CHAPTER – II

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY
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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF MANIPUR

Manipur is a small hilly state in the north eastern region of India. It is a charming place encircled by nine hill ranges on all sides with a small and beautiful oval valley at the centre. The state has 352kms. long international border with Myanmar to the south east and 502kms long border with the adjacent states of Nagaland on the north, Cachhar district of Assam on the west and Mizoram on the south and south-west.

Area and Population

Manipur has a geographical area of 22,327sq.kms which constitutes 0.7 percent of the total land surface of India. Manipur has two distinct regions namely the hill and the valley. Ninety percent of the total geographical area of the state i.e. 20,089 sq.kms is covered by hills, the remaining area is a small valley covering only 2,238 sq.kms and accounting for only one tenth of the total of the state. The state has 33 towns and 2,391 inhabited villages as per 2001 census. Imphal is the capital city of Manipur.
The people living in the valley are Meiteis who are predominantly Hindus. Meitei Muslims (Pangals) form a small percentage of the population in the valley. The hill areas are inhabited mostly by various tribes of the Nagas and the Kukis and other small tribes who are Christians. There is difference of customs, dress codes, food habits and belief system between the valley and the hill people.

For administrative convenience, the state is divided into nine Districts, five are in the hill and four are in the valley. The Districts in the Hill are (1) Senapati (2) Tamenglong (3) Churachandpur (4) Chandel and (5) Ukhrul. The Valley Districts are (1) Imphal East (2) Imphal West (3) Bishnupur and (4) Thoubal. The Valley areas of Manipur has two constituent parts one of which is the Imphal Valley in the heart of the state and the other is Jiri Valley in the West beyond the pale of hill ranges bordering the Cachhar District of Assam. The Districts were further divided into sub-divisions. There are altogether 38 (thirty eight) sub-divisions.

The population of Manipur according to 2001 census was 22,93,896 comprising of 11,61,952 males and 11,31,944 females. Of all the districts, Imphal West district had the highest population of 4,44,382 where 2,21,781 were males and 2,22,601 were females while Tamenglong district had the lowest population of 1,11,499 of which 58,014 were males and 53,485 were females.
District-wise population of Manipur according to 2001 census is presented in Table 1

Table - 1

District-wise population of Manipur according to 2001 census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Districts</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Hill:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>1,46,548</td>
<td>1,37,073</td>
<td>2,83,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>58,014</td>
<td>53,485</td>
<td>1,11,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>1,17,232</td>
<td>1,10,673</td>
<td>2,27,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>73,465</td>
<td>67,313</td>
<td>1,40,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>59,741</td>
<td>58,586</td>
<td>1,18,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Valley:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>1,04,550</td>
<td>1,03,818</td>
<td>2,08,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>1,82,250</td>
<td>1,81,890</td>
<td>3,64,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>2,21,781</td>
<td>2,22,601</td>
<td>4,44,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>1,98,371</td>
<td>1,96,505</td>
<td>3,94,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>11,61,952</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,31,944</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,93,896</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur.

Urbanization

Urbanization stands for growth of towns and non-agricultural activities. It is generally associated with the growth of industrialization, trade and commerce. According to 2001 census, a total of 5,75,968 population were found in the urban area constituting 33 towns (28 statutory and 5 census towns) in the state. It appears that the process of
urbanization has been very slow in the state which perhaps indicates a slower occupational shift. The number of towns and cities has grown at a low rate from 1(one) town in 1951 to 33 in 2001 during the last 50 years period. However the urban population has increased from about 2.86 thousands to around 575.97 thousands over the said period.¹

**Literacy Rate**

Literacy rate is one of the indicators which play an important role in the socio-economic developments of the state. In Manipur the percentage of literacy was less than one at the beginning of twentieth century. High priority was accorded to education after independence.

Out of the total population of 22,93,896, the total number of literate persons was 13,10,534 of which 7,53,466 were males and 5,57,068 were females according to 2001 census. Imphal West district ranked first among the districts of Manipur with a total of 3,11,238 literates where 1,71,996 were males and 1,39,242 were females.

The district-wise literate population and literacy rate in both the sexes of the nine districts of Manipur are shown in Table-2.

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Table - 2

District-wise literate population and literacy rate in Manipur according to 2001 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Literate</th>
<th>Literacy Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>1,45,377</td>
<td>1,10,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>1,71,996</td>
<td>1,39,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>70,507</td>
<td>49,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>122,109</td>
<td>79,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>33,147</td>
<td>24,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachanpur</td>
<td>78,871</td>
<td>60,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>46,922</td>
<td>33,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>34,329</td>
<td>22,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>50,208</td>
<td>37,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>7,53,466</td>
<td>5,57,068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Census Operations, Manipur.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Population

There are 33 (thirty-three) scheduled Tribes in Manipur. They lived mostly in the hill districts of Manipur. According to 2001 census, the Scheduled Tribes population was 7,41,141 where 3,74,319 were males and 3,66,822 were females.

There are 7(seven) Scheduled Castes communities in Manipur. The total Scheduled Castes population was 60,037 where 29,934 were males and 30,103 were females, according to 2001 census.
Birth and Death Rates

Birth and death rates have been continuously decreasing since independence. In the rural areas of Manipur, the birth rate of population per annum falls from 26.8 in 1981 to 14.5 in 2005 where the rural death rate is declining from 6.8 to 4.0 in the same period. In the urban areas, birth rate falls from 24.4 in 1981 to 15.5 in 2005 where the urban death rate falls from 4.5 to 4.4 in the same period. Estimated birth and death rates in Manipur from 1981 to 2005 is presented in Table – 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth Rate</th>
<th></th>
<th>Death Rate</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Sample Registration System Bulletin, Registrar General of India.*

Economic Classification

The result obtained in the last decennial census 2001 reveals that 43.6 percent of the population are workers whose main activity is participation in any economically productive work by pursuing or mental activities. The workers can be broadly classified in two categories viz. (1)
Main Workers and (2) Marginal Workers. Main workers are those who worked for a major period of the year (183 or more days) and the marginal workers are those who worked for less than 183 days in a year. The composition of workers in 1991 census indicates that the proportion of main workers to total population in the State slightly decreases from 40.35 percent in 1981 to 38.55 percent in 1991 and further to 30.43 in 2001. However, the proportion of marginal workers to total population increased to 13.19 percent in 2001 from 3.63 percent in 1991 and 2.85 percent in 1981 census.\textsuperscript{2} Table 4 presents the workers and non-workers of Manipur.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, p.19.
Table – 4

