



The Revivalistic Fervour in the poetry of Chaoba and Komal

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"layrarabi ironni

Khangdabana haybani

meitei kabi lak-khini "

(Meitei Kabi. L 39-40)

(Poor is our language

(said by those who don't know)

(Said due to lack of knowledge)

(Metei poets will do come)

The above three lines, a hypogram of chaoba's poetry, with topicalisation of **poor is our language** which takes precedence over two matrix lines having countervailing nations resulted in far-reaching effects in the minds of the Manipuris in the early part of this century. The poem, indeed, evoked an explosive reaction from the readers with its powerful subtletyness of creation. This is how the poetry of **chaoba (1 896-1949)** emerged as an opening ira of Modern Manipuri Literature after a long lull of negligence.

In the same vein, the following lines of **komal (1899-1935)** emerged on the scene forcefully reawakening the manipuri minds from their long slumbering.

"matam kuynagi tungda

Lengsillakle ima meitei chanu,

meitei sahitya mandir manungda,

yenday thanna lei haptuna,

Katlusi imagi khuyada"

(Meitei Chanu, L 1-5)

(after a lapse of time

Has come back our mother, Meitei Chanu,

Into the temple of Meitei-Sahitya,

By putting the flower to the brim of the basket

Let us go and lay (it) under the sole of our mother)

In this extract also, the first line **after a lapse of time** in serving as a marked feature for drawing attention after a heuristic re-reading of all the lines. There is no incapability phenomena but it gives a strong presupposition phenomena for a long period of activity which creates a sense of remorse and repentance. The re-emerging of Manipuri literature in such a pitiable situation is more pitiable. The delineation of such pathetic feeling in the poetry of Komol had also a telling effect in its own right in the minds of the readers.

As a result, it so happened, that the efforts of Chaoba and Komol grew into a miraculous salvage of the long-drawn up socially stigmatized status of Manipuri Language. Indeed, the poetry of Chaoba and Komol have an unforgettable permanent value of reawakening. It is in this sense that these two writers are often called the fathers of modern Manipuri Literature. In this paper I will deal with some palpable aspects of the poetry of Chaoba and Komol as Early Modern Manipuri Literature.

As we have seen from above both Komol and Chaoba had high patriotic sensibilities. They wanted to revive the past glories of their mother land and tried to depict it as a precious wealth of their mother land. But their ways of dealing with it are of different nature. It is also of our interest to discuss the corresponding relevance of their poetry as a whole that progressed in different nature at some length in the course of this presentation.

It is a matter of relevance to mention that Chaoba was equally conversant with the writings of prose and poetry to express the same Obsession he had in his mind. This point is very much apparent in the case of his writings for the upliftment of Manipuri language and literature. His essays like **Kabi** (The Poet), **Kabi amasung Kevaya** (The poet and the poetry), **meiteilon** (Manipuri language) etc. speak volumes for the point. His essay **Khamba thoybi seireng amasung mahakaybya** (Khamba Thoybi Sheireng and the epic) shows the talent of Chaoba as a good literary critic also. Here he compares the story of Khamba and Thoybi with Mahabharata and a number of other famous stories and kaybyas from Sanskrit Literature and convincingly argues that the

story of Khamba and Thoybi is a fine epic in its own right. Even he can express his idea of human life and its significance and difficulties in its short span both in beautiful poem and fine essays like **sinpham onnaba** (wrong profession), **laybak amasung thabak** (Fate and work) etc. In doing so, Chaoba shot into prominence as an unparalleled prose writer also. When such sensibilities are expressed performing the full emotive functions, they are again in fine lyric poems. In this sense Komol is different from Chaoba. Komol is also a good prose writer but the charm of his prose is due to its poetic function. His prose is nearer to the emotive dimension of

language function. But most of the subtle human feelings are found to be aptly conveyed through fine and unforgettable lyrics. Now, let us see how they portrayed them in their own rights.

