

Woman In Manipuri Proverbs

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The best way to understand the various aspects of a society's culture and internal systems is through its folk literature. Folk literature is, in fact, the voice of the people's hearts, not refined and modified by the confines of classical rules, but rather, emerging from the hearts of the people in their natural form, without any embellishment or embellishment, and reaching the hearts of the people. Manipuri society has a rich tradition of folk literature. Whether it's folk tales filled with wondrous and mystical accounts revealing the relationships between humans and animals and birds, or folk ballads revealing the philosophies

of society and the individual, or various genres of folk theatre focused on art and entertainment, or folk songs that echo the pulse of life. These diverse forms of folk literature reflect society in their entirety.

Idioms and proverbs are also part of this folk literature. They are formed by the accumulation of centuries of folk experiences. On the one hand, they reveal the intellectual capacity and expressive skills of the people, and on the other, they reveal their power to influence individuals and society. Another truth about idioms and

proverbs is that they can help us understand a society's traditions, customs, folk beliefs, and social mentality. Here, our aim is to grapple with a specific aspect of social studies through Manipuri proverbs.

Manipuri proverbs reveal human nature, individual habits, sensitivity, and prudence, while also imparting social knowledge, behavioral skills, and moral lessons. From a sociological perspective, it is interesting to examine how women are treated and viewed in these proverbs on various topics. Manipuri society is home to numerous proverbs that demonstrate a breadth of life experiences, a keen eye for detail, and a skillful articulation of expression. The women depicted in these proverbs reveal society's current perspective on women, their role in social activities, their scholarship, tendencies, characteristics, and practical knowledge. From these, the prevalent beliefs towards women can also be understood.

There can be basically two forms of proverbs related to women-

- Proverbs made about women
- Proverbs told through a woman

Many sub-types of proverbs related to women can also be made, such as - proverbs describing the character of women, proverbs related to women's behavior, proverbs describing the tendencies of women, proverbs expressing various beliefs regarding women, proverbs expressing social beliefs related to women, etc.

In societies influenced by traditional and feudal elements, it has been common to confine women within high and low walls. At the core of the feudal system was the notion that women were like property. Consequently, they faced all the dangers that could befall anyone if they failed to guard them. Following this belief, just as in ancient times, property was kept hidden

and out of sight, hidden in pits, mud walls, or dark rooms, women were also tried to be hidden, away from the eyes of everyone except their husbands and family. This was a strong framework of female slavery. Male power employed various tactics to provide moral support for this entire structure. One of these tactics was the belief that if a woman left her home and went out into society without restraint, her femininity would be in danger, as any man in society could attack her like a ravenous predator.

Another aspect of the slavery of women that flourished in feudal society was that, due to the prevailing economic structure, only women from those classes whose husbands or family members controlled the economic resources could remain at home. Women from classes that lacked this privilege were forced to leave their homes and were doomed to become victims of predators.

A Manipuri proverb, revealing this face of feudal society and the plight of women, goes, "Ningthem nubi kaina chaba hondai, Langol shing chanbada chabani" (A tiger cannot eat a woman living in a palace, but in Langol, it eats a woodcutter). The folk experience behind this proverb is that Langol is located at the foot of a mountain, a short distance from the city of Imphal, where in ancient times, many wild animals lived. Going to that place was life-threatening for anyone. For a woman to go there was even more difficult. In folklore, this situation was woven into a proverb, creating a bond for women. The literal meaning of this proverb is that it will be impossible for a woman to save her life if she goes to collect wood in Langol, but the context in which this proverb has been used in the folk society means that the daughters-in-law and daughters of powerful and rich families do not go out of the house.

One implication of this proverb is that there is a difference in the social respect accorded to daughters-in-law and daughters of rich and poor families. It should be noted that this difference relates to whether a woman steps outside her home or not. In ancient times, a woman who did not step outside her home was considered more respectable than one who could or was forced to step out. It was clear that only a woman who accepted feudal bondage and accepted servitude to men as the ideal of life could be worthy of respect in society.

