CHAPTER - VII
CONCLUSION
AND
SUGGESTIONS
CHAPTER - VII

Conclusion and Suggestions

Manipur is one of the north eastern states of India. She is known for her scenic beauty, rare fauna and flora. Different communities and ethnic groups inhabited the state. About two thirds of the total population are concentrated in the valley. The people of Manipur specially women are praised for their hard work, labour and contribution to different aspects of life.

The thesis makes a study on women of Manipur regarding their status, role and activities in social, economical and political fields. The study cover women since the Pre-British period till date. Many changes have been witnessed since the merger of Manipur into the Indian Union as well as due to modernisation and urbanisation. These changes had given an impact on the women of Manipur.

The study focussed more on the women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency and their socio-economic, political status and activities. Singjamei is one of the 40 Assembly Constituencies in the valley of Manipur. It is divided into three wards i.e. Ward No. 15, 16 and 17 of Imphal Municipal Council. On the whole the activities of women in the three wards have been analysed. Further, the role of women vendors in the Singjamei market in shaping the economy of their families is also studied and analysed.

In the Pre-British period, generally women share half of the
responsibility in their families. Mothers were given a respectable place in the families and daughters were treated kindly. There was no restriction in their participation in any kind of social practices like births, deaths and marriages. In fact, women in Manipur did not remain confine in their homes and enjoyed more freedom and earned more respect comparing with women in other parts of India.

However in a patriarchal traditional society of Manipur, more importance was given to men. Conflicts and warfare among different clans and tribes were common and the circumstances placed men in a more important and superior position as protectors. Thus women in Manipur occupied a second place to men in the society.

Besides household chores women extended help to their menfolk in cultivation like planting the paddy, weeding, harvesting and carrying the heavy loads of paddy. They also went fishing and it will not be an exaggeration to say that trade was entirely in the hands of women. It was the Lallup system which enhanced the economic activities of women. Women from different parts of Manipur gathered at Khwairamband market for selling their merchandise which consisted rice, vegetables, fish, salt, tobacco and other articles of everyday use. Another important trade managed by women was weaving. In fact, the knowledge of weaving became an essential qualification of women in the Manipuri society.

Politically, the common women had no share in politics in the past. However as a group they could exercise political influence. The priviledge
of political participation was meant only for the women belonging to royalty and nobility. Mention may be made of ‘Patcha Loishang’ which was a women’s court. The Chief Queen acted as the chairman although there were other women members.

Socially the role of women in the family, the locality and the state has been taken into consideration. In the family women act as a daughter, daughter-in-law, wife and a mother. The greatest role is that of being a mother.

The Women Movements of 1904 and 1939 highlighted their participation in the issues of the state. Then the emergence of Nisha Bandh Movement in 1975, Meira Paibi Movement and the emergence of other Women Organisations are worth mentioning. Since 1980’s the Nisha Bandh women who later became Meira Paibis paid attention not only to prohibition of liquor consumption but also to protect innocent people from the excesses of security forces. They kept vigil at night with lighted torches in hand and came to be known as Meira Paibis. They also began to pay attention in fighting drug abuse and trafficking.

Through the study it is revealed that women still continue to share the financial responsibility as in the past. Women of the present day still act as traders and extend help to menfolk in cultivation and other activities. The Khwairamband market still continue to be an economic centre dominated by women.

Due to modernisation and spread of education a section of women
in Manipur became educated and got employment in Government and Non-Governmental establishments. These women no doubt, shoulder the economy of their families.

Handloom sector provide maximum number of employment after agriculture and form a source of income specially for the women of the state. In the Khwairamband market, exquisite handloom products are displayed for sale by women. Recently, fashion garments with intricate designs keep on producing with more demands.

