Chapter VI

CONCLUSION
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In this study an attempt has been made to understand the term modernisation, its characteristics, its theories, its various aspects. The study also deals with the various socio-economic factors of modernisation which had its impact on socio-economic life of the Meitei Women.

Modernisation is a process of change. It refers not only to change in the external structure of social level but also at the internal intellectual, emotional and spiritual level of man living in the society. In social science, the term modernisation is used to designate the process through which a traditional or pre-technological society passes as it is transformed into a society characterized by machine technology, rational and secular attitude. Its essence lies in the awareness of man as self-potent being who have the power to change their lives and transform society.

Modernisation theory has its roots in the ideas of Durkheim and Weber. Durkheim in his book “Division of Labour” talks about two types of society, the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’. To him two types of society have very different forms of social cohesion between their members. The people of a traditional society perform the limited tasks of a simple agrarian community in village settlement. In the traditional society, social cohesion was based on the simple common life style and beliefs that prevented in village settlements. Durkheim calls this form of cohesion ‘mechanical solidarity’. According to him, with the increase in number and density of population and limited resources
people started competing for the scarce resources. This led to social division of labour. As a result new resources were generated by the producers while others got specialized in other areas of life outside of material production. Thus, the division of labour became more complex and created an increasing interdependency among people. In this way, modern society was created. To him, modern society is more complex, integrated and based on cohesion which he called 'organic solidarity'. To him, modern system creates a new pattern of morality and a system of norms which are less rigid than those of a traditional society.

Like Durkheim, Weber another sociologist whose work has had a great impact on the development of modernisation theory, also draws a distinction between traditional and modern society. Much of this distinction was based on fundamental contrast of ideas and values operated in these two societies. According to him, coming of the 'modern era' ensures social birth of the individual as a relatively free agent not bound by rigid and unquestioning conformity to past tradition.

Thus, Weber and Durkheim have provided many of the basic themes of modernisation theory in particular by bringing forth the contrast between traditional and modern societies.

The four major aspects of modernisation are politico-socio-economic and intellectual modernisation. Political modernisation, emphasize on rational, scientific and secular techniques of decision-making and law making. It involves mass mobilization, political
participation and accountability etc. Social modernisation brings about a marked change in the outlook and behaviour of groups which are characterized by the function they perform in society rather than by caste, language, residence and other similar factors. With the growth of social modernization the individual finds himself in the wider world of freedom in which there are fewer restriction on his ability to take decision. The Economic modernisation involves the systematic application of science and technology to production processes and to the rationalization of distribution. It compels the increasing utilization of inanimate energy in contrast to animal or human energy. It implies high degree of specialization in the techniques of production and labour skills and requires technical, professional and managerial skills and Intellectual modernisation leads in all system to generate emphasis on secularism and secularization of the process of government and bureaucracy. Its increasing emphasis is on strengthening the material basis of life. It implies a wide spread belief in progress.

Modernisation may be brought about through several factors. Some of the factors which are directly responsible in bringing about modernisation are growth of universalistic legal system, expansion of education, urbanization, increased network of communication etc.

Some of the important characteristic features of modernisation are it is a lengthy process and the totality of the changes which modernisation involves can only be worked out through time. Also, modernisation is an irreversible and progressive process. It enhances human well-being culturally and materially.
Before going to analyses the socio-economic impact of modernisation on Meitei women, it is essential to understand the traditional, social and economic life of Meitei women.

In the traditional society, Meitei women had to follow many prescribed norms, customs and practices which had invariably puts them in a disadvantageous position and undermined their individuality. There was strict convention of weaving only the 'Phanek' and the manner of weaving it was strictly defined according to the age of the wearer. Likewise, the style of keeping the hair according to the age of the individual was also practiced in the traditional society. By looking at the style of wearing the dress and the manner of keeping the hair, one could easily make out whether a woman is married or not.

Meitei society being a patriarchal society, imposed many social codes and norms which had to be followed by women. She was expected to obey and accept the decision of the male members. As a young girl, she was expected to acknowledge the authority of her father and help her mother in household chores. As a married woman, she was expected to follow her husband in all the troubles of life and at her old age she had to live under the authority of her sons. Further, as a female she could never become the head of the family. This institution of headship was reserved for the male members and she was denied the right to inheritance of immovable property.

Women were considered as impure during menstruation and were prohibited from cooking and having contact with the male
members of the family. She had to wash all the clothes which they had
touched during their period. Moreover, women were also considered
as impure during childbirth not only by the family members but also
by the whole clan she was considered as impure and were prohibited
from performing religious rituals till the purification ceremony which
was observed on the 12\textsuperscript{th} day of the childbirth.

