

WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
(A Case Study of Manipur)

Dissertation submitted to the
Jawaharlal Nehru University
in
Partial fulfillment of the requirement
for
The award of the degree
Master of Philosophy
Rinyaphi Raman



Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
JNU New Delhi
2002



CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

July 29, 2002

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**WOMEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: A CASE STUDY OF MANIPUR**" submitted by me for the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** is bonafide work that has not been submitted, in parts or full, for any other degree of this University, or any other University and is my own work.

Rinyaphi Raman

Rinyaphi Raman

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Rakesh Gupta

Prof. Rakesh Gupta

Chairperson

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Kiran Saxena

Prof. Kiran Saxena

Supervisor

Dedicated to Mom and Dad

Acknowledgement

I express my profound gratitude to Dr. Kiran Saxena, my supervisor, for her affectionate advice, suggestions and guidance, without which this work would not have been possible.

I thank my parents, my two sisters and brothers and Miyu for their constant support and inspirations in my life. I would also like to thank my friends especially Bijoy, Kennedy, Leingakpa, Maria, Ungshungmi, Themreingam, Sam and others who have helped me collecting materials and Mithing, who did all my computer typing and editing for me.

Content

1.	Introduction	1-5
2.	Manipur (A) Area (B) Population (C) History of Women's Movement (D) Present Women's Movement	6-21
3.	Concept of Political Participation (A) Modes of Participation (B) Variables of Participation (C) Women and Political Participation (D) Political Efficacy and Political Participation	22-49
4.	Status of Meitei and Naga Women (A) Social Status of Women (B) Economic Status of Women (C) Religious Status of Women (D) Political Status of Women	50-95
5.	Conclusion	95-103
6.	Bibliography	104-111

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The topic of our research is "Women and Political Participation : A Case Study of Manipur". The study on women and political participation is important because women who constitute about half the population is very unsuccessful politically not only in Manipur but also throughout the country. The situation of women in Manipur is a bit different from her other counterparts, i.e. the status of women socially and economically are much higher, and they are very independent. In spite of this, women in Manipur are not successful in political participation in terms of elections. Therefore the purpose of this research is to find out what hinders women of Manipur from political activities who are otherwise socially and economically very successful.

There are four chapters in the dissertation. In the first chapter, we shall discuss on Manipur - its location, area, population, social ecology, history of women movement, the two Nupi Lans (women's war of 1904 & 1939) which were successful movements directed against the British.

People in Manipur may be divided into three broad groups. They are :- the Meitei, the Zomi-Kuki-Chin and the Nagas. They have different dialects, cultures, traditions etc. The Meiteis are those settled in the plain and the two other groups are the tribesmen settled in the

surrounding hills. There are vast differences in life-style, social structure etc. not only between the Meiteis and the Tribes but also among the tribes themselves.

Since time immemorial, women played an important role in the society in Manipur. Women as a collective group were very powerful. Whenever there was a problem in a society, women were always at the forefront fighting for justice. Many a times the King's or an administrative officials' order were repealed after women requested them because it was not justified. In the same way when the British ordered the male members in Imphal to rebuild the burnt bungalows by bringing building materials i.e. teakwood from Kabow valley, the women rose against the British's imperialist policy and snatched away the materials like bamboos, thatches etc. and threw them into the Nambol river. The British subsequently reversed their order.

The Second Nupi Lan (women's war) of 1939 was also directed against the British policy of exporting rice, inspite of the shortage of rice for consumption. Finally, unable to bear the hunger women once again rose up against the British authority to stop the rice export immediately. Therefore these Nupi Lans made a landmark in history because for the first time not only in Manipur but also in the world history an exclusive women group fought against the imperialist power. Even today various women groups like Meira paibi, Naga Women

Union Manipur, etc. are fighting against social evil like alcoholism, drug abuse and trafficking, violation of human rights, etc.

In the second chapter, we shall discuss about the concept of political participation. It is the hallmark of the democratic setup. It is also the indicator of how affective a democracy is, depending upon the level of participation. Unless women who constitute half of the human race do not participate, the democracy cannot function effectively. Although women are enfranchised, they have remained a second class citizen in terms of political participation and political power specially at the higher levels, they are no where near, leave alone equal to man.

The meaning of participation changes with the time and role of the state. People's participation not only give legitimacy to the system but it also provide support to the policies pursued by the government. Political participation is the involvement of individuals and groups in the political process of a political system at various levels?

Participation is a multidimensional phenomenon. Citizens can participate in different ways to influence the government. There are different modes of participation like voting, campaign activities, membership of a party or organisation etc. Political participation also depends on variables like psychology, socio-economy and political

factors which influence the individuals in participation. Women herself is an important variable because she affects the nature and scope of political participation. Women's presence in policy making will make a mark in male dominated patriarchal politico-cultural structures. It will also put an end to open resistance against women entering politics.

There are many hindrances like lack of education and experience, family and children, domestic work, traditional mind set where women are meant to be ruled and not to rule etc. that stops women from active political participation. Lack of education and experience outside the home demoralise her personality.

The third chapter is the status of Meitei and Naga women in Manipur. Here we shall study only the Meitei and the Naga women, leaving aside the other group i.e. the Zomi-Kuki-Chin. The status of women can be divided into four parts, they are social status, the economic status, religious status and political status of women in Manipur. Regarding their social status we shall discuss about their position in society, marriage, divorce, dowry, bride price, law of inheritance etc. Women enjoy certain freedom, there is no restriction on their movement, no sati, no purda system, no child marriage, etc. Bride price is paid to the girl's father by the boy's family in marriage which is just the opposite of paying dowries by her counterpart in other parts of the country. In religion also women enjoy equal status with men, even

a more prominent place in the case of a Maibi (priestess) among the Meiteis.

In economy, women work very hard and earn their living. Obviously the status of women who contribute more in the society and economy has to be higher than someone who has no contribution. But in politics, the status of women is far behind that of men. From the day Manipur got statehood, there has been only three woman MLAs till date. The first being Hangmila Shaiza who was elected in the year 1990 and in the same year, Apabi Devi was elected as a byelection after her husband's death who was the sitting MLA from Oinam constituency. Many women have stood for election but each time they have failed.

In the last chapter that is the Conclusion, we shall conclude by discussing the similarities and differences between the Meitei and the Naga women, looking into all the four aspects-social, economic, religious and political. And then we shall reflect on the concept of political participation, to research the factors responsible for women's failure in political participation in Manipur.

MANIPUR

The lower Himalayan ranges at the far north eastern part of India cradles the beautiful Manipur state. It is nicknamed as the 'Switzerland of India' by Lord Irwin and 'Land of Jewels' by Jawaharlal Nehru¹. Manipur literally means 'the city or land of gems'. It is surrounded by Nagaland state in the north, Burma in the East, Mizoram in the South and Assam in the west².

Area

Manipur has a total area of 22,372 Sq. Km.. Geographically, Manipur can be divided into two, the hill area, which constitutes about 90% of the total area and the 'Imphal valley' which is about 10% and is surrounded by the beautiful green hills. Manipur lies between latitude 24°30' and 25°60' north, and longitude 93°10' and 94°50' east³.

Population

The population of the valley and that of the surrounding hills according to 2001 census is 2,288,624. Decadal growth (1991 - 2001) is 30.02%. Sex ratio is 978 females per 1000 males which is

1. Arun (ed), '*Manipur G.K*', G.M Publication, Imphal, '97, p.5.
2. Manjusri Chaki Sircar, '*Feminism in a traditional society*' : women of the Manipur valley, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1984, p.15.
3. R.Brown F.R.C.S.E., '*Statistical account of the native state of Manipur*' Calcutta 1874, p.1.

much higher than the national sex ratio of 933 per 1000 males. Literacy rate is 68.87% while that of the male and the female is 77.87% and 59.70% respectively.⁴

The valley of Manipur which constitutes about 10 % of the total area is inhabited by the Meiteis and the Pangans (acquired term for Muslims settled in Manipur) who formed the majority of the population. The hilly area is occupied by the tribes of Manipur who can be broadly classified into two groups i.e. the Nagas and the Zomi-Kuki-Chin groups inspite of their differences in their customs, languages, mode of dress etc. There are 29 government recognised tribes and other minor tribes in Manipur. Therefore the people of Manipur can be broadly divided into three subgroups:

- i. The Meiteis and the Pangans
- ii. The Zomi-Kuki-Chin
- iii. The Nagas

They are a Mongoloid origin and speak different dialects that branched out from Tibeto-Burman stock. Majority of the Meiteis have converted to vaishnav cult of Hinduism by obligation since 18th century when the royal family was converted to it by the influence of Hindu missionaries who came from Bengal. However a minority of them profess their prototype religion called 'Sanamahi' Most of the

4. 2001 Census of India.

tribes of Manipur have converted into Christianity after the christian missionaries came to their land. There is a vast difference in life-style and social structure both between the Meiteis and the tribes, and also among the tribes themselves.

History of Women's Movement in Manipur

Women have always played a very important and active role in social movements. The role of women in Manipur can be traced back to the pre British period when Manipur was under monarchical system. Social movements have their roots in the social structure and prevailing conditions of society. The emergence of social movements is a symptom of discontent, dissatisfaction and contradiction within the existing social order. Whenever the policies and the activities of the then monarch affected the social norms and structure of the society, women in an organised form presented before the monarch and protested against the injustice, and the mistake was ordinarily corrected⁵.

According to Constantine, "the agitation which women spearheaded, is wrong to think men were shunning action The women were their force women were considered nonviolent or moderately so. It used to be then Manipuri practice to first send a women's delegation to report an injustice to the ruler"⁶.

5. L.Ibohal Singh, '*An Introduction to Manipur*', Imphal, 1960, pp34 to 47.

6. R.Constantine '*Manipur : Maid of the Maidens*', Lancers Publishers, N Delhi, 1981, p.144.

According to Manipur history, quite a few maharanis took active part in the administration during the monarchical period. The king as well as the people sometimes sought the opinion or support of women to solve different problems or situations which affected the interest of the community⁷. After the annexation of Manipur by the British the history of Manipur is famous for the two Nupi lans (women's war) in the year 1904 and 1939.

Women's Agitation 1904

The first organised form of anti imperialist movement was started by the women in Manipur in 1904. This is popularly known as the 'First Women's agitation'. The agitation was a reaction to the rapid changes which the British had introduced in the new administration in 1892, where the British asserted their complete authority over Manipur after defeating them in 1891. As a first step, the British authorities selected a minor boy of hardly 5 years as the ruler of Manipur. The people were dissatisfied with the selection. They strongly believed, according to the traditional convention of the country, the vacant throne should be filled up either by the ex-maharaja Surchandra, who was deposed from the throne by the 1890's Palace revolt or his eldest son (12 years)⁸. The colonial intention of the British in choosing a minor ruler was to facilitate the colonising process in the newly

7. Lucy Zehol, '*Women's Movement in Manipur*', in MN Karna (ed), *Social Movements in North-East India*, Vikas Publishing Company, N Delhi, 1998, p.68.

8. N.Joykumar Singh, '*Anti British Movement, 1904 to 1939*', in Lal Dena (ed), *History of Modern Manipur*, Orbit Publishers, N Delhi, 1991, p.118.

conquered kingdom. The local people were very much annoyed at the autocratic policy of the British.

The other policy of the British was disarming the local people of Manipur. As soon as the British troops occupied Manipur, the officer commanding of the field force issued an order to disarm the whole population. As a result the British authorities collected 400 firearms. This repressive policy of the British was such an insult to the local people, and treatment as second class subjects in their own motherland was intolerable. The British also inflicted various oppressive measures against the local people as punishment.

The British divided the standing army into four squads and used them for their work. Every two weeks one squad would march to Khuzuma, 72 miles from Kohima and carried back rations required for the British troops, free of cost. When the British marched to different parts of Manipur, they would use the Manipuris as porters without paying anything in return. However at the end of the war, Maxwell, the superintendent of the state abolished the lallup system (unpaid labour) and in place of this, proposed the imposition of house tax. In addition to this the British authorities demanded a sum of rupees Two and a half lakhs from the state of Manipur as a punishment for the disturbance of 1891. These greatly affected the economy of the people. Realising that it is a big amount for them, the British authorities de-

cided to collect the amount on installment basis of rupees thirty-seven thousand annually. Above this a sum of rupees fifty thousand was to be collected as a tribute from the state. The British also imposed house tax from the valley at the rate of rupees two per house and rupees three from the hill areas of the state.

The burden of the people were further increased by the new trade policy, the British had adopted, known as the 'free trade policy'. Under this policy the British exported thousands of mounds of rice free to Kohima. As a result of this, there was scarcity of rice. The situation was getting worse day by day. The people could no longer hold their anger. Finally on July 6, 1904 the Khwairamband bazaar (women market) with its 28 sheds of 300 seats was burnt down to ashes. After 10 days the bungalows of captain Nattal and Dulop were also destroyed by fire at midnight and again another bungalow was burnt down on 4th August. These incidents alarmed the British authorities that it was an organised work of some people, particularly the Rajkumar family. The British authorities wanted to punish for the crimes committed. With this intention, Maxwell, issued an order on 30th September, 1904 in which the males from Imphal had to rebuild the bungalows that was burnt down and that the people should bring teak wood from the Kabow valley⁹. The people requested the British authorities to cancel the order, However Maxwell flatly refused their

9. Ibid., pp119 -122.

plea. He further declared that if the inhabitants do not rebuild the bungalow a punitive force would be posted in the town and the inhabitants would have to pay the cost of the force. The people therefore were shocked at the merciless attitude of the British authorities and they unanimously decided not to obey the order at any cost.

The people under the leadership of some great personalities organised a big meeting on 30th September near the Cheirap court. It was attended by 5000 people. The issue before them was whether to obey the British or not. Finally they decided not to obey the order. At this time the British authorities used brutal force to suppress the assembly. Six persons from the Rajkumar family, who were supposed to be the chief instigators were arrested. The British authorities constituted a court from 4th November, 1904. All the ring leaders of the agitation were summoned for explanation in the court. One of the witnesses, Pandi Bindu Madhob son of Koshewar Shastri said he also attended the gathering and had asked the people to obey the British order. He also appealed to the people to collect the subscriptions to carry out the work. He further said, when he went home the defendants took an oath at the temple of Hodam Chaoba of Uripok that, they would never obey the order to rebuild the bungalow. Pangaton Singh, son of late Nara Singh Raja, in his statement told the court that in the assembly the defendants openly declared that 'under no circumstances they would carry out the political agent's

order and advised all to remain firm'. Another witness Ratan Singh, son of Dharma Setu Sanapati also said the same thing. Thus after hearing all the informations and evidences, Maxwell finally accepted the allegation against the six Rajkumars for organising the assembly against the prohibitory order of the authority. On 10th November, 1904 Maxwell issued an order to expel the six Rajkumars from Manipur. The repressive measures of the British authorities had severely demoralised the people. With no alternatives the males began to subscribe the building materials, collecting teak wood, bamboos, thatch etc. and prepared to rebuild the houses which were destroyed by fire.

