CHAPTER - VI

WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN SINGJAMEI ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY MANIPUR
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Manipur

Women always had their contribution in all walks of life. However they were placed in an inferior position for a long time both in the family and in the society. Their voice was either denied or neglected in the male dominated social set up which characterised most of the social system in different countries of the globe. Therefore in earlier times the question of women leadership in any field was never taken up seriously. According to Mosca, “In all the societies, two classes of people appear - a class that rules and a class that is ruled”.¹ Here women as rulers were found to be very few in number. Majority of the women remained suppressed, exploited and in a much inferior position.

With modernisation certain changes have emerged regarding the position and status of women. In fact women empowerment has been given great emphasis from the middle of 1970s with the declaration of the year 1975 as International Women’s year. In India also, the year 2001 had been declared as Women Empowerment year.

In Manipur women spearheaded many movements focussing on major issues of the state. It will be therefore worthwhile to study the role and leadership of women in social, economic and political fields of the state.

Manipuri women are known to be very active in the social life of Manipur. Their participation in social activities always marked a higher degree than women in other parts of India. The women’s movements of 1904 and 1939 are well known in the history of Manipur. However the recent years have witnessed that women of Manipur are still continuing their social activities since post-Independence period till now.

Economically, women extend financial support to their families at their best level. Inspite of their labour they are not treated equally with men as the society in Manipur is based on patriarchal structure. Although the central and state Governments have undertaken developmental programmes for the development of women, the gender difference is visible in the society specially among the manual labour groups. It may also be noted that some women in groups have taken up initiative in the formation of enterprises and many other groups of such type only with the aim of uplifting the financial condition of women.

The role and pattern of leadership taken by the women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency may be studied by adopting three approaches i.e. social, political and economic.

**Social Activities:**

In Manipur women always take leading part in any social issues since early period of history. Women always act as leaders in the social and political movements of the state. They involved themselves in maintaining social norms, practices as well as in taking up reforms in the
constructive manner. They also raise their voice against social injustice done by the political authority.

The social movement of women is directed against various evils like liquor consumption, drug addiction, and other intoxicants, domestic violence, conflict among the neighbours, organising protest rallies against the excesses committed by the security forces. Women in groups known as 'Meira Paibis'² take active part in these activities. Due to the imposition of Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958, when many innocent persons suffered at the hands of Armed forces, the Meira Paibis had acted as protector or defender of human rights.

In Singjamei Assembly Constituency, a large number of women's organisations are functioning actively. They help in maintaining peace in the state also. Sometimes due to illiteracy and lack of proper counselling some women make hasty decision on many issues which displayed loopholes in their activities. However, comparing the merits and the demerits of their activities, the merits are always found to be of higher degree. For study and examination of women's organisations in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, three such organisations may be taken up as case studies.

The Women's Action Committee:

The Women's Action Committee was established on 12th April

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² Meira Paibis are the women from the concerned locality. They keep vigil at night with torches in hand.
2002 at Chingamakha, Imphal with the objective to launch a vigorous drive against the use of drugs and other intoxicants.\textsuperscript{3} The drive was directed to both against the drug users and traffickers.

Drive against the users: The Committee took pains to find out the users. After identifying the drug users, the members of the committee gave them proper counselling. The committee did not make any difference between users of Singjamei and other places. They are treated equally by giving counsellings. In the beginning the users were not exposed to the public. The Committee tried to maintain proper and cordial relations with the young users and give them protection from harassment in the society. They were also encouraged to surrender themselves to the committee so that proper help and guidance will be given by the committee.

Before giving the treatment, the Committee first tried to consult the parents of the users. For this purpose, the members of the Committee went either to the homes of the users or called the parents at the office of the Committee. The consultation was done at the convenience of the parents. Then the parents were given a briefing on the danger of being drug addicts, how to undergo medical treatment, how to give medicine regularly and the duration of the treatment. The Committee work in cooperation with the frontal organisations which are established to fight drug addiction. Here mention may be made of MNP (Manipur Network

\textsuperscript{3} Interview with Laishram (o) Bimola Devi, President, Women Action Committee, Chingamakha, Imphal, Manipur, 29-4-08.
of Positive People) Yaiskul, Imphal. In collaboration with MNP, the Committee provided free medicines to the young users.

Drive against the traffickers: The traffickers were encouraged to surrender to the Committee. Sometimes the Committee used force when the traffickers did not pay any heed. However, no exposure specially of women traffickers was made either to the public or the media. But stern warning was given to them by threatening to impose fines or to expel them from the Leikai or locality.

The Committee take interest in organising awareness programmes to fight drug addiction. Meetings are held regularly with resourceful persons to deliver lecture imparting good knowledge on the issue. The awareness programmes are very effective as the ignorant people specially women can learn about HIV, AIDS etc. Moreover, appeal is given to the public to treat lovingly the infected persons and encourage them to undergo all the necessary treatments. The Committee also organised a camp for a duration of 20 days in November 2003 at the residence of Laishram (o) Bimola Devi under the banner “Born Again”. The campers who are users both from Singjamei Assembly Constituency and other parts of Manipur were given free medicine and counselling during the course of the camp.

