

Who will be Ningthou?



Long, long ago, in the land of Kangleipak in Manipur, there lived a **Ningthou** and a **Leima**. They were loved **dearly** by the people.

The Ningthou and Leima, **on their part**, never stopped thinking about their **meeyam**, their people. “Our meeyam should be happy,” they said.

The people were not the only ones who loved their Ningthou and Leima. The birds and animals too loved them. The Ningthou and Leima always said: “Everybody in Kangleipak should live in peace. Not only the people, but the birds, animals and trees.”

Their **beloved** king and queen had three sons: Sanajaoba, Sanayaima and Sanatomba.

Twelve years later, a daughter was born. She was named Sanatombi. She was a lovely child, soft and beautiful inside. She was loved by one and all.

The years went by, and the children **grew up** well. And then one day, the Ningthou called all his ministers and said: “It is now time to decide the Tungi Ningthou, the future king.”

The ministers were shocked. “But O Ningthou, what is there to decide? Sanajaoba, your eldest son, will be our future king.”

“Well,” the Ningthou replied. “That’s how it happened in the old days. The eldest son always became the king. But times have changed. So let us select a king who is most **worthy** of becoming a king.” “We will have a contest to select the future king,” the Leima said. And so, in the land of Kangleipak, there was a **contest**, a horse race. Whoever reached the khongnang, the banyan tree, first would be declared Tungi Ningthou.

But then, a **strange** thing happened. Sanajaoba, Sanayaima and Sanatomba all three of them finished the race together. They were expert riders and all three reached the finish line at the same time! There was great excitement. “Look at them!” the people **shouted**. “Shagol thauba

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nupa, such **fine** horsemen!” But one question remained: Who would be the Tunggi Ningthou? The Ningthou and Leima turned to their sons.

The Ningthou said, “Sanajaoba, Sanayaima and Sanatomba, you have proved that you are fine horsemen. Do something different each one of you, so that we can decide who will be Tunggi Ningthou.”

Suddenly, Sanajaoba **mounted** his horse and held his **spear straight** in front of him. He looked around. There was a **hush** among people. “What is Sanajaoba, the eldest, going to do? They thought to themselves.

Sanajaoba then looked at the huge khongnang standing **majestically** in the distance. He **pierced** the tree and jumped his horse right through it! “**Bravo!** Bravo!” The people shouted. “**Thouro!** Thouro!” And then they fell silent. Now it was the turn of the second son, Sanayaima. What would he do? Sanayaima too looked at the khongnang as he mounted his horse.

Then he too **rode** towards the tree, harder and harder. The people watched in silence, afraid even to **breathe**. When he was really close, he urged his horse to jump. Higher and higher the horse rose until horse and rider jumped clear over the huge tree and landed on the other side in a **wonderful** motion.

The people breathed in relief and said **in unison**: “**Phajei ! Phajei ! Wonderful ! Wonderful !** And now, it was the turn of the youngest son, Sanatomba. He, too, rode his horse towards the khongnang and, before anybody knew what was happening, uprooted it. **Triumphantly** he carried the tree to the Ningthou and Leima and laid it at their feet! Shouts of Thouro ! Thouro ! Phajei ! Phajei !” filled the mountains. The people grew **restless** . Why were the Ningthou and the Leima taking so long to make the announcement?

They **craned** their necks to see what was happening. The Ningthou and Leima were watching Sanatombi, their five



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year-old daughter. She looked sad and lonely. She **stared** at the khongnang which lay dead by the **throne**. Birds **flapped worriedly** around, searching for their homes in the tree. Sanatombi walked up to the khongnang and **whispered**, “The khongnang is dead. It was hurt by the spear and now it is dead.”

The people were all attention. The Ningthou stood up. He looked at the three boys. He looked at the little girl. He turned to the people. “If anybody is worthy of becoming the ruler,” he said, “it is little Sanatombi. It was she who told us to look at the soul of the khongnang. Sanatombi feels the pain of others. She feels the pain of the people, the animals, the birds, the trees.”



“I declare Sanatombi the future Leima of Kangleipak,” the Ningthou said. A silence fell. Everyone turned to look at the little girl, their future queen. There she stood, all of five, like a small khongnang, with birds flying all around her. They sat on her shoulders and on her head. She held out her hands full of **grain** and the birds flapped about her, **pecking** at the food.

“A Leima is one who doesn’t hurt anybody in the kingdom.”

