CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2. SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF INVESTIGATION

Man is considered to be a social animal. There is no human being in this world who can say that he does not belong to a society or any human group. Inter-personal relationships are what mark a society and as the societies go on developing; these inter-personal relationships among men also undergo changes. Where there is interaction of various individuals of different upbringings and varied lifestyles, there is bound to be problems encountered by everyone. Here, the role of the sociologist becomes very significant, as it is his prime responsibility to study the various challenges faced by the individual in the process of his socialization. The sociologist generally does not tend to prescribe a standard pattern of living for the humans, rather he studies about the reasons behind the great variety of differences that exist between individuals and between different ways of life and thus may portray man and his relationship with the society in an unbiased manner.

In earlier days, technological advancement was at a very rudimentary level. Many societies were isolated geographically, socially and culturally, leaving very little scope for advancement. However as men began utilizing the natural resources coupled with his skills, knowledge and manpower he began moving towards what we call civilization and modernization. Today, many societies have gradually given up a primitive lifestyle and adopted a modernized life style. However, we observe that many societies that have advanced technologically still lag behind in the race to modernization because of the adherence to the age old cultural values. Not that there is anything wrong in adhering to cultural values, but in the process of the formation of any human society there comes a point in the life of the individual as well as the society where culture, once given birth to, tends to have an existence of its own infact it supersedes the individual; this according to sociology is termed as the super organic nature of culture.
Somehow, from the time the history of the world began, the male always occupied the primary position in a majority of the human societies. This is also quite evident in the animal society. Throughout the world, we observe that though men and women have more or less equally contributed to the successful continuation of society, it is the man who generally has the upper hand in almost all the aspects of life. Thus sociological research, which today has become more scientific in nature, studies the various societies formed by the humans and does an in-depth analysis of this evident disparity between the man and the woman; the working of same culturally values differently on them and also the changes brought about as a result of women either going against set cultural values or utilizing the same to bring about a revolution.

Today, human society can be studied scientifically, thus almost all sociological research has a scientific edge to it. Social research has significantly contributed to a detailed and overall understanding of the human being and his relationship with the society that he is part of. But, however scientific our approach to the study of human societies, it is not an easy task to predict social behavior and expect to find a standard pattern of behavior to exist among the humans, because human nature is very elusive and ever changing. This aspect of the human nature often brings a lot of obstacles in the unbiased and clear understanding of human nature. Investigation in social context is a time, labor and money consuming affair. However, these hurdles have never deterred the sociologist from continuing his quest for an in-depth knowledge of the human nature.

According to P.V Young, “Social research may be defined as a scientific undertaking which, by means of logical and systematized techniques aims to: (1) Discover new facts or verify and test old facts; (2) Analyze their sequences, inter-relationships, and causal explanations which are derived within an appropriate theoretical frame of reference; (3) Develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories which would facilitate reliable and valid study of human behaviours.”

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The relevance of this sociological investigation lies in the fact that it is an in depth study of the processes of empowerment among the woman with special reference to the women of Manipur. The importance of social research has been summarized in the following few points.

1. To have a clear understanding of the various sociological processes that either contribute towards or degenerate social progress/growth of any society
2. To analyze the bearing of socio-cultural factors on the life of an individual and how the factors contribute to the overall development of the individual.
3. To view the bearing of norms and a formal system of government on the individuals and the group. To understand how social processes can either bring about disharmony or establish social control and also the adherence or deviance to them.
4. For social planning such that every human group or society moves towards modernization thus elevating the standard of living of the people.
5. To analyze the working of cultural norms on men and women and to see how these factors work differently for them such that we can gain an insight into the life of the weaker section of society - the woman.
6. To improvise the methods and the tools that are utilized in social research such that, better and more scientific means can be adopted to study and gain a holistic understanding of man as a social being.
7. To realize the significance of research that is scientifically motivated and which will contribute for the further advancement of social sciences.
8. To gain an insight into the life and culture of different groups of communities thus help us to understand man in an unbiased manner, taking into account the different cultures and ways of life that enable us
to understand and accept the different enculturation processes that each is subjected to.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Redman and Mory define research as a “systematized effort to gain new knowledge”. Some people consider research as a movement from known to unknown. Social research tries to rediscover every aspect of man’s evolution as a social animal and every moment even adds new knowledge about the behavior of man.

Research refers to the systematic method consisting of:

1. Enunciating the problem
2. Formulating a hypothesis
3. Collecting the fact or data
4. Analyzing the facts and
5. Reaching certain conclusions either in the form of solutions towards the concerned problem or generalization for certain theoretical formulations.

Social research has gone a long way in studying the various socialization processes, the functioning of different social structures, to study the varied patterns of interrelationships in the society and how social systems need to be reorganized and restructured in dealing with them.

2.2. NEED FOR TRIBAL RESEARCH

The tribal population of India, according to the 1991 census, was 67.76 million. And this number is growing at a very fast pace. With the growth in their population, their problems are now becoming the forefront of government concern. In India some of the important features of the tribals are: most of them live in isolated terrains; the main resources of their livelihood are agriculture and gathering forest produce; they do not cultivate for profit; they still rely on barter system; they spend greater part of their earnings on social and religious ceremonies; and a large number of them are illiterate and are victimized by
unscrupulous forest contractors and moneylenders. For many years the tribals were considered to be the primitive and backward segment of society. Many still live in forests and hills without having more than a casual contact with the so called civilized and modernized neighbors. Many anthropologists and sociologists are of the belief that it is not correct to impose alien values and beliefs on the tribals but to allow them to live in their own way without any interference from outside forces. Thus, for a long time pre-independence of India, the tribals were more or less ignored. However as time passed by and due to the increasing pressure of population and vested interests of the invaders many outsiders began settling in tribal regions. This brought about a lot of problem and as such gave rise to unrest, exploitation and feelings of deprivation, thus leading to agitations and movements among the tribals. There are a very few individuals or organizations that really worked or are working for the welfare of the tribals. This is the main reason why many tribal communities are still not susceptible to change and are suspicious of outsiders.

The constitution of India has laid down strong machinery for safeguarding the interests of the scheduled tribes and other backward communities, in the form of setting up a commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The state governments have separate departments to look after the welfare of these communities and have also been spending a sizeable amount on the welfare of dalits and tribals. A number of voluntary organizations also promote the welfare of dalits and tribals. Their welfare is also given special attention in the Five Year Plans. The tribals also are provided adequate representation in the legislative organs at different levels as well as reservation in services and educational institutions.

However, in spite of all these measures, governmental, non-governmental and individual, the tribals are still suffering from poverty, indebtedness, illiteracy bondage, exploitation, disease and unemployment. The condition and status of women is even more at a rudimentary level.
Hence, a thorough social research that is scientifically maneuvered is very essential to probe into the socio-cultural, economic, religious, political aspects that effect and shape the destiny of these deprived sections of society and more specially, the deprived category of women who belong to the various tribal communities of India and with special reference to the woman of Manipur.