Other activities of the Committee: The Committee also focused its attention to liquor consumption, both the producer as well as the persons who drink liquor. Punishment was given to both. Unfortunately most of the women engaged in liquor trade belong to poor families. So
they were advised to give up the trade and find another alternative to earn their income.

Another successful drive launched by the Committee was against the restaurants which were in the headlines of the local newspapers in Manipur for some immoral reasons. The drive was made against restaurants specially with dark cabins. Some owners earn easy money and lure young boys and girls in these dark cabins. So the committee felt the need to stop these anti-social activities which would hamper the morality of the youths in Manipur.

The Committee also participate in all the important issues of the state and go hand in hand with other civil society organisations. It staged sit in protest, protest rallies and joined any movement launched by women of the state against the deteriorating law and order situation in Manipur. The Committee was also able to solve disputes and quarrels among the members of the leikais, settled many cases relating to violence against women. The activities of the Committee do not remain confine in the Singjamei Assembly Constituency only. The members also took up similar cases outside the Constituency in Manipur.

At present the Committee due to some problems is unable to carry on its activities as vigorously as before. Moreover the rise of popular state level organisations against drugs and other intoxicants have over shadowed the activities of the Committee. However it should be remembered that Committee had helped in establishing peace in Singjamei
and other places in Manipur depending on the prevailing situations from time to time.

**The State Level Nupilan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee, Singjamei Imphal:**

The Committee was set up to celebrate the historic upsurge of women in Manipur popularly known as the Nupi lan or the women’s war. It mainly focussed on the movement of Manipuri women in the year 1939. Every year since its formation, the Committee is organising a lamjel or race exclusively for women on 12th December in the memory of the historic incident of Nupi Lan.

The initiative in the establishment of the Committee was taken by five persons in 1991. They were Konthoujam Kumar Singh, District Youth Co-ordinator N.Y.K. (Nehru Yuva Kendra) Konthoujam, Ningthoujam Ito, Thongju Part II, Imphal; Sorokhaibam Sarat, Heirangoithong west, Imphal and Kh. Ibohanbi N.Y.K. Khongjom, Manipur. In the next year, they handed over the charge of organising the lamjel or race to a committee. Thus the State level Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee was established on 18th October 1992.  

The Committee celebrated the first Nupilan Ningshing Lamjel on

4. Interview with Smt. S. Medini Devi, Singjamei Chongtham Leikai, Imphal, Advisor of the Committee on 28-4-08 and 26-5-08.
The State Level Nupilan Memorial Race,
Imphal, Manipur

Women belonging to different communities after the Nupilan Memorial Race at Singjamei Super Market,
Imphal, Manipur
12th December 1992. The Nupilan Memorial Complex near Head Post Office Imphal was chosen as the starting point of the lamjel and Singjamei Super Market, Imphal as the destination. Women of all the communities can participate in the lamjel in their own traditional costumes. Thus the race indirectly help in maintaining integrity of Manipur.

Functions of the Committee: For the proper functioning of the Committee an Executive body was formed. The members of the body are elected for a term of 1 year by the members of the Committee. Every year they are elected in the month of October before the great day i.e. 12th December. The Executive body with the help of a sub-committee make systematic arrangement for the great celebration. The Committee is divided into sub-committees which work in full co-operation with one another. The Sub-Committees are

1) Traffic and Publicity Committee
2) Decoration Committee
3) Medical Committee
4) Refreshment Committee
5) Prize Committee

The members of the Sub-Committees help and Co-operate with one another by working in co-ordination for the successful organization depending on time and situation.
The Committee - a front of women organisations:

The Committee is a front of various women’s organisations. It was formed specially to commemorate the Nupi Lan. Any organisation of women in Manipur can join it. However the Committee is a neutral body free from the influence of any particular organisation. The organisations which formed the committee are free to participate and take active involvement in all the important issues representing their own organisation and not in the name of the Committee.

In the construction of the Nupi Lan Memorial Complex, the Committee contributed a sum of Rs. 1,111 (one thousand one hundred and eleven) and handed the same to the then Governor of Manipur Shri O.N. Srivastava. Thus since the time of its formation, the Committee has successfully observed the lamjel or race every year on 12th December. As a result, the Nupilan has been started to observe everywhere in Manipur. The state Government has understood the importance of the day and declared 12th December a state holiday. Here the credit for making 12th December a special day in Manipur goes to the State Level Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel organising Committee, Singjamei, Imphal.

Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup:

The third women’s organisation to study is the Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup, Singjamei Thongam Leikai, Imphal. It was established on 15th April 2007. The objective of the organisation is to work for the
development of the leikais in the area. The women belonging to Ward No. 17 work together unitedly. Since its formation, the organisation has been engaged in many developmental works.