The women folk were very much agitated by the oppressive measure of the British authorities. As mentioned, whenever an injustice was done either by the king or other officials, a group of women would go to the palace and report about the injustice then the authorities would be compelled to correct the mistakes. Though the women were not given any political and administrative responsibilities, whenever the authorities committed some illegal act towards the innocent people, they would come out and fight for justice. Likewise, in this agitation also women folk were compelled to fight against the imperialist policy of the British. On 3rd September, 1904 thousands of women came out spontaneously and launched a big demonstration and entered the residence of the political agent and superintendent of the state. While the males were collecting the materials, women

in a group suddenly appeared and snatched away the building materials from the males and threw them into the Nambul river. Thus they started action against the order of the British officials¹⁰. The demonstrations of the women continued for several days as a result of which Khwairamband bazaar (women's market) was closed. The agitation became so intense that it began to affect the day to day life of the state. The British used police force to suppress the demonstration where a large number of women got injured. Finally the British decided to withdraw the order of the construction.

The Women's Agitation of 1939

The second Women's agitation against the British imperialist policy took place in 1939. The root cause of the agitation is the irregularities and malpractices in the administration of the state. Before the British came, trade was controlled by the women folk but after the British established their colonial rule, it took a different turn. Outside traders captured the monopoly of trade gradually after the British introduced a free trade policy. The British exported a large quantity of rice from Manipur. In the year 1925-26, 155014 mounds of rice was exported. The duration of export was permitted for six weeks but due to the use of motor lorries the rice export business could be carried out more quickly. As a result of this the price of rice rose up rapidly.

The export of rice was carried on under two different cat-

10. Macha Leima, '*Quarterly Journal of Manipur Women*', 1972, pp5-7.

egories i.e., 'Cart tax' and 'land pass' system. In the formal system the free movement of rice was allowed after paying cart tax and the later was made through agreement between Manipur state and Assam government. Under the second category the rice could be exported to the Kohima civil stations and Assam rifles posted in different areas in Assam. From the cart tax system the state could acquire a lot of revenue but later on the mode of collection was changed. Earlier the collection was made by an order passed by the office of the political agent but later on the responsibilities of the collection was given to a trading firm and a fixed payment was made to the state half-yearly. This new system of collection was started in 1932 which helped in the growth and consolidation of Marwari capital in Manipur and the quantity of rice export in this year reached, 277,389 mounds as against 105,287 mounds in the previous year. The sharp increase in volume of rice export had serious economic repercussions on the normal life of the common people.

The Marwari traders who were permanently settled in Manipur held the top place in the economic structure of Manipur. They had the monopoly of purchasing rice and paddy from the cultivators and local traders. They offered rates, sometimes much higher than the local rates. The cultivators and the local sellers obviously preferred to sell their rice and paddy to the Marwari for higher prices. As a result the local people suffered. In spite of the efforts made by the

public to stop rice exports, the Marwaris continued to export rice secretly at night. This shortage of rice in the local market was so real, one could hardly get even for household consumption.

The women traders at the Khwairamband bazaar, who earned their living by trading rice and paddy were deprived of their means of livelihood. Women from all parts of the state had come to Imphal to sell their products and buy rice, yet they could not get any rice because the shops were closed. The women mobilised themselves and approached kasturi's shop demanding the shop to be opened. Despite slogan shouting, the retailers remained unresponsive. Inflamed by the pain of hunger the women decided to hijack all the bullock-carts carrying paddy to the godown owned by the Marwaris. A group of women seized four cartloads of paddy and sold them in the open market. Supply was totally discontinued to the retailers. More than 15,000 women demonstrated before the darbar hall and shouted slogans for banning the export of rice¹¹. They met rice mill owners in Imphal and warned them of dire consequences if they continue running the mills. At that time the maharaja of Manipur was out to Nabadweep in Bengal for pilgrimage. The women agitators compelled the president to go with them to the telegraph office to get a telegraphic order from the maharaja. The women also tried to stop the commandant of the 40th Assam rifles who had arrived for controlling

11. Ibid., pp6-7.

the mob. The situation became so serious that the soldiers were called to disperse the crowd where, 21 women were seriously injured.

On the 14th December, after the president of durbar received a message from the maharaja directing the political agent to stop the export of rice, an order was promptly issued. The women agitators then turned their attention to the rice mills owners. They forced a written promise from the owners that they would not run their mills. By night many big mills were dislocated as their electric connections had been cut off by the women agitators.

Moreover, the situation worsened because of unexpected natural catastrophe. There was excessive rain that damaged the standing crops and vegetables in July and August and again in mid-November, hailstorm damaged the standing crops ready for harvest. Consequently, there was a poor harvest. The agitation was well organised that Khwairamband bazaar (women's market) was virtually deserted for a year. It was after repeated assurance by the maharaja of Manipur that the situation in the market returned to normal¹².

The movements of 1904 and 1939 is a great landmark not only in the history of Manipur but also in the world, because these women's agitation against the imperialist power is the first ever move-

12. Lucy Zehol op.cit., p.70.

ment organised by the women folk. Although the duration of the agitations were short it produced a very good impact on the political and economic life of the country and paved the way for the future.

Present Women's Movement in Manipur

'Meira Paibi' which meant 'torch bearer' is a new women's movement in Manipur. This can be called the third Nupi Lal (Women's War)¹³. It began in the 1970s, and is still in a continuing process. The movement was launched by the women folk primarily to save people from the clutches of liquor and drugs. In 1975 the government took a decision to give licence to sell liquor to boost the state's economy. Liquor shops were opened freely and many people were under its influence. To check this, women from all the localities came out of their houses to stop the sale of liquor and its influence. They remained awake the whole night to apprehend the drunkards who came on the street. If they are caught, they are given warnings and if necessary they are handed over to the police. In order to check the sale of liquor, they also break into the house of those who are engaged in selling liquor, the bottles and the earthen wares that store liquors are also destroyed and given warnings. The mode of checking intoxicants by these collective women is quite extraordinary.

However the direction of the Meira paibis also change

13. Dr. Jamini Devi, '*Women's Movement in Manipur, Past and Present*', Manipur Today, 26 January, 1999. Vol. XIX, No.1, p.15.

according to the need and circumstances. In the eighties the Meira paibis movement was directed towards checking drug abuse and trafficking because by this time many youths of Manipur have become victims of drug addiction. Unfortunately Manipur has become a transit point of drugs between the 'Golden Triangle' and the rest of the world. Another serious concern of the movement is towards insurgency problem in Manipur. Under the Armed (Forces Special Powers) Act 1958 many innocent youths suffered and some of them even get killed. As a result the women folks started to guard their husbands/sons from the harassment of the police and paramilitary forces by holding torches in their hands through the night. This is how they got their name 'Meira Paibi' (torch bearers).

Tangkhul Shanao Long

Tangkhul shanao long (Tangkhul Women Council) is one of the most prominent bodies in Manipur, enhancing the process of empowerment in their own unique ways. The need to form an all women organisation came about when many women from the villages in the east district (Ukhrul) of Manipur were sexually assaulted and raped by the security personnels during combing operations in March 1974. Many Naga women had already borne the brunt of the strategy to use 'Rape' as an instrument of power by the armed forces. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act which cover all the North-eastern states, gives the security personnel unlimited powers. Under

the Act, even a noncommissioned officer is granted 'the right to shoot to kill' on the mere assumption that it is necessary to do so in order to maintain public order and may only give some due warning as he may consider necessary, it also gives the security personnel the right to enter houses, search and arrest without warrant. The Act gives near total immunity to the armed forces for their actions for no prosecution suit or other legal proceedings can be brought against any personnel acting under the Act without the permission of the central Government.

During the 1974 combing operations by the 95th BSF , women were used as soft targets. The security personnels not only rounded up the villagers, looted and tortured men but also raped many women. One of the victims Ms. Rose, an 18 year old of Ngapum village who was engaged to be married soon, committed suicide (where suicide is a very rare case) after being raped by the BSF Officers in front of the village elders¹⁴. There was anger, resentment and a sense of outrage everywhere, women and men came out on the streets to condemn the barbaric acts of the 95th BSF personnel. There were demands to book the culprits¹⁵. Public meetings and rallies were held. In one of the meetings the East District Women's Association (EDWA) was formed to protect and promote the funda-

14. Lucy T.V. Zehol (ed), *Women in Naga Society* , Regency Publication, N Delhi, 1997, p.26.

15. Shimreichon Luithui, *Naga Women : Struggle for Human Rights* , *Indegenous Women : The right to a voice*, IWGIA, Copenhagen, 1998, pp 124-126.

mental rights and dignity of the Nagas in general and that of the Naga women in particular. In 1979, EDWA was renamed as the Tangkhul Shanao Long (TSL). Ever since the formation, the TSL has grown in every aspect, even though the struggle for respect of human right has remained the main agenda, due to continued violations of human rights by the Armed Forces¹⁶. The TSL mothered the formation of the Naga Women Union Manipur (NWUM), which is an organisation representing all the Naga women of Manipur, in October 1995. The NWUM has been actively participating in the discussions on the political developments that are taking place in Naga areas and decision making at the national level.

Comparatively women in Manipur are more free and independent in the social role and activities when compared to their counterparts in other parts of the country. They were organised during all periods of their history. In other words, the women instead of representing a symbol of 'protection' and 'secondary roles', they have been able to put effective check to a great extent on a variety of social evils against themselves, men and children¹⁷.

DISS
320.082095417
R1414 Wo



TH10559

DISS
Y,152aw.447701'N9
P2



16. Ibid., p.127.

17. Lucy T.V. Zehol, op.cit., p.73.

TH-10559

CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The rising concern and interest in the changing role and position of women of society has inspired a considerable number of studies on the status of women in family and society, marriage system, education, status of working women, women in labour force, etc. While a good deal of attention has been devoted to the study of social and economic position of women in India, very little attention has been paid to the role of women in politics¹. Political participation is the hallmark of a democratic setup. Nature, success and effectiveness of democracy largely depend on the extent to which equal, effective and actual participation is provided by the system to all its citizens. As women comprise about half the population, they cannot be ignored. We have to know the nature and scope of their participation, without which a true democratic participation is not possible.

Although women are enfranchised members of the political realm, actually they have remained a second class citizens in terms of political participation and political power. Specially at the higher levels they are nowhere equal to men. In most of the countries not many women come to the forefront. They remain largely inactive in and indifferent to politics. However they also encounter many obstacles because of tradition, prejudice and social economic conditions.

1. Bhawana Jharta, '*Women and politics in India*', Deep and Deep Publications, N Delhi, 1996, p.1.

Due to age-old traditions and attitudes they are disadvantaged and discriminated by being limited to their homes. Politics is still regarded as men's affair and political activities are generally considered to be masculine. Their participation in politics as voters, candidates, campaigners and office holders in political parties, on an equal footing with men, still remains a dream. They are yet to realise the value of their political role.

According to Susan J. Carroll, "greater representation is viewed as a democratic right, and the lack of more extensive participation by women is an indication that our democratic system is malfunctioning". Another view is that women in position of power will exert a distinctive influence on public policy. The election of more women to the public office is seen as important because it leads to changes in public policy.²

So the study of political participation of women and the factors which have relegated them to the secondary position have become not only relevant and pertinent but also useful. However the meaning of participation changes with respect to time and the changing role of the state. Peoples' participation in public affairs has been a subject of abiding interest in political science since the days of Plato. For Aristotle, the emphasis has been on democratic government through

2. Herbert Mc Closky, '*Political Participation*', in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12, Mac Millan, New York, 1968, p.253.

sharing of responsibilities to public offices. Aristotle defined citizen as one who shares in the administration of justice and in the holding of office. The declaration of French revolution of 1789 says that all citizens have the right to take part personally or by the representatives in the formulation of law. The role of participation was confined only to the function of law making in the days of laissez-faire. The nature and awareness of participation has widened with the emergence of socialist state and its increasing role. Marx argued about universal political participation as a means and end of the manifestation of human freedom. Political participation is an educational process, it is the means for the establishment of a just social order.

Participation in one form or the other existed throughout the history of state. But democracy provides for the maximum scope of participation by the citizens. Direct and indirect participation of citizens in public affairs and their involvement in the conduct of public affairs is the life of a participatory democracy. Participation of citizens act as check against the sinister design of the privileged few over the general interest of most of the citizenry. The success of democracy depends upon the extend of participation specially at local level. People's participation not only gives legitimacy to the system but it also provides support to the policies pursued by the government.³

The early empirical work by Tingsten and Gosnell focus

3. M. Ramchander and K. Lakshmi, *Women and Politics*, Book Links Corporation, Hyderabad, 1993, p.21.

entirely on voting turn out as the only available data at the time were official, aggregate statistics. When survey began to study political behavior the working definition of participation was expanded to include campaign participation and political discussion. By the time of Milbrath's study, political participation, was being interpreted quite broadly from spectators activities including exposing oneself to political stimuli, voting and political discussion to campaign activities and to gladiatorial activities such as soliciting political funds, being a candidate for office, and actually holding public or party office.⁴

Political participation is a broader and a more complex term, expressing itself in various kinds of overt and manifest political activities. It is not confined to the selection of decision makers only but to effect their political behavior and hence societal decisions at large. Generally political participation is the involvement of individuals and groups in the political process of a political system at various levels.

Norman D. Palmer defined political participation as the involvement of citizens in such political activities which directly or indirectly influence the behaviours and actions of decision makers.⁵

4. Milbrath, Lester W., *Political Participation, How and why do people get involved in politics*, Rand Mc Nally Publication Co., Chicago, 1965

5. Norman D. Palmer, *Elections and Political Development : The South Asian Experience*, Vikas Publishing House, N Delhi, 1976, p.57.

Nie and Verba broadly defined political participation as “those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take”⁶. Nie and Verba exclude from the definition of participation such passive activities as following politics and discussing politics with others. Since these activities do not represent any attempt to influence the government. Yet such passive activities could be viewed as participatory behaviors in an era in which political campaigns are increasingly conducted through mass media (and particularly, the electronic media), so that the simple act of following the campaign via the media may substitute for more active forms of involvement. That is, attentiveness to campaigns and other passive activities may serve as the form of vicarious participation that satisfies a citizen’s need for involvement in politics.⁷

Thus Nie and Verba do not include the activities of professionals and of those who are regularly involved in public affairs in political participation. Like Nie and Verba, Milbrath and Goel exclude the activities of professionals and regular public officers in it. But unlike them they include not only the active roles that people pursue but

6. Norman H. Nie and Sidney Verba, *Political Participation*, in Fred In Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (ed), *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. IV, Massachusetts, Addison-Wasley Pub. Co., 1975, p.1.

7. Herbert A. Asher, Bradley M. Richardson, Herbert F. Weisberg, *Political Participation an ISSC workbook in comparative Analysis*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/Newyork, 1984, pp 48-49.

also the ceremonial and support activities. According to them ,political participation may be defined as those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics.⁸

While Nie and Verba consider protest participation outside their orbit of study because they consider it an illegal activity ,on the other hand , Ali Ashraf and L N Sharma argue that irrespective of its nature ,political participation refers to the activities that are designed to affect governmental decision making and actions.⁹

According to Soysal the term participation is very often used to cover all the forms of actions by which citizens take part in the operation of state machinery.¹⁰

Political participation is the hallmark of democracy and modernization .In the traditional society, government and politics are of a narrow elite. On the contrary the more advanced nations have accepted the principle of active citizenship .The focus and nature of participation varies widely ,social and economic modernisation pro-

8. Lester W. Milbrath and Goel , 'Political participation:How and Why do people get involved in politics?',Rand Mc Nally Pub. Co.,Chicago,1977,p.2

9. Ali,Ashraf and L N Sharma,'Political participation and electoral process',Political Sociology , University Press Pvt. Ltd., Madras 1983, pp140-45

10. Mumtaz soysal,'Public relations in Administration II,the influence of the Operation of Public Administration Excluding electoral rights'International Institute of Administrative Studies, Brussels, 1966,p.8

duces broadened participation. Huntington and Nelson defined political participation as the activity to provide citizens design to influence governmental decision making . International encyclopedia of social sciences refers political participation as those activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy.¹¹

The concept of political participation includes activities like voting , campaigning in election convincing other persons to vote in a particular way, attending public meetings ,distributing party literature, joining an organisation or a party , contributing money to a party, contesting election and holding public or party office, etc. They are also called conventional political activities. But recently, the concept of participation has been broadened to include all those political acts through which people directly effect political decision making process. Besides conventional activities , Participation now also includes such activities like petitioning ,participation in mass movement agitation ,strikes, demonstrations, protests, sit-ins, marches, presenting memorandums and violent acts design to change political system.¹² these are known as direct means of political participation or the conventional political activities.

