CHAPTER - I
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Introduction

BRIEF HISTORY OF GORKHAS IN MANIPUR.

The State of Manipur is a fertile field for Anthropological studies. It has various ethnic groups of people like the Meitei, Naga, Kuki, Mizo, the Manipuri Muslim, Gorkhas etc. The state has an area of 22,327 sq. km. and the population as 1991 census report is 18,37,149 souls\(^1\). This state, being situated at the cross road between South East Asia and mainland India, has experienced several waves and streams of human migration since pre-historic time till today, the Gorkhas are a group of the latest immigrants in Manipur. They are also known as “Nepalese” but they prefer to the “Gorkhas” as their ethnonym. They are now becoming one of the distinctive communities of the state with a population of 46,498 as per 1991 census report.

The coming of the Gorkhas and their settlement in Manipur dates back to 1819\(^2\). As regards the settlement of Grokhas probably the year 1819-21 may be treated as the first footing of the Gorkhas in Manipur. It occurred during the time of Raja Gambhir Singh.

In the year 1824 the Gorkhas of the 1st battalion of the sylhet local battalion were included in the police levy of Raja Gambhir Singh which was maintained by the Lt. Col. Innes C. Brot.\(^3\)

2. Acharya, Ghanashyam, Gorkhas of Manipur, Manipur Gorkha Welfare Union, Imphal 1999
Many opinions are prevail about the settlements of the Gorkhas in Manipur. One opinion holds that they came to Manipur as soldiers of the Britishers and settled here after their retirement from service. Gorkhas being the most trusted and honest to the Britisher, all the British political agents were accompanied by the Gorkha soldiers. The Britisher were, thus the major agent of bringing Gorkhas in Manipur. The then existing Gorkha soldiers in Manipur increased their number when the 42nd, 43rd and 44th Gorkha Rifle were brought to Manipur around 1880. Further a large number of Gorkha soldiers were also brought to Manipur during 1891.

Another batch of Gorkhas came to Manipur as retinues of Ishwori Devi when she married His Royal Highness Shri Maharaj Bodhachandra Singh, the then king of Manipur on 18th June 1941.4

Forty four Gorkha soldiers came along with Ishwori Devi and they began to settle here permanently. Those Gorkha retinues were used to supply large quantity of milk to the palace as well as to the officers of the 44th Gorkha Rifles and to the British camps. Later, these retinues moved to different parts of the state and settled there permanently. As claimed by Bhandari Purushottam (1996:18-19), some of Gorkhas also landed in Manipur in 1942 as soldiers of the Indian National Army (Azad-Hind-Fauj) of Netaji Subhaschandra Bose. Many Gorkha soldiers of this regiment also settled in Manipur. The same author also states that some Gorkhas, namely Mohan Singh Chhetry, Sumar Thapa, Nandalal Dulal and Nambahadur Adhikari from Manipur joined the Indian National Army (INA).5

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In 1950 a great flood occurred in Sodiya district of upper Assam. At that event many lands in that district were submerged, a catastrophe which led some of the Gorkhas of that area to flee. A section of these victimised Gorkha entered the State. This exodus was another wave of immigration of the Gorkha people in this state.6

The entire Gorkha community of the state are treated as foreigners by the British and collected foreigner tax. The Gorkhas were foreigners in British period. They were given domicile in this state since 1947. (Resolution No. 5 of 9-7-1947, Manipur State Council, Source Manipur State Archive).

Thus Gorkhas coming in different waves were settle in various place of Manipur, mainly at Kanglatongbi, Kangpokpi, Pukhao, Serou, Moreh etc.

**DISTRIBUTION OF GORKHAS IN MANIPUR :**

Gorkhas are widely distributed in different parts of Manipur. Their settlement can broadly be divided into two categories or regions i.e. hill settlement and plain settlement. Those who live in the hilly region of the state have adapted their way of life in accordance with the ecological setting of the hills, mainly in economic life. This clearly differs from those of the Gorkhas practising agriculture in the plain areas of Manipur.

In fact those Gorkhas settling in the plain areas of Manipur, are very much adapted to the Meitei way of life than those of the Gorkhas living in the hilly areas of Manipur. As there is little scope of direct contact with the Meitei, the hill dwelling Gorkhas lead more traditional way of life than those of the Gorkhas dwelling in the plain areas of Manipur.

