CHAPTER VIII

OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPING
HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT IN MANIPUR

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The development of handloom and handicraft industries of Manipur are under the jurisdiction of a number of development departments like Industry Department, Sericulture Department, Khadi and Village Industries etc. The actual process of development is, however, based on out-of-school education as the majority of the artisans engaged in these two household industries are poor and illiterate. They are mostly from the rural areas. Non-formal education such can make an impact on the artisans of these cottage industries, so far as the process of learning is concerned. For these sections of the people, this process of education is an important agency for carrying out handloom and handicraft developments.

In fact, learning by doing is the process through which the knowledge and skills of handloom and handicraft are transmitted from generation to generation since a long time for the rural and agricultural development. It is in this context some programmes of non-formal education can accelerate the development of handloom and handicraft industries of the State. Manipur is an industrially backward State having very few industries other than handloom and
handicraft. However, she has a distinct place in these house-
hold cottage industries in the country, and these are based 
on her indigenous methods and techniques.

For our convenience, the discussion of this chapter 
has been divided into two major parts viz., (i) Handloom 
Industry of Manipur and (ii) Handicraft Industry of Manipur. 
It may facilitate in examining the development of these two 
cottage industries of Manipur in the light of its possible 
impact of non-formal education.

8.2. HANDLOOM INDUSTRY OF MANIPUR

In the past, the fundamental needs of the people 
of Manipur were limited only to food, shelter, and clothing. 
But with the advancement of time and human civilisation, the 
need for standardised food is met by agricultural products 
replacing the original raw items of food. Similarly, the 
backs of the trees and skins of the animals used in the form 
of clothes have now been replaced by fine clothes. As such 
the art of spinning and weaving is going to be improved in 
association with the human civilisation. Here, out-of-school 
education can play an important role in the development of 
handloom industry. In Manipur, the progress of handloom 
industry may be divided into two types—(i) weaving of cotton 
cloth and (ii) weaving of silk cloth. They are being discussed 
one after another along with their different aspects.
Types of Weaving in Manipur and Their Processes

Lashing Takpa-Kappa (Process of Cotton ginning and carding)

Khwang Lyong Shaba (Loin loom weaving in process)

Pangyong-Shaba (Throw shuttle loom weaving in process)

Langchak Chakpa (To spin by Meitei women)

Kon-Shaba (Fly shuttle loom weaving in process)

Meitei women selling cloths in the market
8.2.1. WEAVING OF COTTON CLOTH

The raw material generally used for weaving in the past was cotton. It was grown by the people themselves and at due time it was harvested by the male and spinning and weaving works were done by the females. However, it was not grown sufficiently in the valley areas of Manipur. Whatever was produced, was neither enough nor of good quality. The hill people grew part of their local needs in their jhum cultivation areas in between two cropping seasons. In the past they did not know how to weave. And as such, it was the duty of the Meiteis to take the cotton from the hill tribes and to send the finished products to them in different attractive designs. It clearly shows that there was cordial relationship between these two sections of the people of Manipur, as well as, the superiority of the Meiteis in the art of weaving. Thus weaving is the oldest and most widespread cottage industry in Manipur. It is also a part of Meitei family tradition and a time honoured subsidiary source of family income.  

The indigenous method of weaving follows a number of processes like—(i) ginning, (ii) carding, (iii) spinning, (iv) winding, (v) twisting, (vi) dyeing, (vii) sizing etc.,

using cotton as the raw material. And as such, almost every Manipuri family more or less possesses one or two looms for producing textiles not only for home consumption but also for commercial purposes. The product too was of coarse quality in the past. However, spinning fine thread started in 1562 during the reign of king Rungyamba of Manipur.3

Manipuri looms may be classified under three groups on the basis of their structure and technique. They are—(i) Loin looms, (ii) Throw shuttle looms and (iii) Fly shuttle looms. These looms are introduced at different stages of social development, thereby imparting out-of-school education for developing handloom in Manipur.

