CHAPTER - 1

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

A society exists with its social consciousness and it is needed for its sustenance and growth and evolves their own traditions, customs and usages. Their own practices and beliefs are constantly replenished through intercourses with other cultures and many of the philosophical, moral and religious inputs are derived from such interactions. There are also the influences of rational evolution of consciousness experimented and approved universally which make dent into a given society through interactions.

The system or forms of social consciousness are expressed in the language, terms, theories, customs and traditions with the regulatory norms of behaviour accepted in a particular society. These act as the determinants. These factors also determine the level of politicization of that social group, the way it attunes itself to a particular political environment. A particular political environment determines its minority or majority status. It is a slow process but the effects are sustained in the existence of the group.

The various types of social beliefs and usages are not born ready made. The social conditions are created through the experiences of many generations and often, some of the widely held belief of a particular age is discarded when it is not favoured in later times. Hence, there cannot be any claim to permanence in a socially held belief and practice. Each of them goes through a complex path of evolution and stages of formation. In this connection, it is the ‘awakening of consciousness’ or ‘consciousness in an embryonic form’ or ‘the degree of class consciousness’ and the need to develop consciousness if the social group is to sustain itself.
Social existence and social consciousness are reflected in one another in a dynamic and reciprocal way in which social existence plays the decisive role. It determines the conditions of the origin and purposeful functioning of the forms of consciousness. But the later do not remain passive. Mental activity finds its embodiment i.e. it becomes material in the corresponding institutions, organisations and objects making up in particular, the political structure of the society as an important part of the political relations and existence. Emphasizing the active creative role of consciousness, Lenin wrote “man’s consciousness not only reflects the objective world but also creates it”.

1.2 SOCIAL SYSTEM OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURIS:

Bishnupriya Manipuri Society like other Hindu communities believes in caste system. Generally Hindu communities have four varnas such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Baishya and Shudra. But the Bishnupriya Manipuri Hindu community has only two varnas – Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The Brahmins are respected in this community and the members feel that they are the supreme in the society. They follow the meaning and content of sloka “barnanang brahmana shrestha”. The community point out their affiliations to the Sama Veda, one of the four Vedas.

The Kshatriyas of the Bishnupriya Manipuris are divided into two clans – plain Kshatriyas and descendants of the kings.

The plain Kshatriyas of the Bishnupriya Manipuris have two groups – Rajar gang and Madoi gang – Rajar gang people are stated to be the followers of the king and Madoi gang people are, on the other hand, the followers of the queen. There is a story on the division of two groups. The date of the conflict could not be ascertained properly but the story is widely recognised in the community as a whole. The two groups owe their origins to the conflict over the decision of the King to appoint the son of the elder queen (Kherei Leima) as the heir to the
throne after his death and the claim of the son of the junior queen (Meleibi) was disregarded. Leima stands for a lady of the aristocratic origin. This enraged the followers of the junior queen and they showed resentment over the decision of the King. Its effects were quickly felt on the entire Bishnupriya Manipuri population and the community was divided into two camps and they remained so even today. The Madoigang group belongs to the followers of the junior queen. The old time political animosity does not prevail till this date and the old time conflict is nearly forgotten but the division in the society still persists.

In Assam, the number of the Madoigang people is comparatively speaking, less but in Tripura, they are evenly divided. In Assam, the Rajar gang people are larger. No census is taken on the strength of these sections of the Bishnupriya Manipuri population. Therefore, it is only a rough estimate and the community elders are not willing to divide the society only on these grounds. They avoid it for social and political reasons. In Bangladesh, Madoigang people are larger in number than Rajar gang people. It could not be ascertained whether the Madoigang people had migrated to Tripura and the present territory of Bangladesh after the real rift occurred in the past followed by the migration of the Rajargang people to these areas. The turmoils in Manipur which occurred in the past had prompted the nearly entire population of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community to migrate to the safer areas where they could persevere with their language, culture and economic pursuits. The words used and the tones of expression vary slightly between the two groups as observed but mutually comprehensible. But the written language of both the groups is same.

The Brahmins act as a unity in the community and are also endogamous and sustain their existence mainly through inbreeding. As they are clearly marked in a small community and they are engaged in the ritualistic functions always, they hold a higher and predetermined position in the society. Their surnames too clearly
resemble those in the Bengali community. The Bishnupriyas, as a community live within the same territory and therefore, share many of the cultural nuances together. Their surnames invite interesting correlation. They are Sharmas, Mishras, Chatterjees, Mukherjees and Banerjees. Most of them originally came from their villages in Bengal. Some might have come from the northern region of the country. When some Sanskrit pandits made journey to distant Manipur, they gradually lost touch with their moorings at home and adopted local culture and language. In Bengal, a Chatterjee with his gotra ‘Kashyap’ would not marry within the same gotra and among the Bishnupriya Manipuris where these typical Bengali Brahmins got naturalised, follow the same gotra system. For example, a Banerjee among the Bishnupriya Manipuris, has the same gotra ‘Sandilya’ like their Bengali compatriots but they have numerical limitations to face. The Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmins are not a very large group and roughly speaking a village contains only a few Brahmin families. When a new village is set up, one or two Brahmins are taken to the village and settled there. A Brahmin searches a match for his daughter within the Brahmin community only. Till today, the Brahmins within the Bishnupriya Manipuri community remained exclusive. So are the Meitei Brahmins. The Brahmins belonging to both the groups, in all probability, were brought by the King for the religious performances among them. We may trace back the settlement of the Brahmins in Manipur, when the King under the impact of the new religion, decreed in favour of the Brahminical culture with inclinations towards the Vaishnavism.

There is no restriction what so ever, in contracting marriages between the two Brahmin groups. A Meitei Brahmin would gladly bring a Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmin girl to his house and vice versa. All Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmins, following the old traditions from the royal days, know the Meitei language and hence there is no cultural
discomfiture when such marriage takes place. The Brahmins living among the Bishnupriya Manipuri community generally speak Meitei Manipuri language at home. At the same time, they know the Bishnupriya Manipuri language.

The Brahmins of the Hindu Society in Bengal were generally attributed to be the descendants of the Brahmins from the west, in the regions of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the time of gradual aryанизation of tracts now known as Bengal. Kanauj was the political as well as social centre in the region before the arrival of the Mahammedans in the region and it was true atleast in the first millennium of the Christian era. Many Brahmins came to Bengal from other regions of the country also, making the population a very interesting conglomerate.

The Manipuri Kingdom was associated with the mythical anecdote of Babrubahana and Chitrangada and the story had definitely helped the process of sanskritisation of a group of people who lived in the periphery of the mainstream culture and the story was made famous in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore (e.g., his dance drama ‘Chitrangada’). Tagore brought the whole gamut of the exquisite beauty of the dance style of this far off region to the limelight. Now, it is a classical dance form of India recognised by all experts. But a mythical story, though culturally contribute enormously, cannot be historically proved so easily. The Brahmin elements among the Bishnupriya Manipuris and their Meitei counterparts were settled in Manipur at the invitation of the King and the Brahmins, even today, retained Manipuri as their first language though the Bishnupriya Manipuris ceased to assert their identity in the Manipur valley. Now, a Meitei Manipuri village is homogenous like the Bishnupriya Manipuri village. The waves of political changes that has blown over Manipur played roles in the separation, particularly the Burmese invasion in the region is remembered with trepidation. The invasion ransacked the whole political and social fabric in the region and thousands left the
land for safer places. The present day Bishnupriya Manipuris are the inhabitants of Barak Valley of Assam, Tripura and the old Sylhet district of Bangladesh.

It is narrated that Babrubahana came to Manipur with the idol of Lord Vishnu from Indraprastha with the help of some Brahmins and the dominance of the Brahmins in the Bishnupriya Manipuri society prevailed from that time. This reverence for the Brahmins still persists and the trend is likely to continue in years to come. Brahmins came to Manipur and got high position in the society due to the blessings of the king. Some Manipuri writers, writing on the legend of Brabrubahana, tend to reject the story altogether as mere hearsay. But the rejection altogether may be an injustice to the great fable which created impression in the mind of the people. W. Ibohal Singh in his book “The History of Manipur (An early period)” in page 6 stated “Besides these types of accounts there is also another set of accounts in which the ruling clan of Manipur is described to be the descendents of Arjuna, the Pandava of the Mahabharata epic. It is stated that Manipur is the very Manipur of the Mahabharata as mentioned in the Aswamedha Parva and there was one king named Chitrabhanu who ruled this kingdom, who had a daughter named Chitrangada.” A story gets universal acceptance when a true figure existed in the past. A myth gets ensconced in the mind of the people around an original true figure, lost in the real pages of history but retained in the folk memory. The historicity of the figure is often in doubt which cannot be ascertained so easily. The flesh and blood are put in places where necessary, these we may assume to be unhistorical in most of the places. When no definite proof is available, its origin may be traced in the old non Aryan tribal chief whose exploits some how were retained in the folktales. The folk story was later on woven into beautiful tale in the sanskritic form and style. The original skeleton was covered with
flesh and blood which gave a touch of fantasy. The story of Babrubahana- Chitrangada was projected with beautiful artistic colours which helped the growth of a culture. The original Robin Hood with such skeleton had become a lively hero of the old. The original Robin Hood did not have a lady love but later on, one was created for him as his story acquired great amount of romanticism and public acceptance. Nobody denies the historicity of Robin Hood who thrived in and around the forests of Nottingham in England many hundred years ago but the fable is now sheltered in the mind of the people in the shapes which was the product of the literary artistry. Rabindranath Tagore transformed the story of Babrubahana - Chitrangada in the song and dance form which is now part of our culture, but the story of Babrubahana and Chitrangada was not created by Tagore. He picked the story and added his exquisite imagination into it and made it a widely accepted dance form. The great weight of Kashiram Das “Bengali Mahabharata” included all these fables including the story of Chitrangada and Babrubahana. Vyasdeva's Mahabharata did not include such fables associating them with the eastern hills.

Both the Meiteis and the Bishnupriyas – two factions of Manipur of old shared the common Vaishnavite culture and there was a process of tradition building for some centuries. A genuine religio-cultural movement occurred under the patronage of the Kings. The composite culture thrived for centuries and there was lot of intermingling. This process of interacton and acculturation continued. The drive and dexterity of the Meiteis’ original culture had got inputs from the Sanskritic sources, thus creating a culture distinct and identifiable for the people outside. A culture is created with efforts from all and continues until a state is disturbed by the cataclysmic events which, many Manipuris would agree that it came in the form the Burmese
(Myanmarese) invasion in the early part of the nineteenth century. The exodus of the people who were in the process of being assimilated into a composite whole, suddenly got disturbed and thousands of them rushed to the safer places in Sylhet and Cachar. This explains the presence of the sizeable Meitei and Bishnupriya population in the present day Bangladesh, Tripura and the Barak Valley.

Among the Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmins, there are different lokeis, gotras and prabars etc. which are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lokeis</th>
<th>Gotras</th>
<th>Prabars</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Purohit / Parithgo</td>
<td>Kashyap (Triprabar, having three prabaras)</td>
<td>Kashyap, Apasar, Noidruba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shyamurakfam</td>
<td>Bharadwaj (Do)</td>
<td>Bharadhwaj, Angirasa, Barhaspatya</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Hanjapham Gagra/Chencooree</td>
<td>Shandilya (Do)</td>
<td>Do</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Laifufam</td>
<td>Shandilya (Triprabar)</td>
<td>Shandilya, Asit, Debol</td>
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<td>5. Kamprakfam</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gurumeyum</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bishnuratfam</td>
<td>Batsya (Panchaprabar)</td>
<td>Ohurba, Chyaban, Jamadagni, Bhargab, Shakatayan</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Furarakfam</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lehaothabam</td>
<td>Madhugolya (Do)</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Hangoifam</td>
<td>Kashyap (Triprabar)</td>
<td>Apsara, Kashyap, Naidhruba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teleibam</td>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Onoubam</td>
<td>Bharadwaj (Do)</td>
<td>Bharadwaj, Angirasa, Barhaspatya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Adhikari Meyum</td>
<td>Goutom (Do)</td>
<td>Gautam, Bashistha, Barhaspatya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all probability, the lokei names designate the blood relationship among its member. It is also interesting to note that the Brahmins belonging to the factions – The Meitei (also spelt as Metheis) and the Bishnupriyas – do maintain the same surnames. Though these factions differ on many questions; the Brahmins do maintain a relationship encompassing the factional boundaries. There is no bar in marriage relationship among the Brahmins of the factions.

This strengthens the notion that the ‘origins’ of the Brahmins were from the same areas. In the second category, the standard ‘gotras’ current among the Brahmins throughout the country, were affixed to the village base and it can be called a process of bringing them nearer to the mainstream through a process of sanskritisation.

According to the opinion of the Monoranjan Chatterjee of Betubari, due to the Burmese invasion in Manipur grand father of Punduri Kaksha Sarma, founder of Radhamadhab Sevashram (Radhakunda), came to Kholopar of Patharkandi and established a temple of God there. Their descendents are now spread all over Singla, (Dullovcherra, Anipur), Pratapgarh (Patharkandi) and Tripura. These Brahmins belong to the Purohitgo lokei which are not seen in Cachar and Hailakandi. When the Brahminical influences increased in the royal court, the Brahmins were invited to perform various functions and they obliged the King to do so, and they occupied the position of the King’s priest at Manipur.

