essence, and Pakhangba is the actualization of it. This is in a way the metaphysical significance of the two personalities of the Meetei pantheon. It is in this sense that Sanamahi is taken as the elder, and Pakhangba as the younger brother, both being the sons of Salailel Sidaba who is but the manifestation of the Supreme God. This shows that Sanamahi and Pakhangba are but two aspects of the self-same reality. Sanamahi is the inner aspect while Pakhangba is the outer aspect of life. The child in the womb of the Mother is taken to be Sanamahi by the Meitei traditional belief, but when the child is born, i.e., when he comes out from the womb of the Mother, he becomes a member of the living world and is Pakhangba.

Thus in the religion of the Meeteis Sanamahi becomes the presiding deity, having his place in every home, and seated within each being as the main principle of life (Thawailel — the Supreme soul in the being), while Pakhangba becomes the ruling deity — the divine ruler having perfect knowledge of the secrets of the universe and its Author. Metaphysically Sanamahi remains as the inner essence of all things and beings, while Pakhangba is the externalization of that essence.

The demands of the cultus as well as the growth of reflection prompted the early Meeteis to recognise all the Lais to be only the shifting forms of the One and real divinity. Anthropomorphic polytheism cannot be taken as the keynote of their religious philosophy. The concept of Tengbanba Mapu
represents the High God who is the Soul of the Universe, the Guardian of the Cosmos. All the Lais are His manifestations. Thus there is no crude monotheism in the Meetei Puyas. The ancient people longed for a power above on which they could depend. The different Lais were the reflections of the growing wants and needs of the people, but none of them answered to the highest conception of the Deity. The Meetei mind craving for the Infinite arrived at the notion of Atiya Sidaba\(^1\) whose association with the sky represented the transcendence of the finite. Atiya Sidaba created through a demiurge called Kodin which emanated from Him.\(^2\) He is not a shadowy Absolute but a determinate Being in determinate relations to the world and man. The restless mind of the early Meeteis was satisfied with the conception of Tengbanba Mapu, the transcendent ground of the universe. In contrast to the mutability and decay and disappearance which are the doom of all created things and beings including the different Lais, the religious thought of the Meeteis has striven to rise to the idea of a Being who is lifted high above the flux of time.

\(^1\) lit. Sky Immortal

\(^2\) cf. Leithak Leikharol.
Man has traversed a long way from a life of brutish ignorance to a fully articulated rational self-consciousness. The Godward movement of the early Meeteis is a stage in the long course of religious experience of humanity. They not only worshipped gods but also reflected on the mysteries of the world. Their cosmological speculations were coloured by mythical assumptions. What is significant in this primitive human endeavour is not the answer they gave but their search for the World-Ground. The Meeteis believed that the universe with its contents living and non-living had its origin in the Supreme God, Tengbanba Mapu. How from the One emerged the changing world of multiplicity is described in many puyas.

Leithak Leikhalon is believed to have been composed during the reign of Nongtalai in the first century and was edited, with minor additions, by the great Maichou Louremba Khongnangthaba in the time of king Khagemba (1597-1652). The book is explicitly cosmological in nature though it describes different features of history and culture of the land and its people. As the title of the Puya indicates, Leithak Leikhalon means the book on the creation of heaven (Leithak) and earth (Leikha). The main purpose of the book is to give an account of the creation of heaven and earth as manifestations of the Supreme Being, called here by the name of Tengbanba Mapu.
According to the Meeteis, there are two great time orders: the hangko and the chak. The hangko age is the age of gods during which primal elements emanated from the ultimate substratum. It has four divisions: ko, thei, poi and taye. These involved countless number of years during which the stage was set for the emergence of our world. After the hangko comes the chak, the human age. It has also four divisions: hayi, haya, khunung and langba (Konna). The earliest beginning of the hayi chak is treated as a transitional stage when gods and men were living together. It is believed that at the end of the langba chak the universe is dissolved. All the manifested deities and the primal elements are consumed by the fire of langba. Nothing remains except Atingkok (Formless Boundless Expanse) and Amamba (Darkness). The universe becomes a mere naught; darkness prevails everywhere. From this state of nothingness the will of Tengbanba Mapu brings about new creation. ¹

