

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE "BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF LATE HEISNAM KANHAILAL (PADMA BHUSHAN AWARDEE)" ON 17<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, 2018 AT MAHARAJ CHANDRAKIRTI AUDITORIUM, PALACE COMPOUND, IMHAL.

Shri L. Jayantakumar ji, Minister, Arts & Culture,

Prof. N. Tombi ji,

Dr. K. Sushila, Director, Arts & Culture,

All the participating Artistes, Gurus, Writers and Directors,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is, indeed, a great pleasure for me to be with you all today at the celebration of the Birth Anniversary of Late Heisnam Kanhailal, a Padma Bhushan Awardee commencing on the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 and which will continue till 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2018. I am also glad to note that this celebration will be marked by memorial lectures, discussions, and three theatre shows of his direction namely, Tamna Lai in 1972, Pebet in 1975 and Dakhgar in 2006. My congratulations to all of you.

It is good to learn that the main objective of this celebration is to foster Manipuri theatre in its pristine purity and to further develop and consolidate the composite Manipuri culture by carrying forward the legacy of Heisnam Kanhailal. He was a theatre personality who dedicated his life doing research on native theatre responding to the contemporary socio-political turmoil and making Manipuri theatre known to the world with his innovative creation of a new medium in the tradition of psycho-physical acting. Late Shri H. Kanhailal is the lone theatre practitioner in the contemporary Indian theatre who could provide theory and practice of his own individualised theatre. This

actor's training process had caught the attention of many theatre practitioners and researchers across the globe.

I have been made to understand that the three plays selected for staging during the anniversary celebration mark the historical milestones of Kanhailal's theatre journey and one shall witness his experiment with form and content in these three plays. The memorial lectures scheduled as a part of the celebration will also mark the beginning of a critical engagement for Kanhailal's works.

Late Kanhailal was the founder-director of Kalakshetra, Manipur and I am happy that the theatre group has been sharing a substantial role in the growth of his genre of theatre. It is heartening that Kalakshetra, Manipur believes in the notion of a workshop that is a laboratory or a research theatre open to critical engagement as well. It is a remarkable journey that the group has produced 20 plays since inception including several outstanding plays directed by Kanhailal.

Literature and theatre are truly indicative of the society and their studies provide not only a cultural and traditional glimpse of that society but also reflect its vast multi layered identity. Theatre brings out the traditional richness and beauty of the people in a society through the language of the common and unassuming people.

Theatre, as all other art forms, aims at propagating and reinforcing deep-rooted principles related to the religious and ethical life of the people. And yet the same forms can serve just as effectively as instruments of change, adjusting messages to suit new sets of realities and changing value systems. Theatre can be thought provoking and a strong catalyst of change as in the case of Kanhailal's genre of theatre.

Preservation and sustenance of a Nation's identity and heritage are the bounden duty of the people. I hope through the medium of theatre, apart from providing entertainment to the people, the traditional amity, National unity and harmony would be reinforced. Manipur being a culturally rich state, there are ample scopes for extensive works and research in the field of theatre and Kanhailal certainly occupies the pole position as a torch bearer.

I, once again, thank the organizers for inviting me to this Birth Anniversary Celebration and wish the celebration a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.