During the rule of the king Pameiba at Manipur when all priests, due to the fear of the Meiteis, did not conduct religious services to the Bishnupriya Manipuris, then priests of Purahitgolokei dared to conduct religious services. As a result there was no proper security for the settlement of these Brahmins. Three fourth population of this society are the followers of the Brahmins of the purohitgolokei denomination.
According to the opinion of the Bhubaneswar Mukherjee of Rajargaon, Patharkandi, his forefathers had settled at Patharkandi establishing a mandir in order to be free from the torture of the Meiteis. They belong to Shyamurakpham lokei and the dominance of this lokei was felt at Cachar specially at Singari and Hailakandi.

Brahmin of Laifufam could not adjust with Meiteis of Manipur and first settled in Gorerbond because their followers settled at this place. Later on, they settled at Awalala, Lengtarpar of Karimganj district and Bekirpar of Narsingpur, Cachar. Pandit Nabadwip Misra of Bekirpar belongs to this lokei and forefathers of this lokei came from Kanyakubja.

The main priests of the Idol of Bishnu of Bishnupur who belong to Bishnuratfam lokei, came to Cachar. Kalimohon Sarma of this lokei established a mandir at Dharam and the land was donated by Muni Singha of Raja lokei. He married, Jamuna Mukherjee, the sister of Gobindaballo, the Godishwar of Gagra. According to the opinion of Ishwarbabu of Patharkandi, he belongs to Kamprairakpham who have come mainly from Nabadwip.

During the regime of Maharaja Bhagya Chandra, after the Burmese invasion, no Brahmins of Manipur dared to serve Bishnupriya Manipuris due to the fear of Ningthouja subjects. At that critical situation due to the advice of Maharaja Bhagyachandra, Sarbananda Mukherjee of Hanjafam lokei came forward to conduct religious services to the Bishnupriya Manipuris and he was honoured as ‘Godishwar’ by the king.

According to the historical record left by Nanda Kishore Mimangshatirtha and documentary evidence of Madan Mohan of Bekirpar, after the demise of Bhagyachandra, Godishwar Nimaichand Thakur came to settle at Gagrapar leaving Manipur. Rabidananda
Thakur, the nephew of Nimaichand Thakur in 1826 at first came to Gagra and then settled at Chencooree leaving Manipur.

The well-known Dakulla (drummer, mridanga badak), Nileswar Mukherjee belongs to Hanjafam lokei. The followers of Nimaichand Thakur are known as Gagrar Dal and the followers of the Rabidananda Thakur are known as Chencooreer Dal and now there is clash over the question of supremacy in the society between the two groups.

At Singia there is also a clash between the Purahitgar dhal and Khair dhal. But this kind of groupism should be omitted as soon as possible for the welfare of the society.

In the social system of the Bishnupriya Manipuris, after the Brahmins, next social position is occupied by the descendents of the kings known as “Rajar Jiput” . In the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. There are four dynasties of the kings such as Arifam (Puranaraja), Anoufam (Nuwaraja), Lempa Raja (Thakcham) and Khuwairakfam (Kairengkhullakpa).

Descendents of Maharaj Kirtidhwaj are renowned as the descendents of the ancient kings. Coming from Manipur, they at first settled at Khalaper of Patharkandi and later on they settled at Patiala, Fetipat of Dullovcherra, Singari, Dudpur, Mohanpur, Mashughat of Silchar, Jorhat, Sonapur, Katakh of Hailakandi Hemchandrajit Rajkumar, the first president of the Mahasabha is a member of this group.

Descendents of Anandaram, the son of the second queen of Maharaj Krishna Chandra (Kalaraja) are known as Anoufam or Nuwaraja in the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. They at first settled at East Dharam of Meherpur area and established dominant position in this area. Rajkumar Nanousena of this descendent settled at Patharkandi. Dr. Nilmadhab Rajkumar of Silchar, Kalasena Rajkumar,
the reputed singer and Dr. Ranadhir Rajkumar of Patharkandi belong to this group. Now they settle in different Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas.

According to the historian Mohendra Kumar Sinha, Kushadhwaj, the forefather of Lemparaja, established marital relationship with the Nuwa Raja Maharaj Krishnachandra and the result of which Kushadhwaj was enthroned as a king of Saraspur of Hailakandi district. Son of the king Kushadwaj was enthroned in the kingdom of Patharkandi. King Ratnadhwaj was the capable descendent of Lempaking dynasty. Namadeb Singh Rajkumar of Patharkandi belongs to this group. Later on these descendents scattered all over the society. Renowned artiste Senarik Rajkumar of Kalinjar and the renowned educationist of Rajnagar, Nitya Gopal Rajkumar are the pride of this dynasty.

The historian, Mohendra Kumar Sinha mentioned the descendents of Khuwairakfam dynasty. The forefather of this dynasty is Dhanapati Rajkumar who was the original inhabitant of Rangamati. Later on their descendents entered into Manipur and merged into Bishnupriya Manipuris which is mentioned in the book “Manipurer Prachin Itihas”. Later on these descendents of this dynasty left Manipur during Burmese invasion and settled in the village of Kalinjar and Dharam of Meherpur, Cachar.

Social system of the plain Kshatriya Bishnupriya Manipuris can be divided into Gotras and Lokeis according to Rajargang people and Gotros and Dapas according to Madoigang people. Every gotra consists of some lokeis or dhaps. Gotras of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Society are Bashistha, Kashyap, Moudgolya, Koushik, Atreya, Angirasa, Shandilya, Gautam, Br.iyagra, Lomash, and Bharadvaj.
The Lokeis or Dapas under Gotras are mentioned below –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Gotras**</th>
<th>Lokeis / Dapas **</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Bashistha</td>
<td>Alakgo Lokei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Kashyap</td>
<td>Amunga, Inoupa, Shakakpa, Khaninga, Kaichampa, Keinampa</td>
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<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Koushik</td>
<td>Leishangpa, Lorenhanba</td>
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<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Atreya</td>
<td>Shwapalgo, Kehugo, Bura, Laya Khullakpa Moirang, Kongpa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heinonga Telei, Khama Ateya, Thangchapa, Kangalago, Shwamnoja Burakhullakpa, Selungba, Keikhu, Leisaba, Keilhusangba, Barkeilhu, Achangba, Bharati Koirenga, Shatara, Chinipa.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Angirasa</td>
<td>Lempa, Mekura, olonga, Kherugo Cherua, Sengka, Forompa, Pachiya, Aachou, Menjar.</td>
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<td>7)</td>
<td>Shandilya</td>
<td>Aatuligo, Chalagmo, Dhanga, Mahago, Khanchakpa, Shara, Koakpa, Pangshing, Dhakula, Takhen, Gogor Oja, Lakha, Khama, Longlei, Leimago.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>Goutam</td>
<td>Chouhabari, Leyampa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>Biyagya</td>
<td>Kaireng Khullakpa, Apeng Khullakpa Kaifa Khullakpa, Nakul Khullakpa, Merupa, Shanga, Baishi, Meichi, Thampa, Kumthoi, Nungkei, Parongo, Lengthanga, Leimi, Kayengba, Dhanuk Thiba, Miyangpa, Yenko, Khulakpa, Monkhoura, Barigo, Nilmani Khoiju, Bera, Thongchel, Soura Snachalba, Dhuho, Mahamgo, Hinouba, Asaga etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>Lomas</td>
<td>Lorarpa Lokei</td>
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<tr>
<td>11)</td>
<td><strong>Bharadwaj</strong></td>
<td>Aamungo, Mangkeigo Langtigo</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tango, Thongei, Pangshi,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Khutlang chafa, Heromba,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Bedago, Fetigo, Miyanga,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thangilgo, Sengamba, Topi,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Aulapatra, Leichenbang, Chatara.</td>
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</table>

Gotra is the name of an illustrious forebear of the clan who is considered as their ancestor. Lokei or Dhapa similarly considers to be the same ancestor. There are many Lokeis or Dhapas under a Gotra. The standardization is carried out. All Bishnupriya Manipuris carry gotras. There was an attempt at sanskritisation at a particular period of time and the ancestor who is widely venerated by a line of descendants, the family line took his name or it was given to him. We have seen such 'association' as transfixed in some other sanskritised group as the Dimasa Barmans. Hence, there is a process of acculturation and the social recognition by the court was essential. There was an attempt at standardisation initiated by the Court. Marriage among the men and women of the same lokei/dhapa or the ghotra are strictly prohibited because their forefathers had blood relationship. If any marriage is held instead of this social restriction then that fellows will be socially boycotted. People of the same lokei are always remain united through the Apakpa, the first fore father of that lokei.
1.3 ROLE OF THE MAHASABHA IN THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

Social consciousness among Bishnupriya Manipuris was developed in the second decade of the twentieth century. In the second decade of the 20th century after the First World War, there was a trend of new political atmosphere over the whole world. On the other hand, due to the spread of education a new renaissance was evolved among the educated Indians who felt insulted to live a slavery life under the British Empire. Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi started the freedom movement against imperialism. Another group of people started their movement against exploitation of one class by another class motivating the ideology of communism. In this social atmosphere spirit of renaissance was developed among the educated persons of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. Peasant movement of Bhanubil also inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people in the spirit of social consciousness.

Gakulananda Geetiswami, minstrel poet, is pioneer of raising social consciousness among Bishnupriya Manipuris. Leikhom Sena Singha of Singari, Silchar had also contributed towards social awareness among the community. A contemporary drive to social consciousness was also geared up by the ‘Jagaran’, the first magazine and mouthpiece of the society published in 1925 from the town of Sylhet by the initiative of Sri Mahendra Kumar Sinha and editing of Arjun Sinha in collaboration with four social workers such as Haridas Sinha of Masughat, Babuchand Sinha of Kailashahar, Nabadwip Sinha and Sri Nilmani Sinha of Narsingpur who were the students of Murarichand College, Sylhet.

In the census of 1931, the Manipuris were classed under the category of the tribal group and in a notice issued to the public for information by the secretary, Assam Franchise Committee on March 28.
21, 1932 it was revealed that the Manipuris should invariably be treated as tribal people. This notice created a strong reaction and opposition in Cachar and Surma Valley. Manipuri leaders, both Bishnupriya and Meitei, jointly assembled at a meeting held on June 12, 1932 at Tarapur, Silchar under the presidency of Khelendra Chandra Mukhopadhyay to oppose the said government notification and to move to the government to enlist the Manipuris under the category of caste Hindus on the strength of evidential proofs furnished by the eminent historian, Mohendra Kumar Sinha. As this meeting was of great historical value for both the branches of the Manipuri people, the names of the participants from the old districts of Sylhet and Cachar may be mentioned here.

1. Nileswar Mukhopadhyay, Bhanugach, Sylhet, Bishnupriya Manipuri Brahmin.
2. Lakshmindra Kumar Singha, Mashimpur, Sylhet, Bishnupriya Manipuri.
3. Chandra Babu Singha, Patharkandi, Sylhet, Bishnupriya Manipuri.
4. Lokendrajit Rajkumar, Dudpatil, Silchar, Meitei Manipuri.
5. Jagadananda Singha, Singari, Silchar, Bishnupriya Manipuri.
6. Kunjaraj Singha, Machughat, Silchar, Bishnupriya Manipuri.
8. Choudhury Singha, Ramnagar, Silchar, Meitei Manipuri.
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A short resume of the deliberations may give hints of the controversy on the status of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language which surfaced 76 years ago in the same meeting and how both the communities responded on the question. The complete report of the meeting is available to us. One gentleman, Khelendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya of the Meitei community wanted it to be a Meitei congregation with the Meitei customs observed properly. Immediately it was opposed by some members of the Bishnupriya community on the ground that the meeting was arranged for the development of the Manipuri communities as a whole and not for the particular segment of the Manipuris. Contesting the opinion of Khelendra Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, the opposing member said that it was not a court where the complainants and the defendants are present with a judge presiding over it. His opinion was accepted and the members agreed to follow a joint course and it was for the betterment of the Manipuris as a whole. In gist, both the communities met to oppose the notification for the declaration of Manipuris as tribal. But one thing was common in the deliberations of the Meitei Manipuris and the Bishnupriya Manipuris that all the speakers in that meeting wanted education and social awareness for both the communities.

In course of adopting resolutions, Pandit Kunjaraj Sinha, Mashughat, Silchar, drew the attention of the delegates present to the serious twisting of the historical facts of the ancient and medieval Manipur connected with the Bishnupriya of the Indian Aryan family. The conference expressed resentment over such falsification and adopted a resolution to move to the government for taking necessary action in this regard. The conference further passed a resolution to send a deputation consisting of the members of both groups of Manipuris to the Governor of Assam to clarify with records that the Manipuris are not tribal people. But they belong to the caste Hindus. The members selected for the deputation are Shri Mohendra Kumar
Sinha, Hemchandrajit Raj Kumar (Bishnupriya Manipuri) Raman Singha and Bijoy Singha of Lakshipur (Meitei Manipuri).

