Chapter 10
SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The study titled Social Change among the Lois of Manipur attempts to analyse the patterns of social, cultural, economic and political changes in the two Loi villages of Manipur. In Manipur, most of the people belong to the Mongoloid group, except for Manipuri Muslims, Manipuri Brahmins and some of the new migrants from Assam and Bengal Lairikyengbams or translators (Devi 2002:3). The people in Manipur are settled in both the hills and the Imphal valley. In the valley the people comprise the Meitei, the Manipuri Muslim and the people coming from other parts of India. However, in some parts of the valley, mostly in its periphery, are settled indigenous people called the Loi and the Yaithibi who were included in the list of Scheduled Castes of Manipur in 1956. The government has taken up various programmes for raising income level of families, education and village development of Scheduled Castes. Besides, 2% of the seats in the government jobs in Manipur have been reserved for the scheduled castes of the state. Like Scheduled Castes in other parts of India the Loi of Manipur are also undergoing the discernible changes in economic, political, social, cultural, religious and ritual life in the contemporary times. The objectives of the study were (i) to understand the nature (patterns/processes) of social change among the Lois, (ii) to analyse the causes and consequences of social change among the Lois, (iii) to suggest the ways of planning social change and development among the Scheduled Castes in the North East and (iv) to arrive at a framework explaining the social change among the weaker sections in India. Research reveals that in India, traditionally the Scheduled Castes occupied the lowest position in the social hierarchy, who were considered as untouchables and were kept away from the higher castes. However, studies are revealing the gradual abridgement of the social gap between Scheduled Castes and higher Castes (Rao 2000; Singh 2002; Singh 2001; Dahiwale 1994; Chaudhary 1987). In the cultural sphere, the Scheduled Caste people have changed their pattern of behaviour, life styles, and dresses in the way of the high caste people (Singh 2001; Balakrishnan 1993; Singh 1969; Harper 1968; Beteille 1967; Patwardhan 1966; Cohn 1955; Srinivas 1952). Among them, the rise of literacy is perceptible after Independence. However, the benefits of massive adult education programmes are not equitably shared among
the Scheduled Castes as poverty stands in their way and force their younger children to become bread earners by participation in the labour force or by doing odd jobs (Pandy 1993; Balakrishnan 1993; Pandy 1991; Ahmed 1980; Sabnis and Mahurkar 1979). Studies on their economic aspects inform that Scheduled Castes have become less dependent on the higher land owning castes for their livelihood as they have now become landowners, cultivators and sharecroppers under effect of the new legislation on landholding. Besides, urbanization, industrialization, modern education and various development programmes of the government have brought changes in their traditional occupations (Maurya 1991; Sivaram 1989; Sabnis and Mahurkar 1985). Politically, the Scheduled Caste people are now increasingly inclined to use political power to gain better position in the society. The special provisions made in the constitution to safeguard the backward classes and Scheduled Castes accorded them the reservations in government services and special welfare programmes to improve their social status (Thorat 2009; Dahiwale 1994; Chaudhary and Pratima Chaudhary 1994; Pundir 1993; Uplaonkar 1992; Singh 1990; Chauhan 1992; Maurya 1991). Thus, Sanskritization impacted change in their sociocultural domain whereas the changes in education, occupation and political awareness are mostly induced by law and state agencies through welfare programmes and protective measures for their uplift.