Among the different activities of the organisation mention may be made of improving the drainage system in the area, electricity etc. The drainage system being in a very bad condition, the women members of the organisation undertook a social service camp for cleaning the drains. As a result the drainage system of Singjamei Mayengbam Leikai, Thongam Leikai and the adjacent areas in Ward No. 17 have no problem in the rainy season and these areas are no longer flooded. Again electricity is another area which the organisation paid its attention. The members of the organisation sought contributions from the leikais in order to install new transformer so that the people could enjoy regular electric supply.

Another area to which the organisation gives its attention is in connection with educational matter. The Educational Guide Centre (Library) at Singjamei was working effectively in creating awareness about the importance of library in the spread of knowledge. Later on the Guide Centre could not perform its activities due to poor infrastructure and financial weaknesses. At this stage, the organisation took up steps for making the centre to work effectively. Along with it, the organisation also

5. Interview with Kshetrimayum Ibumu Devi, President, Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup, 30-11-09.
worked to construct a community hall at Singjamei parking, Imphal. If the effort is materialised, then a large number of people will be benefited.

The Organisation do not remain confined its activities only in Singjamei area. It had also participated actively in important issues in the state. It took a vigorous role in fighting against the excesses committed by the armed forces under the AFSPA, 1958. The organisation expressed its opinion against the excesses committed by the armed forces against the innocent civilians. Organising dharnas and meetings to express the voice of the people against these excesses are other important activities of the organisation.

The incidents of fake encounters have become so frequent in Manipur that the organisation cannot remain a silent spectator. So, the organisation decided to draw the attention of the people and media outside Manipur so that some steps could be taken up to solve the matter. Thus it organised a Press Conference at Press Club, Guwahati in co-operation with the North East Women Front and expressed the tragic incidents of fake encounters in Manipur. For this purpose, the members of the organisation collected pictures, cuttings from newspapers and documents related to fake encounters which were produced in the Press conference. After the conference at Guwahati, eminent social activists and media persons came to Manipur to see the real situation of cases of fake encounters. Smt. Shanti Das, Working President, United Women Front, New Delhi and Sukhendu Bhattacharya, Senior Reporter, Press Trust of India (PTI) came to Manipur. They met directly with the family members
of the victims of fake encounters. Thus there was wide publicity of fake encounters and other related issues in India. Here the contribution of the organisation is noteworthy. The organisation also worked for the upliftment of women and participate in many conferences organised by the Manipur State Commission for women.

Women in Manipur act as forces of social change through organisations which fight social abuses like drug addiction, other forms of intoxicants and various anti-social incidents. The activities of three women organisations have been analysed. The Women’s Action Committee underwent a vigorous drive against drug addiction. The State Level Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel organising Committee boost up the spirit of Manipuri women by reminding the historic Nupi Lan and the Singjamei Chaokhat Nupi Lup work for the welfare of the people. Although there is little difference in their motto, it is clear that all the three organisations work for bringing betterment in the society.

**Economic activities:**

With the spread of education and subsequent rise in the literacy rate, a large number of women started to find out means to make themselves financially independent. A large number of women have established resourceful enterprises to earn money. These enterprises are mainly in the art of weaving, knitting, embroidery etc. Manipuri women are known as master weavers. Now-a-days women use various techniques to produce items with intricate designs to attract the customers. Some of
their products are highly demanded not only in Manipur but also outside the State and even foreign countries.

In Singjamei Assembly Constituency also many enterprises of such type have been established. Such centres provide facilities for training and employment to women. Three enterprises in Singjamei Assembly Constituency are selected to study. The first enterprise is KETAWN (Kangleipak Embroidery, Tailoring and Wool Knitting) at Yumnam Leikai Nambul Mapal, Imphal. It can be regarded as one of the most resourceful enterprise in the state. It is a centre exclusively run by women and has become a centre of employment for women not only from the same locality but also from far off places. The KETAWN was established in 1980 with the objective to provide employment to both educated and uneducated women.

Items of production: Various cloth items for different purposes are produced here. Among these, mosquito nets, bed covers, bed sheets, shirts, blouses, petticoats, varieties of tailored garments, wool knitting, computerised handloom and embroidery products may be mentioned. The price list of some products are given below.\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bed sheet (double) cotton/synthetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rs. 500 to Rs. 3,500/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rs. 2000 to Rs. 3,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^6\) Interview with Khundrakpam Bidyeshwori, Instructor, Thoubal Wangma Taba and Ningthoujam Madhuri, Phayeng Yubung Khunou Leikai, 7-2-2010.
KETAWN, Yumnam Leikai, Nambul Mapal, Imphal, Manipur

Woollen Products of KETAWN, Yumnam Leikai, Nambul Mapal, Imphal, Manipur
2. Mosquito net- plain/embroidered 1 Rs. 950 to Rs. 1,150/
               Rs. 2000 to Rs.5,000
3. Blouse 1 Rs. 350 to Rs. 450
4. Wool knitting - sweater, shawl, scarf etc. 1 Rs. 200 to Rs. 1,000

The products exhibit the excellent skill of women in embroidery, tailoring and wool knitting. The products include both hand made and machine products. A large number of women are engaged in different stages of production like drawing, weaving, embroidery, finishing, printing, tailoring, wool knitting etc. Utmost care is taken to avoid any defect. The finished products are branded with the seal of KETAWN as label near the border of the goods produced.

