

UNIT IX

17 LAI HARAoba



Have you ever attended a **Lai Haraoba** celebration in your locality? If so, you might have seen **Maibis** and **Pena** singers dancing along with men and women. It is not merely a performance of dance and music but a religious practice presented mostly with song and dance movements. The courtyard or the open space where the **Lai Haraoba** celebration takes place is known as '**Laibung**'.

You might have seen a congregation moving in a long procession on the road by carrying the idols. There are **Maibis**, **Maibas**, **Pena** singers, men and women differently dressed in the procession. It is a part of the **Lai Haraoba** celebration. On a day in the first week of the ceremony the congregation will set out from the temple and move around the locality. It is known as 'Lai Lam Thokpa'.

Lai Haraoba is a big traditional occasion of the native people of Manipur to pay homage to the deities known as Umang Lai. It has been there in Manipur since time immemorial. Manipuris used to think of their ancestors as demi-gods and worship them as Umang Lai. Temples for the Umang Lais are built in an isolated and forested place. The surrounding areas of the temple are not frequented by the people except only at the time of worship. The descendants of respective clans worship their deities by offering **Lai Haraoba** celebration once a year or after an interval of time.

It is usually celebrated in the dry season such as the months of Phairen, Lamda, Sajibu, Kalen etc. (in the English calendar Feb, March, April, May etc). It is believed that the celebration of **Lai Haraoba**

ceremony brings peace and prosperity to the land and the people. The system of celebration is strictly maintained. It is generally believed that misfortunes would befall the people and land if its ritualistic system is violated.

There are four kinds of **Lai Haraoba** in Manipur. They are **Kanglei Haraoba, Moirang Haraoba , Kakching Haraoba and Chakpa Haraoba**. **Kanglei Haraoba** is celebrated in the areas of Imphal and nearby places. The people of Andro, Leimaram, Phayeng, Koudruk, Khurkhul, Tairenpokpi are known as Chakpa group.

There are some differences in the systems of celebration but the meaning and objectives are similar. The duration of the celebration is decided by the concerned worshippers. Usually it takes many days to celebrate the **Lai haraoba**.

There are a series of religious performances everyday starting from morning till late evening. These rituals are performed by **Maibas, Maibis and Pena singers**. The theme of **Lai Haraoba** celebration is the depiction of the history of evolution of the universe and mankind as believed by the native people of Manipur. It also depicts the birth and growth of human beings, the growing of crops, building of houses, the making clothes etc.

It is not only a religious ceremony but also a source of social and cultural study of this land and its ancient people. It is known from the of **Lai Haraoba** that both Polo and the Manipuri folk dance have turn there since the pre-historic days . It gives many valuable information about concepts, beliefs of the ancient people.

These days, Lai Haraoba is celebrated with a lot of entertainment. Too much of entertainment may decrease its ritualistic value. The modern generation should try to know its meaning and value which are of great academic value and cultural importance.

New Words :

Maibi : Priestess in white clothes, white feather on her head, hair bound with the tail falling loose and swinging.

Maiba : A male Priest in white clothes who performs the rituals of the celebration.

Pena singers : Male singer who sings along with the music produced by an instrument known as Pena.

Congregation : group of people who gathered to worship.

mere : simple

to pay homage : to show respect

isolated : quiet, lonely.

forested : covered with trees

descendents : issues or of springs

misfortune : bad luck.

ritualistic : performed as a part of a ceremony.

clan : a group of families descending from an ancestor

evolution : gradual development of something.

EXERCISES

1. *Answer the following questions:*

- (a) What is **Lai Lam Thokpa**.
- (b) What is the courtyard or the open space where **Lai Haraoba** celebration takes place called ?
- (c) What is **Lai Haraoba** ?
- (d) When is **Lai Haraoba** celebrated ?
- (e) Why do the native people of Manipur celebrate **Lai Haraoba** ?
- (f) How many types of **Lai Haraoba** are there in Manipur?
- (g) Who are the Chakpa groups of people ?
- (h) What is the theme of **Lai Haraoba** celebration ?
- (i) What is the academic importance of **Lai Haraoba** celebration ?

2. *Look at the following sentences :*

Rani is tall.

Sita is taller.

These two sentences can be combined and written as

- (i) Rani is not as tall as Sita

Now combine the given pairs of sentences as done above :

- (i) Santa is beautiful. Tombi is more beautiful.

