CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The district of Thoubal occupies 405 Km$^2$ area of the south western part of the Manipur valley. It is extended between the parallels of 24°15' and 24°45' north latitudes and meridians of 93°50' and 94°10' east longitudes. The thick and fertile alluvial plain formed mainly by Thoubal river and its tributaries is popularly known as the "rice bowl of Manipur". According to 1981 census, the district has a population of 2,31,781 persons. The society is an amalgamation of Manipuri Hindus, Meiteis, Muslims and a number of tribes. The general density of population in the area comes to 572 persons/Km$^2$ (1981).

The area is characterised with most typical features of Manipuri culture with a range of socio-economic conditions. Agriculture constitutes most important sector of economy. The land resources are underutilised due to inadequate irrigational facilities on one side and denuded soils under submergence on the other. Monoculture, mostly dominated by paddy, may evidently be noticed. Handloom and cottage industries are important types of industries in the area. The socio-economic and financial institutions are also inadequate with poor interlinkage system. These pose constraints on effective utilisation of natural resources and resource mobilisation. The inefficient
spatial organisation and poor functional interaction of the central places restricted rapid adoption of innovations and transformation of regional economy.

Review of Literature

Various studies have been made in the field of regional development and planning in the country. After Independence (1947), concerted efforts were made for faster and planned development based on principles of democracy and social justice with establishment of Planning Commission, Government of India. In the beginning, emphasis was given to establish basic infrastructure for rapid and steady growth in the field of agriculture and industries in form of multipurpose projects; heavy industries etc. Simultaneously, attempts were made for expansion of railways and road transport networks. Community Development Blocks of operational size were established throughout the country so that effective and widespread development may take place. There have been shifts in the emphasis given in different five year plans in the country as per needs and requirements of population and area (Reports of Planning Commission, 1952, 1956, 1961, 1969, 1974, 1980 and 1985).

Different vital issues of regional development planning in India were vividly revealed by R.P. Mishra and
V.L.S. Prakash Rao (1974). Various dimensions and implications of rural growth centres for integrated area development were used for Miryalguda Taluka (L.K. Sen et al., 1971). Regional Planning for Social Facilities examines the concepts of central place system and their application in Eastern Maharashtra (Wanmali, S., 1971). National Institute of Community Development renamed as National Institute of Rural Development, developed a model for Integrated Rural Area Development which has successfully been used by scientists with slight changes or modifications as per its suitability of local conditions. Worth mentioning among them are – Growth Centres in Raichur (Sen L.K. et al. 1975), An Integrated Tribal Development for Keonjhar District (Patnaik, N. and Bose, S., 1976), Micro Level Planning: A Case study of Kernal Area (Bhat, L.S. et al., 1976), Block Plan in District Frame in Ahantapur District (Tripathi, R.N. et al., 1981).

Further, a number of village level studies were made for many blocks by certain organisations e.g., Block Level Administration (Shiviah, M. et al., 1979), Block Level Planning (Mishra, G.K., 1987) etc.

For the State of Manipur, a number of studies have been made by many geographers and social scientists. Worth mentioning amongst them are Gazetteers of Manipur (Dunn, E.W. reprinted 1975), Techno-Economic Survey of Manipur (NCAER, 1961), Economic Geography of Manipur (Ansari, S.A., 1974), Geography of Manipur (Singh, R.P., 1982), Some Aspects of Geography of Manipur (Ansari, S.A., 1987), Census Atlas of Manipur (Census Directorate, 1989). A wide coverage has been given to Manipur in Economic Problems and Planning in North East India (Agarwal, A.K., 1987). Integrated Area Development Plan for West District, Manipur was prepared by NICD in 1976.

Besides these, some theses have been accepted for award of Doctoral degrees in different Universities such as Manipur Valley : A Study in Land Use (Singh, R.K.R., 1981), Imphal : A Study in Urban Geography (Singh, B., 1981), Population Geography of Manipur (Singh, Sunder, 1985), Settlement System of Manipur : Spatial, Social and Economic Dimensions (Singh, N. Deva, 1986), Transport
Geography of Manipur (Sharma, Lalhari, 1989). These theses have their own merits as authors have tried to reveal specific problems and characters of habitat, society and economy of Manipur. Due to inadequate data base, maps were prepared at the district or sub-division level (except demographic aspects only). This sought the need for undertaking micro-level indept studies of districts using data base at the village level. Micro-level Planning: A Case Study of Bishnupur District has been made in the Department of Earth Sciences, Manipur University (Devi, H. Gitabali, 1990). In the present study author intends to present available information in scientific manner at the village level and suggest plan for Integrated Rural Area Development of the district.