The Scheduled Castes in North-east India have been improving their status like that of the formerly high caste Hindus. The studies show that they have upgraded to the same statuses as those of high caste people. As they are now engaging Brahmin priest to officiate their ritual and religious ceremonies, they no longer suffer from the stigma of being low caste people. The Scheduled Caste people of the region are forming modern caste associations for community welfare and development activities, realizing that through political participation and exercise of political power they would get their due place in the society. However, sometimes their economic backwardness and illiteracy does affect their political consciousness and development and therefore, for their effective political participation, they need to be provided better economic conditions and education (Singh 1997; Singh 1995). In Manipur, the Scheduled Castes are apparently less identifiable as a separate social segment in the present society as they have sanskritized their traditional customs and practices by accepting Vaishnavism and the Hindu religious ceremonies voluntarily in the post-Independence period of India. In many villages, they seem to have shaped their
behavioural pattern, life style, dress and housing patterns on the way of the upper caste Meitei people. They find their due place in the society, without being subjected to any kind of discrimination. Notwithstanding this, there are the cases of a few villages, isolated and untouched with the changes, perhaps, due to illiteracy and little contact with the mainstream (Singh 2002; 2001; 1997; 1990). These trends of change are mainly perceived due to the processes of sanskritization and modernization which the Manipuri society and the Scheduled Castes have been undergoing since the Independence of India. Thus, in Northeast, particularly in Manipur, the gap between Scheduled Castes and high castes seems to be bridging fast and on a larger scale through the twin process of sanskritization and modernization. Nonetheless, politicization is an important process of change taking place among the Scheduled Castes in the contemporary India. The state legislation and various policies and programmes of the government act as concomitant accelerating factor to bring social mobility and change among them. Hence, the ongoing change among the Scheduled Castes can be captured by a holistic perspective. Therefore, the present study addressed the question: What patterns of Social change are perceived among the Lois of Manipur?

The Methodology

The study makes a structural-functional analysis of the two Loi villages, namely Koutruk and Leimaram in comparative perspective to understand the on-going socio-economic and political changes among the Lois in Manipur. For the study, data were collected mainly by administrating an interview scheduled form the households of the two Loi villages. Besides, observation and case study were also used to supplement the interview. The obtained responses in the interview schedule were coded in a code sheet and analysed manually. The coded data were tabulated and converted into percentage for comparisons and analysis. In some cases, mean and standard deviation were also calculated. For the analysis of data, structural functional method was used. The functions of social changes were particularly focused in the analyses.

The Findings

The study finds the continuity and change in the social life of the Lois in the two villages. Mostly structural units are continuing and significant changes have occurred or are occurring in the functioning of the structures. The continuities and
changes have been focused in social, economic, political and cultural aspects of their life. At the structural level, there are found some new structures which have merged to deal with the needs and functions in the changing environment. Particularly, in the economy, polity and culture one can see the structural differentiation. On the functional place, either new functions are being adopted or new functions are added to the old ones. One can thus see obviously the structural continuity and functional changes in the culture of the Lois. The results of the study are discussed in terms of social, economic, political and cultural changes and continuities among the Lois in Manipur. These are as follows:

I. Social Change

(i) The traditional seven clans among the Lois are still continuing. These are Ningthouja, Luwang, Angom, Khuman, Moirang, Kha-Nganba and Srang-Leishangthem. These clans have a common between the Meitei and the Loi. In the two villages, most (62.6%) of the families belong to Ningthouja clan. In Koutruk, the largest section of the families (35.23%) belong to Leishangthem lineage under the Sarang – Leishangthem clan whereas in Leimaram, near about two fifths (39.32%) of the families belong to the Ningthoujam lineage of Ningthouja clan. The continuity owes to caste endogamy and intercaste marriages between the Loi and the Meitei as both the communities have the seven clan structure. Even in case of intercommunity marriage between the Loi and a tribe when bride is drawn by the Loi, no change of clan is required. Thus, the clan continuity has not been affected by intercaste or intercommunity marriages.

(ii) Traditional joint family structure of the Loi consisting of a father, mother, a married son and the daughter-in-law and other children including one or two grand children has undergone changes as a result of new occupations, modern education and the emergent urban culture. Most (70%) of the families in the two villages are now of nuclear type: over two thirds (68.18%) of the families in Koutruk and 70.39% in Leimaram are nuclear and, near about one third (31.82%) in Koutruk and over one fourth (29.61%) in Leimaram are joint families.

Along with the nature of family, its size has also scaled down and therefore most (54.2%) of the families in the villages are of the medium size (5-8 members). In Koutruk over a half (54.55%) of the families are of the small size (1-4 members)
whereas in Leimaram, about three fifths (57.28%) are of the medium size (5-8 members).

(iii) In spite of the Loi tradition of arranged marriage, most of the families (93.4%) in the villages have witnessed love marriages. The social interactions in the festivals and ceremonies as well as schools, colleges and workplaces give the opportunity to young males and females to fall in love with each other. In the monarchial time, there was marriage rule that Lois should marry among those from themselves who possess similar occupations or industry in their caste, maintaining clan exogamy. But, now, there is no such rule imposing inter-caste and intra-occupation marriages. Therefore, intercommunity and inter-religious marriages are also taking place. Over a half (56.4%) of the families have witnessed inter-caste marriages and 43.6% of the families have experienced intra-caste marriages of their male or female members.