In the changed political horizon Myron Weiner rightly defines

11. Herbert Mc Closky, *op.cit.*, p.253.

12. Norman D. Palmer, *op.cit.*, p.57.

political participation as “ Any voluntary action successful or unsuccessful , organised or unorganised episodic or continuous , employing legitimate or illegitimate method intended to influence the choice of public policies , the administration of public affairs, or the choices of political leaders at any level of government local or national”.¹³

Political participation means not only contesting elections and decision making ,it includes the gamut of voluntary activities with a bearing on the political process ,including voting, support of political groups, communication with legislature, discrimination of political views and opinions among the electorates and other related activities. Political participation can be considered to include involvement in any form of organised activity that effects or seeks to effect, power relationship. Participation therefore includes tendencies to influence attitudes and behaviour of those who have powers of decision making. This covers a wide range of activities of political participation from representation to decision making to movements, protest and support, meetings on issues of vital situational and systematic import.¹⁴

Political participation determines the shape of political life.

13. Myron Weiner, *Political Participation : Crisis of Political Process* , in Norman D. Palmer, *Elections and Political Development : The South Asian Experience*, op.cit.,pp57-58.
14. Sushila Patni, *Women Political Elite : Search for Identity* , Printwell, Jaipur, 1994, p.87.

It is also a means for development and an indicator of development. The idea of democracy would flourish only when genuine and effective participation is materialised. Attention to the problem of participation of women has become crucial in the light of the present global situation where an increasing awareness to do away with inequality, to provide equal opportunity, irrespective of gender, in the sharing of resources, and in the rule making process has become the urgent demand of the day. Society in general, including women themselves, even politicians and political parties create hurdles that prevent women from taking more active and equal role in the political process.¹⁵

According to Pravin Sheth, elections provide one of the most potent means of political participation, although it is not the only one. Different modes, levels and channels of participations are available as the electoral process sets in. Political participation involves many activities ranging from the act of voting, choice of political leaders, articulation of issues to exercising powers as legislators, discussion making and administration of public affairs. Participation helps the individual to be effective and it associates him with the political system. Higher the rate and levels, the more varied the forms of political participations, the healthier is the democratic system. Particularly in a society and a political system where certain groups are behind the others, where they can be categorised as 'weaker sections'

15. Jayasri Ghosh, *Political Participation of Women in West Bengal : A Case Study*, Progressive Publishers, Calcutta, 2000, p.106.

or 'disadvantaged groups', wider participation and mobilisation at higher levels are necessary for their upliftment and that in turn is healthier of the democratic system.¹⁶

Today, women's movement has provided a different definition of political participation. While collective action is very much part of the political process, the price of participation is high, because of today's political reality (which includes a complex ineffective state machinery) apathy and sometimes outright hostility towards the implementation of the developmental policies, there is also a deep rooted gender bias within the judiciary and the legal system.¹⁷

The question which can be asked at this juncture is why is it that women is to be found more active within mass based protest movements than in formal political process? Is it because it is the only space available for women to vocalise their demands or is it because the nature of these organisations are best suited for women as they are generally nonhierarchical and provide women space? Whatever the reason, it must be recognised that women and other marginalised groups like the Dalits and the tribals of the country has very little scope in the mainstream politics. This broad definition provide scopes to include the formal way by which political processes of

16. Pravin Sheth, *'Women Empowerment & Politics in India'*, Karnavati Publications, Ahmedabad, 1998, pp9-10.

17. Neera Desai, *'Issues in Women's Political Participation'*, in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (ed), *Women and Politics*, Har-Anand Publications, N Delhi, 1992, p.55.

the country are affected. The danger is would such intellectual jugularity serve to camouflage the existing structural inequality which prevent woman from entering the formal, political system of the country? Or would it, in reality, accommodate and provide for existence of those non formal means of political participation, through which the political participation of those sections of society which do not have chances within the formal political system get recognition ?¹⁸

Modes of Participation

Participation is a multidimensional phenomenon. Citizens can participate in different and alternative ways to influence the government . It depends on the individuals who engage time at their disposal, the kind of pressure they want to exert and the government's response towards their activities. Verba and Nie ,grouped the alternative activities by which citizens can participate in politics into four broad modes of participation .They are - voting ,campaign activities , communal activities and particularised contact.¹⁹ Voting and campaign activities are defined in a straight forward fashion, while communal activities refer to individual and group behaviours on issues and problems relevant to a collection of individuals and particularised contacts refer to interaction with political authorities on personal problems. The authors demonstrate that different sets of citizens performs

18. Ibid., p.55

19. Sidney Verba & Norman H. Nie, *'Participation in America : Political Democracy and Social Equality'* , Harper & Row, New York, 1972, pp44-47.

these activities and that no cumulative pattern holds among them. Milbrath and Goel add protest and communication to these modes mentioned by Verba and Nie which relate individuals to polity. They are also of the view that political acts would be hierarchically organised from the least difficult to the most difficult, if a person performed a more difficult act, he was likely to perform those that are less difficult as well. Schonfeld has mentioned ten types of activities which are cited in the literature on political participation. This include :-

1. Running for or holding public or party office
2. Belonging to a party or other political organisation
3. Working in an election
4. Attending political meetings or rallies
5. Making financial contribution to a party or a candidate
6. Contacting a public official
7. Publicly expressing political opinion to convince others
8. Partaking in political discussions
9. Voting
10. Exposing oneself to political stimuli.²⁰

Rush and Altroff²¹ have drawn a hierarchy that covers the whole range of political participation available in all types of political system. They are :-

20. William R. Schonfeld, *'The Meaning of Democratic Participation'*, World Politics, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, 1975, pp136-137.
21. Michael Rush & Phillip Altroff, *'An Introduction to Political Sociology'*, the Bobbs-Merril Co., New York, 1972,

1. Holding political or administrative office
2. Seeking Political or administrative office
3. Active membership of a political organisation
4. Passive membership of a quasi political organisation
5. Participation in public meetings, Demonstration etc.
6. Participation in informal political discussion
7. General interest in politics
8. Voting
9. Total ability

“The center of the study of developing societies”, in their All India survey of the 1967 election have grouped the electorate into five broad category on the basis of the level of involvement in political participation.

1. Apathetic: Those who are not involved psychologically in political system.

2. Peripherals: Those who only vote and have some interests or some informations.

3. Spectators: Those who only vote and have some interest and information along with a few who with moderate level of motivation are engaged in other activities.

4. Auxiliaries: They are active participants , those who vote and engage in activities with high level of interest and information.

5. Politists: This is the highest level of involvement ,those

who vote and engage in activity with high level of interest and information and all those who engage in three or more activities with medium or high level of interest and information.

Political participation denotes a series of voluntary activities ²² which have a bearing on political process. They are :-

1. Voting at the polls
2. Supporting possible pressure groups by being a member
3. Personally communicating with legislators
4. Participating at political party activities and
5. Engaging in habitual dissemination of political opinion through word of mouth communication to other citizens.

As we have discussed, the modes of participation in a political system, are voting, campaign activities, membership of political parties and voluntary organisations, contesting election and the use of unconventional methods like protest, demonstration and strike. Voting is the simplest and the least demanding activity which does not require much information, initiative, and motivation as the other political activities. Since vote determines who holds the executive office, it exerts a great pressure upon the leaders and is called "the blunt instrument" of control over the government.²³ On the other hand

22. Woodward, J. L & Rober, E., '*Political Activity of American Citizen*', in H. Eulau and others, *Political Behaviour : A Reader in Theory and Research*, Amerind Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., N Delhi, 1972, p.133.

23. Bhawana Jharta, op.cit., p.14.

campaign activities require more initiatives and are more difficult than the voting, but these have more collective efforts upon the decision making process than voting. These also demand active, conscious and tactful participation. Verba and Nie included the following items in the campaign activities; persuade others how to vote actively, vote for a party or a candidate, attend political meeting or rally, contribute money to a party or a candidate and membership in political clubs ²⁴.

Membership in political party or political organisation is the cooperative mode of political participation .People involve in group or organisation activities to deal with social and political problems. However, this mode of participation requires much initiatives on the part of private citizens. Contesting election is the highest and most serious form of political participation.

Protest activities--marches, demonstrations and other such direct actions which are also called the unconventional political participation are generally considered illegitimate, non constitutional and unhealthy for a democracy. In third world countries, the so called conventional methods are rarely effective in decision making process. Here the inputs are very high and diverse but the resources are small. Unless the political mainstream is obstructed, governments do not pay any heed to the citizen's demands and aspirations. To have a

24. Sidney Verba & Norman H. Nie, op.cit., p.58.

serious influence upon the decision making process and the system as a whole, rallies, gheraos, demonstrations, strikes etc., have become part and parcel of democratic process and the most effective mode of political participation. One goal of political participation is to effectively communicate the demands to political leaders.

Variables of Political Participation

Political participation is a complex phenomenon, a dependent variable that depends upon many factors such as psychological, socioeconomic and political factors which influence the individuals participation. Psychological variables referred to the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs. Those who are more interested and concerned about political matters and are surrounded by political conflicts, are more likely to be active in politics than those who are totally occupied in their private lives.

Socio-economic variable includes education, occupation, income, age, race, religion, sex, family background, residence, etc. Participation tends to be higher among the better educated, members of the higher occupational and income groups, people with political family background, settled residents, urban dwellers and members of voluntary associations²⁵. However the power relation between participation and some of these socio-economic variables may vary

25. Herbert Mc Closky, op.cit.,p.256.

from culture to culture with different political context and their effects on political participation may not be stable.

Political environment is another important variable for a successful political participation. If the political map of a country is too large, if the machineries for political communication do not properly function, if the government institutions are with highly rigid and complicated rules, it seriously affects the rate of political participation. People will take part in election more if the election rules are simple. Existence of party systems and its nature (competitive or non-competitive) also effect the level and nature of political participation to a great extend. Party campaigning, its issues and ideology and the existence of pressure tactics also weigh heavily in political participation²⁶.

According to Dr. M.Ramchander and K. Lakshmi,²⁷ factors that influence the degree of the individuals voluntary political involvement are :

1. Personal factors that relates to the individual, attitude, belief, and personal traits.

2. Political factors relates to the political setting which includes the amount of exposure to political information accessible through the media or personal contacts, the political party structure,

26. Bhawna Jharta, *op.cit.*, pp15-17.

27. M. Ramchander & K. Lakshmi, *op.cit.*, p.25.

the relative accessibility of other organised political action groups, the relative importance of elections and the regime attitude towards participation.

3. Socio-economic factors such as social class, occupation and sex also influence participation.

The three sets of variables are closely linked and intermingled. A change in any of them would affect the political participation.

Women and Political Participation

Woman herself is an important variable because she affects the nature and scope of political participation and the political system as a whole. The study of participation of women is important as half of the voters are women and we have to know their attitudes, problems and potentials to frame the right policies strategies and laws for their welfare and uplift which have been neglected.

Women's participation does not mean only the mobilisation of power to solve their problem. It is necessary to apply women's point of view in policy making which affects the whole society. Women's presence in policy making bodies will at least make a mark in male dominated patriarchal politico-cultural structure. It will also hit the age-old sex stereotype, present alternative role models for aspiring young girls and women, and will put an end to open resistance against women entering politics.

According to Annapurna and Pati, "most of the able educated women, specially those from the middle class background do not wish to get themselves involved in political activities for many reasons. Lack of training in political organisation and the socialisation process make women dependent leading to a different attitude towards politics. Social tradition engulfed with various taboos continue to look down upon women as part of the household not of public life. The attitude of men is the most important factors which retards women's increasing involvement. Their personality development is controlled, regulated and maintained by male members of the society. Finally women are kept out of all major decision making processes and are therefore not given any chance to improve the quality of leadership."²⁸

According to Lakshmi Menon, "The general attitude towards politics is another obstacle to women's participation in public life. Politics is regarded as dirty and education does little to encourage to take the stigma attached to politics and to see political morality as a reflection of the collective morality of the society in which we live".²⁹

While explaining why few women move into political leadership roles, Randall gives two broad categories of explanation which

28. Annapurna Devi & N.M. Pati, '*Women in State Politics (Orissa)*', Political Science Review, Vol. XX, 1981, pp143-44.

29. Laxmi Menon, '*From Constitutional Recognition to Public Office*', The Annals of the American Accademy of Political and Social Sceincs, VOL.375, Jan. 1968, pp36-37.

encompass supply and demand factors. The supply factor includes Indian culture socialisation which view women as being socialised into feminine and non competitive role that do not accord with political activity, resource explanation which focus on women's lack of such resources as education , employment, social class and political experience and situational factors such as the number and the ages of children and the availability of child care as determining factors. On the other hand the demand factors tend to focus on the environment within which women operate. There are voter bias against female candidate, the reluctance of party selection committees to nominate women for winnable seats, the nature of the electoral system, competition from males in single member plurality districts and the long term depression influence of incumbency on females gaining office.³⁰

According to Madhu Kishwar, "one reason for the marginalisation of women is that the ruling elite has undermined the normal functioning of government and other public institution. Women have relatively less ability to use money, muscle power and other form of influence in the public sphere. Another important reason, why women can not make it on their own in electoral politics is that electoral politics in India today is increasingly relying on violences".³¹

Sakina Yusuf Khan points out that due to social condition and the double work, women can seldom make the time to partici-

30. Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1987.

31. Madhu Kishwar, *Sidelined* , The Illustrated Weekly of India, Feb.4, 1990, pp32-33.

pate in electoral politics. Even those who manage to be politically active often hesitate to join politics because it is considered a 'dirty game'. The cost of election is another hindrance as few women have independent income and families are unwilling to finance them.³²

According to Marcia Lee, "Lack of female participation in politics stems from three factors namely , children at home , fear of sex discrimination and perception of women that certain things are not proper to do".³³

Henry Chafe finds discrimination against women deeply rooted in the structure of the society, in the roles women play and in the sexual division of labour which restricted females primarily to the domestic sphere of life.³⁴ Anuradha Bhoite points out that on one hand women cast their votes in large numbers, take part in agitational political activities, but on the other hand they lag behind in enjoying and occupying prestigious political offices. The main reason is that in male dominated society the power is enjoyed by man in every field and at every layer of the society. Naturally as politics is the important field for power hunting, women are kept out of power race.³⁵

32. Sakina Yusuf Khan, 'Sorry, It's a Stag Party', The Times of India, 19th May, 1991, p.3.

33. Marcia Lee, 'Why Few Women Hold Public Office : Democracy & Sexual Roles', Political Science Quaterly, Vol.91, No.2, 1976, pp297-314.

