CHAPTER – III

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Introduction

Every movement whether social or political has their roots in social, political and economic structure and the prevailing conditions of the society. The emergence of the movement is a symptom of discontentment, dissatisfaction and contradiction within the existing social and political order. Dissatisfaction and discontentment arises when individual no longer consider the values and norms on which the order is based to be the best or, only possible values and norms. Social movements arise when the individuals develop the idea that they are only in but not really of the society. Economic causes of discontent like unemployment, economic backwardness of the region can also give rise to the emergence of movement as well.

The dictionary meaning of the word movement is 'a series of actions and endeavours of body of persons for a special object'. Herb, while discussing the sociology of social movements, defines social movement as an attempt to certain groups to bring about fundamental changes in social order, especially in the basic institutions of property and labour relationship. Joseph Gusfield defines social movements as, 'socially shared demands for change in some aspects of social order'. Another slightly different view of J. Gusfield is that movement is a 'wide variety to certain institutions or, to create an entirely new order'. Social movement may be defined as any concerted effort on the part of a section of society to bring about changes in the existing system, Wilkinson

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2 Ibid., p.548.
defined social movement as 'a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction any means, not excluding violence, illegality revolution or, withdrawal into 'Utopian community'. According to him two basic elements, namely 'a minimal degree of organisation' and 'a commitment to change' are necessary for the existence of a social movement.

Thus, there are various issues involved in defining this concept. In fact, it is a very difficult task to give the meaning of movement in a uniform way because some movements may be defined by the character and implication of the commitment, other by the organisational mode and strategy and other by the constituency of the population which accords the movements normative commitment and participation. It may be generalised that movement is for a change in the existing society.

**Characteristics of Socio-Political Movement**

With the introduction of the new colonial administrative system in Manipur after 1891. There were many movements against the colonial and feudal authority of the state like Thoubal Agitation 1913, Irawat movement 1934-50, and Nupilal Anisuba 1939. If they got it, they remained silent until another problem came up. Nevertheless, these movements were stepping stones for getting political consciousness and played a great positive role in the gradual developing process of political and social system of the country.

**Typology of Movement**

All these political movements were participated by the muslims jointly with Meeteis. It was not happened in case of Kuki Rebellion and Jadonang Movement of Kuki and Naga in Manipur. They launched their movements separately. If we examine those movements, all these movements were constitutional.

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Muslims in Thoubal Agitation, 1913

The assumption of the administrative authority by Churachand Singh, a Raja under the British Paramountcy, on the 15th of May 1907, may be regarded as the beginning of this misery. During his time, he treated the common people very badly by introducing several types of system like 'Peon Chakthak', rations for touring peons and officials, 'Yarek Santri', keeping vigils over officials of tours which ultimately gave a heavy burden to the people. Thus, the feudal ruler introduced a various heinous social evils in Manipur. This practice was continued for a petty long time. Later on, the people of Thoubal launched movement against these oppressive measures. This movement was known in the history of Manipur as Thoubal Agitation. It broke out in 1913.7

A petition from Muhammad Angou Mia of Fouden Village of Thoubal District praying that his sons and grandsons might be exempted from pothang on the ground that his father held the important post of Hanjaba under the Maharaj.8 On the 18th September, 1907, Darbar resolved that Angou Mia is only a Hanjaba, his son only will be exempted from pothang but his grandsons will not be exempted. Resolved that the list of persons to be exempted from Pothang as prepared by the Judicial member be filed for reference in future cases similar to this.9

In the year 1910, a feeling of dissatisfaction developed among the common people when they saw a policy of discrimination and exploitation adopted by the feudal and colonial authority. As a result of it, the Manipur State Darbar granted exemption from "Pothang duties" to a considerable section of the population comprising of, all men living at Imphal Town, Brahmins and Rajkumars, all the honorary servants of Shri Govindaji Temple,

7Sir. Robert Ried, History of the Frontier Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941, O.K.
8Darbar Resolution No.3 of 11 September, 1907.
9Darbar Resolution No.4 of 18 September, 1907.
all the servants of His Highness the Raja and all the military police sepoys.\textsuperscript{10} The clear meaning of the decision was to impose "Pothang duties" on the rural and hill only.

The Thoubal Agitation was started in early 1913. It was done by mainly Meetei and Pangal of Thoubal. In olden days, Thoubal was composed of small villages of Thoubal Achouba, Thoubal Khetri Leikai, Thoubal Ningombam, Thoubal Sabal Tongba, Thoubal Moijing, Khekman, Keibung, Thoubal Leishangthem, Thoudam and Irong. They listed a series of demands, Stop Pothang, Stop Chakthak, Stop Yarek Santri and demanded construction road from Thoubal to Mayang Imphal also.

