CHAPTER VI

FOLK NARRATIVES (2): FOLKTALES

A. FOLKTALES

It seems that the term 'folktale' as used in English is very inclusive as it can refer generally to all kinds of traditional prose narrative, written or oral. "Although the term "folktale" is often used in English to refer to the "household tale" or "fairy tale" (the German Märchen), such as "Cinderella" or "Snow White", it is also legitimately employed in a much broader sense to include all forms of prose narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years. In this usage the important fact is the traditional nature of the material."¹

As Bascom has put it tersely, "Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction."² They are simple entertaining, with or without moral, not too systematic, not too specialized, easy to understand and memorize with some scope of addition, subtraction and modification by almost all the members of a folk-society. Folktales are not considered as history; they may or may not have happened and they are not to be taken seriously. The folktale may be set in any time and place. Therefore, they are almost timeless and placeless.

Like folksongs, folktales also have no known originator and are handed down from person to person or from generation to generation spontaneously through oral tradition. According to Y.M. Sokolov, "The deepseated vitality of the tale, in so far as it appears still to be a factor in its oral existence, depends on the creative, and not on the mechanical character of the transmission of the tale by the story-tellers."

B. MEITEI FOLKTALES

From time immemorial folktales have been told by the parents or grandparents or elderly persons of the family to their children at bed-time or by the hearth or the fire-place. Now-a-days, they are told at any place or time, not necessarily at bed-time or by the hearth or the fire-place. As we have already seen, 'folktales' in Manipuri are called Phungā wārī and the term must have originated from their association with phungā (the hearth). But the term Phungā wārī continues to designate the folktale.

As is common of the world, old men and women have been usually noted as narrators. Sometimes, there have been young recounters too: they had heard the tales from their parents and have got them by heart to repeat them to their friends or to other children. Over and above, in the Meitei society there are professional story tellers known as wārī leebā (wārī means

story; leeba means telling or narrating). These professional story tellers are narrators of stories from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and other religious and legendary stories, etc. If and when invited, they narrate the stories in sessions which may last for many days together. They are paid for their services. Although the stories they relate are not "folktales", they constitute an important part of the traditional tale-telling paraphernalia.

In Manipur the folktales have manifold functions. As is well recognised, the folktales of a country form a vital element in the living culture and also reflect an image of the people. They play an important role in educating the children in various ways. Such folktales of Manipur like Ramuba lamuti Panthaba, Pebet, etc. have provided good amusement, recreation and also imparted moral education to Meitei children down the ages. The folktales serve the functions of the communication channel for knowledge and beliefs. From the tale of Laikhutsangbi, there is a traditional belief in the heart of the Meiteis that the reddish colour in the singud (reeds) is the manifestation of the very blood oozing out from the hand of Laikhutsangbi, which was cut off by the husband of Tamangdong when the demoness had searched for the child through the wall. The folktale of Kawi-Keioiba teaches that the wit and wisdom always triumphs over foolishness. Folktales also transmit moral, ethical, religious and philosophical knowledge to the Meitei folk. Moral tales are particularly significant for their
educative value. Besides, they also import practical knowledge about the conduct of everyday life. In the Meitei society, the folktales are also used for soothing a crying child. When a child cries, the parents or the grand-parents narrate very popular tale like Laikhutsangbi, Ita Thaomei, etc. in order to soothe the child. The Meitei children are very much fond of hearing folktales. Besides, when a child feels hungry it can wait for the meal to be ready by listening to tales. All in all, Meitei folktales play a particular role as a fact of Meitei culture, and the Meitei norms and values and their attitude towards life are well expressed in them.

Moreover, in spite of the rapid and marked changes in the socio-cultural norms in recent times under the impact of modernization, folktales, as we have noted, continue to be popular with all their traditional elements and thus serve as cultural items reflecting the traditional life style, ethos and values of the Meitei people. The practice of polygamy, the ill-treatment of the step-mother to the step-children, the trial by ordeal, etc. prevalent in the Meitei society are clearly reflected on the mirror of the Meitei folktales. Shandrembi and Chaisra, Haoshi Hanciru, Uchek Langmeidong and other tales of such nature which have been taken up in the succeeding pages are some of the examples. In the tale of Shandrembi and Chaisra, they two fought with swords in hand to find out who the real Shandrembi was. The loser was the
evil-doer and the winner was the deserving hero or heroine.

Such trial by ordeal mentioned in this folktale has no counterpart in the customary law prevailing under the Meitei kings, but no doubt, such trials did exist when society in Manipur was more primitive. There exists even at the present day a folk method of detecting a culprit: when some trifling article is lost in the house, and the head of the household suspects that one of the inmates has stolen it, he resorts to this method; every member of the household has to bring some rice wrapped in a piece of cloth with an identification mark, then all the bundles of the rice are thrown into a pot of boiling water, and after sometime the bundles are taken out: if the rice in a bundle should remain uncooked, then the owner of that bundle is the culprit. Besides, in the Meitei society, the practice of soothing a crying child by the mention of some dread animals is still prevalent and the story of Tapta offers a clear example of such practices.

For the study of folktales, it has been found convenient to classify them on the basis of themes and forms, but these classifications are rather loose and vary from country to country and from one cultural group to another. Again, the classifications are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, jokes and humorous tales may have moral overtones, animal tales may be of the joke or trickster type. However, for the purpose of our study the following classifications of the Meitei folktales have been made: (a) Jokes and humorous
tales, (b) Animal tales, (c) Tales of the supernatural or wonder tales, (d) Tales of cleverness or cheating or trickster tales, (e) Etiological tales, (f) Cumulative tales, and (h) Moral tales or fables. An attempt has also been made to identify some of the tales in terms of the Aarne-Thompson-Type-Index as well as to identify some Motifs in terms of the Motif-Index of Folk Literature by Stith Thompson.

(a) Jokes and Humorous Tales

"Short anecdotes told for humorous purposes are found everywhere. They are variously referred to as jest, humorous anecdote, merry tale, and (German) Schwaenze. Among some they are usually animal tales, but even where this is true the action is essentially that characteristic of men. Important themes producing these popular jests are the absurd acts of foolish persons (the wumpskull tale), deceptions of all kinds, and obscene situations. There is a tendency for jests to form cycles, since humorous adventures become attached to some character who thereafter attracts into his orbit all kinds of jests, appropriate and inappropriate. The same hero may be celebrated for his clever ruses, and for his utter stupidity, and obscene tales may often be told about him. But jests frequently detach themselves from cycles and may be encountered in the most unlikely places. They are easily remembered and universally liked, so that they travel with great ease. Some of the funny stories heard today have lived three or four thousand
years and have been carried all over the earth. 4 Stith Thompson, further, observes: "In one way or another a large proportion of the most popular anecdotes and jests are concerned with cleverness. Sometimes the interest is in the contrast between a clever and a foolish person, with the main interest in the latter." 5 Some specimens of such types in Meitei folk-tales are given below:

(i) Hanuba-Hanubi Panthaba (Planting of arum by the old man and the old woman)

[Type 151; also Type 176 and 176 II]

Long long ago there lived an old couple who had no children. One day while they were planting pān (edible arum Colocasia Sp.), some monkeys came there and one of them said to the couple, "Oh grand-parents, your method of planting is wrong. If you do like this, the arum will take a long time to grow."

The old man said, "Oh grandson, what will be the correct method of planting? If you know, please tell me."

One of the monkeys again said, "You first wash it and boil it, then wrap it in a banana leaf and plant it. If you do so, you will find it fully grown up next morning." So saying, they

4. Stith Thompson, op.cit., p. 10
5. Ibid., pp. 188-189.
The old couple believed in what the monkeys had said to them. So the two did everything accordingly. In the midnight the monkeys came there to see whether the arum had been planted according to their instructions or not. When they found it that had been done the manner they had desired, they removed the boiled arum and ate to their heart's content. Then they collected some fully grown lambāl (wild arum) from the nearby ditch and planted them in place of the boiled arum and went away.

The next morning the old couple woke up early and found the arum plants fully grown up. This made them ever¬joyed. The old man plucked some arum plants and gave it to the old woman to cook. The old woman cooked it. The old man ate it first. Immediately he felt irritation. Unable to bear the pain of irritation, he cried loudly, "Hanubi (old woman), 'hentāk', o hanubi, hentāk." The old woman did not believe that such a beautiful plant would have any pungent taste. So she also ate it but felt the same system of irritation. She started crying loudly, "Hanubā (old man), hentāk, hanubā, hentāk." Thus, the two ate hentāk together and became normal. They realised that a trick had been played on them by the monkeys. They were very much angry with the monkeys and planned to kill them. The old man said to the old woman, "I'll pretend to be dead and you

6. **Hentāk**: A kind of food prepared with dried small fish and wild arum which is traditionally believed to cure nipping.
cry over my death. If they hear your cry, they will come to inquire. If they come, you tell them to lift and put me on the court-yard. At that time, I shall beat them up with a cheitup (leg) to death." The old man lay on the ground pretending to be dead, with a log by his side. The old woman sat at the foot of the old man started wailing with improvised eulogies:

"Hā hanubā, hā hanubā
Pāncādunā sikhibā, māiren chādunā hallakle"

("Oh old man, Oh old man, you died of eating arum but come back to life by eating pumkin").

On hearing the wails of the old woman, the monkeys came there and enquired about what had happened. The old woman said, "Your grandfather is dead, there is nobody to perform the death rites." Then the monkeys approached the dead body of the old man to remove it for cremation. In the meantime, the old man stood holding the log in his hand and started beating up the monkeys to death. Thus, all the monkeys except a small one were killed on the spot. The lone survivor ran away and reported the tragic incident to the other monkeys. The old couple were much worried about the probable consequences. Therefore, they decided to hide themselves in an earthen pot. Immediately the monkeys arrived at the house of the old couple, and started searching for them. In the meantime, the old man felt the tendency to fart. He sought for the permission of his wife, "Hanubi, may I break wind?"