34. William Henry Chafe, 'The American Women : Her Changing Social, Economic & Political Role', Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972, pp46-47.

Milbrath and Goel underline the importance of family in political participation. According to them, the most closely knit in-group of all is the family, and family experience has a profound impact on a person's exposure to political stimuli and on his activity level on politics. Children growing up in a home with a high incidence of political discussion and a high intake level for political stimuli are more likely to maintain high level of exposure to stimuli about politics when adult.³⁶ According to Marvin E. Olson, children growing up in a politicised family will learn often at a very early age to be interested in and concerned about political matters. According to him, two common indicators of a politicised family are frequent discussion of political affairs in the home and parental involvement in political groups and parties.³⁷

Adult political habits are learned in childhood . Girls are generally encouraged from the early age to play a role which includes conformity, passivity and concern with domestic activities. Boys are taught to be leaders, to be aggressive, self reliant and to exhibit traits conducive to economic achievement. This general sex role socialisation is thought to be advantageous to males in the world of politics. Girls are often discouraged from taking an active part in political activities.³⁸

35. Anuradha Bhoide, '*Women & Democracy in India*', Kerala Sociologist, Vol. XIII, Dec.1988, pp62-66.

36. Lester W. Milbrath & M. L Goel, op.cit., p.38.

37. Marvin E. Olson, '*Three Routes to Political Participation*', The Western Political Quaterly, Vol.XXIX, No.4, Dec.1976, p.553.

Thus we can say that socialisation in the family is both a cause and effect of women's low political participation. Lack of interest that women generally show in the political matters is not the result of a single moment but a result of a learning process. Women are socialised into the wife and mother role and politics is emphasized as incompatible to them.

Marriage is a hindrance for a women to participate actively in politics because for that she needs a husband who is very supportive which is not very common in our society. And she is affected by domestic responsibilities which the husbands would not take up even if his wife is busy with the political work. Since it is a double work for the women, very few, committed women come up to be involved in politics.

Children is another hindrance for women in active political participation. Mc Glen asserts that, one group that may be largely under represented among the politically active in national and electoral politics are mothers of young children - not only the less educated young mothers but also the well educated ones. She also says that if women are to be fairly represented in positions of political power and in the policy making process, fundamental changes in societal belief about women's responsibility for the burdens of parenthood will have to take place.³⁹

38. Robert Hess & Judith Torny, *The Development of the Political Attitudes in Children*, Aldine Press, Chicago, 1967, pp199-222.

According to Marcia Lee, children at home have both short range and long range effects. In the short - run, child care prevents women from fully participating in politics in their, twenties, thirties and early forties, specially in more time demanding activities such as running for public office. In the long run, after the children are grown up women's entrance into politics at the decision - making level becomes difficult because of their lack of political know - how and connections to effectively compete with the more experienced men who have been active all along. In short, most men interested in politics get a head start and it is very difficult for women to catch up.⁴⁰ The restriction of women's political activity during the child bearing years results in women getting a late start in politics which robs them to acquire the seniority and experience necessary to achieve influential positions in the government and policy making process.

Surya Kumari is of the view that burdened with household and child rearing chores and responsibilities women rarely have the energy or the inclination to get out of their homes to realise their political ambitions.⁴¹

Like family, education also shapes political orientations of people. Lipset argues that education broadens men's outlook enabling

39. Nancy E McGlen, *The Impact of Parenthood on Political Participation*, *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, 1980, pp312-13.

40. Marcia Manning Lee, *op.cit.*, pp304-10.

him to understand the need for norms of tolerance, restraining him from adhering to extremist doctrines.⁴² Milbrath and Goel find people with higher levels of education participating at the higher level in politics than those with less education. This is because differences in educational standard corresponds with differences in other social characteristics and psychological attributes. Persons with higher educations are more likely to have higher income, to be exposed to more mass media, to occupy higher status positions; to possess greater information about government and politics, to feel more efficacious and so on.⁴³

Thus because of family and child care responsibilities women have role conflicts. They generally do not enter active politics, even if they do, they enter much later in their lives. They have to work very hard and struggle to compete with men. To be 'uneducated' and to be a 'woman' in themselves are two most important causes of less political participation and when these are united their effect is multiplied. Education contributes to raise women's consciousness and their level of self confidence which bring them out from the traditional clutches and broaden their views and thinking about the outside world.

According to Snehalata Panda, the low rate of women's

41. A Surya Kumari, '*Strategies for Political Empowerment of Women*', University News, June 5, 1989, p.18.

42. S. M Lipset, op.cit., p.20.

43. Lester W. Milbrath & M L Goel, op.cit., pp98-99

participation in formal politics may also be due to the public and private dichotomy. Actually, the hand that rocks the cradle has not ruled the world. In fact, rocking the cradle has been precisely what has prevented the hand from ruling the world. She further says, if women participate less than the men, it may be because it hinders the expression of alienation and because it does not deal with those issues, that are in fact centre to women's life under the present sex role system.⁴⁴

Political Efficacy and Political Participation

Political efficacy refers to the person's belief that, political and social change can be effected or retarded and that his efforts alone or in concert with others can produce desired behaviour on the part of political authorities.⁴⁵ Political efficacy is a psychological disposition, a feeling of personal competency or personal effectiveness. Therefore, it is the efficacious person, who is likely to participate and involve in political activity. The antecedents of efficacy are mainly three, according to Campbell -

- i. Education
- ii. Socio-economic
- iii. Membership of a majority ethnic group

44. Snehalata Panda, *Determinants of Political Participation : Women & Public Activity*, Ajanta Publication, N Delhi, 1990, pp 22-23.

45. International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol.1, p.225.

Education helps in developing self confidence and personal control. An uneducated person has less of self confidence and control over the internal and external environment. Confidence and control on self are indicators of ego, strength, which is necessary for political efficacy. The sense of efficacy develops with opportunities for participation. The family, peer group, membership of various associations and political parties help in developing the sense of efficacy.

Like education, socio economic status boost a person's self confidence and they also have personal control as well as control over the external environment. Membership of a majority group generally reinforces efficacy. In order to safeguard group interest, they become assertive.⁴⁶

The level of efficacy is determined by the degree of peoples' belief that outcomes in their life are contingent upon what they do.⁴⁷ People who believe that the outcomes in their lives results from forces beyond their control are the 'externals' who lack faith in themselves. Rotter⁴⁸ suggests that efficacy is a learned behaviour. People who accept that their own actions can effect the outcomes of the event, would increase their internal ability which would change

46. Snehalata Panda, '*Political Efficacy & Political Participation : A Study of Women's Involvement in Politics in India*', In Susheela Kaushik (ed), *Women's Participation in Politics*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1993, p.78.

47. Fink. H.C & Hjelle, L.A, '*Internal & External Control & Ideology*', *Psychological Reports*, 1973, pp967-974.

the conditions of their environment. On the other hand people not having faith in their ability (externals) will be passive in any attempt to change the world. Studies on political participation shows that externals are less active politically due to their expectations that they cannot control events whereas internals are politically active.⁴⁹

Despite development in certain areas, culture in under developed countries like India, the traditional outlook has not changed so much as to do away with the dichotomous division of society. The private world with its narrow restricted boundary is still considered the right place for women. The sex role socialization of a girl and a boy is still that of a traditional one where boys are taught to possess masculine attitude, of being independent, forceful, assertive and direct. Female role socialisation is directed towards compassion, submissiveness, sympathy etc.

In Indian families the voice of a daughter count less in family decision making. Thus a girl since her childhood is deprived of the conviction that she can influence decisions. This creates a sense of ineffectiveness in participation. The primary role of women in a society is still considered as wives, mothers, child bearers and rearers, whatever maybe their level of education and professional career.

48. Rotter, Semann, Naud Liveravt, V.S, '*Internal i.e. External Control of Reinforcements : Major Variable in Behavioural Theory*', in Watsbume, N.F (ed), *Decisions, Values & Group*, Vol.II.

49. Snehalata Panda, op.cit., p.28.

STATUS OF MEITEI AND NAGA WOMEN

While discussing the status of women in Manipur, it is necessary to take into consideration, the various groups separately. Though most of these people more or less come from Tibeto-Burman origin, social, culture and economic position also differs considerably depending on environment around and various impact from outside social, religious and so on.¹

We shall discuss and compare the status of Meitei and Naga women leaving aside the other subgroup Zomi-Kuki-Chin group. The Meiteis are the plainsmen who are settled in the Imphal valley, and constitute the majority of the population of Manipur. The Nagas are the tribes comprising of Mao, Maram, Thangal, Zeliangrong, Anal, Mayon, Monsang, Lamkang, Maring, Tangkhul, Paomai, Chothe, Tarao, Kharam, etc. The Nagas inhabit the four districts of Manipur, they are Ukhrul, Senapati, Tamenglong and Chandel.

Women of Manipur can be studied under four heads :-

(i) Social, (ii) Economic, (iii) Religious, (iv) Political.

Social status of a Meitei women

The term 'status' refers to a position of women as an

1. G. K Ghosh & Shukla Ghosh, '*Women of Manipur*', APH Publishing House Corporation, N Delhi, 1997, p.27.

individual in the social structure defined by her designated rights and obligations. In every society, advanced or tribal, western or oriental, women undertake a distinct and inevitable role from time immemorial. However the status of women differs from one society to another. It should be understood in terms of what extent their roles are recognised and accepted within that particular society. Women in Manipur are socially and economically very independent. It may be noted that in any society where women contribute to the economy, of her family her position both economically and socially has to be superior to those societies where women do not contribute.² Social evils like female infanticide, sati, bride burning etc. are non-existent in Manipur. Widows do not have any recognised under privileged position as practised in north India and other parts of the country.

In ancient Manipur, women held a very high status in society. There was equality between men and women, the latter even enjoying higher status than men.³ The society was matriarchal, where women were the head of the family and property was inherited by the females. However the status of women degenerated gradually after Hinduism struck root in Manipur. Matriarchy was replaced by a strong patriarchy. The Manipuris had started worshipping the goddess since ancient times.⁴

Younger women up to the age of 35-40 are always en-

2. Ibid., p.27.

3. Ksh. Bimola Devi, '*Manipuri Women - A Case Study*', in N. Sanajaoba (ed), Manipur Past & Present, Vol.1, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1998, p.160.

4. Oinam Bhogeshwar Singh (ed), '*Ningthourol Lambuba*', Imphal, 1967, p.73.

gaged in domestic work irrespective of their class and status. School and college going women have to do a lot of domestic work before going to classes. Female labour, however, in one form or the other has been the normal feature of Manipuri society from time immemorial. The day begins for women when men are still in the bed. Besides cooking, weaving and looking after their households, they work in the fields in the morning and go every evening to the bazaar with merchandise for sale or exchange.

The educated working ladies are also struggling and fighting very hard in the social fields of life. They are in between tradition and modernity. They have to discharge many social duties and responsibilities. They have to satisfy their in-laws, discharge many household duties and social obligations as well as work hard not to lag behind in their offices and academic works.⁵ Thus all classes of women (educated, uneducated, rich, poor) are playing a great role in the social life of Manipur. On an average, their status is not so high as compared to their role. Most of them are not allowed to take part in the decision making process of the family, of the 'leikais' (local name for localities) and in social problems. Decision making is believed to be a sole right of the men and generally what men has decided is accepted. There are many social taboos for women to participate in social life. For instance, if a tree is climbed by a girl or women, that tree will not bear fruit. In spite of the many responsibilities women

5. Bimola Devi, *op.cit.*, p.162.

take up ,women in Manipur are not enjoying a level of equal status in society. Gender equality will be there only when men folk restores to women what is due to her.

Marriage

It is an institution and complex of social norms that sanctions the relation of man and a woman and binds them in a system of mutual obligations and rights essential to the functioning of a family life.⁶ Child marriage is unknown in Meitei society .Widows except Brahmins are allowed to remarry. There was no system of sati and purdah. In ancient Manipur there was no strict rules for marriage.⁷ In course of time as society became male dominated , laws of marriage also developed gradually. Inter marriage among the seven clans or yeks are common . However there are certain restrictions regarding marriage that is, people belonging to the same clan called 'yek' cannot marry each other. There were special penalties on breaches of this rule in the form of loss of the privilege of giving water to the Raja, but their validity was derived from the superstitious fear of divine wrath for the violations.⁸ In the past a Meitei was ostracised for intra-clan marriage and was sent to a 'loi' village in the west called 'Haujaupan'.

Meiteis are polygamous and the Raja may have three principle wives, worth as many as 108 subsidiary partners. The titles

6. Scot P William, *'Dictionary of Sociology'*, Goyl Saab Publishers & Distributers, N Delhi, 1988, pp 243-244.

7. O. Bhogeshwar Singh, *op.cit.*, p.19.

8. G K Ghosh & Shukla Ghosh, *op.cit.*, p.21.

of the Raja's wives in order of precedence are -

1. Maharani
2. Apambi (which means either the preferred one or one who rules)
3. Laimakhubi.⁹

Further there is a general rule that a man may not marry a woman of the clan from which his mother came. For breaches of an exogamous rule, e.g., for marrying mother's sister or her children, the offender was sent to the Yathibi group of 'Loi'.¹⁰

Widows may remarry (except Brahmins) but not with their deceased husband's brother. And there is no ceremony for the re-marriage of the widow.

In polygamous households, the husband's attentions to the several wives are strictly regulated according to procedures, the eldest getting twice the normal share next below her. However, now a days these rules are not observed.

In tradition both negotiated marriages as well as love marriages with elopement are practiced. According to Manjusri Chaki Sircar, the Meiteis are very romantic people, most marriages are

9. Ibid., p.22.

10. Manjusri Chaki Sircar, *Feminism in a Traditional Society : Women of the Manipur Valley*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., N Delhi, 1984, p.58.

based on romantic love.¹¹ After they decide about the marriage, they elope for few days before they reappear together so that parents can go ahead for ceremony. Sometimes marriage ceremony is performed without elopements. The usual marriage ceremony is known as 'Prajapati' or 'Brahma' which in fact was adopted after the process of Hinduisation. Other form of marriage is also practiced, the Sanpati, Rajbibaha, Rakhsana and Gaudharva, the later constituted by simple cohabitation. Although to become a husband and wife, it is not necessary that the marriage ceremony should be performed, it is usually performed but often after as before cohabitation.¹²

Dowry

Gifts may be accepted from the girls parents in a wedding but they are not compulsory for brides parents to give particular things as such and the concept of compulsion, consideration which are elements of dowry are missing. In the course of time with the influence of Hinduism, the dowry system became more prominent. Rich parents give costly gifts to their daughters. But the most important thing is that the bridegroom's party does not demand anything from the bride's party.¹³ It is up to the bride's family whether to give or not. Even though it is not compulsory most of the parents give gifts because it has become, a status symbol. In many cases, marriages are

11. Ibid., p.66.

12. R. Brown, FRCSE, '*Statistical Account of the State of Manipur and the Hill Territory under its rule*', K. M. Mittal, Calcutta, 1973, p.

13. Bimola Devi, op.cit., p.165.

also held in the residence of the groom who bears all expenses involved, dowry does not arise.

Law of Inheritance

Being a patriarchal society, properties are inherited by the male. Ancestral home is usually given to the youngest son of the family and the other properties are divided among the children depending on the father.