The leaders of the agitation from the side of Thoubal were, Thokchom Thokchao, Khema Choukidar, Hangoichura, Waikha Pheijao, Yumnam Mera, Tonjao and Muhammed Alip Chaoba,\textsuperscript{11} Samom Juba Singh, Waikhom Amu Singh, Okram Tolen Singh, Thokchom Amu Singh,\textsuperscript{12} Muhammed Mansur Ali.\textsuperscript{13} Many villagers assembled and demonstrated before the Darbar and palace. Several people were imprisoned.

\textsuperscript{10} Darbar Resolution no.1 of 15 June, 1910.
\textsuperscript{12} Leikhuram Ibobi Singh, Manipur Praja Samallani Amasung Anisuba Nupi Lal, Shanti Press, Imphal, Pp. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{13} Muhammed Mansur Ali was born in the year 1872 at Irong Chesaba. He was the fourth son of Abdullah of Chesam dynasty. Since childhood he was brave and not timid. After he entered couple he became choukidar kombat No. 271. During the period of his choukidarship "Peon Chakthak" rations for touring peons and officials, "Yarek Santri" keeping vigils over officials of tours which ultimately gave a heavy burden to the people. Although he was chukidar under the kingship, such type of torture and harassment to the villagers were denied by him. Therefore he along with all other choukidars of Thoubal area gathered and revolted against the king. As a part of the that revolution, a pressure was given for forming the Thoubal Mayang Imphal Road. He was imprisoned in to jail for agitation 1913. After spending a life of a Choukidar for many years, Muhammed Mansur Ali died at his residence in the year 1932. This information is given by Md. Wajid Aii, 63 yrs, former Sarpanch, Irong Cheshaba on 1-10-05.
The flames of the agitation spread to the adjoining villages. The agitators threatened the loyal state servants who came for duty with social ostracism unless they stood with the people in the struggle. As a result of the agitation, all the state works came to a stand still.\textsuperscript{14}

In its meeting dated, 17 April, the Darbar resolved to suggest the following measures to Political Agent, a fine be imposed on every house that refused to perform Pothang duties, the ring leaders be arrested, publicly whipped at Imphal and committed to jail, the Government of Assam be requested to send sufficient force of military police from Kohima for assistance in implementing these measures.

The Political Agent did not support the idea of repressive measures and decided not to take recourse to force so long as the agitation remained peaceful. Apparently, his decision was influenced by two factors. Firstly, he did not rely on the Manipuri police under the command of the Raja, secondly, his request for reinforcement being form down, the force at Imphal was not considered sufficient to suppress the movement by force of arms.

The Political Agent felt that under the then circumstances, continuation of the Pothang System would be no longer justifiable. He, therefore, discussed the matter with the members of the State Darbar as regards the alternative administrative arrangements requiring to meet the additional expenditures as a result of abolition of Pothang system demanded.\textsuperscript{15}

As the outcome of the discussion it was agreed that Pothang system should be abolished, subject to the approval of the Local Government of Assam with the administrative changes were, tax on land should be raised, court fee should be raised, tuition fee for students in school should be introduced,

\textsuperscript{14} F.D.P. Political A. May 1913 No. 40.
\textsuperscript{15} Sir Robert Reid, Op. cit., p.90
traveling allowances for state officials on tour should be introduced, contract system for the state work should be instituted, a fresh house tax should be imposed, a separate budget for increased expenditure due to abolition of Poathnag should be prepared.  

On this basis of this decision, the Maharaj of Manipur, by a Proclamation, abolished the Pothang system on the 9th June 1913. However the agitation did not cease their movement because they again began to turn their attention to the introduction of new taxes specially against the increase in the land revenue.

It is remarkable and conspicuous in this context that if non violent resistance to undesirable state law in the form of Civil Disobedience and Non-Co-operation as adopted by the Indian leaders during the freedom struggle may claim a place in the political history of the country, the peaceful measures of Civil Disobedience and Non Co-operation had already been adopted in Manipur for the people's welfare long before the Indian leaders restored to such measure.

Indeed, the people of Manipur, including Muslims participated in the political affairs of the state and they began to realise the value of effective demand. A part from this successful action, it also laid a good foundation for the success of any type of non-violent democratic movement in the state.

Muslims in Irawat Movement, 1934-1950

In Irawat's movement one could understand that he fought against both feudalism and colonialism. So, his main target was the king, who ruled under the advise of the British. It is not easy task to fight against these two powerful authorities. That means he has to mobilise all sections of Manipur, who are

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16 F.D.P. Political a. May 1913, no.53.
inhabiting in the state as Manipuris. Muslim is also one of them. So, Irawat mixed with Manipuri Muslim leaders both from Cachhar and Manipur. But in reality, the Muslims could not give large-scale participation as done by the Meetei followers of him. Nevertheless one could not discard their important role in his movement. So in order to have full picture of this movement, it is better to see the whole movement of Irawat and now Manipuri Muslim extend helping hand to him.

