Chapter III
ABOUT THE LAND AND PEOPLE
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The population which has been chosen for the present study is one of the chief populations of the state of Manipur. It has been felt necessary to give a brief profile of the land and its people in order to have a fair idea on the geographical and environmental background and the socio-economic status of the people in general. Manipur- which literally means the Land of Gems was known by various names such as Makhale or Mekhale by the Assamese, Meitei by the Cacharies, Kangleipak or Meitrapak by the Meiteis, Cassay by the San, Kathe by the Burmese etc. (Pemberton 1835, Brown 1874, Hudson 1908). A Manipur historical work ‘Sanamahi Laikan’ claimed (Kabui G. 1991) that the name Manipur was first officially introduced during the reign of Hinduised King Garibaniwaz (1709-1748). This small state (fig. 1) in the eastern frontier of Indian union became a full fledged state on 21st January of 1972 as a 20th state of Indian union. Manipur has both hills and plain topography. It is a hill girth state and homeland of various ethnic groups and tongues.

It covers an area of 22,356 sq.km. of which 2,230 sq.km. constitute the valley, where the Manipuris live (Singh and Singh 1987). The rest is the homeland of various 29 (twenty-nine) tribes. The present Manipur lies between 23.50° and 25.30°N latitude and 93.10° and 94.30°E longitude (Singh Ibungohal 1987). According to the census survey Report of the Govt. of India(2001), the total population of Manipur state is 2,388,634 of which 1,20,7,338 are males and 1,181,296 are females. The literacy percentage is 68.87%. The main valley of Manipur consisting of 9 percent or about 1,843 sq.km of its total geographic area spreads in the centre of the state (Singh 1992). Manipur has nine districts such

Manipur is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the south by Mizoram, Chin hills of Myanmar on the east and the Cachar district of Assam on the west. It is the meeting point on the eastern gate of India where diverse groups of people, language met through ages wave after wave, influencing one another to a large extent resulting into a mesegenous population. For a description of physical features, it may be divided into three broad regions, the central valley, the hills surrounding the valley and the Jiribam Subdivision. The state has many rivers and rivulets which runs across the valley of Manipur. The important rivers are Imphal, Nambul, Iril, Thoubal, Khuga and Chakpi rivers which represent Manipur river system. All these rivers flow from north to south. A number of lakes such as Loktak, Waithou, Ikop, Loushi, Kharungpat, Pumlen, Kainambi and Sanapat are located at different places of the valley and of which the Loktak lake is the biggest of all. These lakes play important roles in the socio-economic life of the people.

According to Wlademir Korppen’s classification (Singh 1982) of world climate, Manipur belongs to temperate rainy humid mesothermal climate region characterised by dry winter and hot summer. The mean annual temperature in the state records a decreasing trend towards the east. January and May experienced the coldest and the hottest months respectively. The annual average temperature ranges from 4.83°C in the winter and 33.13°C in the summer and the annual average rainfall of the state is 1719.99 mm, Imphal being with 630 mm (Directorate of Economics and statistics, Govt. of Manipur 1999).

The people of Manipur, to a great extent, depend on the agricultural economy. Agriculture is important for them not only for food crops and cash crops, but also for the employment it provides. In 1991, the total population of all the working forces was being 8,58,667. These working forces of Manipur people had been classed into three sectors (1) Primary Sector (agriculture and
allied activities) (2) Secondary Sector (industrial activities) and (3) Tertiary Sector (trade, commerce and services activities). The percentage of 57.83% of the total working force was engaged in primary sector i.e. agriculture and its allied activities, 7.99% was engaged in the secondary sector, while the rest 34.18% was engaged in tertiary sector (Directorate of Economics and Statistics Govt. of Manipur, 2001). According to Ansary (1985), rice cover about 80% of the total crop area. It is grown throughout the state. Next to rice, maize (zea maize) occupies the next important crop specially for the hill people. Moreover, pulses of various types occupy an important position in the economy of the cultivators.

Another special feature is that the industrial structure of Manipur is mostly dominated by the household industry. Manipur handloom and handicrafts are well known for its superb artistic quality. Sericulture is an old industry of Manipur. Some people are engaged in jewellery. Many more are engaged in foundary, while some specific villages are engaged in earthen pot making industries.

The per capita annual income in the state per head of the population for the year 2000-2001 is Rs.12,228/- against Rs.17,530/- for All India at current prices and it has been classed as medium income group as compared with other states (Govt. of Manipur, 2002).