But the resolutions though duly signed by the president could not reach the concerned authority due to conflict arising between these two groups for which the Bishnupriya Manipuris had to organise a separate convention to uphold the original resolutions passed in the Tarapur joint conference dated 12.06.1932 as stated above. Accordingly the convention was held in the title “Surma Valley Manipuri Sammelani” on September 25, 1932 at Jagadananda Vedanta Ratnas Deva Mandap, Ambicapur under the presidency of Hemchandrajit Rajkumar Vidyanidhi. The main demands raised in the convention are-

a) To include Manipuri (both Bishnupriya and Meitei) in the category of caste Hindu group).

b) To give representation of the elected member from this depressed and backward community to the Assam Legislative Council.

c) To reserve a special quota in government service for Manipuris.8

To facilitate effective works the convenors of the convention formed the Surma Valley Manipuri Association, a registered organisation of the whole community. Due to the strong move of this association, the government of India withdrew the declaration of the secretary, Assam Franchise Committee and placed the Manipuris under the category of caste Hindus on the ground of historical evidence. To express thanks to the government for the recognition of their basic demand, a social gathering of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people was arranged in the house of Kunjeswar Sinha of Bhakatpur in which Mr. J.B. Walker, the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar was present. Notable among them are Dholagiri Rajkumar of Rajnagar,
Mohendra Rajkumar of Kachudharam, Mohendra Kumar Sinha of Patharkandi, Dhinabandhu Sinha of Chiparsangan, Lalit Madhab Rajkumar of Rajnagar, Krishnakumar Sinha of Mashughat, Kunjeswar Sinha of Bhakatpur, Naba Kumar Rajkumar of Rajnagar, Leikhom Sena Singha of Singari, Muhi Sinha of Bhakatpur, Rajbabu Sinha of Mashughat, Sri Gournitai Sinha of Kabuganj, Tarang Singha of Mashughat and Chandrakanta Sinha of Singari. They expressed thanks to the government for their realisation of right attitude towards Manipuris. This gathering was a signal in the formation of the Birat Sabha or the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha. A convention of two day session was held at Patharkandi on Sept 30 and Oct 1, 1933 and this convention gave birth to an organisation known as the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha or Birat Sabha which is the mouthpiece of the Bishnupriya Manipuris of Cachar, Tripura, Sylhet and Manipur advocating social, economical, educational and cultural upliftment i.e. all-round development and prospects of Bishnupriya Manipuris. This great organisation of the community is a registered body vested with supreme authority.

Falguni Sinha, a gentleman from Katakhal became the general secretary of the Birat Sabha and this organisation began to reform the society removing blind belief. It was also concerned with the road development the initiative of which was taken by Narendra Kumar Sinha of Tripura popularly known as “Sarakbaba”. The main aim of this body is to produce highly educated youth in the society. This aim was fostered by Tanubabu Sinha, Kirti Singha and Mohendra Kumar Sinha who at that time were highly educated persons. Tanubabu Sinha had constructed a hostel at Sylhet at his own cost for providing free accommodation to the students of this community. Mahasabha is primarily concerned with religious affairs i.e Radha Madhab affairs which paved the way for social unity among Bishnupriya Manipuris. In
the mean time Krishak Andolan took place at Surma valley which inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to organise their society.

In 1947, India became independent which created impact upon every linguistic community including Bishnupriya Manipuri because the Indian federation was formed to accommodate diversity in our culture and a small community like the Bishnupriyas nurtured a hope for their language which, they felt, would get due recognition in the country. The independence created an atmosphere for the intellectual thinking of the development of the society. The participation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people in the freedom movement of our country helped the growth of social consciousness.

Basic right of the linguistic minority community was included in the constitution of India for which intellectual and right thinking people came forward to take the leadership of the Mahasabha and began to ponder over the all-round development of the society. Mahasabha leaders began to realise that without language there is no proper existence of the society. But the Mahasabha could not properly proceed in its own goal because the sessions of the organisation were not held at regular intervals for which it could not give pressure to the government to fulfill their basic demands. Before 1951 there was no distinct identity of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people because both Meiteis and Bishnupriyas were regarded as Manipuris. As a result, there was no existence of Bishnupriya Manipuri population though Sir Grierson in his linguistic survey found in 1891, the existence of a considerable number of Bishnupriya Manipuri population in Cachar district of Assam.

From 1951 Bishnupriya Manipuri society veered round to identify themselves as the Bishnupriya Manipuris. In the historical “Andurgang Adhibeshan” held in 1955, the Mahasabha raised the demand before the government to educate their children through mothertongue and
also formed Bhasha Committee or Parishad, Sahitya Parishad and Sanskriti Parishad with their specific aims and objectives. But the demand to get education through mother tongue was just only in black and white. Due to this social awakening in the 1961 linguistic census, Bishnupriya Manipuri people were allowed to identify them as Bishnupriya Manipuri community.¹⁰

But most of the people of this community were not aware of the fact that they should be identified as the Bishnupriyas within the common title ‘Manipuri’ and as a result, many of them were identified only as “Manipuri’. Due to this ambiguity, the Bishnupriya Manipuri population in Assam was shown less and the census figure returned only a depleted figure of 15,169 only. It is a surprising fact that in a thickly populated area like Patharkandi, only one person was enumerated as a Bishnupriya Manipuri and she was a lady. This explains that the Bishnupriyas were yet to come out of the common cultural heritage with the Meiteis.

Moreover at the time of tabulation, due to the prefix or suffix of the word ‘Manipuri’, all Bishnupriya Manipuri people were termed as Meitei people according to the rules of the Census Commission, government of India. The leaders of the Mahasabha raised a strong protest against this policy of the government in order to make proper distinction between Bishnupriya Manipuri and Meitei Manipuri.

But with the refusal of the government to fulfill this genuine demand, the attitude of the Mahasabha hardened and they preferred the use of the term ‘Bishnupriya’ time being as a distinct language in the census in order to recognise the existence of this linguistic community and a debate arose at Patharkandi at the mandop of Upendra Sarma in the executive meeting of the Mahasabha. Gopinath Sinha advocated strongly in favour of the term Bishnupriya but some in the audience did not support Gopinath Sinha. But in the end of the
debate, the views of Gopinath Sinha was accepted when some assertive members came forward to support him, among them were Jagat Mohan Sinha and Birchandra Sinha of Kabuganj. This decision of the executive body of the Mahasabha was passed in “the Hal Hali Adhibeshan” of the Mahasabha. Then Mahasabha began to give pressure upon the government to codify Manipuri as the prefix or the suffix of the word Bishnupriya.

In 1961 Manipuri Welfare Committee was formed with Gour Singha (Meitei) of Lakshipur and Gopinath Singha (Bishnupriya) of Dullovcherra as the president and secretary of this committee respectively. This committee created an atmosphere to unite both Meitei and Bishnupriya Manipuris into a common platform. This body began to motivate people about their existence in the society.^^

The linguistic movement of the Bengali people of the Barak valley in 1961 inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to start their linguistic movement for the recognition of their language as the medium of instruction in the Primary Schools of Barak Valley. When the Bishnupriya Manipuri people started their linguistic movement, Bengali people came forward to support the Bishnupriya Manipuri people. Many Bishnupriya Manipuris willingly participated in the language movement of 1961 and made a common cause. It is an effort on their part to project themselves as an identifiable entity having socio-political goals of their own.

During this movement Andolan Parishad, Bhasha Parishad, Sahitya Parishad, Mahasabha and Students Union organised meetings in every mandop of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas of Barak Valley and in other parts of Assam in order to make people socially conscious and to organise the movement for the recognition of the language and the assertion of their own identity for their existence under the constitution of the country and to enable the study of the
language at the primary stage of education. In this period Andolan Parishad, Bhasha Parishad and Mahasabha were able to get the support of different political parties, educationists and journalists of the Barak valley, who by their signatures, sent a memorandum to the Assam government on August 30, 1968 to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary stage of education. These intellectual people inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to continue the movement and also participated in the various phases of the movement for which public opinion was formed in the Barak Valley in favour of Bishnupriya Manipuris irrespective of communities.

Another notable point is that Merachouba Singha, the M.L.A. from Sonai constituency and Gour Singha, President, Manipuri Samajik Mahasabha, both were Meiteis, willingly signed the memorandum for the recognition of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language and they helped to forge unity between two linguistic groups of Manipuri.12

As a result of this memorandum, Linguistic Minority Commission organised the meetings at Patharkandi, Bikrampur, Hailakandi, Meherpur and all political parties and intellectual people supported the genuine demand of the Bishnupriya Manipuris. This reflected the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

The Mahasabha approved 7 points of charter of demand raised by the Andolan Parishad. On the basis of these demands the Andolan Parishad observed three phases of peaceful Satyagraha movement from 1968 to 1969 in different areas of the society with two slogans.

“Amar Dabi Dena Lagtoi” (Our demand must be fulfilled)

“Ima Thare Lerik Tamkarani Dena Laktoi” (learning by mother tongue must be given).
These two slogans are composed by Shri Gopinath Sinha in order to make people socially conscious.

"Raktakshwar Abhijan" phase in different parganas was primary responsible for evolving social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people. Gana Abhijan (mass movement) was started to make people conscious in different areas of the inhabited areas with the initiative of Gopinath Sinha, Madon Mohan Mukherjee of Dullochera, Senarup Sinha, Chandmani Sinha of Bikrampur and Raman Sinha of Meherpur. To make the society conscious, the following organisers were deputed in different areas of the society.

- Monoranjan Sinha & Hemkanti Sinha, – Hailakandi
- Gopinath Sinha – Bikrampur & Jatrapur
- Jogendra Kr. Sinha & Harekrishna Mukherjee, – Meherpur
- Kushadwaj Sinha & Birbabu Sinha, – Pratapgarh
- Gopi Mohan Mukherjee & – Dullovcherra
- Madon Mohan Mukherjee,

Gopinath Sinha was entrusted with the full responsibility to supervise in all areas of the society.

Gana Abhijan (mass movement) was started in the Pratapgarh area from the village Nurkha at the residence of Sri Gojendra Kumar Sinha, prominent social worker, who convinced others regarding the necessity of the linguistic movement for the proper development of the society. Mahasabha afterwards organised Gana SovaJatra and submitted memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar and Subdivisional Officers of the Barak Valley which created social awakening in the society. It also observed 24 hour Gana Anashan.
(Mass Hunger Strike) from 10. a.m. on April 29, 1970 to 10 a.m. of April 30, 1970 all over Cachar, Tripura and Shillong which is also responsible for social awakening in the society.

Here it must be mentioned that Golam Osmani, Bar-at-Law, Mohitosh Purkayastha, Tarapada Bhattacharjee, Biswanath Upadhaya, and many other distinguished leaders came forward eloquently supporting the legitimate and constitutional demands of the Andolan Parishad. All the names mentioned above were the renowned politicians of the time and some of them served as the members of Parliament (Mohitosh Purkayastha and Gulam Usmani) and some as the members in the state legislature of Assam (Tarapada Bhattacharjee and Biswanath Upadhaya). Mahasabha also observed 48 hour Gana Anashan from 10. a.m. on 13.12.72 and 72 hours Gana Anashan (mass fasting) from 10 a.m. of 6.3.74 in Cachar which created an impact upon the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to become conscious socially.

In 1978, the National Convention of the Andolan Parishad, Mahasabha and Students Union was held at Bhakatpur under the presidency of Sri Nanda Kishore Sinha, M.L.A. in order to decide the future course of action for social progress. A debate arose in this convention because one group favoured the continuation of the andolan and the other group was against the andolan. Ultimately the convention decided to take the path of andolan. By this convention Seven Point Demand Action Committee was formed with the following office bearers.

President – Gopinath Sinha.

Vice-President – Bhimsen Sinha.

Secretary – Krishnaballav Sinha.

Joint Secretary – Anil Singha Gautam.
After the formation of Seven Point Demand Action Committee, the Andolan Parishad was merged with the Mahasabha. A coordination committee was formed to maintain liaison among these organisations. Nanda Kisore Sinha and Monoranjan Sinha became the president and the convenor of this co-ordination committee.

In the meantime lobby system emerged within Mahasabha. Nanda Kishore Sinha had a lobby with Kameswar Sinha, Golapbabu Sinha, Manikanta Sinha, Kaliprasad Sinha and Bimal Krishna Sinha whereas Jagat Mohan Sinha had a lobby with Gopi Mohan Mukherjee, Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Gopinath Sinha, Monoranjan Sinha, Jogendra Kumar Sinha, Hemkanti Sinha, Kushadhwaj Sinha, Krishnaballav Sinha and Bhimsen Sinha. Difference of opinion was raised to the extreme point for which judicial injunction was imposed in the Patiala session of the Mahasabha by an appeal of Bimal Krishna Sinha resulting the division of Mahasabha into two groups. One is Nandakishore's group and the other is Jagat Mohan's group. A Gana Abhibartan was convened at Bhimthakur's Sri Mandap, Tinokhal in 1981 with three members presidium to resolve the conflict between Nanda Kishore's group and Jagatmohan's group. The convenors of this Gana Abhibartan were Radhamohan Sinha, Udoy Chand Sinha, Kalasena Sinha, Bhadra Sinha and Kshirogopal Sinha, Members of the presidium were Churachand Sinha of Dullovcherra, Babuchand Sinha of Kailashahar and Manikbabu Sinha of Kabuganj, A debate arose regarding the point whether the membership of the Mahasabha will be by birth or by paying requisite fees. But Nanda Kishore Sinha being the president of the Mahasabha was absent with his group whereas Jagatmohan Sinha was present with his group. So the Gana Abhibartan (mass congregation) was ended without any positive result. But that split was dissolved in the Garerbond session of the Mahasabha specially with the effort of Bhupendra Kumar Sinha, Shyam Sundhar Sinha realising the spirit of social unity. It is to be
mentioned that this unity did not last long for which Nanda Kishore’s Group, coming out from the Mahasabha, formed an organisation known as the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Sabha whose social contribution will be discussed in a sub-chapter of this chapter.

