

## SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE SHORT POEMS OF HIJAM ANGANGHAL SINGH

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The first half of the twentieth century witnessed colonial attitude of the British rule in Manipur (1891-1947) a hilly state in the north east part of India and also strongly felt the impact of the Second World War (1939-1945). Such things in turn brought about changes in various spheres of the State - social, political, economic, cultural and so on. All these aspects had been engraved in the works of the pioneer poets of Manipur who had emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century. Hijam Anganghal Singh (1892-1943) is one of the pioneer poets of Modern Manipur literature. His remarkable literary creation, Khamba-Thoibi Sheireng is the magnum opus in the history of Manipuri literature. Rather than this, his other literary products are Shingel Indu (long narrative poem), Jahera (novel), and Hijam Anganghal Singhagi Sheireng Khara (some poems of Hijam Anganghal) in which the different aspects of the contemporary Manipuri Society such as political, cultural, educational are clearly reflected.*

*Key words: Colonial attitude, pioneer poets, magnum-opus, aspects, contemporary.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

As literature denotes a body of writing by a people or by peoples using the same language (Encyclopedia Britanica:2005:77) human life is the source of literature. In the true sense of the term, literature is the image of a dynamic society (Babu:2001:66) and likewise, a society is truly reflected in its literature. Engels states that he could fully understand the then French Society from Balzac's novel, but he could not do so from a book of history (Nabachandra:2001:46). In this way, as society creates literature it reflects the society, its good values and defects as well. Poetry is one of the most important genres of literature.

Literature has an important role to play in human society as it helps in creating and producing a new face of society partially or fully – what sociologists coined the term social change. An inspiring poem creates general influence on society. Shelly has called poets the unacknowledged legislators of mankind (Mangaraj: N.D.). Thus, writers also play a remarkable role in bringing changes in the society as they act as an important agent of social change.

### **METHODS AND METHODOLOGY:**

My study is an attempt to study the relationship between literature and society through historical perspectives. For this an interdisciplinary method has been adopted for obtaining scientific conclusion. Books, seminar papers, journals etc are employed while writing this research work.

### **DISCUSSION:**

Hijam Anganghal (1892-1943) is one of the pioneer poets of modern Manipuri literature. Rather than his masterpiece Khamba Thoibi Sheireng and Shingel Indu(1937-38), other short poems were published posthumously in a collection of poems called Hijam Anganghal Singhagi Sheireng Khara (Some poems of Hijam Anganghal Singh). These poems, according to Hijam Romoni Singh, were originally of the poet himself (Romoni:1950:pt. II). In his poems one can see the different way of expression by using a new diction and writing style. Another technique he used is to satirize the society and people.

A sense of ridicule and satire is expressed in his poems like *Minai Luhongba, Huinao Macha Yengba, Machin Sana Toppa Check, Nachom Chinbi, Thoubandong Ningaidabi* etc. Some other poems entitled *Hijam Anganghal Singh gi Sheireng Khara* were published in *Lalit Manjary Patrika*, (Guna:1994:102) a renowned journal circulated in Manipur in the last quarter of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Some of his poems Thoubandong Ningaidabi, Siramaktada Maruna Yuba, Nachom Chinbi and Huinaomacha Yengba were written in satirical form showing the various aspects of the Manipuri society in direct and indirect ways. However, we can see some poems with a realistic representation of the Manipuri society - a natural portrayal of human character accompanied by a strong and new voice. Like Kamal and Chaoba, he was also a patriotic poet. In the poem *Laman*, his patriotism is well expressed in the following manner: (Romoni:1950:P11)

“Dearest of Dear [s]  
 Most cherished of the cherished,  
 Mother, Mother, it’s mother” [Translation]

The poet not only loved his motherland but also had strong desire to use the products of his native country. He spread the message that only by utilizing homemade clothes one could escape from poverty. Thus, he propounded the theory of swadeshi in this native State of Manipur. He wanted to wear *Khadi* clothes. Such things were well reflected in his poem *Meitei Rang* (Handmade cotton): (Romoni:1950:4)

