CHAPTER – FOUR

MANIPURI MARRIAGE
4.0. Manipuri Marriage

4.1 Concept of Marriage:

Marriage is in many respects, the important social institution in every society, whether primitive and civilized. The stability of human society depends upon this universal and primary institution. The very basic of the family and the society are organized and fulfilled through marriage. On account of its vital importance, the sanctity and permanence of marriage has been emphasized in all societies. Every society has its own marriage system. Manipuri societies of Barak Valley too have their own elaborate marriage system. To them marriage mean the sacred and ceremonial of woman with a man with due religion rites. In the Manipuri society, the term marriage is known as “Luhongba” which is a synthesis of two words - “Lu” and “Hongba.” The term “Lu” means “Head” and “Hongba” means “Solemnize” or “Change”. In short, the surname, clan and tradition of the girl Changes with marriage.¹

In the Manipuri marriage, the rite “Kujaba” plays a very important note. The most important ingredient of Manipuri marriage ceremonies lies in the concept of Kujaba which consists of one big earthen plate called “Kambi” containing the prescribed of quantity of husked-rice, a hand of banana having odd numbers, the prescribed fruits having good smell, permissible loin-cloth (dhoti), shirt, turban, comb, scissor, nail cutter and knife. On the day of Heijingpot ritual (will be described in detail later), this gift is first given from the groom to the bride. Then on the day of marriage the second gift of Kujaba is given by

the bride to the groom. By a garland of fresh flowers, the five fingers each from both the bride and groom are tied together and on it the \textit{Kujaba} is placed till the completion of the rite. In short, this rite is the starting point of a new life. The implication of this rite is that both the newly marriage couple have equal responsibilities of life’s burden under a joint hand.

There are four elements in the concept of \textit{Kujaba}. They are - the earth, the food-grain, the cloth and accessories. The internal significance is that both the newly couple require all these things for their livelihood. \textit{Kujaba} is the blessing for starting a new thought of life, the end of past chapter of the girl’s life and changing the head of the family form father to husband.

\textbf{4.2. Manipuri Marriage and its kinds:}

Though the Manipuris of Barak Valley perform their marriage ceremonies according to the Hindu way but they still practice some of their traditional marriage systems along with the Hindu way of marriage system. Some section of the population even performs their marriage system completely according to the traditional marriage system. In the Manipuri society of Barak valley there are three forms of marriage. They are (i) Marriage through engagement (ii) \textit{Kanyakatpa} and (3) \textit{Chelhong} (love marriage). Among them marriage through engagement is the most prestigious form of marriage.

\textbf{4.2.1. Marriage through engagement:}

Marriage through engagement is the most common form of marriage among the Manipuris of Barak Valley. In this form of marriage, interested male party will approach first to the female party following
some customary laws. If both the parties agree to the proposal the date of marriage will be fixed. The details about this form of marriage will be discussed in the later pages.

**4.2.2. Kanyakatpa:**

In this form of marriage both the lovers take themselves decision to become life partner and come out from their respective houses. After getting the news about it elderly persons from both sides in a very simple function will declare both the male and female husband and wife. In the early days if the male and female came out from their houses, which were known as ‘Chenba’ in Manipuri, no marriage ceremony was performed. In fact, this type of marriage at that time was considered as a marriage of a widow or divorcee.

**4.2.3. Chelhong (Love marriage):**

Now days this type of marriage is also gaining popularity among the Manipuris of Barak Valley. In the earlier times, this form of marriage is not even dreamt of. At present, this type of marriage is almost same with the first form of marriage. Only the difference is that if the male and female are found to be from the same yek, which is not allowed according to the Manipuri customary laws some adjustment will be made by the priest while performing the rites and rituals.

**4.3. Stages of Marriage:**

As mentioned before, marriage through engagement is the most common form of marriage among the Manipuris of Barak Valley, in this form of marriage there are five stages. They are – *Hainaba, Yathongthanaba, Waroipotpuba, Heinjing potpuba* and *Luhongba.*
4.3.1. Hainaba:

It is the preliminary stage, where the interested male parents first approach to the female party with some gifts of fruits and other items. If both the parties agree and if it is found suitable according to the Yek theory and also favourable from the astrological points of view, then both the parties fix another date for next formality – Yathangthanaba.

4.3.2. Yathangthanaba:

This is the ceremonial agreement and giving the consent for the marriage by the head of girl’s family. This function is held at the house of the girl. In this ritual the eldest male member from the groom’s family along with some relatives come to the bride’s house. Both the parties made negotiation and agreement in connection to the date of the ceremonial marriage.