Distribution of workers and non-workers of Manipur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
<th>2001*</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Workers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3,31,242</td>
<td>45.94</td>
<td>4,14,812</td>
<td>44.21</td>
<td>4,30,227</td>
<td>39.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,42,097</td>
<td>34.59</td>
<td>2,93,471</td>
<td>32.85</td>
<td>2,29,137</td>
<td>21.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,73,339</td>
<td>40.35</td>
<td>7,08,283</td>
<td>38.55</td>
<td>6,59,364</td>
<td>30.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Workers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>9,958</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>96,989</td>
<td>8.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34,269</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>56,663</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>1,88,880</td>
<td>17.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40,469</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>66,621</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2,85,849</td>
<td>13.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Workers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3,37,442</td>
<td>46.80</td>
<td>4,24,770</td>
<td>45.27</td>
<td>5,27,216</td>
<td>48.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,76,366</td>
<td>39.48</td>
<td>3,50,134</td>
<td>38.96</td>
<td>4,17,997</td>
<td>39.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,13,808</td>
<td>43.20</td>
<td>7,74,904</td>
<td>42.18</td>
<td>9,45,213</td>
<td>43.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Workers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3,83,564</td>
<td>53.20</td>
<td>5,13,589</td>
<td>54.73</td>
<td>5,68,418</td>
<td>51.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4,23,581</td>
<td>60.52</td>
<td>5,48,656</td>
<td>61.40</td>
<td>6,53,157</td>
<td>60.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,07,145</td>
<td>56.80</td>
<td>10,62,245</td>
<td>57.82</td>
<td>12,21,575</td>
<td>56.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7,21,006</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>9,38,359</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>10,95,634</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6,99,947</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>8,98,790</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>10,71,154</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14,20,953</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18,37,149</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>21,66,788</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-Divisions of Senapati District.

Source: Office of the Registrar General of India.

Composition of Workers

According to 2001 census Imphal West district had the biggest number of workers with 1,78,111 of which 36,094 were cultivators, 15,635 were agricultural labourers, 23,844 were in household industry and
1,02,538 were other workers. Tamenglong district had the smallest number of workers with 50,863.

The district-wise distributions of workers according to economic classification as per 2001 census are presented in Table- 5 and Table – 6.

Table – 5

Distribution of workers by cultivators, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industry and other workers in 2001 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/ State</th>
<th>Total Workers (Main+Marginal)</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Household Industry</th>
<th>Other Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>71,888</td>
<td>44,766</td>
<td>9,531</td>
<td>3,454</td>
<td>14,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>50,863</td>
<td>39,337</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>9,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>99,363</td>
<td>56,107</td>
<td>8,472</td>
<td>7,043</td>
<td>27,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>54,545</td>
<td>33,578</td>
<td>3,897</td>
<td>3,525</td>
<td>13,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>66,515</td>
<td>46,005</td>
<td>1,917</td>
<td>2,620</td>
<td>15,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>1,56,882</td>
<td>31,768</td>
<td>22,371</td>
<td>23,618</td>
<td>79,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>1,78,111</td>
<td>36,094</td>
<td>15,635</td>
<td>23,844</td>
<td>1,02,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>89,703</td>
<td>25,196</td>
<td>14,107</td>
<td>11,395</td>
<td>39,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>1,77,343</td>
<td>66,854</td>
<td>36,812</td>
<td>20,193</td>
<td>53,484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>9,45,213</td>
<td>3,79,705</td>
<td>1,13,630</td>
<td>96,920</td>
<td>3,54,958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-Divisions of Senapati District.


According to 2001 census, Thoubal district had the highest percentage of workers to total population with 48.70 percent. While Imphal East district had the lowest percentage of workers to total population with 39.73 percent.
Table – 6

Workers and Non-workers of Manipur by Districts (2001Census).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District/State</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Main Workers</th>
<th>Marginal Workers</th>
<th>Total Workers</th>
<th>Non-Workers</th>
<th>P.C. of workers to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senapati</td>
<td>1,56,513</td>
<td>49,873</td>
<td>22,015</td>
<td>71,888</td>
<td>84,625</td>
<td>45.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamenglong</td>
<td>1,11,499</td>
<td>43,353</td>
<td>7,510</td>
<td>50,863</td>
<td>60,636</td>
<td>45.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churachandpur</td>
<td>2,27,905</td>
<td>71,933</td>
<td>27,430</td>
<td>99,363</td>
<td>1,28,542</td>
<td>43.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandel</td>
<td>1,18,327</td>
<td>39,935</td>
<td>14,610</td>
<td>54,545</td>
<td>63,782</td>
<td>46.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukhrul</td>
<td>1,40,778</td>
<td>51,564</td>
<td>14,951</td>
<td>66,515</td>
<td>74,263</td>
<td>47.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal East</td>
<td>3,94,876</td>
<td>1,06,562</td>
<td>50,320</td>
<td>1,56,882</td>
<td>2,37,994</td>
<td>39.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imphal West</td>
<td>4,44,382</td>
<td>1,29,101</td>
<td>49,010</td>
<td>1,78,111</td>
<td>2,66,271</td>
<td>40.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishnupur</td>
<td>2,08,368</td>
<td>55,557</td>
<td>34,146</td>
<td>49,703</td>
<td>1,18,665</td>
<td>43.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoubal</td>
<td>3,64,140</td>
<td>1,11,486</td>
<td>65,857</td>
<td>1,77,343</td>
<td>1,86,797</td>
<td>48.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>21,66,788</td>
<td>6,59,364</td>
<td>2,85,849</td>
<td>9,45,213</td>
<td>12,21,575</td>
<td>43.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding Mao-Maram, Paomata and Purul Sub-Divisions of Senapati District.

WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA – A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the vedic period, education was institutionalized and there were very few centres of formal education known as ‘Gurukul’ or Ashram. Each Gurukul was centred and structured around the learning and specialization of a distinguished Rishi. These were mostly single teacher schools which function rather informally.³

In Buddhist period, learning was fostered by the numerous monasteries and the children learned their lessons from the monks and nuns. The Buddhist monasteries were known as Viharas. These Viharas turned into great educational centres.

During the Medieval period, religion was a dominant factor of society. Among the Muslims, education was instituted on large scale through ‘Madrassahs’ and ‘Maktabs’.⁴ Maktabs were the elementary schools and madrassahs were the higher institutions of learning. In Hindu society, educational institutions like the Pathsalas, the Tols and the Parishads were developed. The Pathsalas were the elementary schools, tols were the higher institutions of learning and the parishads were assemblies of the learned mainly of the Brahmins.

In ancient days women education was encouraged in India. As girls were also eligible for the study of Vedas they had to undergo the Upanayana ceremony or ceremony of Vedic initiation. There were many women scholars devoting to higher studies.

