Introduction:

It is said that women constitute about half of the world’s population, yet their status has been significantly low in comparison to men. Even today, relations of subordinating and controlling women in the society, a social construct based on the principle of male domination, continues to linger on in the guise of tradition, religion and philosophy. However slow and irregular the development in the educational sphere may be, it has brought about a substantial change in the perception and attitude with regard to the status of woman in the world at large. In India, since independence women have gained enhanced status both legally and socially. The growth of education and technological advancement has led to the entry of large number of women into the different sectors of modern life. It has been said that the growing trend of educated women working in the society has elevated the status of women in the society and that she has come to acquire a more or less equal position with her husband in the family. In the course of this development, the educated working women have not only broken the traditional domestic drudge image, but are now more actively involved in decision-making both at home and beyond and are emerging with more respectable status in the society.

The term ‘status’ refers to a position of an individual in the social structure defined by his or her designated rights and obligations. Each status position is expressed in terms of a role. Since each individual occupies a number of distinct statuses within a society, he or she performs a variety of roles. Status is realized through one’s role. The concept of status is used to indicate that the ordering of individuals in terms of attributes- level of education, occupation, income, etc. and these attributes are responsible for the status and role of women which varies from country to country. Thus, ‘status’ is the location or position of an individual in a system of social relationships, while ‘role’ is the behavior associated with the position. Therefore, each status position is expressed in terms of a role that is, a pattern of behavior expected of the occupant of that status. There are various definitions which have been used to
convey the meaning of the term ‘status’, for the present study, the term ‘status’ would refer to a person’s social status. That is, referring to her rights and privileges. It is the position of a person on some implicit or explicit scale of what is socially valued, which represents her ability to influence or control the social and physical environment.

In India, including the tribal communities, the emerging role of women sharing in the income earning activity has given rise to conflicting viewpoints. On the one hand, she has earned more respect and equality in her marital relationships. On the other hand, she still retains her inferior position in the still traditional patriarchal setup, despite her economic independence. These standpoints can be analyzed through the use of the term ‘power’. Power is a universal phenomenon in human societies and we see its effects and manifestations but not the phenomenon itself. Power is not authority but it is intimately related to both. Power is thus neither force nor authority, but it makes both force and authority possible. Max Weber’s construction of the concept of power seems to be most suited for the present study. He has defined power as “the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action.” Power is, therefore, power over others. The Thesis intends to study the effect of women’s education and employment on the power relations within the family. With the advent of Christianity, the American Baptist Mission in 1896, then the Catholic Church in 1952, education was not only initiated but was seriously taken up as an essential means of evangelization in the Tangkhul Naga region. Though education was open to all (boys and girls), the traditional preference for men over women was followed by the parents. Whatever may be the case, the advent of Christianity and the introduction of education had brought about a tremendous advancement among the Tangkhul women in particular.

**Objectives of the Study:**

With a view to understand the status of the educated working women among the Tangkhuls, the following objectives are taken up for the present study.
1. To study the effect of women’s education and employment on the power relations within the family;

2. to study the changes in the traditional social structure due to the effect of women’s education and employment.

**Methodology:**

The present study is based on the field work conducted in Ukhrul town of Ukhrul District, Manipur and it also covers the Tangkhul settlements in Imphal, Manipur valley viz; Dewlaland, Lamphel, Tangkhul Avenue, Nagaram, and Langthongching where a sizeable number of educated Tangkhuls have taken residence.

In order to get representatives of all the educated working Tangkhul women, attempt was made to collect data from different occupational groups. Major Government, semi- government organizations, offices and institutions were also approached for the collection of samples besides going from door to door. This had to be done since Educated working women, though a clearly definable category; do not constitute a community in spatial or any other sense of the term. The sample population was spread over in Ukhrul town and Imphal city. Thus, those areas were selected which showed a substantial population of my category of respondents. The data was collected through structured questionnaire, structured interview and observation method. 50 respondents each of the educated working women and their husbands from Ukhrul and Imphal were randomly selected and were given the questionnaire to be filled up by themselves, which were collected on the appointed date by the researcher. The researcher also carried out structured interviews, mostly conducted in the homes of the respondents, according to the convenience and desire of the informants. Secondary data were collected from various libraries using published and unpublished materials in the form of books and journals related to women.
The respondents on the whole understood that information sought was exclusively meant for academic purpose. The data for the study were tabulated by using SPSS programme.

The body of the thesis is divided as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction which includes the statement of the Problem, Survey of Literature, Objective of the study, Methodology and Chapterization and also the Field Experience of the Researcher.

Chapter II: Traditional Tangkhul Social Structure and Status of Women

Chapter III: The Status of Educated Working

Chapter IV: Nature of Power Relation in the Family and the Changes in the Traditional Social Structure and Conclusion

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the thesis which includes statement of the problem, survey of literature related to the topic under study and the objectives of the study that sought to examine the effect of women’s education and employment on the power relations within the family. The research methodology used for the study and the various field work conducted and the field experience has been discussed in this chapter.

