

“Delving into the Henjunaha Folktale: Uncovering Cultural Significance, Symbolic Narratives and Identity”

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Abstract: The purpose of this work is to investigate the cultural significance, symbolic narratives and identity in the folktale of *Henjunaha* which deeply rooted in Manipur's cultural context. Using cultural theories of purposed by Stuart Hall, the study looks into how the story reflects and shapes cultural norms, values and identity in the Manipuri community. The analysis also focuses on gender roles, societal expectations and the relationships between folklore and cultural identity. This research utilizes qualitative methods including analysis of the folktale and exploration of relevant cultural artefacts. The study also draws on existing scholarship in cultural studies, folklore studies and Manipuri cultural history. This research employs cultural studies approach considering how the folktale functions as a cultural artefact, reflecting and influencing the cultural identity of the Manipuri community. This research also contributes to a deeper understanding of how folklore serves as a medium for cultural expression and identity formation.

Keywords: Henjunaha, Manipuri folktale, Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall, Identity.

Introduction

A folktale is simply an oral fictional tale that gives the storyteller absolute freedom which exists on two levels: oral and auditory, which denotes that there is a teller and a listener. However, one distinctive feature of the folktale is the variation in the story every time it is retold. It is observed that folktales differ from generation to generations since they are transmitted orally.

Folktales that have been passed down from generation to generation which helped in educating people also serve the purpose of entertainment prior to the development of printed materials and modern technologies. Moreover, it has given the mankind a new aspect of learning the do's and do not's of the culture through its orality and storytelling. In the meantime, they are actually based on man's life; therefore it is indeed to be taken into consideration that they are instructive. Most folktales have a story element that is attached to the common folk which further teaches a person to behave well in the world giving the vast knowledge related to life processes. In other words, folktales are sources of moral lessons which can be easily achieved through the socialization with others.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed for this study is descriptive qualitative research. A descriptive qualitative research is a methodological approach that seeks to deeply explore and describe phenomena, aiming to capture the richness, complexity, and diversity of experiences, behaviours, and perspectives within a specific context. Researchers engaged in descriptive qualitative research within literature often utilize techniques such as textual analysis, interviews with authors or literary experts, and reader response studies to gather diverse perspectives and insights. This approach not only enriches literary scholarship but also offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay between texts, readers, and socio-cultural contexts, fostering a more holistic appreciation of literature's enduring relevance and impact.

Cultural studies and criticism explores the broad interdisciplinary field focused on analyzing and interpreting cultural phenomena within societal contexts relating it to symbolism and cultural identity. The theories of reception and encoding-decoding proposed by cultural theorist Stuart Hall is one of the prominent worked even existing today. Reception theory emphasizes the active role of audiences in interpreting and making meaning of cultural texts such as literature, films, artworks, and media content. This perspective highlights that audience members to not passively consume text or media but actively engage with it, drawing upon their own experiences, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds to interpret and decode messages embedded within cultural artefacts. Moreover, encoding-decoding theory, as articulated by Stuart Hall, further elaborates on the complex dynamics of communication and interpretation within cultural contexts, symbolic narration and identity. According to this theory, cultural texts are encoded with meanings by producers or creators based on specific cultural codes, ideologies, and discourses. However, audiences engage in a decoding process that is not necessarily identical to the intended encoding by producers. Hall identifies three decoding positions as dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional. While some audience members may decode messages in alignment with dominant cultural ideologies, others negotiate meanings based on their own perspectives and some may resist or challenge dominant meanings altogether. By integrating these theoretical frameworks into cultural studies and criticism, it can offer the desired analyses of how cultural meanings are constructed, contested, and negotiated within complex socio-cultural environments, enriching our understanding of cultural production, consumption, and impact by reflecting on cultural significance, symbolic narratives and identity.