4.3.3. Waroipotpuba:

This is the third stage of Manipuri marriage. In the Manipuri society of Barak valley this particular ceremony is sometimes called Heikat-Leikat Puba. In fact, Waroipot-puba was also practiced in this area in the earliest days. Regarding the elaborate arrangement of the marriage this is actually the ceremonial agreement and final setting up of the two parties. In this ceremony the groom’s family with friend and relatives approach to the girls house with fruits, sweets and other things which are to be offered to Sanamahi, the family God of girl’s house.

4.3.4. Heijing-Pot or Haija-Pot:

*Heijing-Pot or Haija- Pot* is the ceremony which can be termed as the first part of the ceremonial marriage of the Manipuris. This is the
important stage of the marriage. Through this function marriage is made known to all. In this rite groom’s parents, relatives, friends and invitees come together to the house of the bride with seven varieties of fruits, clothes and kabok (parched rice) in decorated baskets called ‘Phingairuk’ and ‘Heijing Kharai’ (decorative container made of bamboo with cover). One phingairuk contains fruits for ancestor’s deities and another for Lamlai (local deities). Special clothes and gold ornaments for the bride are also brought in this occasion. Now-a-days different kinds of sweets are also included in the baskets. In earlier days, according to the Manipuri tradition the girl is taken to be full blooming flower in the garden of her parents. The groom’s parents offer fruits to the parents of the bride as the price of the flower. A particular fruit called Heikru is traditionally taken to be the chief fruit. There may be other fruits of several kinds, but without this fruit all are meaningless. Seven Heikru fruits are placed in the bamboo baskets. If this fruits are not available, being out of season, its branches are used. These are placed along with other six varieties of fruits. However now-a-days except the offering of these entire things to the Yumlai (Home-God), Sanamahi and Lamlai (Local deities) some changes are noticed in this rite. After all these baskets are placed in their respective places, the bride and the groom’s father jointly pray to the supreme ancestors. After the completion of these formalities, one senior Brahmin asks the reason for the arrangement; at that time the formal announcement of marriage between the daughter and son is announced by both the father of bride and groom. In this way, in front of the public gathering, the ceremonial recognition of the marriage is made. Then the elderly male relatives prostrate themselves to each other. Finally the kabok and sweets which are there in the baskets, meant for the general public are distributed to them.
4.4. Bar-Barton or Piba Lei-Laangba\(^2\):

It is the formal invitation to the groom from the bride’s side for marriage. In the earlier days, it was performed one day ahead before the actual marriage. At present, it is generally performed just before the actual marriage. On this day, a boy preferably younger brother of the bride will come to the place where the groom is taking rest. For this ritual a garland of flower is prepared along with *Lei-Chandan* and *Pana-Kwa* (Betel-nuts and betel-leaves in a decorated banana leaf) bound nicely by a white cloth. The groom, prepared for the ritual, wearing *Pheijam* and *Pungyat* and sits on a mat facing the east. Then the younger brother taking out the well prepared *Pana-Kwa* will place before the groom and will bow down making a request formally to come to the ceremony. After that the boy will garland the groom. The parents of the groom will present some amount of money to the boy and the elderly person who have accompanied the boy. This is a healthy convention with show of respect and regard on both sides. This is the specialty of Manipuri society.

4.5. The Ceremony of Wedding:

Ritualistic preparations are made both at the residence of groom and the bride on the day of marriage. So marriage cannot be held during the ritually unclean period of either family. *Nat Sankirtana* plays an important role in the Manipuir marriage ceremony. In most of the Hindu social marriage, it is observed that ‘yagna’ or sacrifice plays very important role. Both the bride and the groom promise each other in front of *Nat Sankirtana* as they believe *Nat Sankirtana* itself is a great sacrifice.

\(^2\) Piba Lei-Laangba – Bar- Barton is also popularly known as Piba Lei-Laangba among the Manipuris of Barak Valley.
It is observed that the *Nat Sankirtana* performed in any other occasion has a number of differences with marriage ceremony. Usually, in connection with the marriage ceremony the *Nat Sankirtana* is not performed in the village *mandop*. Generally, in the house of the bride the marriage pandals are constructed. In this also certain rules and regulations are to be strictly followed. A ‘*Kunja*’ is to be constructed by a decorative hand following certain rules. In the middle of the marriage pandal, seat for the bride-groom is arranged by *Sambhasa* and *Sebaris* in the specific stage of the *Sankirtana*. It may be mentioned her that it is compulsory to offer (*Lei-Chandan*) to all the invitees by *Arangpham*. It will be followed by presentation of betel-nuts and betel-leaves in a decorated piece of banana-leaves.

