

# Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

Each week the *West Highland Free Press* publishes the text for Roddy Maclean's

“Letter to Gaelic Learners” on *BBC Radio nan Gaidheal (103-105 FM)*.\*

The programme is broadcast at 11.50 every Friday morning,

and repeated at 7.30 pm the following Monday.

“Am b’fheàrr leibh tì neo cofaidh?” Tha a’ cheist sin simplidh gu leòr, nach eil? Ach dè mu dheidhinn na ceist seo? “Am b’fheàrr leibh tì àbhaisteach neo tì Thibèatanach?” Uill, mura robh sibh a-riamh anns a Hiomàileatha, neo ann an Tibèt fhèin, ’s dòcha nach bi fios agaibh dè chanas sibh. Bheir mi comhairle dhuibh, ma tha. Gabhaibh an tì àbhaisteach!

Nise, feumaidh mi ràdh gu bheil spèis mhòr mhòr agam do na Tibèatanaich agus an cultar. A h-uile turas a bha mi cuide ri Tibèatanaich neo treubhan Hiomàileathach aig a bheil cultar Thibèatanach, chòrd e rium glan. Tha na daoine laghach is modhail, ach làn spòrs is fealla-dhà cuideachd. Agus tha mòran dhen bhiadh aca glè mhath – rudan mar *momos* a chuireas iad ann am brot, agus rudan eile, car coltach ri sin, a tha iad a’ dèanamh le taois.

Ach chan eil mi cho cinnteach idir mu dheidhinn dà rud a tha iad ag ithe agus òl – *tsampa* agus tì, neo teatha. Thig mi gu *tsampa* aig deireadh na litreach, agus tuigidh sibh carson nuair a chluinneas sibh mo seul mu dheidhinn na tì.

Bha mi ann an taigh ann an dùthaich nan *Sherpas*, ann an Neapàl, nuair a ghabh mi tì Thibèatanach. ’S ann às Tibèt a thàinig na *Sherpas* bho thùs, agus tha mòran chleachdaidhean aca fhathast a tha dìreach mar a th’aig Tibèatanaich eile. Air an latha sin bha i cho fuar ris a’ phuinnsean, le sneachd anns a h-uile h-àite, agus bha mi a’ coimhead air adhart ri rudeigin teth òl. Dh’fhaighnich fear an taighe dhìom, am bu toil leam cupa tì agus thuirt mi ris gum bu toil.

Thug am bodach a-mach nàdar de mhuidhe neo biota, soitheach àrd fiodha le maide na bhroinn. Chuir e ann am meadhan an t-seòmair e agus dhoirt e uisge goileach ann. Chuir e rud neo dhà eile ann agus, an uairsin, thòisich e air am maistreachadh. Bha e car coltach ri seann bhean air Ghàidhealtachd o chionn fhada a’ dèanamh ìm.

Nuair a bha e deiseil, bhruidhinn am bodach rium ann an *Nepali*, cànan nàiseanta Neapàil.

“*Cup chiya, Sahib?*” dh’fhaighnich e – cupa tì?

“*Ali ali maatra dinus,*” arsa mise ris – dìreach rud beag – ged a bha lan-fhios agam gun lionadh e an cupa mòr a bha ri mo thaobh.

Chuir mi an cupa ri mo bhilean agus dh’fheuch mi an tì. Uill, cha do dh’òl mi a leithid a-riamh roimhe, neo bhon uairsin nas mòr! Bha am blas, uill, eadar-dhealaichte! An àite bainne ùr, bidh iad a’ cur seann ìm ann. Agus tha mi a’ ciallachadh seann ìm – air a dhèanamh le bainne bho *yak* a chaidh a bhleoghain greis mhath roimhe sin. Mar as breun an t-ìm, ’s ann as fheàrr, a-rèir choltais.

Agus cha b' e sin a-mhàin. Cuiridh iad ann, an àite siùcar, salann. Canaidh mi dìreach nach robh e ro mhath. Thuirt mo charaid, ri mo thaobh, agus e a' coimhead air m'aodann, "Na smaoinich air mar thì. Smaoinich air mar bhrot. Agus bidh modhail nuair a thilleas am bodach."

