

# Going back to THE ROOTS

### Young professor starts local language challenge on social media to safeguard indigenous identity

Language is not only a medium of expression but also a person's identity. This is the reason why Dairaris Rumong has embarked on a mission to safeguard that identity of the indigenous populace that has witnessed unrestrained influence of western culture, especially in the North East, over decades.

The young assistant professor of English at St Mary's College started Speak Your Roots Challenge on Instagram (@speakyourroots2020) on August 3 this year. Rumong manages the social media page alone and throws up frequent language challenges for social media users.

The @speakyourroots initiative has its genesis in a casual conversation among Rumong and her friends, Sasha S Laloo and Laurette Dikhar.

"We talked about the various challenges on Instagram and we wanted to do something that would engage the young and the old alike on social media in a meaningful and productive way. That is how I came up with the Speak Your Roots Challenge. It is a linguistic, literary, cultural and social exercise with a purpose to document anything related to indigenous language," Rumong told *Sunday Chimes*.

"How well do you know your native language? Do you ooze depth and eloquence while speaking your roots? In an increasingly globalised world, it is easy to slip into using English to communicate," was the introductory note on the Instagram page.

"The first challenge was on the occasion of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 9. "Post a word or phrase of your choice in your native language (with the definition/ meaning) using the hashtag #speakyourroots #talklocal," said the challenge.

In Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's words, "the limits of language" is the limits of one's world, and Rumong sets the limits. Every chal-

lenge is thought-provoking. One challenge called for participants to submit a local word denoting an indigenous jewellery or cloth while another focused on local games. There is also a list of Khasi prosodic terms like *ka shon* (accent), *tara* (rhyme) and *jaichem* (ambic). Contributions come not only from Khasi

Hills but from other parts of the state and the northeastern region as well as across the country.

The participation has covered a number of languages and "there has been a gradual and consistent interest in the challenge". A post by Tony Gill puts up the idiom *Deo loro dis dia*, which is Konk-

**speakyourroots2020**

**bawanshwa\_syiemlieh**  
Meghalaya

**THREE PILLARS OF OUR LIVES**

"Khamai in ka hok"  
This is a Khasi proverb which means to perform the duty well, to live justly and work honestly.

"Im Tip Brier Tip Bli"  
This Khasi proverb means Know Yourself, Know God, I.e recognize and understand who you are in order to fully comprehend and connect with the Great Divinity, God, U Bli.

"Tip Rar Tip Kha"  
This precept stresses the importance of knowing both Matrilineal (Cognates) and Patrilineal (Agnates) lines, i.e. to know his Kith and Kin.

There are posts on Assamese, Tangkhul, Ao Mongseng, Ao Chongli, Bodo, Kokborok, Mizo, Punjabi, Konkani, Nepali, Khasi, Jaintia and Garo languages. One challenge called for participants to submit a local word denoting an indigenous jewellery or cloth while another focused on local games



(Clockwise from above) Rumong is an assistant professor of English; posts in Ao Mongseng and Khasi

ani for 'May God give you a good day'. There are posts on Assamese, Tangkhul, Ao Mongseng, Ao Chongli, Bodo, Kokborok, Mizo, Punjabi, Konkani, Nepali, Khasi, Jaintia and Garo languages.

"There is no set schedule (for the challenge) and anyone can send an entry as the challenge is always open. In the recent months, entries based on a significant word or phrase, indigenous food, indigenous games and indigenous clothes have been encouraged," said Rumong, who pointed out that education, globalisation and personal interest are the factors influencing language preference.

On the western influence on the indigenous people in Meghalaya, Rumong asserted that the local languages are widely spoken and "English is confined to certain pockets in urban areas".

"For instance, the use of English may be attributed to the fact that it is easier to communicate in English in Shillong

**In Ao Mongseng, the word 'Ukhaleh' means the tiny puddle that's formed by rain drops falling from the roof. Such a simple thing and yet a very beautiful sounding word.**

due to the cosmopolitan nature of the city. What should be highlighted is that it is commendable that local languages are being spoken and written in the state," she added.

