

A Dying Tradition: Proverbs and Riddles in Meitei Society

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Abstract

The paper aims to examine and situate the role of proverbs and riddles in Meitei society. Proverbs and riddles reflect the socio-cultural psyche of a society. In the days of past, both were used as a medium of building and consolidating a society. Hence, they become inseparable from the society. They were used to give a particular message or to advice the population from certain misdoings, or to encourage certain moral conducts so much so that the society can function properly. They were incorporated into the daily lives of the people. However, modernization and globalization have an adverse impact on them. The present generation familiarity with the traditional proverbs and riddles is far from being satisfactory. The paper shows that the Meiteis have relevant proverbs and riddles that fits into any social circumstances. The paper made use of various collected works on proverbs and riddles by traditional Meitei scholar and other related oral sources. The paper in its basic argues that proverbs and riddles can be preserved and sustained if they are exposed to the young generation from a young age. However, the lack of exposure clearly points that these traditions have already been dying out slowly yet gradually and unnoticed by the people.

Keywords: Oral Traditions, Proverbs, Riddles, Declining, Preservation, Meiteis

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Introduction

Oral traditions can hold valuable information on how a society conceptualize their world, and shed significant light on their indigenous worldview. It includes folklores, folksongs, proverbs, riddles etc. It can reveal the intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional cognition of events by a society, even if the event did not occur.ⁱ Oral traditions act as mediators between social systems and value systems. Oral traditions are a crucial source of history, language, and information, especially for regions with limited written records.ⁱⁱ However, orature stand at a cross-road today. It has the potentiality to be used as a reliable source of history with the right technical caution and examination, and in interpreting local history.ⁱⁱⁱ The waves of modernization pose a threatening challenge to oral tradition.

Folkloristics consider folklore as comprising of various elements like myths, legends, folktale, folksongs, ballads, proverbs, riddles, sayings, and rituals. In a way, folklore can reflect the psyche of a society. It plays an important role in manifesting and preserving culture. It also acts as a fountain of knowledge giving social intelligence as well as wit. Thus, each of the elements has their own function in a society. William Bascom defines five specific characteristics of folklore in his seminal work 'Contribution to Folkloristics' (pub. 1981). They are^{iv}-

- i. Amusement is an important function of folklore.
- ii. It validates culture, and justify rituals and its institutions.
- iii. It can help in educating a non-literate society.
- iv. It can be used as a means of applying social pressure and exercising social control.
- v. It can have an effect in bringing desired socio-political reforms.

So, we can safely conclude that proverbs and riddles being an element of folklore possess the characters mentioned above.

A proverb is a short phrase or sentence constructed in such a way that it gives an intended message promptly or unequivocally. But, the intended meaning of a proverb can only be understood when used in the right context. A proverb can have varied meaning according to the time, place, speaker and to whom it is being addressed. Thus, proverbs can explicitly reflect cultural and societal norms. Proverbs are generally used by elderly people in giving advice or caution to children. Sometimes, it can be used in mocking the wrong actions of other. It can also be used as a tool in building unity, peace and development within communities and in bringing social harmony. On the other hand, riddles are shrewdly constructed questions. Riddles are generally asked to test a person's logic and cognitive skill. Children generally fancies themselves in riddles. Any child

who can answer maximum number of riddles is respected automatically by peers in awe of his logic and intelligence. Sometimes, elderly people test young children with the help of riddles. Thus, riddles play an important role in enhancing cognitive skills, and conveying knowledge about social norms and the environment.

The *Meiteis* are an ethnic community settling primarily in the central valley region of Manipur. They played a significant role in shaping the history of Manipur where the erstwhile kingdom of Manipur was consolidated by the Meiteis under their kings of *Ningthouja* dynasty. They have a rich cultural heritage in the form of folklores, vernacular architecture, and traditional value system. They also have a rich corpus of written literature in the form of *puyas*.^v The *puyas* are an invaluable source in reconstructing the history of Manipur. The *puyas* along with *Cheitharol Kumbaba*^{vi} and other clan genealogies form the backbone of literary sources. However, the Meitei society is equally blessed with a substantial amount of oral tradition. The oral tradition clearly reflects the social psyche of the Meiteis. The *funga-wari* (folk-tales)^{vii} and lullaby teaches moral lessons on determination, perseverance, dedication, hard-work, and self-sustenance. Proverbs and riddles are also a shining gem. For generations, it was a medium of transferring socio-cultural knowledge, logic, and moral values. It is embedded with ethical principles and valuable life lessons. This paper seeks to situate the place of proverbs and riddles in Meitei society. It attempts to unravel certain themes like environmental prudence, morality, life lessons.

