Chapter VI

Conclusion

This is the last chapter of this thesis dealing with the conclusion of the above studied chapters. The concluding lines of the chapter wise version are exhibited in this chapter.

In the study of the accounts of the ancestral deities of the Meitei it is brought to light that the ancestral gods and goddesses of the Meitei have a distinct place, position and status in the polytheistic realm of the Manipur. Even the dominant indigenous cult running under the title of Sanamahi cult or “Sanamahi Laining” is a sect of this ancestral worship. Divine Pakhangba cult even though it originated as an indigenous cult of abstract god,¹ it converted itself into a sect of this ancestor worship cult. Hence, it is proved that the ancestor worship cult is the most powerful and favourite cult of the Meitei, so far concerned to the socio-religious affairs prevailing in the valley of Manipur. Still the waves of this cult are striking with the strong forces in the socio-cultic states of Manipur. The young generations even though their minds are carried to the foreign countries of the modernity, desire to regain and retain the “Eepanat-Eepunat” i.e., the culture of the cultural heritages of the past forefathers. This desire means to run the concept and conception of the young Meitei nearer to the ancestor worship cult. From this circumstance it is

appeared that the cult of ancestor worship is seemed to forecast to revive in some future period as the history is said to repeat itself.

Divine Sanamahi as shown above was the prince-son of Meitei-King Khagemba and he had spent a life of about 8 years of age. He was deified and attributed to be the incarnation of lord creator in the Meitei pantheon. The deified first son of Khagemba was called “LAI” during the tenure of kingship of Khagemba. His first shrine was erected at Wanggon (the princes’ and princesses’ yard in the palace complex) in 1617A.D. Since then divine Sanamahi remained as the centre of Meitei religious sphere and king of all the benevolent and malevolent divinities and spirits. The shrine of divine Sanamahi at Leishangkhong/Wanggoi and Tollong Leikai (Uphong Yumpham) was established by Meitei-lord Garibanawaza but these establishments and erections were claimed in the attribution to Meitei-lord Khagemba.

Divine Sanamahi became a worshipping god in the shrine temple since 1617A.D. But the worship, even though carried out with the maintenance, retainment of altar as sanctum inside the temple there was no image of adoration. With advance of time the concept of idol-worship was adopted in Manipur since 1699A.D. As divine Sanamahi cult being the leading cult in Meitei native theism to worship him with an image is appeared to be the most interested inspiration of the general mass and Meitei-lord Tubee Charairongba is seemed to have the Knowledge of the public interest. So he rendered to cast

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the idol of divine Sanamahi who was in the name of Lai-Waa-Haiba then. The record in this regard is :\(^4\)

\[\ldots\text{Ningombam Maichougee Kum saka 1622...Ingnga tha...4ni Ieraida Lai Waa-Haibagee murti Hei-e \|} \]

This is the first and foremost anthropomorphic statue of divine Sanamahi, The image was destructed on Sunday, the 17\(^{th}\) day of Meitei-lunisolar month Mera (Oct.-Nov) in 1654 saka (1732A.D). But another sculpture of divine Sanamahi was remolded on Monday, the first day of the Meitei lunisolar month of Thawan in 1655 Saka (July-Aug, 1733A.D.).\(^5\) This divine Sanamahi’s statue was casted along with the image of Langmai/Umasana Cheengjaroibee, the divine consort of Lord Sanamahi in the anthropomorphic forms and features with regards to the appearances, physical postures and anatomical structures of both the divinities are portraying as bellows.\(^6\)

\[\ldots\text{Iyu Khoiyam Laiyingthougee murti mahakshangdi tubi eige chenglou shakpanthongbu shanchoohal-O \| Iben Khoimom Lairemmagee punung leppanthongde yoibu ishanou Gomati rani ahenbeegee kori napomthong, chinban moikaiyatpu shoihanganu \|} \]

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\(^6\) Ibid, Pp102-103.
The above cited statement was the royal edict of Meitei-lord Garibaniwaza and his order was carried into action without fail with no degree of unlikeness in making the two statues.