2.3. PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

Critics of the Indian family system say that women in the Indian society have from time immemorial been victims of discrimination. They haven’t enjoyed an equal platform with their male counterparts. They have not only been deprived at the society level but also in the family. It is not uncommon to come across individuals from all strata of society, not expressing happiness at the birth of a girl child. In fact there are sections of societies in India that even kill the girl child before she could come into this world. She may not even have any share in her father’s property. Ideologies, institutional practices and existing norms in society have contributed much to their harassment. In spite of the legislative measures adopted in favor of women in our society after independence, the spread of education and women’s gradual economic independence, countless women still continue to be discriminated and harassed. In the light of this dismal picture, the condition of the rural women is even more pathetic. Illiteracy, cultural and religious oppressions have made their condition even more pitiable. Comparatively, in some sections of the urban areas, women are considerably aware of their rights and privileges. They have learnt to be assertive and accept new roles for themselves. They have developed optimism and a hopeful approach to life. My in depth survey of the life of the women of Manipur has shown that they too are oppressed, first of all as women and secondly as tribal women. This has probed me to do an in depth analysis of the various factors associated with their condition and whether these factors have contributed to their empowerment or not. A comparative study of the condition of non-tribal and tribal women in Manipur has also thrown light on the
working of factors differently for both these groups and has gone to prove that the condition of the non-tribal women is much better as compared to the tribal woman.

Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, clearly contended that while women participation in the nationalist upsurge was crucial, the women of India have an additional task, and that is to free themselves from the tyranny of manmade customs and laws. They will have to carry on this second struggle by themselves for man is not likely to help them. This is even truer for the women of Manipur, who have to bear the whole burden of struggle for women emancipation themselves.

2.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Women's empowerment is a crucial issue facing women as a whole and Manipur women in particular. Today as they themselves have become better aware of the need and as they struggle to reaffirm their indigenous identity, rights, values and dignity as human beings and have become determined to stand against the threat to their existence perpetrated by ideologies of sexism, colonialism, materialism and individualism.

Thus, for the women of Manipur, the struggle for gender equality is to be launched not only within the confines of the home and the community but also at the state and national arenas and platforms where negotiations for socio-economic cooperation and understandings are accomplished. Women have no contribution as they have no control over their lives and natural resources. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, clearly points out that if an ancestral treasure lying buried in a corner of the house unknown to the members of the family were suddenly discovered what a celebration it would be for the occasion. Manipur women's marvelous power is lying dormant. If the women of Manipur wake up they will dazzle the Nation.
2.5. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The main aim of my study of the women of Manipur was to realize the following objectives:

1. To study the concept of empowerment and its various dimensions among different communities in Manipur.
2. To study the Status and process of Empowerment among the tribal and non-tribal women of Manipur.
3. To bring to light the reality and causes of the existing social inequality between men and women in Manipur with a view to compare the structure of both the tribal and non-tribal societies of the state.
4. To understand women-men equal participation in developmental processes in Manipur.
5. To analyze women’s movements in Manipur to fight for their rightful contribution in the society.
6. To analyze the status and role of men and the influence of patriarchal values
7. To find out if the process of empowerment is strong among the women of Manipur.

2.6. HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis (or hypotheses) is a tentative statement about what is predicted. In other words hypothesis is assumed to true unless proved otherwise. The prime hypothesis of this study can be stated that by and large the women of Manipur especially the women belonging to the tribal communities of Manipur are comparatively less empowered than the women belonging to the non-tribal sections of the state, due to the various prominent socio-cultural, economic, religious factors that contribute towards this process. It’s been almost fifty years since India became free from the tyranny of invaders and has gradually moved towards industrialization and modernization, and is now in a neck-to-neck race with the developed countries however the condition of women is very slowly showing improvement in an upward trend and this is very true for most of the tribal woman who still lives an alienated, male dominated, ignorant environment;
unaware of her potentials, skills, and equal abilities to compete with her male counterparts.

Thus, my study not only probes the area of empowerment among the woman of Manipur, it also searches the other different factors that are directly or indirectly connected with the condition of the woman involved in the empowerment process. Therefore, the various other hypotheses that I have also deeply delved into are as follows:

1. Customary and legal laws like male inheritance, the root causes of inequality among men and women in tribal societies of Manipur.
2. The culture of Manipur society, the customs and patterns of behavior, are not different as far as tribal and non-tribal women are concerned. However the process of empowerment is comparatively different among them.
3. Status of tribal women is comparatively lower than that of the non-tribal women in Manipur.
4. Women's position and degree of empowerment is defined by gender and gender-relations in both tribals and non-tribal societies in Manipur.
5. Level of literacy along with higher education is a powerful and multi-prolonged force in improving women's status in Manipur, especially among the tribal community.
6. Conscientization with regards to gender equality is low among women as seen in their educational aspirations for girls and boys in Manipur both tribal and non-tribal women.

STUDY AREA
The present composition of the population of Manipur may be broadly classified under five main groups: (1) The Meiteis, (2) The Scheduled caste Meiteis (3) The Kuki-Chin-Mizos (4) The Nagas and (5) The Muslims. Manipur consists of nine districts having numerous blocks and villages. The state is broadly divided into two areas - the hilly terrains which are mainly inhabited by the tribal communities and
of the valley which is the habitation of most of the non-tribal communities. Out of the nine districts of Manipur, I have selected four districts of Churachandpur, Senapati, Bishnupur, and Imphal East. Among these four districts Bishnupur and Imphal comprise mostly of the non-tribal population whereas Churachandpur and Senapati are predominantly populated with tribal communities.

2.8. CRITERIA AND METHOD OF SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS
Since my study was aimed at the process of empowerment of the women of Manipur, significant number of my respondents comprised of woman generally between the age group of 18-60. I had adopted the following criteria while selecting the required number of respondents from the sample demarked, for the purpose of my study:
1. Number of respondents- the number was adequate enough to gather the required amount of information for the purpose of study.
2. Gender of the respondents- the study comprised mainly of women respondents; however male respondents were also carefully selected such that bias could be ruled out to a great extent.
3. Age of respondents - the age of the respondents was such that they could understand the questions posed to them and could disseminate the relevant information connected with topic under study.
4. Marital Status of respondents- most of the respondents were either married or of marriageable age. However a small percentage also consisted of unmarried individuals, divorcees and widows.
5. Representation as per area under study- adequate representation was given from all the areas under study and that this sample group was largely representative of the entire woman population of Manipur. Also, adequate representation from both the groups that is the tribal and the non-tribal was given.
6. Educational level of the respondents- adequate representation from the literate population of the group under study was made, however the non-literate group was also considered, as they could highlight the problems that they undergo due to
illiteracy. Thus, for a comparative study both the literate and the non-literate populations were selected that proved quite significant for the study.

7. Occupational status of the respondents- adequate representation taken from employed, non-employed as well as self-employed groups. This was to prove the significant relationship between occupation and the process of empowerment.

2.9. POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population under consideration constituted the tribal as well as the non-tribal women of Manipur. The sample that was representative of the women of Manipur was carefully selected from the four main districts under study namely Bishnupur, Imphal East, Churachandpur, and Senapati. The respondents, mainly the women who were aged between eighteen to sixty years and who were active in all aspects of life, were selected for the purpose of my study.