The *Nat Sankirtana* singing begins after the arrival of the groom’s party. Following the basic sequence of *Nat Sankirtana* tradition the *pung* initiates its *Raga* and *Isheihanba* begins the singing. In this way *Nat Sankirtana* of marriage ceremony proceeds by its fundamental structure of *Talas* i.e. *Ragahouba*, *Tintal*, *Men*, *Tanchap* and *Menkup*. However, *Raga Achouba* is not performed in the marriage ceremony. Generally it is performed on the death ceremony. In Barak Valley, in the occasion of marriage ceremony of *Nat Sankirtana*, *Moibung-Khongba* is not included. Further, it is observed that the participation of *Khonghangpham* is absent in Manipur, but is found in Barak Valley.

### 4.6. Bor-Puja and Bor-Yatra:

One would find an excellent grandeur and pomp at the marriage function of the Manipuri society of the Barak valley. On the day of marriage after the bridegroom is fully dressed up with traditional dress he will be made seated on a new *Kouna Phak* (mat) covered with a white
cloth on the right side of the corridor of the house facing the eastward. It is a simple ceremony where a metallic-pot with full half of water and a mirror with stand are placed in front of the groom so that he can see himself in the mirror. The other items required are – arranged fruits in decorated two banana-leaves, two numbers of betel-leaves, a Ghot, incense, husked rice, sesamum, mango-leaves, dubri (a kind of grass) etc. In the left side of the groom two numbers of small flag of white colour, a pot filled with water, white flower, cinnabar, Arthaki (a kind of fruit), Lei-Chandan (flower and sandal), a betel-nut, one banana, Dakshina, Dakshina for five Panch-Devata (five gods) and Tusli-patra will be kept. On the other hand in the left side of the groom milk, ghee, rice, gold, silver and five numbers of Dona(prepared from banana-leaves) will be kept. Then after seeing the auspicious moment, the Brahmin will perform puja. After that the groom will pray to Sanamahi and Leimarel Ima of the house, pay his respect to his parent and near elderly relatives of the family and proceeds for the bride’s house along with all his friends, relatives and invitees. An umbrella, a nice Chaisel (a broad mouthed utensil), a mirror are required to be taken along with him by his friends. There are also certain other things to be filled up in the Phingairuk which are to be taken to the house of the bride. They are:- Chengluk- Nungshang (mainly filled with raw rice), Apokpa’s Phingairuk (containing different kinds of fruits), Lamlai’s Phingairuk, Ushin Nga (containing fish for the ritual Meetam Nga-Thaba), Phingairuk, Athenpot luk-mai (decoratedly arranged raw rice with different kinds of vegetables) etc. For the welfare and prosperity and long life with issues for the newly married couples these things are essential. The carriers of these Phingairuks are to be arranged in serial manner leading first by the “Chengluk Nungsang Pubi’ and followed by others. The women who will carry these Phingairuks will all dress up with nice traditional clothes wearing all sorts of gold
ornaments. The mother of the groom will go ahead of the groom and the other followed them either on foot if it is near or if far in vehicles. In front of all of them a band party proceeds.