Hanubi said, "Be careful, you- send the wind out with the least
possible sound. If the monkeys happen to know our whereabouts, they will kill us surely." But he broke wind with a low sound "poat ... ." A little later, the old woman also felt the same and broke wind with the permission of the old man, with a sound "pi ... ." By that time the monkeys came nearer to the jar where the couple was hiding and began to carry the jar. The old man again felt like breaking wind and sought for the permission from the old woman. She cautioned him while giving the permission. However, the old man broke wind with a loud sound "Bang ... ." On hearing this sound, the monkeys were greatly surprised. They suddenly dropped the jar they were carrying and ran away. The jar was also broken into pieces. Thus, some of the monkeys got injured by the splinters of the jar and some killed. After this incident, the old couple (Hanuba-Hanubi) lived happily.

[Motifs: K 331.3. Worthless object (animal) substituted for valuable while owner sleeps or K 476. Cheating by substitution of worthless articles.]

(ii) Ningngol Mawa Apangba (A foolish son-in-law)

[Type 1013; also Types 1631 B and 1635]

Once upon a time there lived a widow who had two sons. Her older son was very clever, but the younger son was very foolish. Everybody called the younger one Apang (a fool). Though foolish he never failed to obey his brother. He was always afraid of his
brother and bad a good regard for him. His widowed mother was all the time sick as she was very old and weak. One day his elder brother said, "Dear brother, I am going to the paddy field. Please stay working at home. You must tie the calf when the sun rises to the top of the bamboos and you must bathe our old mother with warm water." After entrusting his brother with the tasks, his elder brother went to the paddy field.

The fool waited for the rise of the sun in order to carry out the entrusted works. After a while, when the sun rose to the top of the bamboos he hurriedly went to their cattle shed and dragged the calf from it. He forcibly bent the top of a bamboo tree and tied the calf to it. Then he released the bamboo and the calf was automatically hanged to death. He was pleased to see the calf hanging freely and thought that he had accomplished his brother's first instruction. Then he went inside his house and boiled the water for the purpose of bathing his mother. He let his mother sit in a tub near the edge of their court-yard and by the side of the growing sugarcanes. Then he poured the boiling water over his mother. His mother died instantly from scalding. She remained with her mouth wide opened and facing towards the growing sugarcane. But to her foolish son it seemed as if she was looking at him with pleasure. At the posture of his mother, he presumed that his mother desired to eat the
sugarcanes and he put a piece of it into her mouth. Then the fool loitered here and there at his court-yard humming a tune in a happy mood that he had carried out his brother's instructions.

After some time his elder brother returned home. He was surprised to see the happy mood of his brother. So he said, "Dear brother: Have you done the works entrusted to you?" His foolish brother said, "Yes, I have done, I have tied the calf to the top of a bamboo when the sun reached it." His brother saw the awful sight of the calf. Being worried he asked him of the whereabouts of his mother. He learnt from his brother that his mother was eating sugarcane by the side of the sugarcane yard. He went to the spot and to his dismay found that his mother was dead. His brother embraced his mother and started crying very lovingly. The fool also began to cry. Once the fool started crying, he could not be easily stopped. He went on crying without food even after his brother had stopped.

Next day, the two brothers went to the market to purchase some articles for the death-ceremony of their mother. At the market his brother told him to carry home a hamper of salt. On his way home, the fool had a call of nature and wanted to hide the hamper of salt somewhere. Being unable to find a proper hiding place he immersed the bag of salt into the water beneath a thongrā (narrow jetty erected in the pond). When he was ready
to go home he took out the bag of salt from inside the water. But to his utter surprise, he found that the salt had been completely dissolved. He narrated the whole incident to his elder brother on his arrival from the market. His brother went to the market to repurchase the salt knowing that his brother was a great fool.

After some days the fool went away and sat silently at a corner of the palace of the country wearing a ngabong (a handloom blanket). He saw the khudeisel kāosel (khudeisel means towel rack; kāosel means spittoon. These articles are generally made of both gold and silver and they are used by the Royal family and high officials of Manipur) of the king and like them very much. So he stole and gave them to his elder brother. His brother scolded him for the theft. In the meantime, the courtiers of the king arrived at their house to search for the lost ornaments (khudeisel kāosel). His elder brother became nervous at the arrival of the courtiers. So he kept the ornaments hidden. He called his foolish brother inside their house and said, "Brother, tell the courtiers that we did not steal it. I will hide myself in the granary. Don't disclose it to the courtiers." So saying his brother hide himself in their granary.

The courtiers met the fool and asked him whether he had stolen the royal ornaments. The fool said, "I do not know and my brother tells me to answer that we have not stolen the ornaments." The courtiers said, "Where did you keep them?" The
fool said that he did not know but he had given them to his brother. The courtiers again said, "Where is your elder brother?" The fool said, "My brother is not hiding in the granary." Then the courtiers caught his elder brother and sent him for imprisonment.

The fool became restless in the absence of his brother. He went away keeping his house under lock and key. After walking for some time he came to a village where there was very rich widow. She was popularly known as Lukhrābī Shamu loibi (Lukhrabī means widow and Shamu loibi means having an elephant. The compound term has been generally designated to a 'rich widow'). Though she was a woman, she was very clever. She was always on the look out for a husband of her old daughter. The widow's search for a suitable match for her daughter had proved futile. Finally her daughter was married to the fool and the latter stayed in his mother-in-law's house. He knew nothing about household management. His only duty was to roam about every morning, to have his lunch and dinner and to go to bed in the evening. Besides, he had no knowledge of cultivation and no friends at all.

Thus, staying some days at his in-law's house, one day he went beyond his village in search of work. He was very tired of his long journey in the sun. So he rested at the foot of a tree. When he got up from his sleep, he had a call of nature. He hurriedly went to a river side. There he defecated behind a bush.
It so happened that he defecated on the back of a big tortoise without knowing its presence. Hardly had he left the place than he saw his faeces moving towards the water of the river. He thought that his faeces had got limbs. On the second day of this incident, the fool got up from his sleep for defecation in the dark night. He remembered the movement of his faeces. So he defecated on the floor and in front of his bed in the hope that his faeces would definitely walk away as he had seen it do before. After finishing defecation, he opened the back door of his house in order to make way for the exit of his faeces. Then he said, "You faeces, I have opened the back door for you. You must go away through it towards the river."

However, the faeces did no respond to his order and it lay still in spite of his second warning. The fool thought that his faeces needed a little threatening. So he took the polo-stick in his hand and threatened to take the life of his faeces. He said, "Will you remain idle? Why can't you go away to-day while you had gone yesterday?" So he beat his faeces repeatedly with his polo-stick. With every strike the faeces were thrown all over and the walls of his room were stained with it. He thought that the faeces was running away at his beating. His mother-in-law remained silent being afraid of his nature. However, his wife stopped him before causing further damage.

After some days his mother-in-law gave him an axe for cutting some wood on a hill. He returned home after cutting down the tree.
His mother-in-law asked him why he had not brought the wood. The fool answered that he was only told to cut down the wood and was not told to bring home. Again the next day his mother-in-law instructed him to drive off the birds and insects from the paddy field. He took the ripe bunches of the paddy to be insects eating the grains. So he struck the paddy with his stick. He was pleased to see the grains falling on the ground for he mistook them for the bees. He returned home humming a tune in a happy mood. Later his mother-in-law was aghast to learn of his foolishness.

After a few months his wife was seriously ill. His mother-in-law sent him to the market to purchase bananas for offering to the gods. He was not well acquainted with the market place. So his mother-in-law pointed to him to go straight in a particular direction and to find a place where lots of people had gathered. She asked him to bring three sweet and tasty bananas. The fool went straight in the direction pointed out by his mother-in-law. He crossed over many tree-tops which were on his way. He never bothered about the river, the ponds, etc. He went even through the houses that came across on his way. At last he reached a place where there was a mass gathering. He decided that it was the market. Then he purchased three bananas from the first dealer and tasted one banana in order to determine its sweetness. Thus he brought only one banana to his house out of the three bananas. His mother-in-law asked him the reasons of his bringing only one banana. He told that he had tasted two bananas for
determining their sweetness. His mother-in-law became annoyed at his words and she asked him how he had tasted the bananas. At this the fool pooled out the remaining banana and ate it up. He told his mother-in-law that it was the way how a banana was eaten. Instead of getting angry with her son-in-law the lady burst into a laugh. Thinking that he had to laugh if someone started laughing, the fool also joined in the laughing.

Gradually his mother-in-law carefully taught him different works like cultivation, cattle-rearing, raising of vegetables, etc. with his efforts ultimately his mother-in-law became richer day by day. Thus, the foolish son-in-law lived happily with his wife and mother-in-law.7


(iii) Katalgi Wari (The story of a lazy fellow)

Type 923 B

Once upon a time, there lived a king who had seven daughters. The king had a strange weakness; he always wanted to be praised and flattered. One day he called all his seven daughters and

asked them what they thought of him. All the daughters except the youngest one praised and flattered their father so much so that their father was extremely gratified. But the youngest daughter was of a different nature and she did not like to praise and flatter her father falsely. So she told frankly her father that she loved him as a daughter should love a father. She further said, "Prosperity as well as adversity is the work of God." The king was annoyed at the remarks of his daughter and told his men to seek the laziest person in the land for her husband.

