ABSTRACT

In the present piece of research work, the basic institutions of Meitei-Pangal of Manipur have been analyzed from structural functional perspectives. Though old, the structural functional approach is a dominant sociological perspective.

The background of the structural functionalism is found in the works of A. Comte, H. Spencer and E. Durkheim.

Comte applied this perspective in his work, more prominently in his theory of organicism. H. Spencer also adopted organicism which led him to look at the social whole and the contribution of parts to the whole.

E. Durkheim’s interest in the social facts reflects his interest in the social organicism and their interrelationships and impact in the society.

The major concern of these perspectives is the analysis of the structure and functions of a society that a social system needs to survive.

Parsons is considered one of the giants of this perspectives. His structural-functional analysis becomes conspicuous when he says that - four basic conditions have to be met if any social system is to operate at all. These are: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency. These conditions are fulfilled by four institutions viz. economy, polity, kinship and culture.

The Meitei-Pangal community of Manipur also meets these basic conditions of the social system. Islam is their religion. They believe that Islam is propagated by Prophet
Muhammad (PBUH) from Mecca, Saudi Arabia. They follow the basic teachings of Islam.

Economic activities of the Meitei-Pangal may be categorized according to their settlement. Inhabitants of rural areas (normally) depend on agriculture, fishing etc. But the urban inhabitant's economy rest upon business, craft etc. overall the whole Meitei-pangal has low economic status.

There are formal, as well as informal social/civil organisations in the meitei-pangal society. They settle problems of and in the society through discussions and mutual consultations with elder members of both the confronting side and if needed take help of the police and court. These organisations work in totality for an all round development of the meitei-pangal society.

Kinship is fabricated around the institutions of family and marriage. Though, influenced by the neighbouring (meetei/meitei) society, they (Meitei-Pangal) maintain these institutions on the spirit of Islamic principles. The structure of a family in the meitei-pangal is nuclear in nature although joint and extended family too exist. They are patriarchal as well as patrilocal. The head of the family is the father. Family life of Meitei-Pangal stresses on Islam. Besides certain other important functions - it encourages people to contribute to the society through socialisation. Both the sexes have their importance in their spheres of work.

In order to regulate the sexual life of individuals, Islam stresses much on marriage and prohibits free sexual relationships in any form, providing stability to the institution
of marriage. Islam strongly advocates the procedures that seems very important for its stability.

The social life of the Meitei-Pangal also follows the norms, values and the functioning of the social institutions. Culture is a complex set of knowledge, beliefs, arts, moral, law, customs etc. acquired by man as a member of the society.

The Meitei-Pangals are the followers of Islam. They have a faith and practice on the sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) and teachings of the Quara’n. They follow Madrassa and Maktab system of education. Modern education among the meitei-pangal starts late and so, till today, lag behind the other communities (meeeti/meitei) in education.

Maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate is also high. Due to the lack of education, poverty, low economic status, and political backwardness, the standard of living is still low. In this work, it has been tried to concentrate only upon basic principles of these institutions and deliberately ignored the indulgence in juristic discussion as much as possible). While explaining it has been explored that all these institutions exist and balanced function in natural way among the Meitei-Pangal.

The various institutions function to meet the basic needs for the survival of a society and have remained the focus of attention of the scholars. The functional pre-requisites as propounded by Parsons namely: adaptation, fulfilled by economy; goal attainment, fulfilled by political institutions; integration, are achieved by laws included in the political institutions and latency, that are met by socializing agencies where family is the most basic and important agency.
This study is descriptive and explanatory in nature. The
descriptive research design enables researcher to describe or
present a picture of phenomenon under investigation. This
design is qualitative in nature.

This is a ethnographical, participative observation
study method has been used to collect the material. The broader
frame-work to analyse social institutions among the Meitei–
Pangals is that of Islamic Perspective but equal weightage has
too been given to the local condition in this analysis.