During the period of 200 B.C. – 1200 A.D. female education received a great setback due to the deterioration of the religious status of women and the lowering of the marriage age. The girls gradually lost the privilege of Upanayana and were considered unfit to recite vedic mantras or perform vedic sacrifices. Girls in rich, aristocratic and royal families, however, continued to receive a fairly good literacy education. Percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly during the Muslim rule. Society as whole became prejudiced against female education. The Pardah system stood in the way of girls beyond a certain age being sent to schools though very young girls had some schooling where possible.5

Strong prejudices against the education of women through schools prevailed among the people during the British rule. The East India company refused to take any action for the education of women. The earliest modern school for girls was started under the auspices of missions, but such efforts were not effective. A splendid lead was given by liberal Englishmen like David Hare who established a school for girls in Calcutta in 1820 and conducted it at his own expense. J.E.D. Bethune also

set a similar example. Touched by the pioneer work done by missionaries and philanthropic Englishmen, several great Indians lent their support to the opening of girls schools and breaking down the traditional popular resistances against women education. Among them Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar played an important role. Women's education was recognized as a branch of a state system of education for the first time by the Despatch of 1854. According to the recommendation of Education commission of 1882, some schools for women were opened with Government Grants. By 1882, there were 2,600 primary schools, 81 secondary schools, 15 training institutions and one college for the education of women and girls. In 1891-92, more than 3 lakh girls took admission in primary school but out of them only 2 percent girls studied in the secondary level.

In the beginning of twentieth century, Lord Curzon also evinced a keen interest in women's education. During 1905-21 women's education received much impetus and it made considerable progress. By 1921-22, there were 19 colleges for women, 675 secondary schools for girls and

6 Ibid, p.859.
21,956 primary schools for girls. A very significant development of this period was the considerable rise in the age of marriage. This naturally increased the educational opportunities for girls and their continuance in schools and colleges. The demand of the educated men themselves to have educated wives gave further encouragement to women education.  

In 1946-47, there were 59 arts and science colleges in the country (India) for women, 2370 secondary schools for girls, 21,479 primary schools for girls and 4,288 institutions for professional, technical and special education for women. By 1947, a little more than half of the number of girls under instruction were studying in mixed schools. And in 1947, the number of girls who took admission in primary schools (3,475,165) was 80 percent of the number of total admission. In secondary schools 281,000 girls got admitted which was only 7 percent of the total admissions. In higher education their admission (23,000) was less than half of 1 percent of the total admissions.

After independence, University Education Commission was established in 1948-49 which forwarded many suggestions regarding women education. The most important development in the field of women education was the setting up of a National Committee for women's Education, which examined the problem of women education.

10 Biswas and Agarwal, op.cit. p. 861.
11 Ibid, pp. 861-862.
12 Mishra, op. cit. p. 72.
comprehensively. As a result of the recommendations of this committee, a National council for the education of women was set up in 1959. State Councils have also been established in the States and Union Territories.

Regarding the enrolment of students in India, in 1901 only 12 girls were enrolled in primary schools for every 100 boys, in 1950-51 the enrolment went upto 39 and in 1965-66 it was around 57 girls for every 100 boys. For secondary levels, in 1901 only 4 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys, in 1950-51, it went upto 16 and in 1965-66, it went upto 30. For college level, it was only 11 girls for every 100 boys in 1950-51 and it went upto 25 girls in 1965-66.

In spite of all efforts made for promoting women's education, for every 100 boys there were only 77 girls in primary schools, 68 girls in middle schools, 64 girls in secondary schools and 69 girls in different stages of higher education in 1999-2000. There is still a big gap even now between enrolment of girls and that of boys.
WOMEN EDUCATION IN MANIPUR – A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In ancient days, Manipuris had their own system of literary education. The students had to go to the house of the learned teachers for receiving education. The teachers were known as 'Gurus' or 'Maichous'. The house of each 'Gurus' was the main centre of learning. Only the indigenous education like literacy, physical education, health and hygiene, games and indigenous medicines was conducted by the Maichous. In the hill, among the tribal people education was imparted through the village Morungs or the dormitories in the form of training in martial arts and warfare, administrative, arts, culture, religion and customary laws. Women did not receive any education in ancient Manipur. They were assigned only domestic works like cooking, weaving, husking of paddy, looking after the children, nursing the family members, etc. However, few girls of some aristocratic families received education at home by engaging tutors.

In Manipur, schools on the modern lines were first introduced by the officers of the British Political Agency in order to impart instructions to their own children. In 1872, a vernacular school was established in Manipur at the suggestion of the then Political Agent, Major General W.F. Nuthall and the Government of Bengal presented books and maps to the value of four
to five hundred rupees, but for want of encouragement on the part of the authorities it was nearly closed.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1885, Sir James Johnstone (1877-1886) established an English school at Imphal.\textsuperscript{14} The school was named after Sir James Johnstone as Johnstone Middle English School, which was again closed down, at the advent of Khongjom war (1891). It was re-opened after the extension of British Rule in Manipur in the year 1892. The enrolment of the students in the school rose to 113 on 31\textsuperscript{st} March 1893. Thus, the introduction of formal education in Manipur started at the Johnstone School as an aided school. Subsequently a lower primary school was established at Sekmai in 1892-93 and another primary school was also established at Mao Thana in the year 1893-94. Mr. Pettigrew came to Imphal in 1894, and established a school for boys at Singjamei. The people of Manipur acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Pettigrew for his patience, sacrifice, friendliness, ideals and affection of children as his own sons. He tried his level best for development of primary education in Manipur.\textsuperscript{15} Education of women started much latter as there was no girls school for formal education of women in Manipur till 1898.


\textsuperscript{15} Singh, M.T. (1967) \textit{Western Education in Manipur}, Vol., p. 7.
Women Education in Manipur during British Period

Manipur was a small independent kingdom. Manipur came under British Rule in the year 1891. From 1892 onwards it became a princely native state under the political control of Government of British India. This British paramountcy continued till 1947 in which India got independence.

