

REVITALISATION OF SANAMAHI LAINING

(SANAMAHISM)

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Abstract :-

Sanamahism is an ancient religion of Meiteis of Manipur. The story of religion is similar to the mythical story of ancient Greeks. The formation of univers and making King of the society and and story of SANAMAHI to be a household god of every household is the main theme of the story of Sanamahism also believe in the Sylvian deities also. Locally sylvian deities known as Umanglais. Every year performed in the festive season known as Lai Haraoba.

Key words:-

SANAMAHI	= God of every household
Umanglais	= Sylvian dieties
Maiba	= Preist
Maibee	= Preitess
Pakhangba	= Brother of God Sanamahi
Kangleipak	= Anceint name of Manipur

Revitalisation of Sanamahi Laining (Sanamahism)

Sanamahi religion is one of the oldest religion in south east Asia. It originated in Manipur, the worshipper communities are the Meiteis/Meiteis, Kabui and Ziliangrong and few other communities inhabited in Manipur, Assam, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Mynmar, Bangladesh, U.K., USA and Canada etc.¹

Lainingthou Sanamahi is the supreme deity of Sanamahism and son of Taibangpan Mapu, the supreme god and Mother was Leimarel Sidabi. His brother Pakhangba was the first king of Kangla. According to the traditional

story Sanamahi become the deity of every household of Meiteis. Thus Sanamahism become a faith, believe in Sanamahi.

After the Veisnavite period from Charairongba time which was forcefull in the time of King Garbaniwaz starts revitalization, resurface the undercurrent flowing under the meiteis. Its origin of open movement started under a Meitei, born in Cachar district of Assam in 1888. Naorem Phullo (Laininghal Naoria). As a police officer and teacher by profession, since from childhood in school, he had an intention to study Meitei religion and mayek because of taunted in his mind. In 1930 Naorem Phullo resigned from the government service and form Apokpa Marup in Cachar district of Assam. The wave of Meiteism starts in Manipur around 1934 and starts under the influence of Takhellambam Bokul (Sanamahi Bokul) but it was delayed because of invasion of Japanese forces in Manipur in the World War-II. Naorem Phullo was a critique of Brahmin superiority in Meiteis society and even confronted with the king and palace pandit Atombapu Sharma. Because of this he was ex-communicated from the masses.²

After the dead of Naorem Phullo in 1941, Takhellambam Bokul was the torched bearer of Meitei religion revitalization. In 1945, May 14, Meitei Marup was form as a branch of Apokpa Marup at Imphal with a motive to revive the old tradition. It was founded with 19 members including Bokul as the president. The resolution which were taken in that day were:

- 1) Decision to revive Meitei Culture.
- 2) To re-introduce to archaic script.
- 3) Study the ancient Manipuri literature.
- 4) To use Manipuri language in worship.

In later stages they determined reclaim the ancient deities from the name of Hindu God (To get rid of Hindu names), the hardship in Phullo time was Brahmo Shabha oppose violently as punishment exclusion or expelled from the masses were very frequent phenomenon. Even in the time of Bokul in 1947 formally outcaste a group of 38 member and refused other access to the religion rites.

On the other hand Sanamahism was not an anti-hinduism a much cultural than as religious movement. In the Veisnavism period of anskritisation, the Sanamahism favoured for the revitalize or to return its own ancient religion of forefather.

According to Sairem Nilbir sum up the aims of Sanamahism as

- 1) Renouncing of Hinduism.
- 2) Discarding theories that attempt to sanskritize Meitei religion.

- 3) Reviving traditional (pre-hindu) Meitei religion, Culture, language, script and literature and accommodating to the modern situation.
- 4) Strengthening unity between Meiteis and hill people (Naga and Kuki) of Manipur.
- 5) Fostering unity between the Meiteis of Manipur and the Meitei diasphora.
- 6) Encouraging research into the history of Manipur.
- 7) Publicizing the distinctiveness of ancient of Culture Meitei.

In 1970s and 1980s, the movement of Sanamahism was increased its momentum with many educated people were joined with its pride of original religion and denounced the forcefull act of the Manipuri King. The burned down of Manipuri old scripts in the time Garibaniwaz started to observed as black day under the civil society organization from 1978 in every year.³

The first condolence of puya mei-thaba was observed by the follower of Sanamahi religion in the morning of 23rd day of Wakching (December January) 1978. About 500 books written on Hinduism were burn on pyre. The seven colour flag of Meitei were half mast. The effegies of King Garibaniwaz and Shanti Das were burnt down.