According to Leithak Leikhalon Puya, there is but one Being, Tengbanba Mapu, raised high above all the conditions and limitations of time and change. He is the ground, guide and goal of the universe. From him all flows out. To him all returns. Creation and dissolution go on in a repeating series. At the time of dissolution all the nine layers of earth, nine orders of heaven and all gods disappear into the original

¹. Singh, O. Bhogeshwar, Ningthourol Seireng, pp. 1-5
potential naught filled with darkness. This primeval dark ground is explained in terms of Atingkok and Amamba who are the manifestations of the Supreme Lord. From the great desire of Tengbanba Mapu to create the universe came forth the primal sound Hung. There then appeared a halo all around like an encircling rainbow. This round halo is the main root. The Supreme Lord is the sheath covering all. Atingkok is the germinating fibre of the root. The point of germination is called Sannaching (the divine mount). Within it lies Amamba, the darkness. Within this Amamba, still Atingkok remains and within Atingkok lies the Lord. As Tengbanba Mapu is both high above and down below, he is said to be the all-embracing infinite.¹

That at the beginning the earth was under water is clearly stated in the Puya. Atingkok, the vast boundless expanse is the womb in which all find place in different forms changing in the infinite course of time. Within it there is Amamba. Within Amamba there is Air, within Air there is Cloud, within the Cloud, there is Water and within Water there is the Earth.² This earth which was under water was lifted by the deity Ashiba by means of different species of animals like owl, Kopi (an insect), tortoise, fish etc. - all of which are his own manifestations. The different layers were borne by

¹ Leithak Leikhalon, pp. 4-6
² Ibid., pp. 11-12
different creatures. The nine orders of heaven were also created by Ashiba. On the highest order there is Konkhei Atamba, the place of the deity Nunglanglen Akhuba. Above the highest level of heaven shines the Supreme Lord by his own light. He is present in the inmost layer of the earth also. It was a great achievement of the ancient Meetei thinkers to arrive at the notion of the Indeterminate in form of Atingkok-Amamba. In their search for the ground of all changing things they looked upon the Indeterminate as the immediate source of the determinate.

The primal sound 'Hung' initiated the emanation of the primal deities of creation and also of the primal elements that would ultimately mature into the present universe of things and beings. Atingkok and Amamba, as the eternal manifestations of Tengbanba Mapu served as the ultimate background of creation. Atingkok controlled and directed the whole course of creation. Atiya Sidaba and Ashiba were the main architects. Konjin Tingthokpa was the deity trying to disturb creation. Nongthangleima was the goddess of light and thunder distracting Konjin from his disturbing activities. Tengbanba Mapu called Atiya Sidaba from within Atingkok and asked Atingkok to take Atiya Sidaba down to create the universe. Amamba which merged with Atingkok took Atiya down and called forth Taopiloinai. Taopiloinai means the conglomeration of all the elements.

1. Ibid., pp. 11-15
floating in the vast infinite expanse and is considered to be the Supreme Mother. She appeared as the great imperishable black boulder (Nungmu Tumda Mangdaba). Atingkok sat on it and wedded with Nungmu. Atiya who emanated from Atingkok was characterised by primal clouds. Taopiloimai was characterised by Air. The union of Atingkok and Taopiloimai resulted in the manifestation of Ongthi. He was Ashiba, characterised by Water and symbolized by A. The heat generated was Konchin Tingthokpa. He was Fire and symbolized by Ka. Then came different stars and seven divine girls.

Atingkok asked Atiya Sidaba to create the world. Atiya sitting on his own breath called forth Ashiba addressing him as A, and Ashiba came forth as Infinite Water (Ishing Tarang). Konchin Tingthokpa also was called out, addressed as Ka, and he appeared as Fire. Atiya Sidaba went up to Atingkok to ask as to how the earth would be created. He bowed down to Atingkok and asked him to show his worth. Atingkok opened his mouth and showed all lying within Him. The sun, the moon, the Pole star and other stars, galaxies, Fire, Water, Air and all others were shown to Atiya who was simply afraid to see all these. Atiya requested Atingkok to close His mouth. Atiya wished to take out all and threw himself within Atingkok. He tried to drive out all the things by uttering HOIROU (the divine song) : Ahei He Hoirou Hoirou Hoirou Nakese. Hearing this song Atingkok opened His mouth and all the elements came out as driven by Atiya. Atingkok sang 'Ahei He Heiya Heiya
Heiyanakese'. The song of the elements within was 'Ha Hei Hoi Ha Ha Ha. Hoi Hoi Ha Ha, Ha Herin Linfa Herila Herinia, Nayute Khulaite Heiyase Heiyase Tahou Hou He Hou Haya Naketa'. This is a song to express happiness in coming out. All these songs are unintelligible. But they are still sung in the celebrated Lai Haraoba festival of the Meeteis.¹