Regarding the poems of glorification, Chaoba glorifies a number of ancient and past events as beautiful natural objects. In such instances, Chaoba's poems are like the sweet songs of a singing bird flying from place to place. Unlike Komol, he is never confined to any particular place. With a wonderful spirit and pleasing heart, Chaoba depicts his varied as an experienced traditional Manipuri minstrel and lyricist. As the minstrels often did, Chaoba's poems enthrall his readers by bringing them to the realm of ancient moirang the- home of romantic excitements and thrillings with its associated stories of seven incarnations amidst its natural scenic beauties. The poem like-**loktak Mapanda** (on the bank of the Loktak Lake), **Tonu-Layjinglembi** (One of the previous incarnations of epic heroine Thoybi), **Loykaba** (Coming back from exile about an epic heroine Thoybi as found in the last story of seven incarnations), **phouoybi Layremma** (a name of the goddess of wealth also an episode from seven incarnations), all have their settings in the ancient moyrang with all its antique values. In this sense Chaoba is like a modern Manipuri minstrel also. Coming back from Moyrang, his poem **Samu Phaba** (Catching the elephant by Maharaj. Bhagyachandra in Tekkhao) is also another fine specimen of his glorification. The poem Meiteil eipak (The land of the Meitei) is also another fine depiction of his mother land. Here, Chaoba depicts his feeling for the love of his a tone of glorification. His description of the beauty of this land surrounded by seven layers of hills, the attractive echo of Tamna in imitation of the sound of skylark from wild hills in the midst of the waves of moonlight when the season of Autumn sets in, the sounds of ringing bells from the temple coming silently into the mind when the sun sets - suggests a high hope for the coming of the Manipuri poets because all these are the incomparable qualities of this land not to be found in any other land. In such a land there will be no dearth of poets.

But Komol depicts such patriotic sensibilities in a rather pathetic tone. Unlike Chaoba, he is confined very much to a lonely place - Canchipur. Most of his depictions are marked by the presence of the ruined and crumble images of the glory of Canchipur- a one time palace of Mahipur. His confinement to Canchipur and his longingness for its solitude is evident even in his novel **Madhabi** also. Indeed, Komol was mad with the solitude and sweet historical relics of the old palace of Canchiyur. It appeared to him the mute historical relics expressed the grief and deep sorrow for the one time glory of Canchipur which had long been buried under the current

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of time and which nobody tried to remember. his special deep love for Canchipur was expressed by himself as **The name Canchipur was recently introduced but it sounds so sweet that I wish it to have been from the ancient.** He deliberately wrote these lines as a footnote of a poem **Canchipurgi lemhouba makhak** (The Remnants of Canchipur). The hills, birds, plants, creepers, flowers the old royal pond (Rasmandal), rivulets: and solitudes of Canchipur - all feel the sorrow of Canchipur and all speak in his poems. In the following lines how the Crepers and birds of Canchipur lament can be seen

"Urigi kanglupna mari catpa,

thadoktuna tungnapham heipal Leipal,

Onthoyri teiduna uphul wayphul

lam khunu Lagmeinachingba uchek,

tengthari Canchipurgidamak

(Canchipurgi lemhouba makhak 1.42-46)

(The family of creeper plants which creep
By leaving the fruit and flower plants,
Are rolling down Laden with the dust and the like,
The dove and the Langmei birds,
Are Lamenting for Canchipur)

In another beautiful lyric **Chandranadi**

a name of a dried rivulet in Canchipur, his association of Canchipur is forcefully depicted as a nice indirectional device. Here he depicts the traditional wealth of his mother land which has long been forgotten and no longer remembered as the underlying water of the dried rivulet chandranadi with a strong appeal for its exploration. The following lines indicate the idea.

