CHAPTER-V

Education among the Muslims *(Meitei Pangals)* and Movement for Revival of Islam

Before discussing education among the Muslims *(Meitei Pangals)*, it is necessary to know what is meant by the term education. Education, this word is derived from Latin word Educere which means to bring up or to develop.¹ Education in the beginning meant gaining of knowledge. At present some people give more importance to knowledge then education. But it is not proper.² “It is said that education as communication of knowledge alone will mean delaminating the scope of education. Education is a process and knowledge is only its achievement. Apart from these, education is also concerned with the beliefs, values and ideals of life. It is skill which a person can obtain by practice. It also includes acquaintance with human experiences. So from practical point of view, there is no difference between knowledge and skill, information and knowledge. In any definition it is not fair to give them equal status. Knowledge is not only a level of achievement or on aspect of education.”³

Different scholars have given different definition and meaning of education. Plato, according to him education is “The capacity to feel pleasure and pain at the right movement. It developed in the body”. In the opinion of Aristotle “Education is creation of a sound mind in a sound body.”⁴ Mahatma Gandhi wrote “By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in
child and man-body, mind and spirit.” In the word of B.N. Jha “education is a process of social function carried on by and in society for its own sake”.

It is generally accepted that education is derived from Latin word educatum which means the act of teaching or training the function of education is to draw out rather than to put in. It was with the view that Addison wrote that “Education when it works upon a noble mind, draws out to view every latent virtue and perfection which without such helps, are never able to make their appearance”. According to another derivation, the word ‘education’ is synonymous with the art of developing and cultivating the various physical, mental and moral powers of the mind. In the Gita, the knowledge of Brahma or knowledge of soul has been regarded as education. In Buddhist philosophy, the search for truth and making of moral virtues practical has been advocated as the main aim of education. Thus the word education has a very wide connotation. It is very difficult to give an appropriate definition of education. A biologist, a priest, a psychologist, a teacher, etc. all of them is supposed to be having intelligence that will present widely various definitions of education. In fact, education is not a lantern or a torch which enlightens only the internal capacities of a child but it has certain originality also. No doubt, it cultivates certain values in life and certain moral force is generated through education. It is also said that “education is the dynamic side of philosophy which seeks to discover common and practical values of life and directs according by the natural development of the child.”
The aim of education during the Muslim period was the illumination and extension of knowledge and propagation of Islam. In the Qur’an education is urged as a duty. Muslim education has two basic aims. They are (1) one is religious and (2) the other is secular. Religious education included study of the Qur’an and the study of the sectarians moral and spiritual disciplines. Secular education aims at a synthesis of secular knowledge and religious beliefs, practice of equal education opportunity.\(^8\)

