

Editorial

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Exploring the beaten path

Man, having the ability to judge and to arrange for alternatives, have taken the shortest road to development and progress. The unique gift of mental superiority over every living creature on the planet is what enables him to dominate and distinguish himself from every other creature inspite of the frailties and physical shortcomings. We take pride, and rightly so, in the fact that we can, and are still pushing ourselves to overcome the physical and mental restraints and limits. Yet ever so often, there comes a time when the collective conscience of a society seems to stop working, taken over by the wave of opinions and mob behavior. One such instance is the period running up to elections for choosing our representatives to the government.

In fact, at present, the state is witnessing an increasing undeclared war of words with various political bigwigs starting to warm up with insinuations and counter blames for the state of affairs of the society, while highlighting their trumped up ideologies and deceptively believable assurances of progress and development. It seems unlikely that most of these old players remember being in the driving seat once, but with the absence of the foresight and impetus to carry out the promises they are doling out now. Given the fact that there is a constraint of resources, both financial and infrastructure with the state government, it is of great concern when the people in power are still hell-bent on pilfering these limited resources for themselves without the least consideration or remorse, leading the public to start questioning the motive and the seemingly earnest efforts of the government to develop the state which is evidently enjoying certain perks and assistances from the central Government due to its underdeveloped status.

The state is yet to see a radical change in the system of governance with emphasis on transparency and efficiency. The various promises and agendas which were pushed on the face of the public during the election campaigns have been shelved for good, until the next one. On the other hand, a majority of us have cheapened ourselves by offering up our suffrage to the highest bidder. To cover up its shortcomings and deficiencies behind the excuse of a less than perfect world is nothing short of shirking its responsibility and a ploy to steal the riches and benefits meant for the public. What the public wants is a government that has the gumption to take calculated risks and pave new ways to initiate development and accelerate progress, one which can translate the aspirations of the people into concrete works and utilize the available resources efficiently.

A Government more accessible to the common man which can expedite its development activities and which can effectively control and motivate its employees will surely win favors from the public. The present Government should realize that the increasingly informed public is getting restive for change and growth, and only those who have shown to deliver on their promises will endure.

"To follow imperfect, uncertain, or corrupted traditions, in order to avoid erring in our own judgment, is but to exchange one danger for another"- Richard Whately, English rhetorician, logician, economist, and theologian.

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SORARENGI MACHANUPI AND KANGLA DIARY: ISSUES OF INSURGENCY REFLECTED IN THE NOVELS OF BM MAISNAMBA

By - Dr. Sarangthem Sobharani Devi

BM Maisnamba is one of the most celebrated writers in contemporary Manipuri literature. He is known for his fresh and original style of writing with novel themes which have stretched into various historical, social and cultural aspects. So long, he has fifteen novels to his credit, they are: 'Atithi Amagi Ahing' (1978), 'Sorarengi Machanupi' (1980), 'Ahhingi Nupi' (1989), 'Kangla Diary' (1999), 'Imphal Turel Mapalgi Rajkumari' (1995), 'Imashi Nurabi' (2004), his trilogy, which has generally been considered the magnum opus - 'Ningthemnubi: Pongi Uchek' (2006), 'Ningthemnubi: Ahingni Laibar' (2006), and 'Ningthemnubi: Koung Mihaat' (2006), the five series of novels namely, 'Shridham Nabadwip Oghi' (2008), 'Shrimati Kumari' (2008), 'Shrimati Kumari Devadasi' (2009), 'Basantagi Kokil Amom' (2012) and the two novels which are the continuation of 'Imashi Nurabi' called 'Nurabi Sayon' (2013), and 'Chittagong Reporter'. Out of these fifteen novels Imashi Nurabi and Ningthemnubi Trilogy are the most celebrated works which have occupied distinguished places in Manipuri literature. For Imashi Nurabi Maisnamba was conferred the 'Manipur State Kala Akademy Award' in 2006 and 'Sahitya Akademi Award' in 2007 by the Manipur State Kala Akademy, Imphal and Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi respectively. Moreover, he is the first writer to receive the 'Manipur State Award for Literature' in 2008 for Imashi Nurabi from the Government of Manipur. Apart from these he has been honoured for these two novels by various literary and cultural organizations with different awards.