Manipur came under the influence of British Indian education during British administration in Manipur. Different schools were opened in various parts of the state and women's education for the first time in Manipur was started in the year 1898-99. In this year two girls were admitted in one of the schools of Imphal area. The State Government tried to secure a lady teacher too. The hope of recruiting a lady teacher was fulfilled in December 1899 when an L.P. school for girls was established at Moirangkhom.\textsuperscript{16}

On the opening day of the school 12 girls were admitted in the school and the total enrolment of girls rose to 53 by 31\textsuperscript{st} March of 1900.\textsuperscript{17} In 1901, the total population of Manipur was 2,84,465 out of which 1,44,833 were women and the total number of girls studying in primary

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{17} Administrative Report of Manipur Political Agency (1899-1900), Imphal, Manipur State Archives., p.13.
and middle schools were only 62 and the percentage of literacy was 0.04 in Manipur.¹⁸

Concerning the slow progress of women education in Manipur, Hodson (1908) stated, ‘the education of women cannot be said to have made equal progress although it was hoped, not without reason, that in a country like Manipur where women hold such an important position in the economic activity of the state, the efforts to establish a good school for the daughters of the higher classes would have been attended with more success than has actually been the case. The failure is not improbably due to the rumour, started by malignity and disseminated by stupidity, that as soon as the girls’ had been satisfactorily taught to read, write and speak English, they were to be shipped off to England where there was said to be a scarcity of marriageable women. The sole basis for this untoward myth lay in the fact that at that time among all the officers of Government, Civil and Military, then serving in Manipur, not one was married. Such rumours are constantly arising in Manipur and derive their wide circulation through the agency of bazaar, where time hangs so heavy that such gossip is eagerly retailed and receives too often ready acceptance’.¹⁹ The rumour hampered the attendance of girl students for some time. Further, the dearth of qualified women teacher was another cause of slow progress.

¹⁸ Administrative Report of Manipur Political Agency (1901-02), Imphal, Manipur State Archives, p.16.
of girls' education. Another important factor that hampered women's education was the general apathy on the part of parents towards education of their daughter.20

In Manipur society, knowledge of reading and writing was not accepted as qualification for a girl. Skill in weaving, cooking and husking of paddy was considered greater accomplishment for a girl. To be a good housewife, the qualifications that were required for a girl could be acquired from her mother and elder members of the family. So the guardians felt no necessity of sending their daughters to schools. Besides, the girls were too useful in the household activities, and to that extent it was considered a great loss for the family to send their daughters to the schools. Due to this notion, it was difficult to get students for a girls' school. But an enlightened public opinion in favour of girls' education developed gradually. English educated youths began to realize the need of women's education and they advocated strongly for the introduction of women education for the welfare of the society. To remove prejudices of the people and to make them understand the necessity of women's education for the welfare of the family and upliftment of society, they took up pen as instrument to create public opinion.21 Thus women again started going to school.


21 Ibid pp. 107-108.
In 1911, the number of literate girls increased to 217 and percentage of literacy became 0.12 indicating about threefold increase within a decade. In 1931, the number of the girl students rose to 689, out of the total women population of 2,29,791, making the female literacy as low as 0.30 percent of the total women population. In 1941, out of total women population of 2,62,886, the number of women students was 1,594, which formed 0.61 percent of the total women population. The following table shows the trend of female literacy in Manipur from 1901-1941.

Table – 7

Trend of Literacy in Manipur from 1901-1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literate</th>
<th>Percentage Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1,39,632</td>
<td>1,44,833</td>
<td>2,84,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,70,666</td>
<td>1,75,556</td>
<td>3,46,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1,88,119</td>
<td>1,95,897</td>
<td>3,84,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,15,815</td>
<td>2,29,791</td>
<td>4,45,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,49,183</td>
<td>2,62,886</td>
<td>5,12,069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Census Operation, Manipur.

Women Institutions in Manipur during British Period

The British Government established many girls' schools for promoting women's education. In the year 1898-99, an L.P. School for girls was established at Moirangkhom. In 1913-14, the then chief commissioner of Assam established one middle vernacular school for
imparting education among the girls and the school was named as Lady Earle Girls School, after his wife's name.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1932-33 two more L.P. Schools for girls were established making 3 L.P. Schools for them. The fourth girl school, Sagolband Aided U.P. School was established in 1934-35. The then Maharaja of Manipur, Sir Churachand Singh, was a great patron of learning. It was at his instance that the first Girls’ High School was set up at Imphal in 1935 after the name of his eldest daughter, Maharajkumari Tamphasana.\textsuperscript{23} On the recommendation of Manipur State Durbar, Tamphasana Girls High School was taken over by the Government on June 1, 1946 as a Government school.\textsuperscript{24} In 1946 the state established one co-educational college called Dhanamanjuri College (D.M. College) which was named after Dowager Maharani Dhanamanjuri Devi.

**Women Education in Manipur during pre-statehood period:**

Manipur was merged into India as a part C-category on 15\textsuperscript{th} October, 1949. Manipur came under the administrative power of a chief commissioner assisted by an Advisory Council of 14 members. But from 1957 onwards, a Territorial council with 70 members headed by a

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, pp.111-112.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p.112.
chairman replaced the Advisory Council and this was continued till 1963 when Manipur became a single district Union Territory. However, the Territorial council was replaced by a Legislative Assembly of 30 members and a council of Ministers. In 1972, Manipur became a full fledged state within the Indian union with a Governor as the Head of the State and the members of the Legislative Assembly was doubled to 60.25

After Manipur's merger with India, the Indian Constitution guaranteed equal status to both men and women. The constitution of India assured that there shall not be any discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. There shall be equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment to any office under the State. Article 45 of the constitution of India provides that the state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education for all children till they complete the age of 14 years. With this aim the education of women became one of the major responsibilities of the State while formulating its policies.

Within five years of accession to the Indian Union, the number of women students increased by 4.4 times from 1,594 in the Pre-Independence period (1941) to 9,962 in 1951. In 1951 the total population

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of the state was 5,77,635. The total percentage of literacy was 12.57, out of which the female literacy was 2.73 percent.

In the year 1960-61 there was a marked increase in the percentage of literacy reaching 36.04 and that of women 18.87 percent and the number of women students being 62,620. In the year 1970-71, out of the total population of 10,72,753 the total percentage of literacy was 38.47 and that of female being only 22.87 percent. In that year the number of female students was 1,03,707. The table below shows the trend of literacy in Manipur during Pre-statehood.

Table – 8

Trend of literacy in Manipur during Pre-Statehood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literate</th>
<th>Percentage Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2,83,685</td>
<td>2,93,590</td>
<td>5,77,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3,87,058</td>
<td>3,92,979</td>
<td>7,80,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5,41,675</td>
<td>5,31,078</td>
<td>10,72,753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Census Operation, Manipur.

Women's Institute in Manipur during Pre-statehood Period

There were 28 girls' primary schools (including Nursery and Middle schools) in 1951 against 4 in the Pre-Independence era. In the year 1960-61, the number of girls' schools rose to 187 primary and middle schools
and 5 high & higher secondary schools. The first women’s college was established in 1965 with great demand & pressure from the public. In the year 1970-71, the number of girls schools was 338 against 187 primary and middle schools in 1960-61. The number of Girls High & Higher secondary schools went upto 19 against 5 in the year 1960-61. The following table shows women’s institutions in Manipur from 1950-51 to 1970-71.