Amongst various handicrafts the kauna (water reed) craft may be mentioned. Majority of the artisans engaged in the production of kauna item are women. As women in Manipur are born weavers, they have no difficulty in weaving kauna to make various items of everyday use and fashionable use. Moreover women of Manipur are skilled in various crafts like embroidery, artistic textiles, jewellery, pottery, doll making and toys. Such items are displayed through Craft Fairs, Exhibitions and festivals both in and outside Manipur.

In Singjamei Assembly Constituency, the social and economic role and status are deeply examined. Socially the activities of women are that of being a wife, mother, caretaker of the family and also an agent of social change. As a wife and caretaker of the family women have to look after the needs of the husband and other members of the family. They are also responsible for doing all the household works. Most women in Singjamei prefer nuclear type of family as small family is easier to manage.
Very few women have admitted co-operation and support from their husbands in the household works. But the percentage of husbands helping women in the household activities form only 2 percent in Ward No. 15, 3 percent in Ward No. 16 and 1 percent in Ward No. 17. Majority of women in the three wards expressed the view that they do not suffer domestic violence.

As a mother the women pay their attention on health care and education of children. The health care measures include proper diet, health check up, cleanliness etc. Majority of women in the Singjamei Assembly Constituency have paid their care and attention to the education of their children. They help their children in their home works, check the monthly or yearly Progress Report Card, find out the subjects in which the children are weak and send them for private tuition or at coaching institutions. The women also have admitted giving equal treatment and love to both sons and daughters by providing them same education facilities, same diet etc. But in families with acute financial problem, only the sons are sent to schools while the daughters are kept at home to help in the household works.

The women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency also act as an agent of social change. They take active role by performing activities against social abuses like liquor consumption, drug addiction, atrocities on women, violation of human rights by State and non-State forces and anti-social elements. They also participate in the burning day to day issues
of the state. As a member of Meira Paibi organisations, the women of Singjamei always fight against social evils.

The economic activities of women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency are divided into different categories: Government employees, Non-Governmental employees, vendors and housewives. These categories of women contribute in the financial set up of their families in varying degrees according to their capacities. However, full fledged Government employees enjoy better financial independence and job security than the other categories.

Due to the problem of unemployment, many educated women work in the non-Governmental establishments. Many of them admitted that they faced the problems like insecurity of the service, irregular and low salary, thereby making them difficult to maintain the family. At the same time women vendors engaged in different trades earn their income from their profits. They also face financial difficulties.

The economic activities of the women vendors of Singjamei market which is in the heart of Singjamei Assembly Constituency present a picture of domination by womenfolk. A large number of women vendors from far and near carry out their economic activities in the market from early morning till late in the evening. These vendors dealt with all articles of everyday use as well as for occasions.

Among the vendors, the vegetable vendors constitute the highest number. They belong to poor families while some are widows with the
entire burden of family maintenance and children. There are vendors who come from villages far from Imphal. They have to spend on bus fare, food which they take at the market everyday as well as bear the responsibility of family maintenance. For them comfort and luxury in life are out of question and their only motive is to extend a heart and soul contribution in running their families. They make no grudge and always ready to adjust to any situation and circumstances.

Besides the vendors, there are also women shopkeepers. There are two rows of small shops facing each other on both sides of the road leading to the newly constructed Singjamei bridge over the Imphal river. Varieties of readymade garments are seen hanging in front of these shops. The goods displayed for sale include shoes, sandals etc. Thus the market present a picture of the economic activities of women. The market also serve as a nerve centre where the women gather and learn about different issues. Although Meitei women dominate the market, women of other communities like tribals and muslims also take part in these economic activities. All these women belonging to different communities and ethnic groups carry out their trade and transaction in harmony with each other.