**Objectives**

Integrated Rural Area Development refers to the comprehensive effort attempting at various development strategies including opportunities for the beneficiaries, augmenting their skills and capabilities, transformation of technology relating to agriculture and at the same time planning to reactivate the resources physically as well as economically. This includes the process of plan formulation, the nature of existing planning machinery, the procedures devised for programme integration as well as the
status of plan implementation including the institutional set up for plan implementation arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. This intended to assist in identifying the spatio-functional-sectoral gaps and inadequacies in the present planning system and implementation of District's Rural Area Development programmes.

The process of rural area development planning in the state is still at the melting point, hence Integrated Rural Development Planning (IRDP) assumes significance in the present context. This programme has two important dimensions as it has direct impact on rural poverty on one side and identifies the employment opportunities. Functional and spatial dimensions are the two important aspects of integration for rural area development. Functional integration simply refers to the socio-economic activities which are closely related to area development planning. The important strategy for achieving the basic objective of accelerated socio-economic development of the district has to be evolved in regard to the existing environment and socio-economic conditions prevalent in Thoubal district.

The study area is characterised with acute intra-regional disparities. The main objective of the project
is to curb such imbalances amongst the inhabitants of the area. The regional disparities or imbalances lie in its economic resources which to a great extent depend on various agricultural productions. Agriculture is mainstay of the rural economy of the district. Thus, the development strategy has to lay great emphasis on development of agriculture and allied activities.

Census, 1981 accounted that 78% of total workers are engaged in agriculture. The district has a tremendous potentiality for the development of agro-based industries and it would be possible to explicit after the completion of Thoubal Multipurpose Project. It aims at to generate irrigation facilities for about 34,000 ha of agricultural land and help to eradicate the rural poverty to a great extent. Thus, it seeks to remove poverty and unemployment, bring economic self-reliance, reduce disparities in income etc. The rural development strategy of the VII Five Year Plan considered an accelerated development of productive sectors with sustained efforts to improve development in agriculture. At present, development in agriculture is meagre without adequate and assured supply of water for irrigation. Thus, the only strategy for agricultural development is to provide efficient irrigation facilities which may help in converting single crop-land area into double and multiple cropping.
The comprehensive rural area development planning conceives the preparation of perspective plans for a short-term area development and formulation of action programmes. Development should begin from the grassroots levels. The implementation of the rural development starting from household and village to block and district level will be proper and quicker development strategy.

The study area has two Community Development Blocks namely Thoubal and Kakching with its headquarters at Thoubal and Kakching. These administrative units enable rural population to derive economic benefits from the developmental assets created in each area. The continuance of the IRDP for the improvement of the economic condition and social status of the rural communities is vital. It requires focus towards employment of unemployed youths in a limited time for raising income levels of rural population of the weaker and backward sections of society. The success in removal of poverty is largely dependent on the financial credit schemes, taken up by the beneficiary groups of the district. The important strategy for achieving the basic objective of accelerated socio-economic development of the district has to envisage the existing environment and socio-economic conditions prevalent in Thoubal.
At present the rural development planning is formulated through block, as an appropriate strategy for development begins at the block levels. Thus, planning processes at District level are formulated through the blocks which themselves are closely interrelated. Thus, the blocks are the main implementing agencies of the schemes under IRDP which comprise agriculture including horticulture, land reclamation, animal husbandry and rural industries. At the same time, it is a programme for development of target group beneficiaries.

The socio-economic conditions of population in the district depends on two things i.e. (i) the development infrastructure particularly road transport and power, (ii) Education and other social overheads/institutions.

The district is suffering from transport bottlenecks in absence of railway or efficient inland water way system. The National Highway No.39 is the only line which passes through the district and as such it cannot reach to distant villages. In the rural areas villagers use to walk on kutchta roads along with their cows and buffaloes or carts. Goods are still carried on human backs from the distant hilly villages who are constantly facing such difficulties resulting from poor transport and communication system.
The IRDP aims at amelioration of road transportation facilities in the rural areas of district by completing roads already taken up, converting of fair weather road (FWR) into all weather road (AWR), interlinkage system of all villages upto 500 population by FWR, improving the quality of road and reducing the cost of construction by use of locally available material and labour. Suspension bridges also need examined to be constructed across deep rivers for providing linkage system to distant villages. Thus, emphasis will be given for provision of better transport and communication for a rapid economic development by providing effective and efficient interlinkage system in the area.

