

Trans-border Tribe of Manipur in India : The ‘Anal ‘ a Short Ethnographic Study

Dr. Meheboob Hassan

Former, S.C. Roy Research Fellow

The Asiatic Society, 1, Park Street, Kolkata (W.B.)

Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India

E-mail- dr.meheboobhasan@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This survey done by me is based on the origin of Anals and to where they exactly belong to in geographical location. Special importance has been given to their social structural and their various rites and rituals. Their economic condition and principal of activities are a part of my survey. Beside, the religion of the Anals show their faith in the supreme power. The rapid changes in the economic, social, political and religious spheres have also been reflected in my survey.

Keywords: Trns-border, Kuki-Chins, Animist, Rites and rituals, Christianity.

Introduction:

Manipur state is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural state which is located eastern part of India and surrounding by Mirzoram, Assam, Nagaland, and eastern border of Myanmar and found the said community in the country of Myanmar . So, the Anal called as a trans-border tribal community in both India and Myanmar .According to the census of 2011 in India the total population is 1,23,377 of the said community. There are 33 recognised tribal people in Manipur state which there under the Nagas or Kukis, the two different conglomerates mainly from their distinctive indigenous dialects, customs, cultural traits and traditions. The Anal tribal community is one of the oldest tribal folks in southern hills of Tengnopal and chipkikaran district of Manipur state. Anal is a recognised as a tribal people after independence in the year of 1951. It is to

be noted from all reliable sources earlier this group were recognised as one of the oldest under Kuki tribal community but nowadays they are identified themselves as part of Naga tribal community.

Geographical Location:

The Anal tribal community have found of Manipur in India and upper part of Myanmar so, it CA be considered as turns-border tribal community. The ethnic Forentier cross the political boundaries of the two countries. Earlier the small group of the Tibeto-Burmans, speaking Kuki-Chin dialect migrated from Rugged Mountain and wider village of upper Burma now it called Myanmar country to the south western hill of Manipur across the Chin Hills. This tribal community established the cultural and political relations with the

Meiteis of the Manipur valley. Now they occupy Chakpi River Basin as their homeland. Moreover, ethnically and linguistically linked with the Kuki-Chin section of the Tibeto-Burmans. The oldest Anal had acquired social and cultural traits which are northern neighbour of the Nagas tribal community. Geographical situation has made the Anals a classic of the Bridge- Buffer community between the Nagas and Kukis of Manipur state. This had led to the problem of identity crisis of Anal community itself and socially divided into two Moieties- Masum and Mucham. Anal is recognised as among 33 tribal community in Manipur state and is one of the 19 Naga tribal community of Manipur. The Anal is one of the recognised Scheduled tribes of Manipur belonging to the Tibeto-Burman or Indo-Mongoloid family of Mongoloid people. They are called as trans-border tribal folks in Manipur state. The inhabited area of the Anal lies in Yomadung Range stretching from Manipur Valley to Kabaw Valley of Burma. According to 1981 census majority of them (93.91%) are concentrated in Tengnoupal district of Manipur but nowadays it also noted in the census of 2011 they found throughout India for the education and as well as their different jobs activities. The Anal villages are situated both in the eastern and western bank of the Chapki river which flows through the Anal country. Tengnoupal district, which lies in the border of Burma is the homeland of Anals. In the past they were migrated from Upper Burma to the south western hills of Manipur. They are also found in Burma now it the country of Myanmar. Regarding the etymological meaning of the word 'Anal', many theories exist. The popular theory is, the name is derived from the name of

their oldest village Anal Khullen and the name of the village was derived from the founder of the village, Angnal or Analpa. Grierson was of the opinion that the name Anal was given by the Meiteis.

As the Anals belong to the Mongolian race, so it is considered that they must have come from Mongolia and moved to Kabaw Valley region in Upper Burma in the trans Chindnin basin. The Anals possess the mongolian feature with prominent cheek-bones. They are also physically compared with the Kuki-Chins. Their complexion is darker than the Nagas, while the women have fair complexion than men. The eye form is oblique with upper slit like opening, total epicanthic fold is present in the upper lid. In men beard and body hair are scanty. Physically they are well built and healthy. They speak Kuki-Chin dialect.