In fact, the method of weaving in the past was indigenous and it had been started for the first time on Loin looms using indigenous materials. It was, however, under the patronage of the kings of Manipur that the throw shuttle loom was introduced in handloom industry of this region.4 This loom is in a better structure and technique than the Loin loom for all practical purposes. It was only in 1921, fly shuttle loom was introduced in Manipur under the initiative of Huiram Keipha Selungba, an expert craftsman of Yaiskul Hirunghamba Leikai, Imphal.5 He learnt the

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specialised knowledge about this loom from the people of Tripura while he was there. In this way, the three types of looms had been introduced and they helped in developing the art of weaving step by step, facilitating out-of-school education for the young learner of the weaver class. All of them are still extensively used in the valley areas of this region according to the convenience of the artisans.

Actually, weaving in Manipur is a domestic art, engaging at present, a good percentage of people, not only for earning their livelihood but also for absorbing their interests at their leisure time in a number of ways. The traditional customs of the people of this region to use clothes of their own production might have been one of the factors which contributed to the continuation of this household industry from generation to generation. And as such what is produced now by adopting either traditional method or modern method is sufficient for the whole population of Manipur so far home consumption is concerned. In fact, spinning and weaving are done only by the girls and women sections of the people of the State both in the hills and valley areas. And in most cases they learn it by direct participation with their parent. Thus the impact of non-formal education may be observed so far as the handloom industry of Manipur is concerned. Because the learners learn the art not going to any school but by taking direct part in the industry itself.
A Manipuri girl is generally initiated with the art of weaving at a tender age and, as such, she practices this art throughout her life. There is no particular area scheduled for weaving though area of specialisation is very much there. Therefore, every female is an artisan and every house is a handloom production centre. This is the reason why weaving in Manipur has been treated as a classless and casteless occupation forming an integral part of out-of-school education.\textsuperscript{6} The method of learning is, however, an indigenous one using indigenous materials and techniques. As such, it is an important component of out-of-school education though it has been deeply rooted in the social and cultural life of the people of Manipur.

It is a fact that girls from the very young age start helping their mothers, sisters, sister-in-laws and other female members of their families by participating in the different stages of weaving like PHI MOUBA (initial process of weaving), PHI KOTPA (to slope), LANGCHAK CHAKPA (to spin), LANG SHAMBA (to fasten disjoint thread) etc. As such the principle of learning by doing through apprenticeship method which is so important in the process of non-formal education is applied properly in the whole learning

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 13.
situation of this household industry. As they grow older, gradually they pick up the techniques of full-fledged weaving.

They need no regular training in weaving, because, from the very childhood they develop proficiency in this craft by observing their elders during the course of rendering assistance to them. Most of the artisans engaged in handlooms are illiterate leading a simple and constricted life confining within the rural community. In this way, mass participation is a characteristic feature of this cottage industry. Hence, from the humble homes of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other socially and educationally backward communities to the aristocrats, every one of them gives equal dignity to the labour of weaving. This is the reason why every community of Manipur contributes its own site towards the creation of new handloom designs. It must be evident from the fact that there are a number of designs which are believed to be invented by the Princess, Queens and Goddesses of Manipur. And as such, weaving among all the sections of the people of Manipur is not only a part of their household duties but else a part of their purposeful leisure time utilisation. In an indirect manner, therefore, it is helping in the development of non-formal education in the State of Manipur.
DIVISION OF WORK AMONG WEAVERS

There was proper division of labour amongst the different classes of the people of Manipur for engaging themselves in household industry. It has been mentioned in the chronicle known as RASHIN PURAN that Phijam clan is generally engaged in the art of weaving being a clan meant for weaving as its specialised area of work. No doubt, other clans are also engaged in this household industry but specialising in one particular item of cloth or the other. As such there is a clear cut division of labour as to what type of cloth to be woven by the different clans, so far as, the people of valley areas of this region is concerned. It has been clearly mentioned in the book LOIYAMBA SHINYAN that Khingujam clan will be in-charge of weaving NUNGPHI, Laien-lakpa LAIPHI, Khumanlamba SHARILAMI, Leikhrakpa SHARENGPHI, Shameran LEIRUMPHI etc. In this way, an exhaustive list of surnames along with corresponding type of clothes to be woven is given in this book.