"Kanano sakhenba migi torbanda leptuna
irujage thourangliba, khourangba mityengna yengduna".
ireibaktasu turel lei, ichen kangkhre khallibado
touduna yengsi amakta, yengsi tharakpa Layjado. (Chandranadi L 23-31)
(who is that fellow, handsome, standing on the bank of other people

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Getting ready for bathing, with a thirsty eye?
There are rivers in our country also, You think that it is dried
Let us dig it, let us see the water coming out of it)

In the first line, the poet is addressing the fellow handsome in an ironic meaning of idleness by using the word **sakhenba** who is fond of the fashionable things of other people.

It is also used as a synecdochical device to represent the Manipuri people who have not tried to see the original wealth of their native place now in utter ruin. So, the poet is appealing to them to explore those wealth of the land which is the sweetest thing in the world. So he made the final appeal-

"Luraba layja phanggani, irujarabadi isingduda,
inggani pukning hakchang, Kaya nungngaygaba, Pukningda"

Chandran adi 32-33

(clear water will be foud, if taking
bath in the water

Our mind and body will be calm and cool, how much happy it will be)

Thus, by intertwining the lamentation for the past or bygone days with the ruined and decaying place of Canchipur, Komol also laments for the sorrows and distress, dwelt in the untrodden ways, totally hidden from

the eye. So a pathetic appeal, which is not so apparent in Chaoba's poem, becomes a dominant feature in the poems of Komol.

Regarding the aspect of the upliftment of their mother tongue their approaches and also of different type. Komol considered Manipuri literature as a part of the composite whole of Indian Literature. This is clearly seen in the poem **Houjikki Meitei Sahitya** (The present day Manipuri Literature) In this poem, the growth of the Modern Indian Literature mentioned. **The Tamil literature, The Telugu Literature, The Nepali literature, The Khasi literature** are stressed as coming from the distant corners of India. But Manipuri Literature is underlined as a poor flower in the garden of Indian as indicated below-

“Khangle ima nangmangayre layrabaleirang bharatki leikonnungsida”

(Houjikki meitei Sahitya 13-14)

(I have known, mother you are the only poor flower In this garden of India)

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Komol's view here is of a pan Indian Literature. so, his desire for the growth of Manipuri literature so that it can bloom in the garden of Indian literature is found in other poems also. For example, in the poem **Meitei chanu**. (Meitei Woman), his idea of the spreading of the Meitei literature is clearly depicted. The following lines are referred here for the illustration of the view.

"meiteigi Lampakta houba leirang,
tharusanu samudra wangmadasu
satlusanu bharatki, biswabidyalayda;
karigi ngamloydage 'lei parengna tatlobadi

(Maitei Chanu Last line)

The flower grown in the valley of meitei
Let it be planted beyond the sea,
Let it be blossom in Indian universities

Why not, we be able, if the “garland” is not broken

While Komol had such under perspective for his, language and literature, Chaoba, on the other hand, had a different perspective of the human life also. He was rather obsessed with a tragic sense of death and shortness of human life. He was in deep distress and the idea annoyed him day and night. He thought and thought about our life which is rounded with a sleep and which is nothing against the great cosmic power. That is why whenever he sees a beautiful flower like **INGELEI** blooming on the slope of the hill or a beautiful lotus blooming in the middle of the water or even the Charming moon light, this sense of shortness of human life invokes sharply in his mind. He compared human life to the foam floating on the surface of water and vanish, in the next moment. On seeing the flower **Ingelei** falling down on the dust, he says

"nangna Kennaba satpagum

eikhoysu thuna sinaba

ipakta kongol takpagum

punsigi ipakthaksida taklani"

(INGENLEI, Last, stanza)

(As you bloom to fall down

So also we are waiting only to die soon

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Just like the foams vanished on the water-Surface

we will parish on the surface of life)

The same message is found in another poem **thambail ubada** (on seeing the Lotus) as the following

"thambal kaubi leinungsi

aykhoysu nakhoygumbani

taybang ipakthaksida

kennanaba satpani" (L. 21-24)

(The sweet, flower, lotus by name

we also are like you

On the surface, of this life

we bloom to fall down).