Similarly, the proverb “Mapam Khabai Ama Mava Mayum Khabai Ama” (the ladle from the maternal home is separate, the ladle from the in-laws’ is separate) reflects the way women are forced to conform to the framework of a patriarchal society. A woman lives for a long time in her father’s family, where her basic values are formed and she receives practical knowledge. This same woman is then subjected to a litmus test immediately after marriage. She is expected to adapt her values and behavior to the family she has been with for a short time, right from the day of her marriage. This is a difficult situation, which unnaturally pushes any woman through various pressures.

To understand this proverb more deeply, we must recall the teachings given by parents to their daughters at the time of marriage in traditional Indian society. When a daughter departs for her in-laws’ house, her mother often says that her bier should leave from the same house where her doli is going. Secondly, it is said that she should never violate any decorum of her in-laws’ house. Both these teachings are in no way in favor of a woman’s personal freedom. This is what the proverb above points to. There is a popular belief in Manipuri society that states that Nupigi Mang Ani Shuhaide (meaning, a woman There cannot be two graves. It is noteworthy in

this folk belief that the in-laws’ house is considered the burial place of a girl. This is because she has to erase her existence in her in-laws’ house. Even if she wishes to leave her in-laws’ house in protest against some injustice, there is no future for her. By living alone, standing on her own feet, or by marrying again of her own free will, she can never become worthy of the respect that she receives even by erasing her existence in her first marriage.

The proof of how attempts have been made to control women in society by making them dance to the tune of male power is found in a proverb - Nayum Pale Kor Khare Nacha Pokaye Porol Lolle—(Marriage is a line, childbirth is a lock). This means that after marriage, a woman cannot remain connected to her parents’ home as she pleases. It’s natural to question why a line is drawn between a woman and her maternal family immediately after marriage, and why her desire to return to her parents’ home is blocked as soon as she has a child . Traditionalists might argue that the underlying motive behind this is that if a woman remains connected to her paternal family even after marriage, she will be unable to follow the discipline of her in-laws. If her ties with her maternal family are not completely loosened after becoming a mother, she will be unable to raise her family effectively. But has anyone realized how harmful these imposed restrictions are ? In Manipuri society, an extension of this saying is that after marriage and becoming a mother, she has to isolate herself from everyone else and become a shell. While changes have occurred in recent times, the ancient belief remains unchanged. One proverb even threatens, saying, “Nathi pora nanam pora, nacha pokpa naranai (Carry the faeces or carry them on your back, the children are yours).” This means that it is not a man’s

fate, but a woman's. Once she becomes a mother, she cannot escape the burden of responsibilities, even losing the right to visit her parents' home. These proverbs reflect the mindset of a male-dominated society and the boundaries it draws.

There are many Manipuri proverbs that reveal that in ancient times, the responsibility of maintaining family and society was primarily placed on women's shoulders. In the name of duty, women were entrusted with many tasks, and it was assumed that they would perform them without thinking. By idealizing women, it was assumed that they were free from laziness, fatigue, or sleeplessness. Advice to avoid such behaviors can be found in proverbs. Mawa Chakcha Nungshibi Pemma Yahip Phabi (meaning "one who sleeps well after eating what her husband gives") is one such proverb. It is used to target women, and in a highly idealistic tone, it is said that laziness does no one any good; one must work. Similarly, it is common in society to point to any woman and say, "Pemma yehlau fabi tunggi poloi yengansi." (Meaning, "You who started well, pay attention to the end too.") Society has come to believe that women should think not only about the future but also about the future. From a simple perspective, this doesn't seem to be a bad thing. No one can object to expecting a woman to be visionary, but why isn't this same saying applicable to men? Shouldn't society have the same expectations for men?