*“Clothing, to fill poor’s bag,  
 Clothing t cover poor’s back,  
 Clothing woven by mother’s hand,  
 Clothing coarse, Let’s change.”* [Translation]

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According to E. Dinamani, it was also a period of the Swadeshi Movement which spread all over India against the British rule under the leadership of Gandhiji. The writer himself fondly used clothes woven by Meitei Rang. (Dinamani:1992:7)

The writer was also strongly against the system of Colonial rule of the British regime. The sentiment is shown in the poem *Minai Luhongba* in this way: (Romoni: op.cit:45)

*“With Bhisma –like celibacy,  
 Let’s root out the slavery tree  
 Slavish Youth! To check slaves  
 Bearing slaves,  
 Let’s check slave’s marriage”.* [Translation]

Besides, the poet satirized the behavior and manner of some people who, like *Utangbi*, strongly supported parasite living without having her own root into the native soil. This is well reflected in his poem *Thoubandong Ningaidabi* in the following manner-(Ibid:58)

*“Whence art these pots?  
Do they bear on trees or bamboo plants?  
Such numerous pots! [Translation]*

This is the story of a pretentious orphan girl who was born and brought up in a poor society. As luck would have been, she became queen. While she was visiting a market place, she came across a market shed of earthen pots. She pretended to be a lady who had no connection with her village where pottery was practiced as cottage industry.

In his poem Shiramaktada Maruna Yuba, the poet showed the character of a malignant evil man and his destructive and malevolent ideas.

The brain of an evil man is always mischievous. Even after his death many innocent citizens are trapped and imprisoned due to his evil plans. The poet used satire to show the true identity of such type of people who dominated their society in one way or other. As a satirist, Anganghal shows the influences of such type of people in the following (ibid:23:24)

*“When my death is ascertained,  
Let the people do this much,  
Pierce a stick through  
From my bottom through the brains”.*

The poet’s Wa Tannaba is also a poem expressing the poet’s dissatisfaction over the partisan behavior of the British administration. This poem showed the suffering Manipuri citizens who experienced the raw impact of the existing political and social set up. (Ibid)

In the poem Huinao Macha Yengba, the poet showed satirically the existing system of corruption and bribery under the responsible officials of Manipur.

Another poem, namely *Nachom Chinbi* portrays the character of a woman who imitates the actions of other pretty woman without watching her own face. In this poem Anganghal ridiculed the pretension of those Meiteis who aped the *Bengali Babus* in language and life style.

Once again, in the poem Machin Sana Toppa Check, the poet depicted the character of a ruthless, narrow-minded person felt for his gain that there was no harm even if the country was spoiled. It is portrayed by the poet in the following: (Ibid)

“Knows not what’s right’s what’s wrong, speaks to convince.

Thinks for no creature, except his own.

Knows no pity, it’s well if you’re well.

Never minds other’s lost, your bellyful is enough.

Country’s harm, no harm if you’re alive.

Knows no shame, satisfied if your duty is done. [Translation]

In this way, the weakness and defects of the Manipuri society were portrayed in the form of proverbs and satire.

## CONCLUSION:

In the light of the above discussions it can come to the conclusion that a number of remarkable facets of contemporary Manipur society have been clearly expressed in his poems. A strong sense of patriotism and nativism has been described well in his poems Laman (Debt), Meitei Rang (Handmade cotton), Minai Luhongba (Marriage of Slaves). In his short poems like Huinao Macha Yengba (Looking for pups). He showed the then existing malignant like system of corruption and bribery under the British rule in Manipur in a satirical way. In his poem Machin Sana Toppa Check (The Bird with the golden black), Thoubandong Ningaidabi etc. He depicted the selfish, narrow minded characters and the pretentious nature of human beings in a satirical way. Thus, several facets of Manipuri Society are well reflected in the poems of Hijam Anganghal.

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