Divorce

Divorce could take place due to barrenness, adultery etc., Most marriages split up after the husband marries another woman. Very few women take any legal procedure for 'Khainaba' which means separation, instead they abandon the husband's home to return to her parents' home. If a woman has older sons, she may team up with them and manage to push out the husband from the family compound.

If a man and a woman wants divorce, he or she approach the village chowkidar. With the help of the village Hanjaba and other elders, the chowkidar tried to bring about the reconciliation. If a woman wants a divorce to marry another man, her second husband has to pay 'Nupi mamal' (price of a woman) to the first husband. If the husband wants to divorce where the wife is not at fault, the wife could take away all his property with her except a drinking vessel and the

loin clothe.¹⁴ According to rules women should leave behind all her children except the suckling child.¹⁵ If a husband finds his wife committing adultery he may force the man to marry his wife. This is the most honorable way to get rid of an unfaithful wife.

Social Status of Naga Women

The Naga society being patriarchal, the general concept is that women are physically weaker than men, that is why the Naga men felt responsible to protect her.¹⁶ However, she enjoys considerable freedom. About the social status of the Naga women, Haimendorf writes "many women in more civilised parts of India may well envy the women of Naga hills, their high status and their happy life, and if you measure the cultural level of people by the social position and personal freedom of its women, you will think twice before looking down the Nagas as savages".¹⁷

In a Naga society the father is the head of the family. The subordination of mother and children to the authority of the father was practically universal. According to Z.V.Free Paothing, parental behavior, and the daily routine of home life, guided little boys and girls in the direction of socially prescribed gender roles. Children were

14. E. N. Dun, *'Gazetteer of Manipur'*, Manas Publications, Delhi, 1992, p.18.

15. Manjusri Chaki Sircar, op.cit., p.85.

16. Hunibou Newmai, *'The Status of Women in Zeliangrong Society'*, in Lucy Zehol (ed), *Women in Naga Society*, Regency Publications, Delhi, 1977, p.43.

17. Furer Haimendorf, C. Von, *'The Naked Nagas'*, Methuen & Co., London, 1939, p.101.

brought up with early stress on reverence for authority which was the father. Sex roles were differentiated. There has been a distinctive attitudes towards male and female in their child rearing pattern. Boys are encouraged to be proud, dominant, aggressive, be served and waited on. Girls are expected to be quiet, accept discipline, gentle, deny themselves and work hard.¹⁸ However, there is a gradual change since the coming of Christianity and women being more educated are aware of their rights and they have become more assertive.

Dormitory

For the Nagas, a Morung or a dormitory was the pivot around which the social, religious, educational and cultural activities of the young people revolve. Therefore Morungs and the ladies' dormitories are rightly called the Nagas school.¹⁹ It was both a training school in the art of life and war, and the club for entertainment and fun.

From girlhood until her marriage her life is a period of long training for the responsibilities which would ultimately fall to her as the mistress of the house. On reaching puberty, she leaves her home to sleep in the girls' dormitory. At that age it would be shameful to sleep in her parent's house.²⁰ After joining the dormitory, the Naga girls continue to sleep there until they are married or betrothed. The

18. Z. V. Free Paothing, *'Status of Tangkhul Women'*, Modern Press, Imphal, 1994, pp20-21.

19. R. R. Shimray, *'Origin and Culture of the Nagas'*, Pamleiphi Shimray, N. Delhi, 1985, p. 192.

20. Mills, J. P., *'The Rengma Nagas'*, Mc Millan & Co., London, 1937, p.26

Nagas used the house of a rich man as a dormitory and the owner of the house was the patron. The girls would go to their respective parents' home to help in the household activities and would return to the dormitory at night after dinner. It was a training school for the girls. Weaving of various kinds, handicrafts works, embroidery and design works were taught and done in the dormitory at night.²¹ According to U.A.Shimray such essence of collectiveness helps to develop new designs for shawls. The beautiful Naga shawls are the product of the Naga women's creativity and wisdom.²²

It should be noted that while girls were strictly prohibited to enter the young men's Morung, men may visit the girls dormitory, but all visits were allowed after a certain hour, mostly after dinner, only in groups.²³ They would all sing, exchange stories, talk and laugh. Thus girls' dormitory provided the best ground to meet and select their life partners.

The young girls learned many things about social behaviour, manner and obedience from the seniors which their parents could not tell them. It paves the way for her future responsibility as a mother. The moment she reached the dormitory all the problems of the day's hard work or the family affairs were forgotten in the

21. Free Paathing, op.cit., p.26.

22. U .A . Shim ray, '*Equality as Tradition : Women's Role in Naga Society*', EPW, Vol.XXXVII, No.5, p.377.

23. M. Horam, '*Naga Polittiy*', BR Publishing Co.,New Delhi, 1975, p.72.

company of her friends. The most important value of this institution, however lie in the moulding of the girls' future, building up their character and facilitating selection of partners.²⁴

Marriage

Marriages within the clan are strictly forbidden by the law of exogamy. Being a serious offence whoever breaks this law are ostracised by the society and sent into exile. In Naga society marriage proposal is always initiated by the boy's family.

In Naga society, 'bride price' is paid to the girl's father in marriage by the boy's family which is just the opposite of paying dowry by the girl's family to the boy's family as practised in other societies. This is one indication of a high status accorded to a Naga girl. Bride price may be paid in the form of money, precious stones, domestic animals or landed property, according as the bride's parents are able. It is customary that the bride's price must be paid before the actual marriage ceremony takes place. The bride's price is usually distributed among the girl's parents and their relatives. In case she doesn't have any relatives, it is shared among close friends. The interesting thing here is that those who take bride's price are responsible to sort out the girl's matrimonial problems if and when they arise.²⁵

There is a preference for marriage with woman who come

24. RR Shimray, *op.cit.*, p.199.

25. Hunibou Newmai, *op.cit.*, pp43-44.

into the category of mother's brother's daughter (i.e. your cross cousin on your mother's side). Why should this be? According to Julian Jacobs , the Nagas are patrilineal, that is descent and inheritance go through males . A man's mother's brother's daughter is therefore a fairly close relation , but not too close - she is not from the same lineage as himself (which would be a forbidden marriage). The women may not be a 'real' close cross cousin ,but might in fact be one of the many women of the mother's clan. A girl , on the other hand , will see it as a situation in which she is likely to marry a man in the category of father's sister's son. This is only a preference.²⁶

Boys and girls marry the ones they love with the approval of their parents. But sometimes the parents of both sides or either side disapprove, they have to elope against their parents' wishes which they rarely do in the traditional society. But nowadays elopement has become more common .One of the reasons is that marriage celebrations have become a very expensive affair, and many people cannot afford it.

The custom of marriage also differ from one tribe to another even among the Nagas. According to J. Marygrace, in Lamkang Naga tradition, from time immemorial, the parents arrange the marriage of a boy or girl. This was done so in order to avoid divorce. The Lamkangs follow marriage by service. Engagement is the time when

26. Jacobs Julian, "The Nagas society, culture and the colonial encounter, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, 1990, p.57.

the boy has to stay with the girl's family helping them in their domestic work for three years. After this the boy would take the girl to his house. In case of breaking the law of exogamy a heavy fine is imposed upon the couple and excommunicated from the village. Unlike the other Nagas there is no bride price in Lamkang Naga tradition.²⁷

In Mao tradition on the wedding day the groom stands at the main entrance with a spear in hand and ushered her inside the house. Before stepping inside, an unblemished metal (Sickle or axe or any iron piece) is kept at the door where the bride has to step over the metal as she enters. Here the iron piece signifies something that remains cool and lasting. So it is likewise wished that the new couple might have a long happy marital life as cool and lasting as that of iron metal. A form of trial marriage is prevalent in the Mao society. Trial marriage is based on the omens which depended upon favorable and unfavorable emergence of observation during the five days where marriage ceremonial rites are performed. They are as follows;

1. No ember of ceremonial fire is allowed to die out through out the five days ,extinction of fire is considered a bad omen.

2. Nothing sort of blemish materials like cow dung be allowed to be pelted or touched upon the bride to prevent the belief of inducing her with a sense of intense hatred against her husband.

3. If any unfortunate death occurs among the close kins

27. J Mary Grace, Lamkang Naga Customary Laws on Marriage, Raisunriang, 5th issue, 2001, pp10-11.

on either side, then it is taken to be a bad omen for their future. Even the death of domestic animals in the house is believed to be an indication of their future's bad luck.

4. On the marriage day if the bride happens to drop any utensil or slip down on the floor or break any tumbler or earthenware, it is accounted as bad luck.

5. Damage of the oven that is if any of the stones get uprooted or fallen or broken than it is treated to be a bad omen.

If one of the above cited omens occur, then divorce takes place after five days. As the course is rather rough, divorce becomes a normal occurrence in Mao society. Therefore it is tolerated by the society without attaching any stigma. In some cases after temporary divorce due to bad omen people get reunited.²⁸

According to R. Khalothem, there are two types of marriage proposals in Kharam Naga tradition, marriage by service (working for the girls father as domestic worker for 3 years to get his daughter), and marriage proposal through repeated approach. According to the latter custom, the boy's parents approach the girl's parents with local rice beer for three consecutive years at the end of which a date is fixed for the appointed ceremony. Preferential marriage is prevalent among the Kharams, however it is not forced upon.²⁹

28. L M Maheo and D Adaha, *Traditional Marriage Custom of The Mao Naga*, Raisunriang, pp13-16.

In Poumai society, before proposing the girl for marriage, the boy's family would observe their dreams for omens. An old lady administers the marriage ceremony. It is always done in secret while the bride is on the way to the bridegroom's house, she would neither be talked nor touched by anybody before the marriage procession takes place.³⁰

Among Anal Nagas there is a restriction on counter marriage between the same two families which is called 'jolthing' (exchange of sisters). According to Anal tradition the order of seniority is respected by the daughters in marriage. The younger sister has to pay fines to the elder sister if she superseded in marriage.³¹ However it is not observed among the brothers. The other practise among the Anals is that from one family, no two members can be married in one and the same year. It is considered to bring ill luck and misfortune to the family.

For the Zelianglong, marriage is something God has destined for everyone. By getting married one serves as a link in the chain of generation and fulfill the responsibility towards the world and mankind. Therefore marriage is something more than personal, it is a

29. R Khalothem, Kharam Customary Law, Raisunriang, p.17.

30. K T Soune, Customary Laws of Marriage: Past & Present in Respect of Poumai Tribe, Raisunriang, p.21.

31. Samery Anal, Anal Customary Law, Raisunriang, p.39

status.³²

The society does not sanction polygamy but sometimes, it is practiced. For instance, if a woman is barren she cannot stop her husband from marrying another woman. Widow remarriage is accepted in Naga society. A form of both sororate and levirate is prevalent i.e., if the wife died with or without any issue, the husband can remarry one of the sister(s) of the deceased provided that she is willing. Similarly on the death of her husband the surviving wife can remarry anyone of the brother(s) of the deceased on the same condition that, it is consentaneous between the two. But in any case she cannot initiate divorce from her husband.³³ This rule is intended to preserve the blood relationship as well as to protect the children from being placed under the control of a strange woman or man. A widow can continue to live with her children in her deceased husband's house (without marrying the brother) or go back to her parental house leaving her children behind in her husband's house. The former is generally followed because mothers would not part with her children no matter how difficult her life may be, and the latter is practised only on exceptional cases. If she wants to remarry someone, other than her deceased husband's brother, she has to go back to her parent's home, leaving all her children with her deceased husband's family otherwise it is considered as adultery.³⁴ After marrying she cannot claim the cus-

32. M P Namthui & Ajailiu Niumai, *Marriage in Zeliangrong Society, Raisunriang*, p.25.

33. R Khalothem, *op.cit.*, p.18.

tody of the children.

Since the advent of Christianity in 20th century, the Nagas have been solemnising their marriages in their respective churches in accordance with the rules of the church. Although in all societies marriage is recognised as human institution, the Naga Christians firmly believe that it is not a human invention, but it has been instituted by God. While the law of monogamy is strictly observed, the law of exogamy still remain intact. The most important characteristic is the covenant of faithfulness between the bride and the groom till death. It is a divine institution involving a life long union for better or for worse of one man with one woman to the exclusion of all others on either side.³⁵

Divorce

Divorce is very rare among the Nagas. It may be granted on the grounds of breaches of commitment by either of the party for such cases as adultery, ill treatment etc.³⁶ According to M. Horam reasons for, divorce are : barrenness, adultery, failure to bear a child within a reasonable period and when a woman leaves her husband and refuse to return.³⁷

According to R. R. Shimray, in ordinary course a woman

34. Namthui & Ajailiu Niumai, op.cit.,pp25-28.

35. K T Soune, op.cit., p.20.

36. Hunibo Newmai, op.cit., p.44.

37. M Horam, op.cit.,pp99-100.

would be divorced by paying the bride price and the court fees in the form of rice beer before money came into use. In some cases, where the women is barren or unable to bear any heir to her husband, a paddy field was given for her subsistence untill her death or remarriage. In many cases divorce was settled by the relatives of the husband and the wife without resorting to litigation.³⁸

Law of Inheritance

The Nagas have a very biased interpretations of customary law. A Naga woman has no share according to the Naga inheritance laws. The existing laws today promotes hierarchy and disempowerment and thereby compound operation of woman along with other practices that are discriminatory in nature.³⁹ Naga society being a patriarchal system, descent and inheritance are generally in the male line. No ancestry property can be given to a daughter even if she happens to be the only issue. The property goes to the nearest relative amongst the clansman. No female could inherit the landed property.⁴⁰ A man with only one child (daughter) could leave his moveable property in the hands of his daughter if he dies before her marriage, but as soon as she is married the nearest male relative (heir) of the father would claim it.

38. RR Shimray, op.cit.,p.177.

39. Dolly Kikon, Political Mobilisation of Women in Nagaland or Sociological background, NPMHR, vol.6 no.1, Qtr publication, April 2002, p.12.

40. Free Paothing, op.cit.,p.48.

The customary law forbids the sale and transfer of ancestry property as it was greatly valued.⁴¹ Other property which are acquired by the parents can be sold. Nowadays there are many instances of woman possessing landed property such as paddy field, woodland, garden etc. either, handed down to them by their parents (other than ancestral property) or acquired through their own efforts.

Economic Status of Women

According to captain E. W Dun in his book, "The Gazetteer of Manipur ", "the women in Manipur are very industrious. Most of the work of the country except the heaviest , is performed by them. It would be difficult to find more industrious women in India than the Manipuri".⁴² Manipuri women thus played a major role in production.

In a Meitei proverb it is said, "a man who does not go to laishang and a women who does not go to the market are worthless". In another, "The fruit of knowledge is from fathers and grand-father; the reserved wealth is from mothers and grand-mothers". These indicate the concept of division of labour between the sexes.

Most of the domestic affairs of the family are in the mothers hand. Women in Manipur, both in the hills and valley are the first to wake up in the morning, long before dawn, to start the days work

41. M Horam, op.cit., p.92.

42. E W Dun, op.cit., p.17.

when men are still in bed even though women are the last one to retire at night. Colonel McCulloch described the Naga women in 1854, "in the grey of the morning the female of the family are astir and the village resound with the floor of the long pestle in the wooden mortar beating out rice from the husk. This finished, lunch is cooked both for the family and pigs. Later the women proceed for water, which they fill in the bamboo tubes and bring on their backs in basket and they go for fire-wood, and this brought and set about the internal economy of the house that is, to see to their husband's drink being in proper quantity and quality, to their spinning or the weaving, or any other household occupations, an act in which they have no pride".

