

Monpa Tribe and their Handmade Paper Industry

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In news

The 1000-year old heritage art the Monpa Handmade Paper of Arunachal Pradesh – which was driven to extinction, has come to life once again, with the committed efforts of Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).

About Monpa Handmade Paper

- The art of making Monpa handmade paper originated over 1000 years ago.
- Gradually the art became an integral part of local custom and culture in Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Once produced in every household in Tawang, this handmade paper was a major source of livelihood for the locals.
- The fine-textured handmade paper, which is called Mon Shugu in the local dialect, is integral to the vibrant culture of the local tribes in Tawang.
- The paper has great historic and religious significance as it is the paper used for writing Buddhist scriptures and hymns in monasteries.
- The Monpa handmade paper is made from the bark of a local tree called Shugu Sheng, which has medicinal values too.
- Back then, such was the scale of production that Monpas used to sell these papers to countries like Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand and Japan as no paper making industry existed in these countries at that time.
- But, the local industry gradually began declining and the indigenous handmade paper was taken over by inferior Chinese paper.

- However, the handmade paper industry almost disappeared in the last 100 years; prompting KVIC to plan revival of this ancient art.

A brief note on Monpa Tribe

- Monpa is a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh
- The Monpa are believed to be the only nomadic tribe in Northeast India they were totally dependent on animals like sheep, cow, yak, goats and horses.
- The Monpa share a very close affinity with the Sharchops of Bhutan.

Subgroups among Monpas

The Monpa are sub-divided into six sub-groups because of their variations in their language. They are namely:

- Tawang Monpa-The Tawang Monpas have a migration history from Changrelung.
- Dirang Monpa
- Lish Monpa
- Bhut Monpa
- Kalaktang Monpa
- Panchen Monpa

Religion: Influence of Buddhism

The Monpa are generally adherents of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which they adopted in the 17th century as a result of the influence of the Bhutanese-educated Merag Lama. The testimony to this impact was the central role of the Tawang Monastery in the daily lives of the Monpa folk.

Their Language

- Their languages are Tibeto-Burman languages written with the Tibetan alphabet
- The languages spoken by the Monpa people are often referred to as the “Monpa languages”

- “Monpa languages” include Kho-Bwa, East Bodish, and Tshangla languages.