The earliest Meetei thinkers saw the things of nature with such intensity of feeling and force of imagination that the whole universe became an embodiment of the creator god Ashiba. Uttering the divine hymn 'Ungset' Ashiba spread his body. His belly became the heaven and his back the earth. His two eyes became the sun and the moon. His blood became water; his breath, air; his bile, fire. His hair became trees and plants. Thus Ashiba is the whole cosmos.²

One important feature of the Meetei concept of creation is its cyclic character. All things including gods will be consumed by Time which is but a representation of the Supreme Lord. What will remain is Atingkok, the vast expanse filled with darkness (Amamba). Creation begins afresh from this state of nothingness with infinite potentiality. It is ultimately due to the Supreme God, Tengbanba Mapu. The whole creation is from Him, in Him, and for Him. It ends in Him and it begins with Him. In a way, through His own creation He

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¹. Ibid., pp. 12-30
². Ibid., p. 36
realises Himself, and that is the very purpose of creation. At the top there is the Supreme Lord of the Universe within Whom there is the Boundless, Formless Expanse, filled always with supreme Darkness in which there is the Nongshit (the Air), the life of the whole creation which has Leichin (the cloud), and the interaction between the Air and the Cloud has resulted in the coming forth of Water, within which there is the Earth where the living beings come into existence. Like other ancient people the Meeteis explained the whole creation in terms of gods and goddesses. Their legends are the attempts of the primitive minds to grasp the truth.

Wakoklon Hilel Thilel Salai Amaisalol Pukok Puya was written by the great Maichou Apoi-Nana in the time of king Mingyamba (1562-1597 A.D.). This is again copied by Chauba in the time of king Pamheiba (1709-1748 A.D.). This Puya is a treatise on the creation of earth and heaven.

The puya writes about the beginning of the manifestations from the Supreme God, Tengpanba Mapu (known here as Ipungloinapa Apakpa - the Ultimate Infinite Expanse). When there was nothing but this Boundless, Formless Expanse - the Talang, when there was no fire, water, air, sun or moon or when there was neither light nor darkness, when there was nothing but He and He alone as Talang Malang (the state in which nothing definite was formed and manifested), the Supreme God, Ipung Loimapa Apakpa wished to create the Earth (Malem) and Heaven (Nongthou). He then concentrated within Himself to
give forth Malem (Earth) and Leisa (the land surface). In the process there came forth Kampi (Fire), Laicha (Water), Malangpa (Air) which contributed to the formation of Malem (Earth) and Nongthou (Heaven). Thus came the sun, the moon, the stars and planets and all those that shine in the bright heaven. The important ones are the immortal Pole star (Thawaimichak Pi Malik Sitapa), the morning star (Sachik), the evening star (Thaba), Khongchom Nupi, Sachung Til Heipa, Salangka, Okpuloi, Taohuileng, the clouds, the rainbow, the thunder, the galaxy of seven stars. These are all that shine and have a place in the heaven. Not only these shining things in the heaven and the primal elements of the Universe, the Supreme Being had manifested Himself into great divinities. They are Nongpek Chingkhei Apanba, Awangpa Koupalu, Thangching Keilel Lai Sitapa, Khana Chaopa Wangpulel, Ilai Pulel Puling Lai, Pangkalpa, Salailel Sitapa, Konsen Tulei Sengpa Sanamahi, Mee-Khaloupa and Konchin Tukthaba Iputhou Pakhangpa. This book does not give much of the details of the creation except in the above broad outlines. The presentation however may be little different from the Leithak Leikhalen Puya. But this Puya also speaks of God to be the Ultimate Author of the Universe of things and beings. The process of manifestation to bring forth the Universe begins from God when He was alone as the Supreme Infinite Expanse. This process, as told in this book, is just the same as found in Leithak Leikhalon Puya. There also the Tengpanba Mapu with Atingkok and Amamba starts the process of manifestation, of actualisation into the
Universe of things and beings. Atingkok and Amamba represented the state when there was nothing but the Infinite Expanse pervaded all through by Intense Darkness. Salaileel in this book has been identified by some with Atiya Sidaba while Konsen Tulei Sengpa Sanamahi with Ashiba, the main architect of the whole creation of heaven and earth. Konchin Tingthokpa of Leithak Leikhalon has been identified with Konchin Tukthaba in this book. Regarding the order of manifestations also the book agrees with the Leithak Leikhalon. First there manifested from the Supreme Being Fire, then Water, then Air, then the sun, the moon, the stars and planets in the bright open sky, and finally the earth. In this book the earth is shown as lifted from the depth of Water. Just as in Leithak Leikhalon, here also the whole creation is due to the Supreme Wish of God. Otherwise there is no creation and no manifestation, but the primal State characterised by the Boundless Expanse. Thus here also Creation is for Him, in Him and from Him. It begins with Him and ends in Him.