Table – 9

Women’s institutions in Manipur from 1950-51 to 1970-71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of Institution</th>
<th>Total Primary</th>
<th>Girls' School</th>
<th>In % of total</th>
<th>Total Secondary</th>
<th>Girls' School</th>
<th>In % of total</th>
<th>Total College</th>
<th>Girls' College</th>
<th>In % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>Primary (Nursery + Primary + Middle)</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>Secondary (High + Higher Secondary)</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>Degree College</td>
<td>2856</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Separate budget allocation for girls education was earmarked and in the year 1960-61, Rs.3,50,600 were spent on primary education, Rs.1,45,071 on middle and Rs.1,54,683 on high schools and Rs.40,918 on colleges. In the year 1969-70, on primary education Government spent
Rs.22,41,778. On high school education of girls Rs.13,24,497 were spent and on college education of girls Rs.2,59,552 were spent.\textsuperscript{26}

Women Education in Manipur during Post-Statehood Period

With great effort made by the State Government, the literacy scene in the state was greatly changed at the close of 1980's. In the year 1981, out of the total population of 14,20,953, the literate female population was 2,03,387. The total percentage of literacy was 49.66 and that of female literacy being 34.67. By 1991, Manipur had got 3,55,803 female literate persons out of the total population of 18,37,149, the total literacy rate was 59.89 where female literacy rose to 47.60 percent. In the year 2001, out of the total population of 22,93,896, the female literate population was 5,57,068 and the total percentage of literacy was 70.5 with 60.5 percent female literacy rate.

The table below shows the trend of literacy in Manipur during the post-statehood period.

\textsuperscript{26} Statistical Handbook of Manipur, 1992, pp. 14-15.
Table – 10

Trend of Literacy in Manipur during Post-Statehood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Literate</th>
<th>Percentage Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>7,21,006</td>
<td>6,99,947</td>
<td>14,20,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>9,38,359</td>
<td>8,98,790</td>
<td>18,37,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11,61,952</td>
<td>11,31,944</td>
<td>22,93,896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Census Operation, Manipur.

Women Institutions in Manipur during Post-Statehood Period

Primary schools for girls had increased from 28 in 1950-51 to 338 during 1970-71. However, the girls institution were reduced to 246 in 1980-81, 204 in 1990-91 and 183 in 2000-01. This might be either due to their complete closure or conversion into co-educational institutions.

The number of secondary schools for girls had recorded continuous increase. While there was only one girl secondary school during 1950-51, but by 1980-81 it increased to 32, by 1990-91 it was 55 and by 2000-01 it was 56.

Prior to 1965-66, there was no women's college in the state. The first women's college was established in 1965. However, not much progress was made upto 1990-91, till then the number of women's colleges was restricted to only 2. By 1995-96, the state had 7 women's
colleges but concentrated mainly in the valley districts. By 2000-01, out of these 7 women's colleges, the government had given recognition to 2 women's college as the government women college. The table below shows the women's institutions in Manipur during Post-Statehood period.

Table – 11

Women's Institution in Manipur during Post-Statehood Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Primary NOS.</th>
<th>Girls' School NOS.</th>
<th>In % of Total</th>
<th>Total Secondary NOS.</th>
<th>Girls' School NOS.</th>
<th>In % of Total</th>
<th>Total College NOS.</th>
<th>Girls' College NOS.</th>
<th>In % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980-91</td>
<td>3286</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>3190</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12.79</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>3186</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1980, an University was established at Canchipur. All the colleges were affiliated to Guwahati University till 1980. From 1980 onwards all the colleges were brought under the Manipur University. By 1993 the number of University were increased to two with the establishment of Central Agricultural University at Eroisemba.

Various measures were taken up to improve women's education which were considered as a step for raising the status of women in the society. The setting up of National Committee for girls' education in 1959
gave a tremendous impact on the progress of women’s education in Manipur. As recommended by the committee on women’s education, the Government of Manipur set up the State Council for women’s education for expansion of girls’ education in 1967. It was reconstituted in 1972.

The National Committee on Women’s Education had advocated provision of separate institutions for girls to counter the prejudice against their education. Separate institutions for girls had increased in India as well as in Manipur as a result of this recommendation.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was approved for implementation in Manipur on 22nd June, 2004. The objective of the SSA project was to ensure universal education for children in the age group of 6-14 years. Under the scheme, in 2005-06 text books were provided to 2,34,299 girls and ST/SC children in class I-VIII. During 2006-07, 3,21,95 girls, ST/SC children in class I-VIII were given text books worth Rs.150 per child. During 2007, free text books worth Rs.3.92 crores have been provided to 2,76,120 students of ST/SC and all girls in Manipur from class I-VIII.

Women education is essential for the progress of the society. Through education women can improve and enhance their socio-economic status and contribute towards the progress of the society.
STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In Indian society, women's status has always remained high theoretically. Powers of God have been described in women's forms as Laxmi, Saraswati, Durga, etc. Thus, woman has been considered a symbol of wealth, knowledge and strength. Wife has been called 'Ardhangiri' (half part of body) and motherhood has also been given a great respect. Mother is the symbol of Nationality also, which gives us impression of women's status, higher than men's status. But in spite of all this, women's status in India has always remained lower than men's status.27

There were distinct stages of rise and fall in the status of women in India. During the Pre-Vedic and Vedic period women occupied a high position in society and it started deteriorating in Post-Vedic period. Customs of sati, child marriages, polygamy, purdah, prohibition of widow remarriage were widely prevalent and this led to a degradation in the status of women.

During the British regime in 19th and 20th centuries owing to the contacts with modern society, intellectual class of Indian society intensively realized the inhuman and unjust fact of discrimination with women. Through social reform movements and social legislations, efforts

were made to improve the status of women.\textsuperscript{28} And, it was realized early in 20\textsuperscript{th} century that the spread of education amongst women was the only means whereby a transformation could take place to improve their status in society. The status of women started to change for the better slowly with the advent of the British education system.