The professor observed that Shillong is witnessing a return to indigenous knowledge, practices, language and folklore. At the same time, she acknowledged that more needs to do to preserve the indigenous languages not only in Meghalaya but in other states in the region.

"There needs to be a continued docu-

**“The use of English may be attributed to the fact that it is easier to communicate in English in Shillong due to the cosmopolitan nature of the city.**

**Dairaris Rumong | @speakyourroots**

mentation in written or audio-visual form, bringing them into the mainstream. As a consequence, translation also gains a critical position in presenting indigenous communities as repositories of historical and cultural memory.

"As for the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo languages and many other dialects which are spoken in Meghalaya, more books in these languages need to be published starting with children's literature so that children are made aware of the influence of indigenous languages. Research also has to be taken up in order for the languages to gain more relevance, especially among the youth who are otherwise mainly using the English language. Indigenous languages also thrive and are preserved through the genres of music, theatre and film, as has been done in recent times," she enumerated.

But the best way to preserve one's language is to speak the language with children at home so that they have a "strong knowledge of their mother tongue".

"Reading and writing in indigenous languages also have to be encouraged not only in schools but also at home. The same emphasis that one puts on learning English should also be done for the indigenous language. Having said that, my personal opinion is languages are to be treated equally, with each having its own importance," Rumong said.

Speaking Your Roots will continue its mission to protect and preserve local languages and literature that will, in turn, contribute to their roots and appreciate their identity. About the future tasks for participants, Rumong said it would depend on the response. "The challenge can take different forms: a song, a poem, a film or a book. I hope the challenge brings a revived interest in indigenous language and literature that will, in turn, contribute to the well-being of indigenous communities striving to preserve their heritage in the 21st century," she concluded.

**Home Body by Rupi Kaur**

From *The New York Times* bestselling author of *Milk and Honey* and *The Sun and Her Flowers* comes her greatly anticipated third collection of poetry. Kaur constantly embraces growth, and in *Home Body*, she walks readers through a reflective and intimate journey, revisiting the past, the present and the potential of the self "I dive into the well of my body/and end up in another world". It is a collection of raw, honest conversations with oneself.

# Recapturing Shillong citylights

## Biblio-File

Elegy for The East: A Story of Blood and Broken Dreams by Dhrubajyoti Borah

Before the relentless march of history, the lone individual is helpless. Yet it is men whose collective efforts give history its momentum and ushers in change of eras. *Elegy for The East* explores the despondency of man in the face of overwhelming odds. This novel is a work of fiction and yet the characters are real, in thoughts and dreams. The narrative is not far from truth, where an uncaring, anonymous and overbearing State creates situations of social and political strife. The sylvan countryside of Assam hides memories of bloodshed, death, rape and terror. But the story of man's quest for peace keeps hope alive. Published by Niyogi Books, *Elegy for The East* is another masterly work of a master storyteller. Borah's novels tell the stories of the youths in angst, of groups who struggle to bring about a more just society and of women who search for true meaning of life amidst trials and tribulations.

## Dear Mama by Mohini Kent

The Prabha Khaitan Foundation recently announced the online launch of this book. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Dalai Lama, Cherie Blair, Sir Cliff Richard and other eminent personalities as well as common citizens have written personal letters to their mothers, especially for Kent's book. Mother is the guru and guide of the children. But some mothers betrayed their daughters, who were sold as slaves. The letters of those girls in this book speak of heartbreak, trauma, loss and betrayal.

## Book Review

Shillong is a sleepy hill town that remains unperturbed by happenings around it. The calmness is innate to its character but for one who witnesses the eucadian rhythms of the city, the undercurrent of events are unavoidable. *Name, Place, Animal, Thing* captures that undercurrent of daily life in all its aspects through a child's lens that unwittingly captures the layers of socio-cultural and politico-economic fabric of the place.

Daribha Lynden, an IAS officer, uses lucid narrative to depict the various facets of Shillong, encapsulating the essence of the bitter-sweet life of Shillongites. For instance, Bahadur, the obscure domestic help of an elderly but rich and cantankerous Bengali widow, Mrs Guha. He lives with his family in a decrepit house provided by the landlady and takes up odd jobs in the neighbourhood, not for extra income but out of goodness. He exists only when there are chores to do and remains invisible otherwise. Nonetheless, he rouses curiosity in an eight-year-old girl who observes him till the whole day.