(iv) More (60.44%) families in Leimaram than in Koutruk have inter-caste marriage cases because, geographically, Leimaram is surrounded by Meitei villages and the only Scheduled Caste villages in the entire Bishnupur district. Moreover, most (83.49%) of the villagers have converted into Hinduism, leading to more social and religious contacts with the higher caste Meiteis. On the other hand, Koutruk, though three fifths of its families are Hindu, the village is nearer to the Scheduled caste villages of Phayeng, Khurkhul and Sekmai, and have a closer relationship with the people of these villages.

(v) In case of inter-caste marriage in the two villages, the males in over three fourths (77.66%) of the families have taken wives from other communities while the females in over one fifth (22.34%) of the families have married outside their caste. This gender differences is because more male members have gone outside their own village in the search of jobs or otherwise and coming into contacts with other caste or tribal people. It led to have a good relationship with the people of other communities.

(vi) Majority (98.58%) of the families have gone for inter-caste marriage with the Meitei as it results into improvement of their status in the society. Only a few (1.42%) of the villagers have married with tribals. For them, Meiteis constitute the higher caste (superior) group which they are emulating for change in their way of life. While, they consider tribals inferior to them. Therefore, instead of taking wives from the tribal groups they prefer Meitei girls. However, mostly their girls have married with boys from the Meitei and their boys with girls from the tribals like Kom tribe. Thus, there is a big change taking place in the institution of marriage of the Loi.
II. Economic Changes

(i) As a result of new legislations, political freedoms, occupational choice and development, there is emerging a new occupational structure in the Loi villages. The Loi have now discarded their traditional occupation of silk manufacturing which was imposed by the Meitei kings to meet the garment requirement in the state as it carried along the social stigma of low caste, on the one hand, and has become non-remunerative in the market, on the other hand. However, the traditional occupation of liquor manufacturing is still practised because it is profitable and the easiest way of earning money.

(ii) The villagers have made a rational choice in an environment of democracy and political freedom to do away their traditional occupations and therefore they are now engaged in all the three sectors of economy, mainly in agriculture followed by the service sector. Of the total 1842 working persons, 14.12% are engaged in secondary sector of manufacturing, 19.92% in service sector and 65.96% in agriculture and allied activities.

In Koutruk, over three fifths (63.22%) of the workers are engaged in primary sector of agriculture and allied activities, over one fourth (28.35%) in the service sector and a fraction (8.43%) in the secondary sector of manufacturing. In Leimaram, over two thirds (66.41%) of the persons are engaged in the primary sector, one fifth in the service sector and 14.12% in the secondary sector.

Agriculture is still main stay of their economy which engages over three fourths (76%) of the families in the two villages: 72.73% from Koutruk and over three fourths (76.70%) from Leimaram. Agriculture is mainly carried out by the male members in the two villages and the female help the males in agriculture while they are mainly engaged in liquor manufacturing and pig farming. Of the females 8.43% from Koutruk and 15.12% females from Leimaram are engaged in liquor manufacturing. Sometimes, they are also occupied with weaving, embroidery, teaching in private schools and working in private hospitals to supplement their family incomes.

(iii) Agriculture being the main economic activity, the families without cultivable land also leased in lands for cultivation. Over two thirds (68%) of the families in the villages have marginal landholding (below 1 hectares) and a very few (0.24%) have the medium landholding (4-10 hectares) and one fifth have any cultivable land. Most (79.84%) of the tenant families paid the land rent at the rate of 16 bags per hectare.
while one fifth paid 20 bags per hectare (1 bag = 60 kg of rice) based on the mutual relationship between the landowners and tenants who are mostly relatives and friends.

(iv) Growing of foodgrain crop is still continuing in the given conditions of marginal land holdings of most of the families. All of the families in the two villages grow rice. Along with rice, over one tenth (12.63%) grow oil seeds and vegetables, 2.11% grow oilseeds and 1.84% grow vegetables. Of these, majority (64.21%) of the families grow crops for domestic consumption as well as marketing and over one third (35.79%) of families grow only for domestic consumption. As a whole, all the families grow crops for domestic consumption as a main purpose.

