

**THE BRAHMANAS AND THE VAISHNAVISATION
OF MANIPUR**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**THE BRAHMANAS AND THE VAISHNAVISATION OF MANIPUR**”, submitted by **Jayanti Thokchom**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of the University, is to the best of my knowledge an original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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DEDICATED
TO
BABA AND MAMA

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CONTENTS

CERTIFICATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER I: Introduction 1-15

CHAPTER II: Migration and Settlement of
the Brahmanas in Manipur 16-46

CHAPTER III: Vaishnavisation of Manipur 47-81

CHAPTER IV: The Vaishnavised Society and the Brahmanas 82-96

CHAPTER V: Conclusion 97-100

MAP: Settlement of the Brahmanas in Manipur in the 19th century 101

APPENDIX I: List of the Brahmanas along with their details as
mentioned in the *Bamon Meihoubarol* 102-119

BIBLIOGRAPHY: 120-126

CHAPTER:I

INTRODUCTION

Although Manipur remained peripheral to the Brahmanical civilization for a very long time, from around the 14th-15th centuries, Brahmanas from the Gangetic mainland started entering Manipur. This led to the spread of the Brahmanical culture in this north-eastern state of India. By the 18th century, Vaishnavism was adopted and declared as the state religion of Manipur.

Vaishnavism centres on the worship of Vishnu and his various manifestations. Vishnu is mentioned in the *Rig Veda* as the sun god.¹ However, it has been pointed out that the religion that developed around the figure of Vishnu is quite different from the Vishnu of the *Rig Veda*. According to Suvira Jaiswal, this new form of Vishnu worship evolved through a process of syncretism with the popular cults and was founded on the doctrine of *bhakti* or loving devotion which distinguished it from its Vedic religion.² In course of time, many schools of Vaishnavism developed under different *acharyas* (philosophers and preachers).

The form of Vaishnavism that is found in Manipur is the Caitanyite or Gaudiya Vaishnavism which originated in Bengal in the 16th century. Gaudiya Vaishnavism came into being as a result of the *bhakti* movement of Caitanya and theological formulations of the Goswamis of Vrindavan.³ It centres on the worship of Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, and his consort Radha. The most important aspect of Caitanyite Vaishnavism was its mode of worship through *kirtana* or singing of devotional songs which did not require the performance of any ritual and could be adopted by members of all social strata.

The pattern of religious and cultural interaction in Hinduism has been studied by many scholars. The process of gradual incorporation of new cults into Hinduism has been

¹ R.G. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism, Saivism and minor religious systems*, Bhandarkar oriental research institute, Poona, 1982, p.47.

² Suvira Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaishnavism*, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967, New Delhi, p.100.

³ Ramakanta Chakrabarty, 'Gaudiya Vaishnavism' in J.S. Grewal ed. *Religious Movements and institutions in Medieval India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p.159.

termed as Sanskritisation and Hinduisation. The theory of Sanskritisation was first formulated by M.N.Srinivas in 1952 in his study of the religion and society of the Coorgs.⁴ He defined Sanskritisation as a process by which a low caste or a tribal group imitates the customs, rituals and beliefs of a high caste, usually a Brahmana, and thereby raises itself in the social hierarchy.⁵

The concept of Sanskritisation, though widely used has also been criticized. It has been pointed out that apart from the Brahmanical model of Sanskritisation, which Srinivas emphasized, many other models of Sanskritisation can be found such as the Kshatriya model of Sanskritisation, as pointed out by D.F.Pocock⁶ and Milton Singer.⁷ Instances of the reverse process of tribalisation have also been observed.⁸

Another critique of Srinivas's theory came from McKim Marriot who, in his study of the village of Kishangarhi, pointed out that Sanskritisation does not take place at the expense of the little traditions, as pointed out by Srinivas, but it merely results in the addition of Sanskritic elements into non Sanskritic cults. He posited that it is not the upward process of Sanskritisation through universalisation of cultural contents but the downward process of parochialisation that constitutes the characteristics creative work of little communities within India's indigenous civilization.⁹

Another approach to an understanding of this process of cultural interaction has been Robert Redfield's model of Great and Little Traditions. According to Redfield, there exists in India a great tradition of the reflective few and a little tradition of the largely unreflective many. The great tradition is cultivated in schools and temples, the little

⁴ M.N.Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritisation and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1989,p.56.