Women irrespective of their professions have their priorities in the domestic chores. Married women are compulsorily housewives, whether they are a working women, women leader, labourer or in any category.⁴³ Their home chore activities include cooking, child rearing, collecting water, cleaning the house, collecting vegetable, child care, caring of the aged and the handicapped, kitchen gardening, collecting firewood etc.

Rice is the staple food of the entire population of Manipur. Hence paddy obviously is the principal agriculture produce. But type of cultivation varies depending upon the region i.e. people in the

43. L Umani Chanu & M Jamuna Devi, Manipuri Women in Contemporary Situation, in C. Jarushua Thomas(ed), Constraint in Development of Manipur, Regency Publications, N Delhi, 2000, p.124.

valley region practice wet land cultivation with proper irrigation while people on the hill practice either jhum cultivation or terracing thus have low productive agriculture.⁴⁴ The people of the valley are thus, economically forward and dominate the state.

Agriculture is a family enterprise in Manipur. All members contribute their labour, even children below ten help in guarding the vegetable gardens from animals and birds. Almost all women below the age of fifty years of age are engaged in some work or the other in the paddy field. Rice cultivation depends heavily on women's labour. They perform mainly in teams. During harvest both men and women worked together. Women also work as hired labour. Most of them earned money by working extra hours in the paddy fields of others. The income from this source is considered to be a part of the family fund. According to Bimola Devi, "ploughing is usually done by men and there is a taboo against women using the plough"⁴⁵ (it should be noted that there is no such taboo for the Naga women in ploughing).

Weaving is another source of income for women both among the Meiteis and the Nagas. The girls are taught how to weave from a very tender age. Someone who does not know the art of weaving is looked down upon no matter how educated she might be. Weaving is a year round pursuit and it is done side by side with cultivation.

44. G K Ghosh & Shukla Ghosh, *op.cit.*, p.111.

45. Bimola Devi, *op.cit.*, p.167.

There is no time to rest for the women as she has to manage the household activities besides cultivation and weaving.

Older women go to the bazaars to sell their food crops after coming back from the paddy fields. It is a common sight to see a small market by the road side of the state. Most of the shops are owned and managed by the women. Since time immemorial, the Khwairamband bazaar (mother's bazaar) in Imphal is run only by the women which is not very common in other parts of the country.

They maintained their families with the income coming from small trade. Widowed women were and are able to educate their children while maintaining the family by this means alone. Majority of the Manipuri women earned their day to day bread by selling and buying in the bazaar. Embroidery, rice pounding, fishing and helping in house building are other economic activities of women.

Nowadays the economic contribution made by the educated working ladies is immense. Most of them work in Govt. Departments and are in teaching profession.

Religion and Women

The nature made the primitive men develop a kind of reverence, due of share or awe of nature's activities and objects, which

we term religion.⁴⁶ According to Jawaharlal Nehru, “the idea of religion came first through the fear of the unknown. They made a god and goddess of everything - a river, a mountain, the sun, trees, animals and things which they could not see but only imagine like spirits. And they could not worship without images, they put images in the temples”. Superstitions and customs were developed by the Manipuris like others while undergoing the primitive way of life. According to Roger Keesing, “ Two main stereo types of primitive life dominate popular thought. One sees the tribal man as haunted by fear and superstition, as slave of custom and hence it justifies a duty for us to tame and uplift, to clothe, civilize and convert) the others see the tribal world as primitive Eden, where a oneness with nature, a mystical world view, and a materially simple life leave men free from the alienation and the corruption of civilisation”.⁴⁷

Before Hinduism came to the Meiteis, they had their own traditional religion called *Sanamahi*. Here, women’s role is more important than the man. In spite of the introduction of Hinduism, *Sanamahi* is still found among the Meiteis. It is the women who are preserving the old Meitei god and goddesses in spite of many threats from Hindu protagonist, all throughout the later history of Manipur. Even during the zenith period of Hinduism one always finds in every house the worship of *Sanamahi* (Meitei god) by women. They also adjusted,

46. Chandra Sheikhar Panchami, *Manipur Religion Culture & Society*, Konark Publishers Pvt.ltd, 1987, p.84.

47. R. M. Keesing, *‘Elota’s Story’*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1978, p.7.

adopted and practised the Hindu religion equally. Women possess the real quality of balancing their own religion and the religion coming from outside and they are loyal to both.

For the welfare and prosperity of the state and the community, it is considered from time immemorial, to be the duty of the women to worship god and goddess. In a traditional Meitei religion, women occupies a more prominent place than men. E.g. In a Lai Haraoba the main rituals are led by the maiba (priest), maibi (priestess) and pena-khongba (someone who play the violin). Maibi has no exact equivalent in English. They are at the same time priestesses, invoking the lais (god) and making offerings to them, mediums, receiving oracles from the lais and giving them out to the people and as expert singers and dancers, they are the preservers of the oral religious traditions. The female maibi is more important than her male counterpart. She plays a more prominent role in the festivals and, the lai is thought to take more pleasure in female ritual functionaries. Further women are more likely to become possessed. Significantly, when a man becomes possessed by a lai, he would wear the clothes of the female maibi and speak as a male maibi.⁴⁸ Besides their ritual functions, maibi may also act as fortune-tellers for which they use two sets of coins .

A women could become a maibi either by being chosen at the Lai Haraoba or being directly possessed by the lai. A girl may become possessed at an early age, even as young as 7 years, and

48. Paratt, Saraj Nalini, *"The religion of Manipur"*, Firma KLM Pvt.ltd, Calcutta 1980, p.96

these are regarded as making the best maibis. Such possessions often manifest itself in symptoms like illness or abnormality, sometimes in hysterical behaviour. She would then undergo a training under a senior maibi, in which she would be taught the sacred lore. The ability to fall into trance becomes ritualised, i.e. specially apparent in the lai haraoba festival. Maibis may be possessed by a variety of lais, but more often by one of the main gods, such as the guardians of the direction.

The married life of a maibi is complicated by her relationship to the lai by whom she is possessed. The lai visits the maibi by nights when she sleeps alone. On such occasions the lai may approach her either in human or animal form.

The dress of the maibi is distinctive. The phanek (an ankle length skirt) and inaphi (shawl) must be of pure white and an additional waist wrapper is worn on top of the phanek. A long sleeve white blouse is worn and flowers are placed in the hair and behind the ear. As preserver of the oral traditions it is their responsibility to memorise and repeat accurately the sacred lyrics of the festival, and to lead the congregational singing. The maibi's role as the medium is perhaps the most remarkable and the most original and authentic. They are the symbols of relationship between human beings and god.

In several social traditions, for ritualistic performance the presence of the maibi or maiba is considered as necessary and incomplete without their presence. Their services are also sought in exorcising the evil spirit away from the house. They are also invited to cure the patients. Some of them use their traditional magic and others do it through nature care.⁴⁹

Vaishnavism was declared by king Charairongba in the year 1704 as the state religion for the first time in Manipur history.⁵⁰ Since then the purohits (brahmin caste) have the monopoly over ritualistic performances in temples and houses of Hindus. Every Meitei home has a tulusi bong (basil plant on an earthen mount), in the courtyard as a sign of adherence to the vaishnavite faith. All Meitei women wear chandan on their nose and forehead after a daily bath before they start their work. Inside a Meitei home there is usually no altar for vaishnavite deities but in the corners, the south-west and the north-east are dedicated to the ancient deities, Sanamahi and his mother, Ima Iaimaren. The hearth is associated with the ancestral deity of lineage, sagei apokpa. Gradually, with time, the imported faith adapted itself to the ethnic religious environment and Meitei culture, and thus became quite distinct in the world of pan Indian culture. The distinction found its most profound expression in the public prominence of women in core religious ritual. In most of the rituals both sexes participate together, but in some women have more permanence than men. The

49. Chandra Sheikhar Panchami, *op.cit.*, p.102

major ritual prominence in vaishnavite ceremonies can be arranged in two categories :-

1. Ras lila : Goshtaras and sankirtanaras, they are both dance rituals and the latter is performed only by women.
2. Sankirtana : These are religious singing sessions performed by both sexes and known respectively as nupa-pala (male sankirtana) and nupi-pala (female sankirtana). A sankirtana can be divided into two sections - kirtana (musical and vocal style) and cholam (rhythmic style). There are two kinds of cholam - pala and pung. The former is a dance form performed during sankirtana with gentle and firm footwork and graceful movements of the body. The latter is the dance of the male drummer.

Although women sankirtana sessions are quite popular, the exuberant demonstration of sankirtana is found only in nupa pala, the male singing sessions. While raslila dance is performed by female, sankirtana singing has been a male prerogative, developing it into a highly professional skill. Women are not allowed to perform in the technique of male sankirtana and are barred from entering the ritual arena during sankirtana, because the Brahmins regarded them as polluting agents. The dominant aspect of male sankirtana is reflected in the costume of the dancers. The male performers wear stark white dhotis, large imposing turbans with a touch of black on the top (sometimes red), and the sacred thread showing on bare

chests while women wear plain looking faded pastel orange pungo phanek with white inaphi (shawl) whether they are spectators or performers. In all vaishnavite ceremonies women wear pungo phanek but men come in imposing, spectacular colours - orange, bright saffron, shocking pink - in dhoti, turban, kurta.⁵¹

However Meitei society has undergone a significant change in socio-religious life. The present popularity of women sankirtana can be attributed in part to the courage and zeal of the famous female sankirtana singer, Manimacha Devi. She was the first professional woman to give up the plain looking attire and wear the traditional one (maiknaipa), with brilliant coloured stripes and heavy gold or gold plated jewellery. She also rejected the use of tiny symbols, instead used the large 'khartal', till then used only by males. Manimacha Devi formed a sankirtana group of women and performed like male sankirtana singers. Instead of sitting on the ground in a passive position, she and her companions stood up, sang and danced in feminine ecstasy. The council of the sankirtana were offended by this action and sued her in the court, condemning her act as sacrilegious and violating vaishnavite ideology. But she won the court battle and the secretary of the sabha was fined Rs 500 twice by the court for disturbing her performances which attracted a large audience.

Therefore among the Meiteis both the (traditional religion)

51. Manjusri Chaki Sircar, op.cit., pp100-110

Sanamahi and Vaishnavism are thriving side by side. Most of the Meiteis are equally devoted to both of them. At every religious festival and ceremonies of both Meiteism and Hinduism, women are given equal status with men.

The traditional Naga religion is generally known as 'animism'. The concept of their god was rather negative, they believe in plurality of gods and according to their faith, the gods or the goddesses tried to harm them constantly. It was because of this fear that they had to sacrifice animals to their gods to protect them from evil spirits. Before they ate or drink, they would always offer a little food and drink to the gods so that they would not harm them.⁵²

The Nagas believed in the equality of men and women before god. There was no distinction of high or low, fair or dark, privileged or outcast. Even the poorest could become the spiritual leader who would attend to various religious function and rites. Women could practise on par with men to treat various physical ailments by using natural products.

The Nagas believed in the religious corporate life. A sin committed by an individual could bring calamity to the whole society or the village. For instance at the time of sowing paddy, the village chief offered sacrifices and performed the paddy sowing rites one

52. RR Shimray, op.cit., p.225

day ahead of the subjects. In case an individual did the sowing ahead of the village chief, the entire village suffered from failure of crops that particular year and had to face famine. As a result instructions were followed faithfully and if anyone broke the religious practise he or she was sent to exile in far away land.

Among the Nagas there is a belief that soul does not die with the death of his or her body, that if one leads a good and worthy life on this earth, after his or her death, his or her soul will fly away into the realms above,⁵³ and live in the land of the death with the king. Otherwise he is born again as an insect, caterpillar or other form of lower life. According to R R Shimray,⁵⁴ in the Naga traditional religion human beings could not communicate with god directly. But god spoke to them through some natural agents like -

- i. birds
- ii. bamboo divination
- iii. egg divination
- iv. cock or hen divination
- v. dreams of the priest

The Nagas listened to the chirping of some particular birds' direction carefully, if the birds chirp from the right and then cross over to the left the omen was said to be good. If the chirping is from

53. M Horam, "*Naga Religion: A Case Study*" in Sujata Hiri(ed) Religion & Society of North-East India, Publishing House Pvt.ltd., Delhi 1980,p.60

54. RR Shimray, op.cit., pp226-227

the left ,the omen was bad, in such events the work was postponed. Even a headhunting party would come back home as they dare not go against the prediction.

In case of hen or cock divination, the priest would hold the cock or the hen by the head and strangulate it. Its two legs would cross each another. If the right is above the left leg, the omen is good.

The Nagas faithfully follow the prediction be it head hunting, feast of merits, engagement, sowing or reaping ,fishing , hunting etc. They believed that predictions were directions from god. However, with the coming of Christianity in the 19th century among the Nagas, most of them have embraced it and the traditional religion has become a history.

Prior to the arrival of the missionaries in Manipur, the tribal areas were very much neglected. The people lived in their pristine traditional life ,unaffected by the winds of change.⁵⁵ The Nagas were deprived of the modern ways of life and were plagued by fears, ignorance,illiteracy and poverty.

William Pettigrew, a young enthusiastic dynamic and ambitious Scottish missionary was the first to come to the Nagas . When

55. L Jeyaseelan, "*Impact of Christianity on the tribal Society of Manipur*" in Kamei and Shangkhram(ed), *Change & Continuity in the Tribal Society of Manipur*, MUTSU, Imphal 1999, p.79.

he came to Ukhrul, the Nagas were strictly following animism. Pettigrew started his activities without touching the religious sentiments and without interfering in the ritualistic method . He introduced education and opened a school but nobody attended in the beginning. It was only after Maxwell, the political agent of Manipur ordered the village chief to send their children to school, that few students turned up. They were provided books, clothes etc. Thus people started taking interest.⁵⁶ But the daughters were not allowed as they had to help their parents at home and in the fields.

Christianity has brought many changes in their approach, attitude, life style, social structure etc. In the traditional religion, the Nagas had a God of fear. Every illness was thought to be an act of revenge of gods and spirit. They had to offer animals to please them. It was done through the observance of gennas, rituals and the taboos. After they become christianised, the head hunters realised that it was a great sin. Slowly, they have given up head hunting. Traditional youth dormitory or morung have disappeared. The institution was not encouraged by the missionary because it was thought to lead them to all kinds of vices. Instead of these, they have women society for charity purposes as part of church programs. It is an undeniable fact that it was the missionaries from the west who first brought their welfare program.

56.Chandra Sheikhar Panchami, op.cit., p.111.

Political status of women

The degree of participation of women in the political process and decision making bodies greatly depend on the norms and structures of a given society.⁵⁷ There is always interactions between the social norms, social beliefs, traditions and political culture in the society. If there is a gap between these social attributes civilization or development is at a lower level. This gap can be bridged only when political awareness, political consciousness or the political culture grows from within the society.

The women were aware of the social and political processes of the state. According to Bimola Devi this could be due to historical reasons. All male adults had to attend 10 out of 40 days forced labour (lallup system) at the palace and most of them had to accompany the king in his fights against neighboring states. Women had to administer obligations and activities in the absence of their menfolk.⁵⁸ As already mentioned, they were even able to change the political decision of the king if it affected the general interest of the people.