Proverbs and Riddles: Societal Significance

On a closer observation, society needs proverbs and riddles. It can smoothen the functioning of a society through its various functions. Proverbs are used by elders to caution, advice, or challenge other while maintaining social harmony.^{viii} It can also be used to reconcile disputes.^{ix} Riddles, on the other hand, are used for socialization, intellectual development, and unity among youth.^x They also serve educational purposes, teaching logic, cultural norms, and various subjects while exercising the intellect.^{xi} Both proverbs and riddles are deeply rooted in societal practices. They foster social bond^{xii} and helps in the intellectual development, particularly among young people.^{xiii} Overall, proverbs and riddles are valuable linguistic tools that enhance communication, education, and social harmony across different cultures.

Proverbs in Meitei Society

The intended meaning of a proverb is dependent on the cultural context. The space and time can have a great influence on proverbs. Proverbs have a direct relation with socio-cultural norms. It reflects what is being accepted in a particular society.

In *Meitei* society there is no exclusive space for using proverbs. It is used in day-to-day conversations. So, it is an oral tradition. Proverbs are generally mingled within the speech/conversation to show approval or disapproval of an argument(s). Any person who is well versed in using the right proverbs during a conversation is held in high regard by the people.

The well prevalent proverbs in Meitei society are inductive in nature. It is generalized from various experience by individuals, so much so that, it becomes a societal truth, that is applicable to everyone. The proverbs tend to acquaint and apprise the people from certain societal misdoings, to foster self-reliance, to build social harmony, to improve their moral judgement –

i) *angang laknaraga choppa fang-ngee, ahan laknaba kappa fang-ngee*

(translated as = if you fool a child, you may face embarrassment; while if you mock an elder, you may cry)

In the traditional Meitei society, children are respected as much as the elders. The society follows an elaborate social etiquette called '*thaksi-khasi*'^{xiv}. It warns the individual not to cross the limit or encroach into other's private life while talking or lightly joking to each other. So, a child may unintentionally spit words that might be embarrassing in front of everyone or an elder may scold seriously for displaying certain behaviors.

ii) *angao chakcha chaba bu fabara?*

(translated as = is it good to eat in the same manner as a mad-man?)

In Meitei society, there is an elaborate eating etiquette called '*chakcha-yuthak*'. While eating together, it is tradition to wait for the eldest to finish. It is considered impolite to eat with a open mouth or with slurping sounds or in a hurried manner. So, when anyone is seen eating hurriedly or impolitely, the elders generally ask, '*angao chakcha chaba bu fabara?*' so as to indicate that the person is eating impolitely.

iii) *ee-fut chammadi menba ngammi, mee-chin ama di menba wai.*

(translated as = we can easily fill up hundreds of leakages in a river levee; but we cannot easily control even one mouth only)

This proverb can be used both as a warning or as a motivation. It warns the people not to be absorbed into circulating rumors or to motivate any concerned individual by turning their feeling into a question and asking not to be disheartened by rumors if they are not true.

iv) *awa-nungai haiba-si kanagee-sub peebe pham natte*

(translated as = neither misfortunes nor fortunes are permanent position for anyone)

This proverb is usually used to encourage a person or family suffering from any unwanted incidents or ill-fate. It inspires them to dream beyond the horizon of suffering that good fortune is waiting for them. On the other hand, it is also used to warn anyone if they starts showing anti-social attitudes because of their fortunes or success.

v) *ee-nak-khun-ba tar ana lairaba ama sougat-pa ngamde*

(translated as = ten well to-do and rich family cannot keep on supporting one poor family forever)

