

Sangrai Festival of Marma Community

The Sangrai is Marmas' New Year festival which is celebrated on April 13, 14 and 15. The traditional games of the Marmas are also held on the morning of the 13th with Pangchowai (Flower Sangrai), the main Sangrai on the 14th and the Jol-keli (they called "Ri long poye").

Sangrai actually means saying goodbye to the old year and welcoming the new year. At the same time, the new zoom farming season in the Chittagong Hill Tracts starts after Sangrai. Not only zoom farming, the Marmaras do not get married after the full moon of Maghi till Sangrai. To make a vow in the new year, they go to Darshan pretending that their hopes are fulfilled.

Marma women decorate the house with alpana. Besides, the rice obtained from Zum is collected from house to house and brought to a certain house.

The night of April 12 is called "Paanchhoai" which means the day of flowering. At this time, various kinds of flowers are scattered in the hills surrounding the village. Although there are many flowers in the mountains, there are certain flowers with which the houses are decorated. Among them, the white flower called "Sangrai Paing" is the most favorite. The work of plucking this flower is mainly done by the Marma youths. Again they arrange different traditional games, some perform Marma folk dances and folk songs.

Main Sangrai is celebrated on 14th April. Marma housewives go to Bihar with good food and cakes to get blessings from bhante. It is also sent to those who observe fasting among their relatives.

And the Marma youths go to the neighborhoods in groups to bathe the elderly. The elders of each family greet the youngsters at the end of the bath. Not only bathing, Marma youths from every family have to eat something (otherwise it will bring danger).

In the main Sangrai in Bihar, Lord Buddha is bathed in holy water. The bathing water of the Buddha is eaten by the Marmas because the Marmas believe that this Buddha bathing water will put an end to all diseases in their body. After the Buddhist bath, sermons are given. In all the families, rice, coconut, Chinese paper and candles are brought to Bihar for the purpose of God. The chief Buddhist monk of Bihar prays for a happy New Year.

" SangraiDilangpoye" (water festival) is organized in different places after the main sangrai. From the morning of the day of the ceremony they comes from different village and started attending the ceremony after wearing their traditional "Thami (girls)" and Lungi (boys). Very early in the morning, the local youth gather in Sangrai.

Then the Marma king or the headman of the Marmas (head of the mouza) inaugurated the ceremony. After the ceremony, the official "Deelong Poye" started. The Marma youths stand face to face in groups, then they start throwing water at each other until the water container in front of them is finished. In this way, one group after another starts playing water. They believe it as a symbol of blessings and good omens.

The traditional games of the Marmas are held immediately after the water game. Boys play wrestling, girls play rope pulling. And the biggest attraction is the boys bashing game ("Tang Tang").

Also a cultural program was organized in the afternoon. In it, the folk culture of the Marmas is highlighted in various ways. Such as folk dances, folk song are performed.