



Research Paper

A Study of Pacha's An old Man Hard of Hearing

Dr. Anuradha Nongmaithem

Assistant Professor In English Department Of Humanities And Social Sciences National Institute Of Technology
Agartala Jirania, Brajajala, West Tripura - &99046

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ABSTRACT: *Loitongbam Pacha's novel An Old Man Hard Of Hearing is a wonderful novel with full of symbolic presentation trying to portray the nuances and the corrupt social –economic turmoil situation of Manipur in the early 60s after the merger to independent India. The paper talks about the administrative turmoil in Manipur and how human had become so mean minded. The paper also focuses on the style of writing which was unique in Manipur literature at that time. Pacha's explore and set a new trend in Manipuri novel writing. Through the character I, the writer is trying to understand human life? The paper is based on the translated English version by E. Priyokumar Singh.*

Keywords: Manipuri, Pacha, insurgencies, social turmoil.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pacha Meetei (1973-1990) was the first person to received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1973 for the novel *Imphal Amasung Magi Nungshiki Phibam Ishing*. He was a gluttonous reader. He is a prolific writer and has written several novels which includes Hayad Begum, Na Tathiba Ahal Ama, Hajj, Imphal Amasung Magi Esing Nungsitki Phibham, Anouba Pao Ama, Langoinei, Lam Asida Eibu Khangba Amatangdi Thorakpa Phei, Peegi Wari, Thanil, Kalimai Mamangda Laibak Katpasu Yaoee, Katabasu Yaoee, Meeoibagi Wakat, the last two were posthumously published. Throughout the novel the narrator I and his friend Angou (typical Meitei name) is having a conversation. During the course of their conversation the narrator is giving his view about the past and present life, social condition of Manipur, the corrupt administration, rural life, insurgencies and Manipur before and after merger to independent India. The novel is divided into four parts: Character of young woman, As If Without A Heart Heartless, Darkness and An Old Man Hard Of Hearing.

Literary Tool

The writer has employed the literary tool called stream of consciousness. Wikipedia defines it as a narrative device that attempts to give the written equivalent of the character's thought processes, either in a loose interior monologue or in connection to his or her actions. Stream-of-consciousness writing is usually regarded as a special form of interior monologue and is characterized by associative leaps in thought and lack of some or all punctuation. In stream of consciousness the speaker's thought processes are more often depicted as overheard in the mind (or addressed to oneself); it is primarily a fictional device. There is no connection with the speaker's thought and action. There is no sequence in the novel and what he is speaking to his friend. He is speaking to himself and lamenting about life and trying to find out "What is life?" At one point the reader is left to the mercy of his/her own understanding of what is going on. It's like a dark tunnel one is entering not knowing whether you are coming out or not, or where are we going. Such is the disorganization of the novel as how our thoughts are sometimes not connected.

The Analysis from the text:

"In the golden market" (2) the writer laments and exclaimed with pride talking about the past glorious time in Manipur. He cherished the Meitei king defeating the enemies and protecting the integrity of Meitei people, " their lives alone sidetracking their defeated king and their mother land the people of the Khaki taking refuse at the golden feet of the Meitei king!(3). The writer compares those glorious with the self centered people of modern Manipur. There was free air that was flowing and positive energy everywhere. He laments over the gone years and feel sorry for it, "The time had passed away/ It had become a dream" (48).

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Anuradha Nongmaithem

“that worthless city father – then taciturn politician of Manipur. They all remained silently, silently with powerless teeth”. (8) The writer decries degrading the social condition of Manipur. He remembers the good old days before the merger to India. The social chaotic conditions, tospy turvy law and order of the state, the increasing insurgencies movement is all because of short sightedness of the modern Meitei.

“We are all Indians let none divide us”

“Why do they like to speak the lie so much?”

“Be silent. Angou, don't speak loudly”

“What happened? Is it not a lie?”

“Be aware of the time. The groups of revolutionary are nabbing by searching and searching.”

“You mean the revolutionary?”

“Yes.” I said “its sixty seven that were arrested.”