Many Manipuri women have to manage both domestic and external responsibilities. Many women's husbands are alcoholics and gamblers, often drunk. In such circumstances, women are left to manage the household. This is a tragedy of their lives, but it is evident that these women have accepted all responsibilities as a role in life; therefore, whenever they make even the slightest mistake in fulfilling these roles, they

face criticism. In Manipuri society, a woman's daily routine generally begins at dawn and ends when all family members are asleep. A woman adheres to this routine throughout the year, but if a woman even slightly slacks off, family members and society are bound to resent her. Thus, a proverb is used: "Poinuda maining kumajge, vakchingda arum haujge" (meaning, "I will conceive in Paush, but I will get a fever in Magh"). Poinu and Wakching (Paush and Magh) are two months when Manipur experiences the coldest winters. No one feels like working during these times. Everyone yearns to find some rest. However, the only time a woman can get a break from work during this harsh winter is if she is pregnant or falls ill. Taking advantage of this situation, a proverb has emerged and is used against women who, due to fatigue or any other reason, seek a short break. Such women are unnecessarily labeled as lazy, idle, and idle. Similarly, Pomfri Hikmabi Mompak Yahoutheng (meaning one who searches for lice in rags, one who gets up late from bed), pondenbina mangam shaandana lari Using proverbs like "Ponden's slow pace," women are labeled as time-wasters and irresponsible, and are implicitly admonished to stop worrying about their own joys and sorrows and instead wake up early and finish all household chores on time. Doesn't any other group need such advice besides women?

Proverbs related to other aspects of women are also part of Manipuri folklore. For example, Sanabul Pubi Pamde Punpubi Pammi (I prefer the one who carries an earthen pot, not the one who carries a golden pot). This is used to express that beauty is not only made beautiful by adornment; she can also look beautiful in rags. Another proverb is Shakna Kaithel Karibi Irangi Dukaan Phambi (She who goes to the market with her looks, who sets up a shop of debauchery). This is generally used to convey

that external beauty is for others, while character beauty is for oneself. These proverbs are used by both men and women. Digging deeper into these proverbs and observing their use in society reveals how the male mindset dominates society. Consequently, women, under the influence of male mindset, are often seen adopting a patriarchal view of other women like themselves. Despite their numerous layers, one thing about these proverbs catches our attention: a woman's adornment is considered not for her own sake, but to attract men. Even more objectionable is that a woman's grooming is considered a form of debauchery.

Manipuri society is rife with proverbs demeaning women, such as "Nupi gi pukachel aloo gi mathel" (A woman's mind is like potato curry). This proverb attempts to convey that a woman's mind is fickle, and therefore, nothing can be said with certainty about her. Sometimes, hearing this proverb reminds one of a Sanskrit saying: "Stri charityam purushasya bhagyaam, devo na janati, kutoh manushya!" Whether Sanskrit philosophers or others, they have left no stone unturned to degrade women. Proverbs like "Kaitheel nupi na vashkpa" (A seller's promise in the market) and "Lanshotpina paukhum vatte" (A borrower never runs out of answers) attempt to demonstrate that a woman's words are infallible and that she is adept at saying things that bear little resemblance to the truth. Clearly, women are assumed to be prone to fickleness and instability. They are also assumed to be full of secrets and are hesitant to be trusted.

A truth of a woman's life is related to the change in her social, economic and mental status after marriage. When a girl from a poor family is married into a rich family and a girl from a rich family into a poor family, then this situation becomes like a new birth for her. Many times a girl from a poor family, after getting married into

a rich family, forgets her pre-marriage status and starts behaving unnaturally, considering herself to be rich forever. Her behavior becomes ostentatious. The result is that sometimes she refuses to recognize those things used in ordinary life, which she herself used in her parental home. When, under the influence of coming from poverty to wealth When a woman forgets her previous status and behaves differently, then a proverb is used - Chairen nupina chafu boona mahaira kegamboona mapalla hamba (The woman from Chairen asks whether the pitcher is a fruit and the lamp a flower. Chairen is the name of a place where earthen pots are made. If a woman there were to look at a pitcher and ask, "Is this a fruit?" or look at a lamp and ask, "Is this a flower?", then one would believe that the woman is either insane or trying to hide her past. The proverb succeeds in proving that both are fatal for humans. Another proverb, centered on women, highlights the selfish nature of humans. This proverb is, "Icha shumge nacha lauthokau" (I want to put my child to sleep, pick up yours). The proverb depicts a mother picking up another's child to put her own child to sleep. As the embodiment of motherhood, a woman is expected to understand not only her own child's pain, but also the pain of other children. When the same woman is willing to put another child through pain for the comfort of her own child, it is considered extremely selfish. This proverb is used in situations where someone undermines another's interests for their own benefit. While the proverb can be unquestionable from a moral or social educational perspective, it is interesting to note that here, too, the object is a woman. This reveals the nature of our social system.

