CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION:

DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

In the foregoing chapters we saw that during 1891-1947 the British administrators restructured to a great extent the traditional economy into colonial lines to essentially foster their politico-economic interest. In agriculture, the introduction of patta system and payment of tax in cash not only set the beginning of bourgeois concept of property in land but also generated a process of class polarisation. In trade there had been a tremendous outflow of rice crop and cattles at a very cheap price followed by influx of foreign goods leading to the subordination of the local retail traders to the outside traders particularly the Marwaris. The British policy makers were also instrumental in the process of de-industrialisation of the traditional industries with no qualitative improvement of modern industries. The forest resources of the state were also exploited to the maximum advantage of the colonial rulers themselves.
At another plane, it may be pointed out that the British rule was not without merit. The colonial administration was instrumental in generating certain important sectors of traditional economy. In the first place, we have seen that large areas of waste land were brought under cultivation. Besides, a number of new varieties of agricultural crops such as wheat, Shillong potato, Mauritian sugarcane, jute etc. were also introduced. Commercially, it was found that new bazars and shops were opened in the Imphal and rural areas of the state. It was also reported that after consultation with the mercantile community of Imphal, Political Agent, Col. Maxwell constructed a new bazar after his name (Maxwell Bazar). The market was roofed with corrugated iron sheets and the government opened 20 shops by spending a good amount of money.¹ Many other minor markets were also opened. As for instance, Manipur State Darbar granted people to open shops at Lamlai, Yairipok, Kameng-Kakching and Wabagai bazars.² Later, another six bazar sheds were also opened. It was

2. Proceedings of Manipur State Darbar, 1907.
stated that the object of the Darbar in starting new bazars in the rural areas was to enable the local people to possess some shops unhampered by foreign traders. Some form of market regulations were also framed to manage the bazar affairs. 3

Another praiseworthy aspect of the colonial rule was the identification of ancient routes followed by construction of a number of new roads both in the valley and the hills. Some of the ancient routes identified were, (i) Acquee route - starting from Bishenpur it passed through various hill ranges and reached Baskandi in Cachar with a length of 86 and 5/8 miles i.e. (139.4 km); (ii) The Kalanaga route - starting from Lamangdong (Bishenpur) it passed through Nungba village and reached Baskandi with a distance of 82½ miles i.e. (132.8 km) and (iii) Khongjai or Kuki route - starting from Torbung in the southwestern part of the Barak it passed through the great western bend of the Barak leading to Baskandi. Another route which connects Assam through Assam ranges of Manipur at Tholang village and

Jorhat was also identified. In the south, two routes connecting Burma were identified - (i) Heirok route and (ii) Imole route. The length of the Heirok route is 46 and 2/8 miles i.e. (74.6 km) whereas that of Imole route is 49 and 6/8 miles i.e. (80 km). Both the routes passed through the Maring hills and reached Kabaw valley in Burma. In the north, Manipur is connected with Burma by a route which starts from Sekmai. It passed through the villages of the Tangkhuls and the valley of Kabaw at its north western extremity, a few miles west of Samjok.

The Britishers were also instrumental in the construction of inter provincial roads. As early as the first quarter of 19th century, the Raja of Cachar constructed a route between Sylhet and Manipur. Col. Scott, Agent to the Governor-General, granted remission of tributes as an incentive to the construction. Under the treaty of 1833, Gambhir Singh started constructing the road from

5. Ibid.
6. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar Under the British Rule in North East India, (Radiant Publisher, Delhi, 1964), P. 45.
Imphal to Cachar in right earnest at the joint expense of the Government of India and Government of Manipur. It was reported that Government of India spent little more than what was spent by Manipur. The construction of the road between Baskandi and Bishenpur was also completed under Captain Guthrie towards the end of 1842 A.D. in spite of the heavy expenditure and extreme difficulty involved in the work. Mc Culloch informed us that Capt. Guthrie was a great "Path finder" and people had admiration for him. He was one among a few who sincerely wanted to develop road and transport system in the state. It was reported that he even spent Rs. 7,000/- from his own purse in road construction. After completion, the roads were repaired now and then for which the Government of India also supplied necessary tools including wire ropes to make bridges, etc. Construction of another road leading to Assam was taken up as early as

1830s. Gambhir Singh accompanied by Capt. Jenkins and Lt. Pemberton with a force of 700 Manipuri troops forced a passage through the Naga hills to ascertain whether there was any possibility of constructing a route to Assam. Again, in the cold season of 1832-33, Gambhir Singh escorted by Manipur Levy marched through the Naga hills to Assam. It was reported that on both occasions, the Nagas were agitated and the teams had to face tough time all along the way.\textsuperscript{11} Construction of this road which was begun during the time of Gambhir Singh was first opened to traffic in February, 1895. Soon after its opening, it was reported that, the memorial of the officers killed in Manipur in the Anglo-Manipur was of 1891 was brought by a string of 150 carts along this road.\textsuperscript{12} Besides, another road from Imphal to Moreh (an Indian border town between India and Myanmar) was constructed under the supervision of Lt. Raban and it was completed in 1881.\textsuperscript{13} The 28th Bombay Pioneers were employed in the work.\textsuperscript{14} Although this road was maintained only for