Analysis of Henjunaha

One of the most popular folktales in Manipur is *Henjunaha*. According to the tale, *Henjunaha* is the embodiment of *God Thangjing* who was born as a son to *Langlenhanba* and *Khoidom* in the kingdom of *Kege Moirang*. Often described in the Meitei mythology and archetypes, it is said that *Henjunaha* could never see his father and thus followed his mother's wishes throughout his life. *Langlenhanba* was a gifted carpenter who won the admiration of the King who ruled the kingdom of *Kege Moirang*. The monarch, being selective, gave *Langlenhanba* the task of building the strongest boat. *Langlenhanba* accidentally chopped the tree that concealed *God Thangjing* as he searched in the *Mount Thangjing* as to obtain a desired tree. *God Thangjing* appeared in front of *Langlenhanba* as blood spurts out of the tree, expressing his displeasure at *Langlenhanba's* actions. *God Thangjing* took the life of *Langlenhanba* on the same day, viewing his accidental act as a challenge.

Langlenhanba departed *Khoidom* and *Henjunaha*. *Khoidom* taught *Henjunaha* the needs to be a strong man and supports him as a single mother. As *Henjunaha* reaches adulthood, he approaches his mother to assume the role of a responsible adult. After *Henjunaha* leaves his home for work, *Henjunaha* meets *Lailourembi* and had a romantic and affectionate relationship. *Lailourembi* even sang him songs while they were together. Unaware that it was *Lamta Thangja*, *Lailourembi* once asked *Henjunaha* to meet her on that day. *God Poloitabi* comes in his dream and disguises herself as *Lailourembi* and awakens *Henjunaha* from his sleep. For the first time, *Henjunaha* disobeys his mother's orders and goes to meet *Lailourembi* where he encountered with evil spirits. Those evil spirits took the life of *Henjunaha*, on the same day; *Lailourembi* realised of her carelessness and regretted it which led herself to suicide. On the other side, *God Thangjing* and *Goddess Poloitabi* enjoys their play.

The folktale of *Henjunaha* opens with the narration of the existence of the overall beings and gods on the ranges of mountains in Manipur. The places ranges the different cultural heritage places of *Nongmaiching* mountain, *Thangjing* mountain, *Langol* mountain, *Loktak Wangpurel* with the beautifully described blue sky, open field and a prayer ground in the realm of *Kaygay Moirang*. *Henjunaha* and his beloved *Lailourembi* is described as the incarnation of *God Thangjing* and his consort *Goddess Poloitabi*. Unlike the main purpose of the livelihood of a human, they incarnated in order to please the spirits as they complaint for leaving them behind without any purpose. Since it is regarded that the almighty god and humans as well as the spirits and living beings play an important part in the play, *God Thangjing* is bound to look upon everything happening in the real world. The narration goes on to the past to describe how *Henjunaha* was incarnated and lived among the humans.

According to Stuart Hall, he emphasises the significance of places in cultural studies by highlighting how they are not just physical locations but also carries immense, symbolic, historical and social meanings. He further

states that understanding the places within cultural contexts helps people to grasp the meaning behind it and the development of new ideas embedded culturally and socially in narratives and representations. The above mention places are always related to the divine creation or the beginning of the beliefs that people believe. In the folktale, *Nongmaiching Ching* is a sacred mountain in Manipuri mythology which is associated with deities like *God Nongpok Ningthou* and *Goddess Panthoibi*. *Thangjing* Hill and *Langol* Hill are also deeply rooted in mythological stories and cultural beliefs as the residence of god *Thangjing* which symbolizes ancestral connections and protection for the *Moirang* region. *Loktak Lake* is a natural wonder which is believed to have originated from ancient myths involving gods and goddesses, signifying the interconnectedness of spirituality and the environment. Its significance in rituals and ceremonies further underscores its cultural and social importance.

According to the study, *Gender in Folk Tales: Re- Reading Khamba Thoibi* written by Sainico Ningthoujam (2021), states that *Khamba* and *Thoibi* are widely perceived as the reincarnations of *Nongpok Ningthou* and *Panthoibi* respectively. On the other side of culture and belief, it is believed that *God Thangjing* and Goddess *Poloitabi* takes several reincarnations and indulge themselves in the livelihood of humans. It is further believed that *Nongpok Ningthou* and *Panthoibi* are incarnations of the said god and goddess which in turn reincarnates as *Henjunaha* and *Lairoulembi* in the folktale of *Henjunaha*, thus giving a correlation between the contexts of several folklores.