It may be pointed out that this book incorporated the code of conduct of king Loiyamba (1074-1122) to be followed by the people even the king, the queen, the nobles and the common people in their day to day life. As such

it is also a kind of division of labour in which out-of-school education may play a significant role. There is also a class of people who are engaged in the art of making clothes like NINGTHOUPHI and its three different types namely, NINGTHOUPHI SHAIKAKPA, NINGTHOUPHI WAMPHAK and NINGTHOUPHI TAJIN meant for the king himself and for rewards to be given to his nobles for their meritorious services. These sections of people are also making a variety of clothes for the princes and queens of Manipur. They are weavers like—Naota, Yangnu, Meishunaha, Khoiriyen etc. There are also some clothes which can be used only by the members of the royal family and that is also sometimes confined to a particular member. PUNTHIT PHANEK may be mentioned under this category as it can be used only by Tamphasana, the eldest daughter of the king by his royal consort. The handicraft products of Manipur may be made more attractive by a variety of colours adopting both indigenous: dyeing of the past and modern synthetic dyeing materials of present time. The process of dyeing also is learnt by the people through the out-of-school education and not going to any school whatsoever.

8.2.2. INDIGENOUS PROCESS OF DYEING

There are some indigenous processes to be followed before dyeing whether it may be either in the form of yarn or cloth. For yarn, sizing using a quantity of boiled rice and squeezing through a cloth stainer known as CHANANGPHI in a tub of cold water is required. This process is locally known as CHANANG THABA. In the case of cloth, bleaching is done before dyeing. The process of bleaching is called SHANTHI TANBA after the name of the bleaching material—cowdung—used in it. Then the cloth is washed with caustic soda or with ash water locally known as UTI which is also prepared with locally available materials and adopting simple methods. The young girls are learning the whole process either assisting their mothers or attempting themselves on trial and error basis.

They also use some items of local fruits like KANGOL (fruit of a creeper), LAMHEIBI (Randia dumentorum) etc. in washing bleached clothes not only before the introduction of washing soap but also when they are not in a position to purchase it. After this, the yarn or cloth is ready for dyeing in any colour using both indigenous and synthetic dyeing ingredients as per convenience of the weaver to get the desired result.
INDIGENOUS DYEING OF MANIPUR

There are six types of indigenous dyes generally used in India such as dyes made of roots, dyes made of trunks of trees, dyes made of barks, dyes made of leaves, dyes made of flowers and dyes made of fruits.¹² The people of Manipur are also having their own ways of dyeing, basing on their indigenous materials, following indigenous methods. Manipuri weavers prepare and use all the dyes from the local plants and fruits and this knowledge and skill have been handed down to their daughters. This system is still prevalent in the rural areas of this region where they prepare and use such dyes with their own hands with full confidence. As they are learning it by direct participation, so there is reason to believe that the impact of non-formal education is very much visible upon the weavers of Manipur.

They use the juice of wild indigo to give black or dark blue dye along with a bark which gives a red colour shading to terre-cotta. Lampblack locally known as KALI is also used for black dye. But the better black shades are obtained from the strong decoction of indigo. As such a variety of colours like green, yellow, orange shades etc. may be produced from the barks of the trees.¹³ They also obtain carthamine and rhodamine from a kind of flower locally known

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as KUSHUM LEI, yellow and reddish yellow from turmeric, black from the young leaves of teak and brown from the bark of SHEIKUHI (Bridelia rauta). Similarly, the people of Manipur use a type of black colour locally known as KUM obtained from the leaves of a plant of the same name making it an indigo coloured paste by some processes of fermentation and later on by nutrionising it with oyster shell ashes. As such it produces a lasting brilliant colour. In this way the valley people of Manipur are still depending on indigenous dyeing for various purposes. But the most commonly used dye is UREIFROM (Mallotus philippinensis) which is used by old men and women. As such the preparation and use of the various indigenous dyeing materials may be of great significance so far as the process of non-formal education is concerned. The same is applicable in the case to synthetic dyes, as well.

