CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Manipur is situated in the extreme north-eastern border of India. It is bounded by the state of Nagaland on the north, Mizoram on the south, Assam and some part of Mizoram on the west and Myanmar on the east. The state lies in $93^054'E$ Longitude and $24^046'N$ latitude in an altitude of 773M (2536 ft.) ASL. The total geographical area of Manipur is 22,356 sq. kms. which is 0.67 percent of the total geographical area of the country. The State also occupies 20th place in the aerial spread of the country. According to 2001 Census, the total population of the State is 21,66,788 with male-female ratio of about 50 : 50. The economy of the state is agrarian. Fishing is also one of the main means of the villagers. According to 2001 Census, 42.18% of the total population of the State are workers as against the national average of 33.40%. The total number of cultivators and agricultural labourers are 56.46% and 6.11% respectively. The female agricultural labourers dominate male workers and comprise of 59.60% of the total agricultural labourers. Rice is the main crop
which accounts for 86% of the total crop land area. The per capita income is Rs. 11,056/- in 2000-2001 as against Rs. 1721.00 in 1990-1991.

Indian Airlines connect Imphal-Calcutta, Imphal-Delhi, Imphal-Silchar and Imphal-Guwahati. Dimapur having 215 kms. from Imphal is the nearest railhead for Manipur which is connected by road by the National Highway No. 39 that extends upto Moreh, the boarder with Myanmar. Imphal is also connected with Silchar by National Highway No. 53 (269 kms). The total area of the State under permanent agriculture is low, it being 1,48,572.62 hectares only which is 6.66 percent of the total land area of the State.

The name ‘Thoubal’ was derived from a test of ‘bravery’ in the two brothers namely Nganba Kjeng Shangb and Ngamba Kjeng Tenb were engaged to jump into the river for the purpose of trial of divine justice according to the Lammiton1. Thoubal was included within the territory ruled by the Chenglei Salai/Clan. In Manipur, there were six Panas in 1510 A.D. The District Administration as in vogue in the rest of India came into force. As a result, Thoubal
was a part of administrative unit of Manipur Central District on the 12th November 1967. With the passage of time, Thoubal was a full fledged district on the 25th of May 1983 according to the Govt. vide order No. 6/1/73-R. PT. VIII dt. 24th May 1983. Now in the Thoubal District, there are ten constituencies in the Manipur Legislative Assembly. Out of these Constituencies, Thoubal, Wangkhem and Lilong are in the Inner Manipur Parliamentary Constituency whereas Khangabok, Heirok, Wangjing-Tentha, Kakching, Wabagai, Hiyanglam and Sugunu are in the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency. Before the reorganisation of erstwhile central district, the area now covered by Thoubal District constituted one of the nine blocks of the erstwhile Central District. District can be divided into three characteristic physiographic unit as the hill area, the alluvial plain and the swampy lake and depressional areas. There are one hundred and twenty nine villages in this district.

Thoubal District is bounded by Imphal East District on the north, Chandel and Churachandpur Districts on the south, Bishenpur District on the west
and Ukhrul Districts on the east. There are three Sub-Divisions viz, Thoubal Sub-Division covering an area of a population of 1,72,635 and Kakching Sub-Division covering a population of 1,18,854 and Lilong Sub-Division covering a population of 72,651 comprising a total population of 3,64,140 according to the 2001 census in the whole geographical area of 514 sq. kms. which is 2.271% of the total area of the State. There are two C.D. Blocks - Thoubal C.D. Block of 27 Gram Panchayats and Kakching C.D. Block of 15 Gram Panchayats. District headquater is at Thoubal. The altitude of Thoubal District is 781 metres above sea level.

The Thoubal District comes under the sub-tropical humid climatic conditions. The temperature recorded at Wangbal Meteorological centre for the last 15 years ranges from 0.00 C minimum to 34.3 C maximum. Winter starts from mid-October and ends in mid-March with the coldest days during January to mid-February. Summer days start from May and extends till September with the hottest period during June. Rainy days start from the last week of February till November with heaviest rainfall during July.
The soil of the district ranges from moderate to very fertile. Some of the areas are clay with fine salt; some are sandy while some areas are having loamy soils. In some of the hilly regions, the soils are laterite ferro-cious, low lying areas are black cotton soils with high water retention potential. There are 8 rivers in the District which drain in different parts of it. They are namely the Thoubal River, the Sekmai River, the Wangjing River, the Arong River, the Chakpi River, the Imphal River, the Iril River and the Khongjom River. Out of the total geographical area of 514 Sq. kms. of the district, 21,496.5 hectares are agricultural land covering 42.4 percent. Out of the total available agricultural land area of 1,45,621.23 hectares of the State, Thoubal District contributes 14.762 percent of agricultural lands.

The district has a population of 3,64,140 having 1,82,250 male and 1,81,890 female according to the 2001 census. The density of population per sq km is 713 persons. Population growth rate of the district in the decade 1991-2001 was 24.81 per thousand as compared with the growth rate of 26.83 of the
State. The present sex ratio is 998 females per 1000 males. Most of working population are cultivators while some people who live near lakes and rivers are engaged in fishing.

As stated above, Thoubal District is divided into three Sub-Divisions namely Thoubal, Kakching and Lilong Sub-Divisions. There are three Sub-Divisional officers. The Deputy Commissioner is the head of the district. There are 1 Municipal Board, 4 Nagar Panchayats, 42 Gram Panchayats and 10 Bidhan Sabha seats in the district. For smooth and convenient administrative control, Thoubal Sub-Division is again divided into 4 SDC Circles namely Yairipok, Heirok, Thoubal and Khongjom. Kakching Sub-Division is also divided into 2 SDC Circles namely Kakching and Waikhong. Lilong Sub-Division is also divided into 2 SDC Circles namely Lilong and Irong Chesaba.

The area of Thoubal District is 514 sq. Kms. whereas the total area with or without shrub of this district is 2,927 hectares. The agricultural land area of this district is 21,496.5 hectares. The number of
families below poverty line of this district is 11,722. The percentage of the literacy of this district is 43.66%. The number of doctors per 1000 population of this district is 128. The total rural population of Thoubal C.D. Block is 60,968. The total rural population of Kakching C.D. Block is 33,556. The rural child population (0-6 years) of Thoubal C.D. Block is 22,829. The rural child population of Kakching C.D. Block is 11,383. The scheduled caste population of Thoubal C.D. Block is 1,234. The scheduled caste population of Kakching C.D. Block is 1,453. The scheduled tribe population of Thoubal C.D. Block is 997. The scheduled tribe population of Kakching C.D. Block is 1,338. The infant mortality rate of this district is 42.4 per 1000. Despite constitutional provisions, laws and legal aids, women's equality still remains a distant dream in these areas of the district. Continued and widespread illiteracy, school drop-out of girl students are, of course, the basic reasons for this situation in these areas.

The role of a village woman, in all the villages, is not only to be a house wife but also to work alongside their menfolk outside their home. The
activities of village women for maintaining their families are concerned with sanitation, fuel gathering, cropping, waste disposal and thus their contribution to natural resource management far exceed those of men. In spite of their major role women literacy in the rural areas is far below. Of the total population surveyed women share a percentage of 60.53 of which 67.25 percent is illiterate. The incidence of child labour has been observed mostly in three villages namely Khangabok, Heirok and Langmeithet under Thoubal C.D. Block. Some villagers report that number varies from time to time. Occasionally, the child labours return to their home and stay for days for many reasons. After some days of stay at home they again resume their original work or somebody engage them and carry them. The total number of child labours as reported in the three villages namely Oinam Sawombung Mayai Leikai, Haoreibi Mayai Leikai and Langathel Mayai Leikai is 60. The incidence of child labour is rare in other villages.