In relation to the above roles of supernatural being indulging in incarnations, it forms a historical event according to the cultural context. It can be termed as a hegemonic activity to acknowledge the past to the future which in proposition; Stuart Hall signifies the dominant ideologies and cultural representation maintained within society. He further emphasizes on the existence of counter hegemonic forces and alternative interpretations that challenge the diverse and contested views on divine incarnations. As it is related to history being the background of present relating to communication, it is hereby stated that

“Our conversation has to recognise that different histories have produced us, different stories have made this conversation possible.” (Hall, 39)

The epic about *Khamba* and *Thoibi* reflect some dominantly-driving principles in Manipuri society concerning gender parts, marriage, and societal norms. These principles are strengthened through cultural portrayals in legends and fables by moulding perceptions and actions within the society. Despite the prevailing storyline, alternatives interpretations are made inside Manipuri culture. The faith in deity incarnations and the association among diverse folktales imply alternative viewpoints and challenges to the dominant principles. The concept that *Khamba* and *Thoibi* are viewed as reincarnations of *Nongpok Ningthou* and *Panthoibi* indicates a parallel storyline that lives parallel to the traditional beliefs. The same holds true for the *Henjunaha* and *Lairoulembi* which resonates with the diverse historic and mythological backgrounds that contribute to Manipuri folklore. These narratives, fables, and convictions are not stationary but evolve over time, reflecting shifting societal dynamics and understandings.

Sanamahism is a profound religion to be discussed throughout the tale. The tale is associated with the involvement of several god's and goddesses of *Sanamahism*. On the other side, there are also discussions related to *Sharoi Ngaroi* which is associated with evil spirits in Manipuri culture. The ritual of *Umang Lai Haraoba* is significant in celebrating the cultural beliefs and indigenous deities called "*Umang Lai*" or the gods of forest. While *Umang Lai Haraoba* primarily honours benevolent spirits and deities, there is also recognition of malevolent or evil spirits which are considered troublesome that can cause harm or misfortune to individuals or communities. They are believed to reside in certain places like crossroads, lonely paths, or dark forests. People often perform rituals and offerings during *Umang Lai Haraoba* and other occasions to appease these spirits and seek protection from their negative influences. Manipuri households and communities have traditional practices to ward off evil spirits. These may include offerings of fresh foods and flowers, using specific chants or prayers and seeking the assistance of shamans or spiritual leaders for blessings and protection rituals. Nevertheless, *Sharoi - Khangba*, a ritual offering to *Sharoi Ngaroi* or evil spirits, began when the gods decided to form connections with them. It is believed that the *Saroi-Ngaroi* began to settle in the *Nongpok Leihao Ching* around the same time that the gods planned to do so. In effect, the gods burned down the shelters and made them suffer. To avoid reconciling with wars, they began living together, blessing each other's necessities. Thus, offerings to

Sharoi Ngaroi began on the first Sunday of each *Lamta* month in order to satisfy them awhile without interfering with human livelihood.

According to the study, *The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Transforming Society* (2021), states that “Religion is not merely a divisive force in the affairs of humankind. In some situations, it can unite people across ethnic, racial, and political lines through a common allegiance to their creator.” (Beyers, 2)

Religion takes an important role in shaping the society. It is the belief that the people follow which was framed from ancient times. *Henjunaha* as a part of religion plays a pivotal role in shaping the society through its narratives embedded in the culture of Manipur. Stuart Hall emphasizes that cultural studies provide valuable frameworks for analysing how religion is constructed, represented and experienced within diverse cultural contexts which intersects with issues of power, identity and social change which in turn gives the people a sense of self and community belonging. In the folktale, people in the religion of Sanamahism of Manipur have been given a framed idea that *Sharoi- Ngaroi* only encounters on the day of *Lamta Thangja* and one should not go outside at night, which is in fact a framed idea of representation of religion that is still relevant even today.