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According to 1991 census report, the total population of Manipur is 18,37,149 out of which the number of Gorkhas inhabiting at the different districts of Manipur is 46,498 (25,047 males and 21,451 females) The maximum concentration of the Gorkhas in Manipur is found in Senapati district. Out of the total population of the Gorkhas 28,701 are in Senapati district. Their settlement in the district are at Marom Khullen, Irang, Kangpokpi, Motbung, Taphou, Kalapahar, Toribari, Karong, Keithelmanbi etc. 12,679 of them are at Imphal district where their main settlement are at Kanglatongbi, Koirengei, Mantripukhri, Pukhao, Pangei etc. 1808 Gorkhas are in Ukhrul district: In this district they are distributed at only two or three settlement (mainly at Litan), 1556 of them in Thoubal district are concentrated at Serou, 835 Gorkhas are in Chandel district, settling at Pallel, Moreh etc. 614 Gorkhas in Churachandpur district are found at Parbung and Henglep. 255 Gorkhas in Tamenglong district and their distribution are found in Khongshang, Tupul etc. and the remaining 59 are in Bishnupur district and their settlement is at Saiton village.

The first settlement of Gorkha immigrants in Manipur is at Koirengei. It is located at about 7 kms away from Imphal along the National Highway No. 39, which is also known as Imphal Dimapur Road. In this village there is a small hamlet which is inhabited by few Gorkha families. Some descendants of those first settlers are still alive and living in Manipur. Dhurva Singh Chhetry was a Mauzada for the collection of grazing taxes from the Gorkha graziers and Subedar Major Jitaraj Limbu was conferred the title of Rai Bahadur by the then Viceroy and Governor General of India on 1st January 1920. Cattle rearing is the main occupation of the Gorkhas of Koirengei and gardening is also one of the main hobby for them.

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The village of Maram is located at a distance of about 85 kms away from Imphal which is under the Senapati district. Maram is a beautiful village which is inhabited by Maram tribes and Gorkhas. Some people like Bengali, Bihari, Meitei are also staying there for business but not for permanent settlement. Gorkha inhabited areas in Maram is divided into small hamlets. On 1st May 1933, C. Gimsong I.C.S. the political agent of Manipur issued an order on behalf of the Manipur State Durbar allowing 19 Gorkha families to live at Maram. Most of the Gorkha reared cattle, as they used milk and prepared different varieties of milk products for their food purpose. Some Gorkhas are also practising agriculture. Their agricultural field is at Lairou hill and some of them are also settling at Lairou hill.

The name and their order of the 19 Grokha families allowed to live at Maram in 1933 is shown in Appendix - 1

Irang village lies under the Kangpokpi sub-division of Senapati district. It is 99 kms away from Imphal. In 1920, there were 165 families of Gorkha graziers and their total population was about 940 souls. Though the population increases gradually, it would be very inconvenience in the administration. So, the entire Irang area is divided into two parts for better administration i.e. Irang Part - I and Irang Part - II. Many Gorkhas of Irang are also migrated from Kanglatongbi. It is also one of the most important factor for increasing population in Irang areas. Mr. L.O. Clarke issued an ordered dated 23-4-1920 restricting the establishment of “Goths” (cattle Sheds) beyond certain specified boundaries in the Irang valley. He has given an area of 8 miles long and 3-4 miles broad to the Gorkhas of Irang which extend to the Neibet. (Manipur State Darbar Resolution of 23-4-1920 source Manipur State Archive.)
This villagers are stills paying grazing tax to the Government of Manipur. The first batch of Gorkha settlers at Irang areas are Late Krishnalal Dulal, Late Jegendhi Nepal, Late Sher Bahadur Aale, Homnath Acharya etc. and many other settler also stayed at Irang areas.

Their descendants are still alive and staying at Irang and some other parts of Manipur. Gorkha inhabitants of Irang have twenty nine hamlets, out of which thirteen (13) are in Irang Part - I and sixteen (16) are in Irang Part - II. There is no well communication between Imphal and Irang because there is no direct bus service. Potatoes farming in Irang is very famous and one of the best potato production in Manipur as it supplies potatoes to other places of Manipur.