Functioning of the Anganwadi centres are appreciated by the villagers. There are 756 ICDS centres, 381 in Thoubal and 250 in Kakching and
125 in Lilong Sub-Divisions functioning in Thoubal District under Thoubal, Kakching and Lilong ICDS projects of which 495 nos. of ICDS centres 281 in Thoubal, 169 in Kakching and 45 in Lilong are functioning in the rural areas. Most of the centres are running in the private buildings (sangoi) and local club buildings. The Anganwadi centres at the villages- Yangbi Mayai Leikai, Keirak, Nongmaikhong, Khorsantabi, Wangoo Laipham, Pangaltabi and Irengband under Kakching C.D. Block and Langathel, Samaram, Atoukhong Maning Leikai, Oinam Sawombung, Chingtham, Uyal, Wangbal, Heirok Pt. III and Khekman (under JRY) in Thoubal C.D. Block have been constructed by the DRDA Thoubal under EAS during the year 1996-97. Possession of own Anganwadi buildings for running the centres is needed for all the villages under the two C.D. Blocks. However, a mass awareness programme to the people about the entitlements of the children under the ICDS programme is needed to avoid the misunderstanding created among the people and the ICDS workers. Health conditions of most of the children in most of the villages are not good. Malnutrition of children
is very frequently found. Diseases like measles and dysentery are very commonly found in the villages. Sanitary latrines in these rural areas are meant simply to hide their personal appearance while sitting. There is no proper idea of sanitation at all. In some families under Leisangthem Gram Panchayat, sanitary latrines constructed under the schemes of Thoubal Block have been observed to be using well.

Drinking water problem is prevalent in most of the villages. Only a few villages are getting pipe water facilities. The villages which have pipe connections are also not getting water regularly. Some villages like Khangabok under Thoubal C.D. Block and Sora, Sarik Konjin, Tokpa Ching and Yangdong under Kakching C.D. Block are getting safe drinking water facilities under the initiatives of certain NGOs namely Rural Development Society, United Vigil for Healthy Society etc. Since water and sanitation plays a vital role in improving the health conditions of the villagers, particularly women and children, the link between water and sanitation and preventive health care giving stress
to the sanitary behaviour related to the use of the facilities as well as personal and household hygiene education will have been an important subject. Within a family, women will have a central role to play since they are the main users. Children under ten are nearly always an important target group, as they will drink any water available and are also poor latrine users. Education about the environmental sanitation behaviour of children is, therefore, also needed. The behaviour of the youngest age groups can be influenced to a great extent by mothers. Thus, school health education along with awareness building programmes for mothers are needed in all the villages of the district.

Most of the villagers excepting a few villages under the two C.D. Blocks, are not properly aware of and quite innocent about the ideas of development apart from their daily food. The communication facilities in some villages like Tangjeng Khunjao, Mangjing under Pangaltabi Gram Panchayat of Kakching C.D. Block are not working during rainy days. Most of the families in the remote areas are having children even upto 12 for a couple.
This is more in the case of Muslim families. It seems as if they are ignorant of the services rendered by the Family Welfare Department.

Illiteracy due to poor and school drop-out of girl students by the parents because of poor and more interest towards boys are frequently prevalent in these areas. Due to the lack of organisation, motivation and awareness, the villagers, particularly women and children are vulnerable to underdevelopment. The role of money lenders and exploitation caused by these people are also prevalent in most of the villages under the two C.D. Blocks creating the difference between the poor and the rich bigger and bigger. The facilities which are supposed to get by a villager are, thus, not available in most of the areas under the two C.D. Blocks.

The study on the present politics and its impact on the panchayati Raj and Rural Development has not been done so far the latter’s importance and significance in Thoubal District are concerned. The Panchayati Raj can be defined as the transfer of responsibility for planning management and resource raising and allocation from the Central
Government and its agencies to the subordinate units or levels of Government democratically. The concept of Panchayati Raj implies the devolution of sizable powers and responsibilities by the Central Government through properly enacted legislative measure to the democratically created territorial units. Under this arrangement, the units of local government enjoy arrangement more or less autonomy within the territorial and functional jurisdiction that is delimited to them for purposes for rural development. It is a system as well as which aims at achieving democratic values in practice.

The Panchayati Raj aims at widening the area of People's Participation in decision making, micro level political authority and autonomy through transfer of specific powers to people's representative institutions at the bottom. The Zilla Parishad, the highest tire of Panchayati Raj has advisory and supervisory functions of the works of Panchayats. Thoubal District is far behind in the race of development, social, economic and political. Neither the Government nor the people at large do not come forward wholeheartedly to speed up
materialisation of development works and programmes of rural self-government. The result is to delay and postpone development in all spheres. In such an atmosphere this study seeks to highlight the very core area of the relationship between the government, for the most part of it, the Panchayati Raj, a process of rural self-government. This inquiry will surely provide a very comprehensive information and understanding about the nature and characteristic style of working values and ideals of Panchayati Raj in Thoubal District giving emphasis on the constraints and prospects of rural development through the Thoubal District, Manipur.

The people of Thoubal District are involved to take part in the process of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development. It explores certain criteria for linking up a gap so far found in between the authority and the agencies of Panchayati Raj and Rural development. It endeavours to bring better coordination as well as understanding in the establishment of better relationship among all the levels of local authorities. The study impels the rural local people to involve a total awareness of self-development in materialising the various benefits
and advantages of building the developing district of Manipur. Rural Development has assumed considerable significance particularly in the 1920s. It involves a strategy being designed to improve the socio-economic life of rural people with special emphasis on the rural poor. The voice of the rural poor is echoing in the sky of Manipur. Besides the space exploration by Rakesh Sharma and other scientists, lakhs and crores of rural population of India are fighting against the poverty, some of them are meeting their last breath of life from starvation. As a result, for the first time in Manipur the Community Development Projects were established at Thoubal on 2nd October 1952, the birthday of Gandhiji was a landmark in the history of Manipur.

Democratic federal structure of India exists only between the centre and states. The Panchayati Raj institutions as local self-governing institutions should find proper places in the Constitution of the country. Only Article 40 under the Directive Principles of state policy is not adequate. The Constitution of the country should be amended giving Panchayati Raj institutions proper places so
as to maintain uniformity, homogeneity strength etc. There should be Central List, State List and District List in the Indian constitution along with the Concurrent List as already provided. This means that the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be given Constitutional Status instead of keeping the same at the whims of the State Government under the existing system. The area covered by the Panchayats is too small to be viable. Out of 33 Development Blocks in the 9 (Nine) districts in the Manipur Panchayati Raj is extended only 9 blocks in 4 valley districts only excluding 24 Hill Blocks in 5 Hill Districts. No Major and Medium type of scheme can be implemented within the area of a Gram Panchayat. Decentralisation of administration should be ensured by the entrusting adequate statutory powers and responsibilities to the Panchayati Raj bodies in the implementation of all Rural Development programmes in Thoubal as a National Policy so that real democracy as dreamt by our great leaders and the people may be translated into action. The non establishment of Samitis i.e., the Panchayati Raj institution at the block level in Thoubal District, is a gap of the
structure. Provisions for establishment are already in the Act. The absence of this intermediate tier cannot animate the principles and working of the system. The establishment of Samitis may be expedited by the State Government.