There then is Mr Baruah, the suspected "vampire" who runs a stationery shop at Barik. "It was a small shop with a weather-beaten pink front door which sealed in the warmth on cold winter days," describes the author. But time takes a toll on the small business that vanishes in the oblivion. And there is the graveyard, cloaked in the damp smell of wet laterite, and the untold stories of the dead. The place has a character of its own, peculiar and pessimistic, which nudges the faculties of the narrator during her annual visits to her grandparents on the grave of her grandfather.

Lynden's stories do not miss out on the subtleties. As she describes Bahadur's mundane life, she captures

## Book Review

ences of people being mauled by humans or animals, nothing otherworldly ever happening in our lives. That's why perhaps people in this town were so mundane, I thought. The boy writes in pain and all he gets are curious and selfish glances from behind curtains which separate the two worlds.

Incidents like the assault of Mr Roy by local youths bring out the communal turmoil that has maligned the city's reputation forever. But Lynden's narration, which at times is poignant, is not hindered by a particular event and ebbles round the monotony to capture the broader canvas. "Apart from these everyday occur-

rences of people being mauled by humans or animals, nothing otherworldly ever happening in our lives. That's why perhaps people in this town were so mundane, I thought. The boy writes in pain and all he gets are curious and selfish glances from behind curtains which separate the two worlds. Incidents like the assault of Mr Roy by local youths bring out the communal turmoil that has maligned the city's reputation forever. But Lynden's narration, which at times is poignant, is not hindered by a particular event and ebbles round the monotony to capture the broader canvas. "Apart from these everyday occur-



Daribha Lynden (right) chooses anecdotes from her childhood to portray a vivid picture of the city; (top right) the book cover. (Photos by MT, Zubaan & Google Images)

like some of the other communities, were spread across the city. Some stayed in Mawkhar, some in Dhanketti and others in Lalitumkharah, Khasi/Jaintia neighbourhoods that would have rarely allowed outsiders like Bengalis, Biharis, Nepalis and other migrants," Lynden writes. The community's stronghold notwithstanding, social disturbances dislodged them from Shillong leaving behind remnants of their existence. The neon was gone and so was a part of history. What makes ripples in the sleepy city does not move the young narrative. So when local groups declare their disconnection with the State, she finds

it difficult to fathom. "Khasi by blood, Indian by accident." The group made as little sense to me as the strange writing on the wall," she writes. *Name, Place, Animal, Thing*, which derives its name from a popular childhood game, lives up to its name as Lynden picks up anecdotes from her childhood and strings them melliflously to portray a vivid picture of the city and its people.

**Book: Name, Place, Animal, Thing; Author: Daribha Lynden; Publisher: Zubaan; Pages: 260; Price: Rs 300**

NAME  
PLACE  
ANIMAL  
THING



it difficult to fathom. "Khasi by blood, Indian by accident." The group made as little sense to me as the strange writing on the wall," she writes. *Name, Place, Animal, Thing*, which derives its name from a popular childhood game, lives up to its name as Lynden picks up anecdotes from her childhood and strings them melliflously to portray a vivid picture of the city and its people.

**Book: Name, Place, Animal, Thing; Author: Daribha Lynden; Publisher: Zubaan; Pages: 260; Price: Rs 300**

**QUIZ**

After a long hiatus, India is finally witnessing a sporting event. *Indian Super League* is here and a team from the North East is also playing. Health protocols are in place and football lovers have no other option but to enjoy the game on television. For quiz this week, *Sunday Chimes* chooses football in India as the subject. All you cheering fans, take some time out to answer the questions.

