

# Romantic Lyrics of Dr. Jodha Chandra Sanasam

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## Abstract:

Dr. Jodha Chandra Sanasam (1944-2021) was an eminent Professor and surgeon of the **Regional Institute of Medical Science** (RIMS: 1972), Imphal. He was very popular in Manipuri literature both Poetry and Novel. He got the **Sahitya Akademi Award**, New Delhi in 2012. Some Manipuri scholars remarked him as ‘the second literary incarnation of the first Manipuri poet and novelist, Dr. Kamal (1900-1934).’

First of all, I compared with the literary art of Dr. Jodha Chandra Sanasam and Dr. Kamal. Then I critically analysis on his lyrical verse, **Ngaseedi Ashengba Haydoklage** (*Today, I shall tell the truth: 2009*) with reference to Dr. Kamal’s novel, **MADHABI** (1931) and anthology of verses, **LEIPARENG** (*Garland: 1931*), English romantic poet, Thomas Moore (1779-1851)’s poem, ‘The Light of the Other Days’, Sanskrit epic poet, Kalidasa’s **MEGHADOOT** and Manipuri romantic poet, Khumanthem Ibohal (1924-1988)’s **NUNGI KEINA KADA** (*To the beloved KEINA: Ballad: 1964*), etc. At last, I concluded to give his literary beauties and art forms of Dr. Jodha Chandra Sanasam with some suitable quotations from his above-mentioned book.

*‘Poetry is the spontaneous over-flow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility’*

-William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Preface to the **Lyrical Ballads** (2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 1800)

## SIMILARITY BETWEEN DR. KAMAL AND DR. JODHACHANDRA SANASAM:

Generations of yesterday and today have, no doubt, placed Dr. Kamal (1900-1934) with an irrefutable identity in Manipuri literature. This is attributable to the **KaviRatna’s** novel *‘Madhabee’* (1931) and *‘Leipareng’* (*Garland: 1931*). Among the Meiteis<sup>1</sup> and Meitei Pangans<sup>2</sup> who inhabit in Manipur as well as beyond Manipur in other regions especially in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and even in foreign countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and Canada, there is hardly anyone who has not heard the name of Dr. Kamal or has not read his *‘Madhabee’*. *Madhabee’s* beauty is such that those who have read *Madhabee* can’t but appreciate it. In like manner, Jodha Chandra (1944 – 2021), since 1980 till the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has incessantly been contributing short stories, poetry, lyrical poetry, novels and others. The most beautiful creative work of his, where there is a high degree of artistic quality, is his novel *‘Mathou Kanba DNA’* (Sahitya Akademi Award, New Delhi, 2012), a work of romantic fiction in the whole, but interwoven with fabrics of some scientific and socio-politico-economic ethos. If one seeks for a masterpiece of his, among his literary works, it has to be this novel. It is a memoir of three stages of human life, constituted of and represented by three-fourths of the span of a lifeline, a wholesome venture of the writer, a historical romance in the dimension of a travel literature that brought a full impact of a touch of globalization for the first time in Manipuri literature.

<sup>1</sup>Meiteis: The natives of Manipur inhabiting mostly in the central valley of Manipur,

<sup>2</sup>Meitei Pangal: Manipuri Muslims who speak and write Manipuri as their vernacular.

Dr. Kamal also wrote poems, short stories, drama and essay. '*Meitei Chanu*' (1922), '*Jagaran*' (Published at Sylhet, the then district of Assam and now in Bangladesh: 1924), '*Yakairol*' (1930), '*Lalit Manjari Patrika*' (1933) and others related with literature were the journals which published his poems and short stories. Mention can be made of this Kavi Ratna's '*Devjani*' (drama written in 1924 but published in 1984), '*Lei Pareng*' (poetry 1931), and some poems, '*Mingchat*', '*Athouba Nipa*' and '*Nala Maharajna Hundokpirabada Damayentina Tenghaba*' (*Yakairol*, April, 1931, pp. 201/203). '*Brojendra gee Luhongba*' (short story published in '*Lalit Manjari Patrika*', November 1933) and some others. However, it is '*Madhabee*', which the litterateurs and literature lovers of yesteryears and present day Manipuris recognize with a mark of identification. His work, more popularly known as Dr. Kamal's '*Urirei-Madhabee*', is still fresh and vivid among the pre-war elders (dead or still alive).