Social Structure:

The Anals lived in patriarchal society. Although their society is patriarchal in nature, but for taking any vital decision in the family, male members are always consulted with the adult females. So in true sense it is not a male dominated, society. Their society is divided into two Moieties namely 'Mosum' and 'Mulchal', which are again sub-divided into a number of lineages. These moieties are exogamous groups. As the moieties are exogamous in nature, so in every Anal village these two above mentioned moieties should exist. Das, S.T.(1989) have noted seventy eight of such lineages in these two moieties. Family is the basic social unit, where senior most male member is the head of the family, who looks after all family matters and family management. They observe

elaborate ceremonies related to the different life-cycle rituals. During pregnancy period both husband and wife observe a number of taboos for quick and safe delivery of the child. The pregnant woman is not permitted to go outside the house after dark. She is not allowed to take the meat of any ferocious animal. Some restriction is also observed by the husband of the pregnant woman. He is not allowed to go for hunting, he is prohibited to attend any funeral ceremony. Delivery generally takes place in the house and the delivery is attended by the elderly village women, who are expert in this job. After child birth they observe a birth ceremony, which is officiated by the atbempu (village priest). In this ceremony the atbempu scarifies either a animal or a bird or wine. The economically well-off Anals also perform patha khol ceremony. Seven days after the child birth they observe name-giving ceremony, which is also officiated by the

atbempu. The selection of name of the newborn is done by the parents. Villagers, family members and others assemble to witness the ceremony. Among the Anals piercing ceremony prevail, which is celebrated at the completion of one year of the child. Marriage by service is practised by them. They try to follow strictly their traditional marriage rules. If any one violates the rule of moiety exogamy than he/she is excommunicated from the society. Three types of marriage are prevalent among them -

1. Vanu Vapa Poithompa (marriage by negotiation),
2. Vada Narel Ade (love marriage)
3. Pom Luhong (secret marriage)

Generally it is the duty of the boy's parents to take initiative regarding the marriage negotiation. Among the Anals marriage ceremony is an elaborate one, which consists of several ceremonies, such as Zula ceremony, Zupum ceremony, hmalsa and chalha. After Zupum ceremony is over, which is considered as proper marriage ceremony, the groom stay-in the bride's house for three years. During these three years. the groom give service to the bride's house this is a kind of bride-price for the girl. The groom whatever he will earn within these three years is also given to the bride's father. Bride-price is also prevalent among them. Pre-marital sex-relation is strictly prohibited. They bury the dead body. Each lineage have separate thang (graveyard) for their members. In case of unnatural death they bury the dead body outside the village. Funeral ceremony is performed by the village athempu. They believe that the souls of the dead return to live among their descendants. But those who have suffered some extraordinary death such as suicide, murder, accident and who are not buried within the village there is no chance of re-birth.

Economic Activities:

The Anals are primarily cultivators residing in permanent villages. Cultivation is the main source of their livelihood, the others being subsidiary. They practise two types of cultivation - i) Shifting cultivation and ii) wet cultivation. Paddy is their main crop. Besides paddy they also cultivate other cereals and crops. Both the sexes participate in different types of cultivation jobs. There is no restriction for doing any type of cultivation job among both the sexes in their society. Fishing

is an important occupation of this tribe, because they are not only fond of fish but they also very fond of fishing too. They practise fishing throughout the year. Both men and women participate in fishing.

The Anals have great enthusiasm for hunting. Hunting is a male job. Generally the young and adult ones take part in the hunting expedition but nowadays it has been checked and prohibited by the government forest service Act although they usually go for hunting as a game of traditional livelihood and with the breaking the Government laws and orders. They collect dry woods, leaves, bamboos, edible roots, tubers, fruits and different types of vegetables from the nearby forest for their daily use. Generally gathering activity is a female job. They earn some cash money by selling fuel woods to their neighbours, which they collect from the forest. A few of them are also earn their livelihood through service in government.