The main reason behind the structuralism of the folktale is to make the people aware of the existence of the gods and evils as well as their involvement in the livelihood. Thus, a moral lesson can be taught through the folktale associated with the nature of living. Retelling folktales helps to raise a person properly. In such manner, folktales take primary roles in involvement of disciplinary actions within the mind of human beings.

The tale commences with the narration of appreciation of *Langlenhanba* being the most skilled carpenter in *Kaygey Moirang*, presently in *Moirang*. He is described as the great boat maker as his boat was admired by the king. Unlike any other people, *Langlenhanba* belongs to a low class family. Since, he was appraised by the King; he also had the privileged to cut any trees from the kingdom to carve a strong boat for the king.

“You are a very talented carpenter. I grant you the right to cut wood from any part of the kingdom.” (Oinam, *Henjunaha*)

After being appraised by the people of *Kaygey Moirang* and the king for his adaptability, he tells his wife about the incident and plans to descend to *Thangjing Hills* to look for a strong tree. In this way, *Langlenhanba* plans to gift an admiring boat which will eventually make improve the livelihood of his family. But the scenario takes a shift when he cuts a well grown tree and bloods came oozing out of it. It was the tree, god *Thangjing* has been taken in form. On the same side, god *Thangjing* was ferocious for the act done by *Langlenhanba* and was given the death sentence. Later that night, *Langlenhanba* died leaving his family to no one.

“This tree does not have any defect of any kind. It is very healthy and would be perfect for a boat. He struck it with his axe. Blood oozed out of the wound. It was actually a spirit who had taken the form of a tree.” (Oinam, *Henjunaha*)

The folktale teaches and provides us with various religious practices and the moral lessons that will pass down with oral retellings and researches. The death of *Langlenhanba* was caused as he did not realise the act of karma as he was only focused on creating a well built boat for the king while he could not find any healthy tree. In the culture of Manipur, the people manifest the trees and forest as it resembles the existence of gods and goddesses. It is firmly believed that the supernatural exist even today. As a result, the divine offering of rice, fruits, vegetables or flowers to the tree is performed and an axe is being kept on the tree before cutting down the tree to bring prosperity and to feel peace inside the human. If the axe is fallen on the next day, it is regarded that the gods have permitted to offer the tree to the humans. The nature is deeply connected to the humans and the Mother Nature has nurtured the trees as a mother nurtures a child till one's growth to adulthood. On a different perspective, the death of *Langlenhanba* may be regarded as a challenge to God *Thangjing* as he did not pray and offer to chop down a tree. If he had given the offerings to the god and followed the tradition, he would have lived a life he desired. The folktale believes the embodiment or reincarnation and existence of supernatural in the human world.

In this way, it can be considered that folktale helps people to develop better understanding of various conditions of human and since folktales are sources of enforced and disciplined perceptions, beliefs, formality and so on. It also makes people to think about what it is right or wrong. It gives the overall perspective of performing an act and delivering messages through it. Stuart Hall challenges the idea behind cultural purity and authenticity by conceptualising that cultures as a medium are constantly evolving through interactions, exchanges and

hybridization processes. When the concept is related to folktale, though it changes through re-telling, it enlightens people about a new way of living by learning from its context.

In the folktale, the scene about *Langlenhanba* teaches important moral lessons about karma, respect for nature, and the consequences of actions. On the other side, the cultural practice of offering to trees before cutting them down reflects a deep connection between humans and nature, with beliefs in supernatural forces guiding these practices. In the context of the folktale, the tradition of offering to trees and seeking divine permission through the falling of an axe exemplifies the fluidity of cultural practices over time. These practices evolve as they are passed down through oral retellings and adaptations to changing beliefs and contexts. Most of the people in this era are not aware about this practice. As the folktale is retold and researched, it enlightens people about new ways of living and understanding their cultural heritage. Moreover, the story of *Langlenhanba's* demise serves as a cautionary tale but also highlights the importance of respecting traditions and beliefs, showcasing how cultural narratives carry valuable insights that shape societal values and behaviours.

