



LESSON-5
“December 12”

NOTES:

About the poet:

Hijam Irabot Singh was a poet, social reformer and revolutionist. He wrote “Emagi Puja”, a collection of 49 poems while he was in jail in Sylhet, Bangladesh. The poem “December 12” is also from this collection.

Nupi Lan in brief:

History has witnessed two Nupi Lan in Manipur. The first one took place in 1904 against forced labour. The second Nupi Lan came in December, 1939 against the export-of rice from Manipur while people were starving. This fight against the export-of rice later on led to establishment of a better government in Manipur that was responsible and accountable to its people.

Substance:

Nupi Lan had brought a lot of changes and hope in every sphere of the then Manipuri society. The poet had written this poem to pay tribute to the women of Manipur for their courage, unity and righteousness. Through this poem, he was trying to wake them up again and encouraged them not to stop fighting for an even better society in Manipur.

Explanation:

The night has passed,

Another day has gone,

These lines refer to passing away of time. The worst day of atrocities had gone for the Nupi Lan brought better days in the Manipuri society. But, as time passed away since then, the poet was making a hint to the need to look forward for further changes again.

Devi, tuck and tie your hair
Hanging loose and dishevelled.

The poet told the women of Manipur to gather their untidy hair and tie them up to get themselves ready to fight again like they did in the Nupi Lan of December, 1939.

One December Twelve's gone and
Another December Twelve's come,
Have you forgotten that?

As years passed by, a number of December 12 came and passed. But this great day, December 12, 1939 will remain in the history of Manipur forever, reminding us of the courage, unity and righteousness of the women of Manipur throughout generations to come. The poet asked if we have forgotten this fact to remind us we shouldn't.

Did you believe hair'll be tucked and tied?
Did you really think the day'll come again?

It was unexpected for women to come forward to fight fearlessly and shed their blood for the cause of their society. Asking if we could believe they would tie their hair i.e. come up to fight, the poet was actually praising the amazing courage, unity and shrewdness of Manipuri women. Again, asking whether such day would come again, the poet meant whether Manipuri women would come forward to fight again like they did in the future too. He actually wanted to encourage women of Manipur not to stop fighting always for a better tomorrow.

Glossary:

social reformer	– one who seeks to correct injustices and improve society
revolutionist	– one who wants to change the world and work for it.
accountable	– able to justify action or decision
atrocities	– wickedness, cruelty
shrewdness	– cleverness
essence	– an indispensable or essential quality.