The image of divine Sanamahi cited above was lost during the Burmese invasions of Manipuri most believably in 1758 A.D. or 1765 A.D. being carried away by the Burmese soldiers as collected precious objects of war booty. The said sculpture is reported to have brought again in Manipur in 1823 A.D.\(^7\) As there was no idol of divine Sanamahi for royal adoration and public veneration during regime of Meitei-lord Cheengthangkhomba (1763-98 A.D.) alias Bhaghyachandra, the king imitated to mould the images of divine Sanamahi and his consort. The information in this regard states:\(^8\)

.....Akoksha Govindramgee Kumdi Saka 1700.. Kalen 7ni
Ningthoukabada Sanamahigee murti hei-e

This newly moulded idol of divine Sanamahi was animated on Wednesday, the 13\(^{th}\) day of Meitei lunisolar month of Shajibu (April-May) in 1701 Saka (1779 A.D) at Langthaban\(^9\) and worshipped in that capital complex with transfer of capital from Lammangdong or Bishenpur to Canchipur in the same year.\(^{10}\) After the shifting of capital from Canchipur to Khwai Khunpham Konthoujam Yumpham (present compound of Rajbhavan) in 1796 A.D. and from this capital to Kangla complex in 1799 A.D. divine Sanamahi’s idol was

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\(^{7}\) L. Ibungohal and N. Khelchandra, op.cit. p. 221.
\(^{8}\) Ibid, p. 131.
\(^{9}\) Ibid, p. 133.
\(^{10}\) Ibid, p. 311.
carried to the palaces where the capital were situated and administration was sustained. The abode of divine Sanamahi was also made the home of divine Hindu Lord Vishnu who is adopted as the private and personal god of the Meitei King since the regime of Meitei-lord Cheengthangkhomba. Lord Vishnu was set to live in the temple of divine Sanamahi as a god has the same power, function, duty, responsibilities, etc. in the services and goodwill of humankind. The information of keeping both the great gods in the same temple of divine Sanamahi is found as under.\footnote{Ibid, p. 638.}

\[
\ldots\text{Kumbee Khun Nathabbagee Kum saka 1773… Phairen tha} \\
yanin nong shagolsenda Laiyingthou Sanamahida mamangngei Vishnu thamlambabu mangle haidana Mahavishnu l hei-e \ldots\
\]

No record with regard to the remoulding of the image of divine Sanamahi after 1778 A.D. is found in the royal chronicle of Manipur. But the existence of the idol of divine Sanamahi is recorded in the said chronicle uptil, 1941A.D.\footnote{Ibid, p. 638.} In this year the state god carried away from his state temple to private household land in Keishamthong area of Imphal town.\footnote{Thokchom Rajo Maibee lang on Imphal,1977,p.240.}

The status of divine Sanamahi in the Meitei polytheistic universe stands at the highest order with the exclusion of the Lord Almighty in the Meitei pantheon. Because the supreme Lord had retired and withdrawn himself from the affairs of divinities’ and humanity’s administration. He handed over the
charges to His two able sons, namely Ashiba, and Konjin Tingthokpa (Tuthokpa) alias Yoiren Tomokpa Pakhangba. The Almighty appointed Ashiba to be the king of divinities and human houses while His son Pakhangba was appointed the king of human kind. Divine Ashiba was also instructed to look after Pakhangba when the latter astrayed from his benevolent service of human beings, breached the laws of nature and avoided the faith of the Supreme Being and His rules. Therefore divine Sanamahi is the incarnation of divine Ashiba has attained all the powers and functions of the great god.

Lord Sanamahi, as the Meitei think, attained the powers of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. He is equally the masters of gods, goddesses, fairies, and evil spirits. His status is as the Meitei conceived higher than Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva in their single aspects, and he can have equal status with the union of the three Hindu greatest gods in the feature of Trimurti or Trinity. Divine Sanamahi has no incarnation. The concept of another further incarnation of an incarnation of a god/goddess in the religious feature of Shri Gourangga alias Chaitanya as the incarnation of Lord Krishna who is attributed as the full-fledged incarnation (Sampoorna or Poorna Avatara) of divine Lord Vishnu as designed by the Vaisnavas domain but manifestation in different countenances and disguises are found in Meitei native cultic realm. Hence different 10(ten) aspect of countenances, names and disguises of divine Khoiree-Phaba was established.\textsuperscript{14} Thus divine Sanamahi, the great deity remains as himself with no incarnation.

