adult life.

It is tinged in girlhood nostalgia and coloured by field interactions of a researcher, but it is also hued by blood-stained memories that contextualise a disturbed Manipur. The Lai Haraoba has also undergone changes through the vagaries of time. In the contemporary times, the festival has become preponderant with the increase in the number of shrines hosting it. Along with it, the preservation of its traditions has become an important concern for many people while for yet others, it is a festive event that provides some relief to a conflict-ridden society. I conclude with the thought that a seven and a nine does not always make a sixteen. Mathematically it adds up to sixteen but within the Lai Haraoba, it remains seven and nine attributed to the seven female deities and nine male deities of creation. It is not evened. Continuity is shaped by the need to even out a precarious balance. It is the striving for balance and the need to even out that takes life forward.



New NAMA Members



I am from Sangai prou , Imphal. Married to Pramodini Khumukcham and blessed with two sons – Bosco (11 years) and Boris (4 years). Just relocated from Kuala Lumpur to Houston in Sept 2013 as Field Service Manager, Schlumberger. Looking forward to meeting all NAMA members in NAMA Convention this year at California.



I am Maniratan, software engineer and have recently moved to Seattle from Bangalore with my wife Romila Tongbram and our beautiful daughter.

Wishes:

NAMA has given us a home away from home. We are overjoyed by the love and care we got from our brothers and sisters. We wish NAMA a successful journey ahead.



Preetam Yenkokpam and Family in Washington





Chagempomba:

It is a mathel prepare from broken granules of rice with vegetables. A whole some dish itself. Chagem is the broken pieces of rice granules. In olden days removing of rice husk is done in Shumbal a wooden or stone made which has a hollow in the centre for the rice to put in. A long round wooden pole is use to pound the rice to remove the husk. While doing this some of the rice granules become broken. This broken rice is called Chagem. It is separated from the unbroken rice. This Chagem is use in cooking Chagempomba, Chagem utti, and in other utti also.

Ingredients: 5 servings.

Chagem(or rice) 1 cup. 2. Green leafy vegetables. I prefer Hawaii maton and yelang for my Chagempomba (Hangam makes it watery) 250 gms. 3. Hawaijar 5/6 Tbls. 4. Maroi nakuppi/napakpi, fresh coriander leaves, ginger, hairibop(Fresh or dry), green chili and Pakhon. 5. Ngari(If cooking non veg.) 40/50 gms. 6. Smoke fish(For non veg.) 7. Salt to taste. 8. Turmeric Powder 1 ½ Tbls. 9. Dry chili or Chili powder if desire. 10. Fresh green peas and yongchak can be added. 11. Oil 2 Tbls, cumin seed, bay leave, maroi nakuppi and dry chili for Tempering.

My Method:

Soak the ngari in a bowl pouring hot water and cover it. In a heavy base cooking pot put in the Chagem(or rice) and 9/10 cups of water and cook it. When the chagem(or rice) becomes semi cook add the chopped green leafy vegetables, hairibpo if it is dry one, soaked ngari along with the water, chopped maroi and ginger. Continue cooking till the chagem and vegetables become as one. Now add hawaijar, turmeric powder, chili and salt. Continue cooking for sometimes and add fresh green peas, yongchak etc. At this time you can give the Tempering (Sok touba) and add the smoke fish also. Check the amount of water if it becomes very thick you can add some water. Just checked whether the peas are cook or not. If cooked remove it from heat and let stands for sometimes. Now garnish it with Pakhon(Dill), fresh coriander leaves and split green chili and stir it thoroughly. Safe some garnishing to put on the serving bowls. Now your Chagempomba is ready.

Happy Cooking.





Chakhum Corner

Chagempomba Recipe

: By Lourebam Bireshwar





Ingredients : 250 gm small fish, small bunch of nakuppi, 8 green chillis, a slice of fresh turmeric root, 1/2 tsp turmeric powder, 2 tsp cooking oil, salt, hing, banana leaf.

Steps :

1. clean the small fish. Drain the water and put them in a bowl.
2. Sprinkle some hing.
3. Slice the green chillies into halves. Grate the tumeric root.
4. Mix the sliced green chillies, grated turmeric, cooking oil, salt thoroughly and keep aside for 30 minutes.
5. Place the mixed ingredients on a cleaned banana leaf and wrap it properly (This is best if we use turmeric leaf). Wrap the banana leaf in the aluminum foil.
6. Preheat oven to 400 degree F. Bake it for 45 minutes at 400 F and follow by another 45 minutes at 350 F



Caricatures

Drawn by famous cartoonist - Manas Maisnam

ABENAO & BONNY



"Laibak yamna fabani nanaogidi. Tamo Manas Maisnam-bushu nanaona hainingai leitana thagatchari. Loinana NAMA busu taubimal khangba utchari" - Bonny Sharma - Actor, Singer

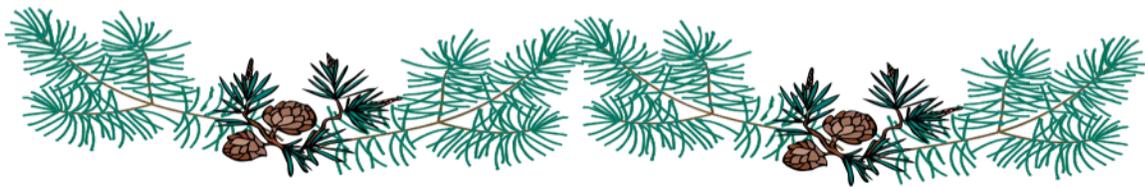
Imoinu Celebration by NAMA Members



Imoinu Celebration in Cincinnati

Uthum (Water Cock)

Photographed in Manipur by Ruhikant Meetei



Houston-Manipur! We have lift off!

