

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF THE AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE MANIPUR STATE AWARD FOR LITERATURE, 2016-17 AT HOTEL IMPHAL ON 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2017

Hon'ble Minister (Education), Shri Th. Radheshyam Singh ji,  
Shri M. Lakshmikumar Singh, IAS, Commissioner (Education-S),  
Present and Past Awardees,  
Distinguished personalities from the field of literature and culture,  
Friends from Media,  
Distinguished Invitees and  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider myself privileged to be here this morning for the presentation of the Manipur State Award for Literature, 2016-17 which is regarded as the highest literary award in Manipur. At the outset, let me congratulate Shri Elangbam Dinamani Singh who has been selected for the award and compliment him for the outstanding contribution he has made to Manipuri literature particularly through his novels.

I am pleased that the State Government had taken the initiative to award outstanding creative writers annually from the year, 2008-2009. It was a step in the right direction towards the enrichment of Manipuri literature. Manipur has made tremendous contribution towards Indian literature and we should all be proud that there is now no anthology of Indian literature which does not feature Manipuri works. I may, however, add that people outside Manipur will know more about its literature, if there was a larger body of translated works. At present, the number of translated works is rather limited and the richness of Manipuri literature is still largely unknown to those who are not familiar with the language. I do hope that the Department of Language, Planning and Implementation will provide the necessary impetus for translation of more and more Manipuri works into other languages and vice versa. This will enhance the popularity of the Manipuri literary works and I

believe many of our creative writers will become household names within as well as outside the country. Efforts should be made that more and more Classical Manipuri literature is also translated into other Indian and global languages so that the society as a whole is enriched. If for that purpose, I could be of any help as Governor of the state, it would be my pleasure to do so.

Shri Elangbam Dinamani Singh has been bestowed the award for his novel “Nangga Eiga Amatani” (You and I are one) which is appropriately named at this juncture. I am told that Shri Singh is a talented writer and poet and through his novel books, using soft and tender words, vividly expresses the present day disturbed life, the impact of contemporary politics and image of society which are eroding the values of humanity. I feel bad that I will not be able to savour the beauty of the novel because of my language constraint but I have no doubt that this work will be a major contribution to contemporary Manipuri literature.

All of you are aware that Manipuri literature, as in the case of other literature, can be divided into ancient, medieval and modern. The ancient works are mostly undated and anonymous and comprise of mostly ritual hymns. The medieval period which saw the full bloom of Manipuri culture has also had great impact on its literature. But the major advances were made during the modern period. The 20<sup>th</sup> century had produced writers like Hijam Anganghal, Khwairakpam Chaoba, Dr. Lamabam Kamal and others. There has been an explosion of creativity and works from 1960 onwards. It is gratifying to note that since 1973, after Manipuri language was recognized by the Sahitya Akademi, 42 writers have been awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award and a number of them have been given the translation prize. Some of the works are household names like, Kunjamohon’s “Ilisha Amagi Mahao”, Samarendra’s “Mamang Leikai Thambal Satle”, Tongbra’s “Ngabongkhao”, Binodini’s “Boro Saheb Ongbi Sanatombi”, and so on and so forth. Creative

writers in Manipur experiment in every genre and the influence of post modernism in literature is also reflected in Manipuri literature. I have great confidence that Manipuri literature will continue to grow and enrich Indian literature in the times to come.

I am happy to know that the State Government has already initiated steps for getting Manipuri language declared as a Classical language of India. This, no doubt, is a critical step and I will take this opportunity to request the State Government to accelerate the process and provide sufficient funds to the scholars who can contribute towards reaching the goal. I have no doubt that if proper research is done and comprehensive documentation prepared of the body of old literature, its own script, and its long history, then there should be no reason why Manipuri language should not be declared as a classical language. If this is achieved, it will enrich the Indian Languages as it will be the first language from the Tibeto-Burman languages which will be conferred this status. Also once such a declaration is made, there will be focused emphasis for further research and publication, leading to further enrichment of the language. Here I would urge all to join hands for a concerted effort and contribute our mite towards reaching this goal. The Language Department of the State Government also needs to be adequately strengthened for achieving our ends.

In conclusion, I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function and I would once again congratulate Shri Dinamani Singh on his success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.