Marriage was strictly performed between exogamous clan and
there were special penalties imposed for anyone breaching this rule.
Polygamy was widely practiced in traditional society. Remarriage of
widow or divorcée was prevalent but marrying a widow also involved
losing one's status in the society which acted as a deterring factor of
remarriage, hence these social practices of remarriage was not very
widely prevalent.

Inside the house and in any social gatherings, females were
supposed to occupy the northern or the left side of the house. In the
Meitei society this northern or the left side is also reserved for taking
out the dead body from the house.

All these norms, practices and restrictions on women were
imposed as a means to keep them under tight control.

In the economic sector, the traditional society witnessed a
significant role played by Meitei women. There were many factors
which compelled them to be an active player in the economic life of
traditional Meitei Society. The first factor was that the king of
Manipur was in constant warfare with the neighbouring chiefs and
rulers. In order to protect the territory of Manipur the adult male members of the families had to accompany the king in these warfares. In the absence of the male members of the family women had to shoulder the responsibilities of maintaining their families. The second factor was that the adult male members had to attend the service of the king in the palace for every 10 days out of 40 days. The third factor was that many Meitei women lost their husbands in the Manipur-Burmese war and many other were taken as prisoners of war. All these factors directly led women to bear the financial responsibilities of their families.

In Manipur, agriculture formed the basic economic activity and women played a very prominent role in the cultivation of this staple food. Some farming activities like transplantation of seedlings, weeding and reaping were mostly done by women. One of the unique features of women and agriculture was the formation of women organisation known as khutlang or the helping hand. Khutlang was a labour team comprising of women of different age group of a particular area formed to help out each other during the time of cultivation and harvesting.

Manipuris lived on rice and as such every house possessed a pestle, wooden mortar, winnowing fan etc. The task of pounding rice was normally entrusted to the girls of the family.

In traditional society, farmers usually depended on traditional methods of cultivation and on natural force for the good harvesting. Only the local variety of crops were sown which had low productivity.
Traditional implements used by the Meiteis were the sledge, plough, smooth harrow, paddy spoon etc.

Since cultivation of rice depended mainly on natural forces, women took important part in performed many rites and rituals for praying natural forces like to stop rain. For that women had to perform rain stopping rites, rain invoking rites, and taming of the floods rituals etc. Women used to sing various songs for invocation of rain in times of drought and used to observe rites for calling down the rain. One such type of rainfall ceremony which used to be performed required women-folk to gather at midnight in a field, discard their clothes and throw their paddy pounders, pestle or winnowing fan in a nearby pool or river and make their way home by by-ways.

Weaving was another important economic activity in the traditional society. This occupation was solely practiced by women in the traditional society. In fact, weaving was considered as one of the essential qualities of woman hood in the traditional society and every woman were presented with a weaving looms on their marriage as dowry.

Traditionally only loin loom was used. Cotton and silk were mainly used as raw material and the yarn was produced by twisting the fibres between the fore fingers and the thumb or by rolling the fibres on the thigh.
Although, weaving was solely in the hands of women yet, they were debarred from weaving the Royal Apparel as they were considered unclean during their monthly cycle.

Even though almost every womenfolk was engaged in weaving, the product of their labour was insufficient to meet the needs of the people. Consequently, women who were very efficient in weaving were regarded as precious in traditional society.

Meitei women also practiced wine brewing and those women who were good at brewing wines were also often captured as war prisoner during war time.

Another important role played by women was the trading and marketing of goods in the local market. The significant feature of marketing was the practice of women of a particular clan selling particular goods only. The market area as such was an open area with no construction or shelter. Due to lack of infrastructural facilities women had to faced many difficulties. They had to sit whole day in these open places during rain or sun shine day to sell their goods.

Meitei women were very industrious. All the production, buying and selling in the local markets were done by them. At home they engaged themselves in spinning and weaving, making all the necessary cloths of the household. This left them with no time for themselves and had to struggle hard to maintain their families.
The impact of modernisation in Manipur was felt soon after the British annexation in 1891. The British administration laid emphasis on construction of roads and bridges. They also started educating the people of Manipur. Different schools were opened in various parts of the state and girls’ education started for the first time in Manipur with the opening of an L.P. School in the year 1898-99. In 1932-33, two more L.P. Schools for girls were established. Thus, total number of L.P. Schools for girls rose to three. In 1940-41, out of the total women population of 2,62,886, the number of women students was 1,594 which formed 0.61% of the total women population.

