



पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह Pt. N. Khelchandra Singh

पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह, जिन्हें साहित्य अकादेमी आज अपने सर्वोच्च सम्मान, महत्तर सदस्यता, से विभूषित कर रही है, प्राचीन मणिपुरी साहित्य एवं संस्कृति के जीवित विशेषज्ञों में से एक हैं, जिनके योगदान से भारतीय साहित्य को दुर्लभ उत्कर्ष प्राप्त हुआ है।

आपका जन्म 1 सितम्बर 1920 को युरिपोक निडथाउखोडजम लीकाई, इम्फाल में हुआ। आपने स्व. पंडित दिनचंद्र सिंह, पंडित परशुराम, पंडित मधोप, पंडित चंद्र और पंडित देव सिंह जैसे अनेक गुरुओं और पंडितों के चरणों में बैठकर शिक्षा प्राप्त की। आप अल्प वय में ही पारम्परिक रूप से प्राचीन मणिपुरी भाषा के अध्ययन में प्रवृत्त हुए। वर्षों तक आप प्राचीन पाण्डुलिपियों में डूबकर किंवदंतियों, स्तोत्रों, शाही इतिवृत्तों, रोमांस और अपने प्रदेश की कविता का अध्ययन करते रहे और फिर आपने अपनी पुस्तकों के माध्यम से दूसरों के लिए अतीत का जादुई द्वार खोला।

पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र युवावस्था में ही मणिपुर सचिवालय सेवा में आ गए और मणिपुर सरकार की सेवा से अवर सचिव के रूप में पदनिवृत्त हुए। लेकिन व्यावहारिक रूप से आपका कार्य-जीवन आपकी सेवा-निवृत्ति के बाद प्रारंभ हुआ। आपने अनेक अनुसंधानकर्ताओं का निर्देशन किया और कुछ समय तक जवाहरलाल नेहरू सेंटर ऑफ पोस्ट ग्रेजुएट स्टडीज, इम्फाल के मणिपुरी भाषा एवं साहित्य के अतिथि फ़ेलो रहे। आप कई केन्द्रों पर मणिपुरी भाषा एवं साहित्य पढ़ाते रहे हैं।

अपने कार्य-जीवन के दौरान पंडित खेलचंद्र सिंह मणिपुर की कई साहित्यिक और सांस्कृतिक संस्थाओं से जुड़े रहे और मणिपुरी संस्कृति के प्रवक्ता के रूप में भारत के अनेक स्थानों का भ्रमण किया। आप मणिपुरी साहित्य परिषद के अध्यक्ष, जवाहरलाल नेहरू मणिपुरी डांस एकेडेमी के उपाध्यक्ष, मणिपुरी हिस्टोरिकल सोसाइटी के अध्यक्ष, मणिपुर मार्शल आर्ट्स एसोसिएशन के अध्यक्ष, अतोमबापु रिसर्च सेंटर, मणिपुर के अध्यक्ष आदि पदों पर रहे। आप मणिपुर राज्य कला अकादेमी और कला एवं संस्कृति विभाग, मणिपुर विश्वविद्यालय और दूसरी कई संस्थाओं की विशेषज्ञ समिति के सदस्य रहे। आपने भारतीय ऐतिहासिक अभिलेख आयोग के कलकत्ता, पटना, त्रिवेन्द्रम और पणजी सत्रों में मणिपुर का प्रतिनिधित्व किया। आपने पूर्व भारत

Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh on whom the Sahitya Akademi is conferring its highest honour of Fellowship today is one of the living authorities on ancient Manipuri literature and culture, whose contributions have elevated Indian literature to a rare pinnacle.

Born on 1st September, 1920 at Uripok Ningthoukhongjam Leikai, Imphal, Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh sat at the feet of many Gurus and Pandits of Manipuri literature and culture including the late Pandit Dinachandra Singh, Pandit Parasuram, Pandit Madhop, Pandit Chandra and Pandit Deva Singh. He was initiated very early into the study of the Old Manipuri language in the traditional way. For years he delved deep into the ancient manuscripts learning about the legends, the hymns, the royal chronicles, the romance and the poetry of his land and then he opened the magical doors to the past for others, through his books.

Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh joined the Manipur Secretariat Service at a young age and retired as Under Secretary, Government of Manipur. But practically his career started after his retirement. He has guided many research scholars and was for some time Visiting Fellow of Manipuri Language and Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University Centre of Post-Graduate Studies, Imphal. And he has been teaching Manipuri language and literature in many centres.

During the span of his career Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh has been associated with several literary and cultural institutions in Manipur and has visited many places in India as an exponent of Manipuri culture. He was President, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad; Vice-Chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy; President, Manipur Historical Society; President, Manipuri Martial Arts Association; President, Atombapu Research Centre, Manipur, etc. He was also a member of expert committees for Manipur State Kala Akademi, Department of Arts and Culture, Manipur University and various other organisations and institutions. He represented Manipur in the Indian Historical Records Commission in its Calcutta, Patna, Trivandrum and Panaji sessions. He participated

सांस्कृतिक सम्मेलन, कलकत्ता और भारतीय इतिहास कांग्रेस, बम्बई में मणिपुरी संस्कृति के प्रतिनिधि के रूप में भाग लिया।

पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह को अनेक पुरस्कार एवं सम्मान मिले हैं, जिनमें मणिपुर साहित्य परिषद का गवेषणा-भूषण (1977), मणिपुर राज्य कला अकादेमी की फेलोशिप (1980) और भारत सरकार का पद्मश्री (1987) शामिल है।

पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह की प्रकाशित कृतियों की संख्या 30 से अधिक है। आपने मणिपुरी राजाओं की वंशावली, मणिपुर का शाही इतिवृत्त, जो 33 ई. से प्रारम्भ होकर वर्तमान सदी तक है, प्राचीन मणिपुरी कविता-संकलन, प्राचीन मणिपुरी गद्य संग्रह, वैष्णव-पूर्व मणिपुर में प्रचलित स्तोत्रों और प्रार्थनाओं के संग्रह, मणिपुर की पहाड़ियों का परिचय, पाण्डुलिपियों पर एक शोध-प्रबंध और मणिपुर की वीरतापूर्ण लड़ाइयों पर एक पुस्तक का सम्पादन किया है। ये पुस्तकें मूलतः प्राचीन मणिपुरी पाण्डुलिपियों में हैं और पंडित खेलचंद्र ने उन्हें टीका और टिप्पणियों के साथ आधुनिक मणिपुरी में रूपांतरित किया है। आपने *उत्तरखंड रामायण* और *आशामेध पर्व महाभारत* का प्राचीन मणिपुरी से आधुनिक मणिपुरी में लिप्यंतरण किया है। स्नातकोत्तर कक्षाओं के लिए आपने प्राचीन मणिपुरी साहित्य का इतिहास लिखा है और प्राचीन मणिपुरी अर्थों के एक शब्दकोश का संकलन किया है। ये पुस्तकें मणिपुरी में प्रकाशित की गई हैं। आपकी अंग्रेजी कृतियों में उल्लेखनीय हैं—*मणिपुरी और मणिपुरी-अंग्रेजी कोश* (1964), *मणिपुरी लैंग्वेज : स्टेटस एंड इम्पोर्टेंस* (1975) *बेटल ऑफ़ खोडजम* (अंग्रेजों के साथ मणिपुर की अंतिम लड़ाई 1963), *डाक्युमेंट्स ऑफ़ एंग्लो-मणिपुरी वार 1891* (3 खंडों में, 1984), *थांगल जेनरल* (एक मणिपुरी वीर, 1997)। डॉ. एस.पी.सेन द्वारा सम्पादित *डिक्शनरी ऑफ़ नेशनल बायोग्राफी* के लिए अपने पंडितराज अतोमबापु शर्मा और थांगल जेनरल की जीवनियाँ लिखी हैं।

अपने विद्वत्ता और योगदान के कारण पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह को मणिपुरी साहित्य और संस्कृति का जीता-जागता अभिलेखागार और पुस्तकालय माना जाता है जो कि महान भारतीय साहित्य और संस्कृति का एक अंश है। इसके एक सुयोग्य व्याख्याता के रूप में आपको मान्यता प्रदान की गई है और सम्मानित किया गया है।

एक लेखक और विद्वान् के रूप में अपने निर्विवाद उत्कर्ष के लिए साहित्य अकादेमी पंडित एन. खेलचंद्र सिंह को अपने सर्वोच्च सम्मान, महत्तर सदस्यता, से विभूषित करती है।

as a representative of Manipuri culture in Purba Bharat Sanskritic Sammelan held in Calcutta and Indian History Congress, Bombay.

Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh is the recipient of various honours and recognitions including Gaveshana Bhusan from Manipuri Sahitya Parishad (1977), Fellowship of Manipur State Kala Akademi (1980) and Padma Shree from the Government of India ((1987).

Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh has now more than 30 publications to his credit. He has edited the genealogy of Manipuri kings, the royal chronicles of Manipur — commencing from 33 A.D. to the present century, an anthology of Old Manipuri poems, an anthology of Old Manipuri prose, a collection of hymns and prayers prevalent in Pre-Vaishnavite Manipur, an account of the hills of Manipur, a treatise on manuscripts, a book on the heroic accounts of Manipuri martial combats etc. These books are originally in Old Manipuri manuscripts and Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh has rendered them into Modern Manipuri with annotations and notes. He has also transliterated from Old Manipuri into Modern Manipuri, *Uttarakand Ramayana* and *Ashamedha Parba Mahabharat*. He has written a history of Old Manipuri Literature for post-graduate classes and compiled a Dictionary of Old Manipuri meanings. These books were produced in Manipuri. Among his publications in English, mention may be made of *Manipuri to Manipuri and English Dictionary* (1964), *Manipuri Language — Status and Importance* (1975), *Battle of Khongjam* (Manipur's last battle fought with the British, 1963), *Documents of Anglo-Manipuri War 1891* (in 3 parts, 1984), *Thangal General* (A Manipuri Hero, 1997). He has also contributed biographies of Pandit Raj Atombapu Sharma and Thangal General to the *Dictionary of National Biography* edited by Dr. S.P. Sen.

By dint of his sheer eminence and contribution Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh has assumed today the role of a living archive and library for Manipuri literature and culture, which is part and parcel of the great Indian literature and culture of which he is a worthy exponent to be recognised and honoured.

For his unquestionable eminence as a writer and scholar, the Sahitya Akademi confers its highest honour, the Fellowship, on Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh.

Acceptance Speech

Pandit N. Khelchandra Singh

Hon'ble President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply touched by the honour done to me by the Sahitya Akademi conferring the Fellowship on me. Conveying my acceptance of the Fellowship with a deep sense of gratitude to the Akademi I would like to say that this honour has come to me not only in recognition of my little humble contributions in the field of the study of the past but also in recognition of the weightage and the depth of the field of the studies.

I am constrained to give my heart-felt humble tributes and homage to the memory of the great masters of the past under whom I had the privilege of working as a student and researcher. These great masters did not work so much for their own name and fame. I saw most of them working in isolation unrecognised and unrewarded but with such depth of dedication and intensive labour at the cost of their material well-being that remembering them inspires in me awe and respect. They were the real living archives of the ancient traditions of this land when I saw them at the fag end of their lives.

I am constrained to seek the indulgence of this august gathering as I pay my humble homage to some of the great masters in different fields under whom I studied by mentioning their names.

My Adi Guru was my elder brother late Chaoba Singh, a Jyotishi who taught me the Meitei script during my primary education and astrology in later years. Panditraj Atombapu Sharma was one of my resource persons in the study of astrology, Manipuri heritage of Thang-Ta and many aspects of Manipuri folklore and its dovetailing with the Indian cultural traditions. I studied and did research in the field of Manipuri Puyas, ancient scriptures and historical and literary writings under Ojha Pandit Thongam Madhab Singh Gavesana Bhusan Pandit Achouba, Ojha Nameirakpam Dinachandra Singh Gavesana Bhusan, Ojha M. Chandra Singh Sahitya Ratna Pandit Achouba and Moirang Ningthou Ojha Kharabam Deva Singh of Thongjao, Ojha Angom Prashuram of Sekmai, Ojha Naorem Amuyaima Singh Pandit Achouba Gavesana Bhusan of Kakching.

