



A BRIEF STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL SITE OF LANGTHABAL (CANCHIPUR)

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Abstract:

The Langthabal, which is now known as the Canchipur located on the side of the Indo-Myanmar road, Langthabalis famous for its partly-in-ruins palace. The ancient red- brick coloured structure is a reminiscence of the bygone era of Manipur's past, perched on a small hillock forested with green pine and jackfruit trees, this palace is a popular spot for all tourists who are on a visit to this beautiful state. Here, we find temples and other ceremonial sites apart from the palace itself. The current paper is a very brief study about these historical sites in the area mentioned above and tries to bridge the present with the past.

Keywords: Langthabal, Canchipur, Raslila, Hitorical Sites, Gambhir Singh.

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

The Langthabal, which is now known as the Canchipur located on the side of the Indo-Myanmar road, Langthabalis famous for its partly-in-ruins palace. The ancient red- brick coloured structure is a reminiscence of the bygone era of Manipur's past, perched on a small hillock forested with green pine and jackfruit trees, this palace is a popular spot for all tourists who are on a visit to this beautiful state. Here, we find temples and other ceremonial sites apart from the palace itself.

Bhagyachandra had a very short reign of three years as he once again abdicated in 1762 as a Brahmin Brahmacharya was killed by his servants. As an atonement, Bhagyachandra stepped down from the throne and his elder brother Gourshyam once again became the king. In September 1762, Gourshyam died and Bhagyachandra again became the king. He was liberal in religious affairs, developed diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries and neglected

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all class and race distinctions, assigned offices strictly on merit and carried out certain new schemes of Ras Dance leading to the installation of Shri Govindajee in Manipur. Considerably section of Rajkumars and Rajkumaris of Manipur claim their descent from King Jai Singh. Before Garibniwaz and Jai Singh, polygamy was not prevalent in Manipur widely.

Jai Singh built the temple of Govindajee in his palace, Langthabal. When the construction of the temple was completed Jai Singh assumed the title of Bhagyachandra. The tradition of worshipping Hindu Gods through their images was not much vogue in Manipur during the period under reference. It was a novel idea to many of the new converts. Manipuris were not however, opposed to the cult of image worship. They used images of their traditional dieties known as Umang Lai during their annual festival known as Lai Haraoba. To the Manipuris, Govindajee was not a mere image. He is a living God to them. In any case king Bhagyachandra looked upto the image of Govindajee as Govindajee himself is a living God. The belief among the Manipuri Hindus is that real power lies in Govindajee and the kings are mere viceroys of Govindajee. Thus, since then installation of Govindajee has been considered the supreme ruler by the succeeding kings as well as the people. The temple was made out of the jackfruit by wooden statue maker Sapam Lakshman Singh.

4.2 RAS LEELA:

It is also said that Maharaja Jai Singh or Bhagyachandra Karta who was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna when the spirit of Vaishnavism pervaded the whole Hindu Community of the kingdom specially the king, it was revealed in his dream, the composition of the RasLeela. Accordingly, he formally initiated the carving of the idol of the Lord Govindajee in 1776, which was then completed and consecrated in November 1779 on the full moon day in a temple built by him in his palace, Langthabal. On this occasion Ras Leela was performed for five days at Ras Mandal Pukhri at Langthabal. The full Ras performance in fact is a complete dance drama. The dance, the music, the dialogue, the costumes and decorations of the Ras Mandal.



Ras Leela Jagoi (Dance)

In this Ras Leela, the dances are performed by God and his beloved Gopis without any audience. It has a different footing altogether. Manipur Ras is not for showing to the audience or onlookers but it is nothing but a meditation of and devotion to god who played in Brindaban in human form. It is considered sinful to think otherwise. No boy above the age of ten years and no girl of the age of nearly ten years take part of Krishna and Radha respectively in the formal Ras performances as Shree Krishna played the sports in Brindaban only upto the age of ten years.



Present condition of Ras Mandal Pukhri



4.3 GAMBHIR SINGH:

The era of Gambhir Singh was one of the most important period in the history of Manipur. Gambhir Singh was the son of King Bhagyachandra and fifth queen Khumbongmayum Chanu. The comparative study between before the seven years devastation and after the seven years devastation is interesting area for the further investigation. Naturally, the task of Gambhir Singh after the liberation of Manipur from Burma was reconstruction from the ruined country. But, in a few years of his reign Gambhir Singh began modernization process. Gambhir Singh revived the radical develop in the field of the political, economic, social and religion.

The Langthabal Palace was built by Maharaja Gambhir Singh immediately after Manipur got its freedom from the invasion of Burma. He was not only a brave soldier/warrior but also an able administrator. He constructed temples, royal residences and magnificent gateways and dug a number of tanks at Langthabal. It was a beautiful palace during the reign of Maharaja Gambhir Singh which was later renamed as Gambhir Singh complex by the Manipur Government. He died on 9th January, 1834 the day of transfer of Kabaw Valley due to heart attack at Langthabal. As a mark of respect to Maharaja Gambhir Singh the great patriot and warrior of Manipur and many unsung heroes of Manipur who fought for liberation of Manipur from the hands of Burmese invaders, the 9th January of every year is observed as the “Chahi Taret Khuntakpa Ningshing Numeet” at the memorial complex of Maharaja Gambhir Singh.

4.4 CAPTAIN GEORGE GORDON:

Captain George Gordon was not only a capable officer but also a keen educationist. He is also credited with writing the first Anglo Manipuri dictionary. He started an English School at Imphal at his own expense in 1837 in Souvenir State Level Johnstone School Centenary Celebration 1885-1985, held in 1985-86 (30-31st Dec. 1985 to Jan. 2. 1986), there by introducing modern education on the soil of Manipur for the first time in history. Gordon's school could be taken as the beginning of modern education for both boys and girls in Manipur as there were two girls among the students. A few years later, the school was closed down. The factors cited are lack of public and state support, his untimely passing away in 1844 might also have been another reason. He was buried at Langthabal. His tomb is still at Langthabal behind the SarvaSikshaAbhiyan School which reminded the people of Manipur about his present at Canchipur.



Tomb of Lt. Gordon, political Agent of Manipur

4.5: CONCLUSION:

The historical Langthabal palace which was once listed under Manipur's ancient and historical monuments by the Government of Manipur no longer looks like a protected site, instead it has become a vast dumping ground. It is now littered with plastic bottles and polythene packets. The memorial house which symbolised the shrine of the king now lies forgotten.

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