Tallest Paddy in the World
is Found in Nagaland
(Officially recognised in the Year 1998 by The Guinness Book of World Records, London)

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The variety of paddy discovered in Nagaland is the tallest paddy in the world. The Guinness Book of World Records, London, after following their due procedure have officially given recognition to such a claim in 1998. The author of this article, Shri V.B. Gangurde came to learn about this paddy, and personally visited the site where this paddy was grown. He was highly impressed by whatever he saw and heard, and decided to write an article. We are happy to publish this article in this current issue of Ishani.

Shri Gangurde is a senior officer of Khadi and Village Industries Commission who is also having qualifications in different branches of knowledge. He has multifarious interests. It was during his tenure in the North-east as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer in-charge of North-east regional office at Guwahati that he came upon this rare species of paddy and wrote this article. Taking cue from his article, the Ishani team undertook a hurried research by way of browsing the World Wide Web to find out if we can add more information to the article. We came across two good photographs of the paddy, which are shown below. Sri Gangurde is at present posted at Delhi as Deputy CEO, KVIC, Northern Zone.

The person who discovered this paddy is the 78-year-old Pastor of Chumukedima Town Baptist Church. He is Mr. Melhite Kenye who is also referred to by Mr Gangurde in his article. He is a Naga himself who belongs to Chakhesang tribe. Hehails from the village Chizami situated in the Phek District of Nagaland. He has also named this variety of paddy as ‘Melhite KenyeLah’ (Lah means paddy in the dialect spoken by Mr Kenye and his tribe). Our team has also fortunately come across a couple of photographs of Mr. Kenye and the variety of this paddy, through website, which we have included in this article.

The North-east is gifted with innumerable perennial rivers, mountains and dense forests with high rainfall. The Northeastern States are recognized as seven sisters with kaleidoscopic culture and Nosegay dialects. The seven sisters are Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Out of the seven sisters, Nagaland is a colourful state with skilled craftsmanship in spinning and weaving. Variety of beautiful Naga shawls not only function as wraps for the body, but the design pattern is also indicative of the status of the person wearing it. Each Naga tribe has evolved its own pattern for shawls and other items of clothing, a sort of badge of their identity.

Nagaland now has been featured in the Guinness Book of World Records for a variety of paddy which is eight-and-a-half feet tall with 1 kg. to 800-gram yield of paddy per plant. The giant variety of paddy has been discovered by Mr. Melhite Kenye, Pastor of Baptist Church at Chumukedima, Nagaland. Mr. Melhite Kenye has been serving as a pastor for the last 35 years. He says that if the discovered paddy can be cultivated in rich soil, it may grow much taller. This could be cultivated in arid land also, but the yield may decrease depending upon climate and watering.

Rice belongs to the grass family graminiae. Its genus is Oryza, so it is called Oryza Sativa. Rice is tolerant to desert, hot, humid, flooded, dry and cold conditions and grown in saline, alkaline and acidic soil. Rice is one of the world’s most important crops. Nearly
half of the population consumes this cereal as their staple food. Rice is grown in more than 100 countries. During the year 2002, 575 million tonnes of rice was produced in the world, out of which 90 per cent, i.e., more than 520 million tonnes was grown in Asia. India ranks 2nd among the rice producing countries in the world, but lags much behind many other countries in productivity, i.e., per hectare yield. The yield of U.S.A. is 6,200 kg. paddy per hectare whereas India’s yield is 1,994 kg paddy per hectare. India is much behind China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Brazil and Japan in per hectare production.

According to a school of scholars, there are a number of varieties of rice introduced in the world. According to a study, there are 50,000 varieties of rice, out of which only few hundred varieties are cultivated. As per World Encyclopedia, farmers cultivate 7000 to 8000 varieties of rice. The Australian Government recorded in its Aus. Aid Global Education Programme, that there would be about 140,000 varieties of rice, excluding varieties of wild rice. Dr Richharia, the well-known rice scientist states that 400,000 varieties of rice existed in India during the Vedic period. He estimates that even today 200,000 varieties of rice exist in India. Dr. Richharia has collected and identified 20,000 types of rice in Chattisgarh state alone. Further, the researchers claim that 30,000 indigenous varieties of rice grew in India prior to green revolution.

Rice has been an ancient and sacred grain in India. Its earliest reference is found in the Rig Veda, where it is referred to as “Annam”. In fact, rice is the synonym of food; it is Adi Annam – the original food of mankind. In Sanskrit, rice is called “Akshata” and depicts something which is indestructible. On each sacred occasion like marriage ceremony, various festivals, and worship, rice is used as a sacred grain and offered as a blessing. Gautam Buddha’s father’s name was Shuddhodhana, which means pure rice. During the period of Gautam Buddha, rice had spread over from India to the neighbouring and Far East countries of Asia, Burma, Indonesia, Thailand, China, Japan and Korea along with the Buddhist religion. Rice is cultivated in almost all States of India but it is the staple food of the people of eastern, north-eastern and southern parts of the country. Over 65 % of the population of India are rice-eaters.

Rice is an extremely hardy and versatile crop, which can be cultivated everywhere, from tropical rainforest of Asia and Africa to the dry desert of the Middle East. It takes three to six months for growing, and 500 litres of water is required for producing 1 kg. rice. Generally, rice plant grows from 2-6 feet (60-180 cms.) in height. The highest grain grows a branched panicle (head) and each panicle bears 50-300 spikelets (flowers) from which the grain develops.
The paddy, which found a place in the Guinness Book, was discovered by Melhite Kenye, pastor of Baptist Church at Chumukedima. This small township is 14 km away from Dimapur, the business centre of Nagaland. The paddy has been cultivated in the courtyard of the Baptist church. The height of the paddy is 8 ½ feet and its yield per plant is 1 kg 800 gm (near about 2 kg). The plant has 178 tillers and having average 510 grains in each ear.

Mr. Melhite Kenye, pastor, says that he saw a plant of sparkling golden colour in dream and since then he strived to search out the golden plant. One day when he was on his way to Kohima he suddenly saw the plant, which had appeared in the dream. He nursed the plant in the courtyard of the Baptist Church and multiplied it. Mr. Kenye informed the authorities of the Guinness Book and their authorities recorded it as the highest paddy in the world in the Guinness Book on 1st October 1998. In course of my discussion with Mr. Melhite, he apprised that such type of high yield rice should be cultivated by the various Agriculture Universities which would hike the production of rice, and may boost up the foodgrains production in the country and help in boosting the national economy.

The dried straws of the paddy have been collected and sent to the Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute, a departmental training institute of Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Sanganer, Jaipur (Rajasthan) to undertake research and necessary experiments on it to ascertain whether the paddy straw could be used as a raw material for manufacturing Handmade Paper by setting up clusters of Handmade paper units. Further, the sample of rice has been sent to the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Yashwantrao Chavan Open University, Nashik to undertake research whether such variety could be cultivated in Konkan belt of Maharashtra.

It is primarily due to the efforts of Mr. Melhite Kenye, that the state of Nagaland is depicted in the Guinness Book as having the tallest paddy in the world with a remarkable yield, something that the people of Nagaland can justly be proud of as having been instrumental in bringing credit to India as a whole.