This particular proverb defines the need of finding ways to earn a livelihood. It implies that if any person does not work to improve themselves, then nobody can lift them up. It reflects a strong ethical values of the Meiteis i.e., perseverance and self-sustenance.

vi) *khong chotlaga chin chotli*

(translated as = if you work, you will have food OR what you sow, so shall you reap)

It is usually said to the youth or an idle and lethargic person to start working so as to have a livelihood of their own, without depending entirely on others.

vii) *thajaba-na lan-nei*

(translated as = it is the one whom we believe that betray us OR a sheep in wolf clothing)

It is used as a warning to be careful while selecting one's friend as it usually the close ones that hurt us.

viii) *chak charging ama na cheng chengkok ama mang-ngee*

(translated as = a dried cooked-rice in a bowl of fresh rice grain desanctify the bowl)

The Meiteis hold social reputation and respect very dearly. However, a parent's good name or a family image is tarnish by one bad child.

On a closer study of the proverbs, the proverbs use by the Meiteis can be categorized in the same manner as Bascom's characterization of folklore.^{xv} The use of proverb in a conversation can have positive effect like improving the overall mood of the conversation or even in loosening up an edgy situation. However, it can be argued that the effectiveness is very much dependent non only on the clear delivery of the line but on the time and spatial context of its use.

Proverbs that can be used lightly so as to bring an atmosphere of amusement are as follow –

- i) *Apangba-na matu fui asingba-na mon fui* (The fool beat his wife while the wise beat his pillow)
- ii) *Een-don da yeiraga ee-ton da palli* (Messages passed to aunt surely reach uncle)
- iii) *Kwak ni kokil ni basanta youraga khang-ga-ni* (The coming of spring will certainly reveal whether the singing bird is a crow or a cuckoo)
- iv) *Chak chadri-makhei ayuk ni, nupi thidri-makhei pakhang ni* (It is morning until lunch is taken and one is still a bachelor until he is officially married)
- v) *Chak-pao ga lan-bao ga, chak-pao na kalli* (The news of a feast is stronger than the news of a war)
- vi) *Cha-min-naba hao-ee, pumin-naba yang-ee* (As eating together is tastier, working together makes completing the task easier)
- vii) *Jagoi saba heitra-ga sumang-da tainei* (To blame the dance floor for one's incompetency in dancing)

Proverbs that are used in validating culture, and justifying rituals and its institutions are as follow-

- i) *Yaoshang matam naha onning-ba, tarpan*^{xvi} matam ahan oiningba (The desire and the feeling of youth during yaoshang festival while the desire to be an adult during *tarpan*)
- ii) *Yaoshang matung aber thungba* (To receive color after yaoshang)
- iii) *Hiyang tanaringei da tumba gy sel thouba* (To ask for repayment of borrowed money while watching boat race)
- iv) *Anam kalla-ga maibi chang-ngee* (One's stubbornness may get them into the state of trance)

Yaoshang, Tarpan, HiYang Tan-naba have become deeply ingrained in the culture of the Meiteis regardless of their origin. The proverbs clearly reflect the familiarity of these festivals and rituals in the daily life of the Meiteis. *Maibis* are person who are in a state of trance through the medium of a God or a Goddess. They play an important role in *Lai Haraoba, Lai Ekou-ba* or on any rituals.

Proverbs that help in educating, both literate and non-literate society, are as follow-

- i) *Akanba budi asingba na ngammi* (The wise triumph over the stronger)
- ii) *Apang-ba tara ga marup oibabudi asingba ama ga yeknaba fei* (It is better to have a one wise enemy rather than to have ten foolish friends)
- iii) *Uchi kallak yum mei thai* (To burn a house to chase a mouse)
- iv) *Uchek achoubana mahum chao-na saba-ni, uchek macha na mahum pik-na sabani* (Big birds build big nests while small birds build small nests)
- v) *Thoubandong chafu kainaba yeibara?* (Does the potter hit his clay pot to break it?)
- vi) *Pithok-khi-ba pot ta mayeng tadaba pot si mahei laan-ni* (The only commodity that does not decrease while sharing is education)

These proverbs have reflection of life. They help in increasing the knowledge of the people on what and what-not to expect from life.