The transfer of power and responsibilities to the Panchayati Raj bodies are not upto the mark as expected inspite of the State Government’s earnest effort due to the lack of resources. We hope that some of the development works will be entrusted to the Panchayats and their involvement in all rural development works be ensured. Involvement of Panchayati Raj bodies in the implementation of Rural Development Programme is not so effective. All development programmes should be related through the Panchayati Raj bodies. According to 1991 census, the population of Manipur is less than twenty lakhs, the intermediate tier of Samiti was absent in Manipur.

Diversion of water from rivers like the Thoubal river and the Sekmai river through drains is the only means of irrigation practices in the district. The other types of irrigation e.g., tank and well irrigation
are almost absent as in other parts of Manipur. In fact, the irrigation system in the district is not well developed. The area under assured irrigation facilities is quite meagre and cannot influence cropping pattern to any significant extent. Major irrigation projects which had so far been undertaken in the district. Thoubal Multipurpose Project is one of the biggest irrigation project in the whole north-eastern region, with an irrigation potentials of about 34,000 hectares, and Sekmai Barrage Project with an irrigation potential of 8,000 hectares. Minor irrigation works in the district include Imphal Barrage, Turel Ahanbi Dam, Ikop Dam, Ingourok Dam, Heirok Dam, Langathel Dam, Kakching Dam, Maru Dam, etc. Chakpi river may be mentioned for its suitability worth navigation. During rainy season, this swift flowing stream makes a clear cut boundary between Serou and Sugunu and separates Toupokpi from Serou. The boat is the only means of transport both for goods and passengers. In this way, district can suitably generate more employment under water way and raise income of rural target groups. One can easily see a number of boats concentrated in
the lake areas with their fishing nets. Thus, such areas require development of pisciculture industry which immense potentiality in this district.

As hilly parts of the Thoubal District exhibit concentration of tribal population, rural area development may be added with Tribal Area Development plans also. The tribal population the district presents a varied picture in the form of religion, language and culture, distinct from that of the rural society. The tribal area development planning needs desired focus as it comes under priority area. Thus, this work deals with the rural area as well as the tribal communities who are badly suffering and become prey of vicious circle poverty. These objectives are to be taken up under scheduled castes and tribal welfare programmes which aim at to bridge the gap that existed in between the backward and tribal communities and other classes with the quickest possible manner. A tribal sub-plan will be formulated for scheduled castes separately. For the generation of economic activities for the tribal villages, the role of Manipur Tribal Cooperation Limited will be assessed. The
corporation may help in plan formulation, execution of projects, managing and administration benefits to the tribal population. Even today, many tribal villages located in the hills are inaccessible. The Government of Manipur are required to take up an especial package for this people in Thoubal district.

The district is suffering from transport bottlenecks in the absence of railway or efficient inland water way system. The National Highway No. 39 is the only line which passes through the district and as such it cannot reach to distant villages. In the rural areas villagers use to walk on Kutcha roads along with their cows and buffaloes carts. Goods are still carried on human backs from the distant hilly villages who are constantly facing such difficulties from poor transport and communication system. There are four kinds of road pavements in Thoubal District as Black Topped, Water Bound, Macadam, Gravel and Kutcha. The roads of the area may further be classified as National Highway, State Highway, Major District Road, Inter Village Roads and Municipal roads. Roads are the only important means of transport in this district. The present
structure of road network in the district is inadequate to meet the minimum requirement of development activities. The area had a road length of 470.86 km in 1984 which increased to 494.86 km in 1985. Over fifty six percent of the total road length in the area is surfaced or metalled while the rests (43.65%) remain unmetalled. The existing roads could not be maintained properly as the thin pavement is broken up by the heavy traffic and frequent floods. Besides the road, the area has some other means of transport and communication which include waterways and cart tracts. The district has not any big and navigable river. Newly constructed roads and bridges have replaced the waterways considerably. In some of the areas, the waterway could not be replaced by any other means of transport for the movement of goods and passengers even in small amount. It is extensively used in Pat areas located in the west and north western part of the district. Most often boats constitute the only means of transport and catching fish around Kharungpat, Ikoppat, Lamjaopat, Khoidum Pat, Pumlen Pat etc. Sometimes they are used to go from one village to another village in swampy areas of the Thoubal District.
Cart track is an important means of transport in the remote parts of the rural area. It is generally used for transportation of agricultural commodities such as rice, straw, fuel wood and timber for longer distances. In most of the interior and tribal villages of the district head loads are still common.

The Thoubal District is rich in flora and fauna. There are hundreds of rare birds and animals and flowers, trees and lagoons offer a memorable experience for nature-lovers. The warm climate is also ideal for such outdoor activities as bird watching, fishing, boating, scuba-diving etc. From the time immemorial flora and fauna are frequent themes in religion, folk-lore and custom in Thoubal District, Manipur. They are important economically as they provide both food and various products from their feathers and other body parts. Birds give pleasure to thousand of people around the world. The pleasure comes simply from watching them in the garden and for which many people travel hundred of miles to witness the real life of birds, plants and animals in their natural habitats. Birds figure prominently in the folk tales of many people in Thoubal District. In Manipur, the close association of the hornbill, Uchek Langmeiton with
their ancestors is still a part of the living oral tradition of the Meetei and the surrounding population of this region. Thoubal District is rich in wild life. Different type of animals live in different vegetation zones of the district. Woodpecker, Craw pheasant, Scops owls, Coots, bantings, thrushes, sparrow, parrot, Wrens Sykes etc. are found in Thoubal District. Fox, bear, tiger, deer are also available in this district. The Government of Manipur on the advice of the Indian Board of Wild life makes laws that prohibit killing of animals and birds. Besides, the shrub species are read, weed and other smaller species of trees which are available in Thoubal District. The Yongchak (tree bean), Heinou (Mango Tree), Uchan (Pine Tree) and tera (Salmalick Malabarica) are found in the hills of Waithou, Lilong, and Kakching etc. They are good quality of timber and extensively used for match splists and boxes. In this way, they can play an important role for the economy development of rural poor people in Thoubal District.

Rainfall begins from the first week of February in this district. But excessive rainfall takes place during the months of summer season. Heavy rain which commences in the month of April, continues
up to the month of October and November. July registers the highest amount of rainfall (231.9mm), in the area as against the lowest (10.00mm) in the month of December. The winter months receives a small amount of rainfall in the district. Thus the distribution of the amount of rainfall in the district exhibits significant seasonal variation. The months of December, January and February envisage the characteristics of the cold winter season. A steep fall in temperature can be marked in the month of December. The commencement of summer season takes place in the early March which can be marked by a sudden increase in temperature, vanishing fog and occasional thunder showers. Rainy season of the district is the longest season of the year which extends from May to September.

The natural vegetation of the district consists mainly of shrubs, bamboos and small trees. Forest are confined mostly in the hilly regions. Due to climatic and edaphic factors the trees have stunted growth. The forest occupy 88.58 km² area of the district. They may be classified as protected and reserved forest. Protected forest occupy an area of 59.5 km² which comes to 67.2 per cent of
the total forest area. The reserved forest account an area of 29.09 km² and constitute 32.8 per cent of the forest area. The very high density of population accompanied with its rapid rate of growth compelled people rapacious exploitation and clearing of forest in search of land for cultivation. After realisation of ecological repercussions of deforestation, currently attention is given to increase area under forest and horticulture. Forests occupy a significant proportion of hill and foot hill zone of the district which are not suitable for agricultural practices. Forest constitute vital natural resource which are influenced by terrain, soil, temperature, rainfall etc.