Folktales as narratives hold deeper meanings embedded within a seemingly mundane world which reflects in culture and tradition. Through the narrative of the first sighting between *Henjunaha* and *Loya* with *Lailourembi* and her friends highlights the traditional practices, gender dynamics and interpersonal relationships that unfold the customary of the culture of Manipur. The narrative unfolds with *Lairaulembi* and her friends engaging in a culturally significant act of washing their hair with *Chenghi*, a herbal concoction which is prepared from young leaves and tender stalks of shoot of trees or shrubs or whole plant with fresh fruits boiled with local sticky rice water. This act not only signifies personal hygiene but also carries deeper cultural and spiritual meanings within the context of their community as in many cultures; hair holds significant symbolic value, representing beauty, strength, and spirituality. The emphasis on not letting a single hair fall off, lest it falls over a spirit, highlights the belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spirituality. Hair becomes a symbol of respect and reverence, echoing traditional beliefs and practices. The riverside setting defines the relation of human with nature as rivers are often considered sacred in various cultures worldwide. The act of bathing and washing hair by the river carries the meaning of symbolic purification and renewal, aligning with spiritual and cultural practices that honour natural elements.

“They were washing their hairs with *chenghi* (herbal concoction for washing hair). They were discussing that not a single hair must fall off, lest it falls over a spirit.” (Oinam, Henjunaha)

The traditional song of “*Hada Urit Napangbi*” sung by *Lairaulembi* and *Tonu* not only adds depth to their characters but also symbolizes a connection to their cultural heritage. The lyrics invokes the ancestral figures, emotional relation and familial duty, reflect a reverence for tradition and the values passed down through generations. The lyrics in Meitei folk songs and storytelling in Manipur remarks the importance of familial bonds, respect for elders, and reverence for ancestors. The first line, “*Hada Urit napangbi*,” directly addresses someone as “*Urit*,” which symbolizes the disconnection of people between generations. The subsequent lines, “*Namana kauray tadabi*” and “*Napana kauray khumdabi*,” evoke longing or sorrow, representing the emotional weight of parents seeking acknowledgment from their child. The rhythmic refrain “*Ya-ho-ho-ya*” adds a melodic and repetitive element, evoking emotions like nostalgia, resilience, or longing for connection. These lyrics also invites listeners to reflect on the complexities of human connections, the passage of time, and the enduring bonds that unite families and communities through shared experiences and traditions. This significant element not only enriches the narrative but also charms the identity of the characters and their rootedness in being a typical woman.

Stuart Hall emphasizes that understanding deeply emotional experiences requires examining them within their cultural context as culture influences how emotions are expressed, perceived, and understood, shaping individual and collective emotional experiences and identities.

“And if you want to play in the area where deep feelings are involved, you have to look at culture.” (Hall, 19)

For example; the act of washing hair with *Chenghi* is not merely about personal hygiene but carries deep cultural and spiritual meanings. It reflects the connection between physical actions and spiritual beliefs within their community which again highlights the reverence for nature and spiritual interconnectedness. The emphasis on not letting a single hair fall off due to the belief that it might fall over a spirit underscores the deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices related to respect, reverence, and the interconnectedness of physical and spiritual realms. Moreover, the traditional song *Hada Urit Napangbi* sung by *Lairaulembi* not only enriches their

characters but also symbolizes a connection to their cultural heritage. The lyrics invoke ancestral figures, emotional relations, and familial duties, reflecting reverence for tradition and values passed down through generations deriving from the meaning.

The tale explores the concept of *Singthaba numit*, a time when spirits convene to discuss mortal lives, specifically determining those who may face death within the upcoming year. This belief is deeply rooted in local folklore and spiritual traditions which reflects the complex interplay between supernatural beliefs, societal norms, and human anxieties regarding mortality and fate. The tale also highlights the community's response to *Singthaba numit*, which involves a collective retreat and isolation inside homes which symbolizes a unified effort to safeguard against perceived spiritual threats. The chase scene involving *Henjunaha* and the spirits symbolizes a struggle for survival and the quest to defy predetermined fates, resonating with universal themes of courage in the face of death and fate.