### **There is hardly anyone who has not heard the story of this novel.**

Perhaps Dr. Kamal is the only one who is well known in the Manipuri literary circle both inside and outside Manipur. Of Hijam Anganghal, many say, 'who is he, we haven't heard about him; don't know him.' They show little interest to hear more or learn more about Sahitya Ratna Kavi Chaoba too. So it is apt to say Dr. Kamal is placed on the altar of immortality in Manipuri literature. His name is on the top in all genres: poetry, novel, Short story, drama. His was a divine birth. There are certain similarities between Dr. Kamal and John Keats (1795-1821), the English poet who had more of a share of unhappiness in life and died young. Thus many litterateurs of Manipur regard Dr. Kamal as the John Keats of Manipur. It is a fact rightly said, worthy of saying so, nothing wrong in that.

What about Dr. Jodha Chandra!! He is a man now living among us, a strong soldier of literature, and the gun of a pen in hand. He is trying to stay away from his earlier professional clinical works now. Ahead of two years of the due date he took voluntary retirement from the post of Professor and Head of Department of ENT, RIMS<sup>3</sup> and now he has become a living devotee of literature. With hope, challenge and a selfless zeal in Manipuri literature he is struggling hard to make a place of his own. Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi (1954) in a manner of recognizing his works, sent him to various National Poets' Meets inside and outside of Manipur. He goes on trips to foreign countries, as well, as to earn knowledge in literature. His published books are: '*Thabal gee Kundo Pareng*' (1980; short story and poetry), '*Nong Nang Chuge Hairasu Chujaro*' (2010: short story), '*Akanba Shaphoogee Irei*' (1981: Novel) and '*Mathou Kanba DNA*' (2009: Novel), '*Koymang Mangba Khonjel Ihul*' (2002: poetry), '*Leicheel Nongphai*' (2004: poetry), '*Ei gee Eeda*' (2007: poetry), '*Nanggee Shaminduni Channabee*' (2011: poetry) and '*Channabee Nanggee Sheireng*' (2011: poetry) and in Lyrical Poetry '*Ngaseedi Ashengba Haidoklage*' (Now, I shall tell the truth: 2009: poetry). An anthology of English poems '*In the DNA*' (2009). Dr. Jodha Chandra is a man who forgets and does not bother food, drink and sleep if it is a matter of literature. Without making a difference whether it is Imphal or a far off peripheral area he reaches whenever and wherever he is invited, inside as well as outside Manipur. He had attended Poets' Meets organized by Sahitya Akademi in Bangalore, Kolkata, Shillong, Hojai etc. He is a poet, novelist and a short story writer, for the works of which he embarked upon since around 1980. Above all these he is a renowned lyricist. The Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Meghalaya, Shillong (2004) conferred upon him the title of Kavaya Bhushan in 2010 and the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal (1935) the winner of the B M Meishnamba Novel Award in 2011

with his novel *Mathou Kanba DNA*. With the same book he is a recipient of the Yendrembam Sorolata Puroskar 2012 from the Sahitya Seva Samiti, Kakching, the Dineshwari Sahitya Mana 2012 from The Cultural Forum Manipur (1959) and National Sahitya Akademi Award from Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. In fact this lyricist had taken his first steps in literature since 1960 when he, as a student of the Pre-university Course at the Dhanamanjuri College (1946), bagged the 2 Best Short Story Award in the college with his '*Taneengbrane Rosalind*' published in the magazine of this college 1961-62 (the 14<sup>th</sup> issue/volume). In the same competition Kavi Ratna ShriBiren (1942-2011) won the 'Best in Poetry' Award with his poem '*Kadomdano Lambelsibo*.'

<sup>3</sup> ENT, RIMS: Ear, Nose and throat, Regional Institute of Medical Science, Lamphel, Imphal (1972).