\textsuperscript{14} L. Ibungohal and N. Khelchandra, op.cit. p. 36
The Sanamahism of divine Sanamahi (adoration) was introduced by Meitei-lord Khagemba in C. 1617A.D.\textsuperscript{15} This Cult endured in the Meitei society till to this date against the new cultic introduction of divine Thangjeeng cult, Nongshaba cult, Nongpok-Apanbee cult, divine Kasa cult, the cults of directional gods and nine arboreal or sylvan gods, Puthiba cult, Tangthong-leima and Lemthong-leima cult, Panthoibee cult, Pakhangba adoring cult, Nungoibee cult royal guardian deities cult, etc. in the time and space of the history of Manipur. No religious sectarian of different religious sections or sects either of Hindu or local indigenous religion deny the veneration and adoption of adorable shrines in their house. Therefore, Sanamahism is the most conventional cult in the Meitei theism.

Even though Hindu Vaisnavite sect of Brahma or Madhavee holds the standard of success in the religious crude in the central Manipuri valley, the cult of divine Sanamahi cannot root out. During the days of the independent kings of Manipur or prior to the British colonization the cult of divine Sanamahi and other cultic observances, celebrations, etc. were carried in parallel to the Hindu religious observances. So much contacts and touches with the Hindu Vaisnavite people of the western kingdoms and principalities so much import of the Hinduised observances, performances and other Hindu cultural materials increased prior to 1850A.D. But those could not hurt the interest of the native Meitei-s who revered divine Sanamahi. But with the defeat of the Meitei in the Anglo-Manipuri war, 1891 and starting of the

Britannic colonization, the preaching of the Christianity begun in C. 1892A.D. The ideal and idea of this religion reacted much in Sanamahism. So a renaissance for revival of age old Sanamahi cult was happened since 1930s. To this date divine Sanamhee is worshipping at two places i.e. Tollong Leikai or Uphong-yumpham (in the cantonment of the 1st Bn. M.R.) and Leishangkhong (Wanggoi) as the state public god, more than his daily adoration in every house of the Meiteis. Thus divine Sanamahi cult is prevailing as one of the important cult of the Manipur state in its standard and status in competing the Hindu Vaisnivite worshipping state and Lord Govindajee, the godhead under the circle of Rasaraja Krishna.

The religious observances and other sacraments as we have described above is categorized into private and public, and communal social ones. Cheiraoba, Pakhangba chenghongba Eenga khurak lamtaiba, Sanamahi chenghongba, Eengen khurak lamtaiba, Thawan potlakpa, Heikhru hidongba, Mera chaoren houba, Mera kwak tanba, Mera Sanduba, Mera men tongba are some of the observances in the native cult. Mera hao chongba the festive dance of the hill dwellers and plain settlers of Manipur was introduced on November 26, 1847A.D. has now become a symbol with the idea of universal brotherhood among the hills and dales of Manipur. The most important is the Ningol Chakouba, which is introduced during the reign of Nongda leiren Pakhangba (33/34-154A.D. This festival is treated to express the brother and sisterly affection is again introduced from the time of Meitei King Chandrakreeti (1834-44 and 1850-86A.D.).

16 L. Ibungohal and N. Khelchandra, op.cit. p. 38.
1) Khunthong-latpa (Worship of the presiding deities of the four directional gateways of the proper Imphal town), 2) Chengoi Eeruppa (sacramental dip in the sacred water of the Chinggoi in Nongmaiijeeng hills in the memory of Langmai Petangga), 3) Nongmaiijeeng Cheengshengba (Cleansing of the Nongmaiijeeng hill region), etc. There are also many other sacraments of Hinduisedly adopted such as Yaoshang (Holi), Jhulan (Swinging), Jalakeli (Playing at water pool), Durga Puja (worship divine mother goddess Durga, the mistress of fortress of protection, security, etc), Ratha jatra (riding of chariot), etc. But the most popular and familiar religious sacrament of both native cultic aspirants and Hinduised religious devotees is the Lai-Harauba or Meitei Umanglai Harauba (the annual rejoice-making observance and festival of Meitei indigenous deities).

The Meitei Umanglai haraoba is started during the reign of Meitei lord Khagamba.\textsuperscript{16} It is divided into Kalen Lai-haraoba and Ningtham Lai-haraoba. Meitei Umanglai haraoba was performed continuously until 1891.A.D. But after the British rule in Manipur the prohibition of Meitei Umanglais haraoba was enforced. The Meitei traditional cultic observance of annual rejoice making festival of Meitei sylvan deities was revived after the prohibition of about 8(eight) years by the Britannic authority.\textsuperscript{17} Nowadays lai haraoba is categorized into i) Kanglei-Haraoba ii) Moirang-Haraoba iii) Kakching-Haraoba and iv) Chakpa-Haraoba. The preparation and arrangement of Umang-Lai haraoba are carried out by the village authority or kingdom’s authority prior to a month of the time of observance.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p. 530.
From the above shown facts and circumstances it is brought to light that the sacraments of Meitei Umang-Lai-Harauba is not merely a Meitei theistic or religious festive observance but also the source of almost all the cultural heritages in the socio-religious, socio-economic socio-recreational and alike fields. It is also one of the most important source and resource of dancing, musical, balletic and melodramic arts. It is the most interesting and heart-capturing social function in the Meitei native indigenous and cultic theme.