Regarding the education system in ancient Manipur, it is stated that the people of Manipur had left valuable treasures of knowledge inscribed in copper plates, coin etc. There are many books written in Meitei Mayek on history, religion, medicine, dance, fighting, philosophy of life, birth, and death etc. Dr. Jamini pointed out that “A deep insight into the available literatures, documents, and culture, social, political, religious and vocational tradition of the Manipur people of the past has testified something of the system of education in the early days in Manipur. The system was by and large methodical, scientific and it emphasized all round development of the individuals.”\(^9\) This type of educational system was the outcome of the constant interaction between the teacher and the taught. In Manipur, student is called “Maheiroi” meaning the learner and teacher is known as Oja or Guru. In the ancient days education system was based on learning through oral transmission of knowledge from one generation to another. The significance of oral transmission lies in the belief that the jar of sacred words should be treasured up in the memory.
‘Mahei’ is a Meitei Lon word which means education. ‘Mahei’ this word is used in two sense – (1) broad sense and (2) narrow sense. Broad sense denotes sense of culture and improvement through the life of a man and narrow sense which include learning the skill of particular trade or profession like goldsmith, carpentry, pottery, embroidery, mridang play, agriculture, sericulture etc. Lairenmayum Ibohal Singh in his book, Introduction to Manipur writes in connection with the education of Manipur as “Every able bodied man was to wage war to catch elephant and tiger, and every male and female were to dance.” So education in Manipur mainly consults with the military warfare and expert knowledge of the use of swords, spears, when a male attained maturity he learnt ‘Mukna sanaba’ (wrestling), Mangjong and Chenjong (Longjump), Khongyai (Jumping with one food), Lamjel (race), Nung-hunba (throwing stone), Tahunba and Okpa (throwing spear and catching it thrown by another) etc, when a man grown up he learn riding Ponies and playing various trick including throwing Arambai. Every man member was required to take military education, however, there was no formal school or college for giving military training or the art of warfare. He had to learn this art from his father or senior person than went to famous expert. It is only for this purpose that King Loiyumba introduced Pana system in 1074 A.D. Gangmumei Kabui stated that the administrative the revenue circle was called Panas. Panas system was introduced not only in administration but also in military, sport and games even. It also may be noted that Manipuris were made compulsory to learn dance. It is compulsory because unless they learn it, they were to expose before the on lookers or audience. In fact, the people of
Manipur had literary education. There were learned people like Guru Khongnanghaba, Moirang Chalamba, Konokthengra, Langon Lukhooi, Wahengbam Madhowram, Angom Gopi and others. However, literary education was considered as secondary importance as Manipuri were educated in using weapon and tactics for offensive and defensive. Before the British introduced Western and Modern education, we do not have any information about the existence of formal education in Manipur. At that time students used to go at the house of the scholars and teacher. All kinds of education were provided at Kangla for all Manipuris including Meitei Pangals but education of woman was neglected. Parents were mostly responsible for imparting education to their daughters. Mothers imparted training to their daughters in embroidery, weaving and domestic work, etc.

Military education was very important and it seems to be compulsory in ancient Manipur to preserve the freedom of the country. EW Dune described about the military personal of Manipur thus “The men of the infantry are of good physique, capable of bearing fatigue, patience, willingness and obedience. They are always ready to march, carry their own provisions, building their own huts and if necessary entrenching themelves.” Loiyumba Silyen throw light on the nature and scope of technical education in ancient Manipur. In Manipur physical education was imparted to the youths in a systematic way since the days of King Pakhangba (33 A.D). Polo games have its origin in Manipur. It was first introduced by King Kangba who ruled in Manipur before Christ. Lord Ripol in 1891 remarked “Manipur is the birth place of Polo” Khong Kanjei
(Hokey), **Mukna** (wrestling), **Kang** (an indigenous game) etc. were the games of the Manipuri. We find references to the existence of medical education in ancient Manipur. The persons who distinguished in medical sciences are known as **Maibas** and **Maibees**. **Panji Loisang** was the college of astrologer which also supported by T.C. Hudson.²³

The seed of the English education was first sown by Capt. Gordon in Manipur in beginning of 19th century. In 1872, Major General W.E. Nuthall, the then political agent, opened a school at Imphal with English language as the medium of institution. The consequently attendance in the school was very poor. On seeing this, the Britishers like R. Brown remarked thus so illiterate are they, that some of the highest officials can neither read nor write, and are not with ashamed for their want of knowledge.²⁴ B.C. Allen too, in his book on “Naga Hills and Manipur” wrote that education it needs hardly be said, received little encouragement in the day of the native rule .....offers of assistance in the formation of school were declined by the Manipuris who stated that they preferred to remain ignorant.”²⁵ In those days the parents did not encourage their children to go to the English school. The boy who attained the English School was treated as an untouchable and not allowed to enter the house after the school class unless he had taken bath and change his school dress.

Those days has gone in course of time. Maharja Chandrakriti gave his consent to Sir James Johnston for establishing an English School. Sir James Johnston established an English School in 1885 at Imphal. That School was
named Johnston Middle School. Two L.P. Schools, one at Shamei and the other at Mao Thana were established in 1893-94. In 1895 Tera Kheithel L.P. School and Pettigrew L.P. School were opened. In 1921 Johnston M.E. School was upgraded to high school level. During 1931-41 many more high schools were established in Manipur.