First Struggle of Irawat

Irawat was born on September 30, 1886 in a poor family of Imphal. He spent his childhood in great hardships. He was educated at the Johnston School. In 1911 he went to Dacca to attend the Pugoj High School where he read up to Class IX only. Due to financial difficulty he left the school and returned to Manipur in 1915 after staying sometime in Tripura. When Irawat read Class V in the Johnston School, one of the teachers kicked a student not only to beat the student. Irawat was a person who could not remain looking at such tortures. Then he had started strike of students against the particular teacher. The School authority advised the teacher to apologies the student and later on he apologise the student. That was the first strike of the students in Manipur and also the first struggle of Irawat.

Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha

For the first time the people of Manipur came to know about the working system of a political organisation in the year 1938. Before there was no political party in Manipur. At the time there was a social and religious organisation which was established in the year 1934. The name of the organisation was the Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha. The Mahasabha was a reform group with the Maharaj himself as the President and Irawat as the Vice President. All the leading personalities of Manipuri were members of this organisation. The Mahasabha aimed at the establishment of a fraternity of Hindu Manipuri of Manipur, British India and Burma, and the emancipation of
the people from the social religious orthodoxy. The motive of the Maharaj was to scuttle any popular anti feudal movement by associating himself with this group of liberal reformists. However Irawat was gradually made aware of hard realities of the country. Some leading members of the organisation, mostly the elite group, who were greatly influenced by the political programme of the Indian National Movement, had strongly felt the immediate need of political organisation in Manipur. They wanted to replace the present colonial and feudal administrative system by introducing a new political and administrative system based on the principle of democracy. Therefore, they had a strong desire to change this social and religious organisation as a political party. Their objective was fulfilled in the fourth session of the Mahasabha, which was held on 29 and 30 December, 1938 at Chinga in South Imphal. In this session, the Mahasabha became a political party and its original name was also changed as the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. The main demand was the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur.18

Irawat Singh demanded the abolition of the Manipur State' Darbar which was composed of the nominee of the king. And Manipur State Darbar declared the Mahasabha as a political party and directed all the government servants who were associated with it to resign. 19 Irawat Singh, who was a judge himself, resigned from his office. He surrendered the feudal privileges due to him and his wife a princess. Elangbam Tompok Singh who worked in Revenue department also resigned and became the General Secretary to the Mahasabha.20

Irawat Singh, following the Swadeshi movement in other parts of the country, burnt all the foreign cloths of himself and his wife in front of the

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19 Darbar Resolution no.7 of 16-10-1939.
Cheirap Panchayat (Court). Irawat visited Cachhar, Assam, Tripura, Burma and Dacca to recognised the Manpuris into a political force.

**Sylhet's Manipuri Muslim**

The Second Women Agitation was started in 1939 when the movement broke out, Irawat was not in Manipur on 5th January 1940. Irawat Singh converted the Women's Agitation created by the rice shortage into a movement for political reforms which aimed ultimately at the end of British rule in Manipur. He was arrested for a public speech he delivered on 17 January 1940 at Imphal and sentenced to three years in jail under the Indian Penal Code Section 124.²¹

While he was lodged in Imphal Jail, he agitated for the improved living conditions of the prisoners. To stop milling oil by the prisoners, to give cup, plate, dish and others, to give enough rice, curry (fish, pea, vegetable) etc., to keep separate dinning room.²² The authorities introduced some reforms in the jail. Then he was transferred to Sylhet Jail. Irawat Singh met a member of Congress and Communist workers in Sylhet and come to be influenced by the Marxist revolutionary literatures. He found in Marxist ideology solution to all the problems of the poor people of Manipur. He used to tell his followers that what he was doing all the time in Manipur was collaborated by the Communist teaching and techniques. He became a communist in Sylhet.²³ He was released from Sylhet Jail in the last part of 1943. He was received by the people of Muslims.²⁴

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²¹ Soyam Satradhari Singh, Maniurgi Itihasta Irabot, Sangai obsets printers, Sega Road, Imphal, 1996, p.57.
²² Ibid., p.58.
Silchar's Manipuri Muslim

However, Irawat was not allowed to enter Manipur. During this period, the attitude of the British towards him became firmly hostile and his movements were kept under strict surveillance. Irawat moved to Cachhar where he lived for three years. While in Assam, he was actively involved in works of the Assam Provincial branch of the C.P.I. He kept liaison with his colleagues of the Praja Sammelini in Manipur.\(^25\)

One day, Irawat swam into the river for crossing the Barak for escaping from the police. When he reached another river bank, he was received by the 700/800 Muslims by boat.\(^26\)

After sometimes, he was arrested under defence of India rule in 1944 and put into Silchar jail for eight months. After release from prison he was actively involved in he establishments of Assam Krishak Sabha (peasant organisation). In 1945 after the war, he contested in the election to the Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly for Silchar Constituency as a C.P.I. candidate but was defeated by a narrow margin.\(^27\) However, he was supported by Muslims by voting.

