



The Realistic Trend of Post Independence Manipuri Poetry

Dr.Nirmola Sana

Asst Professor

Manipuri department

Assam University,Silchar

788011

The literary life of the Manipuris as in other Indian languages underwent a sweeping change under the impact of a new socio-political order in the post-independence period that initiates the emergence and development of a realistic trend. That is why the period is marked by the decline of the earlier trend. So far as the poetry is concerned, the romantic trend that flourished and reigned supreme before independence could no longer be a dominant literary current because of the unscapable impact of the changing social order. A new trend of realistic poetry with its new tinge and taste stemmed from the fast changing life which is expose to the vast prospects of freedom and democracy. As the political process sets in motion, new events and situations flared up. Partition and unification, integration and interaction, merger (e.g. Manipuris merger with Indian Union on 15th October 1949) and adjustment, discrimination and discrepancy, hatred and hegemony, infighting, killing and assasination including Mahatma Gandhi on 30th January, 1948, the birth and growth of democracy and the awkward experience of it, all have a striking effect on the life of the Manipuris. The ramification of all these constitutes the rational behind the emergence of this new trend of realistic poetry. As the new current continued unabated gathering its own momentum with all its idiosyncracies, socio-political loadings charged with a new aesthetic impulse, it was more and more conspicuous that the impact of the earlier trend of romanticism was on the wane and far more subdued. The transition was increasingly realized and became dramatically palpable as the writings of realistic Succeed poets were able to extraordinarily succeed impinging upon the consciousness of the readers and thus started capturing the popular imagination to a large extent. The resounding victory for the emergence of this realistic trend may be ascribed to the writings of E. Nilakanta Singh. When his forceful poem **Menipur** first appeared in 1949, the same year Manipur merged with the Indian union, Manipuri poetry was said to have embarked on a new trend. A change rhythm mood and language in his creations could disturb the status quo of the earlier and eventually revolutionised the thinking of the nootic world. The search for a new reality also brought about the collapse of truth of private havens of a promised land and ivory tower of ideals. Thus, the withdrawal from the dignities of a heighten reality is meaningful and worthy of being noticed. **Chatlasine Kadaidano ibaani** (Let us go then you and I), a collection of poems appeared in 1974 further reiterates Nilakanta's position in this direction. In fact, the underlying beauty of his work lies in its unforgettable realistic impulse- the current mood of ambivalence growing ambivalence between ageold

traditional values and ideals and existing decadence and disillusionment, a source of constant torment of the poet. Such tension is intrinsically projected as a grave concern of the modern Manipuri life. In such a scenario personality becomes the immediate concern rather than the cherished ideals. The poet frets over, the Vex situation and unleashes his disillusionment as -

"Kadomdano lambensibo
Chinga khutka maannadaba
lanthunghamga lambenga samnadaba
phidamdagi misakna luba"
(Which is the way -
No link between speech and practice
The way leading to no good goal
Personality more valuable than the ideals)

(I.R. Bab ,1998)

Because of the astounding bewilderment and the utter complexity, Nilakanta repeatedly reminds and thus intensifies his queries about the legacies of the age-old traditional ideals, moral values and the rich heritage of Manipuri culture that has roots in the remote past by encoding their peculiar charms as in the following lines -

"majaibemma mamom laanglen thoibina sasthouba
kwaaktaagi nungsit namiba
ningonbu mougi singda chalhanba
leaiharaobagi jagoy -
thekka thek nouga nou haina humna sathekpa
sumhatpa baasigi surda,
angakpa punglonda jagatpu kaawduna
aikhoina yengjaba maitaygi jagoi raas
ningsinglibara imaa manipur?
nachaasingdi yengli, adubu kaore!