As a result of the movement continued by the Students Union and ceaseless deputations of the Mahasabha to the government, government of India had given the code structure in the name of Bishnupriya Manipuri from 1981 census which was the result of social consciousness of Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris is enhancing gradually due to the timely arrangement of tri-annual conference of Mahasabha in different areas of the society and frequent arrangement of the meeting of the state committees of the Mahasabha of Assam, Tripura and the central committee of the Mahasabha in different localities of the society. As a result society loving people came forward to assist the Mahasabha in order to serve the society.

The movement again started and due to the pressure of the movement in 1983, the government of Assam issued the order approving the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a medium of instruction in the primary stage of education in Cachar district vide order no. EMI169/74 Pt. – III 310 dated Dispur, the 14th Nov. 1983. This order reads thus ' In modification of this Department notification no 169/ 74/137 dated 29.1.1977, the Governor of Assam is pleased to approve the inclusion of Bishnupriya language as a medium of instruction in the primary stage of education in Cachar District ', sd/ S.S.Ahmed, Under Secretary to the Government of Assam, Education Department. But this order was stayed by the Assam government because of the Manipur government’s objection for the use of the word ‘Manipuri” as prefix or suffix with Bishnupriya.
This stay order compelled the Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union to start the movement in full swing in order to vacate the stay order. The Students Union began to mobilize youth in the spirit of social consciousness and inspired them to continue the movement vigorously in phased manner. Here it also must be mentioned that like Mahasabha, split arose within the Students Union which was responsible for the formation of two students union - one is pro-Mahasabha Students Union under the leadership of Gautam Sinha and the other is pro-Sahitya Sabha Students Union under the leadership of Anil Krishna Rajkumar. These two Students Union continued their agitation to vacate the stay order of the Assam government for the introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as the medium of instruction in the primary stage of education.

Another remarkable social consciousness was reflected in the historical 'Mahamel' organised by the Mahasabha, at Gokilagaon of Patharkandi on Feb 12 and 13, 1994 with the brain of Bimal Sinha, minister of Tripura in which all Bishnupriya Manipuri people, living in different parts of the country, gathered to discuss issues for the development of the society. "

The thought of Bimal Sinha was to create an “Imar Lam” (mother land) taking all Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabitant areas of Tripura and Assam. But in that gathering a debate arose on this plan considering the mutual harmony with the people of other communities and that idea to create ‘Imar lam” (mother land) was abandoned. However that huge gathering attracted governmental notice in Tripura and Assam the result of which Tripura government introduced the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary stage of education as a subject in 29 L.P. Schools vide order no. F. 19 (8-25)-DSE/88 (L-11)/51-91 dated Agartala the 23.5.1995. This historical decision of the Tripura government inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people of Assam to
continue their movement for the recognition of their language in Assam.

Citing the instance of Tripura, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union group led by Anil Rajkumar and Students Union group led by Salil Sinha continued the movement vigorously against the Assam government and Mahasabha created pressure upon the government of Assam by deputation and memorandum for vacating the stay order imposed upon the introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a medium of instruction in the primary stage of education in Cachar district. Ultimately the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha with the active movement of the Students Union was successful to vacate the stay order of the Assam government on the introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary level of education and the Assam Government on July 21, 1996 issued the order to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a subject in the primary schools of Barak Valley but that order was again stayed on Sept 9, 1996 due to Manipur government’s objection. Student’s union movement organised and mobilized youth of the society and witnessed the two martyrs such as Salil Sinha and Sudheshna Sinha. Ultimately due to frequent appeals, deputation’s, prayers of the Mahasabha and the Students Union movement, the Assam government issued notification on May 25, 99 to introduce Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a subject in the primary schools of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas of the Barak Valley. This achievement was possible only due to the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

In 1997 on April 4, 5 and 6, Mahasabha organised a conference known as Sahitya Sanskriti Mahasammelan at Bhakatpur, Silchar. Through this conference the Mahasabha honoured many social workers by various titles Among them the name of Gopinath Sinha who was honoured by ‘Agnipurush’ is remarkable. This is a remarkable
sammelan for increasing social consciousness of the people because nearabout ten thousand Bishnupriya Manipuri people of the country attended in this conference and exchanged their views for the all round development of the society.

Social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris was also reflected in the world conference held at Silchar on November 22 and 23, 2003 which was organised by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha under the leadership of Dr. Debendra Kumar Sinha, President, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha, central committee by forming a reception committee headed by Chandra Kanta Sinha. The main motive behind this world conference is to arrange an assembly of all Bishnupriya Manipuri people residing in India and outside the country in order to discuss social issues. Such type of world conference is rarely visible in Assam which was remarked by distinguished intellectuals invited from different linguistic communities of Assam. The main aim of this conference was fulfilled because Bishnupriya Manipuri people residing in different parts of India, Bangladesh, America and in other countries of the world assembled and discussed various issues for the development of their society. This conference created an atmosphere of oneness and branch committees were formed in different states of North East India, Mumbai and New Delhi, Bangladesh and even in America. As a result Bishnupriya Manipuri people from different parts of India, Bangladesh America and other countries of the world got the opportunity to assemble in a common platform which was a remarkable step for social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

This conference unanimously resolved to demand before the Assam government to grant a development body known as "Development Council" in Assam for the all round development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people and the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha is giving pressure to the Assam government to have this
council as early as possible. Moreover this conference decided to construct hostels at the metropolitan cities of India such as Mumbai, Delhi and Bangaluru for the higher study of the students of this community with the limited financial means in order to provide for the opportunity of higher education. This type of thinking is developed due to the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people.

By this conference the Mahasabha also demanded before the government to include Bishnupriya Manipuri as Other Backward Class in the central list. The Mahasabha through this conference demanded before the central government to broadcast Bishnupriya Manipuri culture in the Doordarshan and All India Radio.

That the awareness on language was converging on a single focus and it was visible in a judicial case. It is reflected in the case of the recognition of Bishnupriya Manipuri language filed by K.Kumardhan Singha and Manipur government in the highest judicial tribunal of the country i.e. Supreme Court of India against the decision of the High court of Gauhati. The Bishnupriya Manipuri people living inside the country and outside all over the world came forward contributing money and also encouraging the executive body of the Central Committee, Mahasabha and legal cell responsible for this case. The meetings were arranged by the legal cell and Mahasabha jointly in the different areas of the society and social consciousness regarding their existence awoke in the mouth of every people of society. They gave moral and financial support to the Mahasabha to face the challenges in the Supreme Court of India.

It is a remarkable fact that the central committee of the Mahasabha arranged the historical Delhi tour in March 2006 in order to motivate the central government of India. This delegation consisted of Dr. Debendra Kumar Sinha, President, Gopinath Sinha, Working President, Chandra Kanta Sinha, Working president, Sundor
Mukharjee, working President, Rebati Mohan Sinha, Working President, Udoy Sinha, Secretary General and other 5 important office bearers of Mahasabha and they arranged a dharna in the Jantar Mantar, New Delhi to appraise the central government of the problems of Bishnupriya Manipuri people for proper solution. Due to the arrangement of such dharna social consciousness was inculcated among them for which they actively participated in this dharna and supported this delegation in all respects. As a result of this, Bishnupriya Manipuri people of Delhi became conscious of their existence and involved in the social process of their society.

Here we undertake the comparative study of the Presidents of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha chronologically in the following paragraphs-

Hemchandrajit Rajkumar Bidyanidhi of Katakhal, Hailakandi, was the first president of the Mahasabha (1932-37) which was earlier known as Birat Sabha. His contribution to the society was to challenge the decision of the Government declaring Manipuris as 'tribals'.

Tanu Babu Singha of Patharkandi was the second president of the Mahasabha (1937-39). He was educated and realised that without education no society can prosper. Realising this point he opened a students hostel at Masimpur, Sylhet in 1930 for the Bishnupriya Manipuri students of the Murarichand college, Sylhet.

Girish Singha of Dudpur, Cachar was the third president of the Mahasabha (1937-39). He was a man with keen understanding of societal changes around, and was always a source of inspiration for people.

Manik Singha Kabyaratna of Bekirpar, Cachar, the fourth president of the Mahasabha (1942-45) was a good orator and
organised the people through his active deliberations. He was appreciated by the people of the society for his organisational skill.

Babuchand Singha of Kailashahar, Tripura, the fifth president of the Mahasabha (1945-50) had an urge for service to the society from his student life and he took initiative in the publication of the first Bishnupriya Manipuri journal ‘Jagaran’ in 1925 during his study in Murarichand college, Sylhet. A Lawyer by profession, he generated social awareness by providing legal aid.

Kamini Kumar Singha of Dharmanagar, Tripura was the sixth president of the Mahasabha (1950-55). He was aware of his role for the development of the society.

Samarendra Singha of Patharkandi, the seventh president of the Mahasabha (1955-60), championed the education of the Bishnupriya Manipuri children through their mother tongue. For this spirit, he was deputed on behalf of the Mahasabha to discuss with the government for the introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary schools of Assam as the medium of instruction.

Krishna Kumar Singha of Patharkandi, the eighth president of the Mahasabha (1960-68), had a great love for the society. His two sons Kushadwaj Singha and Bhimsen Singha were also active in social activities.

Chandra Kanta Singha of Singari, Silchar, the ninth president of the Mahasabha (1968-72) inspired people to participate in the process of the development of the society.

Gour Nitai Singha of Narsinghpur, Cachar, the tenth president of the Mahasabha (1972-74), was actively involved in the organisational works at a time when society faced internal conflicts and laid emphasis on social service.
Nanda Kishore Singha of Silchar, the eleventh president of the Mahasabha (1975-79), was a political leader of Assam elected as a member in the Legislative Assembly of Assam thrice. He got interested to do service for his own community and became the president of the Mahasabha. His important contribution to the society was to secure the support of the Bengali people in the linguistic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people for his historical resignation of membership of the Assam Legislative Assembly in their linguistic movement.

Radha Charan Singha of Tripura, the twelfth president of the Mahasabha (1979-84) was a man inspired by Marxist ideology. He is acclaimed as a good organiser. Popularity of the Mahasabha was geared up in Tripura due to his organising capacity.

Gopi Mohan Mukherjee of Pachdali of Karimganj, the thirteenth president of the Mahasabha was elected in 1984 and he was involved in politics from student days. He was in the forefront in the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement and inspired a large number of Bishnupriya Manipuri youth in social activities.

Bhupendra Kumar Singha of Patharkandi, the fourteenth president of the Mahasabha (1985-86), was associated with the social service from his student life participating in the Quit India Movement of 1942 for which he was imprisoned in the Tezpur jail of Assam. His social service was not confined to this community but also for the all round development of the Barak Valley. He was politically active and a journalist by profession. His most important contribution to the society was the amicable settlement of the internal conflict between two groups of the Mahasabha-Jagat Mohon's group and Nanda kishore's group.

Surendra Kumar Sinha of Kalinjar, Meherpur, the fifteenth president of the Mahasabha (1991-94) was devoted in social service from his early life. He took part in the freedom movement and in
Monoranjan Sinha of Bhakatpur, Meherpur, the sixteenth president of the Mahasabha (1994-99), was well known in the community as a personality and was actively involved in the development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. He was the president of the Andolan Parishad of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement. He organised the movement through his oratory skill in Assam as well as in Tripura. He is now the advisor of the Mahasabha.

Dr Debendra Kumar Sinha of Patharkandi, Karimganj, the seventeenth president of the Mahasabha (1999---), is well known in Barak valley as well as in Assam as a physician. He took the responsibility of the presidency of the Mahasabha when the society was in crucial point due to the Meitei Manipuri people's opposition in the recognition of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language and also the internal conflicts afflicted the society. Due to his influence, he was able to motivate the Assam government to implement the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary schools of the Barak valley in 2001. He has expanded the jurisdiction of the Mahasabha to some other countries of the world organising the historical World Conference of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people of the world at Silchar in 2003. He successfully fought for the case for the community in Supreme Court, often provided financial assistance to the organisation for the purpose. He showed very keen interests in upholding the case of the community, which earned him recognition as the defender of the rights of the smaller linguistic groups for a long time. In a way, he saved the community for the posterity. The Bishnupriya Manipuri community is progressing in its mission due to the untiring efforts of Dr Debendra Kumar Sinha. Thus social consciousness is gradually increasing in this society due to the active involvement of the educated and intelligent people in the service of the society.
1.4 ROLE OF BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI JOURNALS IN THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

Journals play a very important role in the awakening of the society. It is seen that people of every society corresponds their views with other people through newspapers and journals in order to form public opinion. In the freedom movement of India, people of India formed public opinion exchanging their views through newspapers and literary journals the result of which they became determined to organise freedom movement Each linguistic minority group in India became conscious socially expressing and inter changing their views and opinions through newspapers and journals. Similarly Bishnupriya Manipuri community became socially conscious through the role of journals.