The book Pudil has similar views with Leithak Leikhalon regarding creation of the Universe. Polpilang (also called Pombilang) an important Puya of the Meeteis gives an account of the creation. It was written by Thengra Maichou (contemporary of Louremba Khongnangthaba Maichou) before the conversion of the Meiteis into Hinduism, i.e., 1718 A.D., Pukhrambam Kala Moirangchha wrote a book entitled Leihou-Nonghou. This book speaks of the creation of heaven and earth as narrated by
Mangang Laininghal (a personality even before the reign of Nongtalai Pakhangba, considered to be the incarnation of God) to his disciple Luwang Leikeiba.

On the query of Luwang Leikiba regarding the creation of heaven and earth, Mangang Laininghal replied, "There was no world, no Universe at the beginning. There was but the vast Infinite Expanse Unbounded by anything. This state was known as Tingakok which was but the Supreme Lord, Tengbanba Mapu." In the Tingakok the Supreme Lord manifested like thin vapour of clouds, and to create the Universe He issued forth the primal sound Hung. Then from Him came out five primal elements of Fire, Water, Air, Heaven and Earth. In lifting the Earth from the deep bottom of Water He made ten manifestations of Himself. There was first Chaora Mapal Thaba who tried to lift the earth from the water. But he failed. The next manifestation was Pisatao who also failed to lift the earth. The third was Nongkhomtao; the fourth was Nongyai Mari Onba; the fifth was Leikhomtao; the sixth was Nongshaba; the seventh was Tekpi (Pig); the eighth was Tikta (Tortoise); the ninth was Pafal (the divine python having thousand crests); and the tenth was Sali-Yangba (a species of white long fish) who completed the lifting of the earth from the deep bottom of water. The surface of the earth which got dried after the lifting was called Kanglei Pung Mayol. When the earth was lifted, the heat in the open atmosphere took up a part of the said earth, and thus formed the five elements of Fire, Water, Air, Earth
and Heaven.

The creation as narrated by Mangang Laininghal to Luwang Leikoiba in the book Polpilang shows the ten manifestations of the Supreme Being in lifting the earth from the bottom of Water. Though the presentation is a little different, in Leithak Leikhalon also there is the mention of Tortoise, Owl, Pig, Elephant, Pafal, Saliang Fish etc. as playing their role in the creation of the different layers of the Earth. All these things resemble in a way the mythological legends of the ten Avatārs of the Hindus.

Last but not the least we can consider the view of Amam Nonglon regarding creation of the Universe. The Amam Nonglon view is taken out mainly from Nonglon Pathup Wachetlon left by Singtabung, son of Poireiton. Poireiton was the brother-in-law of Nongtalai Pakhangba who reigned in 34 A.D.