The status of women in Independent India occupies an important role and all efforts are being made to establish the significant place that she can play in the upliftment of her own self and the society at large. The preamble to the Constitution of India resolved to secure to all its citizens – social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunities, dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation. Indian women are entitled to these rights just as men are. Some of the specific directive principles are free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of fourteen, right to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work, maternity relief etc.\textsuperscript{29}

The Indian Government had expressed a strong commitment towards education for all. However, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. In 2001, 54 percent of women were literates which means 46 percent of women were illiterates. Although literacy levels were low, there had been progress in improving educational attainment for both

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Upadhyay, Op.Cit. p63.
sexes in India over the last several decades. In 1951, only 9 percent of women and 27 percent of men were literates. In 1961, 15 percent of women and 40 percent of men, in 1971, 22 percent of women and 46 percent of men, in 1981, 30 percent of women and 56 percent of men. In 1991, 39 percent of women and 64 percent of men and in 2001, 54 percent of women and 76 percent of men were literates. Despite the improvement in literacy, there continued to be a large gap between the literacy levels of men and that of women.

Dahiya (1996), described the status of women as 'in the modern times, women have come a long way on their path of struggle. They have achieved a better status today than what they have had in the past. They are no longer confined to the four walls of their homes. In education in particular, they are doing better than men. Girls now excel the boys in school and college examination results. In most courses of higher learning at the university, they make it in greater numbers than do the boys. They have found entry in most professions, including the military and police. In the professions of medicine and engineering, they are entering in a big way. Even in the profession of law they have found a place. They have gone a long way on the path of progress. Yet, much remained to be achieved. They are denied equality even today.'

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However, Safaya (1996) had different views on the status of women and remarked, 'Indian women are still shackled to traditions, customs, age-old superstitions and beliefs. Orthodoxy, dogmatism and conservatism still prevail, purdah system, dowry system, early marriage and widowhood and such social evils continue. There is no awareness and consciousness amongst women so that they could take up their rights and responsibilities. They remain suppressed by their husbands, spend most of their time in kitchen work, got married to unsuitable bridegrooms, remain economically dependent throughout life and are viewed as inferior in the male-dominated society'.

Women form almost half the population in our country, yet the status of women in India, be it demographic, economic or social, leaves much to be desired. Though our constitution guarantees equal rights and equal opportunities to both men and women visible and invisible inequalities based on gender persist.

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SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN MANIPUR

In primitive period women held a very high social status in Manipur. There was equality between men and women—the latter even enjoying higher status than men. Women were the head of the families. The society was matriarchal as was evident from the fact that ‘the worshipping of Goddess was started from ancient period in Manipur’. The lowering status of Indian women during the Mughal period did not affect the status of women in Manipur. The position of women in a subordinate status has been legitimized with the coming of Hinduism in Manipur.

Captain E.W. Dun (1886) described the social status of Manipuri women during the British regime as ‘The Women of Manipur, married or unmarried, are not confined in zenanas, as they are in Bengal of Hindustan, all classes are alike in this respect; neither do they cover their faces before strangers. They are very industrious, in this respect the opposite of the men, who are lazy and indolent. It would be difficult to find a more industrious women in India than the Manipuri. With all their industry and usefulness, women hold but a very inferior social position.’

But, contrary to Dun's view, Hodson (1908) stated, 'the women hold a high and free position in Manipur, all the internal trade and exchange of the produce of the country being managed by them'.\textsuperscript{37} The above statement showed that there was gradual change in the social status of women in Manipur from 1886 to 1908.

Concerning the low social status of women in Manipur, Dun remarked, 'women are considered more in the light of goods and chattels than as persons to be treated with honour and consideration'. He further explained that the low status of women was partly owing, no doubt to the laxity of their marriage customs, which were loose in the extreme, but still more to the bareful system of domestic slavery which was the prevailing custom of the country.\textsuperscript{38}

Regarding marriage customs, polygamy was an accepted custom among the Manipuris. Greenwood (1891) stated, 'The princesses were more numerous than the Princes as each of the latter had several wives. The Senapati was supposed to be the happy owner of nine wives, and the other had almost as many'.\textsuperscript{39} Colonial writers like Dun (1886), Hodson (1908) also mentioned a wide acceptance of polygamy among the royal clan and the urban elite. At present also polygamy is allowed but it is the exception rather than the rule.

\textsuperscript{37} Hodson, Op. Cit. p. 23.
\textsuperscript{38} Dun, Op. Cit. p.17.
In ancient Manipur, there was no strict rules for the marriage. The reason might be the matriarchal system prevailing in the then society. In due course of time, the society was dominated by men due to historical and other reasons. Then laws of marriage also developed gradually.

Wives were very much loyal to their husbands, if a minister or a close associate of the king kidnapped a married woman, she often committed suicide instead of becoming one's wife. If there was any illegitimate relationship between man and woman resulting in abortion, women of the society beat him and took him around the place showing his face to others.

Regarding marriage customs, Dun wrote, 'Although to become man and wife it is not necessary that the marriage ceremony should be performed, still it is usually performed'. He further added 'early marriages are unknown, widows except those of the Brahmans may re-marry. In contracting marriage, as a general rule, the young couple are allowed to see and approve of each other. When the parents approve of a marriage, the heads of the families arrange matters. Presents are sent by the young

man's parents to the house of the girl; no return presents are made at this stage, money presents are not given'.

There were various types of marriages recognized in Manipuri society. They were Hainaraga Hongba (Arranged Marriage), Chellaga Hongba (Eloped Marriage), Kainakatpa and Loukhatpa.

Arranged marriage was socially the most respectable form of marriage. In an arranged marriage, the bridegroom's family brought gifts, sweets and fruits with them when they went to the bride's house. If the latter regarded the union as unsuitable, negotiations stopped immediately and if it was regarded as a possibility, then horoscopes were read. If found favourable, a meeting was arranged between the elders of both the families. Then an official announcement of the marriage called 'Yathang Thanaba' was made. Finally, 'Waroipot Puba' was held where the bridegroom's family visited the bride's house with their relatives by bringing fruits and sweets.

In an eloped marriage, the above formalities were excluded. Once the girl and the boy had eloped, the boy's parents were supposed to take responsibility and informed the girl's parents the next day. Sometimes, if the girl's parents found the match unsuitable, then they could refuse. Then either the girl was sent back to her parent's house or if the boy and girl were insistent, the bridegroom's parents got them married. The girl's family

did not participate in such a marriage. But after that the girl was not allowed to come to her natal house by her own parents. The girl’s parents could not, at a later stage, accept the marriage without holding a feast. This feast was called the Loukhatpa Ceremony.

Kainakatpa was a simple form of marriage ceremony performed by widowed or divorced women or those who could not afford and among the rural areas. In all the forms of marriage, the opinions of the prospective girls and boys were taken into account. In short, they had the right to select their life partners.

There was no strict customary law in Manipuri society regarding divorce. The husband and the wife could separate without having to undergo any formalities.