For example, in the beginning of the century the king had to abandon his plan to introduce copper coins when the women traders refused to accept them. In fact the large market centres of Manipur

57. Bimola Devi, "*Political status of Women In India and Manipur*", Manipur Today, 23rd April 2000, Vol.20 no.2 p.15

58. Ibid, p.15.

run by women have a history of providing moral consensus on the problems of the state. Apart from economic activities, the market is also an important venue for social and political interactions⁵⁹. It was this aspect of khwairamband bazaar which played a crucial role in the outbreak of the Nupilan (women's war) which occurred in 1904 and 1939.

Both the movements were spontaneous and organised by women themselves. The first movement was against the order of the political agent forcing the menfolk of Imphal to bring teakwood and bamboos from kabaw valley to rebuild the residence of the Assistant Superintendent. The second women's movement was mainly against the British policy of exporting rice from Manipur which led to its scarcity for daily consumption. Both these movements were very successful.

Some of the more prominent women in Manipur

In ancient Manipur 33 A.D the chief queen named Laisana was a member of the council of ministers. She headed the women's court called 'Patcha' where all women related cases were taken up and settled.⁶⁰ There were many women who took active part in the administration and political affairs of the state.

59. Manjusri Chaki Sircar, op.cit., p.34.

60. Bimola Devi, "*The Role of Women in Manipur Politics*" in C.Jarushua Thomas (ed) *Constraints in the Development of Manipur*, Regency Publications New Delhi p.113.

For instance, Lingthoingambi, the wife of Ningthou khomba who ascended the throne in 1432 A.D defended the royal palace heroically when her king - husband along with his nobles went away to attack 'AKLA'. The Tangkhuls hearing the absence of the Raja invaded kangla. The Rani in the guise of the Raja with royal gown welcomed the Tangkhuls, they were fed with intoxicated meals and overpowered easily when drunk.

The khongsais of kumbi khongyang also invaded the palace in the absence of the Raja. This time also, Lingthoingambi in the guise of the Raja on horseback fought against the khongsais and defeated them.⁶¹

An example set by Maharani Gomti devi also shows the high strategy of a women in controlling the maharaja in the political administration of the state including succession to the throne. She wanted to take revenge against Maharaja (her present husband) for killing her former husband. She made Garibniwaz promise that her son Ajit shah should be made the Maharaja after his death though there were many older sons from other Ranis. Ajit shah was the son of her former husband. Though born at the palace, she was pregnant when Garibniwaz married her.

61. U Dhananjay Singh, "*The Manipuri Women*" Manipur Today, 26th Jan 1995, Vol.15, No.1, p.35.

Among the Manipuri princesses, we can cite Kuranga Nayami, the daughter of Gourshyam who was married to the king of Assam. After the death of her husband, she adopted a political strategy to protect her younger brother -in-law, Laxmi kant. In 1769 she killed the leader of the Maomaria revolt, Baruah and made her brother-in-law the ruler of Assam.

There are princesses like Shija Tampha, Indu Prakha etc. who ruled the kingdom effectively after the death of their husbands.⁶²

In the past when head hunting prevailed among the Nagas, women played a very important role in saving the lives of the men. Phukreila (neutral lady) in Tangkhul, was the name given to a woman married to a person of another village. She was very highly respected for her neutrality for she was related to both the villages, and were called ambassadors of peace. She would boldly enter the battle field and intervene the two enemy villages. When enough heads had been slain and the verdict was clear she would step in between the warring parties to prevent the winner side from chasing the defeated party. Her intervention meant stopping the war⁶³. Even in war of challenges where only two warriors fight, she could intervene in a certain stage. Harming her meant violation of the inter village laws which would mean a war by all villagers against the law breaker. Thus as a media-

62. Bimola Devi, *Political Status of Manipuri Women*, Manipur Today 26 Jan 1999, Vol.19, No.1, pp26-27.

63. RR Shimray, op.cit., p.168

for she could not be harmed, nobody could lay hands on her. She was called 'a peace maker', 'a torch bearer of peace'. In politics and diplomacy women could influence in many ways directly or indirectly through their father or husband or brother.⁶⁴

The political status of woman who belong to the royal circle was quite high and it was an exception for a common woman like Rani Gaidinliu who led the Zeliangrongs in 1931 to fight against the British government. Gaidinliu, the third daughter of eight children of Lotthomang and Kalotlenliu, at the age of 13 associated with Jadonang (freedom fighter). She became his lieutenant in his social, religious and political movements. After the execution of Jadonang, Gaidinliu took up the leadership of the movement. She told the people, "we are free people, the white people should not rule over us, we will not pay house tax to the government, we will not obey their unjust laws like forced labour and compulsory portorage subscription". She wanted to preserve the traditional Naga culture. Her political programme was that a 'Naga kingdom' would be established where there would be no wants.⁶⁵

Gaidinliu went underground to direct the rebellion. The people gave money and a large number of man volunteered for the cause. At a time when the Nagas were ruthlessly suppressed by

64. Free Paothing, *op.cit.*, pp67-68.

65. Gangumei Kabui, Lal Dena(ed), *History of Modern Manipur*, Orbit Publishers, N Delhi, 1991, p.13.

the authorities of Manipur, Gaidinliu was the only hope for their freedom. The British decided to capture Gaidinliu in order to suppress the movement. Apprehending the popularity of the rebellion under Gaidinliu, the British ordered that the operations should be centralised under the direct control of J. P. Mills, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills. Troops were sent out and outposts were established at strategic points, photographs of Rani Gaidinliu were distributed and pasted through out the three districts. Girls having similar names as 'Gaidinliu' were interrogated as a result of which they had to change their names to avoid interrogation. Even Gaidinliu had to adopt the name 'Didinliu'⁶⁶. The president of Manipur state durbar offered a reward of Rs.200.00 for the arrest of Gaidinliu and was subsequently raised to Rs. 500.00, and the village giving information about her was promised a remission of taxes for 10 years. Gaidinliu went into hiding in North Cachar hills while her supporters were given severe punishments, several villages were also burnt down. The jawans of the Assam rifles had a long and difficult operations in the attempt to arrest this young leader. Gaidinliu was arrested in October 1932, in Polumi village in Nagaland, during the construction of a wooden fortress, (which would accommodate more than 4000 warriors). Before her arrest, Gaidinliu had told her followers, that the next two months could be crucial period, that either she or the British would win.

Mr. Higgin, the Political Agent of Manipur sentenced her

66. Aram Pamei, '*Rani Gaidinliu*', Raisunriang, p.33

to life imprisonment. She spent 14 years in the dark cells of the British jail. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was impressed by her activities and at the same time shocked that such a tender girl at the age of 20 should suffer so much. He called her the 'Rani of the Nagas'.⁶⁷ Since then the title of Rani had been popularly appended to Gaidinliu. She was ultimately released from jail when India became independent in 1947. However she was not allowed to return to Manipur and had to stay in Nagaland to prevent her from reviving the movement.

Political status of women after independence in Manipur :

After independence, the Maharaja in response to the demand for the introduction of democratic government in Manipur adopted the Manipur State Constitution Act 1947. The Act introduced the State Assembly and the Maharaja was made the constitutional head. The first election State Assembly was held in 1948 where the Manipuri women exercised the right to vote. It was a great achievement as women in other parts of the world especially in Western democratic countries like U.K. had to fight for a long time to get the political right i.e. the right to vote. Women in Manipur did not fight for their right to vote.

In 1954-59, women played an active role in demanding responsible government. In 1960, Women's Assembly Demand Committee was formed to press the central to grant responsible government in

67. Gangumei Kabui, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

Manipur. In one memorandum to the Chief Commissioner, the committee said, "we cannot remain passive and silent on the day to day happenings and events having a direct bearing on our happiness and sorrow as well as our future welfare. We are very much perturbed by the government's apathy and indifference towards the present satyagraha movement launched by the Assembly Demand Coordination Committee for the achievement of responsible government in Manipur"⁶⁸.

In the parliamentary and the electoral college elections in 1952, Manipuri women participated as voters and candidates. Ishwari Devi, wife of late maharaja Bodhchandra Singh contested in the parliamentary elections from the inner Manipur parliamentary constituency as an independent candidate but she could not succeed. M. K. Binodini Devi contested from Khurai constituency in the electoral college election as an AMNU candidate, and got elected by defeating three rival candidates.⁶⁹ In the 1957 territorial council elections, another woman Sabi Devi, who played an active role in the women's movement of 1939, contested as a communist candidate from Wangkhei Kongba constituency but was defeated. Women members were nominated in the territorial council from 1957 - 63 and legislative assembly from 1963 - 69 of Manipur. They were R. K. Mukhara Devi, Akim Anal, Lhingjaneng Gangte and A. Bimola Devi⁷⁰.

68. Y Joy Kumar Singh, Assembly Demand Co-ordination Committee, Why Responsible Govt. for Manipur, Imphal, 1960, p.61.

69. Govt. of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results 1952.

70. Bimola Devi, op.cit., p.171.

Women Candidates since 1972

The number of women candidates in the assembly elections has increased after Manipur attained full fledged statehood. In 1972 elections there were three candidates contesting in the assembly election but all of them lost. In 1974 there were three women candidates, they were Lhingjaneng Gangte nominated by the congress in Saikot constituency, Aribam Bimola Devi, Manipur Peoples Party contesting from Heingang constituency and T. Kholly an independent in Saikot constituency. Again, all the three were defeated⁷¹.

The number of women candidates have further increased in 1980 Assembly elections inspite of their earlier failure. There were 7 candidates in both the valley and hill constituency⁷². They were:-

Sl.no	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	T Kholly	Independent	Saikot
2.	LhingJaneng	Janata	Saikot
3.	A Bimola Devi	Janata	Heingang
4.	RK Mukhara Devi	Congress	Keishamthong
5.	Kh.Bilashini Devi	Communist	Bishnupur
6.	A Puingapati Devi	Congress(U)	Thangmeiband
7.	W Joymati Devi	Congress(U)	Sagolband

The performance of the women candidates both in the hill and the valley was not satisfactory. They could not secure a high

71. Ibid, p.71.

72. Election Result 1980.

percentage of votes in 1984 election, the number of women candidates have reduced to five.⁷³ They were :

Sl.no	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	A Bimola Devi	Independent	Heingang
2.	N Shyama Devi	Independent	Lamlai
3.	W Joymati Devi	Congress	Sagolband
4.	N Vaiphei	Independent	Jiribam
5.	Manlienmang	Independent	Churachandpur

Out of five candidates only one is supported by a political party (congress) and the rest are independent candidates. This shows that the political parties have no confidence in women for winning the election. It may also be noted that all the five women candidates forfeited their security deposits. Then in 1990 assembly election, there were seven women candidates contesting in both the hills and the valley constituencies.⁷⁴ The candidates were :

Sl.no	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	RK Mukhara Devi	Congress	Keishamthong
2.	Ph. Ishwari Devi	Janata Dal	Wangkhei
3.	M Sahadev Devi	BJP	Khurai
4.	T Ibemhal Devi	CPI	Heijanglam
5.	Hathoi Buansing	Congress	Churachandpur
6.	BK Rose	Independent	Thanglon
7.	Hangmila Shaiza	Janata Dal	Ukhrul

73. Election Result 1984.

74. Election Result 1990.

Hangmila Shaiza (wife of former CM Late Yangmaso Shaiza) was elected from Ukhrul constituency defeating her four rivals. She was the first women to be elected in the legislative assembly after Manipur attained statehood in 1972. And again in the by-election held in the Oinam constituency after the death of sitting MLA, K Bira Singh, his wife K Apabi was elected on the congress ticket. Thus, the women membership in the legislature increased to two.

In the 1995 elections, 11 women candidates contested. There were 5 in the hills and 6 in the valley. They were :-

Sl. No.	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	Chingnou	KNA	Churachandpur
2.	Hathoi	INC	Churachandpur
3.	B K Rose	FPM	Thanlon
4.	T Kholly	NPP	Saikot
5.	Ngaizanem	MPP	Singhat
6.	PK Ongbi Devi	INC	Sagolband
7.	N Manisang Devi	Janata	Konhoujam
8.	T Ibemhal Devi	CPI	Nambol
9.	K Apabi Devi	INC	Oinam
10.	Y Sakhitombi Devi	Independent	Singjamei
11.	M Ruhini Devi	MPP	Lamsang

None of them got elected and some even forfeited their security deposit. In the assembly election 2000, there were ten women

candidates, two in the hills and eight in the valley. They were :-

Sl.no.	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	Guiliangliu Panmei	NCP	Tamenglong
2.	T Ngaizanem	Samata	Singhat
3.	Y Rati Manjuri	NCP	Heingang
4.	Y Shakhitombi	Independent	Singjamei
5.	T Manishang	BJP	Konthoujam
6.	A Mirabai Devi	INC	Patshoi
7.	E Dipta	BJP	Jiribam
8.	K Apabi	INC	Oinam
9.	W Leima Devi	Independent	Naoriya Pakhanglakpa
10.	P Damayanti	MSCP	Wabagin

Out of these ten women candidates, only W Laima Devi could garner enough votes to win from the Naoriya Pakhanglakpa constituency.

In the parliamentary election, there have been four women candidates contesting from outer and inner Manipur constituencies.

They were:-

Sl.no	Name	Party	Constituency	Year
1.	Ishwari Devi	Independent	Inner	1952
2.	Lhingjaneng G	MPP	Outer	1984
3.	M Anne	Congress(I)	Inner	1996
4.	Kim Gangte	CPI	Outer	1998

Among them only Kim Gangte was successful and she represented Manipur in the House of the people. And again in 2000 parliamentary election Kim Gangte was the lone women candidate in the outer Manipur parliamentary constituency but she was defeated.⁷⁵

Thus, the performance of women in both assembly and parliament is not very encouraging though women are recognised as active political workers and their voting turn out is always higher than that of men. The voters, specially women, are not aware of the necessity of having women representative in the decision making body of the state. Though the social and economic status of women is high, their political status remain low inspite of the participation of women in the local bodies as a result of reservation provided by the 73rd and the 74th amendment acts of the constitution of India.

75. Bimola Devi, *op.cit.*, pp115-121.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

From the above discussions, we can conclude that women in this part of the country is better placed than their counter parts else where both socially and economically. Social evils like sati or bride burning, Child marriage, Dowry (deaths), Purdah system, Certain restriction placed on widows etc. which women in other parts of the country endured and suffered are not found in Manipur.

The two major ethnic groups i.e the Meiteis and the Nagas which we have studied showed some similarities and also differences in their cultures, traditions, belief etc.. In both the communities, women are highly esteemed. There is no such restriction in their movement and they enjoy certain freedom.

Both Meitei and Naga women normally marry the ones they love, so negotiated marriage is not very common though it is also practiced. In marriage, the law of exogamy is strictly observed i.e two people belonging to the same clan or yek cannot marry each other. If such a thing happens, they are ostracised from the society. They are sent into exile, as they are believed to bring famine or epidemic in the locality or the village. The other similarity that we observed is that a man may not marry someone from the mother's clan. And in case of a second marriage by a man who has a wife and children, he leaves his home and all his properties goes to his first wife and their children.

Economically, the women are independent. They really work hard to make both ends meet. She is the first to rise up in the morning and the last to retire at night. She works from dawn till dusk, cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children and husband's needs. A working mother is not exempted from all these domestic. Besides these chores, women (Married and Unmarried) are engaged in hand loom, handicrafts, kitchen gardening, silk rearing and yarn making, farming, pottery, fishing and animal husbandry etc. to support their living. The "hard working" nature of the women is evident from the fact that there is no beggar in the society. These are some of the similarities we observed in the Meitei and the Naga society.