⁵ Ibid.,p.56.

⁶ D.F. Pocock, 'The movement of castes', *Man*, vol.55, may 1955,pp.71-72.

⁷ Milton Singer, 'The social organization of Indian civilization' in *When a great civilization modernises: An anthropological approach to Indian civilization*, Vikas publishing house pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1972(first published in Diogenes,1964), as cited in Kunal Chakrabarti, 1992, 'Anthropological models of cultural interaction and the study of religious process', *Studies in History*, vol 8, no.1, p.131.

⁸ Kunal Chakrabarti, 'Anthropological models of cultural interaction and the Religious Process',p.132.

⁹ McKim Marriot, 'Little Communities in an indigenous Civilisation' in Marriot ed. *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1955, pp.193-200.

tradition keeps itself going in the lives of the unlettered in their village communities.¹⁰ These two traditions are said to be interdependent. He opines that the great tradition gradually developed from primitive thoughts and practices through a very complex process of interaction and underwent much alteration and modification.¹¹

Milton Singer identified the great tradition with Srinivas's Sanskritic Hinduism, which has been defined as the generalized pattern of Brahmanical beliefs and practices which have an all India spread and the local cults with little traditions.¹² According to his understanding of this process of cultural interaction, the great tradition reaches out to the little traditions and absorbs them.

V.Raghavan has shown that the great tradition incorporates many local and regional elements which give it a composite character.¹³ J.F. Staal argued that the oldest and apparently most pivotal forms of the great tradition are often of a type which can be described as non-Sanskritic. These are in fact based upon little traditions and the origins of the great tradition lie in numerous little traditions, widespread throughout India's history and geography. He says, "To say that Sanskritization is a process by which little traditions are assimilated to the great tradition is like saying that a book becomes a library book by adding it to a library."¹⁴

V.Raghavan has listed three characteristics of the process of assimilation of local cultures into the great tradition. First, he says that this great tradition is not a destructive force; it constantly absorbs and conserves the existing practices and customs. Secondly, the process brings about some homogeneity and synthesis of the huge mass of cultural elements in India. Thirdly, the systematization and incorporation of local cultures into the greater tradition resulted in their refinement.¹⁵

¹⁰ Robert Redfield, *Peasant society and culture*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956, p.70.

¹¹ Redfield, 'The Social organization of Tradition', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol.15, no.1, 1955, pp.13-21.

¹² Singer, 'The cultural pattern of Indian civilization', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol.15, no.1, Nov. 1955, pp.23-36.

¹³ V.Raghavan, 'Variety and Pattern of Indian Society', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol.15, no. 4, August, 1956, pp.497-505.

¹⁴ J.F.Staal, 'Sanskrit and Sanskritisation', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.22, no.3, 1963, p.267.

¹⁵ Raghavan, op.cit. p.505.

A.Eschmann, in her study of the Hinduisation of the tribal deities in Orissa, used the concept of great-little traditions. She defined Hinduisation as a continuum operating in both ways between the two poles of tribal religions and the codified or High Hinduism. The tribal religions can be found entirely or almost entirely in tribal communities and High Hinduism is represented in those great temples where worship is performed according to the rules codified in the scriptures. But these two are said to be combined through several intermediary stages within one specific regional tradition.¹⁶ The temple level indicates the attainment of a definite stage of Hinduism although it is not necessarily the end of the process.¹⁷

Eschmann provided a graphic model of the process in which each stage or realm of the process is thought of as an ellipse and thus, has two foci. Here, the ellipses are said to be inter-locked and hence every focus is relevant simultaneously to the two realms. She identified the foci with the main stages of Hinduism: the tribal cults, the temples of sub regional importance and the great temples of regional importance. However, she cautioned against the inherent tendency of oversimplification of such a model and emphasized that the process of Hinduism is a continuum in which the realms marked by the ellipses are not rigidly cut off from each other but the transitions are fluid.¹⁸

Thus, Redfield's model of great-little traditions is more suitable to my theme because the concept has a wider diachronic applicability.¹⁹ However, the model of Sanskritisation can also be used heuristically as related to some of the processes of social and religious transformation in the Indian culture.