Many historical facts prove that Manipuri women played a significant role in strengthening Manipuri society economically.

Manipur had a unique royal system in which male members from every household were required to go to war as soldiers. During these times, the entire responsibility of the family fell on women. Women performed seasonal tasks such as sowing crops in the fields, growing vegetables on the land around their homes whenever they had free time, or weaving various types of textiles on handlooms. They also sold these items in the market, or called kaithel. This tradition remains strong in Manipuri society even today. Nupi Kaithel has a distinct identity worldwide due to its unique characteristics. Nupi Kaithel is composed of two words: nupi, meaning woman, and kaithel, meaning market. That is, a market run by women, where only women sell everyday items, various handmade clothes, and household items. Due to their hard work, Manipuri women are financially independent in many ways. A cooperative system called “Marup” is also prevalent in Manipuri society. Each member of the group contributes a fixed amount, and everyone receives the collected amount in turn. Through this, women obtain the items they need and desire, which they cannot normally afford. This nature of Manipuri women has created a perception in society that women always have a strong financial foundation under their feet, or that being financially secure is a woman’s nature, or that women are not dependent on anyone else for money, or that women are adept at raising financial resources. What more could men ask for? Hence, a saying became popular: Nupi Laubda Lauri Yumpham Shokpa Lau (Find a girl with farmland and land for marriage). Clearly, men believe that one should marry a woman with wealth, because then life can be lived easily.

Following social norms, parents raise their children and provide them with the best of comforts. All the children in a family grow up together, eating, drinking, laughing, and playing,

but a time comes when those children start their own families. Then the status of the girl among them changes. Gradually, the home where she spent her childhood and experienced adulthood begins to feel alien to the daughter of that family. The elder brother is no longer the same as before, nor is the younger brother the same as before. When such times arise, it is said, “Ibung laikai ipwa kairoi” (Both the younger and the elder brother are from the neighborhood). This proverb depicts the distance that grows between brothers and sisters over time, causing them, whether younger or older, to treat their sisters like the neighbors. The proverb depicts the situation when, upon marriage, a brother’s own family becomes more important to him. The Manipuri proverb expresses the feeling caused by this state, Chaktinnabbudi mondinnabana henna lummi (a pillow heavier than a plate). The meaning is that the brothers and sisters who have been sharing the plate since childhood have become strangers and the one who has been sharing the pillow since a very young age has become important.

This proverb, while reflecting human instincts, also sheds light on a social reality. It’s often observed that a person’s birth family is the most important. It’s here that they gain life experience and learn to shoulder responsibilities. However, after marriage, it’s common to see that the same person gradually drifts away from their family. For that man, his wife becomes the center of his thoughts, and the meaning of family changes. He begins to imagine a family with his wife — largely according to her wishes—or, together, he begins to create the outlines of a new family, one that only his wife can provide completeness. Therefore, she becomes more important to him than anyone else. This is why a man’s attention becomes focused on his wife, and his thinking becomes influenced by her thoughts and

decisions. When such a situation arises, on one side are the family members with whom the man has spent a long life, and on the other side is the woman with whom he has lived a solitary life. At this point, the man begins to give more importance to his wife, and gradually, the family members begin to feel distant from him. This small saying holds a profound, bitter truth. On the one hand, there are the personal and social aspects of the relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife, and on the other, there is the woman's status as a wife, her role, her influence on the man, and society's prevailing view of that influence. It is often observed that as soon as a man, after marriage, dedicates even a small portion of his premarital time to his wife, his parents, siblings, and relatives begin to complain. This also hides a bitter truth about the woman. That is, no matter how neutral a woman may be as a wife, her in-laws and society assume that she is influencing her husband's decisions, concerns and relationships beyond limits.