Educational institutions and other social overheads are of basic significance in the socio-economic development of the area. The percentage of literacy in the district is very low. The strategy aims at eradication of illiteracy and improvement in general and technical knowhow of population by upgrading and strengthening the present educational institutions. The provision for adult and elementary education may be made for improvement of the socio-economic conditions as these have crucial significance to those who remained illiterate or unable to avail due to their poor economic status.
Most often, some villages are bypassed of development processes leading imbalances within the area.

The present study aims at to formulate a comprehensive development plan so as to bring the entire socio-economic activities into a single system of growth centres and service centres i.e. from centralisation to decentralisation.

As hilly parts of the district exhibit concentration of tribal population, rural area development may be added with Tribal Area Development Plans also. The tribal population in the district presents a varied picture in form of religion, language and culture, distinct from that of the rural society. The tribal area development planning needs desired focus as it comes under priority area.

Thus, this work deals with the rural area as well as the tribal communities who are badly suffering and become prey of vicious circle poverty. These objectives are to be taken up under scheduled castes and tribal welfare programmes which aim at to bridge the gap that existed in between the backward and tribal communities and other classes with the quickest possible manner. A tribal sub-plan will be formulated for scheduled castes separately.
For the generation of economic activities for the tribal villages, the role of Manipur Tribal Corporation Limited will be assessed. The Corporation may help in plan formulation, execution of projects, managing and administering benefits to the tribal population.

The IRDP is a development strategy which is multi-disciplinary in approach and multi-sectoral in operation. The growth strategy aims at the overall development of area with the particular emphasis for the target group of population namely marginal farmers, small farmers, landless tenants and the rural artisan labourers. Integration in rural areas is the method and the rural poor or target groups are the focus in the purview of micro-level planning.

The IRDP is built up with many elements including spatial and sectoral integration of the geographical area at the micro-level. Though it may be approached from many different sectors, it is unitary in nature. This idea conceives out of the need to attack multiple causes of poverty in the rural areas, resulting from socio-economic and financial conditions of the district. These cause primarily towards low production, unemployment, lack of agricultural inputs and technical knowhow, education, health, etc.
Keeping the above features in view, the major objectives of the study have been given as follows.

1. To solve the problem of disparity among the inhabitants of the district and bring balanced economic development

2. To increase the income of the poor families who are within the target groups and below the poverty line

3. To bring the entire socio-economic activities into a single system of service centres that is from centralisation to decentralisation.

4. To intensify agriculture by increasing the area under double and multiple cropping with better means of irrigation

5. To remove illiteracy and stress more emphasis on adult and elementary education in the age group of 15-35.

6. To solve the unemployment problem by providing employment to the rural youths in industries and newer areas
7. To give adequate emphasis for electricity and drinking water facilities to the extensive rural and hilly areas

8. To preserve the forest areas within the district and popularise sericulture

9. To identify the functional levels of hierarchy

10. To identify the present status of resource utilisation and the level of development in the rural areas.

11. To improve the road transport and communication facilities and provide necessary social overheads for rapid development

12. To suggest perspective plan for balanced and integrated development of the area.

The plan will assimilate the principles of social justice including provision of equal opportunity to all the sections of society. Suggestions will be put forward for plan implementation and management system. The work will not only benefit the Thoubal District but at the same time provide sound basis for Integrated Area Development of similar areas including the Manipur valley.
Methodology

The present study aims at to focus attention on spatial variations in natural, human and socio-economic environment at the village level. When village, the lowest level of administrative unit is unable to serve the purpose in allocations of specialised functions, clusters of some contiguous villages have been identified on the basis of functional interaction i.e. nodal regions. Qualitative as well as quantitative techniques have been used for cartographic representation of information in form of thematic maps.