Madrassahs were the centre of learning for the Muslim. The years 1907-1908 were a land mark in the history of the education of the Meitei Pangal. During this period a Madrasahs was opened at Lilong whose curriculum included Arabic, Urdu and Persian. The first two Maulvis in Manipur were Ebadullah from Irong Chesm and Abdul Jalin (Tajao) from Thoubal in 1910. The name of the Maulvis in the early time were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Resident village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mohd. Abdul Jalil Maulvi</td>
<td>Moijing</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mohd. Ebadullah Maulvi</td>
<td>Chesam</td>
<td>Irong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mohd Usman Gani Maulvi</td>
<td>Khutheibam</td>
<td>Keikhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mohd Hafiz-Ali Maulvi</td>
<td>Moijing</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mohd Omedali Maulvi</td>
<td>Meari</td>
<td>Haoreibi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mohd Moinuddin Maulvi</td>
<td>Maibam</td>
<td>Thoubal</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mohd Sarfuddin Maulvi</td>
<td>Phundrei</td>
<td>Haoreibi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mohd Bro Mia Maulvi</td>
<td>Basei</td>
<td>Haoreibi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 1907-1908 one Madrassha was established, in 1908-1909 two Madrasshas, in 1909-1910 three Madiassahs, in 1910-1911 four Madrasshas, in 1911-1912 four Madrasshas, in 1912-1913 four Madrasshas,

The number of *Meitei Pangal*, admitted or enrolled in Johnston School was very low. Only eleven Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1909-1910, five Meitei Pangals students admitted in 1910-1911, four students enrolled in 1911-1912, three Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1912-1913, two Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1913-1914, three Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1914-1915, four Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1915-1916, three Meitei Pangal student enrolled in 1916-1917, three Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1917-1918, two Meitei Pangal student enrolled in 1918-1919, three Meitei Pangal student enrolled in 1919-1920, four Meitei Pangal students enrolled in 1920-1921. No student of Meitei Pangal was enrolled in 1921-1922, two students of Meitei Pangal were enrolled in 1922-1923, two Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1923-1924, one Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1924-1925, six Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1925-1926, three Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1926-1927, seven Meitei Pangals students were enrolled in 1927-1928, six Meitei Pangal students were enrolled
in 1928-1929, six Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1929-1930, ten Meitei Pangal students were enrolled in 1930-1931 which clearly indicated that Meitei Pangal did not attract on western education system. Because secular education had not taken hold of the popular imagination among the Meitei Pangals.

With passage of time the outlook of the Meitei Pangals change and the Madrasshas were included in the list of Primary Schools of the Government of Manipur. Out of 101 teachers in the L.P. Schools four teachers were Meitei Pangal. Meitei Pangal teacher increased to six in 1909-1910. Out of 152 teachers in the valley’s Primary Schools in 1910-1911 eleven teachers were Meitei Pangal. Twelve Meitei Pangal teachers were there in 1912-1913 out of 138 teachers in the L.P. School. Fourteen Meitei Pangal teachers were there in 1913-1914. In 1915-1916 fourteen Meitei Pangal teachers were there out of 143 Primary School teachers in valley. In 1916-1917 the number of Meitei Pangal teachers was twenty out of 152 teachers. It was twenty three Meitei Pangal teachers in 1917-1918 out of 157 teachers. In 1918-1919 twenty six Meitei Pangal teacher out of 159. In 1919-1920 there were 161 teachers out of which twenty five were Meitei Pangal teachers.

After the completion of Primary School level and having learnt the essentials of faith, Arabic, Persian and Urdu, some Meitei Pangal students made their way to upper Primary School were the basis of the education was secular and on western model. At the same time religious education continue to remain among the Meitei Pangal community as it taught the religious, the code
of conduct as prescribed by Islam. However “Some Muslims to bestir themselves and avail of the opportunity of higher education in regular schools, whether run by government, or by missionary enterprise.”