Pukhao is one of the important place where the Gorkha community of the state prefers to settle. It is 12 kms away from Imphal and it lies under the Imphal East district. Most of the Gorkha settlers of Pukhao were migrated from other places of Manipur like Irang, Kangpokpi, Kalapahar etc. Their settlements started since 1950 onwards. These areas of Gorkha settlements is surrounded by some other community like Muslim, Meitei, Naga, Kuki etc. In 1957 the additional Deputy Commissioner Shri S.M. Krishnamoorthi granted the permission of the fortytwo (42) families of Gorkha to settle at Matakong Village. In 1958, The Government of Manipur granted permission to the Gorkhas for settlement at Pukhao and Serou area. (Order issued by S.M. Krishnamoorthy A.D.C. on 23rd August 1957) This order is shown in Appendix -2

Chakpikarong is a place where few families of Gorkha were settled. They are migrated from Serou and some other places of the state for their livelihood. This village is 85 kms. away from Imphal city
and their main occupation are gardening, basketry and cattle rearing. There is no agricultural land for them but they work as a day labour. Some of them are vegetable vendors which are collected from their kitchen garden. They work hard and did any type of work without any hesitation for their livelihood. Economically they are very poor, they have no any facility from Government and Non-Government Organization.

FIELD SETTING:

Cluster sampling

a) Koirengei and Mantripukhri

b) Serou

c) Kanglatongbi

In the present study, an attempt has been made to give a clear cut picture of "the socio-cultural life of the Gorkhas of Manipur" for which intensive field work were conducted at Koirengei (first settler of Gorkha immigrants) and Mantripukhri (thickest settlers of urban areas) of Imphal East District, Serou of Thoubal district (new settlers) and Kanglatongbi (the cultural centre of Gorkha community) of Imphal West District.

Koirengei is the first settlement place of Gorkha community in Manipur. Nowadays most of them settled in other places, so this area is not much useful for proceeding the field work.

Mantripukhri has a mosaic ethnic groups of people like Meitei, Naga, Kuki and Gorkhas. Here the Gorkhas are one of the maximum concentration in urban areas of Manipur. So it is very much necessary for conducting the present field work. Mantripukhri is located at a
distance of about 5 kms. away from Imphal along the National highway No. 39. This village is divided by the National Highway No. 39 in more or less equal halves i.e. Eastern part and western part.

In this village there is a big pond which is known as “Mantripukhri”. The word “Mantri” which means Minister and “Pukhri” means pond so it is the pond of Minister and from name itself this place is known as Mantripukhri. This area bounded by Khabam Lamkhai on the North, Thakubari and Agricultural Farm on the South, Meitei village called Ahallup in the East and the ranges of hill on the West. Mantripukhri is one of the medium size village of the state. It is about 2 kms. in length and 2½ kms. in breadth. This Gorkha inhabitant comprises of six hamlets. It has 112 households with a total population of 663 souls, out of which 318 are males and 345 are females. There are some houses which do not have their own land. They are staying in the rented house of some other persons. The main source of water of the area is from hand pumps and it is used for drinking purpose. Some houses used water from artificial wells. Many wells are found in the village which was dug individually. Some villagers also used pond water for their household purposes. Now-a-days tap water is available in some areas of the village. This village is rich both in flora and fauna. Most of the houses have maize field and small kitchen garden as well as flower garden. They had decorated their houses by different varieties of flower plants. Besides this, some faunas are used as domestic animals. Some of them are cow, dog, goat etc. and fowls like hen, duck, pigeon are also kept in their house.

They worship all the Hindu Gods but Durga seems to be the most important Goddess. There is a Durga Mandir in the village, during the puja festival people of this village used to go there to worship. Most of the people of this place goes to lower primary school and
junior high school for study. There are four private school and one Government
junior high school and also one newly established higher secondary school.
The villagers used to go at Khwairamband Bazar for their main purposes. It is
the biggest market of the state. There is also a vegetable market and some
shops are at the centre of the village. This village lies under Heingang Police
Station, it maintains the law and order situation of the village.

Serou is a beautiful place which is located at a distance of about 80 kms.
away from Imphal. This village is bounded by Sugnu in the North, Chakpi river in
the South, Chandel lies in the East and Serou Laikon hill is in the West. This
village has a mosaic ethnic groups of people like the Meitei, Bengali, Bihari,
Naga and Gorkha etc. Their settlements began since 1950 onwards. Bengali
and Bihari stayed there as permanent residents. Inhabitants of Bengali in Serou
village are more than the Biharis, though Gorkha and Bengali have equal halves
of the population. Most of the Gorkhas of Serou are new settlers and some of
them migrated from Pukhao, Kanglatongbi, Kalapahar, Irang etc. Now-a-days
many Meitei families have gone to settle there. Transportation is not so good,
only 4 or 5 buses run across the village. Now-a-days jeep service are available
to and fro from Sugnu to Serou and vice-versa. People of this village used to go
at Sugnu for higher study as there is only one high school and a primary school.
Sugnu to Serou is about 5 kms. There is no big market in the village but small
market and some shops are in the middle of the village but there is no problem
for their household uses.