'Dr. Kamal's **Madhabee** has the essence of a lyrical verse', this is what Sahitya Ratna Elangbam Nilakanta (1927-2000) mentioned in his write-up '*Madhabee Amuk Parubada*' (Mangal, Vol-I, 1s issue, May 1962, Eds N Mangi Devi & Kh Gourashyam Singh, pp 1-7, an annual publication of Delhi Manipuri Students' Union). He said, 'In fact *Maadhabee* is not a novel. It is a poem, euphony of a song' (p. 6). This, in the form of a sweet melody of lyrical verse, fills in the hearts of men eternally; evolves the message of a selfless love in the hearts of many, compounded with universal love and an immortal love.

Poet Jodha Chandra might not be at the level of a divine birth and might not be at the status of Dr. Kamal; yet there are certain similarities, their profession is same; their outlook, towards the end of the horizon, are also of the same nature; their destination of the flow of literature too is same. Looking after patients might be their profession, but literature is their soul; both of them had their sanctum sanctorum in the goddess of literature; never got separated from it, always ever stayed in company with it. Dr. Jodha Chandra got fascinated with the world of Dr. Kamal who had similar visions and concepts in life. In the days, yesterday and today, there had been no literature like Dr. Jodha Chandra, a doctor in profession, who has shown selfless dedications, body and soul, to literature and it is not likely to have another either. The very words used by Kavi Ratna Dr. Kamal himself 'One is not made but a born poet' (*Ahingee Chekla Tamna*) can be said of Dr. Jodha Chandra. These words for that matter are excerpts from what Florus, not the historian, but an Italian writer of whom little is known, said, '*Poeta nascitur, non fit*' (meaning the poet is born, not made).

## ROMANTIC LYRICS OF DR. JODHACHANDRA:

*Ngasidi Ashengba Haidoklage* (Now, I shall tell the truth: 2009) is a Geeti Kavya (Lyrical Verse), the first published of Dr. Jodha Chandra. They are all romantic lyrics written in the period from January 1978 to June 11, 2002. The lyrical pieces, which, in the whole, are of intense selfless love, took 24 years to get them plugged and they represent the poet-lyricist Jodha Chandra's residual pain of the nettle prick of love in the heart; romantic agony, brewed up by romantic longings, striking the extreme end; separation becoming the final destination of the end; fond love for and unforgettable memories of someone he loved; an eternal shadow in the heart that will not leave even if he tries to get rid of. It is a deeply hued painting with the brush of imagination, put forth as a product of literary art. In a way one can say there is not a single speck of the modern stridency in the poet's sensibility with these lyrical poems; they are more of traditional strokes. Emotional and sentimental words of the heart, fabricating its entire wrap, with a sigh of sadness and disappointment, are persistently visible. The visage of some ideals like the intonation of a chord produced when a string is plucked that does not attempt to reach the destination, ornamented with

selflessness like the one seen in *Madhabee* and Hijam Anganghal's *Jehera*; a longing for spending the hours with welled up tears and for worshipping the statue of love in the heart, a desire to remain cantillating with tears in this manner is visible too. One can say it is the symbol of selfless love envisioned by Plato (427-347 BC), the Greek philosopher.

In some of his lyrical verses Jodha Chandra, the poet-lyricist, writes:

I

*With the coming of the New Year  
this gift, let me convey to you  
though I thought I won't say anymore,  
won't unfold anymore, pretty long since,  
... May you be happy in life. ...  
I would rather say I'm doing well. ... (p. 3)*

II

*Today in this storm of rains and winds  
where 're my thoughts meandering?  
No more of a voice or a sound of the living world  
where could you be?...  
You must have suffered, O my love! ...  
Where're you, where've you gone?  
Can't you just come to me this instant?.... (p. 4)*

III

*Let me admit the truth today  
a grudge I've harboured in my heart;  
may you be happy, I said though;  
a pang I've hidden in my heart.  
But happy I'm weeping silently .... (p. 7)*