On seeing the lily in the midst of moon light of October, we find another recurrence of the sad mood. The following lines the idea."

"pangna Panba taybangni

eykhoysu nakhoygumbani

siba ngaynaya hingbani

(Meragi Thabal 1, L 19-21)

(Foolish is the way of the world

We also are like you

We exist to wait for death)

(To die)

The poems-**Siba** and **Mioyba** (The human being) also clearly depict the helplessness and uncertainty of human life. Man is born in this cosmic order to weep, to be drown, to be trapped in the pitfalls of darkness and he finally experiences uncertain. great pain, agony and uncertain death. we don't know when we will die nor have the power to know it also. we are in utter darkness. fightly warriors like Bhisma,. Napoleon are no more than a moment against the

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eternality of great cosmos About the uncertainty for the time of death, he says in. frequentative order.

Ngasi sini, paojende

hayeng sini paotakte

(Siba "L, 1-2)

(There is no new die today

Nor any indication to die tomorrow)

"amang yaythong kumbana mina hakchang inbagumna

taybang khudung lirakli Siba ngayba nattara

(Siba 18-15)

(The Death like the image follows the body Follows the man

Is it not that it waits for our fault?)

About his pityness of our life, he says.

"nongdamba bidhina kapnanaba sinduna

taybang mibu tharakle;

punsigi ipakta wabagi ireida

eykhoyna iraknare"

(Mioyba L 1-4)

(Destiny deciding (our fate) to weep Has sent the human beings On the surface of life in the whirlpool of sorrows and sufferings we are drown)

But, inspite of such obsession with a tragic sense of human life, Chaoba ceaselessly condols himself. So, although: man is born to die and he has no control over the great cosmic power, yet his life has significance if our life implies work and fame. So, he again stresses the meaningful existnce of human life in the poems like **Lau-uba** (the peasant).

The following lines from the peasant speaks the truth of the remark-

"awabagi taybangda nahakkumna nungngayba mapham kadayda phanggaba?"

(The Peasant, Last lines)

(In the world of sorrows, those who are as happy as you Where will we find?)

The poem **Lou uba** in this sense may be regarded as a poem of the purposefulness of human life.. In other poems like siba, Ingenlei, Meragi Thabal, Mioyba, the tragic sense of short-lived human life is foregrounded despite the poet tried to console himself who is actually in deep distress.

Although we find a number of poetic aspects of chaoba. and komol as discussed above, we cannot but emphasize their romantic aspects also. The romantic experience of chaoba can best be analysed in the poems like **pithadoi** and **Loktak Mapanda**. their both these names have their romantic fields in the romantic parlance of Manipuri society. **Pithadoy** is a name of a seasonal singing bird which possesses culturally assigned romantic attributes and Loktak is also a name of a beautiful fresh water lake which is the source of the traditional manipuri myths and romance. Komal has depicted it in his poem **Nirjanata** (The solitude). But the poem has no relevance with any traditional lines of romance as "**Pithadoy**", and **Loktak** have their roots in folk etymology. For example, in the poem "**pithaday**" the name **Thadoy**, which the bird is calling in its aesthetic carollings in every spring season is the **Thedoy**, the heart of Nongban, who we found in our traditional legends. The poem is the immortalisation of a love that came out of our legend. The poem is marked by the emotive voice of the lamenting bird. When the world is overflowed with the sweet and loving song of the bird, the message of love brought by the song makes the poet rather anxious and the instinct of love sleeping in his heart is awakened. at last, the poet comes to know that the infinite lamentation of the bird is the immortal love for **Thadoy** of bygone era by identifying the bird with the soul of the legendary figure Nongban This is the picture of an eternal love which lasts in the soul even after death. The poem is charged with a severe romantic home sickness of an unfulfilled love affairs that will remain for ever in every heart as a sweet unheard melody, even sweeter than heard melodies. The inspired impulse of the poem is so expressive as is found in the following -

khangle chekla khangjare

prakritina tharakpani nangse

tambinaba biswaprem

phongdaktaba nungsiaba

thammoynadi tamliba

nungngaybagi iratam"

(Pithadoy, last lines)

(o bird, I have known

You, sent by nature

To teach the eternal love unexpressed love

The heart tends

Towards an ecstatic joy)

This poem depicts a stilted sad music with a severe romantic agony. It is a poem of a saddest thought in the melody of a sweetest song.