Following Manipur’s Merger with India, there was growth of women’s education, the number of girl students increased by 4.4 times from 1,594 in 1940-41 to 6,696 in 1951. In the year 1970-71, out of the total population of 10,72,753 the total percentage of literacy was 32.9% and the percentage of female literacy being 19.53%. The number of girl’s high school went upto 19 as against 3 in the year 1960-61.

The progress further accelerated after the attainment of statehood of Manipur. By 1995-96, the state had women’s college out of which 2 were recognized as government women’s college. With the increase in educational facilities provided for girls/women the number of the educated rose and today, the percentage of literate women has reached 60%.
As a result of the introduction of Modern education there was a discernible change in the attitudes of women as reflected in their changing dress habits, hair style, eating habits, mate-selection etc.

Meitei women no longer confined themselves to their traditional dress nor keep their hairstyle according to their age. Now-a-days they wear variety of dress and particularly those dress which they find comfortable to wear. They also keep their hairstyle according to their likings. This change in dress and hairstyle marked a gradual weakening of customary practice which was prevalent among the Meitei women in the traditional society.

Various other traditional practices like giving preferential treatment to male child, standing in front of male members, taking meal after the male members in the house, restriction imposed on receiving male friends are hardly observed by the younger generation who are more educated.

In terms of marriage, the practice of late marriage and acceptance of divorce in case of failed marriage by women is increasing. Spread of education also made women conscious of maintaining a good health. Because of the various efforts made by the central government and by the state government, NGOs and awareness spread through mass media like T.V., Radio, Newspaper etc. women became conscious and took benefits of various health care scheme offered by both the central and the state government. Not only this, they have realized the importance of having small family and they
willingly come forward to avail themselves of the various family planning methods provided by the state government.

Relating to Economic sector efforts to modernize the economic structure of the society was initiated by the British government and serious works on Modernisation of Agricultural sector started during post-statehood period. The state government with the assistance of the central government has provided various improved technology to the farmers like moulboard, plough, three-tinned cultivators, dusters, sprayers, improved HYV seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, weedicides etc. Credit facilities are also made available to the farmers.

Various training programme especially for farm women and girl child has been take up by the government. Farm women and girls are taught to preserve various fruits like pineapple, orange, citrus, wild apple etc. and are taught methods to prepare jam, jelly, pickle etc out of the farm products. The state government through its systematic and planned approach has helped the farmers in solving their farm problems which has to some extent helped them to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Increased productivity helped farm women in earning more income by selling their products in the market and moreover the credit facilities advanced to them helped them in setting up many income generating enterprises primarily the manufacture of agro-based products like jam, jelly, squash, papad, dhoop making etc. This helped them in earning from Rs 500 to Rs 1000 p.m. Not only this, after
contributing financially to run the family, they are also able to save money and some of them even spend money on themselves.

Modernisation of Handloom Industry which is another important means of livelihood for women in the unorganized sector also started during the British administration but the real phase of modernisation started during the plan periods. Fly-shuttle looms fitted with modern equipments as dobbies, jacquard, take-up motion attachment, drop bones, multiple bon attachment, semi-automatic looms etc came to be used by women weavers of Manipur. Introduction of this new equipments helped in reducing the time of operation helped in saving their energy and increasing production.

Training programmes are provided to women weavers and various entrepreneurial development programmes are being conducted from time to time to help increase the number of entrepreneurs in the region.

Increased productively and exporting of these products not just outside the state but to foreign countries helped them in earning more income. This has led them to contribute significantly in maintaining the financial expenses of the family. They are able to save more money and spend more money on themselves.

Another significant impact of economic modernisation is the opening up of service sector to women. Number women in the service sector is increasing day by day. The percentage of educated women working in the capacity of Doctors, Engineer, Lawyers, Teachers, etc,
increased. The women of these sectors have been able to get regular steady monthly income and have a secure life financially. One significant impact of taking up jobs in the organize sector on the social front is that it forced male members to be more gender sensitive.

To conclude, it may be stated that modernisation of socio-economic sector helped in improving the socio-economic status of Meitei women. Modernisation of the unorganized sector helped in improving the condition of those Meitei women employed in this sector. Yet, a lot needs to be done to alleviate the economic condition of these women employed in the unorganized sector. More training and loan facilities need to be provided to these women employed in the unorganized sector so as to make them able to come in par with the women employed in the organize sector.