INTRODUCTION

Man has to struggle to provide himself with basic necessities of life that is, food, clothing and shelter. For this he has to utilise the physical resources present in his environment. Environments change from place to place, so is the case with physical resources of land, water, forest and minerals. The degree of prosperity of a society depends upon the availability of resources and the extent of their utilisation. Material prosperity depends upon material output. Only the optimum utilisation of resources can assure a comfortable living. While selecting an occupation or a source of livelihood the first consideration is to adopt that pursuit which will yield maximum return with the least effort.

A region may be endowed with one or more of the following resources of cultivable land, forest, grass land, fishing ground, minerals etc., consequently the basic occupations are farming, lumbering, animal rearing, fishing, mining etc. Thus, human occupations are greatly influenced by natural resources. The occupations change from region to region because of variations in physical resources.

This work is a study of the physical and human conditions that influence the economic life of Manipur. An attempt has been made to correlate the physical resources and human conditions of the state. It is a far furlorn frontier state of India. It is one of the economically backward states. The causes of its backwardness
have been brought to light. The resources of the state known and potential have been discussed. The present development, agricultural, industrial or otherwise has been surveyed and the future of economic development examined. Due attention has been paid to the causes of existing disparity in economic development between the hill and the plain.

In doing this, productive occupations, the number of persons engaged in a particular occupation and their distribution throughout the state are taken into account. This is done to have a clear picture of the local variations and their relationship to economic geography.

The resources, their distribution and the variation in the distribution of basic resources have been investigated. The lopsided economic development of the state is mainly due to the diversity in physical features. A small alluvial plain, less than one-tenth of the area of the state comfortably supports two-third of the population. And the remaining more than nine-tenth of the hill land supports about one-third of the total population of the state. The economic development in the plain is impressive, comparatively it is a precarious life in the hills. Thin poor soil and some forest resources are all for the hill people. With these scanty resources they have to earn their living. Their choice of economic activity is limited to subsistence farming, a little of lumbering and much less of household industries. Their economic activities are greatly influenced by physical environment.
Contrary to it the people of the plain have many avenues of gainful employment, for example, cultivation, a number of household industries, trade and other services. The per capita income in the plain is much higher compared to that in the hill. It is economic geography that analyses why a particular region is poor or backward and why another region is advanced and prosperous.

No systematic work has so far been done on any geographical aspect of Manipur, much less on economic geography. The National Council of Applied Economic Research and Training, New Delhi, in response to the request made by the Government of Manipur, undertook a Techno-Economic Survey in A.D. 1960 and published a book 'Techno-Economic Survey of Manipur' in A.D. 1961. The Government of Manipur, of course, conducts some sample surveys, from time to time, for collecting information of economic nature. But the results of such surveys, even when published are so sketchy that a coherent picture seldom emerges. Such piecemeal economic data do not help in any way.

Census data are collected at the beginning of every decade and in every census operation the major heads undergo some changes. The areas of administrative units change and therefore the data cannot be analysed very satisfactorily. The census operations before the last operation in A.D. 1971, did not lay much emphasis on economic aspects and hence do not serve much purpose of a student of economic geography.
A work on economic geography deals with an evaluation of basic resources, which are the foundation of all modern economic activities. The natural resources and various other factors of the environment and their interrelationship influence the various types of economies. The economic development of a region is reflected in the type of farming, level of industrialisation, extent of development in the field of power generation, transport and communication, trade and commerce, in fine per capita income.

For an assessment of all this one requires adequate and reliable statistical data. A researcher is faced with the problem of paucity of published data here. The other published material throwing sidelights on economic aspects of the state are in the form of passing references and their correctness is open to question.

To supplement the information, some field survey of the kind of sample survey is desirable. But under the prevailing circumstances, any such survey, as an individual enterprise, in the hill area, is impossible. As regards government organisations, they have the resources, manpower and authority to collect information, whenever they require.

Any individual, enquiring about the economic condition of a family is a suspect, more so, if he is a man from outside that area. If the investigator tries to collect the same information indirectly through somebody it may not be reliable. Due to their past experience the hill people have developed a fear psychosis. They are afraid to
disclose anything before an outsider, lest that should go against their interest.

As regards collection of information in the central plain there is the convenience of travelling and also staying in some cases. When people are approached for relevant information, their first reaction is 'caution'. Many questions flash through the mind of the individual. Who is he? Why is he asking me this or that? What is he going to do with this information? Why is he asking me and not everybody? Even when he is told by the investigator at considerable pain, he does not feel convinced, as is often evident from his expression. Many apprehensions come to his mind about the questionnaire. That may be used for land ceiling or for revising land revenue, or agricultural income tax or increasing some levy. As a result he does not receive the investigator with enthusiasm.

Notwithstanding the reaction of the people in this respect, the investigator approached the people with a questionnaire prepared in advance. Twenty scattered villages were selected, so as to cover different parts of the central plain. After going round a selected village, five households were selected for sample survey, which represented economically better off, average and poor families. A separate copy of questionnaire was used for each household and entries made. Thus, one hundred households in all were covered in twenty villages. Later on, the data were processed for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. The household income from land, industry, business, service and all other sources is laboriously worked out.
The per capita income of each household is calculated at current A.D. 1970-71 prices. This is compared with the per capita income of the state for the same period which is rupees four hundred and seventy six. Then the households are arranged in descending order on the basis of per capita income, and each household is assigned a number.

The households having per capita income close to the state per capita income are placed in the category, Average, with per capita income ranging from rupees 450.00 to 500.00. Those exceeding rupees 500.00 are graded as Above Average. The households with per capita income from rupees 350.00 to 449.00 are graded as Below Average, and those below rupees 350.00 as Poor. The interpretation and analysis of sample survey incorporated in relevant chapters, is based on these four stratified economic gradations.

The entire work is divided into two parts. Part I is a treatment of the subject in a geographical background. It covers five chapters. Chapter I deals with the historical geography of Manipur. It is a cursory glance on the history of the state from mythological antiquity down to the present day. Chapter II is devoted to topics like structure, relief and drainage. Chapter III deals with climate, soil and vegetation. They have a bearing on economic geography. Chapter IV provides an account of human aspect of the state and covers topics like population and settlement. Chapter V is a brief account of transport and communication. Thus, Part I is aimed at preparing a ground for the understanding of what is discussed in Part II.
Part II is concerned with the main economic activities. It consists of four chapters. Chapter VI deals with an evaluation of land use and agriculture. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of the state in which more than two-thirds of the workers are engaged. This chapter, therefore, has been treated in some detail. Important agricultural crops have been discussed. Agricultural problems have been highlighted. Agriculture, the backbone of the economy of the state, has been emphasised. Any planning for economic development of the state must pay due attention on this aspect of the economic life of the people.

Chapter VII gives an account of industry. This is the second important source of livelihood. The present industrial development has been evaluated and future of industrial development assessed. At present all the Indian states are making huge investments for the promotion of tourist industry. It is going to be treated as a major industry in many of the states. Accordingly, the position of Manipur regarding the development of tourist industry has been examined. As prospects are high this industry has been discussed in some detail.

Chapter VIII details the geo-economic regions of Manipur. The state has been divided into a number of economic regions, based on the available resources, the state of present development and regional diversity. The findings have their basis in personal study, observation during study tour of different regions, and analysis of socio-economic conditions.
Chapter IX includes summary and conclusion. In this chapter the main problems like food resources, population explosion and alarming unemployment have been spotlighted. Important aspects of economic life in order of priority have been evaluated and some suggestions feasible in the present circumstances, have been offered.