The women employees and trainees are given facilities which include

1) Hostel facilities - free lodging, electricity and cooking gas.
2) Six months training course to interested women. Stipends are given to the trainees after 3 months of joining.
3) Provide facility to enjoy holidays at home and give bonus at the time of festivals.

According to an employee, the centre provide a regular source of income. She work as Instructor on Embroidery and hostel warden. She has been staying at the centre for about 4 years and lodging is free. She

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Silken Chadar or Upper Garment Embroidered at KETAWN, Yumnam Leikai, Nambul Mapal, Imphal, Manipur

Woollen Shawl Embroidered at KETAWN, Yumnam Leikai, Nambul Mapal, Imphal, Manipur
admitted of getting bonus during occasions. Only she has to spend for her own food and manage everything properly. There is no financial problem so far. As a warden she also has to take some responsibility.

Another employee working as an operator of computerised machine, has been staying at the centre for 2 years. She admitted that the centre has given her financial support and could save money and send money at home in times of need. Thus it is clear that the centre provide a regular source of income to many women.

It is certain that the centre had contributed in the economic upliftment of women in the state. Recognising the credit of the enterprise, its Proprietor Smt. Y. Sorojini Devi has been conferred a National Award Sri Shakti Purashkar by the President of India at Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi on 19th November, 2006. Thus the centre has reached its fame at the national level. The future plan of the enterprise is to accommodate more women and contribute in improving the economy of the state by giving employment to more women.

W. Hemolata Embroidery Wool Knitting and Tailoring Centre, Singjamei Super Market, Singjamei :

The next enterprise is W.H. (Waikhom Hemolata) Embroidery Wool Knitting and Tailoring centre at Singjamei Super Market, Singjamei. It

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was established in the year 1985. The main objective of the centre is giving self-employment, to solve the problem of educated unemployed, to give training to young girls thereby giving them a means to earn income and to encourage young trainees to open their own centres in future.

The main items of production are bed sheets both ordinary and dunlop (with sponge), phanek mapan naiba with different intricate designs of needle work on the border, one faced, two faced and four faced mosquito nets, fine chaddar with intricate designs of mirror work, woollen blouse, waistcoat, sweater, socks, muffler etc. Tailoring is another means of earning money by the employees of the centre. The women workers of the centre are engaged in stitching blouse, salwar top, school uniforms for both boys and girls, frocks, school bags, fancy bags, purse, decorative wall hangings, lamp cover etc.

In order to make a good sale, the centre attempts to produce up to date and fashionable goods which should also be in good quality. Labels are also put on the goods produced by printing the name of the enterprise. The items are sold directly from the centre according to the choice of the customers. Sometimes items are prepared according to the order of the local customers. However the best means of having a good sale is participation in the handloom fairs in Manipur and outside like Delhi. The women in the centre are engaged in the different stages of production.

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9. Interview with Leishangthem Inaobi Devi, 28-9-06.
10. Phanek is the lower garment of Meitei women of Manipur. Mapan naiba is the striped phanek having borders with intricate designs of needlework.
and cooperate with each other. In fact the centre wish to give training to more girls and live together by improving the financial condition of women. Lack of sufficient income is the major problem faced by women. The Centre always try to help both educated and uneducated women in improving their financial status within its limited capacity.

**Saraswati Ladies Tailor, Singjamei Super Market, Singjamei:**

Another centre exclusively meant for women is Saraswati Ladies Tailor, Singjamei Super Market, Singjamei.\(^{11}\) It was also established with the objective of giving self employment, to impart training to young girls to enable them to earn their livelihood. The main items produced by the centre are phanek mapan naiba, mosquito net, bed sheets both ordinary and dunlop and stitching various items of garments like top, salwar, man shirt, blouse, school uniforms both for boys and girls, petticoat, mosquito nets etc. The goods are then sold to the customers directly at the centre. Sometimes the centre prepare the items according to the order of the customers for occasions like marriages. Participation in the handloom fairs both in Manipur and outside is another means for marketing of the produced items.

Among the items produced, a set of bed items could make good money. The set includes bed sheet, pillow cover, mosquito net, quilt cover etc. The price varies according to the quality and material as well as designs. Here the ordinary set comes to around Rs. 9500 to Rs. 10,500,

\(^{11}\) Interview with R.K. Tarubi Devi, 28-9-06
dunlop (sponged) set comes upto Rs. 12,000 to 15,000 and the set with mirror work is around Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 15,000. At the time of the survey, there were three women employees and twenty trainees. There is no doubt that these women enjoy a source of livelihood from the jobs provided by the Centre. The centre aims to participate more in the handloom fairs both in and outside Manipur. The centre also would like to give training to more women to help them financially.