4.7. Entry of the Groom in the Mandop:

In the Barak valley, in the afternoon of the wedding day the marriage party generally reaches the bride’s village led by the woman Lai-Pot Pubi. This very woman must bear children; the eldest one must be a son and be still living. She must also be married according to the correct customary rites and she must not be a widow. Arrival of groom party in the village is usually informed by a messenger. The groom and his party take rest at a temporary camp nearby the house of the bride. The groom will be guided by a well experienced person who will guide him in every ritual. The guide of the groom is known as Bor Senaba. Just after receiving the massage of the groom’s arrival the Nat Sankirtana begins with the Jaidhwani of the Mandop Mapu. After that the groom and his party are invited by a messenger to enter into the Sankitana Mandop. For the reception of the groom an elaborate arrangement is made at the entrance of the bride’s house. The reception is to be led by bride’s mother and her team. The bride will be welcomed with beautifully arranged Deoti (traditional torch prepared from bamboo) lighted with fire, throwing incense and kabok aphaba (fried rice). This process is repeated three times. This rite is called ‘Deoti-Okpa’. Then the groom prostrate to bride’s mother as a mark of honour and respect. After that the groom and his followers enter into the Kunja and prostrate towards the Sankirtana which is going on in full swing. Like that of other invitees the Arangpham will offer Lei-Chandan to all the member of the groom’s party followed, by presentation of betel-nuts and betel-leaves. Generally, in the north-east side of the Mandop the seating arrangement for the
groom is prepared. The seating arrangement of the invitees and relatives is prepared in the southern and south-western side of the *Mandop*. All the persons take theirsects according to their seniority. After the groom takes seat the *Sebari* offers ‘*Lei-Chandan*’ to him. In the mean time the *Nat Sankirtana* which is continuously progress in singing with *Cholom* of *Pung Yeiba* reaches its stage called *Menthaba*. A two seated chair known as *Luhong-Phan* is placed in its specific spot after *Men* and Brahmin and the father of the bride perform related rituals by chanting hymns. After this, the groom is asked to take seat which is placed in the centre of the *Sankitana*. The groom comes to the *Sankirtana Kunja* and prostrate to the elders, especially parents, the bride’s mother and other Brahmins and sits in the *Luhong Phan*. Then, again the bride’s father and the priest perform related rituals by chanting mantras. During this period *Sankirtana palas* sing in sitting position. It may be mentioned here that now-a-days it becomes a tradition to give some amount of money as a sign of appreciation to the members of the *Nat Sankirtana* party in a specific stages while they are singing by the relatives of both bride and groom and the invitees.

When the puja ritual is completed in front of the groom, the bride is brought by her female companions in the middle of the *Kunja*. It may be mentioned here that before she proceeds for *Kunja* a rite called ‘*Kanya puja*’ will be performed after she is fully dressed up with marriage dress. The Brahmin will conduct the rite. In that rite arranged fruits in decorated two banana-leaves, two numbers of betel-leaves and five other items in a *Dona* will be kept. The five items are – gold, silver, rice, curd and *ghee*. These items will be kept in the right side of the bride. In the left side husked rice, a small flag of white colour, cinnabar, *arthaki*, *dubri*, incense-pot, a betel-nut, one banana, *dakshina, dakshina* for Panch-Devta
(Five Gods), a pot filled with water and flower are required. Like that of
the groom the bride will also be guided by a well experienced person. In
the Kunja she sits in front of the groom who is sitting on the Luhong-
Phan. After that the Brahmin performs puja and the right hand of the
bride is placed on the right hand of the groom, than the Brahmin tightens
their hand together by kushrundju (rope made of kush plant). Then the
already prepared Kujapot on a Thali (a plate), containing husked rice, a
hand of banana having odd numbers, one dhoti and some other specific
articles is placed on their hands. In this occasion the relatives of the bride
give money one by one which is called Dan Peeba and at the last the
bride’s father completes the process. Then the thali is handed over to the
mother of the groom. This is called Dan Yaba. It may be mentioned here
that while the Kujaba is in the palms of the bride and the bridegroom a
special rite called “Meetam-Nga-Thaba” (letting loose fish into the
water) is performed. In this site, two Ngamu fishes, representing the bride
and the groom are let loose in the water and their movements are
observed carefully. Then the prospects of the couple are read. It is
considered to be a good omen if both of them swim together and if not, it
is taken as a bad omen for the couple. The internal concept of this ritual is
‘praying to Irailiema’, the goddess of water to shower blessing for the
prosperity and happiness of the couple. After this rite the bride stands up
carrying Kachali (brass made pot) on the left hand upward. She walks
ceremonially seven times around the groom clockwise and every time of
the completion of the round caste flowers upon the groom. This ritual is
called ‘Lei-Koiba’ (flower offering). The number of Lei-Koiba round is
now reduced to three or five times in some places. At the end of the round
the bride is given a pair of Kunda Pareng, garland of Kundo-flowers of
jasmine family which is to be garlanded to the groom and then she sits in
the left side of the Luhong-Phan. Kundo-flower is known as the witness
flower of marriage. Then the groom takes off one garland and he garlands the bride. The significance of such garlanding to each other is that both are bound in both body and mind and soul and spirit for good. Man is all-in-all for the woman who in turn will never leave the man as the creeper does to a tree. After that the Brahmin tightens the Inafis of bride and groom. Then the bride and groom stand up and bow down to the Sankirtana; some of them come forward and give good wishes and recites a prayer for affectionate union of the couple.