Proverbs that are used as a means of applying social pressure and exercising social control are as follow –

- i) *Achangba migy wa ngang-ganu* (Never talk about a person in their absence)
- ii) *Turel-gee echel di hang-gat na chende* (Rivers never flow upstream)
- iii) *Nashumang sittana mee-gy shumngag sikanu* (First clean your courtyard before cleaning the courtyard of others)
- iv) *Mee-cha sisa-nu ning-laga echa si* (The death of one's own children while anticipating the death of another's child)

Furthermore, the proverbs can also be classified based on their content and topic^{xvii} like medical proverbs, weather proverbs, legal proverbs, foods and fruits proverbs, religion and religious proverbs, abstract concepts, animals and plants, and human body etc.

Riddles in Meitei Society

Riddles are shrewdly constructed question or statement to disguise the actual message. However, there is a hint involved directly or analogously in the statement. It is known as '*Paokhong*' in Manipuri. It is believed to be a deviated word of '*Paofong*' (pao= statement /news; *fong* = to find/ to discover the solution).^{xviii} There is no fixed definition of riddle. A good riddle conceals the solution neatly through its style of expression. The taste of a riddle also depends much on how well it is put by the one asking the riddle.

Riddles developed from the necessity to encrypt important messages in order to make the intended messages difficult to interpret or understand at a simple glance. Those encoded messages were known as 'enigma'^{xix}. There were instances of using enigma in the history of Manipur. In one of *Khongjom Parva*^{xx}, the enigmatic conversation between Queen *Sapam Chanu Nunghitil Chaibi* and *Makeng Khullakpa* when the queen enquired about her son who was kept in custody of the *Makeng Khullakpa*. The son (later King Garibaniwaz) was compared to a steadily growing cock. In addition, many of the literature on clan genealogy, toponymy featured riddle as a literary tool. One method of writing was to begin by posing a specific question about a person or a place. The subsequent paragraphs then gave the answer to that question.

The riddles of the Meiteis can be categorized^{xxi} into –

- i) Literary riddles
Mei-di mei-ni hai, esing na muthatpa-di yade. karino? (= it is said to be a fire, but cannot be extinguish by water. What is it?)

Asaoba/Nungshi mei-chak (= Anger/ the fiery pain of love)

- ii) Folk riddles
Kara nantha, kara nantha. Karino? (= it always slip down whenever attempted to climb. What is it?)
Lafu (= plantain tree)
- iii) Paradoxical riddles
Kak-la gana hing-ba, kaktraga-na siba. Karino? (= it survives if it is cut, it dies if it is not cut. What is it?)
Angang makhoi kakpa (= cutting the umbilical cord)
- iv) Witty questions
Nongma nongma gee asum asum chaokhatlakpa, karino? (=it increase gradually each day. What is it?)
Kalak mee-houba (= envy)
- v) Arithmetical and game riddles
Ahan ama na angang ama da lupa kun piduna kon leiba tharmmi. Korfu ama da lupa manga pi, pukham ama na lupa ani pi, tenggot ama da siki pi. Pukham kaya, tenggot kaya, korfu kaya leirakpage? (= an old man gave 20rs to a child to purchase some utensils. A brass pot cost rs.5 each, a plate cost rs. 2 each, and a bowl cost 25paise each. How many pots, plates and bowls did the child bought?)
Korfu ahum, pukham ama, tenggot tarataruk (= 3 pots, one plate, 16 bowls)
- vi) Obscene riddles
Chap yungkhatlaga tin thaklaga thinba, karino? (= it is inserted after erecting it with saliva. What is it?)
Yettum da lang lengba (= threading a needle)
- vii) Ritual riddles

In Meitei society, despite the association of riddles with the oral tradition, there is no exclusive space for performing riddle. However, riddles were used as a form of conversation in certain manner and context. On the last day of *Lai Haraoba*, there is a ritual called '*Tangkhul Saba*'^{xxii}. In various acts of the rituals, the *Tangkhul* and the lass conversed in the form of ritual riddles.