The pattern of women leadership in Singjamei Assembly Constituency is also studied through the activities of different women’s organisations. The analysis is made on the basis of social, economic and political activities of women. Socially the activities of three State level women’s organisations namely the State Level Nupilan Ningshing Lamjel
Organising Committee, Singjamei Super Market, Imphal; Women’s Action Committee, Chingamakha, Imphal and the Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup, Thongam Leikai, Imphal help in bringing betterment in the society. The state level Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee was established to celebrate the historic Women’s Agitation of 1939 commonly known as the Nupi Lan or the Women’s war. Every year on 12th December the Committee organises a lamjel or race of women as a tribute to the brave mothers of Nupi lan.

The Women’s Action Committee, Chingamakha, Imphal at one time made a vigorous drive against drug abuse. The activities include giving counselling to the drug addicts and their parents, providing free medicines and even sending them to rehabilitation centres with the co-operation from other Non-Governmental Organisations. The Committee also made a firm stand against liquor consumption and successfully solve disputes, quarrels in the families and in the localities, thereby extending help in diminishing social ills.

The third Women’s Organisation is the Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup at Singjamei Thongam Leikai, Imphal. The main objective is to work for the development of the area like the improvement of the drainage system and made effort to enjoy regular electricity supply etc. Moreover the organisation takes a vigorous role in fighting against the excesses inflicted to the innocent civilians by the armed forces. Thus
the three women social organisations in Singjamei Assembly Constituency work for the betterment of the society.

Economically three enterprises exclusively run by women are taken up for study and examination. They are KETAWN (Kangleipak Embroidery, Tailoring and Wool Knitting), Yumnam Leikai, Nambul Mapal, Imphal, W.H. (Waikhom Hemolata) Embroidery Wool Knitting and Tailoring Centre, Singjamei Super Market and Saraswati Ladies Tailor, Singjamei Super Market. All the three centres aim to provide employment to women thereby uplifting their economic lives. These centres produce items like bed sheets, blouses, mosquito nets, sweaters, shawls, scarfs, socks, mufflers, garments with intricate designs of mirror work and needle work. In fact such centres are functioning successfully and help in providing a source of income for a large number of women belonging not only to Singjamei Assembly Constituency but also women of other areas.

Politically, women’s wing of three political parties namely the Singjamei kendra Committee Chanura Marup, MPP, All Manipur Nupi Marup Singjamei Area Committee, CPI and the Singjamei Block Mahila Congress Committee, INC are functioning. The three women’s wings resemble each other in their functioning. They work under the supervision of their respective parent body and extend contribution in all the important socio-political issues of the state.

In Manipur, the participation of women in politics is not
satisfactory. Singjamei is no exception. Thus on closer analysis it appears that the three women's wing are not yet efficient in their functioning. In most cases, the male politicians impose their opinion and the voice of women is neglected in decision making process. The absence of political awareness of women in the area also hamper their activities. Most of the women become active at the time of elections only. Once the elections are over, they forget about politics. Thus politics in Singjamei Assembly Constituency remain a field of male domination.

On the basis of the social, economic and political activities of women bodies in Singjamei Assembly Constituency, the nature of women leadership is determined. Socially the nature of leadership represent collective leadership. The functioning of women's organisations in the social sphere cannot be attributed to the activity of few women leaders. The Nupi Lan Ningshing Lamjel Organising Committee, the Women's Action Committee and Singjamei Chaokhat Thourang Nupi Lup represent a collective effort, work and co-operation of all the members. Moreover, the efforts to bring social change by fighting social evils require a collective effort and not of a few women.

In the economic activities, the nature of leadership represent individual leadership. In the smooth running of a private enterprise, the leadership quality and capability of a proprietor form the most important factor although the co-operation of the staff cannot be neglected. KETAWN, W.H. Embroidery Wool Knitting and Tailoring Centre and Saraswati Ladies Tailor represent similar case.
The nature of leadership in the political activities represent collective leadership because all functions and activities require team work and not of a single leader or individual. The Singjamei Kendra Committee Chanura Marup, MPP; All Manipur Nupi Marup Singjamei Area Committee, CPI and the Singjamei Block Mahila Congress Committee, INC represent the same nature of leadership in their functioning.