(v) Most (97.89%) of the families use seeds found in the locality while a few (2.11%) use local as well as high yield variety seeds. Because the price of the high yield variety seeds are higher than the local ones. The largest number (42.89%) of the families uses Dharam seed and over one third (37.37%) use Phourel Khongnembi seed. Because the Dharam seeds yield more than the Phourel Khongnembi. Majority (60.52%) of the families use their own preserved seeds for cultivation and near about two fifths (38.95%) use from the locality. The agricultural families mostly preserved their own seeds for the subsequent year's cultivation. The seed preference is determined by the price affordability of the families and availability of a particular seed variety.

(vi) Most (90.53%) of the families use chemical fertilizers and a few (9.47%) use chemical as well as natural fertilizers to yield better agricultural production. Thus, all the families more or less use chemical fertilizers like D.T.A, urea, potash and super phosphate. Most of them have discarded the practice of rearing cattle from which natural fertilizers are obtained. Near about three fifths of the families in Leimaram buy the chemical fertilizers from the Nambol, the nearest town form Leimaram at a distance of 3 km. while the most of the families (90.63%) in Koutruk buy it from the Imphal town which is 17 km from the village.

(vii) Majority (30%) of the families produce 30-45 bags, one fourth produced 45-60 and nearabout one fifth (17.89%) produced 15-30 bags of paddy in a year (1 bag = 60 kg). Because the production of the foodgrain is based on the size of the landholding which is in case of the two villages, majority (68%) is marginal landholdig (below 1 hectare).

(viii) The service sector has emerged as the second most important source of occupations, following agriculture. Over one third (35.2%) of the workers in the two
villages are engaged in this sector. Of those in service-workers, near about one third (31.82%) are from Koutruk and over one third (35.92%) from Leimaram, who are engaged in class I and class III jobs of the state and central services.

(ix) The average annual income of the two villages is Rs. 10,273.1 for Koutruk and Rs.10,0607.1 for Leimaram. The average family size of Koutruk is medium size of 5-8 members and that of Leimaram is small family size of 1-4 members. Thus, by their family size the Leimaram villagers have a higher annual average of income than the Koutruk villagers.

III. Political Changes
(i) During the monarchial times, the Loi villages were each administered by a village headman, Khullakpa, with the help of other village officers like Luplakpa, Khunjahanba, Yupalba, Telloihanjaba, Telloihidang, Heijanglakpa, Pakhanglakpa, Naharakpa, Loumilakpa, Loumidang, Chabolhanjaba and Laiselungba appointed by the king of Manipur for effective maintenance of the village socially, economically and politically.

Even, after India’s Independence and introduction of democracy, the traditional caste council constituted of the officers has sustained but only with some changes. It too has undergone democratization and it is now constituted by the members elected by the villagers from among themselves. Moreover, the position of the Khullakpa along with his village officers has lost its power and status to a large extent. Even the Khullakpa cannot impose strict actions and discipline upon the villagers. Thus, they now enjoy the high prestige and status only during the village level socio-religious festivals which they organise.

(ii) Democratic political institutions such as enfranchisement and Panchayat Raj bodies have replaced the traditional political structure of the villages after Independence and the new institutions are concerned with administration and development of the villages. The Lois in the villages have come up the stage of political awareness in a democratic set-up as they realize that for development of the community some political power is needed to make their voice heard to the authority. After Independence, especially after the introduction of the Panchayati Raj in Manipur, the Lois are trying to seek opportunities to capture political power at the grassroots level through contesting Panchayat elections. Thus, out of the eight Gram Panchayat elections from 1969 to 2010, candidates from Leimaram village, have won
six times the elections for the seat of Pradhan in the Irengbam Gram Panchayat whereas a candidate from Koutruk could be elected as the Pradhan of the Phayeng Gram Panchayat once only and that, too, through uncontest when the seat was reserved for a women candidate. Because, Koutruk has a population of only 429 persons which is not sufficient numerical strength for contesting Phayeng Gram Panchayat elections as compared with the other neighbouring villages like Phayeng with a numerical strength of 2475 persons. This indicates the emerging competiveness of democratic politics in the Loi villages.