Despite the unquestionable importance of women in Manipuri society, many women are subjected to polygamy. Due to inherent reasons, it is extremely painful for a woman to find another woman like herself standing opposite her, against her will, on the same ground where she already stands with the man she has accepted as her life partner. This pain is further exacerbated when a woman is forced to accept the situation of living with her co-wife; she fears that she cannot live alone in society. This fear has been instilled in her by the male-dominated society itself, as part of a centuries-old conspiracy. For centuries, patriarchy has devised various tactics to keep women under its monopoly. It has instilled in her the belief that a woman needs a man's protection in some form or another to survive. It is said that the Manusmriti states that a woman can only be safe under the protection

of her father, then her husband, and then her son. History clearly demonstrates that patriarchy, in its autocratic nature, equated having multiple wives (and there was no limit to this) with a sign of masculinity in order to establish control over women. For this very purpose, kings and emperors often had multiple queens, and thousands of women lived separately in their harems. Even then, if a beautiful woman caught the king's eye, she had to come to his palace as a queen or a maid. This problem also exists in Manipuri society. There is a saying in Manipuri: "Poinu dadi uchisu nupi taret lolli" (Even a mouse in the month of Paush has seven wives). Here, Paush symbolizes both virility and prosperity. If both of them come together, then a complete Chakravayuh is automatically created against the woman.

Due to the situation created in the society of that time due to the practice of having more than one wife, some other proverbs have also become popular in Manipuri language due to their influence, such as— Atombi gi phanek phaubdi fadigom maka lammi (Coriander became beautiful after drying the phanek of the younger wife), meaning whatever the youngest wife does, everything is acceptable. Another proverb is Charonnbaga turonnbaga charonnbana henna lui (Living with step-brothers and sisters from another father is more troublesome than with step-sisters). There is enmity between step-siblings born from the same father, but if they are children of different fathers, then the enmity increases even more. Another similar saying is, Poktabi gi sharaida phunga kaynere (breaking of the stove due to the anger of the stepmother), meaning that due to the co-wives, there is no love among their children, due to the feelings of jealousy, hatred and enmity, a situation of division of the house arises.

Although the birth of a daughter is not considered a burden in Manipuri society, it is also true that here too, people desire a son more, and he is also given greater respect in the family. Manipuri proverbs also reveal the patriarchal mindset that discriminates between son and daughter, such as: “Piba na noklga mani thokpa, ni’ dolna kappaga sana thokpa.” (If the son laughs, gems fall; if the daughter cries, gold falls). This proverb is used to portray a son’s work as good and important, while portraying a daughter’s work as merely fulfilling a desire. It’s a common belief that whatever a son does will be for the prosperity of his family, and everyone will always benefit from it. What about a daughter’s work? Whether good or bad, it’s short-lived; she’ll have to move to a different home as soon as she gets married. Because she’ll have to take on the responsibility of the entire household at her in-laws’ place, she begins her preparations herself, and this results in some of the household’s work being done. This assumption makes her work less valuable than a son’s. It’s a different matter that the expectations parents place on their sons are not always fulfilled.

Gandhiji considered it essential for women to be financially independent, as he recognized the problems and mental pressures caused by lack of money. We can see abundant evidence around us of how a dependent woman’s situation worsens. A woman who never faces hardships despite having an earning husband is forced to live in helplessness when he is gone. Even her own children cannot keep her happy for long. At such times, a woman feels neglected, leading to the popular saying, “Mavagi mapaal nokna chai, machagi mapaal kapana chai” (Eat the son’s money with tears, and the husband’s money with a smile). Meaning, a woman considers her husband’s wealth her own and spends it however she wishes, but she cannot assert any authority over her son’s wealth. Therefore, when a woman

lives under the care of her son, she constantly feels a sense of powerlessness and unhappiness.