2.10. SAMPLING

Sampling is the selection of part of an aggregate or totality known as population, on the basis of which a decision concerning the population is made. Thus we can say that a finite subset of statistical individuals in a population is called a sample and the number of individuals in a sample is called the sample size. The sampling unit is the individual respondents that formed the sample size of my population of the women of Manipur. The criteria that were considered while doing the sampling was as follows:

1. The sampling units were drawn in a scientific manner.

2. The appropriate sampling technique was used. In this case the sampling method that was employed was stratified random sampling where past data or some other information related to the character under study was used to divide the population into various groups or strata such that units within each group are as homogenous as possible and the group means were widely different as possible. This classification was done keeping in mind that proper classification of the population into various strata was done and there was suitable sample size from each stratum.
The advantages of choosing the sample, using stratified random sampling were as follows:

1. **More representative** - It ensures any desired representation in the sample of the various strata in the population. It over-rules the possibility of any essential group of the population being completely excluded in the sample. Stratified sampling thus provides a more representative cross-section of the population and is frequently regarded as the most efficient system of sampling.

2. **Greater Accuracy** - Stratified sampling provides estimates with increased precision. Moreover, stratified sampling enables us to obtain the results of known precision for each stratum.

3. **Administrative Convenience** - The stratified random samples are more concentrated geographically. Accordingly, the time and money involved in collecting the data and interviewing the individuals may be considerably reduced and the supervision of the field work could be allocated with greater ease and convenience.

4. Since my population was quite heterogeneous, sampling problems differed markedly in different parts of population for instance literates and non-literates; people living in ordinary homes or large sized homes; employed and unemployed or self employed etc., In such cases it was easier to deal with the problem through stratified sampling by regarding the different parts of the population as stratum and tackling the problems of the survey within each stratum independently.

### 2.11. DATA COLLECTION – TYPES AND SOURCES

For the purpose of the study two main sources of data were used:

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

Primary data is one, which is collected by the investigator for the purpose of a specific inquiry or study. Such data is original in character and is generated by surveys conducted by the individuals.

Following methods were widely used for collection of primary data:

1. **Observation** - it involves recording of actions and is performed by either a person or some mechanical or electronic device. Observation is less versatile than
communication since some attributes of a person may not be readily observable, such as attitudes, awareness, knowledge, intentions and motivation. However, in my study the method of observation was quite useful especially in observing the plight of the tribal women as they struggled with the difficult terrain to complete their daily chores as well as various aspects of their social and cultural life.

2. **Questionnaire** – this is an important tool to for gathering primary data. Poorly constructed questionnaires can result in large errors and invalidate the research data therefore significant effort was put into constructing a good and meaningful questionnaire.

3. **Schedule** – It is like a questionnaire, however, the basic difference between a questionnaire and a schedule is that a schedule is normally filled in by the researcher or someone called an enumerator appointed by the researcher. This method was also employed as the lack of reading and writing was prevalent among many respondents.

4. **Interview Method** - The Interview method is a very effective tool for amassing relevant information directly from the respondents. Every interview has got its own balance of relevance and withholds information. Interview is defined as an effective, informal, verbal or non-verbal conversation initiated for scientific purpose and focused on planned content area. It is useful where an individual is not educated enough to give any kind of written information. Moreover the interview does not alienate the respondent from the researcher. Interviews can consist of open-ended questions as well as closed-ended questions. Interview sessions can capture the emotional upheavals and indifferences of the respondents thus enabling the researcher to understand things in a holistic manner. However, the interview sessions may also bring in bias as the respondents behavior may be affected by his or her perception of the interviewer. In my study the personal interviews were very useful and most of the respondents allowed themselves to be interviewed with ease. Open-ended and closed–ended questions were employed during the interview sessions. Field visits were made and interview sessions conducted with the respondents in the village/town itself.
Unstructured interview method was used which allowed the creation of a congenial environment that allowed an easy flow of effective communication. However this method has its limitations. The diversity of responses acquired through personal interviews makes analysis of the data difficult. Therefore data is collected by using the tool of interview with the help of schedule.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES OF DATA
Secondary data is that which has been already collected by some other individual or agency. Secondary data can be obtained from journals, reports, government publications, publication of professional and research organization and so on. Relevant information on the statistical information of the tribals was obtained from the Tribal Research Center (Pune), Tilak Maharashtra University Library (Pune), Alochana Library (Pune), Gokhale Institute Library (Pune), Manipur University Library (Manipur), and the Census Book of India 2001. Manipur Census handbook (series 14) was also used for collecting the secondary information.

2.12. ANALYSIS OF DATA
Analysis of data is done with the help of computer software. Qualitative data is analyzed with the help of tabulation and evaluated in descriptive writing. In the present study, researcher used SPSS software to analyze the data. Before the analysis the data was edited so that the errors could be corrected or omitted.

2.13. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY
During my study of the women of Manipur, I came across certain hurdles that delayed my study to a certain extent. Moreover since I needed to contact woman from both the urban as well as the rural areas, it became difficult at times and expensive too. Most of the woman of the tribal communities as well as the women living in urban areas were either engaged in work in the fields or fetching water or working in schools or offices thus it was difficult to meet them and interview them in during the day time.
2.14. CHAPTERISATION PRESENTATION
The data collected and analyzed is arranged according to chapters. Thus keeping the objectives of the selected topics in mind, the data collected has been presented in eight chapters:

Chapter I- Consists of relevant information about the background of the state and the people of Manipur.
Chapter II -Consists of Methodology and the sources of data collection and Review of Literature.
Chapter III- Consists of the Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents
Chapter IV - Consists Family Factors and women empowerment
Chapter V - Consists of Cultural Factors and women empowerment
Chapter VI - Consists of Occupational and Economical factors and women Empowerment
Chapter VII - Consists of Health Status and women Empowerment
Chapter VIII - Consists of Religious and Political and women Empowerment
Chapter IX - Consists of the Conclusion and Suggestions
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.15. Related literatures
As literature on women in general and the tribal women in particular is voluminous, the present study focuses mainly on the women of Manipur which is the field of study that embraces all walks of life of both tribal and non-tribal women. However, the thrust is uniformly the same, the inferior status of women in one form or the other, under various pretexts and their consequences.

Robert J. Gregory in his article on Tribes and Tribal: Origin, Use, and Future of the Concept, has written that the term “tribe” has originated around the time of the Greek city-states and the early formation of the Roman Empire. The Latin term, “tribus” has since been transformed to mean, “A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor”. The range of meanings however, has grown broader even further over the intervening years, for example, “Any of various systems of social organization comprising several local villages, bands, districts, lineages, or other groups and sharing a common ancestry, language, culture, and name” also notes that a tribe is a group of persons with a common occupation interest or habit and a large family. Today, the range of groups referred to as tribal is truly enormous. Not everyone who has a distinct ethnic identity however, can be deemed to be a member of a tribe. This is exactly what happened in Manipur within the tribe there are sub-tribes such as the Kukis, the Nagas and so on.