From these great masters I benefited immensely in the collection of historical, traditional, tantrik and valuable manuscripts to the Manipuri folklore, folk literature and

the rich store house of ancient religious rituals.

Great masters of Thang-Ta under whose feet I sat in my studies include, besides Panditraj Atombapu referred to here above, Ojha R.K. Pheijoisana son of Sagolhanjaba Kala, Rajkumar Pakhangsana alias Lakshmansana, Ojha R.K. Babusana, Ojha Ningthoukhongjam Kalachand a senior cousin of my father, Ojha Lairenmayum Damu Padmashri, Ojha Achom Angangjao (Ta) Khonghampat.

In the field of Sarit Sarat (unarmed barehanded self-defense and offensive) my guides were Ojha R.K. Pakhangsana and Ojha Sorokhaibam Gopal Singh. I learnt Mukana under this Ojha.

Techniques and art of Thengou I learnt from Ojha Rajkumar Pheijaosana and Ojha Deva Singh of Thongjao.

From these great masters I had the privilege to learn martial arts and also to collect invaluable literature and documents which formed the main tenets of the Manipuri martial arts tradition.

In the field of Manipuri traditional music and dances I had the great opportunities of sitting at the feet of great masters who helped me in the collection of valuable scriptures and literatures, mostly manuscripts on the subject.

I am also to remember with utmost sense of gratitude many patrons who helped me immensely in my collection of old documents related to the growth and continuity of the State throughout its chequered history upto the present day. Some of them were high officials of the government during and after the British Rule as well as after Independence I was given access to government records and documents covering as many as 25 departments. I joined Government Service in 1939 and retired in 1978.

My position as the librarian of the State Secretariat was the most fruitful period. The state government after Independence has been generous to me while in service and afterwards in my research activities. So far with the patronage of the state government and other semi-government agencies I have been able to bring out 26 publications. The publications cover varied subjects and fields.

The collection of records and documents from the London source which my personal library and archives own now was possible on account of the generous help I

received from Dr. N. Savita Ben Mehta of the Parimal Akademi, Bombay, of which I am a visiting Guru. Dr. Savita Mehta's love for and interest in Manipuri art and culture and mystic folklore traditions are widely known in the cultural circles of the country. Besides her being an exponent of the Manipur. The Parimal Akademi spends considerably on the study and research on Rass Leela and Nata Sankirtana.

The National Archives and so many other institutions in the country had extended liberal assistance to my efforts. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude to some of the prominent research workers and historians of my times with whom I worked and the benefits so accrued from our cooperation on the same fields enlarged the prospects of further research on Manipur. In this regard I like to mention the name of the Late Rajkumar B.Com.

My profound homage also goes to the Late Lairchnmayum Ibungohal Singh, former Member, Manipur State Durbar, Chief Court and Sessions Judge, several times President of the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad. He left with me all his collections from the National Archives and other sources. It was also my rare opportunity to work with him as the Co-Editor of the Cheitharol Kumbaba, a rare unique Royal Chronicle which contains entries from the 1st century AD upto the reign of the last monarch of Manipur. The late Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, the great linguist and scholar of international

repute, encouraged me tremendously in my research and literary activities. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts and Culture is patronising me in innumerable ways at present. I have no adequate words to express my gratitude to this Institution.

Today the Manipuri ancient heritage and folklore are on the verge of a wider discovery thanks to the assistance and patronage so generously extended to the research activists in the field. The present honour conferred upon me by the Sahitya Akademi I hope will enthuse literary and research workers of the present day and of the future. The Manipuri traditional folklore and folk literatures covering almost all the basic departments of human life are now coming up for publication and subsequent circulation, thanks to such a patronage and consideration extended to humble workers like us.

In conclusion I must express my deep appreciation and thankfulness to the distinguished and honourable President of the Sahitya Akademi and the other officials of the Akademi for having taken great pains to come down to this city for this presentation ceremony. This special consideration will go a long way in the deepening of Manipur and the national mainstream relations through the great field of literature.

With these few words I conclude this speech, conveying acceptance of the Fellowship.