The royal servants went out in search of a Katel (a lazy person) and at last they came across a man lying on his back at the foot of a fig tree. The man remained motionless and speechless. In fact, he appeared like a dead man. The king's men asked him to make way for them. However, Katel did not respond at all. On repeated questionings he told the king's men that he was too lazy to get up and asked them to leave him as he was. One of the king's men saw a big fruit by the side of the man and told him to eat it. But the lazy man replied that he was too lazy to reach for the fruit and he requested them to put it into his mouth. The king's men did so and told him to eat it. Still the lazy man said that he was lazy enough to move his jaws and asked them to help him in setting his jaws to work. The king's men knew that they had come to the right place for the right person. So they carried Katel to the king.
The king got his youngest daughter married to the lazy man without any dowry and sent them away in a small canoe. The princess rowed the canoe down stream and with much difficulty she anchored the canoe near a village. She carried her husband on her back and went to an open space. Not far from the place, there was a market where she could buy food stuff. She took out the food stuff which her mother had given her for the journey and she put a portion of it into her husband's mouth. She told him to eat and swallow. Katal did as he was told. The princess ate her share of food and began to think of erecting a small hut for themselves. It was quite impossible for her to collect the necessary materials as she was a woman. Dejected, she began to lament over her misfortune.

Katal thought within himself that they would die in case he remained lazy in that way. He wanted to help his wife and so he called her aloud to assist him in getting up. The princess was surprised to hear him talking like that. She pulled him up from the ground. Katal was very happy to find that he was perfectly fit physically and immediately he went to the jungle to collect the materials for the hut.

Next day he went to the jungle for the collection of the bamboos but to his astonishment he found that the bamboos which he had cut down in the previous day had grown again in their respective places. The strange happening enraged Katal and he cut down the bamboos at a greater speed than before and came
back home. Ratal was surprised to find all the bamboos growing again as before.

One day he lost no time in starting to cut the bamboos. But a crow came flying and sat in front of him and said, "My friend, as you have destroyed these bamboos, I have become homeless." So I'll give you a magic ring if you can spare my home and the magic ring will give you everything you wish and ask for." The man stopped cutting the bamboos and demanded the magic ring. The crow flew away after giving the ring to Ratal.

Thus by virtue of the magic ring Ratal and his wife became the richest couple. They built themselves a beautiful house. The princess was very happy at their unexpected fortune. They became the most respectable and well-to-do persons in the village. They invited the king and the queen along with their six daughters to a grand feast. The king was ashamed at the thought of the ill-treatment he had given to his daughter. He remembered what his daughter had said that prosperity as well as adversity is the works of God and realized that what his daughter had said had come true in the long run. Henceforth, he gave up the foolish idea of being praised and flattered. He said goodbye to his son-in-law and his daughter and left the place. Thereafter, the princess and her husband lived happily.

Motifs: M21: King Lear judgement. King flattered by elder daughters and angered by seeming indifference, though real love, of youngest, banishes her and favours the elder daughters. L100. Unpromising hero (heroine). N200. The good gifts of fortune, or N145 Castout princess prosperous because of Good Luck L50. Victorious youngest daughter.

(b) Animal Tales

"The animal tale is, as a rule, a short narrative, that contains the adventures of the animal that is its principal character. While almost all the actors are animals, they act as human beings and their world is analogous to the human world. The style and structure of the plots are a simple parallelism of thesis and antithesis: a smart or a stupid trickster tries to cheat another animal and succeed/or is caught in his own trap. The mere episodic and independent stories became easily linked to each other, whereby clusters and even whole cycles tend to develop around certain animal heroes and their antagonists such as the fox versus wolf, bear and rabbit versus fox, and jackal versus leopard." 9

It has been observed in the Meitei folktales that the narrators who tell the stories in all seriousness observe no distinct boundary line between man and beast. There are many popular and important animal tales in Manipur. Some specimens of such tales are given below:

(1) Houdong Lambeiba (Monk Cat)

Once an old and infirm vulture lived on a banyan tree. He could not catch prey for himself. His only quota of food was from the other birds of the tree for looking after their young ones when they were away in search of food.

One day a cat climbed up the tree while he was sleeping soundly. The vulture did not notice of it. On seeing the cat, the baby birds raised an alarm being afraid of him. But the cat tried to remain concealed. Hardly had the vulture wake up he saw the cat at his side. He said nervously, "Who are you? Why have you come here? Go away, if you care for your life."

The cat said politely, "O Master, Don't suspect and treat me like other cats. I am a monk and a pure vegetarian. My habit is to listen to the advice of the elders."

"But why should a monk come here?" said the vulture. The cat replied with a soft voice, "I have come here to seek some
religious advice. Please accept me as your disciple. I have been searching for a master like you after the death of my master. To-day is my lucky day."

The vulture was pleased at the praise of the cat and he remained silent. Seeing the satisfaction of the vulture the cat continued, "Your faithful servant has been searching with great pain only for you. Allow me to serve you from to-day."

So saying he got down the tree and disappeared. The noise of the young birds then died down.

After a short while the cat again climbed up the tree with a big mouse in his mouth. He placed the mouse in front of the vulture and said, "Your servant has abstained from the eating such things. Please have it, it is for you."

The vulture took the mouse happily. The vulture had not taken such diet for a long time as he could not fly. Being pleased the vulture said, "Well, I have full confidence in you. From to-day, you stay with me. Your work shall be to look after the young birds attentively. I shall introduce you to their parents after I wake up."

So saying the vulture started dozing and soon fell asleep. The cat who was waiting only for such moment ate up the baby birds and went away.

All the elder birds returned. They found only the bones in their respective nests in place of their young ones. They
thought that the old vulture had eaten their babies. So they killed the vulture.

Thus, the life of an old vulture was lost for giving shelter to a stranger.  

[Motifs: K1810. Deception by disguise. or,  
K2010. Hypocrite pretends friendship but attacks]

(ii) Tokpā Lānnābā (To wage war against a wild cat)

[Type 56B]

Once upon a time there were two friends named Tokpa Meisangba (a wild cat having a long tail) and Wabachengacacha (a kind of bird). Tokpa said, "Let us arrange feasts in turn." Chengagacha accepted the proposal and at first arranged a feast for Tokpa. He served Tokpa with their own eggs boiled which the latter relished very much. Tokpa thought that if the eggs of Chengagacha were so tasty, the taste of the flesh of Chengagacha must be rather excellent." He, therefore, wanted to eat him up. He asked Chengagacha where he spent the night. Every night Tokpa enquired about the place where Changagacha had spent the previous night. Chengagacha gave the name of the

place but kept changing his shelter every night. But one day he forgot to change the place. And he was caught by Tokpa. Thus, Tokpa ate him up and went away by licking his tongue.

The wife Chengngacha wept bitterly over the death of her husband. She feared that she along with her baby might fall victims to Tokpa. So she spent most of her time in the reeds till her baby was fully grown up. One day the female bird told her child to take revenge against Tokpa who had killed his father.

One evening, the son of Chengngacha came to wage war against Tokpa. On his way, he came across an egg, a padum (bamboo splinter), a ngakra (a kind of fish, *Clarias batrachus*), thouri kongai (noose), a mairen (pumkin) and mange thengu (a hammer made of the tamarind tree) and all of them joined him to wage war against Tokpa. They arrived at the gate of Tokpa. After a discussion, everybody was asked to take their respective positions in different places of the residence of Tokpa i.e., the egg at Phungalairu (western edge of the hearth); ngakra in the earthen pot; padum at the mosquito net; thouri kongoi at the main door; thengu at the pillar, and mairen at the eaves. All of them took their respective positions. The son of Chengngacha was on the roof and he chirped "Ke Kre Kek Tokpā lánnāge" (Ke Kre Kek waging war against Tokpa). Tokpa woke up and jumped out of the bed and said, "I am not satisfied with the eating of your father. I will eat you too." So saying, he
blew up the fire at phungā (fire-place). The egg burst out and its splinters hit the face of Tokpa. So he went to the earthen pot for washing his face. But his hands were injured by the fins of ngakrē. Again, he rushed towards the mosquito net for rubbing his face but padum pierced him. Greatly scared, he ran towards the main door in order to escape but he was caught by the neck by theuri kongoi. Then he was dragged towards the thengu and was also beaten by the latter. Tokpa rolled on the floor in great pain. On hearing it, māiren fell down on his neck. Thus, Tokpa was killed.

Tokpa was killed by the son of Wabachengngacha with his friends as a revenge for killing his father. 11

Motifs: K1161. Animals hidden in various parts of a house attack owner with their characteristic powers and kill him when he enters.

K811. Victim lured into house and killed

(iii) Pebet (A kind of small bird)

Type 1227

Long long ago there was a small bird called Pebet. She lived with her seven little children. One day the cat Houdong Lambeiba (Houdong = cat; lambeiba = monk) arrived and called

The mother Pebet with a view to saving her young children from the impending danger resorted to flattery and humoured the cat. "Oh, Thou art as beautiful as the red tayal fruit amidst bamboo thickets. Thou art as striking as the pot full of paddy or the pitcher with water full to the brim. Thou art as charming as a garland full of ngāries (seasoned dry fish). Thou art indeed as beautiful as the rising sun."

'Nōrara-rāo' was the self satisfied reply of the cat who went away for the day by chanting, 'shāmu kākā lili kākā, shāmu kākā lili kākā, mālā javāl'.12 The mother Pebet thought to herself that if she happened to provoke the cat before her young ones were able to fly, the cat would certainly eat them up. So the mother Pebet hastened to tutor her children in the art of growing up. She taught her children how to eat with their beaks; how to fly high from one bamboo top to another, from one tree top to another and from one hill-peak to another. In this way, after a long training, the little Pebet could fly well.

One day the cat came again to Pebet and said to her, "How handsome do I look?"

12. Shāmu Kākā lili Kākā mālā Jawāl - These are nonsense words but they signify that the cat is chanting religious charms by counting beads (as religious people do).
Pebet said to the cat, "Thou art as beautiful as the creeping red tayal amidst bamboo thickets. Thou art as striking as the basket full of paddy or the pitcher with water full to the brim. Thou art as charming as chain fully decorated with ngari, Thou art indeed as beautiful as the rising sun."

Then the cat went away chanting, "Shamu kâkâ jili kâkâ. Shamu kâkâ jili kâkâ ...". After this incident, the mother Pebet said to her children. "O my children, now you all can fly. So I shall pick a quarrel with the cruel cat if he comes again. When the quarrel starts, he will attempt to catch you. In the meantime I shall say, "Swa", then you fly away immediately." The next morning the cat came and called; "Pebet."