Small timber, fuel wood and bamboo are the important forest products which are required for daily uses such as construction materials, furniture, fuel consumption etc. in this district. Forestry schemes should be strengthened to achieve the objective of development, utilisation and expansion of forest resources ensuring maximum net benefit to the society. In Thoubal District, good forests favoured the development of various forest based industries. The forests of the area constitute the
basic resource essential for amelioration of natural environment along with economic prosperity. The growth of population diversified needs and demands of forest based products and allied works open scope for individual development. In order to solve the increasing demand of forest resources, government has taken up various schemes such as measures of protection, plantation and aorestation measures. In this way, forest and vegetation can play an important role for the rural economic development in Thoubal District.

Ferrogenous rocks occure at Kakching. It had been used for making indigenous tools and equipments such as sword, knife etc. in the historical times. Likewise salt is available at the fault zone of eastern foothills of Sikhong, Chandrakhong, Ningel and Waikhong. The extraction of salt in the state from these salt springs has been done since historical times. Sandstone available in the outcrops and in the river beds as transport boulders or pebbles are of local importance specially for construction of buildings, roads etc.
Agriculture plays a very important role in the economy of Thoubal District. It does not only provide a consumption ground for the most of the farm workers but also offers a means of livelihood for agricultural labourers. Major development efforts in the field of paddy cultivation are the provision of irrigation, infrastructure and assured supply of water which encouraged farmers to raise more rice recently. Double cropping has been started in some of the villages which have been provided with assured supply of irrigation water in the district. So, agriculture can be successful under conducive natural environment, favourable social overhead and agricultural infrastructure. It entirely depended on traditional method of farming during recent past and is experiencing a change with adoption of current innovations and modern scientific methods of agriculture. Rice, wheat, maize, millets, oilseeds, sugarcane, tobacco, tea, coffee, cotton, jute, black pepper, chillies, ginger, cloves and cardamon, etc. are the main agricultural products in Thoubal District.

The agro-based industry includes sugar industry, rice milling, wheat flour milling, pulse milling, oil crushing, mat making, rope making and
gur making in Thoubal District. Bamboo and Cane works such as basket making, black symithy etc. are termed as handicraft industry. In addition to these salt-making, wool-knitting, embriodering, leather industry etc. are also performed in this district. The Khandsari Sugar Factory is the only notable agro-based industry of the district which provides employment opportunities to many persons directly and indirectly. As a small scale industry in Manipur, the Khandsary Sugar Mill was set up in 1972 at Khangabok. The development of the mill incurred a capital of 17 lakhs which has a crushing capacity of 60 tonnes per day. The annual requirement of raw material for the factory is 7,000 tonnes. The installed capacity has not been fully utilised due to the lack of sufficient raw materials. The factory runs effectively for about 3 months after the harvest period. The factory has generated an employment opportunity for the people of Thoubal District. The suppliers of sugarcane to the factory are from Kakching, Wabagai, Keirak, Wangbal, Samaram, Langathel Khunou, Khangabok and Tekcham village.
The development of Animal Husbandry in Thoubal District may specialise in form of livestock and poultry, birds. Livestock production programme aims at providing a greater employment opportunity to the weaker sections of society specially scheduled castes and tribal villages of the district. Cattle and buffaloes are the important draught animals in the rural areas of the district. Cattle are indispensable for agriculture and require immediate attention for its development. Adequate supply of fodder is necessary for the livestock development. Hence Minikit Fodder Scheme has been taken up for distribution of free fodder food to the beneficiaries of this district. For the successful development of poultry birds and livestock resources, District Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department is providing specific supervision. Existing veterinary hospitals, dispensaries, and ICDP sub-centre could not meet the requirements of the district. Veterinary Dispensary cum ICDP Sub-Centre at Sangai Yumpham has been upgraded as District Level Veterinary Hospital for a better coverage of health programme. One Veterinary Dispensary has also been opened at Arong. Under the Disease
Investigation Scheme one mini laboratory has started its work in Veterinary Hospital at Thoubal town. In this way many schemes have been taken up for the development of animal husbandary in this district.

Sericulture is an important enterprise which attracts attention of planners and administration to raise this commercial and valued product and per capita income of beneficiaries of the Thoubal District. The district has a good possibility in the field of Mulburry, Tasar and Eri development. The Oak Tasar culture is given priority in the hilly regions when it has better prospects for development. It promises generation of employment opportunities to the rural unemployed including scheduled castes and tribes. Sericulture may be successfully performed on small, medium or the large scale and provide raw materials for cottage industries. Based on such raw materials, Government is going to establish different varieties of silk worm rearing farms in the district. Wangbal, Thongjao, Uyal, Umathel, for improvement in the implementation of such schemes in future. The NREP and RLEGP programmes which have been initiated to reduce
rural unemployment and creation of rural community assets to Panchayati Raj bodies play an important role in Thoubal District. At the Block Level, the Panchayat Samitis are functioning as Block Development authorities. There are two Block Development Officers in this district. The programmes which are thus chalked out are implemented by the Block Development Officers after obtaining the approval of the Deputy Commissioner of the district who also function as Additional Development Commissioner in this district. In this way, they participate in planning, formulation and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in this district.

The Government of Manipur is considering the proposal for establishment of Panchayat Samitis in Thoubal District. With the establishment of Panchayat Samitis in this district, this body is expected to co-ordinate supervise, control the lower Panchayati Raj bodies. Adequate provisions for transfer of the departmental schemes have been made in the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act and Rules made thereunder.
According to R.P. Mishra and K.V. Sundaram: the basic needs of rural development, should be founded on four basic principles. In the first category, group and the productive and social services actually reach the group; and making the development process self-sustaining in terms of development of appropriate skills and implementing capacity, and institutions at different levels to ensure effective use of existing resources and faster mobilisation of additional financial and human resources. The rural development may be conceived as improving living standards of the mass of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. In short, it has three important features: improving the living standards of the subsistence population, community participation, and making the process self-sustaining. Today, rural development is a part of a larger development process of national society. Majority of the people of our nation are taking their livelihoods as well as their share of productive means to rural India. Here, there is a general feeling among the scholars that if national development aims at raising to a rapid process, in the first, the
policy for rural development must be taken up as an important item. Therefore, in all the Five Year Plans, heavy reliance has been put on the administration to achieve developmental targets in the rural area. As a result, the community development programme has been started to launch at every state for rural upliftment. Towards the orientation of rural development, Thoubal like other districts in Manipur has also been started to launch the community development programme since the inception of its independence. As time went on, due attention has been made by the present Government to develop the rural sector to a great extent. In such situation the main concern has also been directed towards functionaries of community development. Development is a progressive change in organism, continuously directed towards a certain and condition. And it also implies the human ability to give a rational direction to this change and to attain what is sought. L.M. Santhanam in his study on human factors in development has started three criteria of development as proposed by Ginsberg. They are namely the growth of man’s control over the conditions of life as constituted by the natural
environment, his society and himself and the growth of intra and inter-social co-operation and the growth of freedom in co-operative relationship\textsuperscript{7}. With this background, the total concept of rural development may be a thought of giving content and direction to certain aspects of social change to attain the welfare of the masses. In many countries, rural development is viewed simply as a process of bringing modernity to rural areas through the establishment of social overhead infrastructure as such goods roads, schools, health centres etc. Walter Ouma Oyugi suggests the programme of rural development involves the systematic introduction of policy actions in the broad field of development aims at improving the standard of living of the people by reducing specially rural unemployment and underemployment, poverty and inequalities in the national system\textsuperscript{8}. In fact it is a process which is directed towards improving the living standard of the rural poor.