In conclusion there is no denying to the fact that the enterprises exclusively meant for women are functioning successfully. Their success will help in giving a strong inspiration to women. In Singjamei Assembly Constituency the KETAWN has become popular. From time to time the centre put advertisement in the local newspapers to recruit more women. Other enterprises are also extending their share in the race. One common objective of such enterprises is improving the financial condition of women.

**Political Activities:**

In Manipur the participation of women in politics is at a lower level. The marginal representation of women in the Legislative Assembly is the proof to it. It is always a rare case for women to win elections in a fight with men. Women became the members of the decision making body, for the first time in Manipur, in the Territorial Council in 1957. Two women were nominated by the President of India in Consultation
with the Chief Commissioner. They were Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte (Congress MLA)\(^{12}\) and R.K. Mukhara Devi (Congress MLA).\(^{13}\)

The result of the last two Assembly elections, 2002 and 2007 shows that the performance of women in politics is still pathetic. In the 8th Manipur Legislative Assembly Election held in 2002, only W. Leima of Naoriya Pakhanglakpa Assembly Constituency got elected. The same has been repeated in the 9th Manipur Legislative Assembly Election held in Feb, 2007. In the by election of Khangabok Assembly Constituency in June 2007, Smt. O. Landhoni Devi, was elected. Out of 60 seats of the Manipur Legislative Assembly women could obtain only one seat in the last two elections. It clearly shows the poor performance of women and the domination of male in the electoral politics in Manipur.

The poor status and participation of women in politics is also obvious in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. So far no women has been elected as MLA and politics thus remain a masculine activity in Singjamei.

It is unfortunate that women voters do not encourage the women candidates. Moreover, majority of the women respondents do not prefer a woman MLA in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Manipur. This has

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12. Who is Who in the Manipur Legislative Assembly (First Legislative Assembly) Secretariat, Imphal, 1964, P. 25.
13. Who is Who in the Manipur Legislative Assembly (First Legislative Assembly) Secretariat, Imphal, 1964, P. 27.
been reflected in the Imphal Municipal Council Elections also. Women got elected as Councillors only when there is reservation of seat for them under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993. In the last Municipal Council Elections held on 31st May 2006, B. Memcha Devi, Ward No. 15 was elected under the provisions of the Act.

Although women lagged far behind men in politics, it does not mean that they remain outside the periphery of this field. For the women in general, knowingly or unknowingly, they become active specially at the time of elections. They participate in the election campaigns, attend election mobilisation programmes like camera meetings, processions and built up election tempo among the people. But majority of the women who participated in these programmes lack higher political awareness.

The political activities of women in Singjamei Assembly Constituency may be studied by taking into account the three women wings of three political parties namely the Manipur People’s Party, the Communist Party of India and the Indian National Congress.

Manipur People’s Party : The Manipur People’s Party established in 1968 is one of the oldest regional political party of Manipur. There is one women wing of the party.

According to the Article No. 7(3) of MPP, a frontal organisation for both the women of the valley and the hills have been formed under the name of “Manipur Chanura Marup”, MPP. There are Kendra Committees
of the Chanura Marup. The Kendra Committees form an integral part for
the proper functioning of the Chanura Marup. The conference of the
Chanura Marup was usually held after a term of 3 years. In the conference,
the following office bearers are elected.

1) Presidents of Kendra Committee, Chanura Marup, MPP.

2) Four delegates from each Kendra Committee, MPP.

3) One representative from each Kendra Committee in the State
Executive Committee.\[14\]

The Manipur Chanura Marup MPP has set up its Kendra Committee
in Singjamei Assembly Constituency called Singjamei Kendra Committee,
Chanura Marup.\[15\] This Kendra Committee work in full co-operation
and extend all the possible support to the parent body. There are 25
(twenty five) executive members of the Committee. Through the parent
body, the Singjamei Kendra Committee participate in the meetings,
discussions of the party held from time to time and pointed out the
loopholes of the burning issues like the Armed Forces Special Power
Act, 1958. The leading members of the Committee also participate in

\[14\] By-Law Chanura Marup, MPP, P. 5.
\[15\] Most of the information on Singjamei Kendra Committee, Chanura Marup was collected
from G. Gunabati Devi, President Chanura Marup, MPP, 29-4-08 and Ksh. Ibemu Devi,
President Singjamei kendra Committee, Chanura Marup, Singjamei Mayengbam Leikai,
Imphal, 2-5-08.
the political classes organised by the MPP periodically. The classes are based on different themes like regionalism, socio economic programmes, Indian politics, role of women in politics etc. These classes had given women the opportunities to be aware of many socio-political issues and analyse these issues deeply. According to the leading members of the Singjamei Kendra Committee, the main focus is always given to develop the spirit of regionalism among the women.