The poem **Loktak Mapanda** is the depiction of another romantic experience of Chaoba. In this poem the poet was first overwhelmed with the beauty of the lake. As he moves towards the middle of the lake, the floating scattering tiny islands of Thanga village moving all the time from one place to another in the direction of the wind, the dancing nets of the fisherwoman standing on the boat, the charming sound of the singing wild birds, the beautiful water flowers blooming amidst the chasm of waves all these become a thing of joy. In addition to it, his long felt desire to see the lake as well as his feeling of it as a lake of meites strongly inspired the poet's power of imagination. Thus Chaoba's experience of seeing to the life of Scattering & floating and its sublime enjoyment of the inner charm of nature is again depicted in this beautiful lyric. His poems depict that rare experience through instantly inspired imagination and deep power of joy. But Komol achieves it through a concentrated imaginative power. This is how the poem **Nirjanata** is depicted. It is indicated here that by sincerely yielding to nature without any desirous motive in a concentrated state of mind and firm belief, and the poet can learn fully many things which our eyes cannot see nor can our ears hear, nor can the recorded history of human life include by completely yielding to the nature, the poet could see that there is nothing perfect like nature. Thus, nature becomes a guiding force for his life in all directions. In this poem, Komol seems to take nature as a constant source of a kind of transcendental essence. Therefore, the life to Komol, becomes insipid, shallow and light so long as it goes away from the nature. By contrary, coming closer and closer to the nature, his life becomes perfect, deep and meaningful so much so that the world becomes too much with him. His severe longingness for the nature is clearly seen in the following lines -

"imagi tampakta tumbagum tumjage nanggi.tampakta.

santigi masak oyraba amrita

chubchaduna hingjage yeybithaway" (Nirjanata, L 158-161)

(Just, like sleeping in the lap of mother Let me sleep in your lap

The elixir, that is like peace and solitude by sucking, let me exist my life)

After looking at different aspects of Chaoba and Komol, they are found to have written on a number of similar aspects. But there is another aspect of poetry which Komol has not touched upon that is the-mystic experience of individual human soul in search of the Ultimate Alone of the universe. The poem "**Lamgi Chekla Amada**" (To a wild bird) of Chaoba is of such experience. This poem is one of the finest Creations of Chaoba's beautiful lyrics. The poem has the distinction of a double vision of a wild bird in the second half of the poem. Here, the biological bird of the first half of the poem in a clearly ontological atmosphere has been transmuted into a mimetic bird. The referential property of the bird has been suppressed or suspended and we are forced to interpret it to that effect through INDIRECTION as the soul of the poet who, by this time is at a conscious-sub state of mind. The beauty of the poem lies in the identification of the wild bird and its Ultimate association with the Alone as we surmount the mimesis hurdle at last.

From the above discussion, we find that the aspects of the poetry of Chaoba and Komol are of similar types. They can be further conflated to some common elements. They had no frustration or the boredom of life. So, they wrote poetry with a specific purpose of life. This poetry came out of their imaginary ivory towers. It seems, by that time, poetry was expected to be sacred and pure. So, the traits of the down-trodden ordinary

people were completely external to their poetry. On the other hand, the object for inspiring imagination becomes an important thing. So, the period of the poetry of Chaoba and Komol may be defined in short as a romantic period of manipuri Literature having a great revivalistic overtone.

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