By Roshan Ngangom

It all started when Pratiksha Joshi Raghuwanshi contacted Sameeta Angom about the ICC's Independence Day celebration about a month before the event (August 25, 2013) was to take place. One of the performance proposed for the event was 'United India' organized by Mr. Yash Havalimane. The idea was to display the diverse culture of India. The performance was to last about 45 mins. within which fifteen groups were given three minutes each to present something relevant to their local culture. Our group was given the onus of representing North-East India. We were in a bind initially as time was short, resources limited and we lacked experience with performances of such level in Houston. The classic question of "who is going to do what and how" made us anxious. We had to come up with a theme song, slide show of Manipur, introductory speech & the performance, all in a couple of weeks. At one point we even thought of backing out as we thought we would not be able to do justice. But we decided to go ahead with it. we decided to walk the ramp displaying the colorful traditional dresses of Manipur. First we had to find participants and then the required costumes. Sameeta contacted Iche Lily Haokip, Ruati (who's family moved to Houston from Bay Area in California), Sarju Laishram, Rabina Mangsatabam and the ever adventurous Iche Shanti Thokchom to be part of the team.

Iche Lily's three children Nenghoikim, Sharon, Patten and Amy, Ruati's sons Randy and Marcus, along with our children Cyra and Laksh were enlisted as participants for the presentation. Then, it was we learnt that Pratiksha's sister-in-law Vrinda and her niece Anya will be visiting the same weekend when the event was scheduled to take place. They were also roped in as participants. One day Sameeta was having a casual conversation with one of her good friend Ms. Jabali Patel about the event and our participation; she thought that it would be cool for her kids to dress up in traditional Manipuri costumes and thus her children Keisha and Riti became part of the performance.

"Sana Leibak Manipur" became the obvious choice for the theme song for the presentation. For the slide show, we received numerous contributions from the members of the Facebook group Manipur Photography Club for which we are very grateful.

Houston-Manipur! We have lift off!

By Roshan Ngangom

All of us got together at our residence for lunch for the first on 17th of August and did trial runs before heading off for the rehearsals the very next day in Katy, TX. During the course of the rehearsal, we further improvised our presentation. The following Friday night, two days before the event we had another rehearsal. Two groups were formed to enter from either sides of the stage. I was to usher one of the groups while Sameer Raghuvanshi (Pratiksha's Husband) was to usher the other. Everyone was exhausted and we decided that we have done what we could, given the constraints. One thing we were banking on despite the lack of preparation was the fact that not many people in the audience would have been exposed to the unique colorful costumes of Manipur.

Anya and Vrinda reached Houston the evening before the scheduled event. Iche Shanti reached Houston late Saturday night after yet another adventurous flight path (that's a whole another story by itself).

On the day of the event all of us met at our residence to get ready. Sameeta took charge of make-up for all the female participants. We were able to squeeze in a final dress rehearsal before leaving for the event.

we reached the event venue about half an hour before the scheduled time. Our team was the sixth group to feature in the "United India" performance. As planned I was ushering our participants on the right and Sameer the ones on the left of the stage. As if our anxiety was not enough, Laksh got cranky just before we hit the stage. he was on the group Sameer was ushering but at the very last minute Sameer and I had to switch places. I was able to calm him down just in time to send him out on to the Stage. From that point onwards there was no turning back - literally! On Jabali's insistence, Sameer and I took the ramp as a last minute addition to what had already been planned. Luckily, we made it within the allotted time (which was one of our major concerns). The receptions we got were tremendous. After our performance, several people came up to compliment us. We felt that all of our scrambling and anxiety was worth it. Pratiksha brought gifts for all the participants - Thank you Pratiksha!. We plan to organize a get together in a few weeks' time. we heard the news that our group "United India" was gifted \$500 by a well-wisher. Mr. Havalimane plans to organize a get together with the 110+ participants of the group. Thus, ended one of the most memorable group event of my life.



The overwhelming response we received gave all of us the confidence and the motivation to perform again in such stages in the future.

I would like to thank the Iche Lily's family for providing colorful costumes; Ruati's family, Jabali and family for their active participation; Oja Sarita for providing Firup, Iche Shanti for travelling all the way from Tulsa, Oklahoma just for this event (she was literally on the road for two days for a 3 minutes performance); Sarju & Rabina for taking out time for the performance and finally Pratiksha & Sameeta for coordinating the entire event. I also want thank my partner in crime, Sameer Raghuwanshi for his enthusiastic support despite his hectic schedule. I thank all - friends and families who showed up to extend their support. Special thanks to ICC & Mr. Havalimane for this opportunity.

****Participants:** Amy Haokip, Patten Haokip, Sharon Haokip, Kim (Nenghoikim) Haokip, Rabina Mangsatabam, Serju Laishram, Kiesha Patel, Riti Patel, Marcus, Randy, Anya Thakur, Cyra Ngangom, Laksh Nongpok Ngangom, Shanti Thokchom, Sameer Singh Raghuwanshi, Roshan Ngangom and Pratiksha Joshi Raghuwanshi.

****Behind the Scene heroes:** Sameeta Angom, Jabali Patel, Lily Haokip, Ruati

Hosting Sunil Oinam



Oinam Sunil is a Senior Editor with Times of India based in Guwahati. He was in US from 6th-16th January 2014 on a tour along with three other journalists.