The Singjamei Kendra Committee, Chanura Marup share all the activities of the MPP Women’s Front. The Committee along with the Women’s Front discussed the hot issues of the state and raises voice against the improper functioning of the Government. In fact there is a strong urge to bring political revolution in Manipur through a regional political party. Despite its positive activities, the Kendra Committee cannot function very effectively due to many factors. The main factor is the lack of support from the womenfolk themselves. Being unaware, the women cannot make proper judgement and exercise their rights and responsibilities. They become easy targets of unfair means and carried away by temptations specially money factor at the time of elections. Once the elections are over, they forget about politics and involvement in it. So the women of the area pay no attention and do not give co-operation in the functioning of the Kendra Committee. Thus the Kendra Committee has to remain paralysed and no effective programmes could be taken up.
Lack of political awareness, ignorance, illiteracy, confinement at home with household chores, financial problems and male domination are other factors which hamper the involvement of women in politics. Education is very much essential in creating awareness among women. "Persons of higher education have more political information and greater political understanding than poorly educated persons".\textsuperscript{16}

**Communist Party of India**: The Communist Party of India is one of the oldest national political party in Manipur. The party has its women Front. Below it, there is a branch of Women Front of the Party in Singjamei Assembly Constituency.

The CPI Women's Front formally came into existence in 1976 with Regd. No. 1789. This front is called All Manipur Nupi Marup with its head office at Irabot Bhawan, B.T. Road Imphal. It is affiliated to National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) which is the National Front of women for the CPI. The CPI has local units under the state unit at different parts of the state. Accordingly Singjamei Assembly Constituency has a local unit with its office at Chingamathak Chongtham Leikai, Imphal. It is known as All Manipur Nupi Marup, Singjamei Area Committee.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Pandit Vijaya Laxmi, Elites and Urban Politics - A Case study of Delhi, M.C. Mittal Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1984, P. 115.

\textsuperscript{17} Interview with Salam Yaima Singh (Local Secretary, CPI Singjamei), Singjamei Mathak Chongtham Leikai, Imphal, 19-6-09 and Th. Binashakhi Devi, Secretary Singjamei Area Committee, All Manipur Nupi Marup, Imphal, 20-6-09.
The Nupi Marup, Singjamei Area Committee did not involve much in the political activity of the party for quite long time. A convention of All Manipur Nupi Marup, Singjamei Area was held on 20th April 2008 at Chinga Mathak Chongtham Leikai, Imphal. The convention reorganised the women's unit of Singjamei comprising 15 members in the Executive Committee for a term of two years. The resolution of the convention are,

1) To demand the Government to solve insurgency problem through a political dialogue;

2) To frame laws against corruption and stop price hike;

3) To develop Singjamei Bazar, Imphal;

4) To draw attention of the Government in the functioning of Self Help Groups and Co-operative societies to end unemployment problem;

5) Regularisation of Angawadi workers and helpers;

6) To construct retaining walls on the bank of the Imphal River, Imphal;

7) To construct proper drainage system, roads and provide regular electricity and water;

8) To improve Urban Health Centre Singjamei with specialist doctors for women and children;

9) Reservation of 33 percent seats for women in the Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) and in the House of the people (Lok Sabha).

10) To strengthen the Nupi Marup, Singjamei Area Committee and undergo effective democratic means to protect the rights of women.
Since then, the Singjamei Area Committee, Nupi Marup had started to play its role in the politics of the state. However further analysis has revealed that the Committee being new cannot function actively. It has to go a long way to achieve its aims. In fact there is no consistent functioning of the Committee. The Committee is found active only on the eve and during elections. The members of the Committee on the eve of elections started to mobilise the workers of the party, especially women towards the issues in elections. The members exchanged their political ideas with voters by focussing the electoral issues in Singjamei Assembly Constituency.

**Indian National Congress**: The third women’s wing which function in Singjamei Assembly Constituency is the Singjamei Block Mahila Congress Committee. It works under the supervision of the Singjamei Block Congress and contribute in creating political awareness specially among the women of Singjamei as well as popularising the Congress Party. The Committee work actively in Singjamei and the women leaders like President, Secretary etc. are chosen by the members with the approval of the Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee. It takes part in all the important national and state issues and also act as peace promoters in the state.

The Singjamei Block Mahila Congress Committee also raised its voice in important issues like inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, preservation of integrity of the state
of Manipur, price hike etc. Organising dharnas, protest rallies, meetings against any unwanted and anti-social incidents are also the activities of the Committee.¹⁸

The Indian National Congress is one of the oldest national political party working in Manipur. The Party has its women's wing called Manipur Pradesh Mahila Congress Committee. There are Block Mahila Congress Committees under the Manipur Pradesh Mahila Congress Committee. In Singjamei Assembly Constituency there is one Block Mahila Congress Committee.

The members of the Committee become more active at the time of elections. An Election Committee of women for Singjamei Assembly Constituency is formed consisting 30 women members, 10 from each ward i.e. Ward no. 15, 16 and 17 of Imphal Municipal Council and through them election mobilisation activity is started. Political mobilisation programmes include house campaigns, camera meetings and rallies throughout the Singjamei Assembly Constituency. Meetings are organised at the residence of any person belonging to the Constituency. In fact the main aim of such mobilisation is meant to draw more voters to the Congress Party. As a result of its efforts, a good response have been obtained from a large number of people including women. Thus the Congress party has become one of the most popular political party in Singjamei.