Like other society Journals also played significant role in the awakening of social consciousness among Bishnupriya Manipuris. Third decade of the 20th century is the beginning of social consciousness to realise their social existence. 1925 marked the publication of the first Bishnupriya Manipuri monthly journal by the students of Murarichand College, Sylhet and the name of the journal was 'Jagaran' which means awakening. The editorial board was formed by Haridas Singha, Babuchand Singha, Nabadwip Sinha, Nitaichand Sinha, Arjun Singha and Ramkrishna Sinha and the main key of this editorial board was historian Mohendra Kumar Sinha. At that time published language of this magazine was Bengali and this magazine provided a platform to the Bishnupriya Manipuri intellectuals to think of appropriate participation of the members of the community in various fields of activities. In other words, they wanted to come out of the shell.

In the eighth issue of this journal in the article captioned "Jatio Bhasha Samashya", Mohendra Kumar Sinha had advocated in favour
of unity between Bishnupriya Manipuris and Meitei Manipuris which was not supported by other intellectuals and paved the way for the development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. But the publication of this magazine was stopped after two years.

In the year 1933, Bishnupriya Manipuri writers published a new monthly tri-lingual journal i.e., (Bengali, Bishnupriya Manipuri and Meitei Manipuri) known as ‘Manipuri’ and edited by Samarjit Sinha, and co-edited by Dr. Lairen Singha. Rajbabu Sinha of Mashughat, Silchar was the brain behind the publication of this magazine. He was active in the literary field and was popular among the Bishnupriyas. His drive and dedication for the cause of the language invited animosity in the rival camp and he was ultimately murdered by some unidentified persons in 1933.

On the eve of the publication of the journal, Franchise Committee of the British government issued notification on March 29, 1931 giving the Manipuris status of scheduled tribe which had invited strong resentment from the Manipuris (Bishnupriya and Meitei) resulting the formation of Surma Valley Manipuri Association on Sept. 25, 1932 and which ultimately led to the formation of the Birat Sabha or the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha on Sept 30, 1933.

So the “Manipuri” journal became the mouth piece of social consciousness by realising self defects, spreading education in the society and economic prosperity by cottage industries etc. Dinanath Singha of Tilakpur, Tripura in his article “Samaj Cheik” (see the society) appealed youth to be socially conscious, to form national fund for expansion of education and development of handloom industries etc. In the 3rd and 4th issue of the “Manipuri” journal, Manik Sinha by his article ‘Samaj’ appealed to the students to become conscious for the necessity of publishing newspapers. Among other notable articles published in this magazine are “Manipurer Itihas” by Krishna Kumar
Sinha, ‘Mahabharatar Manipur” by Haridas Sinha etc. Lalbabu Sinha, Leikhom Sena Sinha, Guru Bipin Sinha also contributed poems in this magazine. The “Manipuri” magazine has become a guiding force of social development in all respects.

In 1937, Another bi-monthly journal in the name of “Mekhalee” was published from Silchar with Sri Falguni Sinha as the editor. There was a difference of opinion with the management body of the journal ‘Manipuri’.

The main slogan of this journal was to raise social awareness among the Bishnupriya Manipuris. It was a bilingual magazine (Bengali and Bishnupriya Manipuri) in which the views of Gosai Singha on “Bishnupriya Samaj Biplob” (Social revolution among the Bishnupriya Manipuris), Mohendra Kumar Sinha’s “Manipuri Grihadita Aryatalla” (Influence of the Aryan culture among the Manipuris). Manik Singha’s “Manipuri Nritya” (Manipuri dance) are significant. Falguni Sinha, Behari Sinha and Sanat Kumar Sinha wrote poetry in Bengali while Sena Sinha, Basanta Sinha, Nishikanta Sinha and Paramesh Sinha wrote in their own mother tongue, Bishnupriya Manipuri which are commendable for their literary value.

In 1941, a compromise was achieved between the publications of the two journals, ‘Manipuri’ and ‘Mekhalee’ and publication of these two magazines were stopped with the birth of a new bi-monthly journal known as ‘Kshatriojyoti’ under the editorship of Falguni Sinha. It was also published in three languages following the principle of ‘Manipuri’. During this time, Bishnupriya Manipuri people began to use their own language with an aim to start literary activities and many young writers of the time contributed poems, essays and short stories. The magazine could not continue and it was stopped after five years due to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Due to the pressure of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha and at the initiative of the people of Pratapgorh
(Patharkandi), a new journal known as “Bishnupriya” was published in 1956 in which the editor and the joint editor was Mohendra Kumar Sinha and Madon Mohan Mukherjee, the two educationists of this society. This magazine opened a new chapter in the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris because this is the first journal purely published in Bishnupriya Manipuri language. Many intellectual people of this linguistic community contributed articles in their own language on history, essays, short stories and poems etc. Among these articles the article of Mohendra Kumar Sinha on “Bishnupriya Manipurir Itihas” (History of the Bishnupriya Manipuris) is remarkable but the publication of this magazine was stopped after 3 years.

Another Bishnupriya Manipuri journal in the name of “Nuwa Beli” followed by ‘Bishnupriya’ was published from Patharkandi which could not survive for a long time but it helped a class of writers with ideas of social change.

In the contemporary period, another Bishnupriya Manipuri journal known as ‘Arya’ was published with the editorship of Sena Sinha who contributed a special article in this magazine on the topic “Bishnupriya Jat Baro Bishnupriya Bhasha.” (Bishnupriya Society and Language).

In 1960 an individual effort was made by Madon Mohan Rajbangshi to publish another journal “Fagu” from Dullovcherra. The editor was very serious and systematic in editing the journal for all round development of the Bishnupriya Manipuris specially its language, literature, culture and other social fronts. A number of new faces appeared in the field of literature and this journal gave platform to them to publish their valuable writings. The importance of this journal lies on the fact that a serious step was made for the language for which a number of workshops, symposiums were organised by
himself. Moreover, the editor advocated in favour of stressing the need for the introduction of Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a medium in "Vaishnav Pala Kirtan" which was used to perform in Sanskrit brajabali and Bengali. Although Gokulananda Geetiswami had started the movement in the late thirties and forties of the last century but it was due to Madan Rajbangshi that it got its momentum and he was successful in introducing it in the seventies of the last century through pada writers cum performers like Braja Kumar Sinha, Madanchand Sinha, Senarup Sinha, Manimohan Rajkumar and Sonani Sinha. Practically it was ‘Fagu’ which brought a new outlook on society on its culture, literature and language. This magazine started publication of modern poetry in their language and many gifted and prolific writers namely Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Brajendra Kumar Sinha, Senarup Sinha, Gopinath Sinha, Krishnadhan Sinha, Gostho Behari Sinha and Ruhini Rajkumar enriched the pages of the journal. The dramatic presentation of essays on Bishnupriya Manipuri language, literature and culture by Gokulananda Geetiswami is highly commendable. Among the successful storywriters, we may name Indra Kumar Sinha, Amar Kumar Sinha and Kalasena Sinha etc.

The Fagu has contributed for long ten years creating history in its invaluable contribution towards the society in many ways. In 1963, the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union published a magazine ‘Malaya’ with the editing of Manikanta Sinha in which standard historical and linguistic essays were published.

The seventh decade of the last century is a glorious period for the Bishnupriya Manipuri society, language and literature when a number of annual magazines were published from different places.

In 1970, the Manipuri Association, Shillong, published a magazine known as “Panchajanya Arjuni” with the editorial brain of renowned short story writer Lakshmi Kanta Sinha. The prose works
of Dhwajaraj Sinha, Sahityashastri, and Mohideb Sinha on Bishnupriya Manipuri Linguistics on history and on other subjects are highly estimated and found invaluable. At the same time Krishna Kanta Sinha of Shillong also published another journal known as “Chino Ego Kungo” (chino, means identify, ego this man and kungo means who).

The publication of ‘Pratishruti’ from Hailakandi edited by the poet, essayist, story writer Brojendra Kumar Sinha has enriched Bishnupriya Manipuri literature. Dr. Kaliprasad Sinha’s “Essays on Bishnupriya Manipuri language and grammar” and on other subjects are worthy for reference. Writings of the editor Brojendra Kumar Sinha, Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Gopinath Sinha, Senarup Sinha, Amor Sinha and Samarjit Sinha etc. are of high literary standard.

At Guwahati, literary and social activities were reflected in the pages of ‘Chitrangada’, an annual journal of the Radha Madhab Sevashram committee edited by Biresh Ranjan Sinha. The first literary periodical ‘Phalal’ meant for children and edited by Mathura Sinha is worthy of reference.

Reference should be made of the Bishnupriya Manipuris living in the neighbouring state, Tripura. In 1972 a weekly journal, ‘Amar Pou’ (our message) was published from Kailashahar and the editor was Sorojini Sinha.

The eighties of the last century has brought a landmark change in the history of the Bishnupriya Manipuri journal when the government of Tripura started publication of the magazine ‘Tripura che’ (Tripura paper). It is a government publication. Samarjit Sinha was its editor and after him, Anukul Sinha became the editor of this Journal. “Bikrampur Katha” from Bikrampur, ‘Mohini’ from Guwahati, “Tripura Che” from Agartala have brought a revolution in the literature and language of Bishnupriya Manipuri publishing valuable writings such as
“Lampoipar Teipang” by Bimal Sinha and ‘Palong Agor Yari” by Indrajit Rajkumar.

‘Kakei’ another weekly journal published from Dharmanagar, Tripura and edited by Anita Sinha, has created an impact upon the Bishnupriya Manipuri society in Assam and Tripura. This paper is still now serving the society by the editorial skill of Anita Sinha. It is publishing articles on social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society.

Bishnupriya Manipuri women are also not lagging behind in this aspect. Jamini Devi, wife of Nishikanta Sinha of East Krishnanagor, Dullavcherra had donated Rs. 200.00 for the continuation of the journal ‘Manipuri’. Radha Rani Sinha was the first lady writer in Bishnupriya Manipuri language whose poem was published in the 2nd issue of the ‘Manipuri’ journal. Indubala Sinha also wrote the article “Cheler Prati Mayer Upadesh” and Sushila Bala Devi of Sripur in her article “Shtri Siksha Sambande Jatkinchit” gave importance upon female education which is very essential for social development.

In 1982, Sandhya Sinha published a magazine “Nuwa Ela” in Bishnupriya Manipuri language from Jorhat and now it is from Silchar. Now it has become a monthly magazine which gave a platform for the writers to expose their talents in Bishnupriya Manipuri language, literature and poetry etc. A galaxy of new writers appeared in the field of literature. Of them we may name Dils Lakshmindra Sinha, Bishwajit Sinha, Bimal Sinha, Champalal Sinha, Sudhanya Sinha, Dils Debojyati Sinha, Srikanta Sinha, Manashi Sinha, Sabita Sinha, Sandhya Sinha, Nitu Sinha, and Pramesh Sinha etc. This magazine gradually improves its standard. In 1990 Anjana Sinha of Guwahati with the patronage of her husband Shanti Kumar Sinha,
edited a bilingual (Assamese and Bishnupriya Manipuri) fortnightly newspaper known as “Nuwa-Dristi”. Though it is a newspaper yet essays of social reformation are being published.

2003 was the remarkable year for Bishnupriya Manipuri women because few Bishnupriya Manipuri women under the leadership of Manashi Sinha, a literary writer and critic, organised a body known as “Amogh Monjooree” and published an annual Bishnupriya Manipuri magazine in the name of “Hridir Pou” with the editing of Manashi Sinha. This magazine gave platform to many new talented women writers such as Gita Sinha, Sumita Rajkumari, Rasabati sinha and Ruplekha Rajkumari etc. This magazine published the articles of the contribution of the Bishnupriya Manipuri women in the development of their society and created the spirit of social consciousness among women. This magazine is worthily accepted by the renowned writers, critics and poets of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. This magazine is advancing with advance writing which is a symbol of the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri women.

Besides that ‘Sudheshna’ edited by Sukhoda Singha of Hailakandi, ‘Lehaunu’ edited by Anita Sinha of Gauhati, “Nikulil Mengshel” of Bidisha Sinha, ‘Chinta’ of Shanti Sinha and ‘Sachak’ by Monika Sinha etc. are remarkable. Besides these we may mention some literary and socio-cultural Bishnupriya Manipuri journals with editors in the following way.

Kalar Katha by Bhimsen Sinha, Bhagirathi by Chandra Gupta, Nabarun by Gojendra Kumar Sinha, Arya by Sena Sinha, Pratap by Birbabu Sinha, Sahitya (literature) by Kushal Kumar Sinha and Barun Kumar Sinha, Panchjanya by Golapsena Sinha and Kalasena Sinha,

Lastly it must be mentioned that publication of some of the journals was stopped due to the financial constraints but their contribution to the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris will be memorable. These journals gave a clear picture of the past, present and gave direction for the future days coming by.

1.5 SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH LITERATURE

Literature plays a very positive and constructive role in the awakening of social consciousness. It is universally true that society of any country has became conscious in many devices, out of them literature plays a significant role. Here we may cite the example of Bengali literature specially poems and dramas. Many remarkable poets of Bengali literature such as Rabindra Nath Tagore, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Sukanta Bhattacharjee and Kazi Nazrul Islam etc. played a crucial role in the awakening of social consciousness not only among Bengalees but also among Indian people who were inspired to fight against British imperialism for attaining independence.