The last part of the ceremony is known as ‘Kangsubi Lannaba.’ In this rite both the bride and groom will come together led by the bride inside the house. They will be seated on right and left with their friends and relatives. Then the bride will be given the sweet Kangsubi (A kind of sweet made of black sesamum) and she will hand over it to the groom, they can eat if so desire. This shows the love for each other. After that the groom will come out of the house and he will bow down to the Sankirtana party until that time the Sankirtana cannot be closed. Then the marriage ceremony comes to end.

In the Manipuri marriage ceremonies there is a tradition of giving ‘Dakshina’ in the form of some amount of money to all the invitees present in the marriage ceremony. This ‘Dakshina’ is to be paid first by the bridegroom party and then by the party of the bride. Sometimes this ‘Dakshina’ is also paid in the form of kinds. It is to be mentioned here that though there is no hard and first rule about the amount or value of the kinds of Dakshina, while paying Dakshina by the bride party the amount or value of Dakshina should not exceed to that of the bridegroom party.

The next ritual after the marriage ceremony is Mou-Thinba (sending off the bride) – the bride along with her relatives and friends
will proceed to the house of the groom. In the Manipuri marriage system, there is a tradition of giving essential articles to be used by the bride. They include – cot beds with accessories, cupboards, kitchen wares etc. for her daily use. Besides, the weaving loom and the accessories to be utilized by her supposing she has to work for herself and the family are also given. All these things combined are known as *Aunpot* (gift items). In the early days bride used to be carried on the palanquin by four persons to the house of the groom. However, in these days decorated well lighted car with a big band party are being used. There is also great change in the items of *Aunpot*, adding all sorts of modern utilities even car etc. *Aunpot* are to be accompanied with the bride. However, now-a-days, they are taken to the groom’s house before the arrival of the groom. When the bride reaches the gate of the groom’s house a purification rite called ‘*Deoti-Okpa*’ is performed by kindling three torches and throwing puffed rice over it. This is followed by ‘*Mou-Okpa*’ in which the mother-in-law receives the bride and leads her embracing into the house.³

After the marriage ceremony on the fifth day, sumptuous lunch called ‘*Mapam Chakkouba*’ or ‘*Mangani chakkouba,*’ popularly known in Barak Valley is performed in the house of the bride in which the two families choose friends and relatives to participate the lunch. After the lunch the bride’s family present gifts, preferably clothes to the groom’s party. After this ritual on a day fixed by both the parties another lunch called ‘*Ngai-Khangnaba*’ is performed in the house of the groom at which also the two families choose friends and relatives to participate the lunch. In this rite also after the lunch the groom’s family present gifts preferably clothes to the bride’s party. However the rite ‘*Ngai-

Khangnaba’ is not popular in Manipur Valley and it is only practiced among the Manipuris of Barak Valley.

Child marriage is not prevalent among the Manipuris of Barak Valley. The marriage of boys and girls are arranged when they attained maturity. As for general rule the wife is preferred to be younger from the viewpoint of age. But this does not stand in the way in selecting one’s partner. Generally, the Manipuris follow monogamy, but there are also instances of practicing polygamy form of marriage. Widow remarriage is allowed in the Manipuri society only through the Kanyakatpa form of marriage

4.8. Customary laws of the Manipuri marriage system

4.8.1. Marriage Rules:

There are several surnames of the Manipuris, which are prohibited degrees of kindred in the Manipuri society. Some of them are Yek-Thoknaba, Pendinnaba, Leinung- Pendinnaba, Shairuk- Tinnaba, Mungnaba and Ee-Omnaba surnames which are prohibited to marry each other.4

Some conditions are given below:

1. Both the parties must not be of the same Yek-Salai.

2. Neither party falls within the prohibited degrees of Peninnaba, Shairuk-Tinnaba, Ee-Omnaba, Mungnaba etc.

3. Both the parties have attained puberty.5

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5 Kirti Singh, Dr. M. ; Manipuri Samaj Hangatlikpa Amasung Choukhatlakpa, Imphal, 1976; p.57.
If any party violates the above customary laws, they are given punishment and excommunicated from the society. The details of the prohibited degrees of marriage are discussed below:

4.8.1.1. YEK – SALAIES:

The Yek-Salais is a part and parcel of Manipuri Marriage system. The Manipuris are exogamous and marriage within the clan or Yek is strictly prohibited. The work ‘Yek-Salais’ means surnames having a common ancestor. Persons who belong to the same Yek-Salai cannot marry each other, and if they do so against the customary law, they would be exiled as outcaste. Salai is another name of Yek.

If and only if there is Yek-Salai prohibition there is possible way to marry, which is available to the seventh generation of the same Yek-Saalai of different Sageis. In short the Yek-Salai relationship is considered the most important way to the marriage.