The mother Pebet did not reply and sat turning her back to the cat. The cat called her twice and thrice but she did not reply at all. The cat became furious at the cold reception of the mother Pebet. Moreover, he had been waiting for a long while for such a golden chance. The cat again called her with a grumbling sound, Pebet; "What do you think of me?"

Pebet said to the cat, "Houdong Lambeiba: What do you want?" The mother Pebet said to the ugly cat, "A cat is a cat, a monkey is a monkey. Thou art as ugly as you could be."

13. Swa: It is traditionally used at the start of the race.
The cat said, "Well, to-day I shall eat all your children." Pebet said, "Eat them if you can." Then the angry cat pounced upon the young ones of the Pebet and they flew away at their mother's remontrances. "Oh children, 'Swa.' But as luck would have it, the youngest one fell under the paws of the cat.

The cat was extremely happy to achieve his long aspiration. He said to Pebet, "How is that, Pebet? Now I shall eat your young one up."

The mother Pebet pleaded with the cat to eat the small Pebet after a web of rituals, which demanded that she be bathed properly as she was dirty, be placed on his palm, be basked in the sun. Then he should throw thrice the young Pebet on his palm saying*, 'Too-too, Te-too" before swallowing the bird.

The cat did exactly as instructed and the small Pebet bird strengthened from the heat of the sun, defecated suddenly on the palm of the cat and then she flew away from the palm of the cat. The cat quickly licked the faeces of the little Pebet and said to himself, 'Ah! If the faeces of the little Pebet are so tasty, the taste of the flesh would have been rather excellent. In this way the cat remained gazing at the little Pebet despairingly. Thus the mother Pebet with her children lived happily in another place.

[Motifs: K550. Escape by false plea. A captive makes a request or proposes an action that permits eventually to escape. K572. Escape from captor by means of flattery]
(c) Tales of The Supernatural or Wonder Tales

The important features of the tales of the supernatural or wonder tales are heroes and heroines with marvellous skills and achievements, supernatural adversaries and magical means. These tales are wholly fictional. But the belief on such tales are supposed to be true or purely fictional may be differed from country to country as Stith Thompson states: "... It is safe to say that the ordinary involved wonder tale is given as a piece of pure fiction in Europe but is expected to be believed in India."14

In Europe and western Asiatic area the most common adversaries are sometimes a dragon, a horrible animal, or simply an undefined monster.15 In Manipur, the common adversaries of the supernatural tales or wonder tales are such things as evil spirits, tigermen, etc. Some of the most significant supernatural and wonder tales of the Meiteis are given below:

(i) Hingchābigi Wari (The Story of Demeness)

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\text{Type 302A}
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Once there lived a man who had two wives. His first wife had a daughter. Wasareima, who was the daughter of a Hingchābi (demoness) was his second wife. Her mother Hingchābi lived on

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15. Ibid., p. 23.
taking the raw human flesh of anybody when she came across in her way. One day the second wife sent her step-daughter to hand over a letter to her mother Hingchābī in order to finish off the step-daughter by eating her up by the demoness, she had clearly written her intentions in the letter. Thus the step-daughter went to give the letter to her grand-mother. On her way to her grand-mother's house she passed through a thick jungle and being very tired of the walking, she rested beneath a big tree. While she was sleeping, a man also came through the jungle. The man saw the sleeping girl and on closer observation, he found a letter in her possession. He opened the letter and went through its contents. Moved by pity for the tender and innocent girl, he modified the contents of the letter and rewrote the letter, "Dear mother, The girl whom I am sending to you to-day is my own daughter. Please treat her with warm affection and love. You shall not eat her up as you do to other children." The man, after this modification, left the place.

The girl after sleeping for quite a long time woke up and went towards the house of her grand-mother. She gave the letter to her grand-mother. According to the contents of the letter, the Hingchābī treated her with great care and love. She took the girl to show the vegetable growing in her homestead. But, as soon as the girl saw a bow, an arrow with a tumba (hollow gourd) hanging on the wall she asked her grand-mother, "Grandmother, what are these things?" The grand-mother
said, "If tumbā is broken, my head is broken and if the bow is broken, I shall die of fracture of my backbone. So these are my life."

Then her grand-mother took her to have a look of her garden and she introduced her to the different magic plants growing in her garden one by one. Firstly, she introduced her to the leaves of the isingchāobi manā (a plant which can cause great flood) and she explained that when a single leaf of it was dropped to the ground it could cause great flood. Secondly, she pointed out the kākpheichāobi manā (leaves of a plant which can produce numerous leeches) which could produce numerous leeches and attack her enemy. Lastly, she pointed to a plant called meichāobi and told her grand-daughter that dropping of a single leaf could cause big fire. Hingchābi used these plants as weapons to defend herself from her enemies. Secretly the girl plucked the leaves of these plants and brought them with her. Then she took leaves of her grand-mother. But her grandmother Hingchābi wanted to eat her up and so she said occasionally, "Misā chāninggi Minu namee." (Hungry for human flesh and feel the smell of human being). Seeing the attitude of her grandmother the girl came to know that her grand-mother was a Hingchābi and so she prepared to leave the place as soon as possible. While her grand-mother was inside her house, the girl ran away with the bow, the arrow and the tumbā. When Hingchābi came out of her house she found that the girl had run way with her bow and arrow and the tumbā. Determined to kill
the girl, she at once, chased her with her mouth wide open, rearing with a thundering voice. On hearing the sound of her grand-mother, the girl got frightened and ran as fast as she could. But her grand-mother came closer and closer. So the girl used the defensive weapons of her grandmother one after another causing obstacles to her chase after the girl a while. However, Hingchäbi overcame the obstacles and the girl came within her reach. Then the girl broke the bow and the tumba and thus killed her grand-mother Hingchäbi.

The step-mother was very much surprised to see the girl returning home safely. She became angry with her mother and wrote a letter again but no reply came from her mother, as she was dead. The girl narrated the incidents to her father and the latter came to know that his second wife was the daughter of a Hingchabi. So, he killed his second wife for doing a Hingchäbi and also for plotting to kill his daughter. In the end the girl lived happily with her father.

(ii) Kabui Keioibi (Half-man and half-tiger)

[Type 165]

One day Kabui Keioibi — (half-man and half-tiger) came to a village in search of food. He came to the house of a widow and knocked at the door.

"Who's there?", said the woman from inside the house. "It's me", answered he. The widow, not knowing who he was,
opened the door. But to her astonishment she saw Kabui Keioiba standing in front of her door. She could not move because of fear and in a trembling voice she asked him, "Why have you came here?" He replied, "I have a strong desire for human flesh and I can't get it anywhere. So I have come here to eat you up."

The widow said, "What do you mean? I am a poor famished widow and I won't taste nice. The house of Thabaton is not far from here. Please go there and eat her with relish. She is very young and she is the only sister of her seven brothers." "What about her seven brothers?", said Kabui Keioiba. The widow told him that they were away from home and if he could imitate the voice of her elder brother, she would open the door without hesitation.

Accordingly, Kabui Keioiba went to the house and asked Thabaton to open the door. The girl replied that she would not open the door for his voice did not sound like that of her brother. So he came back disappointed to the widow and said, "You can't cheat me. I am not a fool. The girl will never open the door. It's no good wasting time. Be ready and I'll kill you."

"Wait", said the woman, "I shall help you." So both of them came to the house of Thabaton and the woman imitating the voice of her elder brother asked her to open the door. The girl was deceived and so she opened the door. At once Kabui
Keioiba caught and took her away into the jungle. Though she cried at the top of her voice for help nobody came to her help.

But after carrying her home, Kabui Keioiba changed his mind. In no time he cultivated friendship with her and asked her to marry him. He built a small hut in the jungle and began to live with her. Thabaton was not at all happy in spite of his best efforts to comfort her. She was always thinking of her seven brothers. In course of time, she gave birth to two children and this even did not comfort her. Day and night she used to make plans for escape, which she could not do for fear of the man-tiger. He was always by her side and he never left her alone even for a single moment. She was like a prisoner in his hand.

After some time her seven brothers returned home and were extremely sorry when they found that their only sister had been kidnapped by Kabui Keioiba. They left for the jungle in search of her without further delay. At last they saw the small hut from a distance. At a little distance from the hut they saw the figure of a woman. They observed more closely and to their great joy they found that the woman was none other than their sister Thabaton. They went nearer and waited for an opportunity of making a sign to their sister.

On hearing a rustling noise, Thabaton turned round. She saw her seven brothers hiding themselves in the jungle. She could understand that her brothers were waiting for her and
without delay she gave a bamboo tube with an open end to Kabui Keioiba. She told him to fetch some water in the tube. When he went away to fetch the water she set the hut on fire and ran away with her seven brothers. Within a short time they reached home and they knew that Kabui Keioiba would come again in search of Thabaton and so they made a plan to kill him.

The man-tiger could not fill water in the tube since it could not hold it. He tried several times but it was of no use. A crow was silently observing the foolish efforts of the man-tiger from a branch of a tree. So he (the crow) told him (Kabui Keioiba) that his hut was on fire and his wife had gone away with her seven brothers. Kabui Keioiba at once came back to his house and found that the crow was right.

Hurriedly he went to the house of Thabaton but he could not venture to go nearer as her brothers were inside the house. So he hid himself somewhere and waited for an opportunity to carry her away as before.

One evening she came out alone to collect some fire-wood. Her brothers were at home. She saw Kabui Keioiba lurking in the bush and suddenly she raised an alarm. Her seven brothers rushed out and killed him to the great joy of all. From that day onwards the seven brothers lived happily with their sister, Thabaton.

A man had two wives. Each of them had a daughter and a son. Shandrembi was the daughter of the older wife and Chaisra was the daughter of the younger one. The two wives became widows as their husband died early.