\textsuperscript{11} La Dena, \textit{British policy towards Manipur}, P. 15.  
\textsuperscript{13} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1892-93, P. 8.  
\textsuperscript{14} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1895-96, P. 7.
allowing the laden and elephant prior to the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26, it became very important especially after the annexation of Burma into British India in 1885. Therefore, even the bridges were begun to be constructed with wire ropes after which, the road became very convenient for traffic.\textsuperscript{15} Besides these, many other important intra-state roads were also constructed. In the valley, the Yairipok-Ngariai road was constructed at the cost of Rs. 1,361/- in 1907-08.\textsuperscript{16} Political Agent in his tour diary of May 1927 also reported that Imphal-Moirang road after extending upto Churachandpur was made jeepable.\textsuperscript{17} The construction of the Imphal Ukhrul road was proposed in 1909, and the work was completed in 1922. On both sides of the road which Rubber and some other commercially useful trees were also planted.\textsuperscript{18} Apart from the land routes, efforts were made to develop water routes too. Maxwell engaged workers to clear the silts on the beds along the courses of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1907-08, P. 6.
\item Ibid.
\item Tour Diary of the Political Agent, 18th March to 20th May, 1927.
\end{enumerate}
Imphal river. And in 1895, a plank boat was introduced. It was constructed by a boat builder from Silchar, helped by four Manipuri men.\textsuperscript{19} Shakespeare, the Political Agent also reported in 1906-07 that the beds of the Imphal river were cleared and its embankments improved by spending a sum of Rs. 15,460/-\textsuperscript{20} In the hills too, roads from Oinamlong to Tamenglong, Nungba to Tamenglong and Phalong to Tamenglong in the western side of the state, were constructed.\textsuperscript{21} A.C. McCall, President of Manipur State Darbar, in his report of 1927-28 said that construction of a new 6\frac{1}{2} miles long road between Tuibong Khullen and Lanier river in the Sadar hills area; 34 miles of a new briddle from Thanlon, the centre of the southwest Sub-division to the suspension bridge over the Irang river; 12 miles of the new Tamenglong-Haflong road in the north-west sub division and 58 miles comprising the three sections of different bridle path in the north west were constructed. The Tamenglong-

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1906-07, P. 6.

Kangpokpi road in the west was also constructed and the bridle path from Hundung near Ukhrul village was extended in 1929-30.²²

Along with the roads, bridges were also constructed over several streams and rivers. As early as 1873, the Political Agent of Manipur urged the Government of India to sanction wire ropes to construct bridges.²³ In 1874, government sanctioned wire ropes for bridging hill rivers. Tools for road repairs were also granted by the government.²⁴ Reed suspension bridge over Irang and Laimatak rivers in place of cane fastening was substituted by wire ropes.²⁵ It was reported that it facilitated much of the movement of the travellers with more safety and even laden bullocks could go across without any difficulty. Iron girders and lacing were used for longer bridges and the smaller bridges were being replaced with corrugated iron

²⁴ Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1874-75, P. 16.
drain pipes. The Administration Report recorded that such positive ventures of the government was not only approved by the people but also accorded satisfaction to their administration. \(^{26}\) In the valley, many important bridges were repaired at the cost of Rs. 11,224/- and another amount of Rs. 4,065/- was spent in the repair work of smaller bridges in 1906-07. Most of them were constructed with iron girders. In 1907-08, a sum of Rs.5,957/- was spent on new bridges, the most important of which was the bridge over Thoubal river at Yairipok. \(^{27}\)

Thus, in the final analysis we find that there were both positive as well as negative impact of colonial rule in Manipur. There were also continuity and change in the traditional economy of the state during the British rule. Though Manipur had come into contact and had been under the rule of the richest and the most powerful country of the time, yet the state remained backward. As stated above, the British ruled over her essentially for safeguarding their

\(^{26}\) Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1903-04, P. 4.

\(^{27}\) Administration Report of Manipur State for the year 1907-08, P. 6.
imperial interest. However, by and large the new system had broken down the fabrics of the traditional economy of the state and initiated a qualitatively new colonial economy. Though most of these changes which had taken place in Manipur are similar to changes in many parts of the country under colonial rule, there were also some other changes which have features specific to Manipur only. Such process of change led to the emergence of a new trend of class polarisation in the traditional economic life of the people and generated social tension in the state.