

GOVERNMENT GIRLS COLLEGE, BETUL

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Name of event- Yaoshang festival in Manipuri society

No. of student - 25

Yaoshang festival is celebrated on the full moon day of *phalguna purnima* and it is one of the most important festivals of Manipur. Sports festival is organized in every locality as a part of celebrating the festival since the last four to five decades. Main highlight of the festival is the *Thabal Chongba* (a folk dance).

The literal meaning of *thabal* is 'moonlight' and *Chongba* means 'dance', thus 'dancing in the moonlight'. In earlier times, this dance was performed in the moonlight accompanied by folk songs. The only musical instrument used was a *dholakar* drum.



Upto the last one century, this folk dance was performed only in the moonlight. Later, lanterns were introduced in the *Thabal Chongba* back in 1950s. Besides *dholak*, even dishes and metal tubs were also used as drums during that time. 'Patromax' was also brought into use in the *Thabal Chongba* as a source of light.

Patromax is a brand name, for paraffin lamps that use a mantle. Paraffin is called kerosene in the USA. *Thabal Chongba* is a Manipuri dance where boys and girls hold hands and sing and dance. Boys wore *pheijom* (dhoti) and girls wore *phanek* (loincloth worn by female Meetei) in the *Thabal Chongba*.

Yaoshang festival is not just for children, but the young and old alike take delight in this joyous festival. Songs, dance, drinks, food everything goes in excess when it is time for Yaoshang. During this festival, which is celebrated for five days, children especially girls collect money/donation from every road passers.

On the first day of the festival, young boys and girls go from door to door for *Nakatheng* after Yaoshang *Meithaba*. The money collected is spent on merrymaking. Children take special delight in the festival. Colours are applied to a big bunch of friends in their locality.

Pichkaris or syringes are also used by children to drench themselves. *Abeer* (colour) is of different bright shades of pink, red, yellow and green. *Abeer* is made of small crystals or paper like chips of mica.

It is said that *Holi*, an ancient festival of India, existed several centuries before Christ. Holi is originally known as '*Holika*'. The full moon festival of Holika gradually became a festival of merrymaking, announcing the commencement of the spring season. Holi marks the end of the winter gloom and rejoices in the bloom of the spring time. It is the best time and season to celebrate.

The famous Muslim tourist Ulbaruni has mentioned about Holikosav in his memories. Other Muslim writers of that period have mentioned, that Holikosav were not only celebrated by the Hindus but also by the Muslims. In Bengal and Orissa, Holi Purnima is also celebrated as the birthday of Cheitanya Mahaprabhu (AD 1486-1533).

However, the literal meaning of '*Holi*' is 'burning'. In Manipur, Holi is celebrated as Yaoshang. Instead of a fire, a hut is built and then set ablaze. The most prominent legend to explain the meaning of '*Holi*' is the legend associated with demon king Hiranyakshyap.

He wanted everybody in his kingdom to worship only him but to his great disappointment, his son, Prahlad became an ardent devotee of Lord Naarayana. Hiranyakashap commanded his sister, Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prahlad in her lap. Holika had a boon whereby she could enter fire without any damage on herself.

However, she was not aware that the boon worked only when she enters the fire alone. As a result she paid a price for her sinister desires, while Prahlad was saved by grace of the god for his extreme devotion.

The festival, therefore, celebrates the victory of good over evil and also the triumph of devotion. Lord Krishna also started the tradition of play with colours by applying on his beloved Radha and other Gopis. Gradually, the play gained popularity with the people and became a tradition.