Religion:

The Anal ancient religious is usually referred as 'Animist' in nature. It is reported that since early 20th century the Anal began to imbrace the christianity and also in between 1910 and 1920 there were a few Anal converted into Christianity with the influence of colonial rules by British Government at that time and gradually increase the number of christens population increased despite of hard ship to compelled. The young generation of the Anal population ,now a days there are totally forgot there indigenou religious and change to practice in Christianity in the religious point of view.

Majority of the Anals follow the Christianity. Both the follower Baptists and Catholics sects are found among the Anals. These two sects have their own church. Pastor plays an important role in their religious life. The Christian Anals observe all the major Christian festivals like, Christmas day, New Year's day, Good Friday e., Easter Saturday etc., The non-Christian Anals follow their own tribal religion. They consider asapavan as the supreme God. The pantheon of the Anal Gods and Goddesses can be grouped into three categories i.e. deities of sky, deities of earth and household deities. They also believe in the concept of pathakthe (soul)

Political Organization:

The Anals have their own village political system. The function of the village council is to look after the over all administration of the village, distribute lands for 'Jhum' cultivation and also to undertake welfare works for the villagers. The members constituting the village council, come through election. They do not get any remuneration for their service as they consider it as social service for the benefit of the villagers. The Anals are politically organised at the village level Chiefs and their councillors administrators by three tier of panchayat raj control by state government. The village land properties are to be maintained by government laws, orders and justice. The coming of domestic norms with India's independence has affected the Anals political system. The greatest challenges and changes is in the realm of economic development of the Anal community. The traditional Jhum cultivators are facing the challenge due forest controlling and service Act. The terrace cultivation and educational changes have been taken place in the Anal society.

Social Change:

Some changes have taken place in the life of the Anals in the economic, social, political and religious spheres. Due to spread of curriculum based education now the young boys and girls go to schools and for this reason their level of literacy is increasing day by day, A few of them have taken Government service as their means of livelihood. In the social sphere those who have converted to Christianity have given up some of the taboos in connection with the life-cycle rituals, which they were observed in the past. For naming of a child now they have adopted some Christian names, instead of their traditional names. With the introduction of village Authority Act. in 1956, the members of the village council come through election instead of nominated by the villagers. Change of religious faith from their traditional religion to Christianity has brought some changes in the observance of festivals. Now-a-days they availed some modern facilities such as medical, post-office, animal husbandry etc. nomination in their day to day live.

Conclusion:

From the above mentioned all discussion it is observed that there some changes have been taken place in economic, social, political and religious life of Anal community themselves in Manipur. Their population is confined in particular pockets in Manipur and their population growth rate is slow. They are participating in formal education and their literacy rate and level of education gradually increasing day by day. The economic depending

on agriculture and domestic animals rearing informal way. They also practicing different kinds of economic activities of both genders like weaving woolen garments and others short of trailer jobs in a primary and secondary sources of income. The Christians Anal tribal people follow both Christians and traditional belief on supreme being 'As a Pavon' but at present majority of Anal population believe that they are Christian. The traditional religious of Anal is usually called as 'Animist' to Christians tribals folks. The state government accepted the traditional village of panchayat system of Anal and introduced it by a traditional of village Authority Act in 1956, the members of the village council come through election by panchayat raj instead of nominated by the villagers but occasionally the village chief also played the vital role for watching and controlling the social norms and values.

References:

1. Das, S.T. 1989. Life Style Indian Tribes, Vol.11, Gian, Publishing House, New Delhi.
2. Govt. of India, 1988. Census of India 1981, Series 13,
3. Msnipur, Part - IX Special Tables for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
4. Kabui, G. 1985. Anal - A Transborder Tribe of Manipur, Mittal Publications, Delhi.
5. Singh, Rajendra, 1981. The Anals of Manipur, Published by the directorate for welfare of tribals and backward classes, Manipur, p.82.