There is no end of the sad songs that got born from the lyrical poetry of Dr. Jodha Chandra - they remain fresh and new. With his lines one cannot but remember Dr. Kamal's poems 'Chir Bidai', 'Atiter Smriti' and 'Nirjanata'. In 'Atiter Smriti' he wrote:

*'I failed to notice the tears running down  
from the corners of my eyes  
the talks we had during our boyhood,  
the numerous stories of kith and kin, all dead,  
of flowers that withered,  
without an opportunity of decorating human's hair;  
these are all floating mystically in the bowel of oblivion.'*

Here again the words and lines of Thomas Moor (1779-1852) in his English poem, 'The Light of the Other Days', which have closeness with those above, come to the mind. He wrote:

*'Fond memory brings the light  
Of other days around me:  
The smiles, the tears  
Of boyhood's years..*

*I've seen around me fall  
Like leaves in wintry weather,  
I feel like one Who treads alone  
Some banquet-hall deserted, ....*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>**Thomas Moor:** "The light of other days' quoted from **Palgrave's Golden Treasury** (1824), O.U.P. London, reprinted 1964, (pp. 224/5).

The lyrical verses of poet Jodha Chandra are also of sadness- filled with pathos and compassion in the whole. It is separation, rather a break-up; tragic end being the destination. In his diction and idioms as well as in the theme and subject of his songs, there is no room for laughter, mirth and unification but there is abundant space of standing apart at distances, putting off further afar from each other, the pang of remorse that resulted from, renting the heart with deeper hurt, envisioning the surrounding space as desert, assumption of hope as despair- all in the line of tragic feelings drifting towards parting of ways. In the "*Meghadoot*" of the Sanskrit Kavi Kalidas, Jakshya could live in a hope of hopes. On the belief that they would get reunited, see each other again and would enjoy their mutual physical love, *Jakshya*, who got stuck up at *Ramgiri*, requested the sailing clouds to carry his message to Jakshyani who had been left at Alka. But for Kavi Jodha Chandra it is not so. For him the imagery of his world simulates fragments of a broken stone or the situation where glass-like pieces are in when they can no longer be glued together again. In it the poet finds satisfaction, kind of some solace; along with it, his love for literature and eventually a taste of life. It is not his option to live the kind of living which the novelist, Loitongbam Pacha Meetei (1942-1990) had, spending his days in a state of restlessness with a nutty deranged head, drinking the local brew, sucking the stub of a bidi all the time, a notebook in his hand at the Paona Bazar and Kakhulong. Nor can he live enduring in a world of erotic longings (in a way with more of nostalgic feelings) like Khumanthem Ibohal (1924-1988) did, writing two epic verses, **Nungshi Kanyakada** (written 1950, published in 1964) and '**Thammoy Paodam**'(1966). Then what must Jodha Chandra do? He must sing; he must write his lyrical poems - maybe *ghajals*, modern songs or the like, specifically songs of separation of love, yet of caring for each other, of enduring the tormenting agony and of the lingering feverish melancholy. It is here, what is most beautiful about the poet is visible, imbued with the quality of art, lifting him up to the level of a lyrical poet. Every litterateur in the world came to recognize Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) after he became the recipient of the Nobel prize (1913) with his devotional lyrical poetry "**Geetanjali**" (1910); R.K. Shitaljit (1913-2008) too with his '**Ikhoulangba**' (November 1949) and his subsequent devotional lyrical verses, '**Sheirangba**' (1988) and '**Geetikavya**' (2005). He also moved in towards lyrical verses like the Vishwa Kavi Rabindranath. Today men of literature admire these poets whose births were fruitful; there is no end of eulogizing their worth. There would be none among those in the circle of musical world who does not know Mirza Asaddullah Khan Ghalib (Turk, Persian, Urdu Poet, 1797- 1869). Dr. Kamal's **Madhabee** today has become a part of the North Eastern literature; the Manipur University (1980) has chosen it as a text book in the syllabus of the Three Year Degree Course (TDC) in English for the VI semester, English Honours Paper, Unit II since 2010. It has been a prescribed book too for the MA degree since 1972 in the Department of Manipuri of both the Manipur University (1980) and Assam University (1994). Previously it was a text book for Matriculation of Calcutta University and Gauhati University (1948). The status, value and literary quality of **Madhabee** are ever rising without limits. It has become a living object of literature, a pasture for comments and annotation of the critics. This is a thing of pride for the litterateurs as well as for us, all the