Muslims in Hill Problem

Independence came to Manipur in 1947 and an interim government was formed with Maharaj Kumar Priyobrata Singh as the Chief Minister. And the pressure on Manipur was exerted through Congress to merge with the Indian Union. On the other hand, Sardar Patel, the Home Minister of India proposed the creation of a new state named Purbanchal Pradesh consisting of Manipur, Cachhar, Tripura, Lushai Hills. The Naga National Council under Phizo wanted to carve out an independent Nagaland comprising the Naga inhabited areas of North East India.\(^28\) Irawat wanted an independent Manipur with full

\(^{28}\) Ibid., p.167.
responsible government elected by the people, with the king remaining as a constitutional head. For relation between Manipur and India he wanted the same relation or state which Ukraine or Bylo Russia, a state within the USSR, even a membership in the United Nations.²⁹

Therefore, Irawat organised a meeting of the representatives of the political parties of Praja Sangha, Manipur Krishak Sabha, Meetei Marup, Nongpok Apunba Marup, Muslim Anjuman on 14 December 1947 at Manipur Dramatic Union under the chairmanship Moulana Rahimuddin, Thoubal Moijing Konjil Leikai.³⁰

This meeting demanded a full responsible government and decided to keep the territorial integrity of Manipur and they sent a good will mission to Nagaland to talk to the leaders of the Naga National Council and formed a United Front of Manipur with Irawat himself as, the president and Moulana Rahimuddin as vice-president. The representative of each of the parties are elected committee members. They are given below:

2. Ibotombi Singh - Manipur Praja Sangha
3. Amul Lung Singh - Manipur Praja Sangha

²⁹ Ibid., p.165.
³⁰ Interview with Shri Moirangthem Ibohal Singh, Ex-MLA, on 15 April 2004

Alhaj Moulana Rahimuddin was born in the year 1890 at Thoubal Moijing Konjil Leikai. His father name was Alhaj Ibrahim. At the age of seven years he went to Madrassa Darul-Uloom Deoband, U.P. and studies Mouluvi Course and stood first position in all classes since he started studying up till the end of the study. After completion of his study he was a teacher of Madrassa Darul Uloom Baskandi Cachhar, Darul Uloom Jaimager Naogao, Madrassa Alia Lilong. He was not only being a teacher of Madrassa, took up many social events. The remarkable work worth mention was that he stood against the formation Purvanchal state and he himself was the chairman of the meeting held in the Manipur Dramatic Union Hall on 14.12.1947 discussed specially denying the formation of Purvanchal state. He contested First General Assembly Election of Manipur in the year 1948 and could not return. Thus a social worker and as a religious person, he died in the year 1975 at his residence. His followers and villagers established a Madrassa under the name and style of Madrassa Rahimia at Thoubal Moijing after his death as a mark of his memory. This information is given by Moulana Salatur Rahaman, Red. Principal, Rangia Arabic College Kamrup Assam, S/o. Alhaj Moulana Rahimuddin on 15 September 2005 at Thoubal Moijing.
4. Shri Irawat Singh - Manipur Krishak Sabha
5. Shri Ibomcha Singh - Manipur Krishak Sabha
6. Shri Sham Singh - Manipur Krishak Sabha
7. Shri Bikul Singh - Meetei Marup
8. Shri Lamphel Singh - Meetei Marup
9. Shri Babu Singh - Meetei Marup
10. Shri M. Ibohal Singh - Nongpok Apunba Marup
11. Shri N. Babudhon Singh - Nongpok Apunba Marup
12. Shri Th. Tombi Singh - Nongpok Apunba Marup
13. Moulana Rahimuddin - Muslim Anjumm

Not only this, Irawat also organised a meeting of the representatives of Political parties of hill and valley of Manipur for keeping the territorial Interiority of Manipur. They were represented in this meeting.31