In understanding the concept of the Panchayati Raj a good deal of confusion arises due to various approaches. The concept has been considered differently by different academics and policy
makers, such as units of Local Government, as an agency of State Government for carrying out governmental functions and implementation of developmental programmes at the local level, and also as a means to realise participatory democracy at the rural level. Iqbal Narain discusses the concept both from the normative and empirical viewpoints and finally develops a syncratic conceptual image and considers Panchayati Raj as a system of Local Government, a mechanism for rural development and also as an agency of State Government for specific activities, its objectives being considered as modernisation, democratisation and politilisation tied to each other in a system of interconnections and interactions. Indeed, it is with the introduction of Panchayati Raj that the process of politicalisation has begun in a massive scale for the first time in the rural society in India. He further has called it an institutional mechanism for decentralisation essentially a means-category concept. R.C. Prasad discusses village Panchayats, the base unit of Panchayati Raj from approaches, i) as an institution of Local Self-Government, ii) as an agency of higher units of
government expected to carry out certain task on their behalf, and iii) as an idea to realise democracy at the village level. However, the author has accepted the first two approaches in his Democracy and Development.\textsuperscript{10}

According to S.R. Maheshwori, Panchayati Raj in India has three broad images: i) as an instrument for the realisation of the ends of the community development. ii) as an organ of the State Government to execute Community Development Programmes and the other schemes and iii) as an idea to realise democracy at the village level.\textsuperscript{11} Ziauddin Khan considers Panchayati Raj for all intents and purposes as Local Self-Government institutions; the idea of which is to bring the decision-making authorities nearer to the people.\textsuperscript{12}

Sugata Dasgupta discusses the concept: i) as an administrative tool (as viewed by the bureaucrats), ii) as an agency of Local Self-Government (as viewed by others), iii) as Gram Swaraj (as viewed by Jayaprakash Narayan as well as by All India Panchayat Parishad). The public image of Panchayati Raj is also discussed by
Dasgupta. According to this author, the public viewed it as an effort to put back the clock of progress. With regard to its operational image, the administrators, rural elite and weaker sections of the community are three parties concerned with it. To the first, Panchayati Raj is an instrument for the implementation of the Community Development Programme and to the second, it provides opportunity for increasing participation with the village government and also for attaining position of political stability and to the last, it has yet to develop a concept of its own. Its operational image from the three parties concerned is far from being satisfactory\textsuperscript{13}. S.N. Dubey considers three basic rationals for the creation of Panchayati Raj, i) to make the Community Development Programme relevant to the needs and problems of the people. ii) transfer decision making authority to the villages regarding development work and iii) to realise the values of participatory democracy\textsuperscript{14}. So development and democracy are considered as the two purposes of Panchayati Raj - development in modernising rural mind to respond to modern technology, and democracy in associating people with the process of decision making. M.R. Khan
discusses the concept from the viewpoints of i) villagers, ii) elected representatives and iii) officials. To the first, it is an institution which provides them certain amenities like construction of roads, educational facilities, drinking water etc. The second describe it as an institution for carrying out village welfare and developmental functions while to the third, it is an institution of democratic decentralisation - an autonomous body capable of deciding its own affairs and an institution for implementing local development programmes. The Panchayati Raj has also provided opportunities for the emergence of local leadership and the success of the panchayats is dependent on the quality of this leadership. It is also said that the term Panchayati Raj literally implies government of the people's representative leaders and thus develops the feeling of self-government among the rural masses.

The past history of Thoubal reveals the social structure in the area. The people may be classified as the Hindus, the Meeteis, the Tribals and the Muslims. Originally the Meeteis and the Tribals of Manipur are of the same ancestors stock i.e, the
Mongoloid. There is no racial difference between the Meeteis and the Tribals - the dwellers in the plains and the dwellers in the hills but only a difference in religions. The Hindus, the Meeteis and the Muslims lived mostly in the alluvial plains of Thoubal District. Kakching exhibits the largest concentration of Loi families in Thoubal District. Kakching Khunou, Waikhong and Sugunu are the other Loi settlements of this district. The Lois speak a separate dialect after independence (1947), they have been declared as a scheduled caste getting special facilities for their social and economic upliftment. Generally the religious ties and trade links become stronger with passage of time in this district. The followers of four distinct religious sect i.e., the Hindus, the Meeteis, the Muslims and the Christians (Tribals) are identified with their different institutions such as Temple (Mandir), Laishang, Mosque and Church respectively. The Meeteis are very much nationalistic whom always sustain their social, cultural and religious traditions. The area has an amalgamation of the Hindus, the Meeteis, the Muslims and less concentration of tribal population. The Hindus believe in the Radha-Krishna cult and
worship the idols of Radha and Krishna in all the temples. The Meeteis worship the local deities more vigorously. Almost all the tribals follow the Christianity despite some of the tribesmen among the Kabui follow their original faith and belief. Churches have become the religious centre and pride of the tribal people and even their marriages are performed therein. The Meeteis worship Lord Sanamahi and Lord Pakhangba as part and partial of ancestors of worship. The Muslims worship Allah. Likewise, religions are the way of spiritual life of these racial groups in Thoubal District.

There are five regular and substantial market centres in the area which are located at Kakching, Thoubal town, Lilong, Pallel and Sugunu. They used to play the catalytic role of focal points and act as the centres of diffusion of mordern method of agriculture. Lilong is famous for its daily retail market, cheep vegetables and export of variety of new materials whereas Kakching is an important place for the available of food grain and varieties of rice, handicraft etc. Thoubal town is famous for its retail market facilities. Besides, there are many small markets, such as Wangjing, Khongjom,
Yairipok, etc. Thoubal town which is the capital town of Thoubal District is situated on the bank of Thoubal river, stretching north-south along National Highway No. 39.

The Thoubal plain is popularly known as the bowl of the State. The north, the northeastern and the southern hilly areas exhibit undulating terrain with poor soil and is not suitable for cultivation. Consequently, a low density of population can be seen in the village in these areas generally inhabited by the scheduled castes and tribes, such as Bomba Khullen, Thoubal Khunou, Aimol Khullen, Mahao and Chandrakhong.

The Thoubal District is known for its rich economic resources which provide raw material for a wide range of cottage and small scale industries. The construction of new roads and surplus production accompanied with and improvement in other related infrastructure open scope for industrial development in the area. High to very high density of population in the area promises sufficient demand for products of cottage and small scale industries. Level of literacy and educated person is considerably low. They cannot get job opportunities in tertiary activities are tempted to start forest-based,
agro-based, mechanical and electrical repairing shops, cottage and small scale industries. Until the commencement of the five year plans there was hardly any industry worth mentioning except handloom. Further, cottage and handloom industry were strengthened with the availability of power, transport, labour and raw materials. Emphasis is given mainly to non-power-intensive industries in the Thoubal District.