In front of Kangla Utara (inside the old palace compound within the Kangla Fort), on 21st January 1979 with a condolence of the lost book on pyre observed openly and Meitei National Front an social organization observed a procession in black dress. In that day also burnt down the images of King Garibaniwaz and Shanti Das including the manipuri version of Bangali Script Mahabarat and Gita with unknown numbers. On the initiatives of Sanamahi follower Saraswasti Puja on Educational Institution were banned and instead of Durga Puja, Panthoibi worship was introduced.

For the Royal annulment of the conversion of Meiteis into Hindu religion, the Meitei National Front approached to titular king R.K Okendrajit to issue a statement annulling the conversion of Meiteis into Hinduism. Maharaj Okendrajit performed with priest at Lilong with declaration Nongkhrang Pareihanba as below as official.

A History of Modern Manipur (1826-2020)

Proffessor : Gangmumei Kamei

Annexure

DECLARATION OF REVIVAL (PAREIHANBA) OF SANAMAHI RELIGION

“I, the king of Manipur, Okendrajit, son of (Late) King Bodhchandra, do hereby exercise my power, authority, rights on the religion, custom of my beloved people of the country to safeguard the extinguishing culture of my motherland, that from today the 23rd April 1992, (the 21st of Shachibu), one time suppressed and subdued religion, culture, custom and tradition of Meitei Eenaat, i.e. “The Lainingthou Sanamahi Pakhangbaism” is restored and revived from conversion and adoption of Hinduism since the 18th century by “The Maharaja Pamheiba (Garibaniwaz) and Maharaja Chingthangkomba (Bheigyachandra) from today effect. I declared, “PAREIHANBA” once it was done by the then aforesaid kings of the country as “PAREILEISINBA” in the interest of the people of the country. I open the Lubaak Taabu and abandon Hinduism as state religion and recognition is hereby withdrawn from the Royal Customary Law of the Country, instead, “The Royal customary Law revived Lainingthouism as State Religion and do hereby give recognition as State Religion”.

Further, along with the revived “Lainingthouism”, all the properties either in kind or customary courts which were annexed with Hinduism and Govinda cults are again restored to the Pakhangba Customary Court, all the Hindu names placed on the deity gods and goddesses of the country are again restored to the original names of the particular gods and goddesses, e.g. Mahabali into Mongba Hanba...Hiyangthang Lairembe, Baruni Mahadeva into Nongpok Ningthou Apaanba, Thangjing Mahadeva into Thangjing Lainingthou, Jivistha into Pakhangba, Visnu into Lainingthou Sanamahi etc. All the traditional and customary functions of the Deity Gods and Goddesses shall be performed into Meitei Laining Law by the Meitei devotees only.

The Declaration covers the revival of the Unitary body of the Hill and the Plain people which was once divided by the Hindu pandits. There shall be no question of touchability and untouchability among the Hill and Plain people which was forced by the Hindu cult. Hence those who want to suffix the title “HAO” (tribal) in their Yek, he is to choose and shall include in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of the Indian Union and shall recognize constitutionally.

The Kangla is the Holiest Place for the Meitei Laining, it is opened to all the

believers and devotees of the Meitei Laining and awarded to function and celebrate all kinds of religious rites and performances according to the Meitei cult, and awarded to reconstruct the lost and damaged structure in the Kangla and all its related places.

From today, the country shall have a Royal Court as it was in the past. It is highest in its form, no judicial court of the country shall hold trial regarding tradition and religion and moreover, the verdict of this court is final, even the Supreme Court cannot interfere regarding the religious matter.

I swear in the name of the Almighty Pakhangba that I shall abide by the revived custom and religious law of the Meitei Eenaat and shall act without fear and favouritism. I will do for the just cause of the people of the country for the future betterment of the people and the country.

Hence, I did PAREIHANBA according to my authority given by the Holy Spirit of the Almighty the Creator and the people of my beloved country as their own trusted King of the country. This Declaration brings our spiritual and physical unity of the Hill and Plain people and remain as one unique body.

We were one and shall be one, no more division shall be allowed.