Minstrel poet, Mukunda Das had given importance on the awakening of public consciousness to revolt against British imperialism. He wanted to awaken the concealed consciousness by the following songs.
Bhoi ki morane

Rakhite santane

Matangi meteshe aaj samar range.

He appealed to the Bengalees saying that they should not be afraid of death in order to preserve their independence. He also said that even female elephants are roaring in the battlefield and appealed to the countryman to non-co-operate with the British government.

He also appealed to the Indians in the spirit of Swadeshi movement by the following lines.

Fele dao kacher churi bangola nari

Kabhu hate aar parona.

He addressed Bengali women to remove the churi of glass from their hand and never to use these churis again in their hands. These lines imbibed the spirit of boycotting foreign goods among Indians.

Kazi Nazrul Islam was a revolutionary poet and he realised tricky policy of the British government to create division between Hindus and Muslims in order to perpetuate their imperial rule. So Nazrul in his poem “Kandari Hushiar” appealed to Hindus and Muslims to maintain unity in order to continue struggle against the British government. He also tried to create political consciousness among Indians by the poem “Bidruhi”. In 1882 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee compiled “Bande Mataram” song in his famous novel “Anandamath”. Bande Mataram is a psalm of life for patriotic Indians. This novel is a glaring example of patriotism. Impact of the revolutionary movement due to the partition of Bengal was felt upon the novel Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore the result of which he wrote two novels “Ghore Bahire” and “Char Adhyay”.
Like other literature, Bishnupriya Manipuri literature imbided the Bishnupriya Manipuris to become socially conscious in order to decide their own social existence. Poetical works of this literature play the main role to make people socially conscious supported by the supplementary role of dramas. Names’ of Gokulananda Geetiswami, a min:strel poet, Leikhomsena Sinha, Senarup Sinha, Jagatmohon Sinha, Gopinath Sinha, Jogendra Kumar Sinha, Manashi Sinha and Suranath Sinha etc. are remarkable to awake the social spirit of Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Dramatists like Madon Mohan Mukherjee, Kalasena Sinha and Jogendra Kumar Sinha have composed dramas for awakening social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

First we describe the role of poets in social awakening by the following poems.

Gokulananda Geetiswami, the min:strel poet, composed the poem “Jati Jagoron Ela” by the following lines

_Utho utho Rajar gang utho utho Madoi gang_

_Aarta koti ghumjiya thaitai_

_Utho Cachar, Pratapgarh, Kalasar, Dharmanagar_

_Dhalua, Haalha baki nei_

_Tanute habi utla, nijor nijor kame lagla_

_Aur egote ghumjiya thaila.

_Rajar gang madoi gang jeta bapak agor jiput eta_

_Tangal buliya jat na bisereio_

_Puran nikaleya cheite dangor huru bisarte_

_Kareu kungoi jingesita nei_

_Rajar gang madoi gang belei_
By this poem, the poet appealed two groups of Bishnupriya Manipuris – Rajar gang and Madoi gang to be conscious socially and not to remain idle in the social affairs. He appealed to the Bishnupriya Manipuri people of Cachar, Pratapgarh, Kailashohar, Dharmanagar, Halhali to become socially conscious and they are engaged in their duties. But the people of Aur area of Tripura could not become conscious. He also appealed them to remove their differences considering them “all Bishnupriyas” and addressed them as sons of the Kshatriya who should be united to fight for the progress of their society. Due to this appeal, these two groups became united and continued their movement the result of which their language was recognised by the government of Tripura as well as by the Assam government.

Leikhomsensa Sinha of Singari, Silchar, composed the following poem of social consciousness.

Oh kala chingkheir kathanat
Puja karte dhou,
Ketokir gathan murgat kariya
Ail kangala bou.

Tap tap  tup tup
Korer tul tul

Ojago peyao nachtara aji
Habi bonor phul

Gun gun kariya bhromor
Aaila phular bone.

Nanajati phular rosh pitara kshone kshone
Ehan kihan oile

Habi phule nachte

Tite tole poriya thaile Maloti.

Esadhe lila koroshot girok

Oh Bhogowan

Utar loge koredhis probhu

Ami habihan.

By the lines of the poem the poet says that other linguistic communities of the society are advanced. They are progressing in their right path but the Bishnupriya Manipuri community are not aware of their own existence. They are unable to progress in their desired way. So he appealed to the Almighty God to improve the lot of this linguistic backward community.

Senarup Sinha of Bikrampur, Cachar, another Bishnupriya Manipuri poet, composed a social awakening song known as "Khalkoril Din Ahil" which is narrated below.

Bishnupriyar jiput tumar

Khalkoril din ahil

Aar din nei jator thomei

Efir nivat poril.

Amar bapok Babhrubahon

Chitrangodhar putok

Malokor man ngakkortega

Mareshil tar bapok.

Pahurlai yari itihas habi

Koria imar durdurbali
Tole thanai dangor moneya
Ghoshlai kali chhali.
Khueya boishishto hareya isto
Loipake kosta bujai
Bangede batedhe kotgo kheya
Chhotphoteya mangot porlai.
Toletto kotota kaya aya aya
Tol kore dilo gojore
Amite huddha lamte thailang
Goj ningkoria tolore.
Jago bishnupriya joikrishno buliya
Imar jange thoi katkoro
Mariya akpet oya lalfam koriya
Bishnupriyar meithong ngalkoro.23

By this poem, the poet addressed to the Bishnupriya Manipuri people saying that oh; Bishnupriya Manipuri Children, day of thinking for your society has come. If you do not do so then future days will be bleak for you. Your father is Babrubahon, Chitrangadha’s son who killed his father Arjuna in the battle in order to keep the prestige of his mother. So you do not forget your precious history and remove all obstacles of your mother tongue. Now you are not conscious of your identity and as a result you are losing your existence. You will be nowhere from the society due to the suppression of other’s. History shows that many linguistic communities have upgraded their status and existence. But Bishnupriya Manipuri people have degraded their status and existence and live a degraded life. He appealed to Bishnupriya Manipuri people to awake socially to sacrifice their lives for the cause of mother tongue Bishnupriya Manipuri and to start their
linguistic movement unitedly for the proper existence of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community.

Jagat Mohan Sinha, chief patron of the Bishnupriya Manipuri literature, composed the following social awakening poem.

*Kakei kakei aguei
Kakei kakei aguei
Bharot imar ure.*

*Matrimonror dhoro firal
Shokti gunlo oya ingal ngal
Bhedabhed pahuro imar joy loukoro.*

*Buddho Hindu Christian
Jain Sikh Musolman
Sonkolpolo chetkoro
Pashi ichu tontro montro
Habir ghoje gonotontro.*

*Agore agoi kalkoro
Habir tati mutkoro
Boron badol mujuro.*

*Imare hazadei
Jogotor patrani hongkorei
Punya jonom dhonya jhorom
Dhonyo amar dhorom korom
Bharat imar ure.*

By this poem, the poet appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to go forward step by step with blessings of motherland India. He appealed the people to keep the flag of nationalism in order to be
enlightened by unity and virtue and to shout the victory of mother tongue forgetting the differences among themselves. He also said that people irrespective of caste, creed and religion have enjoyed their democratic rights by the recognition of their language. But Bishnupriya Manipuri people are deprived of their basic rights and should fight unitedly in all circumstances. He also appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to make progress of their community and make their mother tongue as queen consort of the world. At that time their birth will be virtuous and commendable. Their religion and efforts will be successful in the motherland India.

Gopinath Sinha, pioneer of the linguistic movement of Bishnupriya Manipuris, appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to participate in the movement to get their language recognised by the government by the following lines of the poem “Komta Nagoi”.

Oh beibuni tumi komta nagoi,
Tumi komta nagoi.
Bir Manipuri Bishnupriya
Manipure paloya Manipure ngaloya
Bishnupure tumar konung ashe
Dur durbali hattak oya
Awar bagane.
Tumi khalu jhalu iowa denga
Rajyahara bir manipuri
Aktou napeile imathar peile
Sworgor nungei jiputor hoke.

By these lines he appealed to Bishnupriya Manipuri people to recognise themselves as heroes who ruled Manipur and the symbol of this rule is the existence of king’s palace in Bishnupur. These
Bishnupriya Manipuri people, who were ousted from Manipur due to the Burmese invasion, should come forward at least to get recognition of their mother tongue, which may be the happiness of the heaven due to the heroic activities of the Bishnupriya Manipuris.

Non-Identification of Bishnupriya Manipuri in the 1961 census compelled the Bishnupriya Manipuri revolutionary poet, Madon Mohan Mukherjee to compose poems in order to inculcate consciousness among Bishnupriya Manipuri people. He composed the poem ‘Nartarai’ in the book of poems known as ‘Thoigo’. The lines of this poem are –

**Etharhan Imai more aturi hejat**

*Nikka nikka, boya boya kadat kadat*

*Dhwa ahir isaralo mukhsilo mateya*

*Ponchopranhan thoI hatgi diya.*

*Matueilo ‘Ima’ bulo- baga dilo ‘Ima’*

*Ima nungshipa thar mor Bishnupriya*

*Thapakali lowal yekna koriya*

*Khounat tipa dhiya.*

*Maranihan – mangkorani*

*Mimut korani*

*Nartarai tumi nartarai.*

Significance of this poem is that his mother from his childhood tried to teach his mother tongue by the word “Ima” (mother) from her core heart. He also said that the sweetest mother tongue is Bishnupriya Manipuri which cannot be suppressed by the government. So he warned the government and appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to revolt against the government for the recognition of their mother tongue, which is the basic condition of social existence.
Historian Mohendra Kumar Sinha of Patharkandi, recited the poem “Gan” in a meeting arranged at Bhakatpur under the presidency of the then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Mr. Walker Sahab after recognising the Bishnupriya Manipuris as caste Hindus but not as tribals. Lines of the poems.

Jwaler ebuja peyao Anarjyor bukut thaiyau

Arya sabhyotar thong meihanlo

Aho aho Rajargang, aho aho Madoi gang

Babhrubahonor jiput habihan

Bichara bichiri beleya

Lengkati badhiya

Tulo apa bopar firalhan.25

By these lines, he meant to say that Bishnupriya Manipuri people residing among non-Aryan people, are maintaining their own existence. He also appealed two groups of Bishnupriya Manipuri people-Rajar Gang and Madoi Gang to maintain unity among themselves and to proceed further for the progress of their society.

Dr. Kaliprasad Sinha, renowned educationist, composed a poem of social consciousness in the book of poetry “Elar Mala”.

Lines of the poem are :

Uthohe amar beibuni habi

Ajikar modhu logne

Belir mingal aher ou chei

Mungedhe rongira boron.

Sotyot otol thai tumi ore
Sinha in his poetic style appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to be awakened in present jubilant time. He also said that sunshine is coming forward to light this world. He appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to follow the path of truth with devotion, and to maintain unity among them for the proper existence in this society. So along with other linguistic communities of the world, all should be proud of unity among them and shout with pride that Mother India, which is here referred to Bishnupriya Manipuri society, should prosper and progress in this world.

Jogendra Kumar Sinha, a leader of the Bishnupriya Manipuri linguistic movement, also composed a social awakening poem “Aho Aho Habihan”.

Lines of the poem are:

Aho aho habihan

Imar montre dhiksha loya imar jayodhwani dhiya
By this poem the poet appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to come together and march forward taking the swear in the name of mother tongue. He also appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to upgrade their society superseding other societies. He also appealed to all Bishnupriya Manipuri people to do their duties sincerely with devotion for the betterment of the society.

Another Bishnupriya Manipuri poet, Bimal Kumar Sinha, had composed a society inspiring poem ‘Partaraita’ which is expressed below:

*Kakei karani partaraita tenua dol, karani kakei*  
*Imar kaje thoigo dena akgou ki nei*  
*Dhehoraita imar kisade sathan ose kisade*  
*Thampalgo para meithonge kali poreshe*  
*Ahir konede.*  
*Lishing lishing jiput ima ti jorom deshot kiyaka*
Poet Bimal Sinha emotionally appealed and imbibed youth to go forward for the sake of their language i.e. Bishnupriya Manipuri Language because the bright face of the mother Bishnupriya Manipuri had become ugly. He was astonished to see that many Bishnupriya Manipuri people were not conscious of their own society and to speak their own mother tongue. He also lamented that Bishnupriya Manipuri people could not maintain unity in their movement of existence and they did not come forward to serve their society. He also said that Bishnupriya Manipuri society should have some people who can always champion for their mother tongue. These enlightened youth can make progress of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. In this way social consciousness was injected in the society by such emotional poem.

Mathura Sinha, a Bishnupriya Manipuri poet, composed a social awakening poem “Soloi Gaorapei” to inspire youth in their linguistic movement.

Saloi gaorapei

Jikgha jikgha saloi

Saloi gaorapei
Poet Mathura Sinha encouraged youth to come forward in order to remove darkness in the society. He called upon the youth to be guided by a patriotic spirit and shake off idleness as the mother tongue is a mighty force in the world. They have to overcome the obstacles to
fulfill their aims and should not be afraid of darkness. It is universally true that after bad days, good days will come. The Bishnupriya Manipuri people should stand united and nurture hope that in near future, the government will recognise their mother tongue.