In the initial phase woman education of the Meitei Pangal was not considered as essential as Meitei Pangal woman were confined to domestic and agriculture works. Women education among the Meitei Pangal was limited to the recitation of the Holy Qur’an, learning how to become a good wife and responsible mother etc. However, in course of time Meitei Pangal realized the needs of education and their children were sent to school and colleges. Very few girls mainly from educated families of the Meitei Pangals could attain educational institutions. The literacy rate of Meitei Pangal as per 2001 census is “in rural areas male literacy 72.1 and female literacy 37.7, in urban areas, male literacy 82.2 and female literacy 51.0. This may be contrasted with the results of 1981; the pass percentage of Muslim students at the High School Leaving Examination stood at only 1.66% and 0.73% at the Higher Secondary level in 1989.”

At present Meitei Pangals both man and woman are realizing the importance of education to compete with the others in the global contacts. Their children are no longer confined to Madrasshas but also enrolled to the government institution, Christian missionary schools and other private institutions which marked a good sign of education among the Meitei Pangals in the present societies by producing brilliant students etc.
Movement for revival of Islam

Revival, according to dictionary meaning reviving or being revival; bringing or coming back into use or knowledge. On the other hand revitalitise means to give a new life or imbue with the new life and vitality. According to Wallance “revitalization movement is a deliberate, organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture”.

In the opinion of Katherin Watier, “revitalization movements appear out of social situations where groups are faced with the loss of identity and threat of cultural extinction.”

Now a question is come up in the context of Islamisation – what is Islamisation? The Islamisation is a process in which individuals and groups of individuals come to accept Islam as a religion or a tradition which is supposed to define the core of their behaviour or at least pushes them to seek an ideal realities.

Yogendra Singh said that the concept of Islamisation is based on cultural notion. According to him, “that covers three movements in the cultural status with the first meaning the cultural and social mobility, second meaning a pull towards orthodoxy “in cultural and religious matters among the converts and third meaning the adoption by non-Muslims of values and styles of life grounded in Islam”.

Islamization, this term is used by Yogendra Singh as “to cover three types of movements i.e., firstly cultural status, an upward cultural and social (which during the Muslim rule also implied economic) mobility in the status of groups through conversion to Islam; secondly, movement towards orthodoxy in cultural and religious matters among the converts to Islam; thirdly, adoption of some Islam cultural values and styles of life by non-Muslims either for reasons of expediency and profit or
due to the historical force of culture contact. Islamization in all of these contexts may sociologically be equivalent to Sanskritization in the little tradition of Hinduism. In the historic situation of Muslim domination in India, Islam as a form of cultural system should naturally have been the one commanding the access to highest social status, power and profit, conversation to Islam under these circumstances offered an easy and shorter route to status enhancement. The other relatively less certain method for the same was selective acculturation through learning and cultivation of skills needed by the new rulers. Islamization in the third context, however, is a recent (British and post British) phenomenon and represents a form of revivalistic movement in the little tradition of Islam resulting from greater politicization and identity consciousness in the Islamic communities. It may be due to a feeling of greater alienation from the Hindu tradition generated by the changing political, cultural and economic conditions.”

The view of Imtiaz Ahmad is that “There have been some studies by sociologists and social anthropologists on certain aspects of Muslim social and cultural life which are broadly subsumed under the general title of modernization and social change. No doubt these studies have brought together considerable body of data on those aspects of Muslim life in India with which they deal, but a reading of them suggests that they have all accepted commonly held stereotypes and clichés about Muslims in India, and tried to simply validate them through empirical research. It just so happen that acceptance of those stereotypes and clichés is somewhat more subtle than would be true of polemical writings, through even this cannot be said equally about all of them. Some of them explicitly begin with the widely prevalent
stereotypes and go on to present an analysis of the empirically collected data in terms of those stereotypes. Others do not explicitly start with the stereotypes but the subsequent analysis of the empirical data presented by them leaves no doubt that they are dealing with the subject in terms of popular stereotypes.”