With these theoretical concepts at the backdrop, an attempt has been made in this work to study the religious changes in Manipur in the 18th-19th centuries with a focus on the role of Brahmanas in bringing about this transformation.

¹⁶ A.Eschmann, 'Hinduization of tribal deities in Orissa: The Śākta and Śaiva typology', in A. Eshmann, Herman Kulke and Gaya Charan Tripathi ed. *The cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1986, p.82

¹⁷ Ibid,p.83

¹⁸ Ibid,p.84.

¹⁹ Chakrabarti, op.cit.p. 138

Historiography

Histories of Manipur are very recent compared to those of other parts of India. Starting with the British colonial officials, who took interest in studying the lifestyle, culture and beliefs of the people of Manipur, the trend of writing history began slowly in Manipur. The early writings are mostly of an ethnographic nature.

One of the earliest books dealing with the Meiteis, which is the dominant community in Manipur, is T.C.Hodson's *The Meitheis*. It was first published in 1908. It is an ethnographic study of the Meiteis and discusses their lifestyle, habitat, dress and ornaments, laws and customs, religion, traditions and folklore. Talking about religion, the author pointed out that Hinduism is of comparatively recent origin in Manipur. He traced its development from King Garibaniwaj's period in the first half of the 18th century. According to him, Hinduism existed in Manipur only in an exoteric form. He says, "...to the outward observer they seem to have adopted only the festivals, the outward rituals, the caste marks and the exclusiveness of Hinduism while unmindful of its spirit and inward essentials."²⁰

This view has been rejected by Col.J.Shakespear. In his article 'The Religion of Manipur', published in the journal *Folklore* in December 1913, Shakespear discussed the nature of both the traditional and the prevailing mode of Hinduism in Manipur. According to him, the Manipuris can be definitely called Hindus on the basis of their reverence for cows and the caste system if we accept their own definition of caste. He points out that the educated Manipuris were not unaware of the doctrines and philosophies of Hinduism and observes that the spread of Hinduism was slow and was achieved only through compromises with the traditional faith.²¹

Atombapu Sharma was one of the first scholars who took a keen interest in writing the history of Manipur. He was a Sanskrit scholar and he attempted to provide a Vedic antecedent to Manipur. According to him, the Meiteis are none but the Mithis who migrated to this land at a time when Hinduism did not assume its present form. The

²⁰ T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1999, p.96.

²¹ Col.J. Shakespear, 'The Religion of Manipur', *Folklore*, vol.24, No.4, Dec.1913, p.414.

Mithis, according to him, were Kshatriyas who emerged from the dead body of king Nimi, who died due to a curse of sage Vasishtha.²²

A proper and systematic study of the history of Manipur began with Jyotirmoy Roy's *History of Manipur*, which was first published in 1958. It is primarily a study of the political history of Manipur during the colonial period. Her discussion on the pre colonial period is very scanty due to the absence of primary sources. She did not agree with the view of some of the local scholars who tried to trace the history of Manipur from the Vedic period. She had been careful in dealing with the myths and legends of Manipur that have got entwined with its history. However, her study is mainly based on some colonial writings and some secondary sources.²³

L.Iboongohal Singh's *Introduction to Manipur*, published in 1960, is one of the earliest attempts by a local scholar to write a history of Manipur. He has used the colonial writings, the royal chronicle, *Cheitharol Kumpaba* and local secondary texts as his primary source. The book contains a short sketch of the political history of Manipur based on the royal chronicle. He has also discussed the British rule in Manipur. Singh follows Atombapu Sharma's theory of the Aryan origin of the Meities. In this book, legends have been mixed with reliable information. However, the importance of this book lies in its presentation of the various customs and traditions of Manipur.²⁴