Gregory further stated that the mainstream, of course, was under elite command and control, and the members within conformed and complied with the customs, style of life, and culture of, or dictated by, the proverbial powers. The tribes, on the other hand, were people with special attachments to land, kinship ties, a unique culture, certain religious beliefs, particular activities or material possessions that differentiated and separated them from the mainstream. The tribes were in subordinate roles, for they had less political power and less access to resources, technology and other forms of power.
Tribals lived differently because of their unique history, culture, ancestry, beliefs, and ways of life. Their knowledge of plants, animals, and ways to survive led them to hold wise ideas about how to relate to Mother Earth. Tribes were often scattered about in less preferred locations, and they followed distinct behaviour and beliefs when relating with the majority culture. Further, many tribes had a deep attachment to particular pieces of land, a bond dating from pre-colonial days. That strong link to the land and forest areas was key factor in maintaining tribal status.3

The book, *Women in Patriarchy: Cross-cultural Readings*, is an anthology of twenty three pieces – short stories, essays, extracts – which tell their own story. Covering a period of two centuries and more, they bring together a history of women’s struggles across national boundaries and articulate their emotional boundaries and articulate their emotional intellectual responses to patriarchal control and imposition. As each struggle leads to a new one and another frontier is opened, women have changed their strategies and moved from reasoning to protest, from silence to articulation, from insanity and ostracism to self-assertion and confidence. In the process they have also had to explore their strengths and weaknesses, their sexualities and relationships and negotiate the barriers of colour and race.

These narratives by women of the first world as well as third world nations look at childhood, old age, loneliness, and work with bold strokes of comedy, irony and radical ideology. It seeks to accord visibility to the third world, cross geographical and political barriers, bring together the parallels, focus on the difference and extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding.4 Being patriarchal society women in Manipur are also facing the same problems and struggles which we are going to study in detail in the following chapters.

R.C. Hiremath in his book, *Women and Gender Issue*, argues that though gender equality is a matter of fact, there are still many issues that plague the development and empowerment of women. Early women activists and feminists built up the
women’s liberation movement and ultimately gained many positive factors in their favour. This resulted in many old issues gaining public prominence and new ones caused by the emancipation of women and their entering into the mainstream of social and political life. The book discusses the various issues women face in their march towards equality. The prevalence of male attitudes, generally called male chauvinism, still results in some women in many countries relegated to a second-class status.

The reasons for this, the issues that have cropped up, and a well-reasoned and logical conclusion, form the basis of this book. The chapters reveal the various issues that are discussed such as challenges faced by the modern feminist, Women’s liberation and criminality, Women’s access to the mainstream, The nature of feminism, Are women unable to participate in success?, Feminine sensibility, Gender stereotype sensitivity, Justice and gender equality, Women and the culture of terror, love and the intellectual woman, rape as means of male domination and father’s place in the child’s life.\textsuperscript{5}

Lakshmi Kumari in her book, \textit{The Role of Women in Society}, perceives the role of woman as an evolutionary force with unlimited dimensions, which makes her a social anchor par excellence to steer the value system in everyday life. She is a true home-maker as a secure family unit makes for a secure society. Her true emancipation lies in playing this role to perfection, at all levels emotional, intellectual and spiritual.\textsuperscript{6} This perception is seen very relevant to women in Manipur as we are going to study in detail in the following chapters.

Gupta and Gupta in their book, \textit{Role of Women in the Twenty First Century}, opined that women and their problems have acquired growing importance in our social milieu, over the last two decades. Hence, after realizing the significant role of women, it is desirable that a greater emphasis be given for their all round development and as such imparting education and providing employment to this vast segment of population. The plight of marginalized sections and poor women is significant.
It is therefore, necessary to understand the scientific basis of women development so that public opinion can be more informed and teachers, social workers, activist, can contribute in large measure towards adequate attention of women in our country. It covers diverse aspects of the subject and discusses complexity of problems faced by women. This is a multi-disciplinary investigation into various aspects of the pressing socio-economic and political problems facing Indian women. It explores that how after integration women into development will solve problems caused by development plans and policies which have neglected or been detrimental to women.\(^7\)

Sushama Sahay, in her book, *Women and Empowerment: Approaches and Strategies*, clearly points out that, the empowerment of women by their increased participation in all aspects of political, social and economic life has become one of the major goals of democratic and participatory movements, as well as women’s organizations throughout the world. Beyond offering an understanding why empower women, concept and framework for women’s empowerment, it seeks to discuss the approaches and strategies for empowerment.\(^8\) Women from all sections of communities in Manipur are also now collectively fighting a battle for their rightful existence.

In the book, *Progressive Women and Political Identity*, the author deals with progressive women and their political identity. It gives a critical account of women’s participation in politics and politicalization of women issues. Women’s liberation movement has concentrated on the women’s oppression which includes the sexual division of labour, control of sexuality and the relation of reproduction, access to education, jobs and power over our lives. These issues set an agenda for gender analysis which should produce strategies for change. The feminist movement in India raised several questions – What it is to be a woman? How our femininity and our sexuality have defined for us and how we might begin to redefine them for ourselves? They also include complain against the objectification of women as sexual object for male consumption, against pornography, rape and other
form of violence against women within and outside the family. Today, gender theory has responded in a strange ways to this political agenda, as can be seen in gender approach to the family.\footnote{R.K. Tandon in his book, Status of Women in Contemporary World, stressed that the status of woman refers to the position women are granted as individuals in the social structure, defined by their designated right and obligations. The author explores the status in terms of a role, or the pattern or behaviour expected of the occupant of the woman. The diverse roles she performs in society are those of a daughter, a wife, a mother and a career woman. In order to have a global picture of women’s status, the author makes a quick review of some of the developed, developing and under-developed countries in terms of the position occupied by women in different social structures, and tries to determine ways and means to enhance their position through the most powerful medium education.}

R.K. Tandon in his book, Status of Women in Contemporary World, stressed that the status of woman refers to the position women are granted as individuals in the social structure, defined by their designated right and obligations. The author explores the status in terms of a role, or the pattern or behaviour expected of the occupant of the woman. The diverse roles she performs in society are those of a daughter, a wife, a mother and a career woman. In order to have a global picture of women’s status, the author makes a quick review of some of the developed, developing and under-developed countries in terms of the position occupied by women in different social structures, and tries to determine ways and means to enhance their position through the most powerful medium education.

Even the western woman has also lived, as the subordinate member of the two sexes, and has been biologically and physically regarded as the weaker sex who, at best, can either be protected or neglected. This relationship between woman and man has been accepted - civilization after civilization. She has been labeled the last of the human beings on earth to challenge civilized life for achieving humanity towards her. Women have been invisible in the history of human life for many centuries.\footnote{S.K. Khan in his book, Women and the Human Rights, propounded that it has been recognized that the right to live in a peaceful and secured environment is fundamental to human well-being. Without them, the development of just, equitable and healthy society cannot take place. In totality, peace and security require the fulfillment of social justice, recognition of dignity and worth of human individuals and the equal rights of men and women and of large and small nations. An assessment of the status of women has to start from the social framework. The term ‘woman’ covers women from varied strata of society. The author hoped that covering a wide range of information sources and services in women’s studies in}
India will serve as a basic reference tool not only for library professionals and researchers but also for students, academics, activists and all those interested and involved with women’s issues in India.\textsuperscript{11}

A.K. Pandey, in his book, \textit{Gender Equality: Development and Women Empowerment}, states an individual’s self-conception as being male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex. For most persons, gender identity and biological characteristics are the same. There are, however, circumstances in which an individual experiences little or no connection between sex and gender. In transsexualism, for example, biological sexual characteristics are distinct and unambiguous, but the affected person believes that he or she is— or ought to be— of the opposite sex. Gender identity is not fixed at birth; both physiological and social factors contribute to the early establishment of a core identity, which is modified and expanded by social factors as the child matures.