A.R. Momil has used Islamization into broad senses (1) being tendency among the Indian Muslims to drop customs and features consider to be un-Islamic and (2) refers to the historical process in which Hindu groups – communities and casts – borrowed cultural features of the Muslims. Thus Islamization is a process through which Muslims attempt to distinguish themselves from non-Muslim. The revivalist movements of the present era, then, are a response to and an expression of Muslim modernity, but they are also rooted in a deep historical and cultural paradigm for how Muslim peoples should cope with changing political, economic and cultural realities. Islam is in this sense a religion of “modernization”.

Among the Meitei Pangal the movement of revivalism of Islam began towards the end of 19th century or the beginning of 20th century. Such movement was required because Meitei Pangals were neither strict followers of Islam nor the followers indigenous Meitei religion for many years. It is fact that when they began to settle in Manipur they sown the seed of Islam. However because of the marriage of Meitei women they were ignorant of Islamic religion, which is supported by numbers of historical evidences. McCulloch writes, “……the whole Mussalman population being very ignorant of the creed they profess is not attended with the inconvenience which it would be amongst
a better people. The Maniporee Mussalmans very industrious, indeed, I think them the most industrious portion of the population of Mannipore. They bore the same character in Cachar, where a good many are now settled. They, the Phooagnai, Tengkul, and serve laloop with the Punnahs.\textsuperscript{41} E.W. Dun in his Gazetteer of Manipur writes “The Muhammadans of this country are very ignorant of their religion.”\textsuperscript{42} In the Statistical Account of Manipur of R. Brown, it is written as “they were liberal and unorthodox because they had “no masjid”, and were, for the most party, very ignorant of the religion they profess.”\textsuperscript{43} We find some contradiction in the statements of the English writers with the opinion of Kheiruddin Khullakpam who mentioned that there were Masajids and Panjgans before the seven year Devastation in Manipur.\textsuperscript{44} However, on the basis of colonial writers the opinion of Kheiruddin Khullapam have no sound justification and no priestly class among the Meitei Pangal did existence at that particular time.

In the opinion of Mohd Shakil Ahmad, “The attempt, among, the Pangals, to be more in conformity with their din (roughly translated in this book as religion) began in Manipur with a renewed thrust in the study of Islamic education in madrassas outside Manipur. This process started in the second half of nineteenth century and picked up in the first decade of 20\textsuperscript{th} century.”\textsuperscript{45} In the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century some Meitei Pangals began to study Islamic religious works and many of them became Maulvis. Mention may be made of Abatullah of Irong Chessaba and Tanjo Maulvi. They were the first Maulvis of Meitei Pangal. Thoubal Moijing was the center of revivalism and
many prominent Maulvi of Meitei Pangal were born in that place. The following are the names of the some of the Maulvis who got the knowledge of Islam from out-side Manipur during the period under survey:


It is reported that Maulana Abdula, Maulana Kiramat Ali and Maulana Abdul Jalil were the earliest Meitei Pangal who went outside Manipur to study Maulvi during the king Chandrakriti (1850-1886) and king Surchandra (1886-1890). Meitei Pangals went to different places of India i.e., outside Manipur such as Cachar, Shyllet, etc. to study Maulvi and they had renewed the process of making Pangal beliefs increasingly conform to Islam. B.C. Allen wrote “Their Maulvi are Manipuris, who have been sent to Cachar to be instructed in the principles of their faith by Maulvis from Hindustan. They are said to be fairly well acquainted with the doctrines of their religion …..”. In the second half of 19th century Maulvi education started, and in the first part or early part of 20th century we appeared a self conscious attempt to revitalize Islam. In the word of Gangmumei Kabui, “In beginning of the 20th century, the Muslim self
consciousness had started. Some Manipuri Muslims were sent to Northern India for undergoing religious training as Maulvis. It is said that the first trained Manipur Muslim Maulvis returned to Manipur in 1910 only and they started the Islamic revivalism in Manipur. However, they did not suffer from any social and religious persecution from the Hindu ruling families and the Hindu subjects.”