INTRODUCTION OF SYNTHETIC DYES

There are two types of chemical dyes generally used by the people of Manipur. The chemical dyes which are not of very fast nature appeared in Manipur market at about 1905, and the washable permanent colours appeared by about 1930, replacing the indigenous colour. Some areas like

Wangkhei, Nongmeibung, Sinjamei etc. of Manipur are famous for synthetic dyeing. As such it seems that the impact of non-formal education for developing synthetic dyeing is more on the people of these areas in comparison to the indigenous dyeing. Out-of-school education for dying is learnt in the process of observation and participation methods by the young girls under the guidance and supervision of their mothers and other elderly female members of the family or neighbourhood. This apprenticeship method of non-formal education may play an important role in the life of a Manipuri woman as all the seven Yeks (Clan groups) are having their own identifying colours.

IDENTIFICATION COLOURS OF SEVEN YEKS

There is also a clear cut line of demarcation amongst the different clans of Meitei section of the people of Manipur as to what colour will have to be dyed by a particular clan. And as such, Khumanthem clan is in-charge of dyeing HIGOKNANOU LEI, Khumukcham KUMLANG, Akongchamban LEIPAKLEI, Wariyambam YAICHU LEI etc.17 There are also seven different colours identifying seven corresponding YEKS of the valley people of Manipur. They are viz., (i) NINGTHOUJA—red, (ii) ANGOM—white, (iii) KHUMAN—black, (iv) LUWANG—blue, (v) NDIRANG—multi-yellowish, (vi) CHANGLEI—brown and

(vii) Khabanganba—multi-greenish. It may be used as an important means of non-formal education by developing an aesthetic sense in the minds of the people concerning different colours. The reason is that the Meitei section of the people of Manipur was expected to wear their specified colour clothes in all social functions and ceremonies to show their distinct groups.

8.2.3. Weaving of Silk Cloth

Silk is a new importation in the household industry of Manipur. The artisans carry out the whole processes like rearing, spinning, reeling, carding, weaving etc. at their houses and the knowledge and skills are handed down from generation to generation. As such the development of out-of-school education for the purpose of sericulture is possible for two factors viz., (i) the state possesses suitable climate and soil for growing a variety of silk rearing plant and (ii) the custom and tradition of the people of Manipur for using silk clothes at cooking, taking meals etc., at home and attending grand feasts by all the sections of people of the valley areas of Manipur. Hence, there is heavy demand for silk and silk products.

The silk and silk products of Manipur may be classified into four types, depending on the kind of silk

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plants on which the silkworms are fed. The most important silkworm feeding plants of this region are like KABRANG CHAK (mulberry), TURITILA (Litsaea polyantha), KECE (caster), UYUNG (oak) etc. And as such the four-fold classification of silk products of the State are based on the silkworm rearing plants. They are— (i) Mulberry silk, (ii) Hugo silk, (iii) Eri silk and (iv) Tasser silk. They are being discussed below to ascertain the impact of non-formal education on the people rearing these silkworms.

MULBERRY SILK

The Mulberry silkworms are indigenous to the warm temperate regions of Northern China and hilly regions of Manipur. It is also believed that the silkworms reared in Assam and Bengal have come from China via the border State of Manipur. As such Mulberry silk and its rearing process has a long tradition in the social and cultural life of the people of Manipur. The silkworm is fed exclusively on the leaves of KABRANGCHAK which is abundantly available in this region. The earliest records have mentioned that it was cultivated in Shushakameng, Sagolmang, Sekmai etc. and during the reign of king Chourajit (1883-1813), Manipur had a brisk silk business with Burmas. Thus, the Imperial Gazetteer of India

(1909) records that Manipur is China's contemporary in the production of silk cloth. So, Manipur has a long tradition with the silk industry and the people are learning it since a long past. Naturally, therefore, the non-formal education may help, to a great extent, to develop this industry with all modern thoughts and ideas particularly for improving its rearing process, weaving and using in the embroidery of the borders of Meitei PHANEK RAYEK-NAIBA (a kind of skirt) etc.