The women’s movement questioned certain social institutions and traditional values, basing many of its arguments on scientific studies suggesting that most supposed differences between men and women result not from biology but from culture. Many women objected that the English language itself, by reflecting traditional male dominance in its word forms, perpetuated the problem. Successful efforts to reform the language included the introduction of the title Ms. as an alternative to Miss or Mrs., the substitution of gender-neutral for gender-based terms, such as firefighter for fireman and flight attendant for stewardess; and the avoidance of the male pronoun he (for example, by the use of a phrase such as \textit{he} or \textit{she}) when referring to persons who may be either male or female. The women’s movement also sought to foster changes in male-female relationships within the family, including the sharing domestic roles and the avoidance of gender stereotyping in children’s toys and books, television programs, and other media. An increasing number of women chose to use their maiden name after marriage, either in place of, or in conjunction with, their husband’s name. Much attention was given to consciousness their shared abilities, experiences, and problems.\textsuperscript{12} How far have these ideas percolated to the subordinated strata of society is the question.
Haleh, in his book, “Women and Empowerment Illustrated from the Third World”, raised questions such as: what is empowerment? Is it power over resources? Is it the ability to create ‘effective demand?’ Is it about the access to resources and how they are controlled, politically or economically by NGOs, by political parties, by the state? Do political parties facilitate, or do they channel energies away from empowerment? To what extent is empowerment explicit or implicit? Is it important to evaluate the degree to which, in different circumstances the state has been seen as a provider of resources? The answer to these questions may be different in different places and at different times. There certainly is a different emphasis on different priorities when it comes to understanding what empowerment means to the women in the different case studies analyzed in this volume.

Defining empowerment as a process, and some thing which cannot be done to/for women, but which has to be their own, raises serious questions for development agencies. Is there a role for enablers or for any kind of interventions in the empowerment process? What is the relationship between micro-level processes and macro-picture? Does empowerment in one sphere of activity lead to empowerment in others? Can empowerment ever be a measurable outcome?

The author focuses on the meaning and understanding of power and empowerment. He argues that the dominant feminist understanding of empowerment should be a dynamic one, which conceptualizes power as a process rather than a particular set of results. Then ‘power to’, ‘power with’, and ‘power from within’ would come to construct differing sets of meanings for empowerment. Empowerment is a process that cannot be done for women, but has to emerge from them.13

In the book, Women Education and Social Empowerment, Manta states that women education and social empowerment has been an area of debate and serious concern for the last two decades. As far as India is concerned, social empowerment of women and their education had been wrangled by many social taboos. We have been witnessing “The Women Bill” being tossed around on the floors of both the
houses of parliament for a couple of years passed. This goes on to show that even the politicians, underplay the women’s cause as they are also a part of the social system, which sees to it that the women education and social empowerment stay at the stagnant phase.

This book unveils the real problems being faced by women in all the spheres of life. Although virtually in all the area women have imprinted their mark as not being inferior to men in any way, still the majority of women is not free from the shackles of many social evils. The dowry system is still prevalent in India, cutting across the social strata, child marriage still take place in interior parts of the country. Blind faith, witchcraft, magical rituals affect the uneducated poorer and tribal women.

In their book, “Empowering Women For sustainable Development”, Leelamma and Devasia testify to their continuing scholarly engagement with the perplexities of fashioning, in a non-revolutionary perspective, a just society in India. Their enterprise is all the more demanding in that they turn their engagement in this volume to the problematic of “empowering women” in the context of “sustainable development.”

The discerning reader will find in this book a message of hope. The book abounds with examples of success stories, narratives in which “low” caste, “illiterate”, “powerless” slum women – whether Poonabai of 200 huts in slum in Siraspeth, or Kalabai from Telugupura testify to the possibilities of the reversal of imposed powerlessness by well conceived community action programmes. All these little narratives reveal potentials of the so called powerless to be self-reliant; and as they unfold, we are also privileged to witness how their movement ‘grows’ from combating local despotism of a ration-shop to access to other basic needs and finally to ensuring democratic accountability (recourse to courts for slum dwellers rights or coercing corporators to provide basic amenities). In the process, we learn that empowerment simultaneously moves along the axis of social organization and consciousness.
Empowerment of women and their struggle to achieve economic independence and freedom through meeting their needs without compromising the ability of others to meet their needs is the key issues of discussion. The endeavor enunciates the potentialities of women, their aspirations, sufferings and achievements. It also vividly narrates the struggle of women against societal structures, system, corruption, formidable inequities and their own degradations.\textsuperscript{15}

In the book, \textit{Hinduism And Women}, Malladi Subbamina points out the important aspect of Hindu culture and its attitude towards women. She said some people flamboyantly proclaim that women enjoyed complete freedom and full equality with men during the Rig-vedic period. However, the conclusion becomes inevitable after careful consideration and examination of the mores and the customs of that period that the freedom talked about is limited and the equality boasted of is restricted, and later followed the fall of woman.

And by about 300 B.C. marriage has become a necessary for women. The ceremony like ‘Upanayanam’ symbolizing the new birth is denied to her. It has become her bounden duty to marry. Her childhood, her education, all turned to the single aim of preparing for her marriage. Marriage tie can push the woman into a state of slavery or it can contribute to the development of her personality. She slides into the position of the slave in her married state. The wife has to consider her husband as god, serve and worship him in spite of the fact that he is devoid of character, that he is lustful and that he does not posses any semblance or worth. Loyalty to the husband is proclaimed but loyalty to the wife is not considered. The woman is to live for her lord the husband. There shall not be any other person in her life. She shall not have any individuality. Her personality is to be merged in the personality of her husband.

The author tackles these issues in this book. She does not opt for ‘superiority of women propounded by the great astronomer and scientist Varahamili nor does she accept the secondary role of women as ordained by Manu. She advocates equal and
fruitful partnership of women with man. In her view the women have to depend upon themselves for their all round development and social, economic, political and cultural advancement. She hoped that Hindu women will not and shall not lag behind in this pursuit of women’s liberation.\(^\text{16}\)

In his book, *Status of Muslim Women in India*, Hajira throws light on the various situations which colour the profile of Indian Muslim women. The author has taken care of the past and present conditions of Muslim women. As a result, a social forecast for their future is possible. Historical perspectives of the contemporary situation create a linkage between the past and the present. Another innovative feature is a paper on the participation of Muslim women in Panchajati Raj. The reader, therefore, gets a fairly good idea about various development strategies adopted by the state and their impact on Muslim women. Two papers have also been devoted to legal problems and Muslim Personal Law. The approach of these papers includes a deep sensitivity of the author towards the sufferings of Muslim women without diluting the objectivity.\(^\text{17}\) Condition of Muslim women in Manipur are no better.