.....
.....

(ii) James is strong. John is stronger.

.....
.....

(iii) Chaoba is clever. Boboi is cleverer.

.....
.....

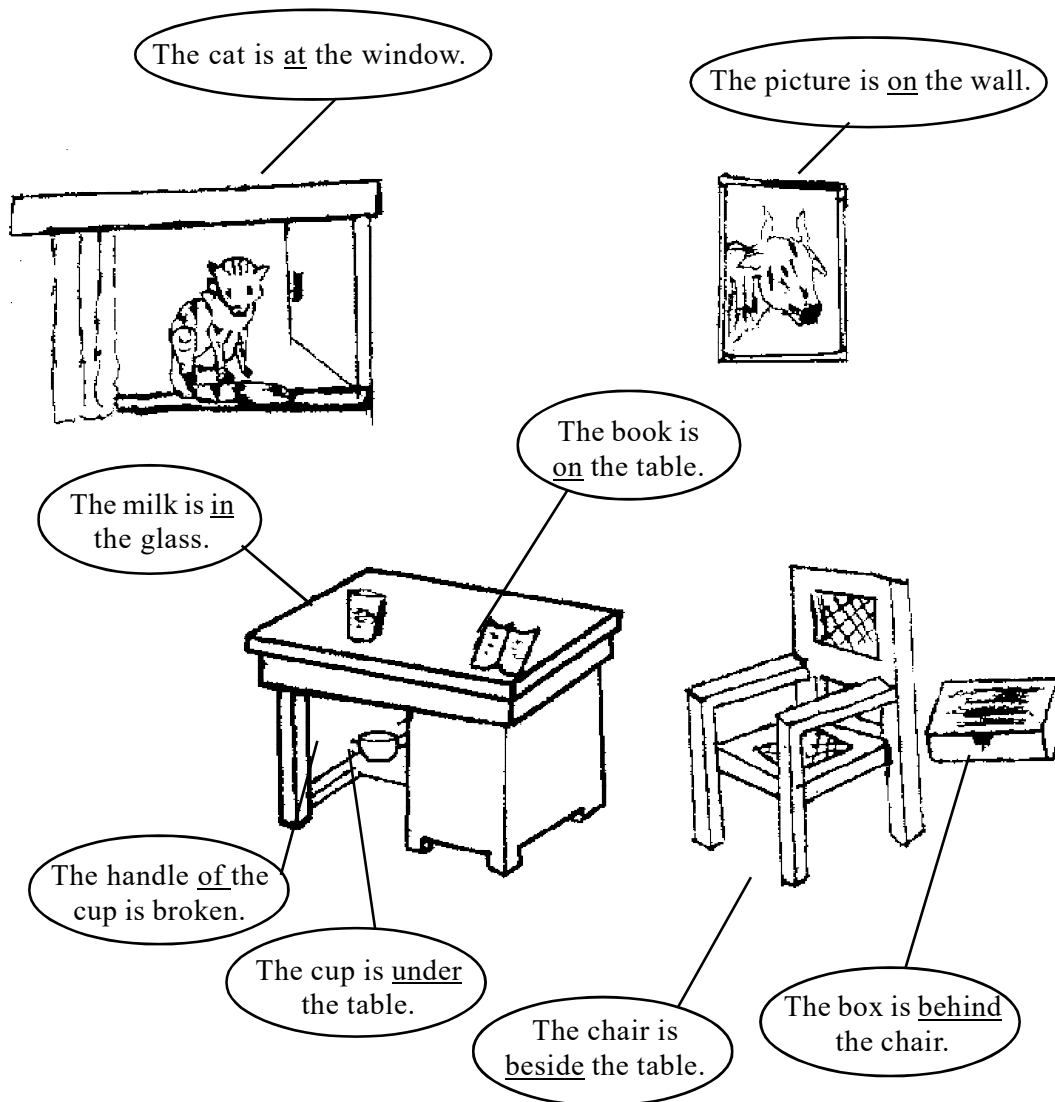
(iv) Manipur is a big state. Assam is a bigger state.

.....
.....

(v) This picture is colourful. That picture is more
colourful.

.....
.....

3. Look at the pictures and see the uses of the prepositions
- *on, at, in, of, beside, under, behind, etc.*



Now, look at the pictures and fill in the blanks with prepositions :