In addition to the constitutional or statutory bodies, some new social organizations such as Koutruk Youth club and Leimaram Yaipha Lamjing Lup have come up in the villages for development of education, sports and culture in the democratic environment after Independence of India. Through these the villagers involve themselves in development activities voluntarily and democratically as their office bearer are elected by the members.

(iii) New political bodies are still formed on the basis of traditional choices and methods of mobilization and the political behaviour of the villagers is largely determined by the traditional consideration of caste and locality which influence politics of the villagers and political parties. Only a small fraction (5.4%) of the families has their members actively working for political parties, for caste and locality predominate over the political parties in the villages. Over three fourths (77.78%) of the villagers who are active members of political parties have become the members because of their interest in a particular political party or a candidate.

IV. Cultural Change

(i) The Lois have undergone Hinduization and sanskritization mostly after Independence. From the historical times, the Lois have been the followers of the traditional Meitei religion, Sanamahi, and they did not convert even when the king Garibniwaja himself adopted into Hinduism as the state religion in 1717 A.D. However, most (79.2%) of the families in the two villages now follow Hinduism, one fifth follow Sanamahi and a small fraction (0.6%) follow Christianity.

(ii) Compared to Koutruk, more (83.49%) families in Leimaram follow Hinduism. They even allowed one Brahmin family to settled in the village to performed rites and rituals related to ceremonies. After the voluntary acceptance of Hinduism, the rites and rituals related to birth, marriage and death ceremonies for the Hinduised families
are performed by a Brahmin while those for the Sanamahi families are still performed by Maibas (Meitei priest) and Maibis (Meitei priestess). Besides, to gain a wider acceptance among the Meiteis and to live in harmony with them, they invite the Meiteis in their religious ceremonies and functions and therefore Brahmin cooks, along with their caste cooks, are also engaged to prepare meal.

(iii) The Loi worship is largely getting sanskritized in the villages. Traditionally, Lois worshipped the traditional Meitei gods-like the Imung Lais (household deities), Lamlais (deities believed to exist in the wild land), Umang Lais (forest deities) and Apokpa (clan god). However, presently the villagers worship the Hindu gods and goddesses such as Laxmi, Mahadev, Hanuman, Radha- Krishna, Durga Sarashwati as a result of their conversion to Hinduism. They mainly (50.8%) worship the Goddess Laxmi- the Goddess of wealth.

They also celebrate a number of festivals including their own traditional as well as the Hindu festivals such as New Year, Yaoshang, Lai-Haraoba, Cheiraoba, Durga puja, Diwali, Ningol Chakouba etc. Sometimes, they visit the Hindu temples to worship the dieties. With the influence of Hinduism, they have introduced some changes in celebration of traditional festivals and worship. For example, earlier, Yu and meat were offered to the village deity during the Lai-Haraoba. However, it has been now replaced by water and fish. Also, Cheiraoba was celebrated on the first day of Sajibu (March - April), but now the followers of Hindu religion celebrate it on an auspicious day of Sajibu.

(iv) The salience of Sanskritic food and drink patterns is perceptible among the Loi villagers. Traditionally, the Lois consumed various kinds of meat and vegetables along with rice as they were Sanamahi. They were outcasted from the Meitei society because of their religion and food habits. Even now, they generally consumed fish, irrespective of the young and the old, as the state has a rich source of fish. However, meat like chicken, pork, duck and mutton are generally consumed by children and male members up to the middle age group (upto 60). The aged persons try to avoid meat as they consider themselves old and therefore they should be oriented towards the god. Compared to Koutruk, there is less number of females in Leimaram who consumed non-vegetarian items because they are more ritualistic than those of Koutruk.

As a custom of their society, Loi produced liquor, consumed it and also offered it to the gods and goddesses during the festival and ceremonies. However, as a
result of modern education they have realized the negative effect of liquor consumption over health as well as to the society. Therefore, most of them are trying to avoid liquor consumption. Of the total males in the two villages, 36.28% consume liquor. Of the villagers who consume liquor, most (48.45%) are within the age group of 15-35 years in Koutruk and (52.60%) in 36-60 age groups in Leimaram. Most (88.94%) of them consume it occasionally such as on birth, death and marriage ceremonies while over one tenth consume it frequently. However, females in the two villages are not consuming liquor.