Suranath Sinha had composed a poem inspiring the Bishnupriya Manipuri society in the spirit of the linguistic movement.

*Ajikar punyatirtho mahamilonor shonkho dhwani*

*Oure roher*

*Habiye akin khourange*

*Dehik amar imare.*

*Ichudinkar rou ahil*

*Habita pahurik*

*Oasak koriya dik milonor jayodhwani.*

*Huru dhangor leira bora nathak amarang*

*Agoi agoi channa oya thaik habihan*

*Ahok bouboron dou jilkeya bojro belak*

*Amar gajedhe.*

*Kitar kaje dorpeitangai e kheltame*

*Aha aha habi beibuni e punya lagne*

*Imar firal dhorik habiye*

*Ekin khourange*

*Dhorik amar Imare.*

The poet appeals that all Bishnupriya Manipuri people will enhance the prestige of mother tongue with sole devotion because there is a sound of conch. Call of all previous days came and people should advance forgetting all past things. Today, promise should be
made to maintain unity in order to safeguard the prestige of the mother tongue. In this society there should not be any superiority and inferiority feeling and no distinction between rich and poor. All should be united and should march forward in any situation without any fear. In this holy time all brothers and sisters of Bishnupriya Manipuri community come forward in flag hand with devotion and call their mother tongue for its prosperity.

Manashi Sinha, a lady poet, who is always sincere to organise women fraternity of this community, exhibits her consciousness through the poem-

ʼImatharʼ (Matribhasha, Mother Tongue )

Hakhanadhe fordhiya
Ramdhonuk hanor tula homaji badhiya
Bahul oya salose Tenua.

Muksi dhiya
Ronge matiri aai homaji, mi chhara goti nei
Ashangpa duniya hanat
Dhwiyogiye nashiya horour sorahanade bahik
Rongor pohurighot burdhe burdhe
Houponor mingal dehik.
Tenuai matiri, mujuria bela ti rongor houpon
Imatharor nei kuno boron pabon
Imathar houpon mimang
Imathar neyoile kitar dak kortan.
Liri liri bouhanadhe bahiya
Aher mingalor elahan
Bouhane aya kane kane matiri
Itihas lengkoranihan.

Imathar mor khuttolhan
Imathare imalamar bana nungshi thakathan.
The poet narrates the importance of the mother tongue through a conversation between two imaginary birds, named Tenua and Rong. Tenua is a lover of mother tongue whereas Rong, another symbolic bird, is not conscious about mother tongue and is concerned with romance and earthly joy. Rong addressed to Tenua to enjoy in this world the beauty of nature whereas Tenua refuses to do so. It also says that without social existence no community can exist properly as Bishnupriya Manipuri. People should struggle for the recognition of their mother tongue by the government which is the constitutional right of every linguistic group. Tenua says that mother tongue is the breast milk and cites the example of Bibhishan as betrayer of the country. So it makes people conscious about the role of Bibhishan who always
created obstacles in the way of development of Lanka. Tenua says that she will go forward to the path surrounded by iron pins with blood and compose patriotic songs making bloodshed. So Tenua appeals Bishnupriya Manipuri people to continue their movement for the recognition of their language by the government. Tenua also creates emotion in the minds of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people saying that

*Mother tongue is my dress*

*Mother tongue is my affection*

*Mother tongue’s recognition by the government is my devotion.*

Lakshmikanta Sinha of Kalain, who was a revolutionary poet, also composed a revolutionary poem “Chikari Kham Naitoi” narrating the spirit of the linguistic movement of the Bishnupriya Manipuris against the government by the following lines of the poem.

*Amare mimut koranir ninge*

*Tumar joto ase lousing lingkhat koro*

*Tat bator lotalo bereya*

*Amar manur hinduk sechani noartarai.*

*Thoiya thum yarir hute bahueya*

*Muksr mel patleu*

*Amar buk tati*

*Kokkore nuartarai.*

*Harbou napeya khamtolor parenge*

*Abera Jonomor sat bat dehiya*

*Hilar lumpak amar mure*

*Kakarani oasak.*

*Amare hojak korese*

*Amare minut karanir ninge*

*Tomar yeta ase lousing lingkhat koro.*
By this poem the poet warned the government and told Bishnupriya Manipuri people not to be appeased by the tricky policy of the government to suppress their genuine linguistic movement. He also said that Bishnupriya Manipuris are deprived of their basic rights and their grievances cannot be suppressed by the fulfillment of other demands. He said that stones or boulders are on their head because they are living their insignificant lives without the fulfillment of their basic demand i.e. recognition of their language by the government. He also warned the government not to apply tricky policies to suppress the movement and they will continue their movement with slogans unless and until their basic demand is fulfilled by the government.

Narendra Kumar Sinha of Meherpur, Silchar in his poem "Oilga Oilga Jago" appealed to the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to become conscious in social spirit. He appealed the people by these lines

\[
\text{Oilga oilgo jago jago ghume nathayo} \\
\text{E duniyat palonir andolan koro} \\
\text{Bidhwan oya nukulo jone jone} \\
\text{Somajore palkoro jogotor munge.} \\
\text{Bidhya gunlo nukulo habir munge} \\
\text{Kshotrio tumi na aloyo} \\
\text{Joy Bishnupriya Manipuri bulo.} \\
\text{Joi koro ghyan buddhi} \\
\text{Arjunor bongsho he bir na aloyo.}^{28}
\]
The poet appealed to the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to be socially conscious and not to remain idle now. They are requested to follow the path of the movement in order to recognise their existence in this modern world and to enlighten their society in the world becoming educated. All Bishnupriya Manipuri people should proceed further with virtue and should revolt because they are Kshatriyas. He also inspired the people to acquire intelligence, knowledge and go forward because they are the descendents of the Arjuna—the third Pandav of Mahabharata.

Bishnupriya Manipuri dramas also inspired their linguistic movement and the remarkable dramas in this respect are ‘Loilat’ of Madon Mohan Mukherjee, ‘Adalat’ and “Gumar Adhar Bagiya” of Kalasena Sinha of Dullovcherra, “Karmabir Rajbabu” and “Amar Dabi Dena Lagtoi” of Jogendra Kumar Sinha.

“Jampuri theatre” written by Jagat Mohan Sinha has social significance. Here the dramatist compared the government with ‘Jamraj’ who had killed all main social workers. The anti-social elements were satisfied due to the role of the government. So he, by this drama, warned the people of the society to be cautious against the tricky policy of the government.

Madon Mohan Mukherjee, a Bishnupriya Manipuri dramatist, earned popularity for his drama ‘Loilat’ giving symbolic expression of the Pandavas of Mahabharata in context with Bishnupriya Manipuris who are in pathetic condition due to the non-recognition of their language by the government. Pandavas had suffered a very miserable life for 13 years when they were driven out by Kauravas due to the cunning policy of Shakuni, maternal uncle of Kauravas. Inspite of so much sufferings, Pandavas ultimately became able to get their own empire due to their right stand. Similarly Bishnupriya Manipuris may face obstacle to get recognition of their language temporarily but
ultimately they will be able to fulfill that demand due to their strong
determination and right stand. So by this drama, the dramatist has
inspired the Bishnupriya Manipuri people to go to their path of linguistic
movement with confidence and courage.

Adalot is another remarkable drama written by Kalasena Sinha
of Dullovcherra. It was composed by the dramatist giving the pen
picture of the vigorous phases of the linguistic movement of the
Bishnupriya Manipuris of the Barak Valley in 1968. He, by his drama,
exposed the role of the intellectual people, who by their songs, poems,
lectures, inspired the common people to continue struggle for their
mother tongue. Agitationists have the dare to face many awkward
situations and government punishments because they are determined
to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their mother tongue. Similarly
there are many people who have betrayed the revolutionaries and their
character and role are clearly reflected in the drama. So by this drama
dramatist desired to make people socially conscious in the spirit of the
society.

Karmabir Rajbabu is another remarkable drama composed by
Jogendra Kumar Sinha of Mashughat in the memory of Rajbabu who
was assassinated by unidentified persons. He always dedicated his
energy for the Bishnupriya Manipuri language and did a lot of social
service which Bishnupriya Manipuris can not forget and should not
forget. To inject this ideal of Rajbabu and to pay tribute to Rajbabu.
Jogendra Kumar Sinha, an educationist, composed a drama in the
name of “Karmabir Rajbabu” to inspire the people in the spirit of the
linguistic movement. This drama gained popularity in the extreme level
in every geographical area where Bishnupriya Manipuri people
reside.29

Another remarkable social awakening drama composed by
Jogendra Kumar Sinha is “Amar Dabi Dena Lagtoi” which was
demonstrated showing the picture of the society in the linguistic movement. In course of time of the linguistic movement, two views emerged which hampered the course of the linguistic movement due to their narrow outlook. Here the dramatist showed the solution of these differences by the arrest of the leaders of vested interest and unity between these two groups was forcibly made which paved the way to fulfill the main demand of the movement i.e. introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language in the primary stage of education by creating unity among them. When the society will be united automatically their demand will be fulfilled by the government. This drama was demonstrated in every pargana of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society in order to awake social consciousness.

1.6 ROLE OF THE WOMEN ORGANISATIONS IN THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

Women organisations are also contributing a lot in the social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society. The first women organisation of the Bishnupriya Manipuri community is known as "Narikalyan Samiti" which was established by the Bishnupriya Manipuri women of Silchar town of Assam in 1975. It was mainly established to fulfill the following objectives

(I) To create social awareness among the Bishnupriya Manipuri women.

(II) To upgrade weaving and handloom technology for the production of well decorated products.

(III) To sell handloom materials by making liaison with the owners of cloth shop

It had an executive committee consisting of 11 members. The main office bearers of this committee are-

President - Chandana Singha
Vice president - Ketaki Singha
Secretary - Sorojini Singha
Members - Sumoti Bala Sinha,
- Beda Sinha,
- Binodini Sinha.

It conducted a meeting per week in the house of every member on the basis of rotation in order to create social awareness among the people. Another achievement of this samiti was that it opened a stall at Gandhi Mela for three years with a view to sell Manipuri clothes, sweets and other things etc. Another achievement of this samiti was that it opened a stall at Gandhi Mela for three years with a view to sell Manipuri clothes, sweets and other things etc.

This organisation through a deputation met Hiteswar Saikia, the then Home Minister of Assam, for the allotment of one plot of land for the construction of the building of the samiti. Here the role of Promod Sinha of Dudpatil must be praised because he led the samiti to meet the Home Minister. But this committee was dissolved in 1978 due to internal conflict.

Bishnupriya Manipuri Women Organisation is another women organisation of the society. Padmaja Sinha and Jyotsna Rajkumari are the president and secretary of this organisation respectively. This organisation is working sincerely to make women socially conscious. This organisation always co-operates with the Mahasabha for the social upliftment. This organisation allotted relief among the flood victims of the Meherpur and Kalain and fire victims of the Patharkandi affected by communal disturbance.

The role of the Amogh Monjooree of Silchar town also demands mention in this context. This organisation came into existence on October 12, 2003 with the presidentship of Prativa Sinha and the secretaryship of Manashi Sinha. It is promise bound to make conscious of women for the proper development of the society. This
organisation, in its inaugural ceremonial meeting, organised a discussion session on the topic “Role of women in the development of the literature of the society”.

It is the pioneer organisation of this society to observe “International Women’s Day” on March 8, 2004 in order to increase awareness about the concept “Women empowerment”. In this auspicious day Seminar cum Health Awareness Camp was organised at Chencooree High School, Meherpur, Silchar under the presidency of Kulabati Mukherjee, president of Chencooree Goan Panchayat, Dr B.P. Nath and Dr. Sumana Naiding gave medical treatment to the patients in this camp.

In the remarkable world conference held at Silchar organised by the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahasabha on November 22 and 23, 2003, Amogh Monjooree in collaboration with All Assam Bishnupriya Manipuri Woman Organisation, organised a Handloom and Handicraft exhibition. On August 9, 2004, Amogh Monjooree distributed flood relief among flood victims of the Chandrapur area from its own fund.

In the annual programme of the organisation held on Oct 12, 2004 a seminar was arranged on the topic “Constructive role of women in the development of the society”. In the early part of 2005 this organisation distributed blankets among the poor people of the village Rajnagar irrespective of all communities.

On March 8, 2005 this organisation arranged “International Women’s Day” with medical camp at Rajnagar which is managed by the help of the doctors Dr. D.K. Deb, Dr. Swapna Sen and Dr. Sumana Naiding. In the annual programme of the organisation in February 2006 it organised a seminar on the literary topic “Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahityat Byaktinisthata Baro Bastunishthota” where literary experts of this community explained their views.
On March 8, 2006 it also celebrated “International Women’s Day” at Gagrapar near Srikona with a free medical camp. This organisation distributed clothes and other necessary materials among the fire victims due to the communal riot of the village Nurkha – a corner village of Patharkandi police station of the Karimganj district on March 19, 2006.

In the 3rd annual programme of this organisation in February 2006, it organised a seminar on a political topic “Role of the Minority Community women in the present political scenario of India” in which Prof Tanmay Bhattacharje, Department of Political Science, Assam University, Silchar and Probhat Kumar Sinha, Head of the Department of Political Science of Radha Madhab College, Silchar, were present and participated in the deliberations.33

On March 8, 2007 on the occasion of the “International Womens Day” it distributed fruits among the patients of the Silchar Cancer Hospital located at Meherpur.

