

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE OPENING PROGRAMME OF M.K. BINODINI DEVI ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL, 2018 ON 21ST FEBRUARY, 2018 AT THE CENTENARY HALL, MANIPUR UNIVERSITY, CANCHIPUR, IMPHAL

Prof. Vishwanath ji, Department of Life Sciences, Manipur University,
Shri Aribam Syam Sharma ji, Prominent Film Director and Producer of Manipur,

Distinguished personalities from Film Fraternity,

Distinguished Invitees,

Members of IMASI Foundation,

Friends from the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be here at the opening programme of M.K. Binodini Devi Anniversary Memorial, 2018 comprising of 'FROM PAGE To SCREEN' – a retrospective of the films of Aribam Syam Sharma and M.K. Binodini Devi. The contribution made by Late M.K. Binodini Devi, popularly known as IMASI in the field of Manipuri film undoubtedly qualifies for well deserved appreciation.

The untiring endeavour of the "The Maharaj Kumari Binodini Devi Foundation" for propagating and perpetuating the thoughts as well as works of M.K. Binodini is, indeed, commendable. I am happy to learn that this programme will also include the Digital Restoration Premiere of IMAGING THEM (My son, my precious), an iconic film in the world of Manipuri cinema and which won the Grand Prix at Nantes in 1981. The screenplay of this film amply reflect on the innate talent of M.K. Binodini, the prolific writer.

Maharaj Kumari Binodini Devi who was born on 6th February, 1922 and lived to be 89 years of age till 2011 is considered as the key renaissance figure of modern contemporary Manipuri culture. She bridged the two worlds

of ancient royalty and modern life. Born as a princess, she transcended the trappings of royalty and lived the full life of an enlightened commoner.

M.K. Binodini was blessed with many talents. She made her name as a novelist and a writer of short stories, essays, plays and screenplays of award winning films, lyrics, poems and ballet scripts. She also recorded her presence in diverse fields such as sculpture, environmentalism, women's issues, social activism and electoral politics. Her works won accolades in the national as well as international arena.

M.K. Binodini is one of the few writers in the world who come from the innermost circle of royalty to make a mark in literature. Her writings touching upon the privileged royalty therefore carried the stamp of authority. It has been observed that her works as a writer bore the unmistakable mark of leftist leanings. She was essentially a writer of the people, a princess brought up in transitional court life, who became a voice for the common man. A majority of her literary works relate to the lives of common people and of the ordinary Manipuri. There is scant hint, besides the grace and elegance of her prose, of her privileged upbringing. Another notable feature is the delineation of strong, unconventional female characters in her writings and young women authors especially look up to M.K. Binodini, whom they lovingly and reverentially call IMASI or royal mother as a role model.

But it was in films consisting of 9 feature films and 4 documentaries that M.K. Binodini could have the most impact globally. Her collaboration with A. Syam Sharma resulted in land mark films like *Imagi Ningthem* winning the Grand Prix at Nantes in 1981, the documentary *Sangai – Dancing Deer of Manipur* receiving the British Film Institute Outstanding Film of the year Award in 1989 and feature film *Ishanou*, an Un Certain Regard Selection for the Cannes Film Festival in 1991.

It is a remarkable achievement that in recognition of her contribution to music, drama, dance, film and literature, she was awarded the Padma Sri by the Government of India. It is also praiseworthy and highly creditable that some of the stories authored by her are included in the curriculum of schools and colleges in the state today. The Anniversary Memorial is love's labour for the IMASI Foundation and ably co-presented by Department of Mass Communication, Manipur and TC Foundation, MUSU. It is heartening that sincere efforts are being made for appreciation and preservation of these quality works of cinematic art and literature. I had not had the opportunity of meeting late M.K. Binodini Devi but having come to know about her works, I can say for sure that I have become an admirer of this great lady.

I do not intend to dilate about the endless contributions made by Imasi in the field of film as well as literature in the state. I thank the organizers for inviting me to this important function of a distinguished personality of the state.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.