Dun recorded the divorce rule as ‘A man can put away his wife without any fault on her part and if a person of influence, he may do so without its being noticed. The rule, however, is that if a man puts his wife away without any fault of hers, she takes possession of all his property, except a drinking vessel and the cloth round his loins. A man and wife may separate by mutual consent and a wife may quit her husband on giving him the value of a slave.’45

45 Ibid.
Majority of the divorce cases arose from the husband's taking a new wife or the wife was barren or she could not give birth to a son, though in some cases wives were attracted to other men and decided to leave their husbands. Very few women took legal procedure for divorce, instead they just abandoned the husbands' homes.

In this regard, Sircar (1984) quoted, 'a divorced women cannot expect to marry a bachelor. It is considered almost unethical for a married woman to marry a bachelor. Women with older children seldom remarry'.

On the role of women in the family, Singh (1985) stated, 'Manipuri woman is the legislator of the children and often the budget maker and manager of the family. Though the pardah is unknown and women are much free in Manipur than elsewhere in India, the institution of the family, organized as it is on the patriarchal system, enforced the double standard of morality, and imposed upon women the ideal of chastity and complete fidelity to her husband and the family of her adoption'.

Further, Jivanlata (1991) had similar view and described Manipuri Women as 'the Manipuri mother is a social and professional mentor of her daughter. The mother-daughter relationship provides a secure base in a woman's life in a society where marital bond is rather brittle. The young

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girls are socialized to be self-reliant and independent and cripple into a passive model of sheer dependence on a male. Through life's joys and sorrows, success and failure, the mother-daughter relationship of Manipuri women is always sustained and strengthened. They take a major part in the economic life of the State in which they enjoy maximum independence. This high status accorded to the women folk is regarded as one of the greatest pride of Manipur.  

However, Singh (1992) had different views and remarked, 'its tradition assigns the position of the women to an inferior position and considered women's place to be within the four walls of the house. Their main duties were to look after the household works. They cannot go against the traditional norms, value systems, unwritten taboos, etc. that have been prevailing from time immemorial. Manipuri culture supports male supremacy and boy preferring culture. Husbands are generally equated with God. Female cannot compete with male in any field. The Manipuri women is a remarkable phenomenon in the social and cultural life of Manipur. She is also the most stabilizing and dynamic factor in the transformation of the Manipuri society through the ages. In the history of Manipur, women of different backgrounds ranging from the queen to commoner came forward to save the society and the community.'


Kshetrimayum recorded the social participation of women as ‘Manipuri women have always played a very vital and active role in social movements. The role of women in these movements can be traced back to the pre British Period when Manipur was under monarchial system. But women’s social movements emerged in an organized manner from the early part of the 20th century. One was in 1904, which was popularly known as the first Nupilan (women’s agitation). It was against the unjust British administration. Because of their high spirit struggle, many administrative reforms were then made, and women leaders emerged in Manipuri’s traditionally male-dominated sphere of business, trade and commerce. The second was the Nupilan of 1939. It was a spontaneous eruption of the suppressed energy of the exploited people. The main cause of the movement was directly related to the irregularities and malpractices in the administration of the state and the economic exploitation by the authority. In the agitation some of the women leaders and along with their sympathizers were sent to jail. All the womenfolk expressed their deep concern over the matter. They stopped business in the market and the Khwairamband Bazar remained devastated for three years. Ultimately they succeeded in bringing reforms in administration.  

Influenced by the success of these agitations, many organisations were established by the women of Manipur in the Post Independence period. These women organisations were very effective in taking up social

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50 Kshetrimayum, O. 'Rethinking women's power in Manipur' Unpublished article.
issues of the state. There have been a series of organized protests launched by women in order to protect the interest of the people and promote their welfare.

Women had agitated against their own menfolk in anti-alcohol drive. In fact, the movement for the prohibition of liquor known as Nisha Bandh Movement started during the seventies. Nisha Bandh groups were formed in all the localities. However, with the increase in insurgency movement of the youths and the imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, many innocent youths suffered in the hands of the military Armed forces. In order to save the innocent youths, Nisha Bandh Organisation had changed to Meira Paibi, who bears torch in their hands and Vigils throughout the nights. Meira Paibi organization is activated in all the localities of Manipur and involved at least one woman from each family. Meira Paibi Organisation has become a social activist forum and this movement has become a major struggle for human rights.

Sharmila Chanu, a young social activist of Manipur is fasting unto death till now from 4th November, 2001 as a demand for removal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Manipur after the Assam Rifles killed ten innocent people at Malom on 2nd November, 2001.

On 15th July, 2004, outside the head quarters of Assam Rifles in Imphal, fifteen women disrobed themselves to protest against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 after the Assam Rifles personnel killed
one woman after raping her. Apart from these important events, there have been several other collective movements during the past few years.

The invincible courage of Manipuri women was stated by Murthi (1984) as 'women of Manipur are bold, almost defiant, and have an edge over the educated elite dames in the rest of the world. Manipur may not be a women’s world. But, it certainly is not a man’s world either. It is here that one finds equality between the sexes achieved in a very harmonious setting'. 51

However, Devi (1988) in her work on 'Manipuri Women- a study' described the social status of Manipuri women as 'Women of Manipur are playing a great role in the social life. But their status is not high as compared with their roles. Most of them are not allowed to take part in the decision making process of the family, of the locality and in social problems. Women generally accept what male has already decided. Decision making, it is believed, is the sole right of the men.' 52

There were also many social restrictions for debarring women to participate in a social life. Women were not allowed to get remarried through the socially recognized ritual process while men were allowed to enjoy the right of getting remarried with a virgin women in a socially sanctioned marriage. Women were not allowed to eat the things which


52 Devi, op. cit. p.162
were offered to family God at the time of Apokpa Khurumba (worship of family God). Women were not allowed to sit in 'Phamen' (Southern portion) of the verandah of the house. The place was reserved for the male members of the family. Women should not dry their phaneks (wrappers) in front of the house as it was inauspicious for men. If a pung (Mridanga) was touched by a women, it would not produce any sound. If a girl or a woman climbed a tree, the tree would not bear any fruit. Women's phanek could not be touched by men. If a man touched women's phanek he was treated as 'Adhamora' (hen-pecked husband). These social restrictions placed women at an inferior position. And in spite of their varied activities and great role in social fields, the social status of women was in a subordinate position in Manipur society.
ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN MANIPUR

Women played a significant role in the economic life of Manipur. On the women's important role in the economy, Dun stated, 'Most of the work of the country, except the heaviest, is performed by women and they are consequently the mainstay of the family circle. All marketing is done by women, all work of buying and selling in public and the carrying to and fro of the articles to be sold; while at home they are busily, employed in weaving and spinning'.