4.8.1.2. **Pendinnaba:**

‘Pendinnaba’ means the persons who belong to a different *yek* or *Salai* having a common maternal grandmother. This type of prohibition is caused by the women having issues by more than one husband.

There is also a kind of *Pendinnaba* called ‘*Leinung Pendinnaba*’. Descendants of brothers born of the great grandmother by more than one husband are said to be in the prohibited degree of kindred called - *Leinung-Pendinnaba*. Thus, only form the woman folks, *Pendinnaba*, the prohibited degree of kindred is caused.

4.8.1.3. **Mungnaba:**

Another form of prohibition is ‘*Mungnaba*’. It means the person having a common maternal grandmother of the fifth degree. *Mungnaba* has two forms viz. *Ee- Mungnaba* and *Minggou Mungnaba*. Person falling within three different surnames with a common maternal grandfather and latter relationship established is blood relationship, called *Ee- Mungnaba*, whereas the former relationship is by relational name called *‘Minggou Mungnaba’*.7

4.8.1.4. **Shariuk-Tinnaba:**

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The term ‘Shariuk-Tinnaba’ is also a kind of prohibited degree. Occasionally princes born to the same king left their clan and got affiliated to another clan (yek), while some remained in their original clan. The same case was there among the common people. Such children are permitted to have matrimonial relation under the rule of Yek-thoknaba. But, the said relation was prohibited by the rule of Shairuk-tinnaba. The restriction was operated by the rule of Shairuk-Achouba amongst the royal families, and the prohibition was forever. But the cases for common people are guided by the rule of Shairuk-Macha and the restriction is only for a period of two generations.

4.8.1.5. Pee-Tinnaba:

Pee-Tinnaba means person having a common maternal ancestor. This is also one of the prohibited degrees of kindred to the marriage. Though Naorem is the blood of Chenglei, they are created as Ningthouja and therefore Naorem and Chenglei Yeks cannot marry each other. King Naotingkhong gave recognition to Naorem as Ningthouja. Atom and Meikam are forbidden to intermarry. Atom is Ningthouja and Keikam is the blood of Khuman, but they are said to be Pee-Tinnaba in the strict sense and likewise Paonam and Thangcham Khagokpam, Yengkokpam and Wangpacham (Leimapokpam of Moirang, Irom of Chingamakha and Laishram of Loklabung, Santhinabam of Leishangthem and Moirangthem of Shmurou, Shiyatpam, Ningthoujam Menjor Mayum and Ningthoujam. Langonjam and Charoibam, Amakcham and Tensubam, Huidrom of Liya and Longonjam, Haobam and Wangkhem, Mungkhem and Leisanthem, Akhom and Arubam, Salam and Langpoklakpam, Thounaojam of Khomidek, Huidrom of Leishangthem and Phammihanbam, Yimnam

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8 Sharma, Atombapu : Meihouron Shakok, Imphal, 1965; p. 42.
Shantinabam and Phamninhonbam, Salam of Salamkhong and Yumnam Moibunglakpam, Leimapokpam and Hijam, Ngangom and Huidrom of Leisangthem, Wangkheirakpam Ahan and Haobam of Moirangthem, Paonam Yilbembam and Kshatri Sanachimayum, Haobam Ahalluplakpam and Nongthonbam of Thangjaba, Waikhon of Thoubal and Waikhom of Luwang Yek-Salai, Ngagmon of Yairipok and Yensenbam, Yairipok Hijam and Korek Sanabam, Laishram of Badra Singh’s blood and Kshetrisana Chaobam, Laishram of Thana Singh’s (Dhana singh) blood and kshetri Sanachimayum, Ngangom and Kabok Engoimayum, Keisham of Yairipok and Poukeishanganbam, Thoubal-Waikhom and Sonjenbam, Sanasam and Oinam, Ngairankhom and Khullen and lastly Yengkhom of Neighouja Yek salai, Konthoujam of chenglei and Sanchestsabam of Kabo.\(^9\)

Up to the fifth and sixth generation, the groups and surnames are forbidden to intermarry. They are permitted to intermarriage after the sixth and seven generations. Angom, Hijam and Salam had intermarriage to each other in the early days, but later this was prohibited during the reign of Angoupa-Shikhong-Lanthaba. But now-a-days many different surnames are found to practice intermarriage beyond the customary rules. For instance, at the time of marriage their respective surnames are found to change into another Yek.

