PREFACE

The main objective of the research study is to explore the position, the awareness, the degree of participation and the performance of the elected women members of the panchayats in Manipur after the introduction of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994.

The women of the Manipur have been known for their courage, bravery, patience and hard working qualities. Outsider who come to Manipur never go back without praising the hard-working qualities of Manipuri women. The courageous and hard-working qualities of Manipur women still inspired the present day educated women, social workers and social activities.

The Manipuri women's not only take active role in the socio-economic activities but also participate actively in the field of politics as a collective. As soon as modern panchayat system was introduced in 1960 in Manipur, the women not only participate as a voter in the election but also participate as a candidate in the election. The numbers of women who participate in the electoral and decision making processes at the panchayat level were very few.
After introduction of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 and the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the scenario has changed. The PRI which were hitherto seen merely as instrument of promoting democracy at grass roots level and as training ground for political leadership, have now been looked upon as agents of local level development and institutions of planning and implementing the development projects involving people’s participation.

Secondly, the two new actors, who were little now either invisible or at the periphery of the system, emerged in the political system i.e. the women and the reserved categories of Schedule caste and schedule Tribes. As a result of reservation, many women came out to participate in the electoral and decision making process at the panchayat and Zilla Parishad levels in Manipur.

Thirdly, the working environment also changed as the government of Manipur embarked upon the process of decentralization of power at the local level, namely Gram Panchayts and Zilla Parishads.

The constructional thrust for democratic decentralization through emerging political leadership has found expression through reserving seats for the women and the SCs and STs in the Panchayats. This has positive effect on the number of women candidates in the Gram Panchayat and Zilla
Parishad elections and in the participation of women in the panchayats of Manipur.

The interaction between traditional active role of women in the social and economic activities and the modern role of women as members of Panchayats and Zilla parishads offers a good area for research work study.

There is very few published literature on the women of Manipur. The published literature reflects only one side of the manifold activities of the women of Manipur. There is no published work depicting more or less complete social and political activities of women. This research work is an attempt to find out the role of women especially their participation and their performances at the panchayat and zilla parishad levels.

The methodology adopted in this research work is mainly historical and analytical. Women voters, women candidates, elected women members of the panchayats and Zilla Parishads including women padhan and women Adhyakshas, up-Adhyakshas, some members and office bearers of non-governmental organisations in panchayat areas were interviewed. Government publications, literatures published by government agencies, relevant informations and documents from government departments form another primary source of data and material for the study.
The first chapter traces the development of panchayat system in Manipur. The emergence of new panchayat system in Manipur in 1960 and future development under the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1975 are discussed in the chapter. The political trend and process for the passing of the Manipur Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 and its implementation are also examined.

The second chapter studied the socio-economic and political status of women and their impact on the women of present day society. It also discussed about the women movements in the political history of Manipur at different stages, thereby helping the women in the social and economic empowerment.

The third chapter examined the voting behaviour and the nature of election campaign of the women candidates contested in the panchayat election. It also emphasised the role of the elected women members in the modern panchayat system from 1964 elections to 2002 elections.

The fourth chapter highlights the participation of elected women in the panchayats. The degree of participation in the panchayats by the elected women members and their performances as members are examined on the basis of selected samples from four districts of Manipur.
The fifth chapter discussed the interactions between the elected women and non-voluntary organisations in the development process of the villages on the basis of selected samples.

The last chapter summarises the findings of the research work with suggestion for improvement in the working of panchayats through active participation of elected women members.