¹⁸. Interview with Irengbam Ambra Devi, the President of the Committee, 2-12-09.
The activities of women wings of three political parties have been analysed. Although majority of women lack political awareness, some women are taking active part in the electoral politics of Singjamei Assembly Constituency. Yet male domination is visible in the functioning of the political parties. The male politicians seem to impose their opinion upon the women members. In fact, the voice of women are neglected in decision making process of the party. It is very much essential to bring a change in the attitude of men towards women. The utilisation of women members only at the time of elections may not help in making the party strong at the grassroot level. In Singjamei Assembly Constituency, though urban, it is found that women members of the three political parties namely the Manipur Peoples Party, the Communist Party of India and the Indian National Congress (I) are guided by the men members in the party activities taken up from time to time. The women members of the three political parties have to assert their political views independently so as to make themselves recognised as leaders of their respective parties.

**Nature of women leadership in Singjamei Assembly Constituency:**

There has always been women leaders in the society who take up initiative in any activity concerning the interest of the people. A leader is of utmost necessity to motivate a group, an organisation and the society at large. In the last few decades many women have emerged in all spheres of life. In India also noteworthy increase has been made regarding the participation of women in all the fields of life. The women leaders have always taken important role in arousing consciousness among the women
in general. Although their number is less comparing to men, yet, their involvement cannot be denied.

In Manipur many women leaders took initiative role in any movement relating to important issues affecting the interest of the people. The present day Manipur has witnessed the increasing participation of women in all the fields. In Singjamei Assembly Constituency also there is no shortage of women leaders in socio-cultural and economic activities. Here we may analyse the nature of leadership in the Constituency from two angles i.e. individual or collective leadership. For this purpose women leaders like leaders of meira paibi, political leaders and women entrepreneurs are selected for indepth study and examination.

The study include the organisational set up, relations with the subordinates or other members, their activities and achievements, allocation of work among the members of the staff, duties and responsibilities as a leader, response from the people, arousing consciousness among the people and their activities inside and outside the state etc.

Women leaders in Singjamei Assembly Constituency in social matters mainly belong to Meira Paibus. There are many Meira Paibi organisations at the local level in the ward No. 15, 16 and 17 of the Constituency. These organisations have acted on many social and cultural issues in the Constituency. One such organisation is the State Level Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee.
The Advisor of the State Level Nupilan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee namely S. Medini Devi has expressed her opinion that as a leader she keep a very good relation with the members of the Committee. The Secretary of the Committee also admitted of having cordial relation with the members of the Committee. The functioning of the Committee represent a combine work of all the members and the credit of its success should not be given only to the leaders. The leader cannot work in isolation. Mention may be made of the sub-committees and the contribution of its members in the successful functioning of the Committee. Traffic and Publicity Committee carried out the wide publicity of the celebration of the Lamjel or race and remind the people about the important historic role of the women's movement of 1939.

Similarly the Decoration Committee arranged public meeting at Singjamei Super Market after the race, the Medical committee had given medical aid to the needy persons and the Prize Committee had taken care of the prizes distributed to the participants of the race. The distribution of responsibilities is just for the name sake because all the members belonging to different committees always work together according to the need of the situation. These activities represent team work. Therefore the nature of leadership is collective.

Another leader interviewed is the General Secretary, Chingamakha Apunba Nupi Lamjing Lup, Imphal. As a social worker and leader, she takes part in many issues. She participated a dharna in September 2006 at the Parliament House, New Delhi demanding Women’s Reservation with the All Manipur Nupi Marup. In another case, she along with other members of different organisations visited Sajik Tampak Chandel District, Manipur in April 2004 to look after the villagers when a terrible encounter took place between the underground outfits and the security forces. Here also the effectiveness of the activities of leaders depend upon the close co-operation of the members. In fact an organisation is not meant for a single leader.

The nature of leadership can also be analysed through the activities of the Women’s Action Committee, Chingamakha. The activities of the Committee like drive against drugs and intoxicants, solving disputes in the locality and far off places in Manipur, drive against restaurants running immoral traffic etc. are carried out with a team spirit. The members as a group rushed to any place where their involvement is needed. The sense of unity among the members and their mutual understanding made the Committee capable to face any difficulty.

The Committee also organised awareness programmes related to HIV and AIDS, giving counselling to the users, traffickers and their family members

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20. Interview with Akoijam Shanti, General Secretary Chingamakha Apunba Nupi Lamjing Lup, 14-6-07.
and made the people aware of the problem through the information provided by resourceful persons. Moreover, the Committee always worked hand in hand with other like minded organisations in the state.

While taking into consideration the activities of women leaders including the Meira Paibis of different organisations, their success as a leader lay in the support and full co-operation of other members. It may also be noted that the response of the people depend upon the personality, capability and devotion of the leader. The leaders of course need to take the initiative but they are not in a position to materialise the activities without the support of other members. In fact, the proper and effective functioning of the organisations require team work. It is the same case for all the women organisations involved in the social aspect of the life of the people. Thus the nature of leadership of women organisations in Singjamei Assembly Constituency may be described as one of collective leadership.