1. Mr. M.K. Simray - Tangkhulong
2. Mr. Lunche - Kuki National Assembly
3. Mr. Kakhangai - Kabui Association
4. M. Temba - Khul Union
5. Mr. Dena - Mizo Union
6. Sirijut Ibomcha - Manipur Krishak Sabha
7. M. Ibohal Sing - Nongpok Apunba Marup
8. Hijam Irawat Sing - Manipur Praja Sangha
9. Mr. Lamphel - Meetei Marup

Muslims in Armed Struggle

Irawat still believed in the constitutional method, he contested election and became a member of the Manipur Legislative Assembly, 1948. On 21st September 1948, the Praja Sabha called a public meeting at Imphal against the proposal of

31 C.P.I. Manipurji Itihas Ahanba Sharuk, Published by B. Sharma, Secretary Manipur State Council, C.P.I., Irawat Bhavan Imphal, 23rd August 2003, p.35
Purbanchal. A part of workers from Pungdongbam came to attend the meeting. On the way they met a police party and a scuffle occurred and a police officer was killed.

When the news reached Imphal, the proposed meeting was postponed and Irawat went underground. The government demands Praja Sabha, Krishak Sabha, Mahila Sanmelini and Communist party. All the members went underground to escape the police repression. Hundreds of peasants were arrested and tortured in jail, Irawat continued to issue press notes and memorandum to the government. He published his weekly regularly from the underground. The government announced a reward of Rs.10,000.00 for the arrest of Irawat Singh.\(^{32}\)

Irawat in 1950 organised the peasant revolution. He wanted a continuing upheaval of peasantry till they attained their social, economic and political goal. Communist leaders like Mohendro Singh, Thokchom Boro Singh, Binoy Singh, M. Megha Singh and others were jailed by mid 1950.\(^{33}\)

Among the Muslims, Md. Rashid Ali @ Amu S/o Tolmu Member of Epham dynasty, Md. Nijamuddin S/o Babu Mia Muhammad of Khulakpam dynasty of Top Khetri Awang Leikai participated in Arm struggle as army.\(^{34}\)


\(^{33}\) Ibid., p.172.

\(^{34}\) Interview with Sri Moirangthem Ibohal Singh, On 15 April 2004, Top Awang leikai. Muhammad Rasid Ali @ Amu was born in the year 1930 at Top Khetri Awang leikai. He was the son of Md. Tolmu Member, he studied at Khetri L.P. School and Feija Middle English School. He could not go on further studies as he was born in poor family and tried to help the family by way of earning as cultivators. He participated the revolution of Irawat although he much associated with the helping of family. His revolution was in favour of the oppressed and weaker section not for religious revolution, revolution for protection of valley, hill or only else. He faced many hardships and problems following the result of associating with Irawat. He was declared absconder by the Government from the incident of Pungdongbam, 21st September 1948 as Irawat face the status of absconder. He was imprisoned into jail and was much harrassed and tortured under jail. Not only this he was imprison into jail several times for Statehood Movement and other agitations etc. In fact Rasid Ali was the person who stood for weaker and oppressed section as follower of Irawat. He spent his life time with the doctrine of Irawat until his death.

This information is given by Md. Nijamuddin, 80 yrs. s/o. Md. Babu Mia at Khetri Awang Leikai Top on 15th April 2005
They faced many hardship and problems following the result of associating with Irawat. Md. Rashid Ali was declared absconder by the Government from the incident of Pungdongbam as Irawat faced the status of absconder. He was arrested and tortured under jail mid 1950. The main duty of Md. Nijamuddin was that he tried to hide Irawat for not arresting by the police and to give information of government to Irawat and his party. Then the Government could not know Nijamuddin that he was associating with Irawat in early stage. But, government could know the place of Nijamuddin and tried to arrest him. But he could not be arrested. He was the most faithful and obedient intelligence of Irawat. The main duty of Md. Nur Ali Muhammad was to collect rice mainly from the family of the sympathisers and followers of Irawat and drive funds to some extent. When Irawat ran after by the police, he sheltered at Kambong Khul of Lamlai constituency with the help of Md. Yusuf Ali. Later on, police arrested Md. Yusuf Ali after knowing the plans and lines for hiding Irawat by him.\textsuperscript{35} After spending a life of an underground fighter for three years Irawat died at Tangbo village in Kabo Valley on 26\textsuperscript{th} September 1951.

From forgoing movements, one comes to understand that the Manipuri Muslims were also participating as good actors in the political system, despite of their microscopic number of population in comparison with the majority Manipuris. A few number of leaders could be found in the documents but good numbers of unknown persons were at stake and gave contribution to all the movements of Manipur. Another notable of Muslims political participation in relevance with socio-political movement of Manipur is that they always went on their activities with Manipuri Meeteis. It was not happened in case of Kuki Rebellion and Jadonang Movement of Kuki and Naga in Manipur. They had launched their movement separately and it was confined to their communities.