(v) Impact of westernization and modernization on the pattern of dress is clearly observed among the villagers. Children and male members of the two villages prefer to wear modern dresses while a small fraction (2.33% from Koutruk and 2.95% from Leimaram) of females prefers to wear modern dresses.

As a very few of the females are engaged in jobs, the traditional dress seems to be holding on. The female members in the two villages also use chandan tilak (forehead mark) daily after bathing and before entering a kitchen. However, males use it during the ceremonies only as they have to go outside the house for earning money and they have no time to use it or it is not convenient to use tilak while going outside the house. Thus, traditional beliefs in mind are continuing under the modern material cultural garb.

(vi) Housing pattern of the villagers is seen in the process of change determined by the level of their economic development. The traditional Loi houses are made up of wood, bamboo, mud plastered wall and thatched roof.

However, nowadays, their houses are seen differentiated into five types: (i) RCC pacca house, (ii) pacca house, (iii) semi-pacca, (iv) kachcha and (v) traditional kachcha house. Majority (63.8%) of the families are living in the kachcha type of house made of mud plastered bamboo wall with tin roof. There are also a few (2.18%) families in Leimaram which live in pacca houses. Most (47.4%) of the families live in a house of 3-4 rooms and a very few (4.6%) live in a house of 8-9 rooms. There is also a small fraction (0.6%) of the single member families living in one-room house.

Traditionally, Lois did not keep extra room for receiving guests in their houses. However, 28% of the families have a drawing room for guest in their houses. They keep television, table, chair, sofa, cupboard and refrigerator in their guest room. Majority (89.27%) of the families keep television in the guest room while a small fraction (10.71%) keep refrigerator also in the guest room.
Traditionally, Loi used earthen chullah for cooking. However, there are found earthen chulah along with gas stove in the families of the villages. Thus, 37.5% of the families in Koutruk and 57.77% of the families in Leimaram have gas stove. A very few families from Koutruk (4.55%) and Leimaram (4.61%) keep water filter also in their kitchens. It indicates that they are changing their life styles.

(vii) Sanitary conditions of the villagers are in the transition from traditional to modern practices. Near about a half (47.82%) of the families in Leimaram use semi-pacca type of latrine while over half (52.27%) of families from Koutruk use kachcha latrine. A very few (4.54%) families in Koutruk still goes for open defecation in the paddy fields or on the hills while none goes for this in Leimaram. Also, one fourth (24.03%) of the families in Leimaram and a small fraction (13.64%) from Koutruk use pacca latrine which is a sign of their move towards sanitary modern condition.

(viii) One fifth of the families from Koutruk and over one fourth (27.67%) from Leimaram have vehicles for transportation. They use these vehicles for private transportation as well as for the service of the public.

V. Educational Change

(i) The movement of the villagers from the tradition of total illiteracy to a high literacy rate is perceptible. Most (88.76%) of the villagers are now literate. Over four fifths (86.51%) in Koutruk are literate ranging from primary to post graduation level and in Leimaram, most (89.23%) of the villagers are literate.

The villagers are very much concerned about education as they consider it instrumental in getting jobs, improving social status and socio-economic development of their community. in Koutruk, the illiteracy rate is declining from over three fifths in the old age group (60+) to one fifth in the middle age group (35-60) and from 21.62% in the middle age group to 7.54% in youth age group (15-35) whereas, in Leimaram, it is declining from over a half (52.86%) in the old age group to two fifths in the middle age group and from 21.72% in the middle age group to 0.19% in the youth age group. Thus, the young and youth age groups are almost free from illiteracy.

The villagers consider private schools better than government schools. Therefore, most (70.85%) of the families send their children to the private schools, 16.82% in government schools and over one tenth (12.32%) in the government as well as private schools. Thus, in all, 83.17% families have had children in private schools and 29.13% families have their children in government schools.
Increased orientation to quality education is quite perceptible in the villages. Most (70.85%) of the families in the villages send their children to private schools, 16.82% to government schools and over one tenth (12.32%) to the government as well as private schools.