Detailed sociological study of the religions of Manipur began with the articles of Kunj Bihari Singh. In his essay, 'Manipur Vaishnavism: A sociological interpretation', he traced the introduction of Vaishnavism in Manipur from the 15th century with the coming of the Brahmanas in Manipur. He argued that they migrated to Manipur because of the religious persecution of the Hindus by the Muslim rulers of Bengal. According to him, Vaishnavism was introduced to Manipur in the 15th century when king Kiyamba received a Vishnu emblem from the king of Pong, although it was only towards the beginning of the 18th century that the spread of Vaishnavism materialized. He observed that

²² Atombabu Sharma, *Meitei Kirtan*, p.157 cited in L.Bhagyachandra Singh's *A Critical Study of the Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis before the Advent of Vaishnavism in Manipur*, Paradise Publishing House, Imphal, 1991, pp.7-8.

²³ Jyotirmoy Roy, *History of Manipur*, Eastlight Book House, Calcutta, 1973.

²⁴ L.Iboongohal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur*, Shri S. Ibochouba Singh, Imphal, 1987.

Vaishnavism arrived in Manipur in three forms and in three successive stages, the Nimandi form of Vaishnavism, the Ramanandi Vaishnavism and the Caitanyaite form of Vaishnavism during king Bhagyachandra's reign in the latter half of the 18th century.²⁵ He argued that *samkirtana* which is a form of worship in Caitanyaite Vaishnavism, was the most important factor that helped in the popularization of Vaishnavism in Manipur. According to him, this form of worship suited the Meiteis because music, dance and drama form significant part of their religious expression. On the basis of his observation of the religious ceremonies and functions of the Meitei Hindus, he concluded that although Bengal was the progenitor of Meitei Vaishnavism, it was modified in Manipur to suit the local conditions and traditions.²⁶

Dr.M.Kirti, in his book titled *Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, has traced the introduction and development of Vaishnavism in Manipur and the influence of Vaishnavism on the culture of Manipur. He has used a large corpus of texts and combined the evidence with those from archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic sources. He drew attention to a copperplate, inscription attributed to King Khongtekcha, who is believed to have ruled Manipur in the 8th century A.D. The inscription mentions the name Hari. On the basis of this, Kirti argued that traces of Vaishnavism in Manipur can be found from the 8th century. It became established in the 15th century during King Kiyamba's reign and was further strengthened during King Charairongba's period in the 18th century. He has divided the religious history of Manipur of the 18th and 19th centuries into two phases. The first phase corresponds to the reigning period of Charairongba and Garibaniwaj during which Nimbarka and Ramanandi forms of Vaishnavism entered Manipur. The second phase corresponds to the reigning period of Kings Bhagyachandra to Chandrakirti when Gaudiya Vaishnavism developed. According to him, the second phase is the most well defined period in the history of Vaishnavism in Manipur and it was during this period that the Narottam Parivar of the Caitanya sect was established as the state religion over the whole of

²⁵ Kunja Bihari Singh, 'Manipur Vaishnavism: A Sociological Interpretation', *Sociological Bulletin*, vol.12(2), 1963, pp. 66-68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.71-72.

Manipur.²⁷ He emphasizes the importance of royal support and the contribution of the Brahmanas in the spread of Vaishnavism in Manipur.²⁸

Saroj Nalini Parratt's *The Religion of Manipur* is both a historical and an anthropological study. She has used the royal chronicle of Manipur as the basis of her research and has combined it with the evidence drawn from a few *puyas* or old Meitei texts. In the first section of her book, she has discussed the traditional beliefs and the various *lais* or deities of the Meitei pantheon along with the myths and legends about them. In the second, she has discussed in detail the various rites, rituals and festivals, especially the traditional festival of *Lai Haraoba*. She pointed out the specificities in the religious observances of the Hindu Meiteis which is peculiar to Manipur.

