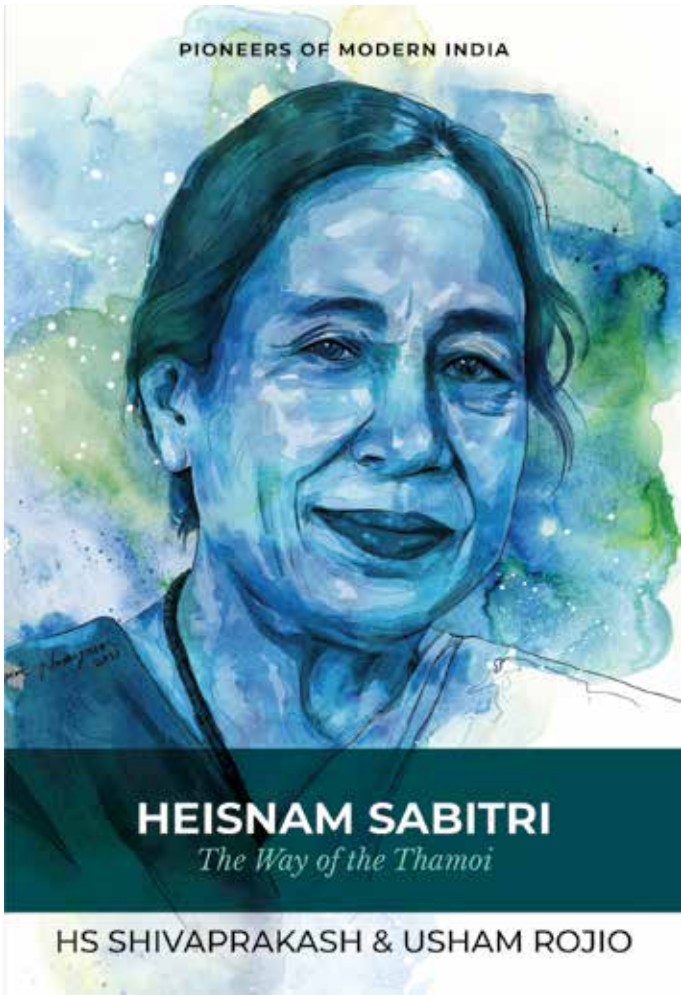


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Offers a *genuine insight to the world of Manipuri theatre*, particularly that of Heisnam Sabitri and Heisnam Kanhailal, the founders of *Kalakshetra Manipur*.

Beautifully illustrated with images of Sabitri in action, on stage, this book is an invaluable addition to *theatre and performance studies*.

Includes a detailed interview with the legendary artist herself, Heisnam Sabitri.



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# Heisnam Sabitri

*The Way of the Thamoï*

H.S. Shivaprakash and Usham Rojio

## A glimpse of the life of a Manipuri legend

Heisnam Sabitri is a critically acclaimed Indian stage actor and one of the most notable personalities in Manipuri theatre. Born into a Meitei family in Mayang Imphal, Manipur, she was introduced to theatre as a child artist by her aunt and theatre actor Gouramani Devi. She married stage director Heisnam Kanhailal in 1962, and together, they founded Kalakshetra Manipur in 1969. She also acted in a short film, *Mahadevi Akka* (1999), and the film won the National Film Award for the best anthropological film. A former government-nominated member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sabitri was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award, in 2008, for her contributions to Manipuri theatre.

'[A] continuous poem...in motion' and 'a living national treasure' (2014) commented Richard Gough, professor of theatre at Wales University, UK, about Sabitri, after witnessing her performing on stage.

This book is an invaluable addition to theatre and performance studies. It delineates the first-hand perspective of Heisnam Sabitri, as well as her husband, Heisnam Kanhailal—two great legendary innovators of 20th-century Indian theatre. It views the different aspects of theatre in the light of 'thamoï'—a Meitei-specific concept.

**H.S. Shivaprakash**, Professor, School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, is an award-winning poet, playwright, novelist, and critic, writing in Kannada and English, and is a multifaceted scholar. He became closely associated with Sabitri and Kanhailal during the finalization of another book on their theatre, and from thence germinated the idea of writing about Sabitri's contribution.

**Usham Rojio**, with a PhD in theatre and performance studies from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, Dr Rojio is a playwright and theatre director, and also an English teacher. His expertise in Manipuri language, culture, and theatre has been instrumental to this project. He has acted as the interpreter between his co-author and Sabitri.



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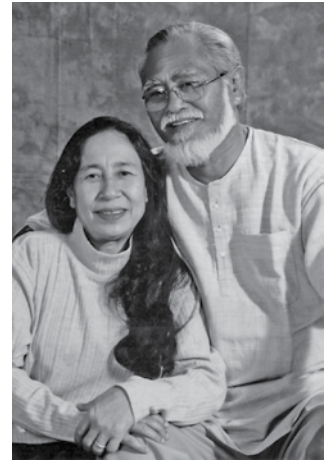
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Sabitri in portrait



Sabitri in the play *Memoirs of Africa*



Sabitri and Kanhailal

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## A peek from the pages inside...

For Sabitri and Kanhailal, theatre was not a profession or specialization. It could never be the part of what the children of the global market now called creative industry. For Sabitri and Kanhailal, theatre was a passion, a commitment, a laboratory of creative imagination. It is precisely because of this reason that the relationship of their theatre with society is totally different from other contemporary modes of theatre. It does not seek to edify and educate the public like progressive theatre or the theatre of ideas. Neither does it escape into the autotelic space of hugely funded aesthetic theatre of drama schools. It is a mode of communion not just with Manipuri people, but also with the world at large.

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