Some decades ago, there was a practice of visiting an unmarried girl house by bachelors of neighboring villages at evening. During such visits, the boys and the girls asked each other riddles as a form of conversation. Sometimes, during festivals they met in group at the village ground or at *sinai-shang*^{xxiii}. They form groups and play riddles, where the losers buy refreshment for all. Thus, riddles contribute in socializing.

Moreover, during the early days there was a habit of socialization where works like paddy harvesting, collection of firewood etc., were done collectively. During such works, people find amusement and rest by riddling each other to forget the physical weariness. Above all, small children find joy in riddling each other. They incorporate riddling in their everyday traditional games like *kangjei*, *fibul habi*, *kwak mangjong*, *uuraobi*, *uu-chi-chi*. The child who is not able to solve much of the riddle at most time is treated mockingly and made the chaser in running games, the seeker in hiding games.

Riddles have their own societal significance. It can help in creating a cheerful and cheery atmosphere. It is a great recreational activity that bring not only amusement but sharpens our cognitive ability. It greatly helps in improving logical reasoning, sharpening wit, and understanding words. It also helps in teaching the value of things around us. In a more abstract sense, the riddles of any society reflect the socio-cultural psyche of the society and its perception of the world.

Proverbs and Riddles Today

From above discussion it can be said that the traditional lives of the Meiteis was significantly entwined with the use of proverbs and riddles. Every societal situation had a meaningful proverb or riddle. Both can be considered as a social tool that helps in building a *Meitei* society. Proverbs help in grooming the young generations by inculcating values that are desired by the society. They wanted everyone, regardless of the gender, to be self-dependent, hardworking, determined, honest. Perseverance was the key to lead a sound life.

The moral values instilled through proverbs exhibits the observant nature of the *Meiteis*, as even a simple line of proverb must be derived through inductive reasoning based on several observations. It also represents the generational knowledge of the *Meiteis*. On the other hand, riddles help in developing the cognitive skill and logical reasoning of an individual. It was a socializing tool used by the unmarried boys and girls, as a part of their conversation. Young children used it while playing indigenous games. During her days as a sovereign kingdom, the Nongthouja kings employed court jesters. One famous court jester is Bijando. No written literature on Bijando is found, but oral sources are there.^{xxiv} Apart from his jesters, Bijando regularly played riddles with the king and the nobles at the court.

In our contemporary society, globalization and modernization has its impact on our culture. The present system of education in schools focus on learning languages, arithmetic, and science. This system ignores the traditional way of learning. Although there are efforts by few educators to incorporate traditional ways into mainstream teaching, it is not sufficient to combat the dying tradition. School syllabus and curriculum largely lack lessons on proverbs and riddles and on how to used them in our daily lives. The NEP 2020 aims in changing the rigid form of education that has been prevailing the academic atmosphere of the country for decades.

Furthermore, the fast-changing *Meitei* familial setups also act as a significant factor in aiding the traditions of proverbs and riddles to be faded away from our society. In the past, a *Meitei* family constituted of a large family where the grandparents lived together with their grandchildren. With the modern lives setting in, nuclear family has become the new normal. This greatly aid in hampering the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. To note, in a traditional *Meitei* society it is the grandparents who passed down various oral traditions to the young generations while sitting beside the *funga*^{xxv}, waiting for dinner.

With globalization and adoption of modernity, the traditional way of livelihood has changed much. The shift from primary sector occupations towards secondary and tertiary sectors correspond to a decline of social cohesion in our society. People hardly get time for social interactions. This change in livelihood pattern greatly affects the oral traditions. The usage of oratures have declined while adapting to the new livelihoods. Moreover, the social space which were there in the past have faded away. With the fading of the spaces, the traditions associated with the space also disappears gradually.

Further more, there is still no appropriate platform where the younger generation can acquire the proverbs and riddles. Thus, the contemporary livelihood and system of education posed a negative impact on the traditions of proverbs and riddles. In fact, these traditions which once occupied a significant space in the traditional *Meitei* society is slowly dying.

