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### **Bishnupriya Manipuris The Successors Of Hastinapur**

India is recognized as a country of rich heritage and glorious past so far opined by the scholars of cultural History, Spiritual philosophy and Archeology. The land of ancient India was vast accordingly to Geography. It is too difficult to describe a map or Geographical boundaries of ancient India. In those days the borders of nations were not defined geographically. The gigantic mountains,oceans,seas,rivers and dense forests covered most parts of the globe. Transportation was as yet to develop and hence time consuming. Politically speaking, the greater India encompassed almost entire Asia and present land of India was divided into numerous autonomous republics those days. As a Chakravarti nation (global) the divine light of ancient Indian culture was spread across the globe. The respective peripheries were worldwide in the regard.

#### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Accordingly, the historical ambiguity of our beloved land Manipur can not be so easily punctuated nor penetrated. From the remote past this multiracial land of Manipur had been the target of so many peoples and communities. It is also evident from historical studies that the traveling of Aryan towards the remotest East of India began to denote the concern of this land more in details.

At the very outset of my paper I can not check my emotions to confess that the strong presence of Hastinapur is still vivid and felt enormously among the people of such a race named Bishnupriya Manipuri now scattered all over the North East India up to Bangladesh and Burma.

We may well find the clues of their link with Hastinapur right from the Age of Mahabharata under the auspicious canopy of Babruvahana the beloved son of Pandava-Arjuna who had left Kaling for Manipur as depicted hereupon the following lines of Adiparva,chapter 215 of Mahabharata in the 9-10 slokas : like :

*So Kalingamatikramya Deshanayatani cho*

*Harmyani Ramaniyani Prekshyamasho yayau Prabhu*

*Mahendraparvatang Dristva Tapasaiupashobhitam*

*Samudratirenashanai Manipurang Gagamahal*

However, in the age of Mahabharata under the leadership of Babruvahana the son of Pandava-Arjun a team of Chandravansiya Aryans settled in Manipur. In 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.(other option in 9<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) an Aryan Group led by Shakya king Abhiraj went upto Tagong in Burma through Manipur. Another Aryan group led by Shakya King Dhwajaraja settled in Manipur in 550 B.C. and invaded Tagong and won it. In 43 B.C. the Talaingas of Deccan established Savekattara in Burma having crossed Manipur probably. The Aryan Group of Bombay province led by Audjishak in 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. settled in Manipur. A branch of them is called Kachhbar(Kathiabar).Besides this, Taumur Chowhan,Gourh etc. and more Aryan and Kshatriya races appeared in Manipuri from time to time. Religious and commercial reasons too caused Aryan settlement in Manipur. Even dated before 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the communication between India and the remotest East prevailed through Manipur. In 152 B.C. the Chinese ambassador Chankien and Huensang in 7<sup>th</sup> century came to learn about the passage to India through Manipur and Assam. In 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Mahayan Buddhism and tantric cult in 3<sup>rd</sup> century were taken to distant East through Assam and Manipur. Evidences are available that

there were high status Brahmins in Manipur, lower Brahmins were in Hukung valley and Buddhists were living in the mountain hills of the Chin-mounts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. To the Chinese the Manipur was Ta-t-Sin and its people were Po-lo-man. The word Brahman got distorted to be Baramon, Balamon and at last became Do-lo-man. At the time of Hu-en-sang India among Middle East countries was called the land of Brahmans. Influenced by Aryans and Brahmans the name Po-lo-man emerged in Manipur. The game of Poloman was actually invented by Aryans. Burmese call Manipuris as Ponna and kathe (Kshatriya). Ponna most probably got broken in pronunciation of Polo-man and this term ponna turned into 'pauna' in Manipuri. In Puranas and other contextual references this land is called Manimaypur, Manipur, Aranyanagar, Madhyadesh, Mekhali, Kanthak (Kodak) etc. Ahom and Cachharis call this land as Mekhali and Magali respectively. At the time of Tibetan King Pangshons Jon-Jangda the land producing high rate of horses was located between Assam and Burma as komboj that should be no other than Manipur. Dr. B.K. Barua opines likewise.