MUGA SILK

The Muga silkworm is fed on an extensive kinds of leaves. The most important one is the species of Laurel known as TUMITLA in Manipur. In Lower Assam it is fed on the leaves of Sauru. It is a multivoltine and has five generations in a year. But only two or three are used by the rearers in Manipur, specially in the Jiribam sub-division. The Muga eggs are hatched and the cocoons are spun at home with an elaborate process which may be utilised for non-formal education purposes for the young girls. As the eggs are hatched and cocoons are developed on the trees, they are carefully protected by the young boys and as such they may get some sort of out-of-school education in the process in the forms of leisure time utilisation. During the day time the greatest enemies of Muga silkworms are the ants, crows, kites etc., while they are attacked by nocturnal birds.
like bats and owls at night. Hence, careful protection is required for both day and night. There is also scope for non-formal education for development of Muga silk which is mainly confined only with the people of Jiribam area of Manipur valley.

ERI SILK

The Eri silkworm lives on the leaves of KEGE which grows luxuriantly all over the State, both wild and cultivated. This silkworm is multivoltine and can be reared all the year round under the supervision of the Manipuri women-folk. However, the autumn, winter and spring broods are the most important ones. The whole process beginning from rearing to weaving are of great energy and systematic labour and therefore it bears some educative value and this may be utilised for developing non-formal education basing on the income generating activities. The Eri silk is also the most popular type of silk, as the people of Manipur are familiar with this silkworm and its footplant since a long time. It may, therefore, facilitate to organise some programmes of non-formal education for the people concerned with this industry.

TASAR SILK

The tasar silkworm is fed on the leaves of the locally available tree, UYUNG which grows abundantly on the
hills and foot-hills inhabited by the rural and tribal people of Manipur. It is a native of warm temperate climate. Thus, the most appropriate opportunity is given by the nature for the development of this industry in Manipur. It is on this ground, the State Government has started Tasar industry beginning from the Fifth Five Year Plan utilising nature-grown oak trees.21

It is a bivoltine insect and as such there is only two cropping seasons—(i) Autumn and (ii) Spring. The feeding of this silkworm is done in the open air. It is also very timid so it may not be disturbed during feeding. The reason is that it does not form proper cocoon even by the slightest degree of interference. Tasar silk is akin to Chinese silk, therefore, it may have enough export potentialities. And as such some facilities may be opened by which a good source of income for the school drop-outs may be available with the least expenditure of time and energy. And for the same the young drop-outs may be properly trained up through some non-formal education programmes.

PROCESS OF LEARNING SILK-WORKS

Learning the process of spinning, reeling, carding, dyeing, weaving etc. of all the four types of silk discussed

above are carried on by means of indigenous methods. The young girls are learning the whole process by observing and experimenting in the same manner in which their mothers and other elderly women of the family are engaged in the work. They also killed the insects within the cocoons by exposure to the Sun heat, hot air etc. Then these cocoons are boiled properly in an alkali solution so as to make the cocoons ready for spinning, reeling, carding and weaving. In this way, the process itself bears some arts and techniques, which may be of great significance in the task of non-formal education.

STATE SPONSORED SERICULTURE FARMS

There are 81 Sericulture farms in both the hills and valley areas of Manipur. They may be of great help in the process of non-formal education for all the four types of silk discussed above in their respective areas. The Sericulture farms indicate that out of 81 farms as many as 55 are in the hill areas of the State while only 26 are in the valley. It is also clear that the area of specialisation differs between these two sections of the people, as hill people are specialising in Tasar silk, opening 51 Tasar Seed Grainages and Extension Centres. It may be attributed to natural factor of abundantly available oak trees in the hill areas of this region, though a modest attempt has also been
made for developing Mulberry and Eri silk there. On the whole, it may be assumed that proper attention has not been given from the side of the State Government for the development of Mulberry, Eri and Muga silks for the valley areas of the State. As such the valley people are still following indigenous methods for these silks. So to improve the indigenous methods the people concerned are to be educated and that can be done through some programmes of non-formal education. These farms may be shown categorically for both the hills and valley areas of Manipur in the table given below.