With the advancement of education and increase in literacy rate, the women have become much more independent and many of them have come forward as entrepreneurs, giving bread to hundreds of women. Mention may be made of enterprises concerned with the traditional art of knitting, weaving embroidery etc. The women weavers have become much more refined in their work by using advanced techniques. However the brain behind the success of the enterprises is the Women proprietors.

In Singjamei Assembly Constituency, many enterprises exclusively run by women have been set up to provide a source of income to women
KETAWN is an example. The centre is organised systematically with subordinate staff members, working units etc. and duties are entrusted to them accordingly. The staff members are electrician, Generator mechanic, machine mechanic, Instructor, Computer designer, salesmen and so on. They are bound to carry out the duties assigned to them from time to time.

Again the arrangement of the working units in the production of various items is quite systematic. The working units include, hand embroidery, machine embroidery, jhari work (intricate embroidery designs at the border of clothes), plain clothes of handloom etc. Both the employees and trainees are divided into different groups and assigned them in different works relating to the process of production according to their skill and experience.

The whole affair in the smooth running of the enterprise is managed by the proprietor. Here her leadership quality and capability as a leader has been proven by the response obtained from the staff. The good response from the women engaged in the different works, shows the cordial relationship between them and the proprietor. It seems that the nature of leadership here represent individual leadership.

In general, the activities of women leaders and their relations with the workers of the enterprises resemble the working of a department in a government or semi-government institution. The successful operation and smooth running of the enterprise always depend upon the supervision of
the proprietor. The case of two more such centres may also be mentioned. W.H. Embroidery. Wool knitting and Tailoring centre and Saraswati Ladies Tailor also exhibit the same system of working with slight differences.

The economic contribution of women is increasing day by day. Their active involvement is visible in the fields like markets, public sectors, private sectors and even in their own homes. Inspired by the spirit to enjoy economic independence and provide employment facilities to women, many enterprises of weaving, knitting and embroidery have been set up. In the successful functioning of the enterprises the first credit goes to the proprietor. The nature of women leadership here represent individual leadership.

In the area of politics, women are in no position to enjoy equal status with men. Although highly educated and possess leadership quality, women lack public support in a male dominating society. Women are hardly encouraged by even the family members and hence not trusted by the public in their capabilities as political leaders. As a result the participation of women in the higher political level is always unsatisfactory.

However some of them have the zeal to come forward as politicians. Notable among them are Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte and R.K. Mukhara Devi who were nominated as MLAs in territorial Council 1957-1963. They are followed by a chain of leaders like Smt. Hangmila Shaiza,
(1990-1995)\textsuperscript{21} Kim Gangte, (12 Lok Sabha 1998-1999)\textsuperscript{22} W. Leima Devi, (2000-2002, 2002-2007), Smt. O. Landhoni Devi (By Election Khangabok Assembly Constituency in 2007) etc. However when the women made an entry into the political arena, they have to remain a minority due to the numerical strength of male politicians who dominated the field of politics. Although not exactly negligible, the participation of women in the game of politics and exercising political power is at a lower degree.

The Singjamei Kendra Chanura Marup, the women wing of MPP work in full co-operation with the parent body and participate in various activities of the party. In its functioning the Singjamei Kendra Chanura Marup display a combined effort of all the members. The leading members participate in the meetings, discussions, conventions held at the state level. The members are aware of many important political issues. They also attend political classes and earn political knowledge and these knowledge are imparted to the women of their surroundings.

In case of All Manipur Nupi Marup Singjamei Area Committee CPI and the Singjamei Block Mahila Congress Committee, Congress I their activities represent a combined effort of all the members. The members of these two women wings of the CPI and the Congress I are

\textsuperscript{21} Manipur Legislative Assembly, Who is Who, List of members of the Manipur Legislative Assembly since 1948.
found to be very active at the time of elections. In fact all the mobilisation programmes are done by them. Thus the nature of leadership is closer to that of collective leadership.

In the social and political sphere, the nature of leadership represents collective leadership because political work and activities of Meira Paibis and other social organisations require a spirit of teamwork. In fact the successful functioning of organisations depend upon collective efforts. Similarly political leaders cannot work successfully without the support of the masses. It also require a collective effort. On the other hand the management of economic enterprises mostly depend upon the ability and brain of the head or the proprietor. No doubt here also the co-operation of the staff is important. Yet which matters most is the ability of the head in managing the whole affair. It is evident that many women are becoming successful entrepreneurs and contribute a large share in the economic development of the state. However some of them seem to remain aloof and it is difficult to contact them. There may be many reasons for it. Lack of proper education may be regarded as the main factor. If such women are highly educated, then they will be able to present themselves confidently and provide information essential to the researchers. Still there is no denying to the fact that such enterprises help in boosting the economic life of a large number of women in the state.