- Which Brazilian footballer played in the Indian Football League in 2002?
- Footballing legend Pele once came to India in September 1977 with his club and played against Mohun Bagan. Which club did Pele come with?
- Who was the first awardee of the ISI's best emerging player, despite his team not reaching the playoffs?
- Who were the Champions in Santosh Trophy tournament when it started in 1941?
- Who is the first Indian woman footballer to play for a professional team in Europe?
- Who was the coach when India won the gold medal in 1982 Jakarta Asian Games?
- India started the 2019 AFC Asian Cup with a thrilling win over which team?
- With which ISL team would you associate a supporter base called 'Manjapada'?
- Baichang Bhutia became the first Asian player to score a goal in the Football League (England). Which English club did he play for?
- All India Football Federation is the organisation that manages the game of association football in India. when was it formed?

(The author is a student of Maharaja Srijayrao Institute)



This Northern Irish dribbler played for ManU and is regarded as one of the greatest players of all time. He died on the same day as Maradona in 2005. NAME HIM.

Answers for Nov 22:

- Seducing and falsely promising to marry them; 2. Owen Hargreaves; 3. Aristotle; 4. Trouser; 5. Sturgeon; 6. 2004; 7. North Dakota; 8. BR Ambedkar; 9. Lord Cornwallis; 10. 14 years

PICTORIAL: Fali Narayan

Send in your answers to [sundaychimes\\_mtz@gmail.com](mailto:sundaychimes_mtz@gmail.com). The first one to send correct answers will get Rs 100

# Get angel glow before D-Day



Winter means two things, chill in the air and the beginning of the wedding season. When it comes to a winter wedding, we assume that winter weddings are fuss-free. No humidity so no frizzy hair, no sweaty makeup, no makeup meltdown during wedding functions. But the season brings along problems like itchy skin, chapped lips, limp hair and pedicure running out too soon during wedding celebrations. Dry and patchy skin can be a nightmare when it comes to makeup application as everything you apply flakes off or creases.

Looking beautiful on the wedding day is not merely a matter of make-up and dress. It needs weeks of care. If a skin care programme is followed a few weeks before the wedding, it can really help. The skin type and the season should also be taken into consideration.

For your daily facial care routine, cleanse your skin twice a day. It is not just the skin on your face that's prone to dryness in winter but your hands are often left vulnerable to the same environmental elements as your complexion. Same goes for the rest of your body. Shahbaz Hussain will tell you how to bring back the glow on your special day. Night-time cleansing is more important to remove pollutants and makeup before bedtime. Cleanse the skin daily at night and apply a layer of moisturiser before you sleep. You can also apply an all-night mask for your skin. For normal to dry skin, use a cleansing cream or gel. Or, take half a cup of cold

milk and add five drops of any vegetable oil (til, olive or sunflower oil). Put this in a bottle and shake well. Cleanse the skin with it, using cotton wool. Keep leftover mixture in the fridge. If the skin is oily, use a cleansing lotion or face wash for oily skins. Oil skins also need deep pore cleansing. Mix rice powder with curd and apply on the face once or twice a week. Rub gently with small circular movements and wash off with water. Ready-to-use scrubs are also easily available.

In winter, oily skin may be prone to blackheads. You can clean up-upt on a beauty parlour and have blackheads extracted. One of the easiest ways to prevent dry hands is by adding a hand cream to your skincare routine. An oily skin may also feel dry in winter but when cream is applied, it can lead to pimples. So mix one teaspoon of pure glycerine with 100 ml rose water and keep in a bottle in the fridge. Use a little of this lotion to relieve dryness. It will soften the skin without making it oily.

Aloe vera gel or honey may be applied on all skin types to moisturise and soften the skin. Apply on the face and wash off with plain water after 20 minutes. For all skin types, tone the skin daily with chilled rose water using cotton wool pads. Wipe and stroke the skin with them. Then pat briskly with the rosewater-soaked cotton wool pads. This adds a glow to the skin. The daily nourishing of normal to dry skin can be done at night, with a nourishing cream. After cleansing, apply the cream and massage on the face with a few drops of water, with outward and slightly upward movements, for 2 minutes. Wipe off with moist cotton wool. For the face, mix a mask at home and use it two or three times a week. For normal to dry skin, mix two teaspoons of wheat bran (choker) with one teaspoon each of almond meal (badaam), curd, honey and rose water. For oily or combination skin, mix three teaspoons of oats with curd, honey and egg white or rose water. Mix everything together into a paste and apply on the face, avoiding the lips and area around the eyes. Wash it off after 20 minutes. After applying face mask, soak two cotton wool pads in rose water and use them as eye pads. Lie down and relax. This is extremely relaxing and refreshing and a great restorer of both body and mind. Rose water has a relaxing effect, helps to remove fatigue and brightens the eyes. The skin around the eyes is thin and delicate. It acquires lines and wrinkles easily. Apply an under-eye cream, wipe it off after 15 minutes with moist cotton