BM Maisnamba is a writer who believes in the purity and the power of literature. With a commitment to ameliorate the flaws and the loopholes of the society through the power of literature he has actively been engaged over the past few decades in creative writing. The majority of his novels are structured into the frame of traditional writing. Having not merely a quality of uniqueness in storytelling art but his skill in the usage of new words coined by him is also highly commendable. Emphasizing on such things helps to attract the readers' concentration on his art. The important issues which are in attempt to highlight in his novels which include discrimination of men in the name of religion, problems encountered by the women in the patriarchal society, declines of women's moral behaviours, violence, corruptions, and moreover the insurgency in the state may be mentioned. Selecting two novels of the writer, 'Sorarengi Machanupi' and 'Kangla Diary', in this paper, an attempt is made to discuss the issues of insurgency in Manipur as reflected in these novels.

We are aware that Manipuri literature has been playing a significant role in identifying social problems and in bringing social changes. Literature is said to have been the artistic record of life. Good literature is not merely a storehouse of knowledge but it is also a tool for social, political and cultural changes. For instance, in the wake of revitalization movement of 'Sanamahi Laining', the indigenous religion of the Meiteis, the role played by the literary works of Meitei Prophet Naoriya Phullo is worth mentioning. Moreover, the roles taken by the writings of Hijam Irawat in mobilizing the people for a new political horizon and the

impact of the prolific writers of renaissance's period-Chaoba, Kamal, and Anganghal's works on Manipuri culture, tradition and society are well known to us.

BM Maisnamba who has come into prominence from the later part of the Twentieth Century in Manipuri literature is a romantic Manipuri novelist. The majority of his works, excluding Kangla Diary, may be considered as stories of action. In the selected two novels the writer has presented a vivid account of illegal activities of politicians and officers, deeply rooted tradition of corruption and atrocious acts of the armies on the innocent people. In consequence of which the emergence of insurgent movement initiated by the frustrated youths who have the enthusiasm to save their society are highlighted in these novels. Pointing his finger on such issues Maisnamba demonstrates the voices of the youths in his writing. Using flash back technique the narrative of Sorarengi Machnupi has been presented. Here, he discusses the issues of insurgency and the problems encountered by those who have involved in it are underscored through the story of a frustrated man called Birmani and his lover Sushini. Through the story of Birmani Maisnamba draws a picture of the tensions of the common people strata and the situation faced by the youths after Manipur got annexed to Indian Union which led to the formation of nationalist movement in the state. Underscoring the historic event of 'Hunger Marchers Rally' which was taken place during 1965 Maisnamba attempts to justify the situation of instability, unlawful activities of the leaders towards earning wealth by forfeiting the right of the common people, anti social attitude, and so on. Using the situation of the society as backdrop the character of Birmani has been structured as a leader of revolutionary movement. The novelist uses the event of the Hunger Marcher Rally as a turning point of Birmani's life to begin with a journey for self determination. Being a representative of College students Birmani participated as an esteem member of the Hunger Marcher Rally. During the agitation he seriously got injured and hospitalized for many days. Consequently, this incident evoked him to unfold his inner voice for a revolution which had been kept in his mind for a long time. He established a revolutionary group called 'Rimian Lalloi' with his friend Rono. Although "Rimian Lalloi" was an insurgent group but in no way near to violence. In support of the facts Maisnamba embodied an enthusiastic voice for streamlining the society towards restoring a harmonious and peaceful atmosphere. Here, by interspersing the idea of what roles to be played by the youths in such a situation is clearly expressed in a dialogue of Birmani. Let's consider the following excerpt which is my free translation from the Manipuri text:

Shall we remain tolerant to the grievous situation of the state? We too have to do something about it if we the youths don't take these responsibilities... then who will... [Sorarengi Machanupi, 1980 :38]

Having a small Government job Birmani stood as a common man into the people's perception. However, in reality, as a revolutionary leader, Birmani had seriously been engaged in making different strategies against the Government. Meanwhile, in a case of arresting a Government officer on the charges of corruption he had to

encounter various disturbances since he was involved in it. Consequently, he left his job and started working as an editor. The forceful and influential words from his pen had become instrumental in strengthening different movements. It was impossible for him to hide his hidden identity for long. Soon after, recognizing him as a leader of insurgence group he was arrested by the Police and had to test the life of imprisonment.