Table 1, showing Govt. sponsored Sericulture farms of Manipur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Categories of the farm</th>
<th>Hills</th>
<th>Valley</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mulberry silk grainage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mulberry Extension Centre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mulberry Chowki Rearing Centre</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Muga Extension Centre</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Muga Propaganda Outpost</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eri Extension Centre</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tasar Seed Grainage</td>
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<td>25</td>
</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tasar Extension Centre</td>
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<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oak Nursery Centre</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Sericulture Training Centre</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
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</table>

22. Govt. of Manipur : Number and Name of Sericulture Farms in Manipur as on 16.4.85. Sericulture Department, Lamphelpat, n.d., pp. 1-3.
8.3. HANDLOOM PRODUCTS OF MANIPUR

The handloom products of Manipur cover a variety of cotton, staple and silk clothes. The people of Manipur weave cotton with stripe patterns along with beautifully coloured shawls, saris, bedcovers etc. with a speciality of this region. Similarly, the most important silk products of the State are saref, wrapper, PHIGE PHANEK, ENGINEER-PHI etc. On the whole silk clothes are very costly at the same time durable. As such the high quality silk clothes are used by the high standard ladies, whereas coarser types of silk like Eri are extensively used by the poor in the rural areas of this region as the products of this silk are exceedingly durable.

There is else a tendency for area wise specialisation in handloom products of Manipur. This is the reason why Wangkhei is famous for her Ghamwar, curtain, bedcover, bed sheet etc.; Thangmeiband, Khurbukhul and Leitangkhunou are the famous places for silk products; Top-Moirangkamepu and Malebam Leikai for PHANEK and turban respectively. There are also some of the weavers who are working for their co-operative societies. There are 597 handloom co-operative societies with 54,664 members in the State.23 These societies are playing an important role for the development of handloom industry

of Manipur guiding the weavers properly towards the democratic path. It is in this context that they may be used as important agencies of non-formal education. Because they are directly or indirectly giving some sort of education or training to the weavers for the improvement of their profession.

8.4. POSITION OF MANIPURI WOMEN IN HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

Manipur women are playing a significant role in the development of their handloom industry, managing the whole affairs from weaving to selling of their products. As such Manipuris do not shut up their women at home, as is the custom in most parts of India; they are much more enlightened and intelligent in this respect. Hence, handloom industry is exclusively in the hands of the women working either wholetime or part-time basis. They have also grasped the sensibility of colour and as such by more experience and training of their eyes, their expert hand apply a wide range of suitable colours to produce magnificent colour clothes. It is, therefore, to Manipuri weavers, the colour is associated with season and festivals.

In fact, handloom industry is so important in the life of a Manipuri girl that weaving implements have been made an indispensable item in the dowry of her marriage. Another aspect of handloom development of Manipur is that Manipuri women are not only making handloom clothes but are selling these also at the open markets of the State and other Sales Emporia. As such they are rendering services for marketing of the finished products. To facilitate the selling outside the State, there are 2 Sales Emporia in Calcutta and 1 each in Dimapur, Gauhati, Bombay and New Delhi for handloom clothes of Manipur. For supplying clothes to these Emporia, there are also 15 handloom production centres in Manipur employing about 3,500 weavers in this region. These centres help in increasing handloom production to a great extent by means of imparting latest knowledge and skills of weaving may be in an indirect manner.

We have, so far, discussed the various aspects of out-of-school education for the development of handloom industry of Manipur and the impact of non-formal education on the weavers at its various processes. Similarly, handicraft industry is also another important sector of public interest having out-of-school educational impact upon the people of this region. It is because, like that of handloom

industry, this cottage industry also covers a good number of people, who are supplementing their family income by this art.

8.5. HANDICRAFT INDUSTRIES OF MANIPUR

Handicrafts are the major elements in the cultural heritage of the people of Manipur. Her handicraft is famous for its superb artistic quality. The intricate knowledge and skills of the handicrafts of this region have been handed down from the older to the younger generation. As such, the learning process takes place by observation and participation methods which are important characteristics of non-formal education. Some of the important handicrafts of Manipur like embroidery, wool-knitting, bamboo works, cane works, mat making, doll making etc. may play an increasingly important role in the process of non-formal education of this region. They are being discussed below:

8.5.1. Embroidery of PHANEK RAYEK-NAIBA

Embroidery is an indispensable handicraft among the girls and women of Manipur. The custom and tradition of Meitei females to wear PHANEK RAYEK-NAIBA compelled them to learn embroidery. It is woven in the loom loom in the traditional pattern of three striped colours with plain black colour border. Both the upper and lower borders of this
Handicrafts of Manipur

Phanek Lonba (Embroidery of Phanek Mayek-Naiba by Meitei young girls) is learning the process from her older sister.