The younger wife was a wicked; she not only hated the older one but also wanted to harm her. One day they went together for catching fish at the Shilel lake. The older one caught plenty of fishes and the younger one caught some oysters, eel, and snakes. As the sun was about to set, the two went up to the bank for going home. When they were on the bank, the younger one climbed up a fig tree growing there and started eating the fruits. And she also dropped a ripe fruit for her elder co-wife. The older one ate it with relish and said to the younger one, "How delicious it is. Please drop some more." The younger one did the same. The younger wife dropped eels and snakes from her tungol (creel) into the mouth of the older one. Immediately, the older one cried and rolled on the ground with great pain. Then she was turned into a tortoise and moved to the water. She did not come up. The younger one was satisfied with what she had done. Thus, she returned home with the fishes caught by her older one.
Shandrembi said to her step-mother, "Where is my mother?"

The step-mother said, "Your greedy mother does not agree to return home with me and she stayed back." Chaisra, her brother and mother had their meal after preparing the fish caught by the mother of Shandrembi. Shandrembi felt nervous at the non-return of her mother. In the meantime, her younger brother began to cry as he was very hungry. She went to her step-mother and said, "Please give me a fish for my brother."

The step-mother said, "Don't cry here. I don't have anything." Shandrembi went back disappointed with her brother. Then she went to bed. In her dream her mother appeared and said, "I am now at the foot of the fig plant of the Shilel lake as a tortoise. Tomorrow morning you catch me and keep me for seven days away from the sun and the moon so that I may be transformed into a human being again."

In the early morning Shandrembi went to the Shilel lake and tried to catch her tortoise -- transformed mother. She caught many other small fishes but set them free into the water. At last she caught the tortoise and put it inside her creel. She returned home hurriedly. When she was putting the tortoise into an earthen pot, Chaisra's younger brother saw it. He said, "Sister, please give me the tortoise." Shandrembi said, "It cannot be given to you." Then he went to his mother and said, "Sister Shandrembi has a tortoise. Mother, I want to eat it." The step-mother told Shandrembi to give the tortoise
to her son. But Shandrembi replied that this could not be given to him. She, further, requested her (step-mother) to take any fish from the earthen pot. The step-mother came hurriedly and took away the earthen pot in which the tortoise was kept. She again said, "Shandrembi, you boil this tortoise properly and feed my son."

When the water began to boil, the tortoise said, "O dear Shandrembi, it has reached your mother's knee." On hearing it Shandrembi took out some fire-wood from the fire place. The boy shouted, "O mother, sister Shandrembi has taken out fire-wood from the fire." Immediately she put back the fire-wood. "Oh, dear daughter; it has reached my breast," said the tortoise. Shandrembi took out the fire-wood from the fire. The boy again reported it to his mother. At last the tortoise said, "Oh, dear Shandrembi, I am dead." Shandrembi cried loudly in vain but the boy ate up the boiled tortoise.

Again, Shandrembi's mother came in her dream, "You keep my bones for seven days inside a lubāk (a covered basket made of bamboo split)." She did it but she opened the lubāk on the sixth day. Instead of being transforming into a human being, the bones of the tortoise had turned into a swallow and flew away. 16

16. There are some variations. Transformation into a swallow is sometimes included in some areas and sometimes excluded in some parts of the valley. In R.K. Snahal's Phunga Wari, we have found the inclusion of it. See also R.K. Snahal, Phunga Wari, Imphal, 1959, pp. 1-10.
One evening Shandrembi and Chaisra went for fetching water. Shandrembi was in dirty dress, carrying an earthen pot whereas Chaisra was putting on phige phanek (a phanek made of silk) and carrying a brass pot. The king on his return from a hunting expedition came across them and said, "You maiden in dirty dress, please offer me some water." When Chaisra reached home, she narrated everything to her mother. On the following day, Chaisra in dirty dress with an earthen pot and Shandrembi in phige phanek with a brass pot went together for fetching water. When the king met them, he said, "Oh dear maiden in phige phanek with a brass pot, let me have some water." The king, further, said, "To-day I will make you my queen." Thus, the king took away Shandrembi on his horseback and subsequently made her queen. In course of time, Shandrembi had a son. Thus, they lived happily.

Chaisra's mother wanted to kill Shandrembi so that she could make her daughter the queen. Therefore, she invited Shandrembi for a feast. When Shandrembi came for the feast, her step-mother said, "Let us bathe your sister Shandrembi." The step-mother took her on a flat stone and said, "Bring cold water for bathing your sister." But Chaisra brought the boiling water and poured it over Shandrembi's head. Shandrembi fell down unconscious. She was transformed into a dove and flew away.

17. Some scholars like R.K. Snahal said that when Shandrembi came to the feast, her ornaments were worn by Chaisra. When Shandrembi wanted to go back, Chaisra instead of giving the ornaments, threw them under the cot. Shandrembi was trying to take them out. While she was doing so, her step-mother poured down boiling water on her head and her soul was transformed into a dove. See R.K. Snahal, loc. cit.
Chaisra went to the palace in the guise of Shandrembi. The king was surprised to see her and said, "Why you have changed your complexion?" Chaisra giving some explanations entered the room for breast feeding the baby. The king was quite surprised but he kept quiet.

Next morning, while the king's grass-cutter was cutting the grass, she (Shandrembi) flew there and said to him of the king's forgetfulness about his wife. This news reached the king. So, one day the king went to the grass field with the grass-cutter. When the latter was cutting the grass, the king hid himself in the bushes. The dove flew there and said,

Oh king,
Thou forget thy wife
Shandrembi on the branch.
Chaisra on the throne.
Let epidemic be on horses.
Let the same be on elephants.
The yarn of the looms be torn.
The son, Khomdon be not lost.

The king suddenly came out and put some grains on the palms and said, "O bird, if you have been transformed by Shandrembi, you come down and eat the grains." Without any hesitation, the bird flew down on his palm and ate the food grains. The bird did not fly away. The king then brought it to the palace and
kept it there carefully. One day on seeing the dirt in the eyes of the king's son, the dove took it out with its beak. Chaisra saw it. Then she killed the dove and prepared it as porridge. The king came to know the reason of the death of the dove. When the curry of the dove was served, the king threw it out and said that it was not a dish for a human being.18

After sometime a heijāng(a kind of plant) plant grew up at the spot where the curry was thrown. In course of time the plant bore fruit. One day the grass-cutter wanted to eat a fruit. So he searched for a fruit. At last he found a fruit at the heijāng plant and plucked it. But it so happened that when the fruit was there, there was no knife, and when the knife was there, there was no fruit. Thus many days had passed. Now the fruit was transformed into Shandrembi who started cooking the food for the grass-cutter while he was out. Every day on returning home the grass-cutter found his food ready. He was greatly surprised and wanted to find out the person who cooked his food. One day he pretended to be going out for cutting grass but stayed by the side of his house. Just after his departure, a beautiful lady came out from the cover of his

18. Chaisra killed the dove on the suspicion that it was being transformed by the soul of Shandrembi. But Chaisra's pleas for killing it was that the wild dove did not accustomed to stay inside the cage. Therefore, it was found dead inside it. See also R.K. Thamphasana Devi, Manipuri Lok Sahitya, Imphal, 1974, pp. 44-57.
Chengphu (rice-pot) and she prepared the food. Suddenly the grass-cutter rushed towards her and said, "Who are you?" She said, "I am Shandrembi. You, the servant of the king have also forgotten me." Soon he was convinced that she was Shandrembi. He requested her to wait there so as to enable him to call the king. The grass-cutter reported everything to the king. Immediately, the king with his attendants came to the residence of the grass-cutter and said thus:

'Come out Shandrembi,
I will make you happy and comfortable.'

Shandrembi came out and embraced the king with love. She then narrated to the king all about her transformation into a dove, from dove to fruit, from fruit to human being, and so on and so forth. The king was very much pleased at the reunion of his beloved wife, Shandrembi. He said, "Let Chaisra be punished by God." Thus, the king brought Shandrembi to the palace.

The king told Chaisra that she would fight with a woman who had claimed as Shandrembi. The king, further, said that she was a liar. So she could defeat her easily.

The king arranged two swords, one very beautiful but not sharp and the other very ugly but with a sharp edge. Chaisra took the beautiful one and Shandrembi the ugly one. They two fought in presence of the king and the noble men. In the fight, Shandrembi killed Chaisra. Thus, the king and Shandrembi with
their son lived happily for a long time.

There are some variations in this folktale in Manipur. Though there are variations, the main theme of the story is the same. In some versions the name of the heroine is Shandrembi is place of Shandrembi.

T15. Love at first sight. K2212.1. Treacherous
K1911.2.1. True bride transformed by false
bride. D211.2. Transformation : Woman to
D431.4. Transformation fruit to person.]

(d) Tales of Cleverness or Cheating or Trickster Tales

On the observation of the trickster tales of the North American Indians, Stith Thompson remarks: "The adventures of the Trickster, even when considered by themselves, are inconsistent. Part are the result of his stupidity, and about an equal number show him overcoming his enemies through cleverness. Such a trickster as Coyote, therefore, may appear in any one of three roles: the beneficent Culture Hero, the clever deceiver, or the numskull. As we look at the incidents, we find that this
mixture of concept is continually present, so that any series of adventures is likely to be a succession of clever tricks and foolish mishaps."^{19} "Trickster is the most paradoxical of characters in traditional narratives and the outstanding characteristic is the lack of moral."^{20} There are a large number of such types of folktales in Manipur valley, some of them are given below:

(i) **Tapta**^{21}

> [Type 177]

Once upon a time there lived a rich man. He had quite a good number of horses. One night a tiger happened to come to his house in search of his prey. The tiger was very happy to find so many horses in the stable. As the night was not so advanced, he hid himself in one of the corners of the stable to avoid the notice of the inmates.