In the last section of her book, she has discussed the historical development of Hinduism in Manipur. She argued that although migration of the Brahmanas to Manipur started from the 15th century, their number was negligible and their influence was slight before King Charairongba's reign (1697-1709). Therefore their presence could not affect the traditional beliefs. She has pointed out on the basis of linguistic evidence that the copper plate inscription that mentions the name Hari cannot belong to King Khongtekcha's period. Vaishnavism, according to her, developed in Manipur in the 18th century and a synthesis between the old and the new faiths was achieved in the latter half of the 18th and in the 19th centuries with the identification of the traditional deities with the Hindu ones. She observed that many customs of the local tradition have been abandoned while certain features of Hinduism were not adopted during the process of Hinduisation. However, she has not discussed the nature of interaction in the Hinduisation of Manipur.

Gangmumei Kabui, in his landmark *History of Manipur, vol.I*, has attempted to reconstruct the history of Manipur from earliest times till the end of the 18th century. He has used a wide range of literary texts, especially the royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, and the available archaeological sources. He has also dealt with the various myths and legends connected with the Meiteis. Adopting political history as the skeletal

²⁷ M.Kirti Singh, *Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, 1980, p.143.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.179.

framework, the book discusses the evolution and expansion of the Meitei state, the prevailing social and economic organizations and the religion of Manipur. According to Kabui, the Brahmanas had migrated to Manipur even before King Kiyamba's period, but it was during his reign that they were employed to look after the Hindu temples and to serve as astrologers.²⁹ He also discusses the religious and cultural change that occurred in the 18th century with the adoption of Vaishnavism as the state religion. He emphasized the role of a Brahmana called Shanta Das Gossai who is believed to have come to Manipur during the reign of King Garibaniwaz, in the Hinduisation of Manipur.³⁰

L.Bhagyachandra Singh, in his book, *A critical study of the religious philosophy of the Meiteis before the advent of Vaishnavism in Manipur*, has studied the traditional religion of the Meiteis. He rejected the view that they practised animism before Hinduism came to Manipur. While discussing the transition to Hinduism, he argued that conversion of the king to a new religion was possible only because there had already been at least some influence of Vaishnavism on the court circle. He pointed out that the co-existence of Hinduism and the traditional religion was uneasy for some time, but gradually there began the process of assimilation which eventually led to the Hinduisation of the Meitei religion.³¹

N.Vijayalakshmi Brara, in her book, *Politics, Cosmology and Society in India's North East*, has done an anthropological study of the Meitei society. She has discussed the state structure, the belief system, the rites and rituals and the social structure of the Meiteis. In her study, she has analyzed the myths and legends of this community and the manner in which these reflect people's perception of their past. She observed that Vaishnavism particularly influenced the rites and rituals of the Meiteis, and that while Hindu philosophy and the Hindu belief system have influenced the indigenous belief system, it has not supplanted it.³²

²⁹ Gangmumei Kabui, *History of Manipur, vol.I. pre-colonial period*, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991, pp.200-201.

³⁰ Ibid, pp.252-256.

³¹ L.Bhagyachandra Singh, *A critical study of the Meiteis before the advent of Vaishnavism in Manipur*, Paradise Publishing House, Imphal, 1991, pp.149-153

³² N.Vijayalakshmi Brara, *Politics, Society and Cosmology in India's North East*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1998, p.185.

In *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpam*(Origin and migration of Manipuri Brahmins), edited by N. Ibochouba Singh, A.Chtreshwor Sharma and B. Kullachandra Sharma, the migration and settlement of the Brahmanas in Manipur has been discussed. The book contains detailed description of the Brahmana families as given in the texts *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon*.³³ The book is informative rather than analytical.

B.Kullachandra's 'Similarities between Sanamahi and Vaishnavism' highlights the similarities between the traditional faith and Vaishnavism without mentioning whether such similarities existed even before the process of Vaishnavisation had begun.³⁴ Sairam Nilabir, in his article 'Sanskritisation during the rule of Garibaniwaz' has discussed the religious policy of king Garibaniwaz. He focused on the role of Shanta Das Gossai and his influence over the king in bringing about the religious change in Manipur. He has primarily relied on the evidence of *Sanamahi Laikan* and other local traditions without any critical assessment of their historical value.³⁵

Thus, religious change in Manipur has been dealt with by many scholars. While some have concentrated on the historical development of Vaishnavism in Manipur and adoption of different forms of Vaishnavism under different kings, some have studied the changes it brought about in the Meitei society. Most of these writings have focused on the interaction and assimilation of the two religions. The presence of the Brahmanas in Manipur for a long period of time prior to the actual adoption of Vaishnavism has been accepted by all. However, how the people came to accept the new religion needs to be studied.