‘*Count Us Equal: The Ministry of Women in the Church of South India*’, Kenneth Gill made a systematic and comprehensive survey and study of the ministry of women in the Church of South India. Christian women in India and elsewhere are crying out for justice and equality, it is more so to women of the ‘Church of South India’ in general and the ‘Theological Trained women’ in particular. These women are struggling for the affirmation of human dignity as well as for a meaningful participation in the Church and Society. They are equally trained with men, but their right of ordination was denied in the church just because of their gender.

After 15 long years of debating, ordination of women was passed in 1970, but it took some years to implement and it was only in 1976 that the first three women were ordained. There are only 20 ordained women in service till in January 1990. The author comments that women have the particular gifts of patience, healing and
reconciliation and are better and able to handle disputes than men. Status of women in religion among the tribal women in Manipur is studied in Chapter VIII.

The book, *Tribal Women and Development*, has discussed about tribal women, their position, involvement, participation, restraints, roles and activities concerning various tribal life-designs. At the conceptual level, as far as modern sociology and social anthropology go, the term status has included all culturally prescribed rights and duties inherent in social positions. Initially status referred only to the “ascribed” one. But of late “achieved” status has also been given due place in sociological and anthropological parlance.

In the tribal society, sex ratio is favorable; there is no bride burning; there is high participation of women in economic activities; infant mortality is low. All of this has a lot to do with the tribal ethos, which recognizes the equal role of women. There is no gaining in saying the fact that the status of women in North-East is higher than in middle India and south. Even in the patrilineal system they enjoy a measure of influence and visibility, which is not to be found elsewhere. Of course, in the matrilineal societies of the North-East they continue to remain owners of the property even though its management is in the hands of the males. In the polyandrous communities of the Toda and the Jaunsar, women continue to enjoy a measure of freedom in material matters, even though they do not control land. It is recognized that the status of tribal women in a tribal society is a little better than that of their non-tribal counterparts.

In the book, *Tribal Women and Forest Economy Deforestation: Exploitation and Status Change*, Walter and Geeta studied the role of women in the forest dweller economy. According to them, at every level women contribute more to the forest economy than men do. They are the main providers of food but due to the policies taken by the government and deforestation, they become marginalized.

The entry of external commercial-industrial forces and the transfer of forest and other natural resources to their control that has caused the crisis in the lives of the
tribals have been affected by government polities that favor the commercial-industrial interests at the cost of the forest dwellers. They have destroyed tribal source of food, fuel, medicines and fodder in order to get higher profits. An immediate consequence of this state of affairs is deterioration in the status of women in all fields: social, economic, cultural, and physical.

On the other hand, a few persons among the tribals have taken over from non-tribal middlemen, occupations such as small time money lending and have started exploiting other tribals. The consequent weakening of the mutually supportive tribal community has more negative effects on women than on men.20

Gavit Attarchand in his book, *Nehru-Tribal and women Welfare*, points out that for Jawaharlal Nehru the exploitation of any form was never acceptable. His concern for women, tribals, children and backward classes reflected this. His concern for religious minorities in India also showed liberal attitudes. Nehru was humanist and his dream was to wipe out tears from every eye and the frustrating sense of pain and weariness from every limb. He never thought of his plan as ‘plan’ only but thought of them as a growth, a development, and a realization of values. Scientific socialism held a moral appeal for him.

According to Gavit, ‘Woman is the builder and moulder of a nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft, she has a heart for stronger and bolder than man. She is the supreme inspiration for man’s onward march—an embodiment of peace, love, piety and compassion. Ostensibly then the position occupied by women in society determines the degree of development of that particular nation. It is undeniable that the problem of removal of poverty and rising of the standard of living, so urgently needed, can not be tackled effectively unless women do not participate fully. No country can progress properly when haft of its population is ineffective and redundant.’21

The book, *Primitive Tribal Women: Health Status*, is the outcome of a study funded by Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. The primitive tribes constitute
a sizable number among tribal populations. These people live in remote and hilly regions with a little contact with people from plains. They venerate every aspect of life. Shifting Agriculture is the main stay of the population. They depend on minor millets as staple food. They are very hardworking people, sincere, and trustworthy.

Due to small amount produce from agriculture they have remained poor. Consequently they are anemic, and suffer from diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and infertility. Personal and menstrual hygiene of women is in a bad state and suffer from white discharge and several menstrual problems. Many women and men have been widowed due to deaths resulting out of malaria. They lack electricity, proper health care and transportation. Primary schools and ashram schools are located at distant places therefore most of the tribes are illiterate.

Primitive tribes are highly receptive and amenable for discussions on several of their problem. Usual surveys may not help in identifying their problems. Informal discussions and interviews will reveal their cultural life. They need continuous interaction with people from plains to develop their life.22 Tribal women in Manipur are hard-working as the primitive tribal women were. Discussions on various health related problems are studied in chapter VIII.

In their article “Indigenous Medicinal Substances and Health Care: A study among the Paite Tribe of Manipur, India.” Nemthianngai and Sangmitra A. point out that people living in tribal areas often faced obstacles in accessing basic health care services due to remoteness and backwardness of the areas in which they live. Understanding the health care needs of tribal people in these difficult circumstances with special focus on utilization of tribal indigenous medicinal substances is significant for devising comprehensive programs. Most of the people among this particular tribe prefer towards indigenous medicine or home made remedies and traditional healers at the primary stage of their illness. Thus, scope of indigenous medicine becomes important. People’s belief in indigenous medicine can play a vital role in implementing Government programmes on improving on improving
and promoting Indian system of medicine in rural areas and at the same time recognizing the local tribal medicine.\textsuperscript{23}

Chhay & Kumar in their book, \textit{Status of Tribal Women in Maharashtra: Executive Summary}, highlight that the Scheduled Tribe population in Maharashtra is 73.18 lakh, which is 9\% of the total population in the state. Maharashtra ranks fourth among the states in India having large tribal populations. There are 47 tribes in Maharashtra spread over in 47 tehsils of 14 districts. The tribals in Maharashtra are no better than that of the tribals in Manipur.

According to the report made by Chhaya & Kumar, tribals in Maharashtra are marginalized physically and socio-economically. They depend on forest resources for their livelihood. They are mostly engaged in occupations like settled cultivation, hunting, gathering, fishing, and animal husbandry, trapping of birds and animals. Some have taken up pastoralism, terrace cultivation and horticulture. And others are involved in basket weaving, mat weaving and toddy tapping. They have neither been integrated in the mainstream successfully, nor are they able to retain their autonomy and identity despite various laws, proclaiming their special status under the constitution.

They have also propounded that Tribals in Maharashtra are often exploited by the moneylenders; they grabbed the tribal land and making them pauperized despite the laws, which ban the sale and purchase of the tribal land to non-tribals. During last two decades they are threatened with displacement of a mass scale because of the development projects such as dams and forest management undertaken by the state, negating its own proclaimed objectives of protection of traditional rights of these indigenous people.