Thus the Aryans and Kshatriyas (of Aryavarta in Vedic Age) the followers of Vedas coming down to Manipur from time to time have been known as Brishnupriya manipuris-altogether. Needless to mention that the people belonging to groups like Kole, Hae Austric and Dravirh races got mingled with Brishnupriya Manipuri partially. It is detectable from the stature, culture and language adopted by the present survivors of this race.

According to Jaimini Mahabharata the Manipuris of ancient times used to speak in good Sanskrit. As the Aryans are conservative so their survivors are conservative too and would speak in Aryan language. As the survivors the Brishnupriya Manipuris follow the same path even today

astonishingly. Scattered in different countries due to socio-political reasons this race has been maintaining their original identity in all spheres of their status ,food, temperament, stature, rituals so and so forth.

In Brahmapuram too the tale of the establishment of Bishnupur city is found elaborately. After the end of Aswamedh yagya the emperor Yudhisthira offered the throne to Babruvahana. But he faught shy of the proposal. He further refused to accept the jewels etc. from the treasury in the spirit that Manipur was enriched with the same enormously. Yet, on the contrary, Babruvahana prayed for obtaining the image of Vishnu installed in the palace temple of Hastinapur. As granted likewise ,he blessed Babruvahana returned to Manipur with the holy image of Lord Vishnu along with the worshipper and established the said image in his own capitals. After the name of Vishnu the capital itself came to be known as Bishnupur since then and its worshipper was named Bishnuratfam meaning Bishnu-worshipper. Uptill now the same is bearing its proof quite spectacularly.

In Aswamedh canto's pages 227 & 228 of Jaimini Mahabharata translated by Dr. Chandranath Bose the details go as follows :

*The people of Manipur are devotees of Vasudeva whole heartedly. This King ((Babruvahana) is great as Vishnu. Decorated with gold and silver the housing lines, the dazzling palaces and the harmits project Manipur to be founded by Vishnu himself as the second Baikuntha on the earth.*

Actually speaking, the idol Vishnu brought from Hastinapur in the age of Mahabharata has been flowing as the central nerve of this race upto date. It is rather unbelievable to note that

the Bishnupriya Manipuri race is the rarest in the whole world that has been called after the name of God. Bishnu(Vishnu), Vasudeva and Sri Krishna have the equal and intrinsic impressions among them popularly. And, they are still possessing the same solid idealistic belief from the core of their heart. No calamities through centuries could damage their ideology nor any attraction could deviate them. Even today when all the races have been contaminated either by greed or by fascination the population of Bishnupriyas has remained intact though so tiny numbering to not more than two lakhs scattered all over the world. As devotees of Lord Krishna they are all vaishnavites and very conservative as well. What to speak about conversion? Any one married to any other caste or community even of the same religion is discarded socially then and there .They do project proud belonging to Aryan group and being heirs of Hastinapur.

From the very physical setup of these people one can easily notice the first hand proof of the presence of Vishnu idol installed in the temples wherever available. A step ahead this may be noted strongly that in any village of Bishnupriyas there must be a Bishnu temple headed with a typical pandal called Maaltheep. Even a few families of this race constitute an autonomous unit to erect a temple accommodating a Bishnu Shalagram the essence embodiment of Lord Vishnu in the auspicious memory of Vishnu idol inherited from Hastinapur palatial temple of Lord Vishnu. As if every village represents a Bishnupur that may be assumed as Hastinapur.Throughout Tripura, Manipur, Assam, Bangladesh up to Burma such a picture is still vivid and bubbling. The economic debacle even has not been able to do away with this spiritual culture.

When we proclaim Hastinapur as the cradle of religions we cannot forget this Bishnupriyas who nurture its essence though scattered so much away from Hastinapur beyond more than two thousand kilometers. The uniqueness in all spheres adopted by these people by way of inheritance does speak about their deep hereditary evidence of Hastinapur culture. The very pronunciation of the word Hastinapur creates and recreates every individual of this community. It is rather astonishing to note that even every child of Bishnupriya Manipuri race knows dearly about Hastinapur which is so uncommon in other surrounding people of the zone. The relation with Arjun-Babruvahana still runs in their veins. Every child of Bishnupriyas is well aware of the fact . When the people of Hastinapur nowadays look the same in relics the Bishnupriya Manipuris are rather living in Hastinapur in their mental map. It is never a past to them.