Moreover this organisation is also trying to highlight the role of women in the development of the society and to make the women conscious about the society. Manashi Sinha, is actively involved as the secretary of the organisation. The aim of the organisation is to make women socially aware and to uplift the social condition of women. Under her initiative and secretaryship, another organisation i.e. the United Women’s Forum was inaugurated at Silchar on February 9, 2008. It is the central organisation drawn from women’s organisations of different linguistic groups of Silchar. The units of U.W.F. are Literary Club, Shyamaprasad Road Mahila Committee, Jagaran Mahila Samiti, Uttaran Nari Sangstha, Nistha, Nandini Sahitya Oh Path Chakra, Maitreyi Sangha, Subhas Nagar Mahila Mangal Sangstha (Bengali), Amogh Monjooree (Bishnupriya Manipuri), Nepali Mahila Samiti (Nepali), Asom Sahitya Sobha Women Wing (Assamese),
Ngantheibi Lup (Meitei Manipuri), Ngeiluk Sister Welfare Society (Naga) and Barman Bahumukhi Mahila Unnayan Committee (Burman). This organisation’s main aim is to highlight the strong challenges, oppressions faced by women at home and outside. UWF is for the unity and security of women belonging to all communities. On the whole we may say that organisations are sincere in the concept ‘women empowerment’.

Another women organisation for the development of the society is “Seven Sisters Women Welfare Society” which was established in 2001and Head office of this organisation is Silchar. This non-governmental organisation is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 vide regd no. Rs/CA/243/B/16 July2, 2001.

This organisation has an executive committee of 11 members. President and secretary of this non-governmental organisation are Bina Sinha and Bhanumati Sinha respectively. This organisation has performed many public welfare functions. In 2001 at Chedana village of Nagaland, clothes were distributed among 500 families. In 2002 at Markalik Tribal village of Jiribam, Manipuri clothes were distributed among 1000 families. In 2003 Medical awareness camp was organised at Nehru High School, Meherpur, Silchar. This organisation donated Rs. 16,000/- (Sixteen Thousand) only for the construction of the hostel of Sri Sri Bhubaneswar Sadhu Thakur Sevashram, Door Darshan Road, Silchar.

Another women organisation formed in Gauhati is ‘Sodou Guwahati Bishnupriya Manipuri Mahila Samiti’ (All Guwahati Bishnupriya Manipuri Women’s Organisation). Its first president and secretary were Sukhojyoti Sinha and Sushila Sinha respectively. This organisation is performing various welfare functions of the society and it is playing a significant role to bring all women of the community together in the greater Guwahati area. Members of this organisation
came to Silchar in October, 2005 during the flood with relief materials and distributed these to the distressed people at Meherpur and Patharkandi.  

In July 2006, an women organisation in the name of ‘Pratapgarh Beyapa Samiti’ (Pratapgarh Women’s organisation) was formed at Patharkandi in order to prevent social injustice and anti-social activities. The first President and secretary of this organisation are Aloka Sinha and Renuka Sinha respectively.

Besides these, mahila samitis are formed mostly in every village of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Community in order to ponder over the development of the society. Thus women of this community have become gradually conscious and this social consciousness was reflected by the formation of women organisations in the different areas of the society.

1.7 ROLE OF OTHER BISHNUPIYA MANIPURI ORGANISATIONS:

ROLE OF THE STUDENTS UNION

Sixth decade of the twentieth century was the period of social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris which had its impact upon the student society. Gurucharan College is a primier college of the Barak Valley, Assam and students of the Bishnupriya Manipuris and other linguistic minority communities of this college became conscious to form a common platform for their all round development. Gopinath Sinha of Dullovcherra, a Bishnupriya Manipuri student, took the initiative to form a linguistic Minority Students Union in 1960 with the students of Manipuris (Bishnupriyas and Meiteis), Burmans, Nepalis and Hindusthanis. Suresh Burman and Gopinath Sinha were elected as the president and the secretary of this Students Union respectively. Gopinath Sinha again formed Gurucharan College Bishnupriya
Manipuri Students Union in 1960 under his presidency. One point is to be noted here that social consciousness was also developed among students of other linguistic minority communities due to the initiative of Gopinath Sinha.

In course of time with the awakening of social consciousness, Bishnupriya Manipuri students formed a Students Union known as Silchar Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union particularly with the effort of Gopinath Sinha. This union published a hand writing magazine known as “Malaya” with the editing of Manidhwaj Sinha of Kachudharam. This was the reflection of the social consciousness of the students of this linguistic community.

Due to the intelligence of the Bishnupriya Manipuri students leader, Gopinath Sinha, in the Gurucharan College magazine “Purbashree,” Manipuri section (both Bishnupriya and Meitei) was created and for the post of the Assistant editor-in-charge of the Manipuri section of the “Purbashree”, election was contested between Gopinath Sinha (Bishnupriya Manipuri) and Dhananjoy Sinha (Meitei Manipuri) in which Gopinath Sinha was elected for the same post. It is to be mentioned that at that time Jayanta Bhattacharjee ex-Vice-Chancellor of the Assam University was the editor of the ‘Purbashree’ magazine and Barun Sinha was the sub-editor of the English section of the Purbashree. This was a signal for the development of social consciousness of the Bishnupriya Manipuris because students of this community got a platform to express their views in a popular student’s magazine.

Here it is proudly mentioned that in the life history of the Purbashree magazine one Bishnupriya Manipuri student became its editor in 1955-56 and he was Madon Mohan Mukherjee of Anipur who was also sincere to think for the social development of the Bishnupriya Manipuri society.
During the time near about 1962-63 there was a preface of the different languages known as “Sanjukta Patrika” in which Gopinath Sinha was chosen as the joint editor. So it is observed that Bishnupriya Manipuri students tried to develop their society making liaison with other linguistic groups.

The Silchar Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union arranged various types of competition in different areas of the society the result of which social consciousness was developed.

With the initiative of the Silchar Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union a conference of the Bishnupriya Manipuri students was held at Singari, Silchar and the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union was formed and Gopinath Sinha was all-in-all to form the executive body of the students union. From that time Students Union organised meetings in different areas in order to mobilize youth in the spirit of recognition of the mother tongue by the government.

In 1967 Students Union convened a conference of youth at Singari, Silchar to discuss about the phases of the linguistic movement. But the Students Union could not take the leadership of the linguistic movement because the Andolan Parishad, a separate body, under the presidency of Sona Sinha of Singari (popularly known as Hanga Chara) was formed for launching the movement. The Andolan Parishad is the banner of all people irrespective of age. But the Students Union gave full support and cooperation to the Andolan Parishad in launching the linguistic movement.

On November 19, 1978, a Gana Abhibartan was convened at Bhakatpur, Silchar with the joint effort of the Mahasabha and the students union. The convenor of this Abhibartan was Monoranjan Sinha who was the then General Secretary of the Mahasabha. So the
Students Union kept liaison with other organisations of the society for the social development.

It organised conferences and meetings at different places of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas and imbibed the spirit among youth for their proper social existence. During that period Anil Sinha Gautam, Rasamoy Sinha, Kripamoy Sinha, Pachugopal Sinha and Debojyoti Sinha were the main leaders of the students union. In the meantime the Assam State Committee of the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Student's Union was formed.

On Feb 6, 1989 Students Union observed 12 hr. Rail Roko movement in the Barak valley in which large number of people participated. Nirmal Sinha, Nalini Sinha, Surachandra Sinha etc. led this movement.

In the meantime the Student's Union was divided into two groups- one group is called Pro-Mahasabha Students Union and the other group is called Pro-Sahitya Sabha Students Union. The Pro Mahasabha Students Union was led by Gautam Sinha, Parimal Sinha, Dilip Sinha, Gobinda Rajkumar, Ashim Sinha and Manash Sinha whereas the Pro-Sahitya Sabha Students Union was led by Anil Rajkumar, Surachandra Sinha, Samir Sinha, Subal Sinha and Gopidas Sinha etc.

Both Students Union organised meetings in every corner of the society and were able to imbibe the spirit of social consciousness among youth. But it is a recognising fact that the Nikhil Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union (both group) should advance in right way in order to mobilise the youth for the betterment of the society.

ROLE OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI SAHITYA SABHA:

In the course of the linguistic movement, difference of opinion arose within the Mahasabha the result of which two groups were
One group was called Jagat Mohan Sinha's group and the other group was called Nanda Kishore Sinha's group. To solve the differences between these two groups, various efforts were made by intellectual people of the society. But all efforts remained in vain and ultimately Jagatmohan's group maintained supremacy in the Mahasabha for which Nanda Kishore's group formed another organisation known as the Bishnupriya Manipuri Sahitya Sabha. The first president and the first general secretary of the Sahitya Sabha were Gokul Sena Sinha of East Krishnanagar, Dullovcherra and Manikanta Sinha of Singari, Silchar respectively. This organisation time to time submitted prayers and memorandums to the Assam government and the central government of India. Sahitya Sabha also held conferences in different paraganas of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas and try to make conscious regarding their social existence. It made close contact with the government regarding the fulfillment of their basic demand i.e. introduction of the Bishnupriya Manipuri language as a medium of instruction in the primary schools of the Bishnupriya Manipuri inhabited areas of the Barak Valley. It also played active role in the cases filed in the court of Other Backward Classes Commission and High Court of Assam for the cause of the society. But it is a matter of regret that Sahitya Sabha was fragmented into two groups – Gour Kishore Sinha's group and Manikanta Sinha's group, which was again fragmented. It is also a fact that that Sahitya Sabha did not confront with the Mahasabha for social harmony and devoted mainly for the development of the literature leaving other affairs in the hands of the Mahasabha. Sahitya Sabha is also devoting its energy to give pressure to the government in tune with the Mahasabha for the fulfillment of the various demands of the society.

ROLE OF THE BISHNUPRIYA MANIPURI SAMAJ SANGSTHA:

The Bishnupriya Manipuri Samaj Sangstha is one of the important organisations for the development of the society. It was
established on Oct. 15, 1988 in a meeting held at Khristanbasti Kalakristi Kendra, Guwahati with the initiative of Shanti Kumar Sinha of East Sarania, Guwahati. The first president of this organisation was Shyamdas Sinha who resigned within the short period and Surendra Raj Kumar became the next president of this body. Shanti Sinha became its secretary and Manisena Sinha, a police officer, was the main patron of this organisation.

The main objective of this organisation was to unify the society removing the differences between the Mahasabha and the Sahitya Sabha. To fulfill this objective, it has taken the initiative by convening a series of joint conferences of both Mahasabha and Sahitya Sabha at the residence of Barun Sinha of Hailakandi, Sadhu Thakur Sevashram Community Hall, Silchar and B.T. College, Silchar. But all these efforts of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Samaj Sangstha were failed. Samaj Sangstha also helped the Mahasabha in the various important social issues specially in the case moved in the court of Other Backward Classes Commission, Assam.

ROLE OF NUWA MINGALE UTHESHI SOU (NUMIUS):

Nuwa Mingale Utheshi Sou (NUMIUS) is a student wing of this community and it was established at Chorgola Valley Public High School, Dullovcherra in 1956. This organisation was established with the initiative of Gopinath Sinha, Prafulla Sinha and Manibhushan Sinha. Profulla Sinha was its founder president and Manibhushan Sinha was its secretary for few days. After few days Gopinath Sinha became the secretary. It was not established only for Bishnupriya Manipuri students but students of other communities could become its members. But in course of time due to the densely inhabited Bishnupriya Manipuri people in this area, this organisation became the Bishnupriya Manipuri students wing in practice. Many members of this organisation now are all in all in the upliftment of this society occupying
important portfolios in the different organisations of this society. For example Gopinath Sinha of Dullovcherra and Debendra Kumar Sinha of Patharkandi are remarkable.\textsuperscript{41}

The main objective of this organisation is all round basic development of the society and students in particular. At present the president and the secretary of this organisation are Debashish Sinha and Debdas Sinha respectively.

**ROLE OF DUKHINI IMAR LEIRAPA SOU (DILS):**

Dukhini Imar Leirapa Sou was established in 1979 by the Bishnupriya Manipuri students settled in Guwahati and its head office is located at South Sarania, Guwahati. First president and secretary of this organisation were Surajit Sinha and Lakshmindra Sinha. Debojyoti Sinha is all in all to run this body. The logic behind the formation of this student’s wing is to safeguard the life and security of the Bishnupriya Manipuri people settled in Guwahati and other places of the Brahmaputra valley. This organisation had mainly one dream i.e. to create a separate geographical area “Imar Lam” like District Council for the Bishnupriya Manipuri people. Through this organisation students of this community got a platform for their development.

This organisation has taken some praise worthy steps. These are:

(I) To give the award of Rs. 2000/- (two thousand) only annually to a reputed social worker of the Bishnupriya Manipuri Community.\textsuperscript{42}

(II) To give the award of Rs. 500/- (five hundred) only annually for three students securing best result according to the principle of merit.
Besides these there are many other students organisations such as Chetana, Khourang and Houpon, Inter-District Bishnupriya Manipuri Students Union in the Barak Valley which are always trying to make students conscious.

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