Every houses of Gorkha has maize field and most of the
vegetables are available in their kitchen gardens. Mustard, pea and
brinjal are famous and found in plenty even it is supplied to other
neighbouring markets. Serou village comprises of three parts such
as Serou part-I, Serou part-II and Serou part-III. The Gorkhas settled in all parts, most of the Gorkhas living in part-III cannot speak and follow Manipuri. So, it is difficult in the field study as one interpreter is necessary for them. They are very simple and honest.

The total households of Gorkha community in this village are one hundred and fifty nine (159) and their total population is 1108 souls, out of which 551 are males and 557 are females. In Serou part-I, there are (20) twenty households, Serou part-II (45) fortyfive households and Serou part-III ninetyfour (94) households. Some Gorkhas do not have their own land for cultivation. They work as a day labour charging with cash or kind depending upon their nature of work. Some of them take all the responsibilities for a field from sowing upto harvesting and the productivity is shared in equal halves between the owner of the landlord. Cultivation and cattle rearing are the main occupations. Cattle rearing is practising successfully in most of the Gorkha families. Maize is also one of the main food for them. They used dry maize seed throughout the year. In this village there is a Health Centre which is run by a doctor with some staffs and also a club organized by the youth of the village for the development of the village. Gorkhas have their own ritual ceremonies as they are Hindus. Most of their ritual functions are similar to those of Meitei.

The village of Kanglatongbi is located at a distance of about 23 kms. away from Imphal along the National Highway no. 39. This village is divided by this National Highway No. 39 in more or less to equal halves i.e. Eastern part and Western part. It is under the jurisdiction of Imphal West district.

Kanglatongbi is the cultural centre of the Gorkha community and it is very important place for the Gorkha community where the social and cultural decision of the Gorkhas in the state are performed. Regarding the origin of the village, the actual name was “Kangla-
Tongba" which means climbing of throne or sitting on the throne. It is believed that one king of Manipur "Kiyamba" reigned at the place. All the places of the state were under water and this particular place was the first place which did not have water. So the said place is known to be a "dry land" or dry place of Manipur. But some other reasons or stories are also behind the origin of this village. The village is bounded by a river called "Bengla" and Motbung on the North and "Sekmai village" on the South, Luwangsgol Kuki village and Meitei village called "Leikinthabi" lies in the East and "Makhan" a tribal village is in the west.

This village comprises 6 (six) hamlets of which 5 (five) hamlets are predominantly inhabited by the Gorkhas. There is no problem of communication in between Imphal and this village as many buses ply on the National Highway No. 39 frequently moreover any type of vehicle can reach the village without any difficulty. The Gorkhas are widely distributed in every corner of this area. The head constable of Sekmai thana being a Gorkha revealed the fact, the thana was meant for the maintenance of law and order in and around Gorkha settlement. Before the creation of Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Grazing Reserve (KKR) Mr. L.O. Clarke the then political agent has given the pataland to the Gorkhas for graziers at Irang. Though it was the unlimited growth of their number so it was same order to established the cattle sheds to other areas and the Gorkhas has to move to other places. The Gorkha graziers being found scattered, so it is necessary to compact a specific area for them. So Kanglatongbi-Kangpokpi Grazing Reserve was created with an area of approximately 140 sq. miles from Kanglatongbi. The tehsil maps of 1920-21 shows specific reserve. It was ceased to be a grazing reserve with effect from 1st December 1946, with regard all the Gorkha grazing living there were order to move at Irang Valley and those Gorkhas who wish to take wet rice

cultivation have to remain at Kanglatongbi. (Order issued by the F.F. Pearson, President Manipur State Darbar, HQ on 26-8-1946).

Sixty four (64) Gorkha families were granted the Pataland for cultivation at Kanglatongbi after getting application from them. This order is shown in Appendix - 3

The name of sixty four (64) Gorkhas and their order were shown in Appendix - 4

Agriculture is the main occupation for this village and cattle rearing is also practised. Where as maize cultivation is found in most of the house hold of Gorkha community.

According to survey report of this field study, there are 524 (five hundred twenty four) households with a total population of 3135 (three thousand one hundred and thirty five) of which 1668 (one thousand six hundred and sixty three) are males and 1472 (one thousand four hundred and seventy two) are females.

METHODOLOGY :

Data Collection

The following techniques are used in the data collection:

a. Observation (Non-participant)
b. Census schedules.
c. Interviewing key informants
d. Case-history
e. Photography
f. Tape-recording etc.

Analysis:

The present study is a synchronic and ethnographic study. The data are analysed in order to give descriptive picture of the community.