Preface

Manipur never remained isolated from the rest of India although in 12th, 13th and 14th century the relation with the rest of the country was somewhat slackened. Isolation of Manipur from the rest of the country is a myth. The real fact is that Manipur is situated on a well known International route connecting the Gangetic valley with Burma. Manipur has a rich cultural heritage rooted in the ethos of religious cultural and social customaries of the community since time immemorial. The Manuscripts are the most important essences that help to know the cultural heritage of man. The effective utilization of knowledge hidden in Manuscripts has lately been recognized as an essential for our socio-cultural understanding to fill up the gaps in the perennial continuity of Manipuri tradition. So, it is therefore necessary to preserve the Manuscripts for current and future use of human society. Most of the Manuscripts are in meitei script. They treat almost all the then known branches of knowledge as would be evident by a glance at it. Further, the meitei of the time were not only conversant with meitei scripts but also had access into Hindu religious books and even translated them into Manipuri written in meitei scripts. It is noteworthy that there were professional scribes whose energy was amazing. Their handwriting in most cases was steady, elegant and charming as with many of them it was a family profession and traditional skill. It is surprising to note that in spite of the lapse of time, the ink use in most of the old Manuscripts has not much faded the quality of the paper used has not deteriorated though damaged in parts by worm.

The present study is mainly concerned with the analysis of the thought content of the Manuscripts available in Manipur. The purpose is to know the total collection of Manuscripts in the Govt. Department and private custodians, the techniques used for preserving the Manuscripts and how the people of the present generation can have full access to such rich heritage. The purpose will be served by digitization only.
It is in the light of the above situation I had taken up this enterprise of collecting and analyzing the Manuscripts of Manipur written on the indigenous paper in original Manipuri scripts commonly termed as Meitei Mayek. Some photographs of the Manuscripts are attached in the appendix. Bibliographic reference has been given in the end so that the readers can have a wholesome view of books and periodical used in the preparation of this work and refer to them.

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