As per the statistics compiled by Walter about the displaced persons in India between 1951-1990, the tribals appear to represent almost 50\% of the population. It is quite disproportionate to their number in the total population, which is around 95
percent. They seem to be the most vulnerable lot because of their geographical location and also because of lack of voice.

According to Chhay & Kumar, the Mahadeo Koli and the Kokna in Maharashtra have emerged as the most developed tribes, who have reasonable land. The status of women in those communities appears to be a little better, in terms of literacy. However, among Kokna, the bride price is replaced by dowry, which is reverse indicator and consequence of integration in the mainstream society. Settled agriculture and increased productivity would be the most desirable development strategy for them. Seasonal migration could be definitely reduced in their case, which disturbs the education of children and also has some correlation with drunkenness. Migration offers substantial income to land-less family. Among Gonds very little migration takes place, because of their socio-cultural milieu.

Although the Gram Panchayat has been in force for last decade, the traditional tribal Panchayats to still exist and they deal with the community matters could be two or three tribal Panchayats depending upon the concentration of that particular tribe in that village. All the problems with marriage, divorce and custody of children are dealt there, and rarely these matters to the court, except the issues about property and land ownership.

As per the Indian Constitution, tribal laws are treated as their ‘personal laws’ and they are not codified. There prevail 182 tribal customary laws in India. Some aspects of these laws are quite pro-women and hence many feminists take the position that until the time secular, uniform civil code does get established there is not need of bringing the tribal women under the purview of the existing laws, which are modeled on the Hindu Code Bill.

However, it has to be noted that women are not allowed to sit as juries in this Panchayat. The data shows the 69.5 per cent women reported that tribal Panchayats exists in their village. 24.3 per cent said that women too could become a jury. Subordination women could be also noticed from various bans or stigmas about
certain actions by women. Ploughing is not strictly allowed for women. Stepping in

certain temples is banned for them.

The custom seems to be having an origin in the hunting practice and the planning
of expedition, which was used to be men’s prerogative. The trees around these

temples, known as sacred groves were not allowed to be cut down since it was

supposed to be place of god. 47.2 per cent women said that this custom still

continues to operate among their tribe. There was unanimity about the ban on

attending any religious function or carry out any ritual during menstruation.

Another important aspect of the tribal culture is their well-publicized alcoholism. It

seems to be a common practice to assume that their traditional liquor habits have

led them to become alcoholics of the modern times. It appears that women too
drink liquor as a part of festivals and also rituals. Older women are likely to drink

more than younger women. There are certain taboos about consumption of liquor
during certain periods such as pregnancy and breast-feeding. Unequal treatment

toward tribals as whole and tribal women in particular is common. Women

indulged in unhealthy habit such as drinking alcohol, chewing tobacco or pan is

studied detail in chapter VIII.

In his book, The Burning Caldron of North-East India, Ghurye is immensely

convinced that the tribals of North-East India were different in Culture and
everything from the tribal groups of hither India. The tribes of this belt were never

a part of the mainstream of the socio-political history of India until about a century

before India acquires Independence. He points out that it is because of the

“isolationist policies followed by the erstwhile British administrators who later

became ‘advisor’ to our intellectuals, anthropologists and administration that

persisted in the ‘isolationist’ anthropological approach” to the tribal problem.

Therefore, the tribal people of North East must be brought out of their isolation

into the mainstream of Indian nationalism. There is a crying need for the easy

transportation and communication with the region as well as between the region
and other parts of India. Ghurye added that the situation in the erstwhile tribal areas of the North-East is pretty serious and explosive.

On that very important international frontier of the country, the tribal states were evidently planning for a complete and hostile separation from India. In the context, China’s claim that Arunachal Pradesh belonged to her figured in the statement. China’s claims on “border fantastic” appearing as the heading of the messages of a reporter of the “Times of India” in its issues of May 6, 1979 posses a grave danger. It appears to be on the peak of a volcano, which may erupt at any time and breaks the integrity of the county. How far the center pay attention to the need of the North-East Indian development is the question of the hour?

Studies on Social Stratification in the Tribal Milieu of the North-East drew attention to some scholars of the (AnSI). For instance, Saha studied the nature of stratification in the Imphal valley with a view to understanding how a caste-like system of stratification emerged and operated in a frontier area of Indian civilization. He carried out an in-depth field investigation to see to what extent the system of inter-ethnic hierarchy in Manipur valley conformed to the varna-jati model in the rest of India. The study revealed that the inter-group hierarchy in Manipur Valley did not fulfill certain basic requisites of the varna-jati hierarchy. It was indigenously developed as an interlineate hierarchy, which was further strengthened by the institution of kinship.

The AnSI also undertook a project titled ‘Society and Culture among the people of Himalayan Border Area: Structure and Change’ in 1972 in order to generate anthropological data from a number of Himalayan tribes on whom there was little or no anthropological information. It was felt that the Himalayan tribes should be thoroughly studied so that relevant information on their social and economic aspects and trends of change would be available.

While doing so (studying about the Himalayan tribes) special emphasis was given to the following aspects:
(1) Ecological adaptation of the people to the peculiar Himalayan environment.
(2) Socio-cultural implications of the locations. Himalayan villages are not only located at the frontiers of Indian civilization, but often also between nations and civilizations.
(3) Trends of socio-economic changes since Independence. The study, with 1947 as the base line, proposed to go into details of the process and mechanism of change and its impact on the traditional life of the people.

As a part of the project, studies were initiated on tribes like the Khamti, Singpho, Kaman, Mishmi, Wancho, Tangsa, Apatanis, Nishi, Hill Miri and the Adi (Arunachal tribals). The studies showed the important roles played by a few tribes as bridge and buffer communities. It was revealed that a tribe could function as a bridge community between two other tribes and as a buffer community in respect of some other tribes. The strategic locations of the villages in the border areas were found to have played an important role as bridge or buffer communities. The tribes of Upper Subaniri Valley for instance, had played the role within the international border.26

Raghuvir Sinha in his book, Religion and Culture of North-Eastern India, observes that Religion is that cultural tradition in continuity of a people that makes them live their life with a disquestioning belief and a sense of absolute dedication to some unforeseen superhuman element controlling their destiny, yet remaining beyond their reach. It pervades most of the human thoughts, and advancement in science has not depreciated its value; it has, in fact, made people realize the role of religion more profoundly.

Thus religion becomes all the more important to a tribal who live nearer to nature, and whose life is largely influence by its overwhelming forces. Religion becomes a part of their life and is interwoven in their socio-religious beliefs and rituals. They approach religion not as something different from themselves, but as an expression of their own inner realization of some invisible supernatural force controlling the course of nature in the same way as it influences their mind and thought.
The religion discovered in the North-Eastern cultural region is different from what it is in other parts of tribal India. They have some elements of religion in common, such as naturism or animism propelling a belief in the hierarchy of function of gods, duties and spirits, reigns over them in a kind of kingdom and in a soul substance hovering round their life. The traditional religion of tribals in Manipur, their beliefs and practices were by and large similar with the rest of the tribals in North-East Indian.