There are two rural hospitals which are located at Kakching and Thoubal town. There are six primary health centres located at Yairipok, Thoubal town, Lilong, Kakching, Kakching Khunou and Heirok. Thus, the health centres and hospitals are concentrated in municipal areas and towns. There are 46 Public Health Sub-Centres distributed in the Thoubal District. The extension services of administration play an important role in the rapid transformation of economy of Thoubal District. The District Commissioner acts as the highest authority involved in taking decisions in administrative affairs with its headquarters at Thoubal town. Other extension services including headquarters of
Community Development Block, Sub-Divisional Officers, Sub-Deputy Collectors, Veterinary Hospitals, Veterinary Dispensaries and Sub-Centres for Intensive Cattle Development Programme (ICDP), etc. are working in this district. There are 6 Police Stations located at Thoubal town, Lilong, Sugunu, Waikhong, Yairipok and Wangjing and one Police Outpost at Pallel. SDPO headquarters are located one each at Thoubal town and Sugunu while Superintendent of Police (SP) is stationed at Thoubal town.

The present study does not also rule out to focus attention on the present politics and its impact on the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, human and socio-economic environment at the village level, constraints and prospects of rural development, certain criteria for linking up a gap so far found in between the authority and agencies of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development. It is found that the government is apathetic towards the full implementation of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development through the complexities of power politics. In the course of preparing my research work, I have employed certain tools of critical analysis to enlighten the aspects of
constraints of the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in Thoubal District. I have also made an attempt to explain the relationship between the power politics or political process and the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in Thoubal District. I have used certain empirical tools like questionnaire survey. This study on the Panchayati Raj and Rural development employs tools of deductive methods and adopts historical and analytical approaches. It attempts to deal with the matter critically and explains some aspects of the relationship between the higher authority and the local authorities with survey data, such as, questionnaire or samples survey.

The study of the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in Thoubal District is very hard to find out the most important documents of these two blocks namely Thoubal C.D. Block and Kakching C.D. Blocks which were burnt down to ashes by miscreants on 29th May, 2001 and 30th June, 2001 respectively. Out of the 10 constituencies in Thoubal District, Khangabok, Heirok, Wangjing-Tentha, Kakching, Wabagai, Hiyanglam and Sugunu are in the Outer
Manipur Parliamentary Constituency. The voters from these 7 Assembly segments of Thoubal District can cast the votes but do not have the right to stand for candidature. The voters of these segments are strongly demanding their right to be elected, so far been put under stress of a certain political culture and participation. There are a few political leaders in the Thoubal District, who can become the Chief Minister of Manipur. Agriculture and industrial sector are also developing in this district. The Thoubal District is comparatively developed since India's independence. The National Highway No.39 is the only highway lifeline which passes through the district and as such it cannot reach to the distant villages. If the trade between India and Myanmar is carried on properly through National Highway No. 39, Thoubal District can harness comfortably for its future development in terms of communication, trade and business, transport and electronic goods. I would like to propose that the Government must devolve the powers and responsibility to the Panchayati Raj Institutions so that the Thoubal District could harvest the fruit of proper implementation of overall programmes of the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development.
Historical Background

In early days, there were some forms of local organisation just like Panchayat in Thoubal. The Khangjeng was the name of the form of Panchayat in the valley areas of Thoubal before the British Rule in Manipur. It was constituted by 13 members namely Khullakpa, Luplakpa, Teloi Hanjaba, Taloi Hidang, Yu-Panba, Khunjha Hanjaba, Hijang Lakpa, Loumee Lakpa, Loumee Hidang, Pakhanglakpa, Naha lakpa, Shgol Hanjaba and Selungba\textsuperscript{16}. Khullakpa was the head of the Khangjeng who was appointed by the King by taking into consideration of the opinion of the villagers. He looked after the villagers and helped the King. Next to Khullakpa, Luplakpa was appointed by the king and supporters to the Khullakpa of all the affairs of the villagers. Next to Luplakpa, Teloi Hunjaba was in charge of religion-cultural aspects and food such as Lai Haraoba, Laisha Tanba, Khoi Tanba, Puthiba Khurumba, etc. Next to Teloi Hanjaba, Teloi Hidang supported the Teloi Hanjaba for the matter of hunting and catching bees. Next to Teloi Hidang, Yu-Panba was in charge of the matter of religion along with wine. Next to Yu-Panba, Khunjha Hanjaba supported
the Yu-Panba, for the matter of wine which was given to the Shanglen Lakpa, Lainingthou, Leimarel, Phungga Lairu, Thongngaklel etc. Next to Khunjha Hanjaba, Hijang Lakpa was the commanding officer to form groups of villagers for doing the works at the village level. Next to Hijang Lakpa, Loumee Lakpa managed all the paddy fields of the king and collected cash or kind from the villagers. Next to Loumee Lakpa, Loumee Hidang supported the service of Loumee Lakpa. Next to Loumee Hidang, Pakhang Lakpa was the head of all the bachelors. Next to Pakhanglakpa, Naha Lakpa was the head of all youth and women. Next to Naha Lakpa, Shagol Hanjaba looked after the horses of king. Next to Shagol Hanjaba, Shelungba was the cashier of the Khangjeng. Its main functions were to arbitrate petty cases viz, divorce, petty money suits and other petty criminal cases. It decided cases of social and religious nature. It exercised executive, legislative and judiciary functions at the village level.

Manipur has got legions legacy of Panchayats. It is discernable since the hoary past of Manipur. Leikai Sangjaroi, Lai-rup and Keirup may be regarded as the rudimentary forms of local authority,
quiet unique and distinct from their Indian counterparts. Their origin goes back to great antiquity. The Meetei Puyas and Chronicles give direct proof of this patent fact. Originally, Meetei society consisted of seven clans/salai each under one head. The eldest son of the head of the clan was called Piba. Pibaship was hereditary and succeeded by the law of primogeniture. In salai functions, Piba gets the first of everything. His descendents were not to work hard in the Lallup (Compulsory Military Service). Umang Pothang (carrying state servant's luggage), Chakat (feeding the state servants) and Yairek Santry (guarding the state servants) at night when they were in the village on tour. Instead they attended the Ningthou Senba Loisang (office of the aid-de-camp). Those of the third son, were to wage war. Those of the 2nd and 4th sons were to attend the Sangjaroi. Its duty was to build houses and gather materials thereof.

Lai-rup (Lai-Party) managed and performed the Lai-Haraoba of the Umanglai within its jurisdiction. Regarding the Kei-rup (Tiger Party), Col. Mc. Cullock (Political Agent, 1863-1867) said, "So destructive have tiger been, that the whole country
is from older times divided into Keirup which when
a tiger commits mischief in their particular district,
mark it down and surround it"19. This is done and
they act down the jungle in a circle all round the
tigers lair, protecting themselves during the
operation by a fence of nets, behind which again,
when the jungle has been cleared, they erect a
stockade of reeds and bamboos (Keiban) when this
is finished, they reported the fact to the capital and
either the King himself or some are deputed by him
went and shot the best. In former days, before the
fire arms were in general use, it was customary to
enter the stockade and spear the tiger on foot. So
the members of the Kei-rup had to learn Lambu
(bigger spear) as well as Langsoi (an instrument
for threatening and pacifying the wild animals like
elephant). Dr. Brown in his 'Statistical Account of
Manipur' wrote that during the reign of
Chandrakanta (1850-1886) in every village there
was a Singlup20. It is a literal meaning of fire wood
association. It had both judicial and nonjudicial
functions. The judicial function was to try petty civil
and criminal cases in the village. Its nonjudicial
functions was included the procuring of firewood
(Shing) for cremation of any one dying within its territorial jurisdiction. In this regard R.K. Jhaljit Singh opined in his 'A Short History of Manipur' that 'Singlup' is analogous to the Gram Panchayat.