(The princess Thoibi riding on a horse
The gentle breeze of kwakta
Making a woman of the virgin
The dance of Lai Harasoba
In the midst of beautiful movements
Manipuri dance we rejoiced
In the midst of enchanting flute
with the sounds of wonderful mridanga
oblivious of the world
Do you still remember mother?
Your sons are looking, yet forget)

(I.R. Babu, 1988)

The poet could not remain satisfied with the mere depiction of sentimental lyricism, the spectacular world of metaphysics and romance and of religious fervours and feelings. Rather, he wanted to convey a sense of loathsome current political hell marked by never-ending abuses coming out of the dishonest and antagonistic hearts. This prompts him to raise his frequent queries about the legacy of traditional values. The deep-seated moral and aesthetic part of the life became more and more a thing of the past and thus increasingly irrelevant with the current mood of despondency and wretchedness. The light of truth, the flame of dharma, clear atmosphere of pure heart-all got bogged down offering no motivation for attending and sunk in the sea of human barbarism. Sati Sita may have been interred with Mahatma Gandhi. The present scenario is marked by the tandave dance of Rudra, the topsy-turvy world of Nataraj Sive, the signal of the doomsday

and breaking of mother earth. The gravity of the situation and the intensity of the horror and hegemony has been encoded in the following lines-

"taaredana nahaaksu uredana
 etom bomgi makhon, ayaekpa, akiba,
 maiyrik-maiykhu amuba chingmuk wangba
 rasiyaada "jaar ningthouna naiba-otpa chuppa
 bandi banbaas mi lising kayabu matungda Kammunijan stelin !!
 senglaba nungthinda ningngaidana khongliba
 lamhuiygi kaangbu esia aaphrikaagi
 atiyaada paairiba langjaagi sanggu
 (You have heard, see
 The noise of atomb bomb, harsh, horryfying
 Black gaseous flames as high as mountain
 The tortures with blood sucking of the Czar in Russia
 Banishment of thousands of people
 Afterwards communism
 Stalin
 In the clear day time
 The unconcerned howling of groups of jackals
 The flock of vultures
 Hovering over the sky of Asia and Africa

(1.R. Babu 1988)

The magnitude of the agony is to such an extent that even the activities and performance of U.N.O. is pitiable and its existence is questionable. It is quite deplorable to see flying flag halfmast at U.N.O. at the death of Gandhiji as a loss to mankind. In such a fast changing world full of violence, selfishness party politics and political propaganda, the situation of Manipur has been degenerated into a state of frustration, pessimism, helplessness, resignation, discontent and depression. The restless-ness of Nilakanta coming out of such social malaise may further be seen in one of his remarkable poems **Lammaangnaba** (Lost Horizon), Here, his preoccupation and obsession revolves around the fundamental unstable question of unstable life and its uncertain outlook rather than being surprised and satisfied with the achievements of human progress and civilization. The poet is totally at a loss what to do when the irresistible progress of civilization started sweeping away the tender life of the Manipuris. Outwordly, the contemporary modern life is in a better status, materially more equipped, more gets promising and purposful. At least, the physical body gets rest by surmounting various hurdles. However with respect to the mind and outlook, there is no stability and certainty. The tiny boat of the Manipuri life that has taken roots in the soil of this valley has started floating on the wave of this human progress and the tender stem of it gets tossed at the gusty turmoil of human civilization. In such a scenario, it is inevitable on the part of the poet to raise a barrage of restless questions, His obsession is foregrounded as- **to which harbour will we shail our boat?** Every now and then, his mind flickers to turn back to the indigenous harbour. Thus he repeatedly refers to LAANGOL LUKHOI; AWAANG CHAOKHONG HIDEN etc. He also asks **-Or else, should we turn to the one that was brought by the sweet and delicate rhythm of Hinduism DIN HIN BHAGYACHANDRA and MADHUKARA SHYAAM OF BRAJA?** The uncertainty is increasing and keeps on coming as in the following -

"taakhi aikhoina thenglaba ahingda
 nungsiba nouraba surgi ichel
 din hin Bhagyachandra

 kanaano yaachangbada phingouna khumduna maangkhibadubu laangol lukhoi !

michik miraaokhol taadraba thenglaba ahingda
 amuksu sumhatpa baasigi sur
 onthokpanidako thammoibu huriba brajagi madhukarshyam
 (We heard at death of night
 The flow of sweet delicate rhythm
 Din Hin Bhagyachandra.
 Who was that disappeared
 Suddenly in the twilight shrouded in white
 Langol Lukhoi

At this dead might
 When not even a faint sound could be heard
 Once more the enchanting music of flute
 Strange Madhu Kara Shyam of Braja
 Who steal away the mind

(I.R. Babu 1988)