However, if the young generation of today are given avenues for learning proverbs and riddles from a young age, we can revive these dying traditions in the near future. It can be incorporated into the syllabus and curriculum of education. Social spaces can once again be reignited on days of traditional festivals. On the other hand, schools must also provide similar spaces where the young students can use proverbs and riddles. Although nuclear family setup has become a necessity, parents must arrange for occasions where the grandchildren can interact with grandparents frequently. Concerned stakeholders can broadcast proverbs and riddles through audio-visual means so as to attract the new generations which are very much familiar with the platform of YouTube. Through these positive efforts from non-state actors, we can revive our dying traditions of proverbs and riddles.

Conclusion

The Meitei culture is no exception when it comes to proverbs and riddles. Both proverbs and riddles occupy a significant role. Proverbs are used in a more formal way as compared to riddles. Proverbs are generally used to prove or disapprove an argument. In most cases, proverbs serve as a medium of propagating socio-cultural values and norms. The proverbs of the Meiteis tend to acquaint and apprise the people from certain societal misdoings, to foster self-reliance, to build social harmony, to improve their moral judgement. So, proverbs are used by the elderly Meiteis as a social tool to shape the behavior, moral conduct, and moral judgement of the youths. Meanwhile, riddles are used by the Meiteis as a medium of non-formal education by the Meiteis. The conduct of riddles in a Meitei society can bring about a cheerful and jolly environment. So, riddles are used as a recreational medium as well. In all, proverbs and riddles occupy a substantial position in the Meitei society. It can be seen that the use of proverbs and riddles in contemporary time is limited. The younger generations does not have much knowledge of the proverbs and riddles owing to certain factors. The exclusion of proverbs and riddles from school syllabus and curriculum creates a gap in the psyche of the young students whereby they do not even realized the existence of this rich corpus of oral tradition in their early formative stage of learning. This led to a inept nature when exposed to such traditions at a later stage. The school-centric focus of modern education takes away valuable hours from the young kids, which in the earlier centuries were used in

playing traditional games. In games like *kangjei*, *fibul habi*, *kwak mangjong*, *uuraobi*, *uu-chi-chi* there was a place for using riddles as a part of the game. The shift in socio-economic life of the *Meiteis* from a agriculture based economy supplemented by handloom and handicraft towards secondary and tertiary sectors of economy result in loss of time that can be utilized for socialization. The tradition of young bachelors visiting neighbouring villages to find suitable girl for their life is obliterated from the traditional Meitei society slowly yet gradually. This loss of social space results to limited scope of using riddles. The preference on nuclear familial setup today as compared to the joint family system of the past is also another contributing factor. In such set up, the younger generations have limited opportunities to interact with their grandparents, which are an extensive repository of such oral traditions.

Oral traditions cannot be sieved from a society. These traditions add value and character to a society. In return, a society can be understood through these traditions. They become the keeper of social tradition and customs. However, there is an increasing fear that modernization and globalization might have an unhealthy impact on these traditions. The modern education needs to be re-modelled so as to absorbed these traditions into their curriculum. There is an urgent need for each Meitei family to maintain a *funga* in their kitchen. This can revive the culture of *funga-wari* both in practice and essence. Through this, the head of the family can utilized the space to educate the children with proverbs and riddles. On the other hand, parents need to encourage their children in socializing with their friends in the locality. This socialization can help in fostering indigenous games where riddles are used as a part of the game. So, the extant of these traditions depend much on each society. It brings forth the necessity to incorporate these traditions in our daily activities. Among those which can be easily incorporated are – proverbs and riddles, through education, societal setups and providing spaces for using them.

Endnotes

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^{iv} William Russell Bascom, *Contributions to Folkloristics*. Archana Publications, 1981, p. passim, archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.219776/mode/2up. Accessed 17 Sept. 2024.

^v *Puyas* are ancient texts on various subjects written in the archaic *Meitei Mayek* script. Today, fortunately, many traditional scholars have transliterated and translated into Bengali. Even English translation of some selected are there.

^{vi} The royal chronicle of Manipur. It records the historical events of nearly two thousand years covering the reign of kings from the accession of Nongda Lairen Pakhangba in 33 CE till the last day of Bodhachandra in 1955.