“As evening approaches, people locked their gates and stayed in the safety of their houses. Unmindful of what was happening around; Henjunaha was out to meet his love, swinging his father's Kangjei in one hand.” (Oinam, Henjunaha)

Henjunaha's encounters with the mythical and supernatural evil spirits carry significant cultural and symbolic weight. The feast organized by the spirits in which *Henjunaha* joined without any thoughts serves as a metaphorical trap which symbolizes deception and danger. The inclusion of food with human fingers signifies the theme of deceit which highlights the cautioning against blind trust and the need for discernment in navigating ambiguous situations. This symbolism extends beyond the literal act of eating to represent broader themes of temptation, betrayal, and the hidden perils that may be disguised in seemingly familiar or comfortable settings.

Henjunaha's realization about the true nature of the feast and the intentions of the spirits reflects the sensation of his quick understanding that the evil spirits posing as friends are in fact, evil spirits which showcases the importance of cultural knowledge, intuition, and swift decision-making in the face of supernatural or existential threats. This tale may reinforce the idea of cultural cautionary tales, where individuals must navigate complex situations with wisdom and awareness to ensure their survival and well-being. The tale serves as a cultural narrative that imparts moral lessons and societal guidance. The mention of the king's men warning about evil spirits deciding fates reflects a collective cultural understanding of supernatural dangers and the consequences of disregarding cultural norms of heeding warnings. This resembles the positioning of not only as a tale of personal survival but also as a reflection of broader societal values, beliefs, and collective wisdom passed down through generations. The chase by the spirits symbolizes the relentless pursuit of destiny or the struggle against forces beyond human control marking an existence of a completely different world between life and death.

“Why, the food they have put on my plate has got human fingers in it,' thought Henjunaha, much frightened. Then he rememberedthat day. The king's men ..announcement that evil spirits..... So people are advised not to venture out of their gates.” (Oinam, Henjunaha)

The tale also explores the indignation of love, loss, and sacrifice within *Henjunaha* and *Lairoulembi*. The mention of the wild pigeon and the twitching of arms of *Lairoulembi* signify to the cultural belief in signs and omens. This reflects a worldview where nature is imbued with symbolic meaning, and events are interpreted through a lens of spiritual or divine influence. The cultural belief of the embodiment of the Manipuri ancestors is also reflected. It can be assumed that the god has taken the form of pigeon to signify as *Henjunaha* was chased by the evil spirits. This cultural belief is still relevant even nowadays. When a pigeon comes home, the grandparents always tell their grandchildren to feed something to them as it is considered that it gives peace, wealth and reflects blessings in the life of the family. But, *Lairoulembi* neglected the customs to be followed, which resulted in the tragic end of Henjunaha and herself.

“O, What is it that I hear? It is the wild pigeon chirping. I wonder what news have you brought for me? Why my arms keep twitching? What bad omens are these foretelling me? O Lord Thanjing, kindly look after him.” (Oinam James, Henjunaha)

It can also be considered that the ancestors, to prevent animals from extinction might have come up with certain myths to protect them. Since the last two decades, a vast number of animals in Manipur are being announced as endangered and extinct which disturbs the ecosystem of the environment. It can be taken that though the ancestors did not have scientific reason yet; they could foresee the future and came up with their own solutions.

Likewise, Stuart Hall argues that the decoder has different decoding in relation to culture and believes. One who is originally from the native land will think the idea that has been there for years while a person from different culture might take it in a different way though it was encoded the same. When we take the narrative of pigeons coming to houses gives different interpretations according to the culture and religion of the people. One may think it is an omen but other may take it scientifically. So, the reception of the message varies from person to person. Moreover, the *Singthaba Numit* as signified as a day when evil spirits roam around to devour a life, it may also signify a day of wellness if we take the perspective scientifically.

Henjunaha's arrival and subsequent tragic fate further explore the concept of destiny and inevitability, symbolized by his struggles against unseen forces represented by the chaotic pursuit and eventual entanglement of his *Kangjei*. The *Kangjei* itself, described as "no ordinary *Kangjei*," carries symbolic weight, possibly representing not just a physical weapon but it is also regarded as the weapon used by gods. The *Kangjei* is related to *Kanglei Thokpa* of *Umang Lai Haraoba*. *Kanglei Thokpa*, a unique ritual in *Kanglei Haraoba*, involves the process of seeking a wife by holding a *Kangjei* (polo stick).