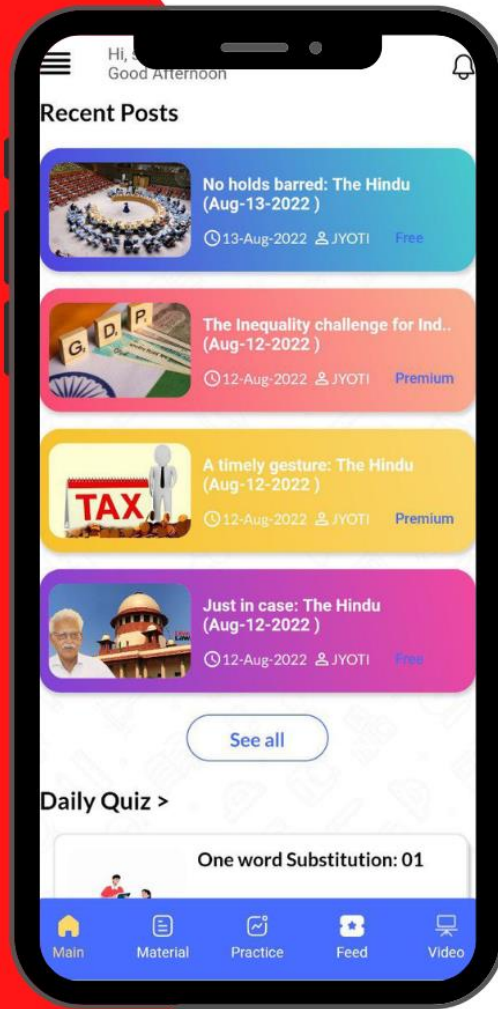
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Vocabulary

1. **Ningthou** (noun) – Ningthou was a title used for the King of Manipur. राजा (मणिपुर)
2. **Leima** (noun) – Queen रानी
3. **Dearly** (adverb) – very much, greatly, affectionately, fondly बहुत
4. **On one's part** (phrase) – used to ascribe responsibility for something to someone. उनकी ओर से
5. **Meeyam** (noun) – kingdom राज्य, सल्तनत
6. **Beloved** (adjective) – dear, darling, love, sweetheart, dearest प्रियतम
7. **Grow up** (phrasal verb) – to gradually become an adult: बच्चे बड़े होना
8. **Worthy** (adjective) – having the qualities that deserve; good, valuable, commendable, praiseworthy योग्य
9. **Contest** (noun) – competition, race, challenge, fight, match प्रतियोगिता
10. **Strange** (adjective) – Surprising, unexpected, curious, peculiar, bizarre अनोखा
11. **Shout** (verb) – Utter in a loud voice; scream चिल्लाना
12. **Fine** (adjective) – nice, well, good, great उत्कृष्ट/ अच्छा
13. **Mount** (verb) – ascended, riding, equestrian, scaled, climbed चढ़ना
14. **Spear** (noun) – A long pointed rod used as a tool or weapon भाला
15. **Straight** (adverb) – right, directly, honest, direct, straightforward सीधा
16. **Hush** (adjective) – quiet, silence, still, calm सन्नाटा
17. **Majestically** (adverb) – Impressively, splendidly शानदार ढंग से
18. **Pierce** (verb) – to go in or through something, esp. with a pointed object, making a hole घुसाना
19. **Thouro !** (interjection) – Bravo! शानदार
20. **Rode** (verb) – past simple of ride घोड़ा से जाना
21. **Breathe** (verb) – Respire, inhale, exhale, blow, puff, take breath साँस लेना

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22. **Wonderful** (adjective) – great, marvelous, fantastic, terrific, excellent
अद्भुत
23. **In unison** (phrase) – simultaneously, all together एक स्वर में
24. **Phajei !** (interjection) – Wonderful!
अद्भुत
25. **Triumphantly** (adverb) – successfully, victoriously, gloriously, proudly, exultantly, jubilantly विजयी ढंग से
26. **Uproot** (verb) – pull (something, especially a tree or plant) out of the ground. जड़ से उखाड़ना
27. **Restless** (adjective) – uneasy, nervous, fidgety, agitated, restive बेचैन
28. **Crane** (verb) – stretch out one's body or neck in order to see something. झुकाना (गर्दन)
29. **Stare** (verb) – Gaze, gawk, glare, look intently घूरना
30. **Throne** (noun) – a ceremonial chair for a sovereign, bishop, or similar figure.
सिंहासन
31. **Flap** (verb) – (of a bird) move (its wings) up and down when flying or preparing to fly. पंख ऊपर-नीचे हिलना
32. **Worriedly** (adverb) – anxiously, uneasily, nervously, apprehensively, fearfully चिंता से
33. **Whisper** (verb) – Speak softly; in a low voice, murmur फुसफुसाना
34. **Grain** (noun) – cereal, speck, whit अनाज
35. **Peck** (verb) – (of a bird) strike or bite something with its beak. चोंच मारना, चुगना



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