In the earlier days, the boys used to visit the girl’s house in open courtship. Through the medium of folk songs both the boys and girls communicated their feelings. At dead of night from a far place the boy used to sing a meaningful song to charm a particular girl at home. Incidentally through another song, girl also might replay singing it

leisurely as if without much significance so far her own guardians were concerned. But this practice is not found today in the Manipuri society.

4.9. Khainaba:

The word “Khainaba” is a technical term. It is commonly translated into “Divorce” or “Dissolution of Marriage.” From time immemorial it has been in vogue in the Manipuri society. Manipuri marriage, though a holy union is not free from divorce. Divorce is a simple affair and unlike marriage, no ceremony is essential in it. According to the customary law divorce is permitted in the Manipuri Society and the legal positivism sanctioned some kind of penalty for transgression of such laws. Under some conditions divorce may be initiated from any side of the spouses. Some conditions are channelized in the following:

1. When the wife become barren or issueless;
2. When the husband dislike the attitude of his wife and vice versa;
3. When either of the spouses becomes insane.
4. When there is any condition compelling either of the spouses to divorce; and lastly.
5. When the husband likes male child etc.

There are some procedures of divorce which have still existed among the Manipuris. Those procedures are discussed briefly in the following:

4.9.1. Procedures of Khainaba:

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11 Kirti Singh, Dr. M. : Khainaba, Hanjinnaba Amasung Chakthak ( The Lanneithanbi 20, October), 1983; Imphal.
In fact, the process of divorce amongst the spouses is very simple. If the divorce is initiated by husband, the bride’s price called ‘Nupi-Mamal’, will be given to the divorced wife by him, and this is the same case with wife. The divorced husband will take the children if the divorce is done under mutual agreement. Responsibility goes to the mother if the child is below four years. Under this condition the divorced husband will give maintenance for both the mother and children called ‘Angnang-Chakthak,’ which is dynamic as the condition demands. But in case of female child the option of residence is given to the child. For the male child father is the rightful claimant. Woman after Khainaba, remains as belonging to the Yek of her husband i.e. she remains as the wife of husband until she becomes the concubine of a man or her death.\footnote{Ibunghal Singh, L. Op. cit. p. 89.}

The child who stays with her mother can be taken by the divorced father when he or she grows up. Since time immemorial it is an acceptable tradition which has been found in the Manipuri society. When the wife desires to leave her husband she may quarrel for the right or wrong cause with the husband, and then the divorce may be negotiated. In this regard, there are two binding forces which are part and parcel in the process of Khainaba. They are : (i)Wa-Loithaknaba and (ii) Hanjinnaba.

4.9.2. Wa-Loithaknaba:

‘Wa-Loithaknaba’ is a process or binding force of Khainaba which means the confirmation of divorce. In this process both the parents, the Peebas of the Sagei (head of the particular surname) and some local elder orally take interrogation from the spouses. They decide whether the divorce deserves or not. This formality is a simple from of social recognition of Khainaba. For year, a divorced woman may remain
unconfined. Before the confirmation if the divorce women dies at her parental house, her death rites must be performed by the husband.

The divorced woman cannot remarry another person before the Wa-Loithoknaba stage. If she does so the second husband must pay a fine to the former husband which is worth half of the expenditure of the earliest wedding ceremony. But this may depend upon the will of the former husband. In its true sense, the proceeding of Wa-Loithoknaba is not an easy way. It may take more time because if both the spouses have their issues, it will be very difficult to do so.

4.9.3. Hanjinnaba:

The meaning of Hanjinnaba is nothing but the ‘Recohabitation’ of both the divorcees.

The act of recohabitation is free from any binding force because everything depends upon their choice. Both the spouses ignoring whatever they did in the past may give a shape to their present lives. Any divorce woman who stays at their parental is generally called ‘Mou-Hallakpi.’ They are also treated as unmarried wives in certain cases. They act all things under the instruction of their parents or elders (in case of parent’s death during their staying at Mapam, Parental house). The following are some of the rules of Hanjinnaba:

1. The limitation of conjugal rights is three years from the date of divorce.

2. Untill a marriage; the divorced wife belongs to the surname of family of her husband.

3. Within three years if the divorce is not confirmed, then such divorce shall be presumed to have been confined naturally.
4. Within three years from the date of divorce, any claim from the bride’s, or groom’s price can be made, and such claim shall be void if it is made after the lapse of three years of divorce.

5. In case the husband is unwilling to the restriction of their conjugal life, no claim of any type shall be made or given by the wife to the husband. If the divorce is caused due to the negligence of the husband who dislikes to any restriction, then he is liable to pay claim or compensation to his wife. In such cases also the limitation is three years.