It is a marked feature of Nilakanta's poetry that he refers a lot of things which has indigenous connotations available either in traditional literature or in history or both. However Nilakanta outrightly decontextualised them from their original discourse and exploited them in a new situation where a promiscuous heap of Social ailments are looming large. When the recontextualisation takes place in such a totally different ontology, it gives rise to a new dimension of literature where the traditional values find their voidness. This is how Nilakanta reconciles his writings with his philosophical world view. For example- **melai laisnaa nongjumpaal Kadaambadi lainungsi, kwaaktaagi nungsit naamiba** etc. are ceaselessly exploited by to the poet in his search for a new reality having a totally different ontological question to depict the broken and its meaninglessness in the existing awkward predicament as in following--

"Kadaaidano maraibak thirabi manipur -
 melai leisnaa nongjumpaal kadaam-badi lainungsi !
 kadaaidano nahaakki isaigi mandir ?
 kadaaidano thaarugadaba nahaakki lumlaba potyom
 kadaaidano heklugadaba nahaakki sanjigi laihao
 kadaaidano saathangadaba nahaakki thamnogi lairaang
 assagi lairaang waakhalgi lairaang pumnamakna yenghidraba
 nahaakki punsigi lairaang ?
 (Where is poor Manipur
 Melei Leisna Nongjumpal kadambadi Leinungsi
 Where is the abode of your music?
 Where will you disembark your heavy burden
 Where will you get champa to adorn your back knot
 Where will you make flower of your heart bloom
 Flower of hope flower of thought nobody takes care of
 Flower of life?

(I.R. Babu)

The poet does not find any solution of the present predicament His restless question continues as --

"Kaasmai debaai?
 Karamba laaidano? Houdokninnarakpa maihourongi
 Laaidara? Thamnoi pibirakpa hindugi laaidara?
 Potthaaba phangdraba matamgi laaidara? Magikhun yaaoriba
 bhabisatki laaidara? Karamba laaidano?
 (Kasmei divaya?

To which god? Is it to the indigenous god?

To the Hindu god who gave feeling?

To the restless god of modernity?

To the veiled god of future?

To which god?)

Thus the tender bud of hope, the powerful stemina in the body. The irresistible flow of thought, the tender spirit of the mind-- all remained stranded finding no way for further proceeding. The poet is too much overwhelmed with the painful reality and in his faint imagination too he is unable to see any prompt resilience. Therefore, his anxiety and resignation sustained and this gives rise to his prolonged restlessness. His only consolation is that one day Manipuris will look back at their mother as the repentent Dushanta did when the ring of memory of Shakuntala was shown to him. He visualizes the desperate condition of Manipur by that time. Thus his restlessness has been imbibed into a projected uncertainty that is yet to come as in the following --

"Matam duda nahaakti kadaaida

Kadaaida imma kadaaida?"

(At that time, where will you be

Where, mother, where?)

Such an obsession continues and stretches into another poetic work **Tirtha jaatra** (Pilgrimage 1905). He mentions in his **Manipur** 1973 that was written after 24 years of the publication of his first poem on Manipur as --

"Hongdedako ima nahaakki sakpham chahi 24 chuppasi

Hongdedako naachaasinggi thammoisi

Raajnitigi tukkacharaba motlaba namthiraba saajatsi

Imaabu namthaak toubasi"

(No change at all, yourlook, mother for complete 24 years

No change at all, the heart of your children

The obnoxious, dirty, stinking game of politics

The deception of the mother).

However on the whole, he is not a pessimist per se. In this later work, **Tirtha Jaatraa** as the title indicates, Nilakanta is still Gold in his long journey in search of an ultimate goal with untiring spirit though baffled on the way.