wool. Or, apply pure almond oil sparingly and massage lightly every day using only the ring finger for one minute under each eye. Massage in one direction only. The skin on the lips is also thin and lacks oil producing glands. It becomes dry and chaps easily. Even if you are using the finest lipstick, you cannot apply it on your lips without a coat of lip balm or petroleum jelly. For plump looking lips, give them a base coat of lip balm. After cleansing, apply almond oil or almond cream on the lips daily and leave it on all night. Sun-protective lip balms are also useful. Protect the skin from moisture loss during the day. Apply SPF-rich sunscreen before going out in the sun. Ultraviolet rays are weaker in winter and you don't get tanned easily. But it tends to cause wrinkles, premature ageing, dryness and damage to the skin. Most sunscreens have built-in moisturisers. Moisturisers are available in cream and gel form. For extreme dryness, use a cream. A liquid moisturiser should also be used under make-up. Keep the skin well moisturised. During winter, opt for water-resistant sunscreens free from fragrance and parabens. This practice will make you glow on your wedding day and even before.

In winter, the skin of the body also needs nourishing oils. In the olden days, 'ubtan' was made at home for skincare. First, the body was massaged with 'oil'. Then home-made 'ubtan' was applied. This usually consisted of wheat bran (choker), gram flour (besan), yogurt (dahi) or cream of milk (malai) and a pinch of turmeric (haldi). All these were mixed and applied on the face and body before bathing. The 'ubtan' was washed off after half an hour while bathing. It helped to clear the skin of dead cells, leaving it smooth and bright with a translucent quality. Another ideal way to get glowing skin is to use ingredients in a clean cloth, wet slightly and then rub the cloth bag on the skin while bathing. Mix powdered milk, ground almonds (badaam), rice powder and rose petals. The ingredients work on your skin, gently cleansing it and leaving it soft, smooth and vibrant. It also leaves the body naturally perfumed and refreshed, feeling as smooth as silk. In winter, the hair also needs to be treated with care. Heat your coconut oil and apply on the hair. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for five minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3-4 times. After shampoo, apply a creamy conditioner, leave on for two minutes

and wash off with plain water. Or, you can apply a leave-on conditioner or hair serum for shine and protection. Oil them every week and get a hair spa at least once a month prior to your wedding. Add a little olive oil to whichever oil you apply to give it a little touch of moisture. You can also give your hair a quick conditioning treatment before shampoo. Mix one teaspoon each of vinegar and almond oil with one egg. Beat them together and massage the mixture into the scalp. Leave on the mixture for half an hour and then wash your hair. If you do not wish to use egg, add more almond oil. You must keep yourself hydrated by drinking 8-10 glasses of water daily which will help flush out toxins, improve skin tone, healthy and glowing skin. You can add fruit juice, coconut water, watermelon, green tea and lassis in your daily routine. Make sure these do not contain too much sugar or sodium. Eating the right kind of food will help your skin glow even in the winter months. Have a small box of dry fruits when you are travelling. Try to include regional and seasonal fruits, vegetables in your diet on a daily basis. Snacking on natural hydrating foods will keep your body hydrated. Opt for a diet that is rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids. All brides go through stress. Do not stress. It can ruin all your winter skincare efforts. To deal with this kind of mental stress, it is essential to learn to relax. It has been proved that physical exercise actually helps the body to cope with stress. A few weeks before the wedding, start exercising, like going for a walk. Yoga and meditation are helpful in terms of calming the mind and inducing relaxation. You must ensure eight hours of sleep daily to rejuvenate your skin. If you sleep late and are not getting enough rest, take mini naps between the day. Even a couple of 30-minute naps throughout the day will help you and your skin.