Amam Nonglon view describes the whole Universe of things and beings as a play between Nong, the boundless Infinite Expanse filled with Amamba (the darkness) and Yai (the light). Nong is the Ultimate background addressed in this Puya as Lainingshing Heiyi. Nothing is known precisely about Him by human beings except that He is the Supreme Ultimate Background of all. It is in a way the Supreme Darkness which signifies the unknown and unmanifest character of the Supreme Reality. He alone was there at the beginning. Yai, the Light was there only within the infinite expanse called Nong. That is to say,
Yai was within Nong, Light was within Darkness. The coming out of Yai from Nong resulted in the being of the Universe, and it is for this reason that the Universe is said to be a play between Nong and Yai. About Nong there can be no perfect human knowledge. It is only when Yai comes out from the background of Darkness as distinct Light that there is manifestation and knowledge. That there is the Universe of things and beings means that there is the Yai coming out from Nong. According to this view the sun and the moon are in the manifest Universe as they are objects giving light, the Yai. But ordinarily only the sun belongs to the Yai (Light) while the moon which does not emit light by itself is considered to be belonging to Nong - the Amamba (Darkness). Moon has light only when the sun shines on it. Otherwise it is in Darkness, the Nong. This Nong is cold, calm and peaceful while Yai as Light is hot and active. The Puya says that the sun and moon are both in the world of manifestation, the world being manifested by their light. But of the two also, the sun is light while the moon is darkness. Besides, the Lainingshing Heiyi is the principle that determines the whole course of the Universe just as the Rta of the Rg-Veda controls and regulates the whole course of the Universe. The Lainingshing Heiyi is above all beings, human or divine. The Fire, Water, Air, the earth and the heaven and all other deities obey him. Lainingshing is thus the counterpart of the Rta of the Rg-Veda. About the nature of the Rta Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "Rta originally meant the
established route of the world, of the sun, moon, and stars morning and evening, day and night. He further says, "the dawn follows the path of Rta, the right path; as if she knew them before. She never oversteps the regions. The sun follows the path of Rta. The whole Universe is founded on Rta and moves in it." Even the gods are to obey the course as determined by Rta.

This view of Amam Nonglon as enunciated in Nonglon Pathup Wachetlon has a different style of presentation regarding the creation of the Universe. However the concept of Nong (the darkness) can be reconciled with Tengbanba Mapu whose eternal manifestations are Atingkok - the boundless Expanse and Amamba, the Darkness. Atingkok with Amamba is the ultimate background of all things and beings, divine and human. In fact the Amam Nonglon view is the meaning and substance of all the theories of creation of the Meetei puyas. The whole creation has been due to the Supreme God. It begins with Him; it ends in Him; it is for Him. All creation is from a state of formless boundless Darkness. From the said darkness there comes up Light that shines and manifests, and also the primal elements of Fire, Water, Air, Heaven with all the shining things like the stars and planets, the Sun and the Moon.

The Meetei theory of creation can be appreciated better if it is compared with the Vedic theory of creation.

1. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, vol. I, p. 79
2. Ibid.
There are two views of creation in the Vedic hymns. The first is creation of the world by an Omnipotent God out of pre-existent matter. The second is creation of the world by God out of His own nature without any pre-existent matter. These two views on further analysis will become one when there comes the question: wherefrom does the creating God come? Quoting the references to Hiranyagarbha by Manu Dr. Radhakrishnan writes, "Hiranyagarbha arose in the beginning from the great water which pervaded the Universe. He evolved the beautiful world from the shapeless chaos which was all that existed."¹

As to the further query "how did it happen that the chaos produced Hiranyagarbha? What is that unknown force or law of development which led to his rise? Who is the author of the primeval waters?", Dr. Radhakrishnan writes, "according to Manu, Harivamśa and the Purāṇas, God was the author of chaos. He created it by His Will, and deposited a seed in it which became the golden germ in which He Himself was born as the Brahma or the Creator God. 'I am Hiranyagarbha, the Supreme Spirit Himself become manifested in the form of Hiranyagarbha'. Thus the two eternally co-existent substances seem to be the evolution of the one ultimate substratum."²

From the above it is clear that ultimately there cannot be any two views. The whole creation is simply due to

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1. Ibid., p. 100
2. Ibid.
the Supreme God; both the creating God Brahmā or Hiranyagarbha and the shapeless chaos from which Hiranyagarbha evolved the beautiful world are but the evolution of the One Ultimate Background (Substratum). The Vedic creation has been well described in the Nāsadiya Hymn, translation of which by Max Muller as referred to by Radhakrishnan runs as below:

"There was then neither what is nor what is not, there was no sky, nor the heaven which is beyond. What covered? Where was it, and in whose shelter? Was the water the deep abyss (in which it lay)?

There was no death, hence was there nothing immortal. There was no light (distinction) between night and day. That One breathed by itself without breath, other than it there has been nothing.

Darkness there was, in the beginning all this was a sea without light; the germ that lay covered by the husk, that One was born by the power of heat (tapas).

Love overcame it in the beginning, which was the seed springing from mind, poets having searched in their heart found by wisdom the bond of what is in what is not.