One of the salient features regarding the essential characteristics concerted with the Hastinapuriness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is their ritual recitation of Mahabharata now in Bengali but explained in Bishnupriya Manipuri language in a manner uncommon anywhere in the world. From cradle to the funeral functionalities the Mahabharata is a strong imperative among Bishnupriya Manipuris as a result of which each and every individual is well versed in the central tale of Mahabharata. Moreover the Vyasapith is the holiest seat of verdict among the same. It is so adorable that the essence of Indian civilization is very much felt therein.

In the long run so to say, there is a Hastinapur in the core heart of every Bishnupriya Manipuri. Every individual bears a fever of Hastinapur. As such they breathe in the name of Hastinapur .They are not ready to forget their great grandfather Pandava Arjun at any cost nor

Babruvahana the brave son of Chitrangada the beloved wife of Partha himself. To this context, it may be declared that Hastinapur is still surviving with strong presence in more expansion. Its real and actual essence lies in elasticity as it is the cradle of religions. Its heritage is never ending. Even today the Hastinapur registers a bold presence among Bishnupriyas the torch bearers of its culture.

To initiate proper justice to my paper towards its ending a reference deserves instant mention of an SMS received so recently from a scholar belonging to local Bengali community.

The same reads like as follows :

*Sir,*

*Lord Krishna is worshipped by Vishnupriyas. And Krishna led the war of Mahabharata at Hastinapur. Naturally you will find the context in the seminar to show clear relationship between Vishnupriyas and Hastinapur i.e. with Mahabharata. (Sender : Arabinda Deb. Mob: +91 98 62 939943)*

In another SMS too such contextual references are vigilant as appended:

*Sir, I find vaishnavite culture very much near to my heart. Harinaam Samkirtana leads me to live a life free from all MUHAS (selfless devotion) equally interesting is KRISHNA ARADHANA as Vishnupriyas performed by their traditional songs and dances. The magic of NAAM provides me real shanty.*

*'NAMASTE' (Sender : The same )*

Towards this end a lot more can be detailed in terms of affinity so stabilized with Bishnupriya Manipuris so as to refer to Lord Krishna who not only led the war of Mahabharata

but also brought the light divine of Srimadbhagavadgeeta through Pandava-Arjuna claimed to be the ancestor of Bishnupriya Manipuris. On the contrary Lord Krishna the fullest incarnation of Lord Vishnu is soul centre of Bishnupriya Manipuris for more than one reason.

## CONCLUSION

The clear vision is the creation of Geeta the applied scripture of Vedas. The same had been given to other deities in previous occasions as mentioned in Geeta itself; but no human being before Arjuna received the message of Geeta. Now, Arjuna being the direct figure of inheritance i.e. the father of Babruvahana gifted with the idol image of Vishnu by Maharaja Yudhisthira, the Bishnupriya Manipuris feel privileged to attach much more cordiality towards Bhagavadgeeta. Mental chemistry is always a very strong phenomenon within human beings. As a result the Bisunupriyas believe and demand that Srimadbhagavadgeeta is their paternal property. It is also evident that even a child of Bishnupriyas knows a few slokes of Geeta by heart. And, Mahabharata recitation is mandatory in all rituals of their own as because it caused the birth of Geeta through their ancestor Pandava-Arjuna. Those days are not far off when Bishnupriya Manipuris shall raise their voice at the top demanding the royalty of Geeta. Geeta is the native land of Bishnupriya Manipuris. Geeta is the soul of Mahabharata, the cradle of Hastinapur.



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### Glossary :

**Bishnupriya Manipuri** : A microscopic Aryan origin population scattered all over North East India, Bangladesh, Burma and having intrinsic pathos in Lord Krishna and Pandava-Arjun.Fullest adherence to their ancestor Babruvahana the son of Arjun & Chitrangada is still strong more than enough.

**Vedic Age** : As cited by authentic scholarly texts & accepted by savants across the globe , the period approximately dates from 50,000 to 20,000 B.C.

**Aryavarta** : The land of Aryans.In terms of modern geographical maps, the same corresponds to the Himalayan region and northern part of the pre-partition India.

**Hastinapur** : Capital city of Pandavas.Now detected under Pandav Till after excavation near Hastinapur,Meerut,U.P.