L. Ibungohal Singh, Ex-District and Session Judge also wrote in his 'Introduction to Manipur' that in ancient Manipur every village had village organisations with two persons called Hanjaba and Hidang as the Heads. They arbitrated petty cases namely Nupi Khainaba (divorce), Angang Chakthak (baby- brought-up expenditure) and petty money suits in the civil side and simple hurt and affray in the criminal side. They sometimes decided adultery cases by levying a fine of Rs. 50/- from the culprit and paying the amount to the husband of the woman. They also decided cases of social-religious nature. When the village panchayats were established in about 1902 by the political agent, the villages which had strong hold of this organisation were excluded and this is still in existence in some villages in Thoubal though not as strong as before. The Ex-District and Session Judge, L. Ibungohal Singh said that this organisation may be considered to be the Gram Panchayat.
One chronicled caption, "Loiyumba Sillen" recorded that in 1074 A.D., His Highness Maharajah Loiyumba in accordance with the traditional set-ups, divided Manipur in 6 Lups just like modern blocks namely Angouba Lup, Nongmai Lup, Akong Lup, Khurai Lup, Chingcharup and Khaicharup. Each Lup had a Phamdon Phamloop as executive body under one Lakpa (chairman) nominated by the King. Each of the 'phamdon phamloop' performed all the development works of the 'Lup'.

The Shalis Panchayat was the name of the form of Panchayat in Thoubal during the British rule in Manipur. It consisted five members at least. All the members are directly elected by the people. Its form of Panchayat is like to be Nyaya Panchayats. Its main functions were to dispose of civil and criminal cases in the rural areas of Thoubal District.

The Panchayat was a council of elders which meted out justice to the villagers and helped to solve various problems of rural life. The institution represented not only the collective will but also the collective wisdom of the entire rural community. The principle of the Panchayat was "Panch Prameshwor"
i.e., "God speaking through the Five". The unanimous decision of the Panchayat was respected by the people as the Verdict of the God. The authenticated Royal Diary, Cheitharol Kumbaba²² recorded that after the Manipur War of 1891, on a blue moon day of 1892, rural panchayats were established²³. Forthwith, Garod (Millitary Court) and Pancha (Womwn's Court) were abolished and Cheirap and Sadar Panchayat²⁴ were established. In Cheirap Puskor Mantry, Nongmaithemba Pukhramba, Ningthoujamba, Naharuplakpa-these five members were appointed on a salary of 50 Paries of land each. In Sadar Panchayat Wakamba, Sougaijamba, Chingakhamba Ahallup Lakpa, Nongmaithemba Laipham Lakpa and Khwairakpa Chaoba - these five members were appointed on 25 Paries of land each as their salary²⁵.

The administrative report of Political Agency, Manipur (1891-92) also stated that below the Court of Political Agent and the Court of Assistant to P.A., were three courts in Manipur going downwards, such as - i) Cheirap ii) Town Panchayat and iii) Rural Panchayat.
The villages in the interior of the valley have been formed into circles containing nearly 1000 houses and in each circles of 5 members had been appointed with authority to try offences of minor degree with power to inflict punishment not exceeding Rs. 50/-. These Panchayats also heard Civil Suits which did not exceed Rs. 50/- in value. But the village Panchayat had not been working long through town Panchayat carried on its business with commendable promptness. However, the village Panchayat circles for police purpose, have been found useful. An officer called a rural choukidar was appointed for every 100 houses and reported daily to the Panchayat of his circle. Therefore in 1902 the village Panchayat were re-established by the Political Agent. In each of the village Panchayat 5 members sat with the exception of Sekmai Panchayat where these members were directly elected by the people by verdict of majority. The method of election was thus that the voters stood in the different rows to choose their own respective candidates in the open field. There could be as many candidates as possible for 5 members to be chosen only. Out of the rows of the standing voters, 5 rows of
higher order of the same would be counted for the purpose of declaring chosen. The pattern was thus that head were counted, but not the contents of the head. They sat on a bench to hear cases which were decided by the verdict of majority. They try civil cases in which the parties are all Manipuris. They also try criminal cases, but no power to improve sentences of imprisonment. The Cheirap heard appeals from these Panchayats. In this regard, the village Panchayats were working satisfactorily. Generally men are by nature constantly at conflict with one another, for greater share of scarce product. The Panchayats were entrusted with only one function, the adjunction of petty disputes. Thus, not only during the British period but prior to that also, there were local government institutions. With the publication of inscriptions of Parantaka I of Vttaramesur in Tamilnadu State, some scholars came to the conclusion that Sabha, Ur, Nadu, Nagaram were strong local authorities in ancient India. This contention was Birwood and Elphinston. In Assam also B.K. Barua, S. K. Bhuyan considered the Namghars established by Sankardev as little Parliament. J. N. Das also
pointed out that there were many Mels, Khels and Riaz during the time of Ahoms, which were regarded as powerful local authorities\textsuperscript{28}. But all these local authorities were not considered as local authorities. They disappeared like the morning mist before the rising sun. Dr. V. Venkata Rao discussed the problem with a keen sophisticated eye. He found the writers were led by sentiments and not by historical perspectives\textsuperscript{29}. So in the case of Thoubal also, before jumping into hasty conclusion, we require to delve deeper. We require an eagle’s eye of Rao. Otherwise, Panchayats in Thoubal is still a big question mark.

The two important institutions at the capital were Durbar and Cheirap. The Durbar was the assembly of all the officials of which the King was the head. The Cheirap, the Chief Court consisted of nobles and officials of different funtionaries from all the Panas or Sub-Divisions. There was fifty three persons eligible for the seats in the Cheirap, in addition to the twentyfour ex-officio-members. Thus, the judicial and executive organisations were brought into touch and functioned in closed harmony with the ideals of the people.
In modern Panchayat system was first introduced in Manipur in the year, 1960 by adopting the U.P. Panchayat Act, 1947. Under this Act, the first General Election to Panchayats was held in 1964. The second General Election to Panchayats was held in 1970. However, the said Act did not come up to the expectation of the people accordingly, the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1975 was passed by the Manipur Legislative Assembly and assent of the President of India was obtained on 9th May, 1976. This Act came to operation only on the 10th January, 1978 by an order of the Government of Manipur. Under this Act, Gram Panchayats, Nyaya Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis were established and 3rd General Elections to these bodies were held in May, 1978. Though the Act provided for establishment of 3 (three) tier system of Panchayats, viz, Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samitis at the Block Level and Zilla Parishad at the district level, only Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti were constituted, thus two-tier system of Panchayati Raj has been in vogue since then. The fourth General Election to Panchayats was held in 1985. Gram Panchayats,
Nyaya Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis were constituted. In 1991, Gram Panchayats, Nyaya Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis were constituted by holding 5th General Election to Panchayats in Thoubal District.

In conformity with the provisions of the Constitution of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 was passed and came into force with effect from 23rd April 1994. The Act provided for a two-tier system of Panchayats i.e., Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. As envisaged in the constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, there are provisions for Gram Sabha, reservation of seats for SC/ST and women, taxation, constitution of State Election Commission and State Finance Commission and establishment of District Planning Committees. The Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 extended to the whole of the State of Manipur excepting any area to which the Manipur Hill Areas District Council Act, 1971 or the Manipur Village Authorities in Hill Areas Act, 1956 extended, or which had been or might hereafter
be declared as, or included in a municipality under any law for the time being enforced or which had been or might hereafter be declared as or included under the Cantonment Act, 1924. The Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 had been amended four times in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2005.

