Manipuri poetry begins from oral literature. Before coming the outbreak of written literature there appeared a vigorous flow of oral tradition for many centuries. The trend of Manipuri poetry beginning from early period till today could be divided into three sections – Early Manipuri poetry, Medieval Manipuri poetry and Contemporary Manipuri poetry. “Writing in Manipuri alphabet commenced probably at the close of the 12th Century but not later than the 15th” writes the literary Historian Ch. Manihar Singh in his “A History of Manipuri Literature”. The early Manipuri poetry deals with prayer, royal programme, romantic events, heroic deeds and worshiping of nature. Most of the poems were written in the form of rhythmic pattern. Sometimes the poems were written in limited syllables. Those poems have no dates and no author. Old Manipuri language was the medium of writing. Foreign and loan words were not available. The poems included among others Ougri, Khemcho, Anoirol, Lairema Paosa, Yakeiba, Hijan Hirao, Ahonglon, Pakhangba Langyenshei, Langmeilon, Ningthourol, Mei, Tharon, Nonglao Eshei, Leichinlon, Larol, Chingoirol etc. Indeed, the early period covers upto 17th Century. And the Medieval Period covers from 17th to 18th Century. As there was an aggressive influence of Hinduism during the time of King Garivaniwij a new change came to Manipuri literature. The Ramayana ad the Mahabharata were written in Manipuri. Many books of the Hindu cult especially Laxmi Charit, Bhakti Charit were written. Bengali, Sanskriti and the foreign words begins to establish in Manipuri language. Names of author and the dates of writing were begun to mention in the publications.

The 20th Century would be the Renaissance of Manipuri literature. When the British occupied Manipur on 27th April, 1891 there followed a certain change in Manipuri society. Western education dwelled in Manipuri society. The Manipuris (especially the Meities) began to take education. The educated Meities tested their creative works on literature, culture and art. New writers gave a new awakening in Manipuri language which was subdued by Bengali and Sanskrit for a long time. “Shatra Macha” by Khwairakpam Chaoba was published in 1932, the poem “Ishwarda” (Written on 17/12/1917) featured in this book would be the first modern poetry. The trend of modern Manipuri poetry begins from this poem. Indeed, the sense of Western modernisation was not there. The poets include in this stage among others Khwairakpam Chaoba, Dr. Lamabam Kamal, Hijam Anganghal, Hawaibam Nabadwipchandra, Arambam Dorendrajit, Chingakham Mayurdhwaja, Hijam Irabot, Ashangbam Minaketan, Rajkumar Shitaljit, Sanjenbam Nodiya, Khumanthem Ibohal, Khumantham Gourakishwor etc. The style of writing manifested in this period was the type of Romanticism in English literature. The sense of patriotism, indulgence in Gouriya Beishnava religion, appreciation of human values, anguish on searching the relativity amongst Man-Nature-God, subjective and nostalgic were the elements of poetry in this period. Using tender and soft words, rhythmic and metrical form the poets write and they also maintain limited syllables.

The trend led by Chaoba, Kamal and Anganghal (romantic tradition) was quite changed after the World War II. The former system was broken by the new generation coming like a storm. A new character was formed. The Western modernism, the new face of the present civilisation was also arrived in Manipuri poetry. The poem “Manipur” by Elangbam Nilakanta featured in the periodical “Ngasi” brought out in 1949 edited by Keisham Kunjabihari would be the first modern foundation in Manipuri poetry. So that we regard Nilakanta as
the father of Modern Manipuri poetry. This poem reflected the war-torn Manipuri society as the effect of World War-II, dirty politics of the corrupted politicians, degrading economy, human negligence of moral values, imbalance of frustration and hope. Again Laishram Samarendra in his poem *Sita* (featured in *Kavi Tarpon*, edited by Khaidem Pramodini, 1960) appeals Manipuri women to escape from the Indian Sati system. These two poems influenced the younger poets of the generation, Again Nilakanta’s *Lammangnaba* and Samarendra’s *Konung Kang Tubada* took a greater role to create modern Manipuri poetry. In early 1970s there came out Nongthombam Shri Biren, Rajkumar Madhubir, Thangjam Ibopishak, Yulembam Ibomcha to enrich modern Manipuri poetry. They have ardently protested against the social system, religious practice, political rule, culture, the degraded morality of their time. They began to decry dolefully that God is dead. Freely they use dirty and naked imagery, disgusting and angry feelings. Reflecting such type of imagery a book of poems entitled *Singnaba* (1974) co-authored by Yulembam Ibomcha, Thangjam Ibopishak and Ranjit W. was brought out in two volumes. Following this trend of poetry an anthology of poetry entitled “Humdrada Humlakpa Nonglei” (1979) authored by Rajkumar Bhubonsana, Moirangthem Borknya, Konjengbam Hemchandra etc. poets like Sougaijam Brajeshwor, Sagolsem Dhabal, Abdus Sahid Chowdhury, Sanamacha, Yumnam Nayan, Haorongbam Parimal, Ilabanta Yumnam, Konsam Kulladhwaja, Konhoujam Kalenjao, Thokchom Biswanath, B.S. Rajkumar etc came out to follow the trend. These poets have created the character of poetry having the taste of modernity, realistic, view on objectivity and escape from rhyme, rhythm and syllabic pattern.

In the mid nineteen nineties the new trend of post modernism began to appear. The Eurocentric ideology of the modern poets was opposed by a group of poets. In “Sheireng” (1993) published by Asheilup, a new literary organisation, Memchoubi, the poet indicted the modern poets as “Hanged and imitating the Western city life, imitating the Western intellectual norms”. These group of poets tried to have a trend of poetry to be decentralised, to have the ideology of post colonial and feminism. These poets included among others Arambam Ongbi Memchoubi, Birendrajit Naorem, Lanchenba Meitei, Saratchand Thiyam, Dilip Mayengbam, Lairenlakpam Ibemhal, Raghu Leishangthem, Longjam Kunjarani, Kojam Shantibala etc. As the modern Manipuri poets have their own dynamic point of view the post modern Manipuri poets have also their new dynamic points. The main ideology of these new poets is faith in life, to preserve hope. It was quite contrary to the pessimistic points of view of the modern poets, absorb their mind to self religion, culture and indigenous characters, balancing between the past history and present turmoil society they have tried to search a new value system. Longing for a new sovereign state they dreamt in this meaningless democratic system. Accordingly the poems by woman poets reflect feminism, an ardent voice for improving woman’s social status. Myth, legend and folktale, the parts of folklore were used as their tools to express their ideas.

New poets have no sooner arrived than the post modern poets were gone in Manipuri poetry. These new young poets include among others R.J. Meetei, Thoudam Netrajit, Imojit Ningomba, Dr. Irunbam Deven, Sobita Bachaspati, Randhirkumar Yendrembam, Sorokhaibam Gambhini, Lamabam Lili, Oinam Usharani, Kshetri Rajen, Naorem Bidyasagar, Abdul Hamid, Loukham Nandkumar etc. Application of new words, fresh imagery are recognisable in the poems written by these poets which reflect the loss of village life, loss of lucidity and simplicity in the present Manipuri society. Their mindset directed towards universal point of life. In search of the peaceful existence amongst the outward and broken human values would be the devotion of these poets. A new and beautiful art form is visible in their writings. The form of poetry by this group could not
be categorised as yet. After this generation there comes Angom Sarita, Pashuram Thingnam, Laishram Lenin, Wangthoi Khuman, Rajkumar Kenebo, Kshetrimayum Manojkumar, Tongbram Amarjit etc. whose works add a new taste, a new vision of the changing civilisation in the present trend of Manipuri poetry.

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