Chatterji in his book, *Status of women in earlier Mizo Society*, has presented a significant study of the status of Mizo women. He points out that the Mizo women have high status and are more open than their mainline counterpart. There are no social evil practices like bride burning due to dowry or sati. They are not confined only within the four walls of the house, but are free to go out of the house to work in order to meet their daily needs.

The economic activities in all over Mizoram reveal that women run almost all shops, like bookstores, stationeries, textiles, drugs and a variety stores and also vegetable markets and tea stalls. And also their contribution in activities such a road making, brick lying, shifting cultivation etc. is in no way less than that of men.

Even in education, right from the elementary schools to colleges, it is found that boys and girls are studying together in almost equal numbers and their teaching staffs represent both sexes in adequate proportion. Their neat and tip-top dresses, stylish hairdo, their engagement in time at the shop appear to point out that they belong to the richer section of the society and this in turn establish that the role of women in middle and high middle class families is indeed a very significant one. He concludes that the Mizo women enjoyed not only equal treatment with men but also were given by the society the highest measure of security and respect for their free will. Though there may be no practice of sati or dowry and appear to have
freedom for women among the tribal community however, whether they have high status in the society is a big question.

V.M. Rao in his article, “Pattern of Workload and Participation in Decision Making among Tribal Women of Arunachal Pradesh,” writes, that Tribal women in Arunachal Pradesh take decision related to childcare, children’s education, type of feast to be prepared, purchase of utensil and clothes, and agricultural activities. Thus, decisions related to major issues are taken by husband, while decisions on activities within the house are dominated by the women.

Men dominate in taking decisions on number of children to bear, arranging children’s marriage, taking or giving loans, sale or purchase of animals, settlement of disputes, social visits, and to some extent noting child care is essentially a female activity. Liberty to women in spending money is, nevertheless, limited to domestic purposes.

Thus, decision making in important activities is decided by the husband. In other words, where there is social prestige men dominate, while decisions associated with responsibility and duties of use value are left to women. There is a positive relationship between levels of education and decision making by self, and there is positive change among women. Tribals in Manipur are no exceptional in this case.

Changing Phase of Tribal Area of Manipur, Ghori traces the development progress of the infrastructure of the tribal area of Manipur from the pre-independence period to the present. In doing so, it not only takes into its purview the socio-economic disparities, which existed earlier, but also the enormous efforts, which have led to the improvement of the life style of the tribal population of Manipur.

While it reflects on the progress made during the Five Year Plans, it does not underscore the glaring fact that it has still along way to go. It not only highlights the national responsibility but also the social responsibility thereby implied, by giving top priority to the material progress of the tribal population. It also focuses
attention on the main lacunae of the tribal population, ignorance and lack of social consciousness; and exhorts the administrators to remove the dogmas and widen the mental horizons of the tribal population through education. It also emphasizes the need for the initiation of sustained welfare programs for the overall development of the tribal population.

Ghori added that there is a great disparity between the hills (the tribal areas) and the valley (the Meitei areas). The hill areas are more backward and neglected by the policy makers of the state. The formulation of schemes and their implementation has not always been satisfactory. Lack of proper communications has been a big constraint for development in the tribal areas. There is an urgent need for building up a network of good roads connecting all important centers as there are no railway links in this state. Building proper network, transport and communication within the state and especially for the hill areas is an urgent need of day.

Similarly, Ghost and Ghost in their book, *Women of Manipur*, studied about women of Manipur belonging to various communities, their unique talent of creativity and their hard work. They broadly divided the Manipur women into two groups:

(1) Those settled in valley (the Meiteis),
(2) Those settled on hills (the tribals).

The Meitei women have valor to fight social evil, to create revolution and can protect the interest of the motherland to fight war if the country faces such eventualities. For instance, during the 80s and 90s, the “Nupi Lal” (women’s war) revolted against alcohol and drugs addiction, which was widespread throughout the state.

The Meitei women hold a high and free position since all the internal trade and exchange of the produce of the state being managed by them. They opted to have markets at convenient spots by the roadside, where numbers of woman congregate at an early hour, whiling the time away with gossips and light work, and attending
customers. These women also weave their own clothes and their contribution in
dance is also greatly recognized.

Ghosh and Ghosh further divided the later into three, the Old Kukis, the New
Kukis and the Nagas. Women are look at high esteem in all these tribal groups.
The economic activities and physical contributions of the tribal women enhance
their position. They are good weavers and weave varieties of fabrics for their own
clothes and for their family and sell the surplus. 

Active participation of women
in Manipur in economic activities is studied in Chapter VI.

Jotsna Chatterji in his book, Customary Laws and Women in Manipur, highlights
that it is the customary laws and cultures that shape women image and their status.
Since the family is patriarchal, controled and governed by man and the first son is
the successor and descendant of the father, he has complete authority over the
family property. Therefore, he has to protect his younger brothers and sisters in
every walks of their lives. The daughter has no right to inherit even if she is the
first-born child of the family. She has no right to her father’s immovable properties
but any amount of moveable properties and wealth she can receive at the pleasure
of her parents at the time of her marriage.

However, in some cases, father distributes his properties to all his sons and
daughters equally before he dies so that no one suffers after his dead, but these are
exceptional. In some tribes, the girl has to marry the boy chosen by her parents who
fixed the bride-price as well. After the death of her husband, she is a widow and
returns to her parents if she does not have any child. Women have no place in
village authority and decision-making process in the society. This inequality
between men and women is due to the customary law-the bride-price. 

Respondents’ opinion about customary laws especially on inheritance right, dowry,
bride price, mehr is studied in detail in chapter V.

In her book, The Role of the Thadou Kuki women in Christian Home, Phavei
observes that the coming of Christianity brought changes in the Thadou-Kuki
society, specially the position of women. She has presented a significant role, which Kuki women have played in their homes. Home is very important for a person because it is where one begins his/her life and ends. At home, a Thadou-Kuki woman plays role as a mother and a wife. She is responsible to mould the family especially the children to grow not only physically but also spiritually. A part from the house holds chores family worship and entertaining guests are her responsibility. It is in her hand to build up a successful Christian family. She concludes, “Where there is a spiritual mother the family always prospers.”

In the preceding chapter VIII, we will find in detail about how women play important role in the family as well as in the Church.

SUMMARY
This chapter has two parts: Research Methodology and review of previous literature. In the first part, social relevance of investigation, problems, significance, need of tribal research, objectives and hypothesis are studied. Study area, population of the study, sampling method and tools of data collection, characterization are also given in detailed.

In the second part several previous literatures on related topic are reviewed. The status of women refers to the position women are granted as individuals in the social structure, defined by their designated rights and obligations. Tradition India had seen a woman only as a member of the family or a group-as daughters, wives and mothers- and not as an individual with an identity or right of her own. As there is no previous comparison study between women of the tribal and non-tribal communities in Manipur, the researcher has interested to study on this particular area.
REFERENCE:

2 Robert J. Gregory, “Tribes and Tribal: Origin, Use, and Future of the Concept”, *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, July 2003, p. 1
3 Ibid., pp. 1-5.