From above study of the Hindu religious period (1704-2009) of Manipur, the advents of Hindu religious sects was started in 1704 A.D. and the sect was the divine Kalika worship cult of the Sakti religious branch of Saivism. This cult actively existed for only 13(thirteen) years. The following Hindu religious sect was called Nimandi sect of Vaishnavism. This sect passed through the regions of Goura/Bangga while it was coming to Manipur. The priest who preached this sect was named Gopaldas Mahanta and Meitei-lord Garibanawaza bosomed the sect in 1717 A.D. with the ceremony of formal initiation with having Gopaldas Mahanta as his preceptor. The Nimandi sect of Hindu Vaishnavism swayed only 13 (thirteen) years in Manipur.

The advent of Ramandi sect of Hindu Vaishnavism nominally started in C 1722A.D. after Gopaldas Mahanta, the favourite preceptor of Meitei lord Garibanawaza left Manipur for his homeland but formally it began in 1730 A.D. with initiation into the Ramandi sect and performing the ceremony of wearing the Hindu sacred thread at the confluence of rivers Imphal and Eereen at Lilong. To speak the truth, this religious sect was nothing other than the hero
worship cult of the courageous and valorous persons. This sect flourished actually in Manipur for only 22(twenty-two) years and faded away with the expiry of Meitei-lord Garibanawaza in 1752A.D. on the bank of confluence of rivers Ningthi (Chindwin) and Imphal. The intolerable manner of Meitei-lord Garibanawaza for the other religious Hindu Vaishnavite sects while he was adopting and following the Ramandi sect is portraying in the royal chronicle of Manipur. One of such example is exhibiting here under:

Sugnu Kyambagee kum Shaka 1664. Thawan tha…8ni Yumsakeisada Nimandi wakongba loi tha-e||.

From the shown example it is obvious that Meitei-lord Garibanawaza tried his best to spread the religious sect of Ramandi or hero adoration cult. But unluckily the general public including the royal dynastic personnel’s did not pay loyalty to the monarch as they preferred the veneration of Radha and Krishna.

After the expiry of the period of Ramandi sect and its culture in 1752 A.D. the Meitei-s resumed to follow or adopt the Nimandi sect uptil 1774A.D. Even though Meitei-lord Cheengthangkhomba embraced the cult of Chaitanya or Gouriya Vaishnavism in C1766-67 A.D. by taking the initiation in the Ahom Kingdom, the general mass of Manipuri-s were not embracing the new faith of Brahma/Madhavi sect until the bringing peace in the politico-administrative affairs of Manipur with the agreement of the Burmese Meitei-lord Bhagyachandra began to preach the new religious sect along with his

\[18\] Ibid, Pp.234-35.
preceptorial guide Paramananda Acharyya who came to Manipur in 1774 A.D. from Ahom kingdom. The saint-king introduced various methods in spreading the new sect by the performances of religious songs, prayers, melodramas, recitations of Bhagavata purana, exhibitions of kingdom’s deity (divine Govindajee) in different festive functions, sculpting of divine idols and distributions of these to worship at different corners of Manipur. Thus this religious sect of Shri Chaitanya’s cult overflowed every corners of Manipur valley. This sect is still enduring as the primary religious sect of the Meitei society.

Thus, the cults of Lord Vishnu and divine Sanamahi were integrated and both the gods were worshipped on the same altar of the same temple as the counterparts. These two gods are the primary and axial gods of the two sections of the Bramanical and Non-Brahmanical religious themes, ideas and notions/concepts. Thus the integration of Meitei indigenous cults or Non-Brahmanical cults and the Meitei Hindu religious sects and cults or Brahmanical cults are appeared to have made worshipped by the Meiteis in the way of compromised. These Meitei cults are going to establish the new foundation of the Meiteis in this age of modernity to solve the ensuing problems in their homeland.