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21. Tapta: According to some scholars, it is a non-sensical word and it means nothing. It is generally believed to have been derived from the sound of the rain drops. In the story the night on which the incident took place was very dark and raining. The mother of the child could not pacify her child at all costs. When she heard the sound of the rain drops falling drop by drop with a sound "tap, tap,..." she had produced the word 'Tapta' (Tāp = the sound of rain drop; Tā = to fall; Tapta = the sound of rain drops falling on the ground.

A similar tale in Assamese is *Dighal Thengiya*. 
At this time a child began to cry aloud in the house. Her mother tried her best to pacify the child. But the child kept on crying and her mother not knowing what to do slung the child on her back and came out of her room. She sang a lullaby to lull her child to sleep. The mother did all possible efforts to stop the crying of the child. She said to her, "Hui läkle" (The dog has come), "Houdong läkle" (The cat has come)." Even then the child did not stop crying. The mother went near the stable and said, "Yeng-nguße Kei läkle" (Look, the tiger has come)." The child was least frightened even at the mention of the word 'tiger'. As a last resort the mother said, "Taptä läkle, Taptä läkle" (The Tapta has come, the Tapta has come). She further, said, "Stop crying or he'll take you away." Immediately the child stopped crying as he got frightened. The tiger got nervous when he heard the remark of the mother.

But the tiger thought within himself that the child had stopped crying at once at the mention of Tapta and therefore, the Tapta might have been a more ferocious and powerful creature than himself. He knew that the child was not afraid of him. With these conclusions in mind, the tiger continued waiting in the dark.

After a while a thief came and entered the stable to steal one of the horses. Secretly he moved around to steal the best one. The tiger saw the thief approaching towards him. The tiger took the thief for the Tapta. Preoccupied with the
thought of ferocious and powerful Tapta, the tiger began to tremble in fear and thought that the Tapta had come to catch him and would put him to death. So the tiger came out of the corner and stood in line with other horses, pretending to be one of them. The thief examined all the horses one after another. He at once caught hold of the legs of the tiger. The thief presumed that the tiger was the healthiest horse from among the other horses and so he put a bridle on him and mounted on his back. The Tiger for fear of Tapta made the least resistance. Then the tiger began to gallop and very soon they were on the high way. In the twilight of the dawn the thief noticed that the creature on which he was riding was not a horse but a tiger. However, he did not lose his reason. He was looking for an opportunity of leaving the tiger. As soon as he saw a big hole in a big tree growing by the side of the road. He at once threw himself off to get into the hole. The tiger, being set free, ran as fast as he could and did not even dare to see what the Tapta looked like.

A little farther away from that place the tiger came across a fox and warned him not to go to that direction. He narrated the story of his miraculous escape from the clutches of the Tapta. But the fox was very curious to have a look at the Tapta. So the fox asked the tiger to accompany him to the place where the Tapta could be seen. The tiger refused for fear of the Tapta, it would be necessary for them to run as fast as they could and in doing so, one of them might lag behind and there would be an
of him. He convinced the fox of the danger. Thereupon, the fox asked the tiger not to be afraid of the Tapta. He made a plan to tie themselves together by a rope so that one could drag the other when one was lagging behind. The tiger agreed to the proposal and both of them started for the place.

After some time the thief raised his head to see how far the tiger had gone. But the tiger and the fox who were coming towards the tree saw the man's head rising out of the hole. At once they cried, "The Tapta is still there." So they began to run as fast as they could. But the fox could not keep with the tiger and he was being dragged for a considerable distance. When the tiger turned round to see how his friend fared, he found the fox dead, and he ate him up. The thief came out of his hiding and went home.

[Motifs : J1758. Tiger mistaken for domestic animal. N691. Objects accidentally picked up used to overawe ogres.]

(ii) Lāi-Khutsāngbi (A fairy with long arms)

[Type 152A]

Once upon a time there lived a couple in a village. They had a child. 'Tamangdong was the name of the mother of that child. The husband used to leave his wife and son at home whenever he went outside for his business. Not far from that village,
there was a dense jungle where Lai-Khutsangbi (a fairy with long arms) lived. This fairy came to the village every day in search of prey and she could thrust her long arms through any crack of a wall and could pull out any person even though she was outside the house. Thus, she became a constant terror to the whole village.

One night Lai-Khutsangbi came to the house of Tamangdong and said, "Tamangdong, Is your husband in?" The mother was terrified at the voice of the fairy but she did not lose her senses and said, "Yes, he is in the house." The Lai-Khutsangbi was taken aback and she knew that she could not be able to kill Tamangdong and her child.

One night she came again and made the same enquiry and went away after getting the same reply. Thus continued for sometime and Tamangdong was eagerly waiting for the return of her husband. On return of the husband from his business, Tamangdong narrated everything of her husband. The husband suggested to his wife that if the fairy came next time, let her be informed of his absence to put her to death. As usual Lai-Khutsangbi came one night and asked Tamangdong the same question as before. Tamangdong replied that her husband was not in the house. Lai-Khutsangbi was very happy, thinking that she could eat both the mother and the child. She then thrust her long arms through the wall in search of the mother and the child. As soon as she thrust her long arm, the husband of Tamangdong suddenly cut off the arm of Lai-Khutsangbi with his
sharp sword at one stroke, ran as fast as she could unable to bear the pain she ran towards the thick bushes of the reeds crying and shouting, "Thamangdong, you cheat me, your husband is not in."

The next day, the villagers found the blood-stained reeds of the jungle in the way of the Lai-Khutshanbi's escape. From that day onwards the villagers lived in peace.

[Motifs: J1110, Clever persons. S161, Mutilation: cutting off hands (arms)]

(e) Etiological Tales

In Manipur, there is no rigid distinction between a myth, a legend and a folktale as the material from the one easily passes into the other. In western countries such tales are sometimes treated as 'myths', sometimes as 'folktales', and sometimes merely as 'traditions.' In such types of tales a real attempt is given to account for creation; but more often these origin tales are nothing more than reports of important changes taking place in an already existing world. These changes may involve the creation of the present earth, or

22. In various areas of the valley of Manipur, this folktale has been told with certain variation with different names of the mother of the child. In some areas, the name of the mother is Chakti Chakto, in some places Sachima and in some locality Tamangdong. However, the theme of the tale is almost the same.
particular features of it, or even of the heavenly bodies; and, more frequently, the creation and conditioning of men and animals. A few of the other myths popular in the Meitei society, like the following centering round the parrot, the koel and the cricket, have an etiological element. They are connected with the popular belief that the parrot, the koel and the cricket are maidens (called Shonggree, Upemnu princess and Haosi Namoinu respectively) transformed into birds. Such tales are found in a large number in the Meitei society. Some specimens are as follows thus:

(1) Taibung Minə Tenawə Onbə (Transformation of human being into parrot)

Long long ago there lived a man called Angangnga, son of Koubru. He had also a son called Yukok Thong Yaimaba who lived on business as he did not know much about agriculture. He was in search of an inn at Kabow (Burma) while he was on business. He took shelter at the residence of Haoningsang Poudongnung and in course of time he became her husband.

After some time Yukok Thong Yaimaba was named Konthak Thongngang Thongsoksaba by all. They lived together for some months. When Poudongnung conceived, Konthak set out for business. As he could not get enough profit out of his business, he did not return home for a pretty long time. In course of time

time; Poudongnung got a daughter called Shonggree. She brought up her daughter with great difficulties. She also went from door to door for husking paddy for earning their livelihood. Her daughter had become of age. Therefore, her mother was aghast of doing such works when her daughter was fully grown up. Thus, she started earning their livelihood from jhooming cultivation. When the paddy began to ripe, she built loungāk-sang (watch-hut) at her paddy field. She spent most of her time by protecting the ripe paddy from birds.

One day Poudongnung said to her daughter Shonggree, "To-day, you go to the paddy field and watch and protect it from the birds." After taking meal with her mother, Shonggree with some victuals went to the paddy field. Thus, she protected the paddy field from wild birds and monkeys for about five days as told by her mother.

While Shonggree was watching the paddy field, her father Konthak Thongngang who had left for business fourteen years ago came back home from Khāgi (China). On his way home, he saw Shonggree, a beautiful maiden watching the paddy field from loungāk-sang. He was totally enamoured by her beauty. For him it was love at the first sight and so he started talking of his love for her. However, Shonggree could not even gaze at him out of her shyness. But being enchanted by her beauty and taking the advantage of the loneliness of the sight, Konthak forcibly raped her on the spot. After the act, he left for
home hurriedly. But the helpless girl Shonggree wept and repented very much for her helplessness of being a girl and for the loss of her virginity.

Konthak Thongngang reached home and said to her wife Haoningsang, "I have come. You prepare a smoke for the hookah." Thus he was sitting at the phamel (the left side of the verandah) with the hookah. At that time as the sun was about to set his daughter Shonggree returned home. She was utterly surprised to see Konthak sitting on a mat in the phamel of her residence. So she entered her home in disguise covering her face with her cloth in order to avoid the notice of Konthak who was puffing from a hookah. She went to her mother and said, "O, mother, who is the man sitting in the phamel."

The mother said to her, "You may not know him but he is your father. He had gone for business for our livelihood when I was pregnant." "I have been raped by him at the loungak-sang. I want to commit suicide jumping down into the river Ningthee near the Ango hill." Saying thus, Shonggree went towards east. Her mother being very busy in preparing the food, did not pay much heed to it. When the food was ready, Konthak had his meal. Poudongnung called her daughter but no response came from Shonggree as she had already left the place. Then, she was in search of her daughter from place to place but she could not find her. Her friends said to Poudongnung, "To-day, we do not see her." At last, she remembered the words of her daughter and
also thought herself that her daughter might have committed suicide. Her mother searched her even in the night but she could not trace her. She returned home with great repentence and slept without her meal.

In the midnight, Shonggree jumped into the river Ningthee and her soul was transformed into nungā fish (a kind of fish). That very night, the soul of Shonggree came to her mother in a dream and said, "Oh mother, your daughter is now in the river Ningthee in the form of nungā fish. I am staying here in order to transform into a new life as I am ashamed of living in the world. You please come and catch me. Then, put me for six days by covering me with seven layers of cloth. If so, I may be able to transform into a new life."