Their ray which was stretched across, was it below or was it above? There were seed bearers, there were powers, self-power below, and will above."
Who then knows, who has declared it here, from whence was born this creation? The gods came later than this creation, who then knows whence it arose?

He from whom this creation arose, whether he made it or did not make it, the highest seer in the highest heaven, he forsooth knows or does even he not know?¹

Like the gifted seers of the Rg.-Veda the ancient Meetei thinkers thought about the questions: How was it when there was no Universe? How was it when the Universe came into being? How then was it after it had come into existence? Answers to these questions are found in the different Puyas. As Atombapu Sharma elaborates the significance of the answers in the light of the Nasadîya Hymn, "Nothing was there at the beginning. All were but a Tingakok (the Infinite Expanse, boundless and shapeless); He alone was there by His own strength. He was Atingkok filled with darkness. It was but the primordial water; by the Supreme Will of Atingkok to make different manifestations, all these had become. The deities came only after the creation of this Universe. The deities did not know how the Universe which was more ancient than they came into being. Therefore nobody could know and say about the details of the creation of the Universe. Atingkok Guru Sidaba the Supreme Lord of the Universe alone knows; He alone bears all these. But about this nobody could have a direct

¹. Ibid., pp. 100-101
knowledge. If it is to be known, He alone knows. Others cannot know.*

Dr. Radhakrishnan made his assessment of the creation as found in the Nāsadiya Hymn, and wrote, "We find in this poem a representation of the most advanced theory of creation. First of all there was no existent or non-exist. The existent in its manifested aspect was not then. We cannot on that account call it the non-existent, for it is positive being from which the whole existence arrives. The first line brings out the inadequacy of our categories. The absolute reality which is at the back of the whole world cannot be characterised by us as either existent or non-existent. The One breathed breathless by its own power. Other than that there was not anything beyond. First cause of all it is older than the whole world, with the sun, moon, sky, and stars. It is beyond time, beyond space, beyond age, beyond death and beyond immortality. We cannot express what it is except that it is. Such is the prime unconditioned groundwork of all being."  

As to how from the Absolute which is neither the self nor the ether, but which is higher than both these and within which the oppositions develop, the world comes into being, the Nāsadiya hymns say, it is by Tapas. "Tapas is just the

1. Shri Atombapu Sharma, Manipur Itihas, pp. 116-117
2. Radhakrishnan, S., op.cit., p. 101
'rushing forth', the spontaneous 'out-growth', the projection of being into existence, the energising impulse, the innate spiritual fervour of the Absolute."\(^1\) As Radhakrishnan observes, "according to this account the steps of creation, when translated into modern terms, are: (1) the Highest Absolute; (2) the bare self consciousness, I am I; (3) the limit of self-consciousness in the form of another. This does not mean that there is a particular point at which the Absolute moves out. The stages are only logically but not chronologically successive. The ego implies the non-ego and therefore cannot precede it. Nor can the non-ego precede the ego. Nor can the Absolute be ever without doing tapas. The timeless whole is ever breaking out in a series of becomings, and the process will go on till the self reaffirms itself absolutely in the varied content of experience which is never going to be. So the world is always restless. The hymn tells us the how of creation, not the whence. It is an explanation of the fact of creation."\(^2\) It would be wrong to think that according to the Nāsadiya hymn there was non-being from out of which being grew. "The first condition is not absolute non-existence, for the hymn admits the reality of the one breathing breathless by itself. It is their way of describing the absolute reality, the logical ground of the whole universe. Being and non-being,

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1. Ibid., p. 102
2. Ibid., p. 103
which are correlative terms cannot be applied to the One which is beyond all opposition. Non-being only means whatever now visibly exists had then no distinct existence ... it is said, 'existent sprang from the non-existent'. Even here it does not mean being comes from non-being but only that distinct being comes from non-distinct being."¹ Puruṣa Sūkta is another approach of explaining the creation of the world out of the original material. According to the hymns of the Puruṣa Sūkta the gods are the agents of creation, while the material out of which the world is made is the body of the great Puruṣa. The act of creation is understood as a sacrifice in which Puruṣa is the victim. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "This hymn is not, however, inconsistent with the theory of creation from the One Absolute described above. The whole world even according to it is due to the self-diremption of the Absolute into subject and object, Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Only the idea is rather crudely allegorised. The Supreme reality becomes the active Puruṣa, for it is said: 'From the Puruṣa Virāt was born, and from Virāt again Puruṣa'. Puruṣa is thus the begetter and the begotten. He is the Absolute as well as the Self-conscious I."²