Folk literature has a tendency to view the character of humans and human groups holistically. Perhaps the people have never accepted the ideological discourses that we consider debatable in the modern sense, but the initial threads of all our debates are certainly found in folk behavior and usages. This characteristic of the folk perspective is also visible in the context of women. While proverbs directly introduce all aspects of women, they also contain some expressions that compel us to reflect more deeply. Many proverbs in the Manipuri language explicitly feature men, sometimes directly addressed and sometimes in other ways. When it comes to analyzing such proverbs, it becomes clear that women are implicitly at their center. The points that deserve special attention here are: It reflects a woman’s temperament, a man’s social or familial status, and a societal perspective on both based on their relationship. For instance, there is a Manipuri proverb: ‘Natu chaora langdum chaora’ (Should I devour your wife, or should I devour the ball of yarn?). This proverb reveals a particular folk perspective wherein men who are perceived as being afraid of their wives are considered inferior to those men who are believed to harbor no such fear. Generally, men about whom rumors circulate that they are intimidated by their wives become subjects of public jest and ridicule. At the root of this social tendency lies the power struggle between men and women—a conflict in which men have historically been conditioned to emerge victorious. In a way, this could be interpreted as an attempt to deny women’s involvement in life at every level, but it is a reality that persists in some places even today, despite numerous pro-feminist movements. Whatever the case, this proverb is quite telling of a timid man when it comes to his wife. Similarly, another proverb that reveals a man’s tendency is: “Lama yengli’ da khunu kai.” (Kept looking at Lama and the pigeon burned). Lama literally means Queen. In a man’s life, it is his wife who has the status of Queen. Due to his

special attraction towards his wife and their mutual love, every demand of his wife becomes important to him as well. If a man focuses only on his wife, it is possible that he loses focus on other tasks, or any other task becomes secondary to him, or he completely ignores it. Then the possibility of those tasks getting spoiled increases, and hence this proverb is used, which means that the work gets spoiled due to being engrossed in one's own interests and not paying attention to the work. It is noteworthy that here the object of interest is the woman and the man who spoils his work by getting engrossed in her, that is, the work is spoiled because of the woman.

It's said that no one can know a man's fate. Incidentally, the same notion prevails in society regarding marriage, that marriage is a game of fate. A man harbors many colorful dreams about his wife, but it's not necessary that his wife will truly make every dream a rainbow of colors and enchanting, because only after marriage does one realize the true extent of his destiny. Society has associated this notion with marriage as well as other areas of life. Often, when things go wrong, people blame fate to cover up their own shortcomings. The culprit behind a man's bad luck is either a woman or an animal. For example, Nupi Thirui Thamathibi, Shan Lairui Akhunbi (The wife he got turned out to be cruel, the cow he bought turned out to be barren). This proverb is used to prove bad luck. The question is whether we should not think that when a wise person faces trouble, he does not keep mourning by crying over his fate - that too by using a woman as a medium, but instead, by understanding the situation, he tries to control it with appropriate behaviour and at one point becomes capable of making his life happy.

A truth of human life is that husband and wife are generally bound by an unbreakable bond of invisible love. Both strive for each other's happiness and live for each other. While

they may have to make some compromises at the beginning of their married life, the natural love that blossoms between them leads them to accept each other wholeheartedly. Over time, they become intimately familiar with each other's nature, tendencies, temperament, and habits, so the decisions of one become as valid for the other as they are for themselves. The gradual equality of conduct and behavior between the two is depicted through a human instinct in a proverb that goes like this: —Mava Huralli Matusu Huralli (If the husband is a thief, the wife is also a thief.) The idea is that husband and wife are equal. To stand on equal footing with men, women were given the field of theft, but with great difficulty, society found a formula for equality between them and men. It could also be said that if the wife is good, the husband is also good, but for this, the man's power would have to change.