Wool knitting using needle and a young girl is learning the process from her older sister.

Wool knitting by machine in an organised Centre for girls.

Bamboo Tray making by an old man as a leisure pursuit.

Mats and bamboo products selling in a Manipur market.

Bamboo and fishing implements selling in a Manipur Market.
PHANEK are embroidered by using mulberry silk. The beginning of this process of embroidery can be traced as early as 959 A.D., during the reign of king, Yanglou Keiphaba. The materials required for its operation are very simple consisting of—(i) a needle, (ii) silk threads, (iii) a pillow and (iv) a SHAMUK (a three legged utensil to keep articles on it), as far as traditional embroidery is concerned. Recently, modern machine embroidery has also been introduced. Both the processes of embroidery may be utilised for developing non-formal education, though the first one is within the reach of all the sections of the people of Manipur. The latter technique with the help of sewing machine has some restricted use as it can be purchased only by the rich families. However, the most commonly used patterns on the borders of Meitei PHANEK are—(i) AKOIBI MAYEK and (ii) HIJAMAYEK. The former pattern is used by all female whereas the latter has some restricted use being a symbol of widowhood. The designs of embroidery are generally associated with flowers, birds and animal motifs. This also shows the aesthetic sense of the Manipuri women.

PROCESS OF LEARNING

The young Meitei girls learn the process of embroidery by the methods of observing and learning by doing from

the elders. It has been started on trial and error basis imitating their mothers or other female members of the family. They use rejected yarns like IANGHUM (remaining portion of yarn after weaving cloths) with a needle on ordinary cloths. Gradually, the mechanism is successfully learnt with the help of a needle by means of lifting a folded PHANEK facing the border towards her on a pillow over a SHARUK. The entire process of embroidery is done from the wrong side. But the material that is being embroidered is so fine and transparent that the pattern shown on the right side like a shadow.29

She looks up the border upside down very often so as to confirm whether the desired pattern is intact or not. As such the proper understanding of colour combinations and their relation to the design patterns are the outstanding characteristics of embroidery of this region. This is the reason why it has been said that the graceful scrolls worked by the Meitei women on their garments in satinstitch are indicative of the highest art perfection.30 Thus the whole process may be taken for non-formal education serving the purposes of supplementing family income and better leisure time utilisation for the women folk of Manipura.

29. Swarup, Shanti 1 5000 Years of Arts and Crafts in India and Pakistan, Bombay 1968, pp. 219-220.
30. Ibid., p. 219.
8.5.2. Wool-knitting

Wool-knitting is another important item of out-of-school education. It is a recently introduced art meant for the girls and ladies for leisure-time utilisation and meeting personal and family requirements. It can be started with a pair of knitting-needle, though sometimes two or more sets are also required. It can also be done by knitting-machines. Both the processes may be utilised properly and can be improved with the help of non-formal education as they can give immediate economic benefit to those artisans engaged in them.

The young girls are initiated to this art at an early age with a pair of locally made knitting-needle and practicing it by using short pieces of rejected wool threads. After getting the fundamental knowledge about this process, they may start full-fledged wool-knitting. However, for large scale production, machine type of knitting is essentially required. Thus it may serve as an important means for earning livelihood for school drop-outs and illiterate girls of Manipur. As such wool-knitting may be included in the curriculum of non-formal education for women so as to attract their attention to such a centre.
8.5.3. Bamboo works

The climatic condition of Manipur is favourable for the growth of bamboo not only in the hill areas but also in the valley areas of this region. As such there is, at least, a bamboo clump for almost all the families of Manipur which will definitely help in the process of basket making and allied works. It has also been made a tradition to do so for meeting household requirements and as a means of earning in the old age in addition to leisure time utilisation. The knowledge and skills are handed down from the father to son. The most important products of bamboo works are different varieties of baskets, trays for rearing silkworms, cotton carding baskets, different types of fishing handicrafts etc. These bamboo products are extensively used in the rural areas of Manipur. So, out-of-school education for bamboo works may have a distinct place for the common people and the handicraft industry of this region.