people, alike. Compared with the literature of Bengali, Hindi and other languages, recognised by the Sahitya Akademi, the status of the Manipuri literature is no more of an inferior quality; it occupies a large space now. All these have happened because gifted and talented people, some of them of divine birth, of various lines: doctors, engineers, professors, soldiers (including those from police service) and bank officials moved in the Manipuri literature, took parts and undertook their respective missions. But so far, in the real sense of the term, there is absolutely no real critic yet. The Manipuri literature is a field where sham critics are scattered everywhere. Such a situation, instead of bringing forth an identity of Manipuri literature, has made it rather vile. Various individuals who have not read or studied even a single book of criticism, not to speak of having had a book of criticism published, are doing the job of a critic. They are trying to lead literature astray. In their attempts to simulate or act like a real critic, misinterpreting literary terms, techniques and terminologies in baffling meanings they are unable to bring out the real visage of literature. Even during awarding literary awards they in 2007 selected somebody's dissertation work, which had been submitted for adjudication for a degree of Ph D under the Manipur University. Wonderful! Are the members of the jury crackpots? Somebody or some people are insane; who are they?

Coming back to poet Jodha Chandra, some of the admirable and worth mentioning lyrics written by him, broadcasted as songs in the AIR, Imphal (1963) in the voice of singers of yesterday and today are:

IV

*'O tears, what's happened!  
Come on; shed more, to your satisfaction...  
but don't ask me further  
why I love to listen to, day after day  
the story of the one  
who broke my heart into pieces;  
I've no answer; it's no use.'* (p. 6)

V

*'Me too, I wanted to reach you a gift  
when you had to go away  
leaving your near and dear ones of the neighborhood....  
Today alone I'm murmuring  
be it a blissful happy life for you ...'* (p. 29)

VII

*'You who always smiled, smile no more  
should I laugh or should I cry...  
In your heart, is there no more  
of even a single drop of love?  
I wouldn't beg for pity or compassion  
all I asked for is love; ...  
the usual smile of yours  
who have you given it as a gift?'* (p. 5)

VIII

*Oh grieved heart,  
take me to a place  
to solitude, where there's nobody,*

*no voice there. ...*

*There, let me disappear ...*

*Let me drift away to a very far distance, very very far?' (p. 11)*

The poet is making an effort to portray the vista of his alienation from the crowd, his estrangement to the falsifying worldly amusements, his intent of making friends with death, his longing for solitude and the pestilence of his fatigued life. ShriBiren saw life as mockery; Nilakanta as a journey to light.

Poet Jodha Chandra nullifies the relationship between life and being alive. That he seeks is a life evading or escaping far away from the general life-stream, that he wishes to live in a land where there is no man, what place can it be, is it the grave? Or is it the cave of death? Certain questions remain unanswered. Perhaps one has to wait for the answer.

We know Poet Jodha Chandra is a devotee of melancholy. His is a life, crushed and trampled by love, deprived of restful placidity. He is a man strayed from and bewildered of ways in love. This can be seen clearly in his well known novel '*Mathou Kanba DNA*' (2009) too; but more vividly in this lyrical poetry of his. The poet in the last leg of his life journey, when he does not find rest anymore, he gently and silently soothes his heart:

*IX*

*'Oh you heart! Just keep quiet please*

*let me take rest a while*

*I have suffered too long*

*let me take rest today at least.' (p. 17)*

The poet finds rest when his eyes shed tears, rather finds happiness in sorrow; at the same time he suffers from a renewed stab in the heart when he sits in the garden and gaze at the flowers. That is how he expresses his inner affliction:

*X*

*'Sat I alone in this garden...*

*shedding tears from the corners of my eyes ...*

*a place it has become for my rest*

*a shelter it has given to this heavy heart afresh ...*

*Sat I alone in this garden*

*but you tears!*

*Why do you just roll down incessant?' (p. 41)*

The poet conjures up a personified character out of his tears and when at extreme stress he asks:

*XI*

*'Tried as much as I could to stop you*

*but you never stop*

*no more of intrepidity left, poor heart!*

*Oh my tears! Won't you yet give me some rest?' (p. 80)*

When the poet comes to know that his beloved (the one who constantly shared love and intimacy with him onetime together), who had become a stranger and belonged to somebody else with change of family and surname, is doing well he feels happy; it gives him rest, gives him fresh new energy and strength to endure. When he hears tidings about his beloved the poet wants to hang on life; wants to help her in every way. This is a very peculiar trait of humans. Novelist Rajkumar Shitaljit (1913-2008) in his first published book '*Thadokpa*' (written in 1940, published in April 1942) narrated: Sadananda lost his

onetime lady of the house and she became a total stranger to him; Sadananda who later became a Durbar Member still continued to support his divorced lady, Mukhara. He could dedicate and give up everything for her. Is not this, too, another wonderful facet of love? Renewing the old flame on hearing words about his lost beloved, poet Jodha Chandra assuages his own heart and sings:

XII

*'Today I heard words about you;  
the thought that you too are living  
I in this life find a penchant of rest.  
Let me help what I can,  
to be able to think this much too  
my life becomes a penchant itself' (p. 100)*

In the end the poet came to see his beloved bid farewell; all of a sudden she had gone within the all-time-fold of premature death. Death has become the terminus of the end point. His eyes caught the sight of a blazing tragic scene, a nightmarish dream kindling his heart; the scene where the last remnant body of his beloved lying on the funeral pyre. But the poet thought it was the best way for his beloved. The view the poet had to discern Death is a good way and what is good for a good soul is the end of all times' is more like that of a heartless stone. It is the means of an extreme revenge against love. It is a revolt, an insurrection; it is a replica of the mind-set of Kunjo who challengingly destroyed the life of Jehera. It is the beastly character of Othello who murdered Desdemona strangulating her neck just for a scandalous incident of a handkerchief: Othello says,

*I will kill thee  
And love thee after.*

Kavi Jodha Chandra writes in his lyrical poem is:

XIII

*'Just before your funeral pyre was kindled  
Came a strong gust of wind  
Came a downpour of rain from the sky ...  
And with tears my eyes welled up—  
If a gale of rains and winds comes  
around the time a soul leaves the world  
the soul is said to be of the blessed kind  
yours too, yours was a good soul.' (p. 125)*

Here we remembered the words of William Shakespeare (1564-1616): He says-

*No Longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell  
Give warnig to the world, that I am fled  
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell; <sup>5</sup>*

## CONCLUSION:

There will be no end in enlisting the literary merits and values of the lyrical verses of lyricist-poet Jodha Chandra. If one is to find out the master-piece among the books on lyrical poetry, published so far till today, it has to be this book of Jodha Chandra. Here in them are proficiency and talents of being a poet. A wholesome visage on the theme or subject matter of love is visible in his work. In it are originality and



creativity. He succeeds to portray the urge, the inciting drive in his heart itself into his lyrical poems. There is no overshadowing of any renowned writer on him. There are, of course, certain similarities between Jodha Chandra and the group of writers who started as romantic poets but who eventually turned into more of melancholic poets like Dr. Kamal, Khumanthem Ibohal, Tokpam Ibomcha (1942-1970), Ram Singh (1923-1979) and Bodhachandra (1908-1955), their hearts mingle, their landing places are same and they all surged towards the conclusion of a tragic ending. Some say Jodha Chandra is simply a passionate lover of songs. Some others say Jodha Chandra is a second incarnation of Dr. Kamal's soul. Above all these Jodha Chandra is a poet in dreams, a poet in meditation and kind of an oracle with a spirit sitting on the head. One day for sure Dr. Jodha Chandra will be recognised as a lyrical poet; along with it as a novelist as well.

May he be a blessed one. #

<sup>5</sup>: *Shakespeare William, "The Triumph of Death', ibid., p. 30*