He, silently, remained thinking something. (35-36)

The conversation between the narrator and his friend gives the social silencing of the administration. Silence is the political term now in Manipur specially. The Center is silent, the government is silent, media is silent and people are forced to be silent. One wonders what will happen if the silence breaks. Thus, the only option provided to the people of Manipur is either you remained silent or you will be as the saying goes, ‘taken to task’. There is a constant reminder that if you are not silent ...???, certainty of being alive if just a question mark in Manipur. The writer is worried about the “Racism” (38), which divides Meitei with the other mainland people. He thinks that it is a dangerous weapon and can be very destructive. And it's spreading like wild fire and breaking up the root of Manipur. But the writer believes that “Capriciousness will never get its goal” (42). In “Cultural and Anarchy” by Matthew Arnold, has beautifully stated that “... while they administer, we steadily and with undivided hear support them in repressing anarchy and disorder; because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection” (10). This is exactly the need of the hour in Manipur, with frequent disturbance in law and order there is no proper society and which result in imperfection of individual person. The whole concept of the essay is applicable with the situation of Manipur.

Women play a major role in Manipuri society and considered as a custodian of culture and tradition. That is the reason the writer has a section focus on the women. At one point of the novel also he talks about his love life and how it was not materialized into marriage because he was too poor to marry her. The writer has fond memories about her lady love by he is shocked to see the drastic changes in the behavior of Meitei women. The writer is dismayed by the behavior of modern Manipuri women. Women are freer in their outlook according to the writer and he decried the lack of moral conduct by women.

He keeps on visualizes a newlywed woman wearing traditional dress:

Amongst the throng of people waiting for the start of the buses, wearing the golden rings on both the left-the right wrists in both the two wrists decorated in a profuse ways, with a very thin belly on the left hand side cladding the Phige with the narrow stream, decorated with the golden rings on the wrist hanging a lady-bag a little upward the wrist the white young woman standing with great dignity. (8)

The writer is content to see such a beautiful traditionally dressed woman. He starting comparing the happily married woman to woman who are having extra marital affair. The wrier contempt those type of women thinking that they are spoiling the society. While having a cup of tea in the old forsaken tea shop with his friend witnessed an incident. This left a bitter feeling in the writer's mind. A couple entered in the same tea shop where the writer is having tea. The woman is in her thirties and the man in his late forties. They were sitting in the secluded room.

The woman is overly decked up to impress the man and was wearing a thin cloth to cover her body:

She wore a thin armless shirt. Then the thin craft showed the transparency of her shirt. The shings of brazier as wide as about two fingers were shown. Occasionally when the tip of the cloth had often fallen down the skins of the root-joint of the arm had been shown. (18)

The writer here gives a detail of a woman who is wearing a revealing dress with the man sitting beside him trying to lure him. The writer is sure that they are having an extra marital affair with the conversation they are hiding talking and the awkward behavior of the man and woman. The narrator is not happy to see such a free woman and blames the corrupt administration that is prevailing in Manipur. The narrator feels sorry for the

dilapidation of moral values in modern Manipur. The social stigma and strict moral code of conduct of Meitei women is rigid, which made them confine within the household margin only. Women when they come out from the rigid boundaries always face criticism. I personally do not agree with the outlook of the writer towards woman. It is not only women that have changed with time, but both the men and women have changed.

The social economics problems is pertaining and becoming more acute as days pass by. The tug of war continues with the center and state stake holders. In between the two the civilian are sandwiched with no option to escape but caught between the two. There is something wrong with the policy makers and the need of the hour is good governance. At this age of digital we are stuck with primitive outlook and few interested are fighting for personal gain. There is no immediate solution but there is a need for change and to deconstruct the existing element in order to construct a new better Manipur. The shared identify that all the indigenous people in Manipur have need to come together for better tomorrow. Time has come to write a new history, violence free Manipur where all are free to express their views and ideas. The concern for the writers of Manipur should be changing "some" inexperienced masses of people with their personal gain into conscientious individuals who strive for human perfection through the pleasant nurturing of all of their skills and talents for a better Manipur.

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