Just after this dream Poudongnung got up and went towards the east with a long (a kind of fishing trap - bowl shaped fish basket) in hand and creel in her waist. When she reached the bank of the river Ningthee, she went down the river thus saying the following, "My daughter Shonggree, I repent for you. I am coming to catch you to get you transformed into a human being. Where are you?" She tried to catch nungā fish. But she could catch the other fishes except nungā fish. She set them free into the water by saying that she wanted to catch her daughter only not them. And sometimes she threw the leftovers on the bank of the river. As she could not catch her daughter the whole day, she returned home, dejected. Poudongnung
felt asleep and in her dream, her daughter Shonggree re­appeared and said, "Oh mother, you catch me but leave me on
the pebbles of the river bank. You do not recognise me. I am
now bearing the scorching heat of the sun. Come again to­day
and take me home before the sun rises. Keep me six days by
wrapping with seven layers of cloth."

She suddenly got up and immediately went towards the
Ningthee river with a long in hand. When she reached the
river back, she tried to find out the nungā fish amongst the
pebbles. Later on she found the nungā fish and put it into
her creel and returned home. She did everything according to
her dream.

On the fifth day Poudongnung was very much impatient to
see it, whereas it was to be kept for six days. She opened
and looked at it on the fifth day. It had been transformed
into a bird as it was seen before six days. It said to her
mother, "Your daughter Shonggree cannot transform into human
being but becomes a bird. Now I can't stay with you." Then
her mother Poudongnung said, "0 dear daughter, you be a small
bird that heralds the morning in Senbi (Burma) and thy name
be no other than tenawā, the beautiful parrot. 24

[Motif : D157 Transformation man to parrot]

Long long ago there lived a brave king called Shalmo. One summer day he set out for hunting with his servant. They failed to catch any animal. At the fag end of the expedition they caught a wild pigeon. As they were deadly tired of the day's hunting, the king asked his servant to collect fire to roast the pigeon somewhere. The servant went to the residence of the princess Upemnu, the daughter of the Kabo king, Puchingba to ask for the fire. While he was roasting the bird at the court-yard of the princess, she was weaving at her portico. He was completely charmed by the beauty of the princess and could not stop gazing at her beautiful face. When he turned his attention to the pigeon, he found the pigeon over burnt. He was very much worried about the punishment his master might inflict. So he started sobbing and his worries overcame the beauty of the princess. She came and asked him about the reasons of his worries. The servant narrated the whole incident and told that his master would be waiting eagerly and hungrily for him.

The princess, consoling the servant, told that she would give him a better item for his master. So saying she went inside her palace and took out the white thoiding (an edible oily seed like mustard seed) from her granary. She pounded the seed in a mortar with a pestle till the seed became oily.
She prepared the paste into the form of a pigeon and roasted lightly on the fire. She gave the pigeon to the king's servant for presentation to his master.

The hungry king was completely fascinated by the beautifully roasted and nicely smelled pigeon. So great was the taste that he took the pseudo-pigeon for the wild pigeon caught in the hunting. Then his servant narrated the incident as to how he over burnt the pigeon while looking at the beautiful princess as he had developed a fascination for her. He sent his servant to propose for a meeting with the princess at her residence that night. His servant requested the princess to allow them to stay at her court-yard for the night. In fact his master was madly in love with the princess at the gesture shown to him took the advantage of his inability of going back to his palace for the day. His servant expressed his master's desire to marry her.

The king Shalmo and the princess Upemnu met at the foot of a betel-nut tree that night and there they exchanged their love for each other. After a passionate love making they became husband and wife. The king named his dear wife Leima Khunuka (Leimā = princess, khunu = pigeon, ḫā or ḫābā = over burnt) as her nick-name. After their marriage the king stayed with his wife for five days together at her residence.

After five days the king returned home with his wife. The queen Leima Luchingbi Yaongnu, the king's first wife, was not present at the palace on the day of their arrival. The king
again, went out for hunting leaving behind his newly married wife. After a while the queen Leima Yaongnu returned home with some fishes. She became mad with anger at the sight of the presence of Leima Upemnu inside the bed-room of the king. The queen Yaongnu hurriedly went inside the room and dragged the hand of Leima Upemnu forcibly. In the process, the hand of the princess was completely dislodged at the wrist joint and a huge quantity of blood was given out. After the incident she left the palace unnoticed.

The king Shalmo learnt of the incident after his return from the hunting. He became very sad with the loss of his beloved princess Upemnu and set out in search of her. Later, when he met his beloved, he persuaded her to return to his palace and assumed her of the full protection from the cruel hands of his first wife. He promised her that he would bring his first wife to book. However, his beloved Upemnu with tears rolling down her cheek, refused to go back as she was unwilling to expose her handicapped position to his subjects. When his request was totally turned down, the king flew into a rage and returned home so as to teach his first wife a proper lesson. He murdered his wife and threw her dead body into a river. Later the dead body of his wife turned into an oyster.

Princess Upemnu was greeted warmly at her residence but her relatives were shocked to see her conditions. Instead of showing sympathy her relatives mocked at her. And to add to
her insult they chided her that her fate would have been different altogether had she obeyed and married her parents' choice. Being unable to bear the insult and her past mistakes one day princess Upemnu committed suicide causing a greater misery in her family. The king came to the residence of his beloved and almost fainted to know that the relatives of Upemnu were mourning over her death. He, too, wept to see the dead face of his wife. At the piteous sobbings of the king his mother-in-law offered the hands of her second daughter. But the king refused the offer thinking that his life was not worth living without his beloved Upemnu. He, too, committed suicide in the hope that his soul would unite with the soul of his beloved.

After their deaths the two souls met at the Nuraching-khuthem lake on the way to the land of Death. Lakong Louonba, one of the gods of the Land of Death advised the king Shalme to take a bath in the lake so that their souls might be united in the Land of Death. While the king was taking his bath Lakong Louonba kidnapped his wife Upemnu and disappeared. The king made fruitless attempts to find his beloved but all was in vain. Lakong Louonba took Upemnu for his wife and later on two sons were born to her. Princess Upemnu was helpless and could not escape from the hands of Lakong Louonba as she was gradually tied down to the chain of her family life. At last king Shalme came to know that his wife had became the wife
a god. So he came to Korou Nongningthou, the king of gods of the Land of Death, to seek his mercy and prayed to him for a proper trial for the kidnapping of his wife. The god took his side and waged a war against Lakong Louonba. In the battle that followed the king Nongningthou defeated Lakong Louonba. Lakong Louonba turned himself into a butterfly and flew away. After the death of her god husband, princess Upemnu came to meet the king Shalmo with her two sons. But the king became furious as she had forgotten him after she had been kidnapped by Lakong Louonba. He reminded her that he had died only for her. Then the king cursed her so that her first son would become a Koel. Thus, the first son of princess Upemnu was transformed into a Koel.

Motif: D156. Transformation man to cuckoo

(iii) Haoshi Namoinu

Once upon a time there was a maiden called Haoshi Namoinu. She had a step-mother who was a wicked and crooked woman. Haoshi Namoinu was brought up by her step-mother and in course of time she came of age. The unfortunate maiden had no peace of mind even for a moment as her step-mother always tried to find fault with her in all her activities and in every walk of life. One day the girl and her friend sought the permission of her step-mother to play kāng (a typical Meitei indoor game).

and promised to do her work the following day. But her step-
mother Nganurol Laoshigam Chanu, who was as sour as a sour fruit and as hot as a hot ginger, told her to take a basket from the granary and fetch paddy from a distant village. The girl had simply to obey her step-mother and had to abandon the play of kāng with her friends. The girl returned home with the basket of paddy perspiring all over her body. Hardly had Haoshi Namoinu reached the verandah of her house than her step-mother told her to husk the paddy. Her step-mother was cooking a chagempomba (a porridge) at that time. She was very tired of the constant stirring of the porridge with a piece of bamboo. On the other hand, it was hard task for the poor girl to husk the paddy without taking a little rest. So the girl said, "O, mother why do you tell me to husk the paddy? I have not yet taken my seat after returning. I have perspired all over my body and my breast cloth is not yet dry." But her step-mother became angry with her and not only she called her bad names but also beat her on the crown of her head with the bamboo ladle. The helpless girl wept piteously leaning partly against the door and supporting herself partly on a piece of bamboo. Bleeding profusely, she moaned that such a life was not worth living. How could she show her disfigurement to her dear friends and the elder of the locality? As her cry and moon were mixed with the gale blowing through the sky, a strange thing began to happen. Her body was transformed into Hari nongnang (cicada). Her phansek became the hairs of the
cicada and her breast-cloth became its transparent wings. Thus, Haoshi Namoinu was turned into a cicada.

In some versions it is told that one day poor Haoshi Namoinu who was very tired after the day's works entrusted by her stepmother, she failed to look after the homestead in the absence of her step-mother.

Again, in a version popular in some localities it is also told that Haoshi Namoinu had lost her parents when she was still a child and she was brought up by her step-mother whose real name was Laoshiyam Chanu and not Nganuron Laoshingam Chanu (as written in some other books).

(iv) Uchek Langmeidong (A bird called Langmeidong)

In olden days there was a maiden who had been brought up by her step-mother. As luck would have it, her mother had died when she was still a child. So her step-mother looked after her and brought her up with cruel treatment. However, the maiden had to bear with her step-mother as she had no other alternatives. Her step-mother had a little son who was younger than the maiden. The maiden loved her stepbrother very much in spite of the ill-treatment of her step-mother. Her father used to leave her under the care of her step-mother whenever he went out for business. During his absence, her step-mother tortured the daughter every day. The unfortunate girl could
no longer tolerate the tortures and ultimately she wanted to be freed herself from the bondage of her misfortune. Every day she wept over her misfortune and felt jealous of the birds Langmeidong flying freely in the sky. In fact she wanted to be in the midst of the birds and she had lost all the interest of her life. So whenever she saw the birds Langmeidong flying over her homestead she told them, 0 friends Langmeidong, since you have wings you can fly freely. I am unable to tolerate the torture of my step-mother. I wish to fly freely like you. Please give me your feathers. As she asked the birds for their feathers every day, the birds developed a love for the helpless and innocent maiden.

