Informative Abstract

In any society, the role of women is very important and indispensable one. This is because of their crucial role and link in the family as mothers, daughters, daughters-in-laws. It is also rightly said by Gustav Geiger that “the position of women in a society is an accurate index of the development of that society”. Women study is regarded not a fad, but as a growing and developing discipline and should not be neglected. Variety of reasons lying behind the educated women while they flooded into the library profession. During the last quarter of the 19th century Melvil Dewey could predict that “most of men who achieve the greatness will be women”. There are some particular professions in which women do well than their male counterparts. That’s why long back, Cuba had declared librarianship as a woman’s vocation/profession. It is one of the few professions/vocations which has history of hospitality for women. It is fact in western countries like USA, UK, France, Australia, etc. In India, women have slowly been entering in the field of librarianship. In Manipur too, a large number of women at different age group and background have already been in the library-profession.

Preliminary studies of library science literature are to convey that a number of studies have been made on women library-professionals in different developed countries like USA, UK, Japan, Canada, Australia, etc. But, in India (and also in North-East Region) the women library-professionals have not got any significant place in the research studies. Since, women section is an important segment in the library profession, there is a great need to examine the limitations and prospects of women professionals in the country, as well as in the state, in order to increase the efficiency of the library services. In this backdrop, the present study has been taken up.
The objectives of the present study are to examine (i) the status of women library-professionals in Manipur; (ii) the occupational image and identity of women library-professionals in Manipur; (iii) the problems and prospects in the profession; (iv) the family and career values; (v) the professionalism in the society; and (vi) the structural, cultural or attitudinal causes of gender discrimination or the obstacle that make the women ‘invisible’ in the forefront of the profession particularly in Manipur. The scope of the present work is limited (i) to the study of occupational-role played by women professionals in LIS in Manipur – their achievements, frustrations and limitations through the analysis of some components involved in their professional and personal lives during last few years (2000-2005) and (ii) to record the hopes, aspirations and frustration of the student components (pre and post stages of the studentship) who are just at the threshold of the profession.

Data are collected from the professionals/working places/library collection (i) through questionnaires and discussions; (ii) by conducting interviews; (iii) by visiting and observing working-spots; and (iv) by studying relevant documents, official files and literature. To find accurate result the collected data are presented, analysed and interpreted with the aid of statistical methods/techniques (like Tables, Diagrams, Weighted Index method, etc.)

The study finds that, at the threshold of the library profession, a sizeable number of young women-graduates in Manipur have always preferred the LIS course for study and also for their career. They always have outnumbered their male counterparts at every level in the said academic stage. But, later (i.e. at the working stage in the profession), they are unable to dominate the profession as leading group and in producing professional outputs (like publications). The study also reveals that the women-segment in Manipur has long traditional bindings with social-cultural-economical-political activities. Also, they are sincere and comfortable with commitment, duties and responsibilities for all the members of the family. This obligation is partially responsible for their
inability to do justice to their professional-commitments. Women professionals have therefore been dominating the profession by ‘number’ only not by ‘authoritative’ or ‘qualitative’ status.

From the study, it has been found that most of the women-professionals are from academic libraries and from upper caste of Meitei community. Most of them belong to the age group of 30-50. Their professional contributions outside the normal work in libraries are very insignificant. Majority of them, as it is found, are quite alert in maintaining professional relationship with ‘colleagues’, ‘juniors’, and ‘others’. However, to a large number of them job-satisfaction is an unknown area. They claim that they have been doing ‘more work’ than their male counterparts. Most of them feel ‘secured’ in the library job and have not experienced any discrimination from the authorities though they always do not get ‘co-operation’.

The study finally has confirmed the issues drawn as ‘hypotheses’ at the beginning. It is found that (i) women professionals are ‘predisposed toward self-sacrifice by the traditional expectations of society at large’; (ii) only ‘quantitative expansion’ will not ‘lead to the achievement of raising the status of women’; and (iii) ‘few and limited scope’ for career development programme have been offered to the professionals (including women) in the state. The women workers, in the state, have strong family commitment, which sometimes stands against their way for advancement. This obligation as found in the study, prevents them to perform their occupational role perfectly and as a result they cannot develop their own ‘occupational identity’ (OID) and ‘occupational image’ (OIM) which are necessary in anyone’s professional career.

To remove ‘structural, cultural or attitudinal causes of gender discrimination’ and to empower women to achieve effective participation in all areas of national and international development, the present study has forwarded some suggestions: (i) women professionals working in the libraries,
should have to change their attitude and outlook to their work; (ii) some qualities for forming the ‘occupational role identities’ (i.e., sound educational background, inclination to continuing education, adaptability with information technologies (ITs), inquisitiveness, comfortability with decision making processes, positive approaches towards challenging tasks and risks) are to be cultivated; and (iii) simultaneously, a fresh thinking has also been required for the professionals to deal family matters separately. Professional’s identity of any women employee should not be equated with family identity, though social pressure demands the same.