^{vii} The folktales are locally known as ‘*funga-wari*’. *Funga* is a hearth in a traditional Meitei kitchen, believed to be the abode of *Emoinu Ahongbi*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. *Wari* means story. So, *funga wari* are stories told beside the *funga* usually in evening while waiting for dinner. It is usually told by the grandparents to their grandchildren so as to instill ethical Meitei values of courage, determination, perseverance, self-sustenance, hard-work etc. Some popular *funga-wari* are *Hanuba-Hanubi Pan Thaba*, *Pebet*, *Moithap Naiba*, *Keibu Kei-oiba*.

For more stories with illustration see,

- a) Roy, L. Somi. *And That Is Why... Manipuri Myths Retold*. 1st ed., Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2021.
- b) Roy, L. Somi. *Feathers, Fools, and Farts: Manipuri Folktales Retold*. 1st ed., Penguin Books, 2024.

c) Chanu, Linthoi. *Wari*. 1st ed., Notion Press, 2019.

^{viii} Mohammed Alhaji Usman, "A COMMUNICATIVE VALUE EXPLORATION of SELECTED NUPE PROVERBS and RIDDLES." *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 07, no. 02, Jan. 2024, pp. 195–204, <https://doi.org/10.54922/ijehss.2024.0671>. Accessed 18 Sept. 2024.

^{ix} James Bode Agbaje. "Proverbs: A Strategy for Resolving Conflict in Yoru Ba' Society." *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, Dec. 2002, pp. 237–243, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369681022000042673, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369681022000042673>. Accessed 28 Sept. 2021.

^x Usman, op. cit., passim.

^{xi} A. K. Awedoba, "Social Roles of Riddles, with Reference to Kasena Society." *Research Review of the Institute of African Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, Feb. 2000, pp. 35–51, <https://doi.org/10.4314/rrias.v16i2.22893>. Accessed 16 Apr. 2023.

^{xii} Helen Japa, "Life Values in the Proverbs Used in Vilavangodu Region." *International Research Journal of Tamil*, vol. 4, no. S-16, Dec. 2022, pp. 123–27, <https://doi.org/10.34256/irjt224s1616>. Accessed 18 Sept. 2024.

^{xiii} Usman, op. cit., passim.

^{xiv} Social etiquettes of addressing the elders as well as the younger children. In a traditional Meitei society, the elders are addressed with strict reverence. At the same time, the elders do not plainly address the younger ones as 'you'.

^{xv} Loitongbam Birjita Devi, *Manipuri Paorou Neinaba*. 2007. 1st ed., Dr. Ningthoujam Bino Singh, 2007, pp. 64–85.

^{xvi} An annual ritual of offering scented flowers and fruits to the deceased, symbolically representing an annual feat for the deceased so that the soul of the deceased are free from hunger and stay in peace in heaven without disturbing the mortal beings on earth.

^{xvii} As cited in Birjita Devi, op. cit., pp. 122-125.

^{xviii} As cited in Oinam Rajendra Singh, *Manipuri Paokhong Neinaba*. 2003, p. 16.

^{xix} Cambridge Dictionary. "Enigmatic." @CambridgeWords, 19 Jan. 2022, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/enigmatic. Accessed 20 Sept. 2024.

^{xx} A form of popular folk ballad sung in remembrance of the heroic deeds of war heroes of the Battle of *Khongjom* (23rd April, 1891) during the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891. Oja Dhobi started the singing of *Khongjjom Parva* to the rhythmic beating a tin can.

^{xxi} Rajendra Singh, op. cit., pp. 29-60.

^{xxii} The ritual depicts one man who is either a *Tangkhum* or adorned in *Tangkhum* costume conversed with the lasses of *Selloi Langmai* Hill. The man chased the lass while exchanging words with them. It shows the strong cultural ties between the *Meiteis* and *Tangkhum*s.

^{xxiii} A collective work place where women, especially unmarried, gathers and work together. The works are usually associated with cotton handloom products from the preparation of yarn to fabric.

^{xxiv} The witty jest of Bijando is dramatized now. For more see, "BIJANDO PART 1 AUDIO/ Comedy Drama of Manipur / Comedy Drama Viral in Manipur/." *YouTube*, 29 Mar. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OhYoIsgkTo. Accessed 14 Apr. 2025.

^{xxv} A hearth in the traditional *Meitei* house, believed to be the abode of *Emoinu*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

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