Manipuri folk literature also contains some proverbs that are moderate in nature, as they depict both the social status of women and the status of men. They can be applied equally to both men and women. The primary motivation behind the prevalence of such proverbs is the desire to expose the truth of both sides equally. It can also be assumed that these proverbs, without distinction between

men and women, are related to the attitudes, temperament, and character of all human beings. Their success stems from the commonality of certain tendencies and qualities in both men and women. The reactions manifested in human behavior under various circumstances are, in many ways, similar in both men and women. The people have skillfully recognized this nuance of human character and expressed it in the vernacular. One such proverb is, "Mapam Shanthaeba Kaina Chai." (The cow was sent to her parents' home and was eaten

by a tiger.) While this proverb appears to be related to women, the context is something like this: a woman arrives at her in-laws' home after marriage. She has a cow there. She is concerned about ensuring the cow is well cared for. She believes that the cow can only be properly cared for at her parents' home, as her parents love and cherish their daughters and everything related to them. Consequently, the cow is sent to her parents' home, where it is eaten by a tiger. Thus, the woman's hopes are thwarted. It is interesting to understand the folk mentality behind the creation of this proverb. It is used when a gift is given in the hope of a good outcome, but in return, the whole thing is ruined or the desired result is not achieved. This is like intending something good, but receiving a bad outcome. This can happen to both men and women. Despite their best efforts, their desires can be thwarted. Folklore has expressed itself with humanity at its core, focusing on both men and women. Such proverbs include Naofamana Mama Chennaba. (Dragging the mother by the umbilical cord), meaning troubling the elders even for small tasks, dolaitongbi geedamak vaikup poobina waba (The straw carrier worries about the one who sits on the doli), meaning the poor worry unnecessarily about the prosperous; Nidhel thumshungbina thum thakate (The salt maker does not add salt), meaning the producer cannot save the produce for himself; Mava anaba humdokalaga shamu iruba yenduna laba (Leaving the sick husband to watch the elephant bathe), meaning to give up important work and concentrate on other tasks), etc. These proverbs may appear to be directed at women, but they can apply to both men and women. Another similar proverb is Pukkangbina shanoiba shakpa (Considering a pregnant woman fat). This proverb, coined for a particular condition of a woman, attempts to explain a human instinct. During pregnancy, a woman's body swells. To ignore this condition and assume she is fat would

be to ignore reality. This proverb reveals a truth about human character. Society routinely posits falsehoods and lies, but these are as baseless as assuming a pregnant woman is overweight. A woman returns to her true self after her pregnancy, and so, once the truth is revealed, the truth is revealed.

Another proverb goes, "Mou Anobina Un Shinnai" (The new bride challenges the snow). Its context is as follows: In Manipuri society, it is customary that when a new bride arrives, she sweeps and mops the courtyard. After bathing in the morning, she offers water, flowers, and incense during the Sun Puja. Regardless of the weather — whether it's freezing cold or a morning drenched in hail—the newlywed bride fulfills this duty with unwavering enthusiasm. This proverb, which implies that enthusiasm remains constant when undertaking new tasks. It's human nature to embark on a new task with full enthusiasm, prepared to face any challenge. This enthusiasm for new work has been compared to a new bride's unfazedness even on a snowy morning.

It's often observed that when a person expects benefits from two different sources at the same time, they seek to benefit from both. This situation is akin to someone trying to board two boats heading in opposite directions, only to fall off. A proverb expresses this sentiment: "Mava Chaksu Chada Mapam Chaksu Chada" (neither getting food from the in-laws' house nor from the parents' house), meaning that while trying to benefit from two sources, one loses out on both. Another social trend that highlights the women-centric proverb: "Nidol Thajba Phona Thajou, Mou Thiba Lonna Thiu" (marry off the girl with pomp and show, but find a daughter-in-law secretly). This proverb is used to convey the sentiment that if you need information about someone, ask your

neighbors. It's a common practice in society to avoid speaking directly to them, even for the smallest details. They use their neighbors as a tool and, in the style of a mystery hunter, try to reach the bottom line. Neighbors also collect information, both true and false, about their neighbors, waiting for someone in need to come along and take something from their treasure trove, so that they can feel the significance of their information gathering. Sometimes, such acts are done to harass the neighbor or to enjoy social ridicule. The proverb points to this truth. Manipuri folk literature contains numerous proverbs centered on women. This requires a scholarly effort.

* This article has been translated from Hindi into English.