L. Sammarendra Singh is another remarkable poet who enriched the realistic trend of poetry and enhanced the beauty and popularity of it in a different way. He is different from Nilakanta in that his poetry is concerned particularly with more mundane matters, the immediate surroundings and the day-to-day routine-bound experiences of the people. Thus his poetry by and large gets around the hurdle of deep-seated scholarly underpinnings laden with philosophical loadings as is available in Nilakanta's poetry. Unlike Nilakanta who relentlessly intellectualizes poetry, Sammarendra indulges in satirizing it as a matter of fact, Sammarendra shot into fame as an excellent satirist as well as unparalleled lyricist, who has an extraordinarily versatile ability in the use of evocative and emotive language. His first collection of poem **Waa Amata Haaige Telangaa** was published in 1962. For his second collection of poems **Mamaang Laikaai Thambaal Saetle** (1974) he was awarded the Jamini Sundar Gold Medal of the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1976 and in the same year he was honoured with the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award as well. In 1985 another collection of poems **Khul Amagi Waari** was published. As his writings concentrate mainly on common ordinary things and extremely trivial matters that are picked up from immediate realities, his poetry has an ultimate say to common readers and his satirical overtone that has a far-reaching heartening effect evokes commendable interest in them. Even an ordinary larva of an insect such as butterfly which is extremely common in summer was not spared. Thus he writes on **Tillaaikhombi** (Caterpillar) as in the following --

Tillaai khombi machaa imaa tillaai khombi machaa

Nungsidara yengngu imaa tillaaikhombi machaa

Haattok-u imaagi ibungngo nungsiba

Haatook-u haattok-u."

(Little caterpillar, mother little caterpillar

Look mother how lovely the little caterpillar is

Kill it away with it my dear Kill

My dear, my love Kill :)

Here he makes use of a little caterpillar, a pitiable loving creature in the style of narrative discourse of just four lines to show the ossification of the kind heart of a dotting mother. In another Poem **Huraanba Machaa** (Little Thief) which is of only five lines, he poem portrays how a little thief is trapped in the hands of powerful thieves and how he underwent the final catastrophe in the hands of another more powerful ones to ridicule the social mores of might is right

"Huraanba machaa amakhak

Huraanba tarukna phaaruk-i

Huraanba machaa adu mathwaai thaa

Huraanba Kunthraatarukna netlaga

niphuna setpada"

(A certain little thief

Was caught by six thieves

When thirty-six thieves trampled

And shattered to pieces by another forty thieves

The little thief lost his life).

Such common incidents, ordinary situations, and trivial matters are dealt with in such a way that it makes mockery of the contemporary society and such poems constitute a separate current that has roots in the immediate realities and concerns. The poems like **Oinaam Mohon** (Mohan is a proper name and oinaam is surname), **Ching Kaasi Ngasidi** (Let us climb hills to-day) are other remarkable poems that speak volumes of such an innovative trend in which elements of satire and vulgarization are marked features. Ginaam Mohon is a very common name, and a name that is so familiar that everybody seems to have acquainted with him. The day-to-day routine bound life of such an ordinary man who tries to cope with various context of situation of modern life for the purpose of his survival in the concern of the poem. Such a man has been destined with many attributes of modern life -- a man who eats hot pakouras and goes to matinee show of Hindi films, speaks out government secrets and also spells out the tough matter of Vedanta. At hotels, he challenges the foreign policy of Mr. Nehru. At the marriage ceremony, his special dress attracts everybody. A child was held spellbound and remained with his mouth open when he gazed at Mohan's sunglasses. In the morning after waking from sleep and clad in dhoti, he comes out of his house followed by two men. On the road he makes promises with his hand raised **before the financial year runs out, grant-in-aid will be snatched by force**. In the office he flatters and fools the cigarette greedy clerks and smokes cigarette from them under pressure. He calls the government LP school teacher walking gently with canvas shoes, the pillar of the nation, Iswarchandra Vidya Sagar and makes him coach his son. At 10 o'clock in the morning, the gate of Collectorate is flooded with the namaste of Mohan that excels the namaste of Home Minister at Imphal polo-ground. His oratory power can win the heart of even market going women. The scene is described at Baasikhong flood relief camp as –

"Mateng paangbiyu angamba daan toubiyu

Nayaa paisa amatta oirabasu

Pukchen sengne pinabiyu

Mioibagi mateng nattana

Mioibana Karamna hingani

Kaithen nupigi sengaodagi

Annaa kelli khudakta.

(Help contribute your mite

Kindly donate even though a single naya paise

With honesty
 How can man live
 without the help of man
 Instantly anna fell down
 From out the purse of market-going women).