\textsuperscript{35} Interview with Md. Nijamuddin S/o, Babu Mia, 15 April 2004, Top Khetri Awang Leikai.
only. That is why the people of Manipur are, still, not having common political aspiration.

Nupilal Anisuba and Muslim Women, 1939

The most important event of the year was the outbreak in December 1939 of disturbances known as "Nupi Lal" or Women's War. It broke out on 12th December, 1939. It is not the movement for equality or, liberation for women. It is not the movement to rise their status. But, it is against the acts (activities) which affect the interest of the people or, state. It is the movement in Manipur emphasised for the upliftment of economic and social condition of the State. In this women's agitation also, Muslim women of Manipur were participating beyond their rigid custom and tradition. They were all benders from Hidak Mana Poopham (The place of selling tobacco leaves).

Causes of the Movement

Under the colonial economic policy, British officials introduced a free trade policy which ultimately gave a great economic benefit to the coloniser. It is recorded that in the year 1892-93, rice was freely exported to Kohima, and several thousand maunds were sent to that station.\(^{36}\) In 1897-98 the import value reached Rs.1,14,374 and the export value was only 92,959. Out of this, the value of rice export was Rs.20,716. In the year 1922-23 the volume of the export reached 80000 mounds of rice.\(^{37}\) In the year 1925-26, 155,014 maunds of rice was exported from Manipur.\(^{38}\) In 1932, the quantity of rice exported in this year was increased and it reached 2,77,389 \(^{39}\) and in 1938 it was 3,72,174 mounds.

In this respect, we can make a comparative study between increase of the area under the rice cultivation and increase in the volume of rice export. In

\(^{36}\) Administrative Report of Manipur, 1892-93, P.3.
\(^{38}\) Administrative Report of Manipur, 1925-26, P.11.
1925-26 the total area under rice cultivation was 1,75,537 acres and in 1938 the total areas was 1,85,213 acres. Only 10,322 acres was increased. On the other hand, the volume of export of rice in 1925-26 was 1,55014 mounds and in 1938 it was 3,72,174 mounds. And then about by 2,27,160 mounds of the volume of rice increased tremendously. The increase in the volume of rice export caused a serious economic effect on the normal life of the common people; and finally it led to the outbreak of this great upheaval.

The excessive rain during the last week of July and first week of August 1939 seriously damaged the standing paddy crops and vegetables. Then heavy rainfall in the late September and early October had caused another adverse effect on the harvesting of early paddy. In mid- November again hail storm damaged the standing crops ready for harvesting. This cause was combined with the export of the large quantity of the rice in the previous year and naturally it led to a great alarm among the people. This was also proved by the increase of the price of rice. The average price of rice during most of the year was Rs.1/4/½ (Rupees one four annas) but in this year it rose up to a couple of annas. So by resolution of the Manipur State Darbar of 17 September, 1939 the export of rice was stopped. And considering the present price of rice, they further unanimously resolved to close the export of rice until further order. And this ban should not be applied to the government contract.

In 23rd September, 1939 to consider P.A.s Memo No.2598-S&T dated 20.9.39 asking sanction for export of rice for Kohima Civil Station. The Darbar sanction export of rice up to the following amounts: (a) for September 1939, 800 maunds. (b) their after 2000 maunds each month. If however this year's harvest was badly affected and there was apprehension of a famine in Manipur then the Darbar reserve the right to Kohima was vehemently opposed by .K.Priyabrata, a member of the Manipur State Darbar and he gave his dissent note in the resolution.

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42 Ibid.
43 Resolution of the Manipur State Darbar no.2, 23-09-1939.
On 23 September, 1939 a large member of applications requesting the authority to allow them to export Chira and Usna. Chira and Usana two types of rice, first one was flattened rice and other one was half boiled rice. The Darbar are not willing to sanction the export of Usana and Chira.\textsuperscript{44}

However, Kistorychand Siragi, cart tax monopolist and Marwari businessman in Imphal made an application to the Darbar and requested to open the export of rice very soon. In the 1st November 1939, Darbar are unanimously in favour of a state monopoly of rice by which all rice in the state would be bought exclusively by the state and all rice sold for export would be sold from state warehouse.\textsuperscript{45}

Meanwhile some other applications asking for opening of export was also refused by the Darbar. At this juncture, the Private Secretary to His Highness, the Maharaj of Manipur, Memo No. 453, P.l-1 of 4.11.39 forwarding certain application for export of Chira. The Darbar unanimously agreed that the ban an export of rice should be lifted on the 24\textsuperscript{th} November 1939.\textsuperscript{46}