Grimwood had similar view and said, 'The women did all the hard work as a rule. They wove all their own and their husbands' clothing and cooked and looked after the house generally, besides working in the fields and coming every evening to the big bazaar with merchandize for sale or exchange'.

Hodson described the role of women in the economy of the state as 'in Manipur every household possessed some amount of land which was the main source of its subsistence. The essential necessities of Manipuris regarding food and cloth were produced in their own land. Agriculture and cottage industry were the two important means of their livelihood. Weaving was done in every house. The qualification of a bride was assessed by the quality of cloth she could weave. Handloom weaving was the most

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53 Dun, op. cit. p. 17.
54 Grimwood, op. cit. p. 54.
important craft of the state practiced by almost every housewife. Every girl knew how to weave and was given a loom as a part of the dowry. Nearly every housewife was capable of weaving all the clothes needed by her family.\footnote{Hodson, op. cit. p.27.}

Sheelaramani (2006) also stated, 'in weaving, in dyeing, in cleaning, in washing and preserving their products, women of Manipur are highly skilled. Till today they excel in these areas. Cottage industry of handloom and women weavers were flourishing in the past. At present when the room for handloom and its products are restricted and manipulated by the coming of machines, modern traders and globalization process in the trade which was once's women's domain and by the commercial motive of the women entrepreneurs of fashion and designing, the handloom and its products have dwindled and the rural women weavers have been displaced from their main occupation.'\footnote{Sheelaramani, C. (2006) 'Economic Empowerment of the rural women: Prospects and Problem' Seminar on women for the women, 18th June, Imphal.}

Women as agricultural workers participated in all operations except ploughing. They were engaged in transplanting, weeding, applying fertilizers and also harvesting the produce. Women performed their work mostly in teams called 'Khutlang'.

In agricultural sphere, a Khutlang generally denotes the woman's working team where women of different age groups are pooled to work
together in agricultural operations, particularly in transplantation, weeding and reaping. In a khutlang team, each member gets the benefit of the labour of the entire team. Working in group is done in rotation for each member’s field so that collisions may not occur. In such works of mutual obligations, reciprocal exchange of labourer is operated without any payment.\(^{57}\)

On the role of women in agriculture, Devi wrote, ‘during harvesting season, both men and women work together. Women also work as hired labour. Most of them earn money by working extra hours in the paddy fields of others. The income from this source is considered to be a part of the family fund. Ploughing is usually done by men’.\(^{58}\)

Further, on the formation of self help groups of women, Sheelaramani stated, ‘some rural women in Manipur particularly the younger generation are well educated and they form groups who have started to run farms of crops, piggery, pisciculture and animal husbandry. Some changes are seen with the formation of self help groups of women in the rural areas of Manipur in the agricultural sectors. The tribal women of the Naga Community are benefited by the International fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The women in the Ukhrul district have


\(^{58}\) Devi op. cit. p.167.
enjoyed the privilege of this fund. Having formed many groups, these women get training in maintaining their accounts and record. Mushroom farming and fruit processing enterprise may also be mentioned as models of these tribal women of rural areas. In Bishnupur district, married women and unmarried young educated girls have launched the ventures of pisciculture of indigenous rare species of fish and farming of various crops.59

Another important role of the women in the economy of the state and family was internal trade and marketing. All the internal trade and exchange of the commodities were managed by women.60 Men seldom appeared in the market and women were the potent force in the internal trade and even the king had to think twice before acting against their wishes. This could be inferred from the instance where the copper coins issued by the king were not allowed for circulation by the women vendors.61

There were markets situated at the convenient spot by roadside manned by a handful of women. Imphal being the capital possessed the largest and the most important sites of these markets. Regarding the traditional market system, Grimwood stated, 'no men were allowed to sell in this bazaar with the exception of a few Bengali traders, who sat in a

59 Sheelaramani, op. cit.
61 Hodson, op. cit. p. 38.
different part of the market and sold clothes. It was a pretty sight in the
evening to see all the women hurrying along with their wares in their heads
and their babies slung on their backs. They sat in long rows in the bazaar
and it was divided up in a most methodical way. Vegetables and fish
occupied one end and clothes and jewellery the other and the whole of the
female population turned out and even the princesses occasionally sold in
the bazaar.62

Women's Market of Manipur is one of the largest markets of
the country managed exclusively by women. Stalls in this market place
were handed down from mother to a daughter or daughter-in-law and
women from all sections of society managed these stalls. Different
commodities like vegetables, fruits, fish, clothes, jewelleries and utensils
were sold in this market by the women.

Marup, a type of co-operative credit and savings organization
formed by a group of persons for promoting their economic interest was
another movement headed by women. The members of the Marup helped
each other by contributing a fixed amount of money per month or per week
or daily basis and each member was entitled to receive the total sum in
turn or lottery system with agreed rate of interest.

From the early days, the Manipuri society had the inbuilt system of
Marup which continues till now successfully throughout the state. There

62 Grimwood, op. cit. pp.54-55.
were different types of marup like marriage marup, singel marup to cover funeral costs, rice marup, bazaar marup, ornaments marup, utensils marup, furniture marup etc.

Women constituted a significant part of the work force in the state. Amongst rural women workers, a majority were employed in agriculture as labourers and cultivators. In the urban areas, women workers were primarily employed in the unorganized sector such as household industries, petty trades and services, construction works etc. According to 2001 census, 44.22 percent of the total workers in Manipur were women. The main and marginal workers among females constituted 54.82 percent and 45.18 percent of the total female workers respectively. Out of the total 2,29,137 main female workers, 1,10,940 (48.42 %) were cultivators, 16,432 (7.17 %) were agricultural labourers whereas the remaining 1,01,765 (44.42%) were engaged in other sectors like manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairing other than household industries and other services etc.63

Number of women in the service sector is increasing rapidly with the spread of education. Educated women were entering governmental, non-governmental or self employed activities for earning income. As per

the census of Government employees, Directorate of Employment, Govt. of Manipur, the total number of female employees working under the state Government was 12,183 as on 31st March, 2005, 1698 female employees under Quasi Government (State) and 79 female employees under local bodies.

There is nothing that a Manipuri woman cannot do today. She is doing everything that hitherto was considered to be a male bastion. A battery of women police officers lead the 2008 Republic Day Parade at Manipur. While a women top cop commanded the parade, another officer gave contingent's guard of honour. During the last decade, many Manipuri women had joined police force.

Manipuri women's contribution in the economic sphere is great, unlike in other parts of the country. Women of Manipur deserve a higher status. But in spite of their contribution in socio-economic transformation and upliftment, the status enjoyed by Manipuri women is low.