"Now and then Henjunaha swung his *Kangjei* at the followers. Keep away from that *Kangjei*. Let it not hit you if you value your lives. It is no ordinary *Kangjei*!" (Oinam, Henjunaha)

Lairaulambi's desperate act of self-sacrifice after witnessing her beloved's death speaks to themes of love transcending mortality and the intensity of emotional bonds. Often found in traditional folklores, the choose of death over life signifies the incomplete life of lovers without any significance. *Khoijuhongbi's* grief at discovering her daughter and *Henjunaha's* lifeless bodies captures the generational and communal impact of such tragedies, emphasising how personal choices and actions resonate within larger familial and cultural contexts. The narrative thus connects together elements of cultural values, symbolic narratives rooted in nature and spirituality, and the timeless themes of love, loss, and sacrifice to provide a significant reflection on human experiences within a rich cultural context.

Conclusion

Folktales also take an important role towards effective decision making. It helps its listeners to mould character and thus gets in the process to find a decision to a conflict. The decision making thus makes a clear concept in which the thought of a human is projected. As a result, folktales can demonstrate the importance of making difficult decisions under challenging circumstances.

Experts have stated that engaging children while telling a story or a tale by asking those questions help them see the importance of making effective decision in their lives. Folktales also helps children in various ways like in the development in stronger reading skills, study other cultures, model, character traits, appreciation of other tradition, learn about decision making helping them to see the world from a different perspective or point of view.

Folktales are both arts and sciences. Even though people during ancient days did not have advanced scientific knowledge, they were closely engaged with indigenous knowledge to make people get rid of the unacceptable wrong doings. Many of the tales which were taught orally through the generation effect the writers which made them decide to archive the folktales through writings. However, the whole idea of folktales changes when it comes to be in written forms.

In *Henjunaha*, readers come across many Meitei words including the title of the folktale itself. While *Henjunaha* may be translated literally as "The handsome young man who was killed by evils in *Moirang* for better understanding of readers who do not understand Meitei, the original title is retained for originality. Likewise, words such as *kangjei*, *singthaba numit*, *maiba- maibi*, *kaygey- leihao*, *urit* etc are retained by the translator to give uniqueness to the folktale and to situate it to the material culture of Manipuri people.

Henjunaha is a short narrative and film that conveys a lot of information about Manipur. The narrative may appear to be very engaging to youngsters, but it is really based on the era when Manipur was subjected under a ruler. In ancient times, Manipur was known as *Kangleipak* or *Meiteileipak*. As the forefathers say, getting through the tale and history has a significant importance.

The offerings to *Sharoi Ngaroi* or the evil spirits are performed on every first Saturday of the month of March to garner and proper the livelihood of the society. Every household of various societies contributes the items to be

offered to god while the *amaiba* and *amaibis* lead the way to perform *Sharoi Khangba*, the feeding of evil spirits. People of the village or society pray for good omen to shower upon the year. Later, the offerings contributed by the people are distributed as remnants to each household. The folktale of *Henjunaha* is still narrated throughout Manipur by grandparents and parents to their children who give the moral lesson that parents are the god and goddess which can be seen through our naked eye. They will always resemble within the power of love, wisdom and priority.

A study of the folktale of *Henjunaha* provides insight into the community's culture, revealing a narrative system deeply embedded in its identity. Through a variety of media such as spoken word, art, music, and literature, we find timeless stories that touch on universal themes of human experience while preserving the uniqueness of *Henjunaha*'s legacy. The rich symbolism in these narratives reflects the consciousness of the society and serves as a bridge between past traditions and contemporary self-expression.

Additionally, research reveals the importance of preserving and promoting stories as an important part of cultural heritage. By sharing the folktale of *Henjunaha* through a different medium, we not only respect the ideas and creativity of previous generations, but also encourage understanding and appreciation of current and future members of the community. This research shows the power of stories that are ever-changing but maintain their essence, helping us understand diversity and encouraging unity and dialogue.

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