The emergence of trained Maulvis in the Meitei Pangal society of Manipur came to witness a strong pursuit in terms of giving and absorbing Islamic knowledge – *Namaz, Roza, Haj, Zakat* etc. In this regard Mohd Shakil Ahmad observed as “The Maulvis devised their own ways of diffusing knowledge associated with Islam learned mostly from Urdu commentaries of Quran and Hadith. As a result their *Waaz* (lecture about Islam) and *Nasibat* (advice, preaching the truth), delivered in Manipuri, were interspersed with Arabic/urdu. They would usually come to a home, according to a prior arrangement, where they would sit on a *Kangthol Phal* (a small bed) placed at corner of the *Mangol* (verandah) and from their Maulvis would deliver their *Waaz* and *Nasihat*, listened to by an eager gathering consisted of man and women. Women are sitting in a separate quarter usually inside the house. This exhortation is known as *Lairik Touba*. Thus, men and women gathered from the Leikai to listen to the Maulvi would imbibe and absorb the knowledge of Islam imparted to them.”
In 1907-1908 a Madrassah was opened at Lilong. Numbers of the Madrasshas were established at the different places of Meitei Pangal inhabited area of Manipur, which were already mentioned. Madrassahas are the entrance of religious education which involved daily prayer of Islam etc. According to Dr. N. Basanta “since many years a Muhammadan School was in existence at Lilong (village at the south of Imphal, where fairly large number of Muslim population was concentrated). A new Madrassa was established in 1908 by introducing curriculum in Arabic, Urdu and Persian at the Muhammadan school. Owing to the introduction of the study of these classical languages the number of boys attending this school was trebled in the 1908, and an additional Maulvi was demanded in the year’s budget. In 1944 the number of Madrassahas reached 10 and these exclusively stood for the Muslim boys and girls.”

Masjid becomes one of the foremost religious institutions of the Pangal. It emerged among the Meitei Pangal society on large scale because of the revivalist movement. Masjid also became as the platform for discussing the socio-religious issues of the Meitei Pangal. In every locality of the Meitei Pangal, there is one or more than one Masjid, which can be rightly said as the direct out come of the revivalist movement among the Meitei Pangal. The officiating priest of the Masjid is called Imam who is assisted by Maujins. Imam is acted as an interpreter of the Islamic precepts. A committee of Masjid is constituted in every Meitei Pangal locality under the advice of Imam. The committee looks after those Pangal who are against the Islamic way of life, like
not performing *Namaj, Roja, Purdah* and those who take drugs, indulge in adultery etc. As we know that there are lots of changes in the dress of the Meitei Pangal after revivalist movement. Purdah system appeared in the Meitei Pangal society very lately, which is also attributed to the revivalist movement. Earlier such system i.e., Purdah system did not prevalent among the Meitei Pangal. *Maktab*, the religious schools are attached to the Masjid where the Meitei Pangals children are given the elementary education in Islam, taught the reading of Quran and the basis of their faith either by Imams or Maulvis from the locality.⁵⁴

*Jamiat-ul-ulama*, another important religious institution was established in Manipur in 1961.⁵⁵ The Jamiat is an apex organization of Ulama. It works for the propagation of Islam and its values; to secure and save guard the religious, educational, cultural and civil rights of Muslims; a revival of Islamic and Arabic study; educational and socio religious reform of the Muslim etc. *Jamial* serves as the both for the Madrassha in Manipur.⁵⁶ Other institutions like Manipur Wakf Board, Manipur Haji committee also furnish the religious need of the Meitei Pangal community. In fact these bodies as stated above not only serve as the vanguard of the Meitei Pangal community and helps in asserting their religious identities but also introduce Islamic dress code, manners, lifestyle etc. among the Meitei Pangal. The revivalist movement among the Pangals started with great effort of *Ulama* and the movements reached each momentum in the part of 20th century.
End Note

21. *Loiyumba Silyen*, M.S.


42. E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Delhi, 1975, p.16.


52. Mohd Shakil Ahmad, op.cit., p.120.


54. Dr. Sayed Ahmad, “Religion and Religiously of the Pangals In Manipur” In the Orient Vision, Imphal, October to December, 2007, p.24.
