

Hornbill Festival makes way to a Bohemian New Year Revelry



Comments 5



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The people of Nagaland have witnessed the humble beginning of the Hornbill Festival in 2001 in Kohima Local ground, the venue of which has been changed to Kisama now. The festival has been named after the Hornbill a bird (Dhanesh Chiriya) which is abundantly referred to in Naga customs and traditions. But this bird which signifies the Naga identity is almost extinct due to mindless killing and lack of thick forest - their breeding place. The Naga cultural troupes today use paper feathers and wooden Hornbill in cultural festivals since there is no living Hornbill easily traceable in Nagaland. If a Hornbill sanctuary is developed in the outskirts of Kisama along with all other colorful chirping birds found in Nagaland it would be an added charm to the festival. There are rare beautiful flowers-wild and domestic-found in Nagaland. Again, there are rare and precious medicinal plants still abundantly found in Nagaland. If one refers to the book - Medicinal Plants in Nagaland, written by S.C. Deorani, Principal Secretary to Govt. of Nagaland, Forest Dept. Kohima you will notice that Deorani has done a commendable job by writing this book. But due to rapid deforestation and resultant climate change these rare and precious herbs and shrubs with high medicinal value are slowly and gradually getting extinct forever. The whole world is now reverting back to traditional way of healing and Ayurvedic medicines because of the side effect syndrome of Allopathy. Baba Ramdev Maharaj of Patanjali Yog Mandir (Trust) of Haridwar, Uttarakhand has enlightened the world about the significance of Ayurvedic medicines, traditional healing systems and Yoga for healing ailments and to strengthen the immune system, reduce stress and improve balance and posture.

Again, the forests of Nagaland is rich in wildlife with variety of animals. I have seen a rodent – very beautiful and lovely, rolled itself like a small ball, sometimes like small wheel with blackish-brown hair at the body, being sold in Naga Bazar, Kohima for 40-50 rupees only. It would hardly offer 200-250 grams of meat but this rare mammal is killed mercilessly without giving a second thought to preserving wildlife in Nagaland. Though hunting of hornbills is banned in Nagaland but villagers kill this almost extinct bird and sell it to VIPs for 500-1000 rupees to decorate their drawing rooms. If (i) a well-managed bird-sanctuary attached with a zoological garden for wildlife (ii) a botanical garden for rare and available medicinal plants (iii) flower garden with power-generated fountain show with focus of multi-colour beam of light on fountains are established in Kisama, these will attract the tourists and traders beyond imagination. The Vrindavan Garden – a flower garden with colourful fountains with music near Bangalore (Karnataka) is revenue-earning and tourist-alluring famous spot in Karnataka State. Kisama can also be developed in that way. Lucknow Zoo with its crocodile-rearing project is a tourist attraction of international significance. Why can't Kisama have something of that kind? Rather, Kisama will be more charming because of beauty of hills and greenery with a pollution free atmosphere. The indigenous crafts from Nagaland and NE region displayed in sale counters and indigenous fine arts created by local talents presented in befitting manner in Kisama Mela will focus on the indigenous talents from Naga society which will bring more money and find more markets outside the states. The valleys surrounding Ghashpani (Medziphema) can be developed into a lake by constructing dams and canals on the line of Barapani lake near Shillong. It will serve as fishery, water reservoir for drinking, irrigation and breeding ground for lily and lotus flower. It will also attract seasonal migratory birds. Trekking at Saramati Mountain in Tuensang and of Dzuku Valley near Kosama is of great tourist significance. Once explored, it will be seen that there are many more avenues and scope to develop tourism industry in Nagaland.

Hornbill festival is aimed at showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Naga society. This has moral and ethical bearing on the cultural aspects on contemporary society. It is not only fun and frolic but the meaning and significance behind these festivals, the mother of all festivals (Hornbill festivals), has to address. The young generation of Naga society needs to synergise the contemporary life-styles with their cultural moorings and perhaps this would be the best way to achieve the objective of showcasing the Naga's cultural heritage as well as to guide the young generation towards building a moral and ethical society as rightly pointed out in the editorial column in Nagaland Post dated 9/12/2007. If these steps are taken it is not necessary for Naga girls to attract national and foreign tourists in a demeaning manne. Naga ladies have, unlike westerners, the chastity and sanctity of their personality. In Naga society, women and men are equal partners and compliment each other in the family and society. This must be upheld. The spice-girls' culture must be prevented from penetrating into Naga culture and heritage.

It is our experience in the tourist places like Jaipur, Udaipur, Varanasi, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Vrindavan (Mathura), Haridwar, Rameshwaram, Kanyakumari, Goa and dozens of other pilgrim places, the foreign tourists specially white men and women bring many bad traditions in our country. Their undisciplined life and spurious relation of men and women are very disgusting, stinking and injurious to just society. The Government of Nagaland and the Naga society are, therefore, required to move very cautiously on the path being opened for white tourists. Otherwise, the Government may earn revenue but Naga society will loose its precious culture as is now being felt in the case of change of religion which has caused rapid westernization and corresponding rapid degeneration of indigenous culture.

I was recently in Rajkot for attending a Seminar organized by Saurashtra University. That was the time of Navaratri Puja (Garva festival) which lasts for nine days. During this Garba festival men and women-assemble in the night and celebrate the festival by organizing Dandia dance till late hours at night. On having noticed the involvement of some boys and girls in immoral acts the Modi government of Gujrat banned this dance beyond twelve in midnight. Similarly, in Nagaland too, precautions should be taken now itself not very far from the beginning of Hornbill festival to check such negative developments. In Kumbh Melas, lakhs of Hindus assemble to have a holy dip in Ganga exhibiting pure heritage of the country. Thousands of Americans, Britons and other white men from every nook and corner of world visit Kumbh Melas not only to witness but to have holy dip in Ganga Mata. Similarly, Hornbill festival must present Naga heritage in unpolluted form and it should not deviate from the path leading to reach the goal.

There can be drama shows by local talents the theme being drawn from folk stories of Naga community. The Northeast Zone Cultural Council (NEZCC) Dimapur can play a significant role in breeding and bringing up Naga talents in collaboration with its counter-parts in other States. The Northeast region is very rich in variety of culture and people are very simple in thought and behaviour. The Hornbill festival can present the panorama of unexplored rich cultural heritage of Naga society and whole of the northeast region as well. For bringing an added charm Rasleela party from Vrindavan (UP), Ramleela party from Ayodhya (UP) and Kathakali from Kerala, Ravindra Nritya from Kolkata and several more cultural artists can be invited turn-by-turn. This will broaden the sphere of significance of Hornbill festival.

Hornbill festival is out and Christmas festival is in. The fun and frolic started during Hornbill festival will uninterruptedly continue till new years celebrations via Christmas revelry. Thousands of cows, buffalos,

mithuns, pigs and birds will be killed for Christmas feasts. The variety of wines have started flowing in the otherwise dry-State of Nagaland. The freedom of mixing of boys and girls in late night liquor parties give rise to many social evils. The parents appear to have lost their control over their children. Slowly and gradually the Hornbill festival followed by Christmas and New Year celebrations are being transformed into breeding and mating season. The spiritual aspect of Christmas festival is nowhere to be seen. This is not a healthy trend that is surfacing in the Naga society. This is because of rampant and rapid westernization of Naga society through English education and foreign religion. The Naga society should be aware of this fact and do the needful to bring back the society on correct path.

- Jagdamba Mall

editor

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