"Deagh bhrot," thuirt mi rium fhìn, "deagh bhrot." (Ged nach robh mi ga chreids'). Agus nuair a thill am bodach, dh'fhaighnich e dhìom an robh e math. "Bha," arsa mise ris gu breugach, "bha, gu dearbh." Agus – lìon e an cupa a-rithist!

Agus tha sin gam thoirt don *tsampa*. 'S e a th'ann min-fhlùir eòrna air a ròstadh. Tha fàileadh math air gun teagamh. Ach tha e ro thioram airson ithe, agus bithear ga mheasgachadh le – seadh – tì Thibèatanach. Cha chan mi an còrr.

Chun na h-ath sheachdainn, mar a chanas muinntir Neapàil, Namaste!

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**Faclan na seachdainne:** tì, teatha: *tea*; àbhaisteach: *normal*; Tibèt, Thibèatanach: *Tibet, Tibetan*; Hiomàileatha, Hiomàileathach: *Himalaya, Himalayan*; treubhan: *tribes*; aois: *dough*; sneachd: *snow*; muidhe, biota: *churn*; dhoirt: *poured*; goileach: *boiling*; deiseil: *ready, finished*; Neapàl, Neapàil: *Nepal, of Nepal*; a-riamh roimhe: *ever before*; thill: *returned*.

**Abairtean na seachdainne:** am b'fhèarr leibh X neo Y?: *would you (pl.) prefer X or Y?*; bheir mi comhairle dhuibh: *I will give you (pl.) advice*; bho thùs: *originally*; bha mi a' coimhead air adhart ri rudeigin teth òl: *I was looking forward to drinking something hot*; soitheach àrd fiodha le maide na bhroinn: *a tall wooden vessel with a stick in it*; thòisich e air am maistreachadh: *he started to churn them*; neo bhon uairsin nas mò': *nor since that time either*; a chaidh a bhleoghain greis mhath roimhe sin: *that was milked a considerable time before that*; cha b' e sin a-mhàin: *that was not all*; smaoinich air mar bhrot: *think of it as soup*; gu breugach: *untruthfully*; min-fhlùir eòrna air a ròstadh: *roasted barley flour*; tha fàileadh math air gun teagamh: *it smells good without doubt*; bithear ga mheasgachadh le: *it is mixed with*; cha chan mi an còrr: *I won't say anything else*.

**Puing ghràmair na seachdainne:** Mar as breun an t-ìm, 's ann as fheàrr: *the more rancid the butter, the better. The "mar as ..., 's ann as ..." expression in Gaelic is common and exceptionally useful. Note that it may be verbless, except for the Assertive Verb (Is ann). Bidh i teth am màireach (it will be hot tomorrow) Math dha-rìreabh; mar as teotha, 's ann as fheàrr (excellent; the hotter the better). It is often met with in proverbs. If you are male, getting a little long in the tooth and suffering uncomplimentary comments from the younger generation about your age, here is a good one to remember: Mar as sine am boc, 's ann as cruaidh' an adharc (the older the buck, the harder the horn). This phraseology also works with additional verbs as in the following proverb: Mar as moth' a gheibh an cù, 's ann as moth' a dh'iarras e (the more the dog gets, the more he wants).*

**Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine:** bha i cho fuar ris a' phuinnsean: *lit. it was as cold as the poison; ie. it was exceptionally frigid!* Gaelic is full of similes (samhlaidhean) of this nature which add great richness to the language. You will already have come across cho reamhar ri ròn (*as fat as a seal*) but there are many others. Be careful not to simply translate English expressions of this nature into Gaelic; try to find a Gaelic equivalent. For example “as fit as a fiddle” could be translated as cho fallain ri breac or cho fallain ri fiadh; on the other hand, “cho fallain ri fidheall” would sound silly! Keep a notebook and, when you hear something of this nature in conversation or on the radio, write it down so that you can later commit it to memory.

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