One day the birds Langmeidong dropped their feathers for the maiden in her court-yard. The maiden collected the feathers and made wings with them. Then she put on the wings and flew away in the midst of the birds. After some days her father returned home and he came to know from his son that his daughter had transformed into a bird Langmeidong and flew away with them. The father was very much shocked at this unexpected happening. His intense longing for seeing his daughter forced him to ask the birds Langmeidong, flying as usual, over his homestead he said, "0 birds, do you see my pearl-like daughter. Please tell her father is awaiting for her eagerly."
One day the maiden who had been transformed into a bird Langmeidong came to the courtyard of her father and perched upon the Polāŋkhok (cloth stand where clothes are dried). She said to her father. "Oh my dear father, Your daughter has come." The father, though very happy to see again his daughter asked her in a dejected voice. "O my dear pearl, why have you transformed into a bird? Do you forget your father? Come to me." However the daughter told her father of her inability to fulfil his wish as she had changed into a bird and had taken the foods of the birds. She requested her father to forgive and forget her forever. Thus the maiden bird flew away.

[Motif : D150, Transformation man to bird]

(v) Nonggoubi-qi Wāri (The Story of Nonggoubi)

Tangja Lilha Pakhangba dug the long and big rivers of Manipur. But, Yoimongba Taothingmang had cleaned the course of the river. While doing so, all the birds including Urok Lamprüf joined the works of Yoimongba Taothingmang. However, the only bird Nonggoubi did not join it. When some birds called Nonggoubi to join the work, she replied that she was breast feeding her child. On the following day the other birds called her again to join them for the same work. But she replied that she was washing clothes. Next time when she was called, her reply was that she was preparing the meal. Thus
Nonggoubi remained aloof instead of joining the work by offering one plea after another. As she did not join the cleaning of the course of the river, it is said that she never drinks water from the river. There is a traditional belief that if she drinks water from the river, her rump will get decomposed. 26

(vi) Urenbi Onkhibagi Wari (The story of the transformation into a bird Urenbi)

Once a man of Heirem Khunjal went to the hills on a business tour. As luck would have it, this man was killed by seven persons with swords in their hands. The dead businessman of Heirem Khunjal was transformed into the Urenbi bird. He could not forget the seven sword men who had killed him even after his transformation into the Urenbi bird. It is believed that the Urenbi bird always cries ‘Mee Taret’, ‘Thang Taret’ (mee taret = seven persons, Thang Taret = seven swords) in constant recollection of his death at the hands of the seven men with seven swords. 27

(f) Cumulative Tales

The important nature of cumulative tale is the spirit of pure fun and amusement in the form of repetition, usually repetition with continuous addition. In a cumulative tale

proper "the action, characters, names, speeches or whatever is the feature of the accumulation, builds up to an impass or a climax and often, but not always goes through the list again in reverse in order to resolve the plot." \(^{28}\) Stith Thompson thus observes: "Something of the nature of a game is also present here, since the accumulating repetitions must be recited exactly, but in the central situation many of these tales maintain their form unchanged over long periods of history and in very diverse environment ... . The cumulative tale always gradually works up to one long final routine containing the entire sequence. The person examining cumulative tales, therefore, has only to look at this final formula to learn all that is to be learned about the whole tale." \(^{29}\) Some cumulative tales are available in the Meitei society. We are giving below a specimen of a Meitei cumulative tale.

\[\text{(i) Khambrängchāknā Mapām Chatpā (Khambrangchak's visit to Parent's house)}\]

Once upon a time a Khambrangchak (a kind of bird) couple lived happily. The wife of the Khambrangchak had not visited her father's house and as such she had not met her dear relatives for fairly a long time. One day she took the permission of her husband to go her father's house. As a preparation of her proposed visit she went to a river bed for

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taking a bath. She happened to sit on the back of a bachelor crab who had been calmly basking in the sunshine. She mistook the crab for a big flat stone. In a state of joy, she danced, cleaned and polished her soles and nails of her feet on the back of the crab.

The crab became very annoyed at the reckless activities of the Khambranphak and so he caught the soft legs of Khambrangchak with the hooks of his long claws. Out of severe pain, the bird flew away and sat on the branch of a bong plum tree grown on the southern side of small house. As a result of her perching on the bough of the tree, a fully ripened fruit fell on a nest of ants. The panic-stricken ants rushed out of their nest and bit an old woman enjoying a sun bath. The old woman was unable to bear the painful bites, and started rolling herself on the ground. In doing so she accidentally disturbed the nest of a bat built on her fence. The bat flew away with great fright. As the bat is usually blind in broad day light, she, too, accidentally flew inside the trunk of the elephant for she could not find the way out. From that day onwards the elephant fell sick and avoided any kind of food. Several times he tried his best to remove the bat out of his trunk but failed. The king heard the news of the illness of his elephant. He summoned all his able courtiers and able mātbās and mābis for the treatment of his elephant. Ultimately, being unable to bear the smell of the different drugs used by the quacks, the bat came out of the nose. The courtiers caught the bat.
The king said to the bat, "You harbourer of bugs, why are you taking shelter inside the trunk of my elephant while you have other places of shelter? Are you not afraid of me?"
The bat pleaded guilty and said, "O king please excuse me of my fault. My nest is on the fence. It happened to fly inside the trunk of your elephant as an old woman disturbed my nest. I had knowledge that I took shelter inside the nose of your elephant." The king released the bat as he was innocent. Next he asked the old woman why she had disturbed the nest of the bat. The old woman also pleaded that she did not disturb the nest deliberately and blamed the ants. The king then released the old woman and summoned all the ants for interrogation. The ants, too, pleaded innocence and accused the ripe hog plum fruit that had fallen on their nest. The king then set the ants free. The hog plum tree in turn, pleaded its innocence as Khambrangchak had caused the fall of the fruit on the nest of the ants. The Khambrangchak also pleaded her innocence narrating the whole story. The king then decided that the crab was the root cause of the whole problem. So he then called the crab and learnt from him how he had caught the legs of the Khambrangchak. The king consoled the crab and released him. On the other hand, he could not punish the Khambrangchak for he fully knew about the usual preparations of a lady at the time of her visit to her parents' house. Naturally Khambrangchak had not noticed the crab being preoccupied with thoughts of meeting her dear parents and relatives.
And the story ends like this :

"Alas, Khambrangchak's visit to her parental house led to so many events."  

Motifs : Z40.6.2. Bite (Prick) causes series of accidents

(g) Moral Tales Or Fables

The important feature of moral tales or fables is the moral or didactic overtone. Therefore, we may put all these tales which have got moral implications in this category. When the animal tale is told with an acknowledged moral purpose, it becomes a fable. "The best known are the great literary collections, Aesop and the Panchatantra. They usually attach an actual maxim, though this is not necessary. But the moral purpose is the essential quality which distinguishes the fable from the other animal tales."  

In Manipur also, even a humorous or joke tale may have a moral lesson. Such a specimen is given below :

(i) Ita Thaomei (The Widow and the Lamp)

[Type 956D]

Once upon a time there lived an old woman alone in her house. To earn her livelihood, she used to weave during day

31. Stith Thompson, op. cit., p. 10.
time and at night she spinned the cotton. Gradually she became very rich as her expenditure was much less than her income. Thus in the village she became a rich woman. The local thieves heard of the woman and they were jealous of her wealth. For quite a long time the thieves were on the look out for an opportunity of looting her.

One night the old woman was spinning the cotton in her house in the dim light of her small lamp. She kept the lamp on a high stand. That night a thief entered her house for attempting theft. He thought that the woman would not be able to see him properly in the dim light because of her senility. So he went straight towards her and stayed at the foot of the lamp wearing a black turban on his head. He remained in the dark shadow of the lamp post. But the clever woman heard the sound of his respiration. She started thinking of different plans of apprehending the thief. She knew of her physical incapability and her lone position in the house. Besides, the thief would kill her in case she rose an alarm to attract the attention of her neighbours. So the old woman continued her work as if she was unaware of the presence of the thief.

At last she thought of a plan. She began to have conversations with her lamp addressing the latter as her "Itā" (friend)." She turned towards the lamp and said, "Itā Thāomei, Itā Thāomei." Itā Thāomei, The lamp did not respond to her
repeated calls as it was a lifeless object. But the woman again said, "What has happened to you today? And why are you not responding to my calls? I know, we have an understanding not to respond to each other's call when a thief enters our house."

On hearing the conversations of the woman with her lamp, the thief presumed that the lamp could talk and they had conversations every day. He also imagined that the lamp was not responding to the call of the woman as he had entered the house. So he made up his mind to respond to any further call of the woman on behalf of the lamp so that his presence could not be detected.

The old woman again called, "Itā Thāomei". Now, the thief replied, "Um". At that moment she told the lamp she would narrate a story and she began: "Once a woman lived alone. One day a thief entered her house and then, she shouted, 'a thief has entered, a thief has entered.' Thus she began to shout at the top of her voice so that her neighbours might hear of it. Immediately her neighbours came to her rescue and they caught the thief red-handed. They caught the thief and sent to the king for trial and punishment. Thus a weak but clever woman caught the thief.

[Motif : K700. Capture by deceptions]
STORY-TELLING

PHUNGA WARI - STORY TELLING AROUND THE HEARTH:
NOTE THE HEARTH AT THE CENTRE, THE PODOL (LAMP) WITH LAMP STAND AND CHENG-PHU (RICE POT)

A WARI LEEBA - PROFESSIONAL STORY TELLER