These are the explanations regarding the creation of the world as shown by the hymns of the Vedas. The resemblance between them and the Megtei puyas is so striking that one may

1. Ibid., p. 104
2. Ibid., p. 105
even doubt as to whether one is borrowed from the other. The doubt however cannot be maintained because of the brilliance of both the Vedas and the Meftei Puyas. "The Vedas are the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess."^1 To the Mefteis also the ancient Puyas are sacred texts which incorporate the speculations of the gifted Maichous. Both have independent character and development. Had the Mefteis been influenced by the Vedic thought there would have been a clear indication for it in the Puyas. Thus the similarities may be a matter of coincidence.

Though there is difference in language, style and presentation the theories of creation as found in the hymns of the Vedas and as revealed by the Meftei puyas have almost the similar meaning and significance. The primal state before creation as sung by the Vedic seers in their hymns, and as shown in the different puyas of the Mefteis is almost similar. It was a state in which there was neither existent in the manifested form, nor non-existent. It was a state in which there was no fire, nor water, nor air, nor the sun, nor the moon, nor the earth, nor the heaven with all the shining stars and planets. There was no death and no immortality also as all are within His infinite womb potentially without any process of manifestation. He alone was there older than the whole world. He is beyond time, beyond space, beyond age,

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1. Ibid., p. 63
beyond death and beyond immortality. About this primal beginning the Leithak Leikhalon Puya says, 'all the nine orders of heaven and earth, the fire, water, air and also all the deities disappeared into the primal original potential nothingness. All are within His boundless infinite bosom filled with darkness. Darkness prevailed all through.\textsuperscript{1} There was no light to make a distinction from darkness. As the Amam-Nonglon (the primal darkness and light) view of the Nonglon Pathup Wachetlon Puya clearly suggests, in the primal state there was but darkness all over and the Nong, the Supreme Being, is known by Amamba, the darkness. The emanation of the Light from Nong is just the coming into existence of the manifest world with all the shining objects, the sun, the moon and the stars (the light that has come out from the Supreme Dark background is the Yai).\textsuperscript{2} Like the Tapas of the Vedas an innate spiritual impulse of Tengbanba Mapu is suggested by the Primal Creative Sound Hung issued forth from Him at the initial stage of creation. Just as there is the Ṛta in the Vedic system as the order of the world - the established route of the world, of the sun, moon and stars, morning and evening, day and night, there is the Lainingshing Heiyi of the Megei belief as the Ultimate principle of the Universe - determining, regulating and controlling the whole course of the manifest world. Just as

\textsuperscript{1} Leithak Leikhalon, p. 4

\textsuperscript{2} Piba, A., Eeyek Salailon, p. 140
Rta is the father of all, the unchanging principle underlying the shifting series of the world, the Lainingshing Heiyi is often regarded as the Ultimate Father of the cosmic order. The world is not a purposeless chaos but an emanation from God. This is the truth advocated both by the Vedas and by the Puyas.

The Meetei Puyas do not consider the world to be real by itself. They find the explanation of the world in a Supreme Divine Will. The world is an efflux from God, a manifestation of the essence of His being. The created world, though it is distinguished from God, has nevertheless no meaning and significance apart from God. The divine immanence, however, does not deny the divine transcendence. God is the transcendent Ground of the cosmological whole. By the activity of His Will He has given being to the world of things and beings. Nothing in the universe is static. Change is the law of things. Everything in the world is subject to decay and death. But God is the infinite eternal Being and as such is transcendent of the world. To the religious mind of the Meeteis, the world as an expression of the will of God is sustained by Him under a loving care. This idea has led the Meeteis to transform every house into a veritable temple. There are many household deities, the chief of whom is Ashiba or Sanamahi who occupies a corner of the house. Sanamahi, as we have noted earlier, is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord of the Universe called by different names.
There is no basis for any idea of the unreality of the world in the Meetei puyas. But the early thinkers realised the incompleteness and finitude of the world and regarded God as the ground, guide and goal of the world. Materialism was rejected. The unity postulated to explain the multiplicity was conceived as a conscious principle. The world is not a purposeless chaos but an ordered scheme of things and beings. In the fanciful and mythological accounts of creation the Puyas bring out the spiritual foundation of our world.