Suggestions:

The study reveals that women in Manipur still suffer from many problems in all spheres of life- socially, economically and politically. The women of Singjamei Assembly Constituency, Imphal is no exception. They also face many problems. Thus it is of utmost necessity to give them more attention from different angles. The following measures are suggested for their welfare and improvement in social, economic and political life.

1. The family members specially the husband need to change their selfish attitude and should extend help, encouragement and appreciation in the activities of women both at home and outside. Then only an atmosphere of understanding could be established.

2. The parents need to give more attention on the education of girls so that they will become aware of their rights and responsibilities.

3. The Government on its part must give further attention on female education and look into the successful implementation of various schemes and measures relating to the education of women.
4. Women organisations need to give further initiative in fighting all types of social evils relating to women.

5. The civil society organisations should extend full co-operation for the successful working of Women's organisations in order to bring all round development of women and the society at large.

6. Providing health training and awareness programmes among the women is also suggested. Here the attention of both the Government and non-governmental organisations is required.

7. The society on the whole must try to have a liberal view on the freedom of women and the idea of gender equality should be taught to the growing children.

8. Due to the problem of unemployment many educated women remain unemployed without proper source of income. Therefore it is necessary on the part of the Government to create means and opportunities for increasing the women employment in the Government and semi-government establishments.

9. At different unorganised sectors, women are subjected to discrimination. They are deprived of the amount of wages they deserve and paid less than men. Therefore equal wages must be given to both men and women for equal work.

10. Providing loans to self employed women at low rate of interest through the banks is also suggested to improve the financial condition of women.
11. Encouragement should be given to the functioning of Self Help Groups and other self employment schemes of women.

12. The Civil organisations should have a closer look into the functioning of the Non-Governmental Organisations and other private establishments. In some such establishments the women employees face various problems and more particularly irregular and low salary in spite of their labour.

13. Steps should be taken up to widen the market of handloom and handicraft products both in the state and outside. Here the effort of the Government and social organisations is required.

14. The sheds of women vendors in Singjamei market are worn out and in a bad shape. Therefore the sheds need repairing. It will be far better to construct a new market shed in a systematic way to accommodate more women. Moreover, many street vendors are there having no shed of their own. Special attention of the Government is drawn here.

15. A large number of women failed to obtain financial benefits from the measures and schemes sponsored both by the State and Central Government due to the manipulation of a certain group of people who act as middlemen. Therefore due attention to the matter is to be given by the Government.

16. The State Government must provide financial assistance in time to boost up the functions and activities of the Manipur State Commission for Women.
17. The society should change its attitude and cultivate faith in the capability of women as political leaders. This will certainly help women to participate in the decision making process more efficiently.

18. Reservation of 33 percent seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures should be adopted which will reduce the marginal participation of women in politics.

19. Encouragement should be given to women leaders who are interested in politics both by the family members and the society.

20. There is male domination in the working of political parties in Manipur. The Singjamei Assembly Constituency is no exception. The political parties in the area need to shed off their anti-women prejudices and give up the practice of imposing their opinion on the women members.

21. Women in general and particularly in Singjamei lack political consciousness. Political parties, civil organisations and women’s organisations should take initiative in organising political awareness programmes for women.

22. The political awareness programmes should be organised in every leikais or locality regularly and not only during election times. For such programmes the political parties should provide proper fund to the leading women who take up the initiative.

23. It is high time for the women particularly of Manipur and Singjamei Assembly Constituency to exercise their franchise independently of the male members of their families.
24. In Singjamei Assembly Constituency, the women’s wing of different political parties cannot function efficiently due to the absence of support from women in the area. Therefore women in general in Singjamei Assembly Constituency should extend co-operation in the functioning of women wings of political parties.

25. The political parties should take into consideration the opinion of women members and give encouragement to the functioning of women’s wing of their parties in the same constituency.