Under the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the 1st General Election to Panchayats was held on 31st January 1997 and Zilla Parishads and Gram Panchayats were established. The second General Election to Panchayats was held on 30th August 2002 and Zilla Parishads and Gram Panchayats had been established in the Thoubal District under the supervision, direction and control of the State Election Commission constituted under section 98 of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994. In the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, there was a provision for establishment of two-tier system of Panchayats i.e., Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Parishad at the district level. There was also provision for establishment of Gram Sabhas.
Section 3 (1-B) of Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 as amended in 1996 provided for establishment of Gram Sabha for a village or a group of adjoining villages having population of not less than three thousand and not more than six thousand subject to such variation not being larger than two thousand as may be necessary on consideration of the local situation. There were 42 Gram Sabhas in Thoubal District. A Gram Sabha consisted of all persons whose names were included in the electoral rolls within the area of Gram Sabha unless a person was disqualified for being a member of Gram Sabha under the Act. As per section 17 of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 as amended in 1996, a Gram Panchayat consisted of the Pradhan and such member of directly elected members as might be notified from time to time by the State Government and one member for every 350 population or part thereof of the Panchayat area should be elected as a member of such Panchayat. Every Gram Panchayat must continue for a period of 5 years unless dissolved sooner. In case of dissolution, election to constitute a Gram Panchayat must be held before expiration of a period of 6 months.
Section 48 of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 provided for establishment of a Zilla Parishad for a district and having jurisdiction over it. The Zilla Parishad shall consist of the members directly elected from the territorial constituencies in the district, the members of the House of People and the Members of the State Legislative Assembly representing a part or whole of the district whose constituencies lie within the district and ten percent of the Pradhans of the Gram Panchayats in the district. As per Section 50 (1) of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 as amended in 1996, Government may by notification in the Official Gazette determine the number of directly elected members from the territorial constituencies keeping in view the whole population of the district at a rate of one member for every 18,000 population or part thereof. The Adhyaksha (chairperson) of the Zilla Parishad is indirectly elected. Every Zilla Parishad must continue for a period of 5 (five) years unless dissolved sooner. In case of dissolution, election to constitute a Zilla Parishad must be held before expiration of a period of 6 (six) months.
In all Panchayats, seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their population and not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved for SC & ST are reserved for women belonging to SC & ST. And again, not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to SC and ST) of the total number of seats filled by direct election are reserved for women. In the offices of the Adhyaksha of 4 Zilla Parishads, 2 (two) seats are reserved for women.

The Panchayats at both the levels of the Zilla Parishad and the Gram Panchayat are involved in the implementation of centrally sponsored poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes such as Swarajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY), Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yozna (SGRY), Indira Awaj Yojna (IAY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY), Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojna (PMGY), Gramin Awas etc. The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 is a unique turn in the history of Panchayati Raj movement in Manipur. It has provided the Panchayats a constitutional status. It has ushered in an era of political awakening for the rural women.
The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) was established in 1983 in Thoubal District. Under this agency, there were many rural development programme or schemes implemented in this district. Now the two community development blocks, namely, Thoubal and Kakching are the implementing agencies of the central-sponsored schemes in rural areas crossing the families below the poverty line. The funds are being provided to the beneficiaries in the form of subsidy and bank loan under individual schemes of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and some other schemes, such as, National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programmes (RLEGPs) which are the employment generated programmes on the basis of 60:40 (wages and material equipment). The National Rural Employment Programme and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme launched during VIth plan periods for giving gainful employment to the rural poor have been merged into a single rural employment programme with effect from 1st April 1989 for providing more employment opportunities to the rural poor which is known as Jawahar Yojana.
It is a new programme launched by the Prime Minister on 28th April 1989 for giving employment opportunities who belong to the below poverty line in the rural areas.

Each panchayat in Thoubal District with a population of 3000 to 4000 is expected to receive between Rs. 80,000/- to Rs. 1,00,000/- consisting 80 per cent of the projected expenditure on Jawahar Rozagar Yojana. The remaining 20 per cent is envisaged to be met by the concerned State Government.

Training programme of different trades were also undergoing in the recognised institutions for 3 to 6 months. The beneficiaries who have gone training under TRSEM, they are selected as beneficiaries of IRDP according to their relevant trades for improvement of families below poverty line. Development of women and children in rural areas (DWCRA) was implemented specially for women group. One group of women in any trade or skill consists of 10-15 members per DWCRA centre. Funding was provided on temporary basis from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 25,000 per centre. Its scheme
continues upto 3 years on the basis of 75:25 both the sharing of Centre and State Governments on 31st March 1998, a sum of rupees five lakhs twenty thousand and eight hundred (Rs. 5,20,800/-) and fourteen lakhs and two thousands (Rs. 14,02,000/-) are provided to the Thoubal Block and Kakching Block through DRDA Thoubal, for the scheme of infrastructure, piggery, weaving, duckery, poultry, tailoring, Pan dukan, work bullock, grocery, milk cattle, carpentry, pineapple, mat-making and rickshaw pulling.

"The objective of the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development is to bring village socialism as in the words of Mahatama Gandhi. Therefore, revamping of Gram Panchayat is highly needed so that people can participate directly in the planning and implementation of various development programmes and through it to make the people aware of the concept and ideals of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development. Panchayats will have an important role to play in the task for the uplift of the villages. The strong Pnachayats will be able to play an important role not only in the implementation of
centrally sponsored schemes but also in the planning and implementation of their own development programmes and social justice. While making Panchayati Raj and Rural Development as units of Self-Government, the roles of the Central Government, State Government including officials concerned with the Panchayayti Raj Institutions and the people at large will be very important. The Government of Manipur should not be apathetic towards the Panchayati Raj Institutions, authorities and officials in Manipur in general and in Thoubal in particular. They must go hand in hand with the same attitude, only then, the Thoubal District can become a modal of democratic decentralisation in Manipur.
Notes and References:

1. P. Gunindra, Lammilton (ed), P. 113


4. Government Silk Farm, Wangbal, Thoubal District

5. R.P. Misra and K.V. Sundaram: Multi Level Planning and Integrated Rural Development in India, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, P. 190

6. Quoted from Uma Lele’s Study on “The Design of Rural Development; Lessons from Africa, By Mohit Bhattacharya, Bureaucracy and Development Administration, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979 P. 15

7. M.L. Santhanam’s Views on Human Factors in Development, P. 18


10. R.C. Prasad, Democracy and Development, Rachna Prakashan, New Delhi, 1971, P. 4


16. L. Gokulchand, Panchayati Raj and Village Development (ed), P. 23

17. Ibid, P. 23

18. L. Gouragopal, Local Self-Government in Manipur, P. 23
19 Ibid, P.23

20 L. Gouragopal, Local Self-Government in Manipur, p.24

21 L. Gokulchand, Panchayati Raj and Village Development (ed), p.33

22 It is an important chronicle in Manipur in which the reign of the kings, important events during their reign are written. Laienlakpa compared it with Kashmir Rajtarangini and Prof. E. Nilakanta


24 The Town Panchayat was instituted on 15th Nov. 1891 (Vide Chapter III of Administration of Manipur State from 13th September, 1891 to 1st May, 1907, Cabin 37 File No. 45 of Manipur Secretariat)


26 Kaye, The Life and Correspondence of Lord Charles Metcalfe, Vol.2, PP.191-192

27 Barua, B.K. Sankardeva, the Vaishnava Saint of Assam

28 Das, J.N., Democratic Decentralisation, Assam Tribune, 29-01-61

29 Venkata Rao, V., Dr., A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam, p. 514