After he got back from the jail, so as to escape from the Police he had to keep himself hiding in a village located very far from the city called Nongpok Khulen. In such a situation the novelist made a turning point on the life of Birmani by introducing a female character called Sushini. After having met with Sushini Birmani started avoiding from the works of insurgency. Subsequently, they got united and started a new journey for a new life. The aspect of Birmani's life is a ubiquitous phenomenon to those who have involved in the revolutionary movement. By the unsatisfactory outcomes, repentance, insecure life and moreover having incompatible thought among the leaders they were compelled to leave the path of insurgency and hankering about to get back to a common people's life. Such realities faced by many individual in the progress of insurgence movement are distinctly drawn in the novel through the character of Mr Birmani.

Escaping from the underground's life with a new hope Birmani started approaching towards a new beginning. His life was complete with two children. With the aim to achieve an economically independent life he entrusted in the green revolution by dedicating in the agricultural works. However, his peaceful life was short; he got no mercy from the security forces during the progress of arresting people who were once involved in the insurgent movement. When he came back home after the completion of his imprisonment he found no clue of his wife and beloved children. With such an approach the novelist tries to highlight the situation of instability, insecure life and different problems which have not only been encountered by the activists of insurgency but by their family also.

The issues of insurgency which BM Maisnamba started concentrating on from Sorarengi Machanupi have come into his Kangla Diary. The Kangla Diary which is said to have been based on true story and events is characteristically highly distinguished from his other works in terms of style and diction. Since, the story of the novel is presented as a stream of thought it may be true to say that the Maisnamba's Kangla Diary is very close to the Pacha Meetei's Imphal Amashung Magi Ishing Nushitki Phibam (Imphal and its Climatic Condition) which has been considered as a stream of consciousness novel. Most of the Maisnamba's works are to be considered as stories of action but the structure of Kangla Diary is found to be adopted the technique used by Pacha in his Imphal Amashung Magi Ishing Nungshitki Phibam.

As Pacha presents all the events taken place during the past several years within few hours through the mind of Thanil, Maisnamba also conveys the story and event of Kangla Diary as an autobiographical memory of Melei with immediacy. Here, the novelist tries to put before the readers all the incidents taken place in Imphal city

through the mind of the protagonist Melei who is identified himself as Kangla Paomee (tr., Kangla Reporter).

As drawn in Sorarengi Machanupi Maisnamba highlights the daily tensions of common people strata and social and cultural sensibilities in a more distinctive way which has been one of the conceptual backgrounds for the movement of self determination. Here again the novelist put a vivid account of the people's protest against the unlawful and intolerable acts of the corrupted leaders. As consequence of it the emergence of the insurgent movement out of frustration is underscored in this novel. The story has been presented with a slogan for self-determination by introducing BK Chingshu as a patriot. BK Chingshu has been introduced as a person who got frustration two times in the past and has nobody behind his life.

His father, held as a warden of jail, was murdered by unknown. Hence, he made a complaint against of it but his voice to the concerned authority fell on deaf ears. This was the first indignation incident encountered by him in his life. And the second one was the suspension from his job as the inspector of CID when he produced a detailed report on corruption against some highly reputed officers. This incident was, indeed, a shattering blow to his life. Hence, he formed a group to fight against the system.

Moreover, the character of Thoiba Luwang is also shown as a person who repeatedly got torturing of armies for extending support to the common people for justice. During the time he was in Indian army he was kept in the jail for three days by the commandant for committing assault in protest against the non Manipuri personnel for their immoderate actions. He was tortured in the jail for many days. Subsequently making a hard decision to fight against them, he fled away from the army camp taking one grenade and some weapons with him. Because of which he was declared as a wanted culprit by the government. To avoid from recognizing him by the people he started working as a rickshaw puller in the public places in which he used to cover the scars of his faces with cloth.

Taking responsibility to fight against systems BK Chingshu and Thoiba Luwang founded a movement. Simultaneously, several frustrated youths were also started establishing many insurgent groups in different part of the state with the aims to fight against the powerful people. Among them the Meitei State Committee and Revolutionary Government of Manipur (RGM) led by Mr Ito and SK Singh respectively are worth mentioning.

The character of BK Chingshu has been described as a person having full commitment to the sacrifice his life for the people's causes. With the aims to validate the human values by rectifying the immoderate behaviour of the leaders he entered into politics and established a party called KRP. Behind the backdrop of the KRP, joining hands with the likeminded groups they had been actively working under different agendas focussing achieving independence in which BK Chingshu played the key role. At the same time joining with Mr Ito, the leader of Meitei State Committee, Mr Thoiba Luwang also started working as a dedicated activist. Subsequently, as wished by BK Chingshu they made a serious attempt to bring all the likeminded militant groups under one umbrella which had been scattered across the state.

(to be contd.)