After lifting the ban, the Marwari businessmen with the help of the colonial official began to export rice from Manipur. Moreover, the foreign merchants in Imphal who had set up rich mills, were all the paddy they could get, milling it and exporting it. As a result of it, the price rose up from Rs. 1/2 to Rs.7per Sungbai in December.1939. On top of this, even at the harvest time (December) rice was not easily available at the market.\textsuperscript{47}

On 8th December 1939, some womenfolk led by Smt. Chaobiton Devi of Tera and came to the rice mill of the nearby Bazar and requested the persons who brought paddy for sale to the mills to sell the paddies to Bazar in order to

\textsuperscript{44} Resolution of the Manipur State Darbar No.4, 23.09.1939.
\textsuperscript{45} Resolution of the Manipur State Orabar No. 13, 1.11.1939.
\textsuperscript{46} Resolution of the Manipur State Orabar No.1, 9.11.1939.
\textsuperscript{47} Rajkumar Maipaksana, Manipurda Ihan Hanba Satyagraha Andolon, Padma Printers, Paona Bazar, Imphal, 1996, p.4.
solve the unavailability of rice to Bazar. But, their request did not agree. Without having no means the women returned their respective homes.48

On 11th December 1939, the women came to meet Political Agent of Manipur but could not meet as the Political Agent was on tour. Then they went to Manipur State Darbar and informed their demands as, “No paddy are sold in the Bazar, but sells at the mills. Therefore, no rice can be found and restrict the milling of rice the mill”.49

The Darbar members informed them to discuss the matter on the next day as the president was outside. On the 12th December 1.939, women from nook and corner of Manipur came to Khwairmband Bazar.50 Under the leadership of Aribam Chaobiton Devi including Loitom Tombimacha Devi, Khambi Devi and others went to the Darbar and no one was there. In the Darbar except the Darbar President Mr. T.A. Sharp. They narrated the problem to him. On hearing the demands, the Political Agent told them that he was the president under the Maharaj. “He could do nothing for the exportation of rice to outside Manipur, appointment of agents etc. are done by the Maharaj, the Maharaj is now at Nabadwip, he could not do it, what he could do is to inform the demands to the Maharaj by the Telegraphic measure”.

Then they alongwith the president proceeded to Telegraph office, the president desired to go on car but due to refusal by the women, the president also went on foot to send a telegraph to Nabadwip to get the approval from the Maharaj.51 The president of Manipur State Darbar, after completion of telegram, tried to leave the place as he was not taking launch but he was forced not to leave the place as all women assembled there also were not getting any meal of the day.

48 Laikhuram Ibobi Singh, Op cit, p.4.
49 Ibid., p.41.
At the same time, the commandant of the 4th Assam Rifles, Major Bulfield and the Civil Surgeon, Major Cummins, who came to the rescue were kept there too. Then sepoys forced to Telegraph office along with gun with bayonet and charged bayonet to the women. The crowd began to throw stones at the Telegraph office and two windows were broken. In the clash about 34 women were injured and out of them 15 were serious.

Muslim Women in Nupi Lal

Muslim women also participated in the war. Their names were Mrs. Yaima, Apabi, Amubi, Nurjahan, Amulala, Heiton, Hasi, Jamina, Jamila, Garam, Duli Achoubi, Khambi, Mehurani, Guljan, Leiren, Thanil, Sara, Tomba, Saferjan, Kunjeri Bibi, Ibeiyai, Bodon Tombi, Sana Bibi, Marem, Sajaobi Bibi, Tonjaobi Bibi, Tombi Bibi and Mrs. Sara Bibi.

Apart of this agitation, Mrs. Sajaobi Bibi, Mrs. Tonjaobi Bibi, Mrs. Tombi Bibi and others under the leadership of Mrs. Sara Bibi, Khetri Awang Leikai came to the Marwari Shop to take rice but not found. When they entered Kasturi Dukan, controversy arose between the women and the son of Dukandar with harsh word, the harsh words of the son of Dukandar was “Chagem will be fed to the Pangal (Muslim) and Meetei and Cheng Machang to the Haos and Mayangs”. Then the women felt angry and broke the godown. They were all the vendors from place of selling of tobacco leave.