In Koutruk, half of the families send both male and female children to the government schools, over two fifths (41.67%) send to the private schools and a very few (8.33%) send to government and private schools. In Leimaram, three fourths of the families send their children to the private schools only and a slightly more than one fifth of the families, each, send their children to the government schools and both the government as well as private schools respectively.

A large section (31.93%) of the families send their children to Nambol town which is nearer to Leimaram village, over one fourth (26.05%) to Imphal and one fourth to Oinam for their studies. Thus, they seek educational avenues for their children in their locality, even outside their own village.

Over a half (54.66%) of the children in the villages dropped out in high school due to their failure in the board examination. The dropout rate is higher among the male children (70.19%) than the female children (29.81%) in the two villages. Because more males than the females are dropout after getting paid jobs.

This finding goes against the results of Saroj Pandey's who found low enrolment and high drop-out of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe girls in schools due to the traditional outlook and attitudes of parents towards girls' education and secondary status of girls in the family. In Manipur and the Loi village no evidence of such gender discrimination, as they are treated equally in Manipur and dropout rate of girls is less than that of boys.

A few (15.2%) villagers are having the knowledge of computer also. Over two fifths (44.74%) of them learned it from the computer centre, around two fifths (38.16%) from the schools offering computer as a part of their syllabus, over one tenth (11.84%) from the office where they work as clerks and a very few (5.26%) at home where they have their own computer. This aids their educational awareness.

VI. Health and Change

Awareness about health and utilizing modern health facilities is on the rise in the villages. One fourth of the families in the villages visited hospital for the treatment of disease in the last one year and three fourth of the families did not visit hospital.
Thus, most (74.4%) of the families in the villages are physically fit and are quite aware about health.

(ii) Of the families the members which have visited hospital for the treatment in the last one year, over three fourth (77.34%) have visited 2-3 times, over one tenth (11.72%) have visited only one time and 10.94% have visited for 4-5 times.

In Koutruk, out of the eighty eight (88) families, one fourth have visited hospital; 90.91% have visited hospital for 2-3 times and 9.09% have visited only one time. Similarly, in Leimaram, out of the 412 families, only one fourth have visited hospital; three fourths have visited hospital for 2-3 times, 13.21% visited 4-5 times and 12.26% of families visited only one time.

(iii) Majority of the villagers (53.91%) have visited the government hospitals, over two fifths (41.41%) the private hospital and 4.69% both the government and private hospital for treatment of their health.

(iv) Near about two fifths (37.78%) of the families have visited hospital for the treatment of gynecological problems, two fifths for treatment ulcer and 15.56% for treatment of cold fever.

(v) More than three fifths (63%) of the families take the help of the Maibis for delivery of a child, around one fifth (19.6%) take the help of the doctors as well as Maibis 15.4% take the help of doctors.

(iv) Three fourths (75.6%) of mothers in the villages take 3-4 months’ of maternity rest after delivery of a child.

(vi) Most (68.13%) of people in the two villages died at the age of 60+ as a natural death. Of these, females are more (84.75%) than the males (58.42%).

VII. Communication and Change

(i) Mass media, old and new, have largely entered the houses of the villagers. Traditionally, folk arts like penna (a kind of musical instrument), Sumang Leela (open courtyard theatre), Khunung Eshei etc. were used as a mass media in the rural society. Moreover, the villagers had to go faraway places on foot to deliver a message. But, presently, they use the modern communication technologies like radio, television and mobile phone to get information and communicate among themselves.

Over three fifths (65.91%) of the families have radio, more than two fifths (42.05%) have television and near about four fifths (78.41%) have mobile phones.
(ii) All the families which have radio, listened channels like news, music, drama and health in the radio and over four fifths (86.31%) of the families have also listened agricultural channels.

(iii) The television channels like news, movie and drama are watched by all the people in the two villages. Two fifths of the families watch other channels like music and dance also.

(iv) The villagers generally listened radio in Manipuri and Hindi. Similarly, all the families are watching television in Manipuri and Hindi, while one third of the families watch television programmes in English.

(v) Near about one fifth (19.2%) of the families all from Leimarams subscribe newspaper in the villages. Koutuk has no transport facility to receive regular supply of newspapers. All of the villagers are interested in reading Headlines and Zodiac Signs, and most of them read cinema news (83.89%), sports (83.22%), matrimonial (81.54%), advertisement (81.21%) and political affairs (70.13%). Most (91.67) of the people spent 1-2 hours in reading newspapers.