4.10. Marriage Dress:

In a marriage ceremony it is compulsory for all the invitees to put a uniform dress. The males generally put on pheijam (Dhoti) and Pungyat (Upper part dress) and colour of these dresses are generally white. While the females put on Thambal Leikhok Phanek (Dress for lower part), blouze and Inafi in the upper part. Dress of bridegroom is also almost same with the invitees. The only difference is that he is required to put a Koiyet (Turban) and a long Inafî of white colour. The bride puts Poloi (marriage dress) in the lower part of the body which is well decorated and the upper part of the body will be covered by well decorated blouze and the colour of the blouze must be either red or green. Beside, the bride will put a Leitareng or Kajeng Lei (a round size head dress).

4.11. Law of inheritance:
In the Manipuri society of Barak valley, the laws of inheritance are quite simple. Each and every son has the right to inherit the properties (movable and immovable) of the father. The youngest son will get the lion’s share of the property if he takes the charge of looking after the parents. If the youngest son is not looking after the parents, the responsible person will get the lion’s share. If any son failed to do so, the property will be divided equally after the death of the parents. Daughters do not have the right to inherit the property of the father but they have the right to inherit mother’s property. Mother’s property is reserved only for the daughters. In the absence of any legal heir, the adopted son or daughter, even the slave, has the right to inherit the property.

4.12. Traditional marriage system:

It may be again mentioned here that some section of the Manipuris of the Barak Valley performs their marriage ceremonies completely according to the traditional marriage system. Though the majority of the Manipuris of valley performs their marriage ceremony according to the Hindu way the influence of traditional marriage system is noticed in their marriage ceremonies. In the traditional marriage system also there are three form of marriage and like the Hindu marriage system marriage through engagement is the most popular form of marriage. Further the number of stages of marriage is also same with the Hindu marriage system. In the Hindu marriage system the first three stages namely – Hainaba, Yathang-thanaba and Waroipot-puba are performed completely according to the traditional marriage system. The remaining two stages i.e. Heijingpot-puba and Luhongba are performed according to the Hindu way along with traditional marriage system. In these last two stages Brahmin plays important role. On the other hand the traditional priest plays important role in all the stages of the traditional marriage system.
Traditional marriage ceremonies are conducted with the veneration of the Salai and Sagei Apokpas of the parties concerned. The party of the groom-to-be brings Apok-Asa for the Sagei Apokpa of the bride-to-be. For this purpose they may bring five, seven or more baskets. In all the baskets there must be two fruits viz. Heikru and Heining. A phanek and Laiphi (garments for Lai) are to be offered to the household Lai along with fruits, Kabok (parched rice), betel nut and leaf. The Gods venerated are the Lamlai (the Lai of the area where the girl resides) and the Sagei Lai.

On the day of marriage, the groom is sanctified by a priest. The groom will pray to the Ultimate Ancestor and the immediate seven ancestors under ritualistic formalities prior to the leaving for the residence of the bride. Then he prays to his parents. After that the groom party proceeds for the bride’s place carrying fruits, sweets and other items to be offered to the ancestral Lai of the bride, the Lamlai (local gods) i.e., Lais (gods) of the locality and Sanamahi (traditional god). In the bride’s house the Chengluk Nungshang (a basket full of rice) and the items meant for the ancestral Lai are kept at the place of Sanamahi and Imoinu Ahongbi (traditional goddess). A seat is specially prepared with ritualistic formalities for the Ultimate ancestor at the main ritual officiated by the priest. For the welfare and long life of the new couple the Lainingthous (god king), Lainuras (divine girls), Sanamahi and Pakhangba (Traditional god) are also worshipped. It is the traditional belief of the Manipuris that the groom represents Salailel and the bride Leimalel, who will procreate living beings. In away the groom is taken to be the sun while the bride is the earth. Just like the earth revolves round the sun, the bride goes round the groom seven times. At the end of each round the bride cast flowers upon the groom. After the end of seventh round
garlands of Kundo flowers are placed by the bride on the neck of the groom. Then the groom offers a garland on the neck of the bride. After the completion of marriage function at the residence of the bride with the final veneration of Sanamahi, Leimaren and the Salai Apokpas of the bride, the couple pays their respect to the parents of the brides and then leaves for the residence of the groom. At the entrance of the groom’s house the bride will be received with the traditional rite “Deoto-okpa.” On entering the new house the bride first pays obeisance to the Sanamahi and Leimaren (female goddess) of the husband’s house.

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