In the second chapter we have discussed broadly the traditional social structure of the Tangkhuls. A Tangkhul village is an autonomous political, social, religious and economic unit. In the political institution the chief of the village was the ruler of the village possessing political power and religious authority. Though he was the head he could never ignore the counsel of the councilors as he was assisted by them in the day-to-day administration of the village. The village council or Hangva in the village was the highest organ of power and its basic units were the respective clans from which the councilors were selected. All matters affecting the village community became subject to decisions of the village council based on customary laws, constituted by tradition and
convention. The representatives of the clans were the chiefs of the clans called Pipa whose position too, like that of the chief, is heritable. Women were never represented in the village council but they were not debarred from the assembly. Disputes of any nature within the village were settled by elders of the disputing parties. If they could not settle the case the matter might be referred to the village council whose decision was final in the village itself. But disputes between two villages, if the disputing village elders could not settle the problem the matter might be referred to the Longphang or to the apex body called Longrei or Tangkhul Long for its final decision. The representatives of the Longphang or Longrei would try their best to bring the disputing parties to a compromising point. But if the parties involved refused to comply with the proposal they might pitch a battle and the representatives of the Long would be present there as witnesses. On such occasions and other situations of battles it was the Pukreila or the ‘neutral lady’ who alone had the power to command the battle to be stopped. As she was neutral she could not be hurt by rule. Thus the Pukreila had much a say in the inter-village relationship in the yester years of the Tangkhul society. Her role as the peace maker preceded the role of the Longphang or Longrei where all the matters beyond the village were referred to since its existence. As does in the village council, the Longphang and Longrei do not have any women representatives to this day inspite of the demands from the women’s organization (Shinaolong).

In the family and kinship we have seen that kinship is reckoned and recognised both by descent and by marriage. As a patrilineal society, the rule of descent is strictly based on the male line only. Thus, all children acquire membership in their father’s clan group which might be a localized group or might spread horizontally over many villages and could never acquire membership in their mother’s clan group. The pattern of inheritance, rules of succession and residence closely followed the system of descent. The principle of succession is primogeniture and accordingly the eldest son of the family assumes responsibilities of the family. A daughter has very little time to stay in the parental house for she marries and eventually leaves the parental house. A daughter does not have any legal right on the family property except a small share at the time of
her marriage which she carries with her as a form of gifts. Even in the absence of a male child, a daughter cannot claim, as a matter of right, the family property, but would normally go to the nearest male relatives. A daughter after her marriage continues to maintain a tie with her natal family by sharing a responsibility on the occasions of house construction, death ceremony, wedding etc. The daughters according to their status in the kinship order are accordingly distributed portions of the meat killed for the occasion. Marriage is the outcome of youthful courtship followed by the approval of their parents or arranged by the parents. Tangkhul society is free in matters of matrimonial choices except that while choosing a partner he or she should bear in mind the rules of clan exogamy. Breach of this strict rule will result in heavy punishment and nullification of the courtship. Monogamy is the most preferred type of marriage. Though polygamy was not prohibited it was discouraged due to heavy expenditure involved in marriage and due to its negative connotation in the peaceful existence of the family atmosphere. Dissolution of marriage or the practice of divorce was very rare though the customs and traditions had the provision for the same as it involved severe punishments. A divorce can cause inter-clan feud or even inter-village feud if the parties involved were from different villages. Divorce could be initiated by either the husband or the wife.

Apart from the political and social life Tangkhuls had religious aspect of their life as they believed in the existence of the one supreme god called Ameowo. Besides Ameowo, they believed in the existence of other supernatural beings that lived in jungles, fields, precipice, rivers and streams, trees, rocks, etc. They believed that some of these supernatural beings were good while others were bad and harmful because of which they often make offerings of animals and fowls to propitiate the latter. The communal observances of the Tangkhuls round the year and their religious rites were connected with their principal economic activities and agricultural undertakings. Accordingly, the spirits (kameo) or the gods and goddesses to whom the Tangkhuls make offerings, sacrifices and invocations were broadly divided into Phunghui Philava, Shimlui Kameo and Kokto. One of the distinct features in the religious aspect was that in
one of the most important festival called Chumpha the woman or the mother of the house played the role of the priest. Besides, she also assisted her husband and at times the village priest in carrying out the religious rites at different times, round the year. The resemblance of her role as priestess is seen today with the American Baptist Mission inducting women as pastors in the churches in the Tangkhul villages.