Regarding his personal life, it is really pathetic and his wife, gentle Yaaimabi has no peace at all as is reflected in the following--

Thenglaba ahingda hallak-i
 Khuraba lairak phaaoduna
 Laikhom ising chimpha pui
 Maiphu laibara Yaaimabi

 Ayuk nupaa ani laak-i iskul kanbharsangi
 Jingghagi waari taabada
 Yumgi yaanglen yengkhatchai"
 (Returns late at night
 Through narrow bylane
 Mud, water on his memory always
 Is charcoal heater ready Yaimabi!

 In the morning came two men
 On hearing the talk about the iron-sheet
 For school conversion
 Gentle Yaimabi turned upwards
 Looking at the roof of her house).

Another more lively incident gives us a telling effect as he came back from a marriage ceremony. Exactly at the gate of his house, a young man caught the wrist of such a man who had declared silver medal in the flood of green light with folded hands on the occasion of charity show programe in which the daughter of T.C. member Sarjulata, formerly called Maipakpi had been dancing **Laima Jagoi**. The young man along with another one who stood a little away with akimbo asked Mohan --

"Asengba haaiyu taada mohan
 Lupaa chahum hangera?"
 (Tell me, brother Mohan
 If you are going to pay back
 Three hundred rupees).

Suddenly, the moment became pregnant with a subdued mood of a sagging life and the magnanimous acts of a modern man are unravelled as surface manifestations of various ploys and subterfuges.

A nice satirical humour can be seen in the poem **Ching Kaasi Ngasidi** where he makes mockery of the traditional religious festival **Chairaoba**, the Manipuri New Year Day. On the occasion of this festival all types of people, men, women, old and young, rich and poor, rice hoarders, salt hoarders, potato, hoarders are hectic in climbing the holy hills in their festive fineries. The poet turned towards them and made his mock comments as --

"He bhagabaan:
 Asup phajabarane laibaak asibo
 Asup phajabarane tampaak asibo
 Asup naanbarane khwaairamban asiba
 Asup lingjan maannabarane meitei Sib
 Chahi chuppa lingjen maannanaba
 Pukchen senghouro ngasidi

Chahi chuppa pukchen sengnanaba"

(Oh God!

Is this land so nice

Is this valley so nice

Is this khwaairamban so clean

Is this meitei so united

Oh be united, all maitais to-day only

To remain so throughout the year

Be honest today only

To remain so throughout the year)

During the rainy season of Ingas, at the death of night amidst relentless rain, the depiction of a affluent householder who visualizes the steady increase in the price of paddy may be seen in the following lines --

"Phougi mamanbu kayaa youkhrabagene Gomti

Maaithong makaa laamna adubu yaamna ingna

Ngaangna Chakliba maiphugi maingaanda

Sanaa khudopta yengduna

tapna tapna.....

.....haairaki.....

Lamsaangdana kunthraamangaa

Nambondana kunthraataret Singjamaidana kunthraamaapal

Maaithong makaa laam-i dhananjoi

Adudi leplourdourinaa mamansidi: "

(what is the current price of paddy, Gomti

In an extremely relaxed mood

Looking calmly at the gold-ring in the bright light of
the heater of charcoal

.....said.....

.....gently.....

35 at Lamsang

37 at Nambol

39 at Singjamei

Dhananjoi had a delightful look

(And said)

Then, the increased trend won't relent)

In another poem Baby Land, the failure in the supply of electricity, water, etc. are aptly depicted by making fun of them as toys of the baby, as in the following --

"Angaangi laibaakta

Laibaakna saai ngaasu, misu, sasu, sansu, huisu

Laibaakna saaba toti ising taade

Laibaakna saaba elektrik mai ngaande

Kallak-ui aihaakna Waaba haitaba angaangi

Thammoibu urubada"

(In the land of baby

Fish also, man also, animal also, cow also, dog also are made of earth

Earthen tap has no water

Earthen electric has no light

I am envious of the heart of baby that knows no worry

When I have seen it)

The following is another specimen for his satirical depiction from the poem **Mamaang Laikaai Thambali Saatle-**

“phamkhidare maitai ophiski keraanigi manaakta

Churut paana laikhidare

Kaannadare khalle keraani

Athuba phaail phaaruba

Migi machaagi iskolarshipki

Onthokpa maitai oikhare

Mamaang laikaai thanbaal saatle

Khoimurabu ille khoiraaba"

(Meities have stopped sitting by the side of office clerk

No more buying cigarette and pan

It is useless, started thinking by the clerk,

To hold up the movement of urgent files

For scholarship of other child

Meitei have changed into a different type

Mamang Leikai has. bloomed with lotus

The black-bees have swarmed it).