8.5.4. Cane works

Cane work is another important handicraft of Manipur in which the impact of out-of-school education may play a significant role in the whole process of learning the designs and techniques. Cane is known as LI in Manipur. There is abundant supply of cane from the Jiribam sub-division in addition to the meagre supply from the hill areas of Manipur.
As such large scale cane work is carried out in Jiribam and to some limited extent at Imphal. Some of the important cane products of Manipur are cane chair, bedside table, sepa sets etc. Non-formal Education Programme for developing this fine handicraft may be organised in the Jiribam areas and some pockets of the valley areas of this region. In that case this industry may further develop and bring good economic return to the people engaged in them.

8.5.5. Mat making

Mat locally known as PHAK is an important handicraft product of Manipur. It is most extensively used in the valley areas of Manipur. There are two processes of mat making depending on the raw materials used in it, namely

(i) YENGTIHUA (Kagra reed) and (ii) KAUNA (reed). The process of making mats of the former raw materials are confined to the menfolk. The other important products are threshing mat, ceiling mat etc. and they are made in some particular areas like Utlu, Telleu and Khangabok. As such it has a limited impact except on the people of these localities as the main producers. However, the process of mat making by KAUNA is adopted by the common people and as such it has a great impact as out-of-school education for the learners for developing this handicraft of this region. In fact, it is used in the form of seat for day to-day use in almost all the families of the valley areas of Manipur. Both male and female are
engaged in the process of this mat making. As such the knowledge and skills of different varieties of mat making are handed down from generation to generation which are of great educative values, particularly for the development of non-formal education.

8.5.6. Doll making

Doll making is another important out-of-school education for expressing artistic abilities of the people of Manipur using a variety of raw materials like mud, wood, rag etc. There are a number of people engaged in doll making both male and female in the forms of children's toys, decorative items of articles like Radha and Krishna, Khamba and Thoibi and other dolls of attractive types. This handicraft products are having ready markets both inside and outside the State. Hence, it may be said to have a great impact on the social and cultural life of the people of Manipur and as such the art of doll making can be conveniently used as an important item for non-formal education programmes.

8.6. INCENTIVES OF HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT DEVELOPMENT

Non-formal education for developing handloom and handicraft industries of Manipur may be geared up towards a wider perspective in view of the incentives given to the artisans from different directions. As such some programmes
of non-formal education for industrial development of these kinds may be included with necessary guidance and advice on technical and managerial problems, industrial opportunities, government regulations and any other matters relevant to the establishment and operation of industrial enterprises. This process of education can definitely help the artisans of this region by inculcating enlightened ideas in the field. They can be made free from the clutches of the middlemen by familiarising the advantages of organising co-operative societies, not only for getting financial assistance either from the Government or from the banks but also ensuring ready markets for their products in addition to get yarns, raw materials, implements etc. at subsidised rates.

In fact, a simple procedure may be followed at the time of giving grants and subsidies to the artisans which may minimise their difficulties. The people of Manipur can be encouraged to form a habit of using handloom and handicraft products. They should be proud of, in using them instead of being ashamed of it. The schemes of giving rebate to handloom and handicraft products and National Award and State-level award for Master craftsman are encouraging steps towards this direction. As such the values of dignity of labour and artistic talent can be inculcated by all possible

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means. For this purpose, handloom and handicraft fairs may be organised to give proper display and publicity at regular intervals. Also, these two important subjects may be included into the school curriculum in the form of work experience, just to encourage the younger generation for cultivating these two basic arts of their own.

The successful implementation of all these development schemes depend on the literacy skill with functionality of the artisans engaged in these two household industries. Here lies the importance of non-formal education. In the fitness of things it may be said that handloom and handicraft may be made an important subject area in the curriculum of non-formal education programmes so as to give immediate benefit to the artisans attending to a non-formal education centre. Thus non-formal education can definitely make a lasting impact on the development of handloom and handicraft industries of Manipur.