Conclusion

Sanskritization and modernization are the two processes of change, working among the Loi. The social contacts with the Meitei have led to numerous marital ties between Lois and the Meitei, bridging their social gap with the latter. As a result of occupational choice and development that have followed in the period of India’s post-Independence, there have been observed many changes in their economic life. It reflects in occupational differentiation and modernization of traditional activities. As a result of urban contacts through education, employment and otherwise, the living standard of these people has been changing in the way of the higher caste people. Despite their steadfastness in their traditional beliefs and practices, they have now gone towards accepting much of the customs and traditions of the Hindu with a view to get wider acceptability in the neighbouring Meitei villages and to live at equality with them. Thus, after their voluntary acceptance of Hinduism, mainly in the post-Independence period, the interaction between the Loi and the Meitei has increased. There is also influence of Christianity among the scheduled castes and some families in the two villages have adopted Christianity as their religion, although their number is very small. Changes are also observed in the food habits, mode of dresses and
celebration of certain festivals. Most of the aged persons are trying to avoid meat consumption. Tradition of liquor consumption has been reduced and, now, they are consuming liquor occasionally during the birth, death and marriage ceremonies. As a result of urban contact through employment or otherwise, the standard and style of living of these people has been changing towards that of the higher caste communities. All these changes in their cultural life are the result of their constant interaction with the other caste communities and religious groups, giving rise to sanskritization and modernization. With the introduction of Panchayat Raj institution in Manipur, the traditional caste council of the Loi has almost lost its power and are now consulted only in the religious matters of the villages. However, the traditional caste council of the Loi has undergone democratization and it is now constituted by members elected by the villagers from among the most responsible persons of the age of over 40 years. Also, there have come up new social organizations of the village youth for development of education, sports and culture in the villages. They have understood the significance of democracy and political power for development of the village and, therefore, they strive for capture of the political power through elections at least at the Gram Panchayat (formal village council) level. Besides these, education, health and communication systems in the two villages are also improving. Majority of the villagers are literate people from the primary level to the post graduation levels. The villagers are seen more concerned about the education of their children. Their health status is very high and only one fourth of the total population of the villagers visited hospital in the past one year. Usually, they visited the government hospitals but if the matter of the illness is serious then they go to the private hospitals to get better facilities. They take the facilities of modern technology. Most of them used mobile phones to communicate within and outside the village. Thus, the process of transformation is going on in their life, though it is very slow. With the development of means of transport and communication, growth of literacy, etc., the Lois of Manipur, shall no longer to have to be conscious of any stigma of being low caste people, and they are well on the path to find their due place in the wider Manipur society without any kind of discrimination.

The study alongwith the other studies from Northeast India reveal that the processes of sanskritization and christianization are spontaneously going on in the region and they do not lead to any social confrontation. Alongwith, these processes the process of modernization through education, occupations and political
participation has really contributed to improvement of their life and, thereby, augmented the cultural mainstreaming of these people as well. Thus, more empowerment and modernization of the weaker sections in secular aspects, the more possibility for their cultural mainstreaming and assimilation. This pattern may be used for planning for development and social change in the region. The comparative analysis of the two Scheduled Caste Loi villages; namely, Koutruk and Leimaram brings out the scenario of better understanding and social relations of the villagers of the only Loi village, Leimaram, in Bishnupur district with the Mainstream Meitei villagers all around in the surroundings as well as better performance on objective indicators of development and modernization like education, occupation, health, communication, political participation etc as it is also facilitated through better road connectivity with the outer world while Koutruk is having poor road connectivity which too connect them with other Loi villages only, providing a limited exposure of the mainstream society, culture, development and modernization. However, as a general framework of analysis to understand the social change among the Scheduled Castes in India, the sanskritization-modernization or Christianization-modernization which is applicable to study the multi-cultural and isolated context of Northeast India does not seem to be adequate for the rest of India where politicisation alongwith sanskritization and modernization has emerged an important processual component of development and social change among the Scheduled Castes. On the whole, it is sanskritization/Christianization-modernization-politicisation frame which is wide enough to analyse the social changes of all kinds among the Scheduled Castes in the contemporary India.