In the year 1892, Mrs. Sara Bibi was born at Khetrigao Thambal Khong. She belongs to Yumkhaimbam dynasty and her father’s name was Muhammad Jaheeruddin and mother's name was Lahila Bibi. Since her childhood, she had a habit of untimit and had a powerful courage in doing any works. At about 18 years old, he was married to Muhammad Noor Ali of Bogimayum a resident of Khetri Awang Leikai. She had four sons and six daughters. As she owned to a poor family and she had many children, she had to take up tobacco leaves at Women Market of Imphal. The profit she got from that small business, she purchased family items for maintenance. But in December 1939, businessman took up the exportation of rice to outside Manipur and people could not get rice in all. People had to purchase rice in high rate
On 13th December, 1939, at morning, a meeting was held at Pureiromba Khongnang Makhong organised by Moirangthem Chandra Singh in order to support the demands of the women. The meeting took a resolution for taking up action for bayonet charge to the women. The resolution was submitted by 24 persons to Political agent. There were Haji Gulap Mia from Haoreibi, Sukur Ahamed Mia from Urup, Abdul Mia from Khetrigao and others.\textsuperscript{55}

In the evening of 13\textsuperscript{th} December, people from different parts of Manipur gathered at Police Land Lampak. There were about 7000 women and 500 men.\textsuperscript{56} In this day, a message was received from the Maharaj asking the Political Agent to help preventing the export of rice and an order forbidding it was promptly issued.\textsuperscript{57} The women then turned their attention to the rice mills, extorting written promises from the mill-owners that they would not work their mills. But night, news that a mill-owner had soaked and boiled some paddy to make parboiled rice caused an angry crowd of some 10,000 women to march on one of the largest mills and only after the electric switches of the mills had been removed by order of Mr. Gimson, the Political Agent, could be persuade them to go home.\textsuperscript{58}

On 14\textsuperscript{th} December, 1939, a meeting was also convened at Police Land Lampak under the chairmanship of Laishram Kanhai Singh and gathered about 8,000 including 600 men. The resolution passed in that meeting was that

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{56}] Ibid., Pp.54,55.
\item[\textsuperscript{57}] Administrative Report of Manipur, 1939-40, p.2.
\item[\textsuperscript{58}] Administrative Report of Manipur, 1939-40, p.2.
\end{itemize}
cinema, drama and other festivals should be stopped during these days.

On 15th December, 1939, a meeting was also convened at Police Land Lampak under the chairmanship of Thokchom Angou Singh resolved unanimously to keep a great protest to the brutally kicked with boot by the police to the women.\footnote{59}

On 15th December, 1939, His Highness in humbly requested to inform the Darbar whether the D.R. 1 of 12-12-39 is approved i.e., whether the suspension of rice export ordered in His Highness's telegram includes a ban on the export to Kohima Civil Station and the Assam Rifles at Kohima and Sadia.\footnote{60}

At that time, the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha was the only political organisation in Manipur and Hijam Irawat Singh was the president. He called a meeting of the Working Committee of the Mahasabha at the residence of Mango Singh of Khurai Naga Mapal, Singjubung Leirak. Some members were strongly against the movement. They even did not like to bring the matter to political platform. But Irawat and some of his close associates had a strong desire to support the case of the movement. As a result of this a rift was developed between Irawat and some members and finally Irawat resigned from the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha and immediately he formed “Praja Sammelon” a new political organisation and a landmark in the course of the women agitation. They strongly demanded for a complete ban on the export of rice endured the authority not to allow the foreigner to stay in Manipur. Besides this, they also demanded for the establishment of a responsible government in Manipur.\footnote{61}

From the above records, we can submit that the outbreak of the movement gave a serious blow to the economic policy of 'the feudal and colonial authority. On the other hand, the British officers thought that the

\footnote{60} Resolution of the Manipur State Darbar no.1 of 15-12-1939.  
\footnote{61} M. Rithichandra, Miyamgi Luchingb a Irabot, Imhal 1977, p.30.
outbreak of this movement was mainly because of the lapses in the administration of the State. Therefore, they always remained the Maharaj to prepare for the reforms in the state. Besides the economic reasons, the women agitation also greatly helped in the introduction of the reforms in the State.

After this movement, the colonial authority brought many changes particularly in the field of revenue, law and justice, etc. which was a long demand of the people, i.e. chief court was established, judicial court was separately established other than the Darbar as the High Court earlier, appointment board was made separately, police stations were opened at different places of Manipur other than Imphal, the power of the Brama Samaj became decreased to some extent, unity of the Manipur people could be shown.\textsuperscript{62} Thus, the war became closed after the British left Manipur and after the independence, Women Demand Commitee was formed. Their stress came to demand of statehood, inclusion of Manipuri Language in the 8\textsuperscript{th} Schedule etc. They are doing their duties in any movements from time to time till to day.

Thus, both male and female Muslims of Manipur have been taking an important role in all movements since 1891 and always reacted with the Meeteis against the existing political system when the ruling elites deviate the willingness of the masses.

\textsuperscript{62} Dr. Keisham Veigyachandra Singh, Manipur Anisuba Leingaklonda Nupilal, Yakairol News, 12-12-2003, p.3.