Ethnohistory of the People

The people of Manipur in the valley speak the Manipuri language or Meiteilon as their mother tongue. The Meiteis are broadly divided into Hindus and Scheduled castes. Constantine (1981), opined that the Brahmins, Muslims, Loi community, other scheduled caste and hill tribes do not come under the rubric Meitei. In fact, the Loi community which is treated on par with the scheduled caste elsewhere was part and parcel of the Meitei group. They were pushed down by social ladder by the Royal decisions for what was considered social sins like inter caste and consanguineous marriages. Therefore, they had become Lois (scheduled caste) by branding. The name Meitei is irrefutably be applicable to anyone belonging to one of the seven Meitei clans.
The Manipur Muslims, who are immigrants have also taken their settlement in this land since late 16th century and it claimed that they have resorted to marrying the local women (Singh and Shah 2001). The Brahmans also came and settled in Manipur as early as 15 century and many more were followed at different times (Nobinchandra 2001). They were mostly from Bengal. They enjoy a higher position than the Meiteis.

Regarding the Lois or the Scheduled caste groups, they are represented by the Andro, Sekmai, Khurkhul, Laimanai, Pheiying, Susakameng, Chairel, Sugnu and Yaithibi or Thoubal Khunou (Singh 1993).

The surrounding hills are the abodes of the Nagas and the Kuki tribes.

**Background of Games And Sports in Manipur.**

It has been observed that the Meities had always taken keen interest in games and sports since early days. Yubistha (Pakhangba) was the first powerful ruler and ascended the throne of principality of ‘Ningthoujas’ in 33 AD and ruled over Manipur successfully for many years. He introduced several methods of warfare skills and imparted martial and Millitary education to the youths of the Manipur to protect themselves and the royal Kingdom from the invaders of the neighbouring countries (Devi 1988). It has been claimed that the Manipur people started playing games in a somewhat systematized way since the time of king Pakhangba. They also evolved various indigenous games such as Khongkangjei, Sagolkangjei (polo), MuknaKangjei, Mukna (wrestling), yubilikpi (cocoanut snatching), Lamchel (race) and throwing events. Not only these outdoor games, many other games such as Kangsanaba, Leekonsanaba, Marumkonbi were also played as indoor games. The Meitei girls, specially in their childhood stage used to play various minor games such as Uraobi, Cheitekotpi, Marumkonbi, Phibulhabi, Nom-Nom sagaitong etc. as their pass time. They played these games in the open air specially in the evening. The games and sports, thus became an indispensable part in the life of Manipur people since time immemorial(Devi 1988).
After the British occupation in the state in 1891, many type of foreign games were introduced into the soil of Manipur. The pioneer in the field of games and sports were Sir James Johnstone, KCSI, CBE, and Maharaja Surachand Singhajee (Singh 1995). They contributed a lot to the development of games and sports in Manipur. It is said that the science of physical education was introduced in the year 1911-12, at Johnstone School, Imphal. Many foreign games such as football, hockey, cricket, carrom, chess and table tennis were played in the school. After the Indian independence, a tremendous change in the field of games and sports had taken place in Manipur.

The Manipuri girls started participating at the 5th National level school games (1959) held at Bombay. Before that an Inter School Athletic Meet was held at Imphal in November 1959 in which 975 students of which 275 girls from 47 schools participated in that meet (Singh 1995). From 1960 onwards, the Manipuri girls started participating regularly in the Games and Sports of various competitions. Because of encouraging results in their performance, the girls and women of the state have started taking more serious practice and interest in different games and sports.

In the last 5th National games of India, which was held in Manipur from 14-25th Feb. 1999, a total of 598 athletes of Manipur, of which 266 women athletes were represented the state. They altogether bagged a total of 112 medals of Golds, Silver and bronze which were the largest medal tally.

Scientists have opined that one’s performance and efficiency in certain sports events depends largely on the physical structure and constitutional body types of the individual. It has, therefore, been felt desirable to have a general idea on the physical structure and type of the present study population that is the Meities. From some of the previous somatometric data, it has been observed that the Meitei males are predominantly medium in stature with a mean height of 164.00cm (Singh, 1993) and the Meitei females too having 154.67cm are classed as medium stature according to Martin’s Classification.
Plate 1. Weight Lifting Indoor Stadium

Plate 2. Warming up for Practice

Plate 3. Cycling Practice
Further, from the rural based Meitei male sample, it has been observed that the Meitei males with their medium stature have an average total arm length of 70.54 cm, total leg length of 86.91 cm, chest girth of 82.78 cm and a body weight of 53.50 Kg (Singh 1991).

From the data of Devi (1985) on the Meitei girls of 20 years, it has been revealed that the Meitei females with medium stature, also have an average upper limb length of 67.49 cm and lower limb length of 72.19 cm. From some of the girth measurements, they are also found to have an average chest girth of 88.33 cm, upper arm girth of 26.45 cm, forearm girth of 23.71 cm and calf girth of 32.09 cm. Their average weight in this age group (20 years) has been shown as 49.05 kg. It may be said that though, the linear measurements particularly the stature, upper and lower limbs may not likely be increased anymore, however, some increments in the above girth measurements may be expected in the subsequent few age groups. This may be true even in the body weight.

The next chapter explains the material and methods of the present study.