Thanks

Ningthourel Okendrajit
Meitei Ningthourel Yaiphaba
Langon Ningthou Apannba
Sana Konung, Imphal

23/4/92

(Reproduced from A.S.W. Shimray, History of the Tangkhul Nagas, 2001, Appendix I pp. 252 - 255)

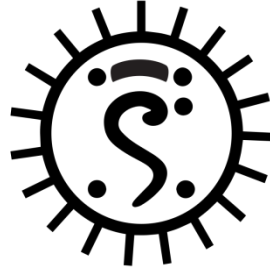
(FROM, - A HISTORY OF MANIPUR (1926-2020) PROFESSOR GANGMUMEI KAMEI

(This declaration of annulment of the conversion of Hinduism and return to the Lainingthou Pakhangbaism was the culmination of series of action leading to the restoration of the Sanahami religion.⁵

The movement of Sanamahism generated the Meitei nationalism in modern time with revive of Satjal. It was formed under R.K. Guneshwor in 1934 and latter on his son R.K. Manisana was the leader of the organization with different name Scientific Defense organization in 1967 and U.F.O in 2003 till today.

One of the most important deities of Manipur, Sanamahi, the term itself derived from the literally meaning "Spreading like liquid everywhere".⁶ In every household have in a proper place according to Meitei yumshalol

(Vastu Shastra) preserved an area called Sanamahi Kachin were dedicated to Leimarel Sidabi and Phunga (a fire place in a house). This is also seen in modern Meitei families who identify with sanamahism.⁷



Symbol of Sanamahism

Sanamahism practices focus on food of cooked and uncooked offering to deities with hymns and oracular ritual whereby priestices become possessed by a god or goddess. For example in Lai Haraoba festival has an offering formula to call the gods, uttered by a priestess over a body of water as translated in English as

In carnate lord, Lairen (Dragon)

Deity pakhangba, O golden one,

Goddess of waters, Ruler of the River,

Golden Goddess (Laisana) fair and beautiful one for you,

Lord and lady, in order to call up your souls,

We have poured the rice on the finest banana leaves,

And on it have placed the fertile egg

and langthrei buds.

We do not offer you the ordinary Khayom (offering packed), we offer you yours own Khayoms

And we have tied them with the seven bamboo strips.

Which (represent) the Seven days of the week

We offer you Khayoms as they are tied thus

Lord and Lady, we beseech you

Ascend from within the Khayom riding along the hires.⁸

Some mantras are also esoteric as a part of Sanamahism for various purposes. For example in the mystical text Sanamahi Naiyom provides several formulas, such as mantra that is believed to stop rain: Hung Krung Hung Krung Ta (8x) Ah (2x) Chat Huk (2x) Hing Hing Huk Su Sa Hing Hing Lek Sal Let hing Ma Pan.⁹

The important Sanamahi Festival are :

- 1) Sanamahi Ahong Khong Chingba
- 2) Lai Haraoba
- 3) Mera Hao Chongba
- 4) Mera Chaorel Houba
- 5) Kwak Tanba
- 6) Panthoibi Eratpa
- 7) Emoinu Eratpa
- 8) Sajibu Cheiraoba
- 9) Heikru Hidongba etc.

The five main deities of Sanamahism are **Asheeba** – Protector and the guardian god of the mankind.

Atingaa Koilou Sitapa - Creator of the universe

Apanba – Ruler of the Universe and the destroyer of the evils.

Leimarel Sidabi – She is the earth goddess.

Imoinu Ahongbi – She is the incarnation of the Goddess Leimarel, she herself is goddess of wealth and prosperity.

The other deities of sanamahism are Panthoibi, Lainingthou, Nongpok Ningthou, Lainingthou Koubru, Ibudhou Marjing, Thongarel, Wangbren, Eputhou Thangjing, Kounu, Nongshaba, Nongthangleima etc.

In the relentless effort of many son of the soil erected Sanamahi Temple board and Temple was erected in 1st Manipur Riffle Compound in 1976 with the help of Manipur Government.¹⁰

Instead of Singh and Devi, the new generation of Hindu Meitei or Meitei started adding Meitei in male and chanu in female as last name.

Sanamahism discarded the chandan with long stripe was given up and only a Tilak in forehead called Laisha namba represent as a symbol of Sanamahism. The ritual which performed since from birth to death were also started to perform in some family according to the sanamahism because of realization of forcefull conversion of King Garibaniwaz.

In the present scenario of manipur valley Meiteis, there are two groups they are goudiya vaisnavism and Meitei Marup (Sanamahism). Both the institution are running without animosity and according to the will of the family.

Under the relentless effort of an IAS officer Late R.K. Birendro Singh revitalization of Sanamahism was recognized by the India Government to include on census report.

In the census of 2011, there are 8% of population are follower of Sanamahism in Manipur Valley.

Even the Meitei Script under the umbrella of Sanamahism included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 20th August, 1992 as a historical landmark.

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