After Nilakanta and Sammarendra, Manipuri poetry underwent a new trend marked by a harsh reality in the hands of a host of younger writers spearheaded by N. Biren Singh (1946-2011), R.K. Madhubir Singh (1946-2004) Th. Ibopishak Singh (b.1948) and Y. Ibomcha Singh (b.1949). N. Biren Singh, better known as Shri Biren produced his first book of poetry **Tollaba Saadugi Waaknal** (The Thought of the Poor animal) in 1970 that was followed by another **Mapaal Naaidaba Sida Ai** (In this immensity, I) in 1989. R.K. Madhubir's works are **Machu Mechugi Atiyaa** (The Sky of various colours), **Kaairaba Murti Urega** (On seeing the broken image, 1970), **Miyaat Taaraba Phadek** (A prisoner sentenced to life imprisonment), 1974, the H. hour Patient and Other Poems (in English), 1982, The **Time Bomb** and Other Poems (also in English), 1987, **Pralloigi Mairiraktagi** (From Amongst the Flames of Doomsday), 1991, **Mamigi Mami** (The Shadow of Shadows), 1996. He is also a recipient of Sahitya Akademy Award of 1996 for his work **Pralloigi Mairtraktagi** Ibopishak Singh's publications include- **Apaiba Thawaai** (The Flying Soul), 1969 and **Norok, pataal Prithibi** (The Hell, the Nether-world and the Earth), 1985 and he received the Manpur State Kala Akademi award in 1987. Ibomcha Singh also received the same award in 1974 for his poetry **Sandrembi Thoraklo nahum ponjel saabige** (Come Out, Sandrembl. Let me build your nest), 1973. Among these younger group of writers R.K. Medhubir is marked as a bilingual writer. His attachment to English literature underlies his literary career and this has perhaps led him to write poems in English as well. Shri Biren also shows his conscientious attachment to English literature. In the hands of these writers, Manipuri poetry underwent another change in language that for the first time flouted the norms of the society. This gives birth to another separate current in poetry in which all the moral and ethical values of the society are blasted and the age-old religious sense of conscientiousness, veneration and sanctity are demolished and desecrated to the surprise of the readers.

Thus the ideal concept of God held in deep veneration has been blasphemed as in the following --

"A rotten pengbaa

Sickly full with stink

Over a lukmai

At the dirty fish market

Dreams

There is no difference

Between Srimati Raseswari

Adorning the left side of Sri Govinda And I.

I am more than her

She has no blood circulation

She cannot go out of the small room.

Whereas I am

Worth not less than five rupees
 At a time.”
 “Yesterday night a shattering sound was heard of Something falling
 The ears were as if hit with a hammer:
 In the shattering rock from south to north
 And the crumbling earthquake
 Fell down the time-worn statue
 of Bhagya Chandra at Khwairamband bazar
 The head of the Rajarshi
 Along with a crown
 Fell down on the ground.”

The following is another extreme type of showing irreverence and blasphemy --

Sitting on a plate
 Full with night soil
 A fly thinks
 Govinda is made of wood
 He has been made to appear so.
 with the help of synthetic colour only
 And you Jesus!
 When the globe has been converted
 Into a machine with the progress of science
 You steeping dangling on the cross
 What do you stand for?

However, Such angry and loud voices mellowed down at the turned of 1990's an a host of younger poets emerged on the scene like R.K. Bhubon Sana, A. Memchoubi, Saratchand Thiyam, Birendrajit Naorem, Dilip Mayengbam, Jene Moirangcha, N Bidyasagar. As They have various views and backgrounds, The earlier trends can not encompass Their writing. They are Proceeding with a new momentum going proceeding with back to Nature, folklore, ancient beliefs and their roots. in the midst of corrupt social practices and diminishing moral values, under such Seenario some new currents are emerging which constitute a new realistic trend of the current century.

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