Agriculture plays the most important role in the economy of the Tangkhuls. The cultivation of the whole village is affected by the village taboo. The Awunga performs the rituals and offers sacrifices to the deity/spirit for good harvest of the year. Only after he had performed the rites and rituals and sowed the ceremonial seedlings the cultivation of the village for the year began. Both men and women worked in the field. There were distinct season for carrying out various agricultural activities like clearing the jhum, seedling, weeding, harvesting etc. Tangkhuls practiced both jhum and terrace cultivation though the distributions are not even in the whole Tagnkhul area.

Agriculture partnership or yarthot was a distinct feature that was practiced by the youngsters and the married women. It was a reciprocal give and take form of agricultural work based on mutual adaptation and perfect co-operation. Rice is the stable food of the Tangkhuls. Many other crops and vegetables are grown along side the paddy cultivation. Agriculture was the main occupation of the Tangkhul and still plays role in the social and economic life of the Tangkhuls in the interior villages and more so in places where only jhumming is practiced. But with the dwindling yields of the land people become less attached to agricultural work and look for commercial openings offered by the various programme of development planning under the government of Manipur. Agriculture is subordinated by domestication of animals, handicrafts, trade and commerce etc. where in women take active role in all the aspects as she did in agriculture.

In the third chapter of the thesis, we have discussed the status of the educated working women among the Tangkul. The women in the study were mostly in the age group of 35 - 49 years. The men were in the age group of 40 - 54 years. On the average the men respondents were around 6.01 years older than the women. Various aspects like
educational background, educational level, job and marriage of the educated working women are discussed. The discussion also included the information about her husband on various aspects as hers that will reveal the actual status of a wife in her family and outside her home in her work place. Majority of the wife respondents had completed their schooling from village and town. With regard to educational level of the respondent, majority of the women respondents had their educational level up to graduation. Almost half of the husband respondents were graduated and almost the same number of the husbands had post-graduate level of education.

Majority of the wife respondents started working at the age of 20-34 years. Majority of the men respondents had begun working since 6-10 years and more than 20 years back (at the time of data collection). Majority of the respondents in both the categories were employed in government sector. Comparatively more women respondents were employed in government service than the men respondents. Majority of the respondents in both the categories were employed on permanent basis. Majority of the wife respondents were within the basic pay range of Rs. 4001-10,000/- Majority of the men respondents were earning within the range of Rs. 5001-25,000/- per month. Comparatively majority of husband respondents earned more than their wives.

Fulfilling one's ambition, economic necessity and enhancement of social status were the major reasons given by both the categories of the respondents for taking up their job. Majority of the respondents, both wife and husband, said that they had job satisfaction. Majority of the women respondents said that they had job satisfaction because they enjoyed their work, that they got to give service to people and that it was the fulfillment of their ambition. On the basis of these facts it may be said that educated Tangkhul women were impelled to get into employment or professions not only by economic insufficiency, but also by other socio-psychological motivations. Almost all the women respondents said that they enjoyed equal status with men at their work place.

With regard to the age at marriage, majority of the women and men respondents got married between 20-34 years between 31-40 years respectively. Majority of the
women had got their job before marriage. Love marriage was dominant among the respondents. Most of the respondents were 6-25 years into their married life. On the marital happiness the respondents were Happy in their married life. Almost all the wife respondents did not face objection from their husbands for working outside their homes. Out of the women who said that they did not face objection from their husband for working outside home, majority of them said that their husbands respected their individuality. A considerable number of them said that additional earning was required in their homes.

Majority of the wife respondents said that their husbands did not prefer them to be housewives. Majority of the men respondents said that they did not prefer their wives to be home maker even if they earned enough. Majority of the respondents in both the categories said that wife’s career did not obstruct smooth running of the household. Apart from their career a good number of the women respondents were also engaged in household duties, social service and education of children. Majority of the working women spend much of their time in domestic chores. Majority of the men respondents said that they helped their wives in domestic chores and majority of the women agreed that their husbands helped them in carrying out domestic chores. Men in traditional Tangkhul society were not known for their participation in domestic concerns. It was solely left to the care of the wife or the mother. We see a shift in the nature of the responsibility among the husbands of the educated working Tangkhul women where the husbands sharing a good percentage of their domestic responsibilities though it remains to be more or less the domain of women. Almost all the husband respondents said that they helped their wives in child-care. Majority, of the men who said that they took part in child-care, said that they did so because it was their responsibility. The area of involvement in child-care among the men respondents were mostly disciplining and education. A shift in the role of men is observed in the husband’s participation in child care. Men in traditional Tangkhul society were most of the time away or busy in head hunting raids and wars. It was the women who took care of their children with the help of their older children or the in-laws. When children attained certain age they join the
Dormitory or *Morung (Long Shim)* for learning the skills in various field. Disciplining was apart of the Dormitory system.