There are differences as well. Most of the Meiteis are followers of either Sanamahi (Traditional) religion or Vaishnavite Hinduism whereas the Nagas are Christians. For the Nagas, the most important characteristics in marriage is the nuptial vow made by the groom and the bride, to remain faithful to each other for better or for worse till death do them part. Nagas are strictly monogamous unlike the Meiteis who are polygamous. According to R Brown, "Polygamy is common among the well to do part of the population, but the lower orders do not often indulge in it. Due to the practice of polygamy, divorce is also more common among the Meiteis. Most marriages split up after the husband finds another wife. In Meitei society, after a divorce both the husband and the wife can remarry

without the consent of the other. Once they are divorced they are free to do what ever they want. But in the case of the Nagas, divorce is a rare phenomenon. Even if it happens, the man can not remarry with another woman unless the wife is married to another man or she consents to his marriage. If he goes ahead, he is excommunicated from the church untill his first wife marries again. This is one area where a woman is highly regarded and the man is helpless without her getting married to another man.

It is common for the Naga women to go back to her parental home for sometime after a quarrel with her husband. But she goes back to their home when her husband comes to take her again. And it is not considered divorce. However, in rare cases of irreconcilable conflicts where the wife refuses to go back, then divorce takes place. If the husband is at fault, a fine is imposed on him. But if the divorce is due to the fault of the wife, the bride price is returned to the husband. And the wife has no custody right over their children.

Another difference is the bride price. In the case of the Nagas, the man who is getting married is supposed to give a bride price to the girl's father as a token of gratitude for bringing her up. It could be in the form of money, animals etc. This practice of giving bride price is not found among the Meiteis.

One common practice among the Meiteis is chenba

(elopement). There are times when a boy falls in love with a girl but feeling too shy to talk with their parents about it. So, with the help of their friends they elope for two to three days. It is a signal for the parents to arrange for their marriage.

There is another custom of thapa (Marriage by abduction) which men use as an instrument to terrorize, subjugate and force women to become his wife. According to Manjusri Chaki Sircar, "although it is not an honorable act among the Meiteis, it is not a socially condemned offence either". She goes on to say, when a group of men, however small in number, can use the power of force to exploit the valued sexuality of unmarried women, it indeed symbolised the expression of desire to assert that no matter how independent women may be, men can still control them if they so choose. The unmarried girls are extremely vulnerable in thapa cases, where she had to surrender herself into marriage with her abductor especially if he comes from a well to do family. But the interesting thing is that such marriage does not last and very often the abducted women leaves her husband and goes back to her parent's home. Therefore, though elopement is commonly practised among the Meiteis, yet, it is not compulsory, and there are cases of performing the wedding ceremony without chenba (elopement). In the case of the Nagas, one has to choose either of them and elopement can never precede the wedding. Elopement was very rare in the bygone days and wedding

ceremony was a big occasion for celebration. Nowadays things have changed. Weddings have become expensive affairs fit for the kings. Many people can not afford it. Therefore, elopement appears to be a better option for them. Couples also elope when the parents on both or either side(s) do not accept or appreciate their relationship. As a rule, no wedding ceremony is required under such circumstances though there are cases of confirmatory ceremonies later on. Marriage by abduction which is practised by the Meiteis is not found among the Nagas.

Regarding the status of widows, they (Meiteis) are free to remarry except the Brahmins. For the Nagas, a widow can marry one of the other brothers of her deceased husband (If both she and the brother and are willing). It is the same with the man. If his wife dies, he can marry one of the sisters of his deceased wife. This is preferred to marrying a stranger to preserve the relationship of the family and also it is easier for the children to grow up with someone familiar to them. This kind of marriage is not a compulsion, it's only preferred. In fact, there are cases where widows remarry other than the husband's brother. In such cases, she has to leave all the properties and her children behind. The practice of marrying a deceased husband's brother is however strictly restricted among the Meiteis.

Another remarkable difference between the Meiteis and

the Naga is the law of inheritance. Being a patriarchal society, the properties are inherited by the males but it is more relaxed in the case of the Meiteis. Ancestral home is usually given to the youngest son and the father bequeathes his properties to his sons and daughters. Where as in the case of the Nagas, the major portion of the property goes either to the eldest son or the youngest and the rest are divided among the other sons and the daughter may get only if the father has enough for all. The ancestral property however can not be handed down to the daughter even if she happens to be the only issue and it has to go to the nearest male relative of the family.

In spite of the roles women play in society, the women have not been successful in political participation specially in the level of representing the state assembly, parliament and other leadership. Women as a collective group like Meira-paibi, Naga Women Union Manipur have been very successful by taking up various issues like fighting against alcoholism, drug abuse and drug trafficking, prostitution, black marketing, fighting against the armies' violation of human rights etc.

There are many factors that constrain women in their political participation. From their childhood, sex roles are differentiated, girls are taught to be quiet, passive, dependent, obedient etc. and boys are taught to be aggressive, defensive, assertive, dominating

etc. which are the characters necessary for a politician today where passivity, quietness, obedience have no place for survival. After a woman is married, her responsibilities towards her husband, children and household activities restrained her from entering active politics.

One general trend among the women in Manipur is having many children. Child bearing and rearing is undoubtedly a difficult and time consuming job. Women have to work very hard to be able to manage her family. If the children go hungry or if they are into bad habits she is to be blamed. She has to see that everything goes well in the family. While engaged in all these, she hardly has time for politics. By the time her children are grown up, she is already past her prime and her late entry into active politics becomes difficult to compete with men who have been in the fray for long.

One of the reasons women do not want to get involved in politics is due to the rampant corruptions, muscle power, money, violence etc. involved today which do not suit their feminine nature. Women are brought up in the atmosphere of strong patriarchy where male dominates over female. They are looked down as a weaker sex who can not look after themselves but who need protection all the time. Man takes it as his social, moral and traditional responsibility to protect and control woman. He cannot think of woman ruling over him suddenly.

Education is an important factor that shaped the confi-

dence of a person and promoted self control. Education was reserved only for boys until the seventies of this century. As it was denied to girls, women remain illiterate for a long time. Even though literacy rate has come up over the years, higher education is still denied to girls and a very small section of the girl population have access to it. This is a big hindrance in their political participation where higher education leads to a higher level of participation.

Political parties are not willing to prop up a women candidates because they have no confidence in women winning the election. Most of the women who contested the elections are independent candidates who have to finance themselves. Lack of support by political parties and shortage of finance is a big hurdle for women's political activities. A woman politician needs a very supportive husband but most of the men do not encourage their wives to enter into active politics. Therefore, women do not have enough finance for election on their own without their husband's or family's support.

Politics is considered to be a "dirty game" by many, specially women. This is one reason why women do not want to get involved. Another reason is the fear of sexual discrimination. In any establishment, women fear of being discriminated. In a male dominated patriarchal society the power is enjoyed by men in every field and at every layer of the society. Politics, being an important field for

power hunting, women are kept out of power race.

One of the most important factors that hinders women in political participation is the men's rigid mindset. If women are to be active in politics the whole mindset of the society that domestic work and child rearing belongs exclusively to women has to change. Both men and women are equally responsible in running the family including looking after the children.

Being a patriarchal society, man is the head of the family. In the name of tradition, man takes all the important decisions of the family. Women are not allowed to make decisions for themselves. Their personality is controlled, regulated and maintained by male members of the society. Decision making is solely in the hands of man, thereby, women are not given the chance to improve their leadership.

Women themselves are also responsible to a certain extent because they also accept the stereotype roles the society has given them and some of them are satisfied with their subordinate position and refuse to accept changes for empowerment. They, who constitute half of the population, do not realise their potentials. Therefore, it may be concluded that women of Manipur who have contributed a fair share to the social and economic life of the state are denied their rightful position in politics.

-
1. Ali, Ashraf and L. N. Sharma, Political Participation and Electoral Process, Political Sociology, University Press Pvt. Ltd., Madras, 1983.
 2. Arun Manipur G.K., (ed) G. M. Publications, Imphal, 1997.
 3. Bhawana Jharta Women and Politics in India, Deep & Deep Publications, N Delhi, 1996.
 4. Chandra Sheikhar Panchami Manipur Religion, Culture & Society, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., N Delhi, 1987.
 5. Constantine, R Manipur : Maid of the Maidens, Lancers Publishers, N Delhi, 1981.
 6. Chanu Umani & Devi M. Jamuna Manipuri Women in Contemporary Situation, in C. Jarushua Thomas (ed), Constraints of Development in Manipur, Regency Publication, N Delhi, 2000.
 7. Desai Neera Issues in Women's Political Participation, in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (ed), Women & Politics, Har Anand Publication, N Delhi, 1993.
 8. Devi Bimola Women in Social Movements in Manipur, in M. N. Karna (ed), Social Movements in the North East India, Indus Publishing Company, N Delhi, 1998.
 9. Bimola Devi Manipur Women - A Study, in N. Sanajaoba (ed), Manipur Past and Present, Vol. 1, Mittal Publication, Delhi, 1990.

20. Jeyaseelan L Impact of Christianity on the Tribal Society of Manipur, in Kamei Gailangam & Shangkhram Gina (ed), Change and Continuity in the Tribal Society of Manipur, MUTSU, Canchipur, Imphal, 1999.
21. Lester W. Milbrath & Goel Political Participation : How & why do they get involved in politics ? Rand Mc Nally Publication co., Chicago, 1997
22. Luithui Shimreichon Naga women : Struggle for human rights, in Indigenous Voice, IWGIA, Copenhagen, 1998.
23. M. Ramchander & K Lakshmi Women and Politics , Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1993
24. Medhi Kunja & Dutta Anuradha Constraints of women in Political Participation : A Case Study of Assam , in Renu Debi (ed) Women of Assam , Omsons Publications, N Delhi, 1994
25. Michael Rush & Phillip Altruff An introduction to Political and Sociology, The Bobbs Merrill Co., New York, 1972
26. Milbrath, Lester W Political Participation : How and why do people get involved in politics, Chicago, 1965.
27. Mills J.P The Rengma Nagas , Mcmillan and Co., London, 1937
28. Myron Weiner Political Participation : Crisis of political process, in Norman D. Palmer , Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience , Vikas Publishing House, N Delhi, 1976

- 29 N. Joykumar Singh Anti British Movement ,in Lal Dena (ed) History of Modern Manipur , Orbit Publishers ,N Delhi ,1991
30. Norman D. Palmer Elections and Political Development: The South Asian Experience ,Vikas Publishing House, N Delhi ,1976
31. Norman H Nie & Sidney Verba Political Participation , in Fried Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (ed) , Handbook of Political Science, Vol.4, Addison Wesley Publication Co., Massachusets, 1975
32. Panda, Snehalata Determinants of Political Participation: Women and Public Activity , Ajanta Publications , N Delhi ,1990
33. Panda ,Snehalata Political efficacy & Political Participation: A Study of women 's involvement in politics in India, in Susheela Kaushik (ed), Women's Participation in politics, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi , 1993
34. Parrat, Saraj Nalini The religion of Manipur , Firma KLM pvt. Ltd. ,Calcutta, 1980
35. Patni Sushila Women Political Elite : Search for Identity, Printwell, Jaipur , 1994
36. R. Brown F.R.C.S.E Statistical Account of the Native State of Manipur, Calcutta, 1874
37. Randall, Vicky Women and Politics ,Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1987
38. Robert Hess & Judith Torney The development of Political Attitudes in children, Alpine Press, Chicago, 1967

39. Sheth, Pravin Women Empowerment & Politics in India, Karnavati Publications, Ahmedabad, 1998
40. Shimray R R Origin and Culture of the Nagas , Pamleiphi Shimray, N Delhi, 1976
41. Sidney Verba & Norman H Nie Participation in America : Political Democracy and Social Equality, Herper and Row, New york, 1972
42. Sircar Manjusri Chaki Feminism in a traditional society ,Women of the Imphal Valley, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1976
43. Soysal Mumtaz Public Relations in Administration II. The influence of the Public Administration Excluding Electoral Rights, International Institute of Administrative Studies , Brussels 1966
44. Woodward J L & Roper E Political Activity of American Citizen , in H. Eulau and others (ed), Political Behaviour : A reader in theory and Research, Amerind Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., N Delhi, 1972
45. William Henry Chafe The American Women : Her changing Social, Economic and Political roles, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972.
46. Z.V Free Paathing Status of Tangkhul women, Modern press Imphal, 1994

Journals, Magazines & Primary Sources

1. Aram Pamei, Some noted Naga women, Raisunriang, 5th issue, April ,2001
2. Bhoite Anuradha Women and Democracy in India , Kerala Sociologist, Vol. XIII, Dec. , 1988
3. Devi Annapurna & N M Pati Women in State politics (Orissa), Political Science Review, Vol.XX, 1981
4. Devi Bimola Political Status of Manipuri women, Manipur Today, Government of Manipur Publications 26th Jan 1999 Vol. XIX, No.1
4. Devi Bimola Political Status of Women in India and Manipur, Manipur Today, Government of Manipur Publication, April 2000. Vol. XX, No. 2.
5. Devi Jamini Women's movement in Manipur , Past and Present , Manipur Today, Government of Manipur Publications, 26th Jan 1999, Vol. XIX, No.2.
6. Dhananjay Sing The Manipuri women, Manipur Today, Government of Manipur Publications, 26th Jan 1995, Vol. XV, No.1
7. Fink H C & Hfelle, L A Internal and external control and ideology, Psychological Reports, 1973
8. Kishwar Madhu Sidelined, The illustrated weekly of India, Feb 4th 1990
9. Kikon Dolly Political Mobilisation of women in Nagaland : A Sociological background, NPMHR, Vol.6, No.1, Quarterly Publications, April 2002
10. Lee Marcia Why few women hold public office: Democracy and Sexual roles, Political Science Review Quarterly , Vol.91 No.2, 1980
11. Mc Glen Nancy E The impact of parenthood on political participation , The Western Political Quarterly, Vol.33, No.3,1980
12. Olsen Marvin Three routes to political Party Participation, The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, Dec. 1976
13. Suryakumari a Strategies for the Political Empowerment of women, University News, June, 1989

14. Schonfeld William R The meaning of Political Participation, World politics, Vol. XXVIII, No.1, 1975
15. U A Shimray Equality as Tradition, women's role in Naga Society, EPW, Vol. XXXVII, No.5
16. J. Marygrace, Lamkang Naga Customary Laws on Marriage, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
17. L. M. Maheo & D. Adaha, Traditional Marriage Custom Of the Mao Naga Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
18. K. T. Soune, Customary Law of Marriage : Past and Present in Respect of Poumai Tribe, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
19. M. P. Namthui & Ajailiu Niumai, Marriage in Zeliangrong Society, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
20. R. Khalothem, Kharam Customary Marriage, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
21. R. D. Samery Anal, Anal Customary Laws on Marriage, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
22. Silla J. Konghay, Some Noted Naga Women, Raisunriang, Fifth Issue, April 2001
23. Khan, Sakina Yusuf, Sorry it's a Stag Party, Times of India, 19th May, 1991.
24. 2001 Census of India.
25. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 1952.
26. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 1980.
27. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 1984.
28. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 1990.

29. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 1995.
30. Government of Manipur, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Election Results, 2000.