In this study, unlike arbitrary class interval, statistical and scientific class intervals have been chosen to depict variations in geographical phenomena in relation to the regional average. Special emphasis has been given to depict average conditions of the variables while retaining its distinction of higher and lower levels as compared to mean. Class intervals are suitably constructed using standard deviation in relation to the mean values e.g.,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbolic Class Interval</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{X} + 2.5\sigma$</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{X} + 1.5\sigma$</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
\[
\bar{X} + 0.5 \sigma - \text{ Moderately High}
\]
\[
\bar{X} - 0.5 \sigma - \text{ Moderate}
\]
\[
\bar{X} - 1.5 \sigma - \text{ Moderately Low}
\]
\[
\bar{X} - 2.5 \sigma - \text{ Low}
\]
\[
\bar{X} - 3 \sigma - \text{ Very Low}
\]

The choropleth as well as isopleth methods have been used to depict single phenomena or different ratios. In order to highlight dynamics of change, information are depicted for two years at an interval of five to ten years such as land use, demographic characteristics etc.

The concept of population threshold and weightage techniques have been used to determine the levels of hierarchy of function and centrality of central places. Christaller's central place theory (K₃ model) has been used in transformation of rural economics of the district. The technique of population projection has also been used to project population for 1996 and 2001 A.D. so as to assess the needs and requirement of increased population.

**Field Work and Data Collection**

Village has been selected as the areal unit for field work investigations. Resource data and other relevant information regarding land use and cropping pattern
for each and every village are collected from District Rural Development Agency as well as S.D.C. Office, Thoubal. The population and demographic statistics are used from the District Census Handbooks of 1971, 1981 and 1991 (provisional). District Gazetteers of Manipur were consulted to understand past socio-economic environment.

The data of locational facilities and amenities are collected from published or unpublished official records received from various departments. Besides these, data regarding policy functions such as medical and public health, education, extension and credit, road and transport, electrification and sericulture have been collected from the office of District Medical Officer, Inspector of Schools, Community Development Officer, Public Works Department, Electricity Department and Department of Sericulture, Thoubal respectively.

Primary data has been collected through the village schedule for all the revenue villages. The space preference or peoples choice of settlement for specific functions was gathered for each and every village to work out centrality, hierarchy and hinterland of different central places. In addition to this, extensive field work was carried out to find out major problems faced by community.
Again, since the mapping is a vital technique of the geographer, simplification of collected data by changing its scale for comparativity in various aspects, becomes essential (Monmorier, 1972, 203). The spatial characteristics and variability of resources/phenomena are presented by preparing various thematic maps. With the help of thematic cartography, a large number of lengthy and complex tables are avoided. The outline map of the district is based on census map whereas settlement map on the topographic map bearing number 83H/14 and 15 and 83 L/2 and 3 published in 1974 of the district on 1:50,000 scale. The provisional census figures have also been used in the present study.

**Design of the Study**

The first chapter deals with the area, objectives and scope, design of study and methodology of the work.

The second chapter encompasses geographic background including geology, physiography, drainage, soil, climate and vegetation on one hand and distribution of settlement, social structure of society including religion, law of inheritance and social facilities on the other.
The third chapter discusses various aspects of population distribution, density, growth, sex ratio, literacy, tribal population, working population, occupational classification of workers and dependency ratio of non-workers to workers etc.

The fourth chapter is devoted to analyse land use and agriculture. Emphasis has been led to evolution of present system of agriculture, demographic aspects of land use, components of land use, cropping pattern, horticulture, animal husbandry, pisciculture and sericulture.

The fifth chapter highlights various aspects of basic planning units, central place theory, growth centre concept, central functions, centrality and hierarchy of central places, different components of central places and their hinter lands.

The sixth chapter deals with the industrial development planning in the district. It includes forest and agro-based industries, handloom, village and cottage industries. Attention has been given to highlight the problems and potentialities for future investment in development of regional economy.
The seventh chapter lays emphasis to child and women welfare in light of education, medical, financial and credit facilities, extension services and electrification in the area.

The eighth chapter aims at to analyse transport and communication including evolution and pattern of present transportation system, volume of traffic flow and its problems and prospects in the balanced development of regional economy.

The ninth chapter lucidly describes various components of spatial integration and functional co-ordination. A general service centre plan has been prepared to overcome the spatial and functional gaps in the area so as to facilitate rapid trickling down process. The economic development plan has also been suggested to cater the needs and requirements of increased population. Further, a perspective plan has been suggested for balanced and integrated rural area development of the district.

The tenth chapter focuses attention on plan implementation and management so that the plan may be able to yield desired results in short as well as long-term perspectives. The thesis is supplemented with a brief summary and conclusion.