Photos: Pinterest

# Waking on the untrodden road

## VOX POPULI

By Sanskriti Singh

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both / And lost one as far as I could / To where it bent in the undergrowth.

When Robert Frost wrote these lines, I wonder where he had been and how the one decision might have changed the course of events in life. The poem holds a special place in my heart as I look back at my life today. I have not reached the point where "I shall be telling this with a sigh I took the one less travelled by, and that made all the difference". I must say the first part makes all the sense to me.

The world has its pre-conceived notion of life and career and the latter has always been in the spotlight. The most travelled roads around me were trodden black and for sure I can be confident enough to say, any of those career paths would have been easier for me. I know my abilities. I am stubborn and I proudly say I chose something that was so remote to people in society that I am close to be treated like an alien around me. I chose Archaeology.

They snatched, and so did gain; Paths, limbs are but sinking ship; Of aching body, spinal disc slips. Ill-gotten gains widen near and far; Mansions, resorts and fleet of cars; The tenure will soon end and break, Wonder what hide-out, they'll take.

As the world equipped for growth, Patriotism hindered barely an oath; Loads of years, boundary a dispute! And the land of Gods, a pure retreat.

What's amassed, yet to leave behind; What's imperative, simply to be kind; What's simplicity that a peace of mind.

Pen in hiding

Crumpled papers, scribbled writings, Become a part of rusty me. A thought for unusual sightings; Catch hold of them and be free! Tied tightly, I'm controlled, As memories unfold, Set me free to the land. Open it, footprints on the sand. The thoughts, Oh! So grand. They will not remain just memories, Build up, I will restore. My pen, in hiding. After all the searching; Finally found you, Forever, stay true.

Too young to die

A man of God died From Covid He stayed at Keatinge Road, Shillong Now his widow cries In shock He was too young to die. A child died from Covid He was a little laughing boy Life's door never really opened He was too young to die. A young man Saying "I'm immune" Lost the battle Covid won. Too young to die.

Bleak fortune

They governed, thus did reign;



All too young to die We are all too young to die When a malignant virus Comes unseen Stealing health, promise and life. We are forced to shout "We are all too young to die."

Potato head

Potato turned French fry, Forever gone her innocence, Her integrity Slowly slipping away. That needle doesn't scare her anymore. Pretty hurts and pain is beauty. She accepted that a long time ago, She slowly goes blank flying down on the table Quietly waiting for her doctor.

Wild geese

You do not have to be good. You do not have to walk on your knees For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves. Tell me about despair: yours: and I will tell you mine. Meanwhile the world goes on. Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers. Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

national perspective, for archaeology is the most global of all sciences. The driving force of this subject seeps into few hearts and I must say it is as challenging as trying to become Einstein. Archaeology is a handmaid of history, but I truly feel quiet far away from it. It is logical for sure, it requires proofs and yet it needs true commitment. You cannot take it as lightly as you take history; and please don't say I don't take history lightly. Almost everyone does, and passionately gets bored of the subject's history. The proper goal of Archaeology is to study a human that vanished from Earth lakhs or millions of years ago. It connects the past to the present developing the future and adding new chapters in your history books. It is a more logical side of history in simpler words.

You cannot expect to go out one day and dig a pit and find the greatest discovery. It will never work like that because as I said earlier, no one can predict the adversities of the subject itself. The unpredictability is at its extremes and if you are wondering it might not be difficult, I must say it is a difficult subject if you are not ready for the bumps and ditches. Your passion for the subject will decide your future here and if you are deeply passionate about this, I must say you will live for it.

It might seem challenging to choose what you have dreamed to be all your life but not all decisions will be wrong. You will be happier with a subject that means the life to you.

(The author is a student of Maharaja Srijayrao Institute)

Mary Oliver

(Courtesy: Ode To A Poetess, www.odestopoetess.com)

Pieces

Yet! Once again, time repeated itself To moments I dreamed. No not of ones isolation Nor of hate, but of hurt, Of pain which reverberates To this circle of a life. That cuts down to the throat. Roderick Theodore Rynjah

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting - over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

Photos: Pinterest