Comparatively, more women contributed 100% of their earnings than men respondents in running the house. More men respondents contributed more than 50% of their earnings in running of the house than their wives. Bread winning had always been a join venture of husband and wife among the Tangkhul society and it continues to be so as almost all the respondents from both the categories said that both husband and wife contribute almost equally towards their domestic expenses. Though there is a shift in the nature of work (from Jhum to office) for women there is no change observed in her participation in her bread winning role. She continues to be so as she was in traditional Tangkhul society. A large majority of the women respondents said that their husbands were not physically violent to them in times of conflict.

In the fourth chapter the nature of power relations in the family and the changes in the traditional social structure has been discussed. The perceptions of the respondents regarding the ideal role of husband and wife were analysed. In their opinion on the ideal roles of husband and wife, most of the respondents favoured traditional qualities as ideal. A majority of the women and men respondents said that their ideals were according to traditional positions. In short, as perceived by the wife, her educational and economic status did not have an important bearing on her traditional ideal of married life and her ideal role of the husband and wife. The question of having upper hand in the family seemed undeterred as majority of the respondents in both the categories agreed on the husbands’ having upper hand though a good number of the respondents said that they are equal.

Several questions related to the effect of education and work on family decision-making was unraveled. We try to find out whether or not the educated working women had the same power in the decision making, as her husband in the family. In order to measure the power of the educated working women Vis-à-vis their husbands, important
areas of family decision making such as major expenses and purchases, buying and selling of assets and properties, vacations and outings etc. were examined.

Some of the wife respondents took the decision on their own and also some with the consent of their parents and husband. It is seen that the higher educational qualifications had prompted the women to take up some career of their own. Out of the total respondents (men & women), majority of them helped their relatives without their spouse's permission though more husbands give assistance than the wives did. Majority, in both the categories of respondents, said that they had freedom to make decision regarding their own earnings. Majority of the women respondents said that they could spend money for themselves and their children without husband's permission.

A large majority, in both the categories of the respondents, said that major decision on expensive purchases was a joint decision of both husband and wife. A slight contradiction is observed in their opinion with regard to the decision on domestic and inexpensive items. However, it is to be noted that women are a part of the decision-making in domestic affairs. In matters of buying and selling of acquired assets, a little more than half of the women respondents said that it was a joint decision. Among the men, a large majority of them said that it was a joint decision. A considerable number of them also said that it was the husband who made the decision in such occasion. Decision on family outing was a joint one as majority of the wife and husband respondents said so. Thus, we can say that though both husband and wife make decisions together there is a tendency of man having dominant share. Majority of the respondents, in both the categories, said that in times of conflict on domestic matters it was the husband's opinion that prevailed.

On the basis of the data it is found that the educated and earning status of women has resulted, to some extent, the power re-allocation in the husband-wife relationship. No definite co-relation could be found about the amount of money earned and the corresponding decision-making capacity that the working women hold. A correlation is observed about the level of education of the wife and their power relationship
as all the women did have educational qualifications equal or more than their husbands, and this has a significant influence to the power that they hold. The employment of women functioned to increase her power vis-à-vis her husband because she earned money and kept control over it. It gave her more confidence and because she was earning money she had a new concept of her own worth, and was assertive.

In regard to the statement: “A wife should consider her husband as superior and be submissive to him in everything”. Nearly half of the wife respondents agreed with the statement. Almost half of the wife respondents disagree with the statement. The husband respondents were divided almost in equal numbers between “Yes” and “No” while a few of them were uncertain as to agree or not to agree. In this regard we can say that majority of the respondents in both the categories agree with the statement. Another statement: “In domestic matters women should not exercise authority over men.” Majority in both the categories of respondents did not agree with the statement. From the two statements it is observed that the respondents did recognize and accept men to exercise certain degree of authority over wife. But absolute authority of men is not acceptable to them as well.

General attitude of the respondents with regard to sex role and difference is also taken into account in this chapter. A greater number of the respondents interviewed in both the sets favoured women’s participation in politics which indicated a shift from the traditional idea of women being confined in the domain of family and home where she took care of everyone and everything in the family. Majority of the respondents agreed in the existence of sex differentiations in their own homes or have observed one, and they are of the opinion that no such differentiation would be made among their children with regard to privilege, but treat them on equal terms. There is still some reservation observed when it comes to the respondents’ opinion on the landed/immovable properties as according to them they are still bound by the customary laws which does not permit them to give away their landed properties especially the ancestral property to the daughters though they may gift away their self acquired property.
Thus we can conclude that the findings may be seen as retention of traditional family structure with an increase shift to modernity. Though there is a power re- allocation in the family among the husband and wife; the husband does continue to exercise some degree of power over the wife. The educated working women too, by recognizing, approving and accepting the traditional ideas for women’s and men’s role, have accepted their women status to that of their husbands.

The hierarchical relations between men and women are part of a patriarchal culture that has been historically nurtured by religion, and by economic and legal factors, among other. These are entrenched in the social structure, in the consciousness of most women, and of nearly all men.