Primary Sources

The primary sources that have been used in this study are all literary texts. They have been classified under different categories based on the nature of the texts.

³³ A. Chtreshwor Sharma, B. Kullachandra Sharma and N. Ibochouba Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpam* (Origin and Migration of Meitei Bamon), Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1995. p.267.

³⁴ B.Kullachandra Sharma, 'Similarities between Sanamahi between Vaishnavism' in H.Dwijashekhhar ed. *New insights into the Glorious History of Manipur*, Akanksha Publishing house, New Delhi, 2009, pp.430-455.

³⁵ Sairam Nilabir, 'Sanskritisation Process of Manipur under king Garib Niwaz' in H. Dwijashekhhar ed. *New insights into the Glorious History of Manipur*, Akanksha Publishing house, New Delhi, 2009, pp.239-249.

Texts on the Brahmana migrations and settlements

Bamon Meihoubarol- This text was written during King Chandrakirti's reign (1850-1886). The royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumpaba* mentions the composition of this text in 1878. It is one of the important primary sources for the study of the Meitei Brahmanas. The provides a list of the Brahmana families along with their *gotras*, the Vedic *shakha* they specialised in, their *pravara*, their *gura*, their *rishi*, their *shreni*, their *upadhi* or title, their *kula devta* or family god, their totem bird or family bird, names of their forefathers who first settled in Manipur, their place of origin, their place of settlement in Manipur, name of the reigning king at the time of their arrival and the reasons for assigning their surname. This is an unpublished manuscript and is written in old Manipuri script. This text was given to me by B.Kullachandra Sharma in a tabular form and transliterated into Bengali script. Hence, I have not been able to cite page numbers in the footnotes while referring to this text.

Bamon Khunthoklon- This text also deals with the migration of the Brahmanas to Manipur. It furnishes a list of the Brahmanas who came to Manipur during different periods. It also mentions the place of origin of these Brahmana families, their *gotras*, the names of their Meitei wives and the surnames assigned to them. This text has been dated to late 19th- early 20th century. In this study, I have used the version of the text transliterated into Bengali by Yendrembam Munan Singh and published by Yek Salai Press, Imphal. The date of publication of this text has not been mentioned.

Royal Chronicle

Cheitharol Kumpaba- It is the royal chronicle of Manipur. It an indispensable source for the reconstruction of the history of Manipur. The text claims to record the events from 33 A.D. when Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, believed to be the first king of the Meiteis, ascended the throne to the end of royal authority in Manipur with King Buddhachandra's reign in 1955. However, historians believe that it is difficult to distinguish between history and legend for the events prior to the 15th century. The text can be described a royal dairy in which the events are recorded every year by the royal scribes and it covers significant events in social, political, economic, religious and cultural realms.

I have used the Bengali transliteration of the text by L.Ibungohal Singh and N.Khelchandra Singh as well as the English translation of the text by Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt. Parratt's translation brings us only up to the year 1762. There are some minor and negligible variations between these various versions of the texts.

Texts on Hindu laws and customs

Vyavastharanaba- This text deals with various codes regarding rites and rituals, birth and death, pollution and purity, taboos, marriage and divorce and celebration of festivals. It has been pointed out that this text is based on Hindu Smritis, although with some modification. It was composed in the 19th century supposedly on the order of King Raghav Singh (1823-1824). The text is written in Assamese script. The Sanskrit version is followed by its translation in Manipuri. This is an unpublished manuscript.

Texts dealing with traditional faith

Sanamahi Laikan- This text deals with the most important deity of the Meiteis called Sanamahi and the importance of worshipping this deity. It contains an account of the conflict between the traditional scholars and priests and the Brahmanas, the old faith and the new, and the compromise achieved by identifying Sanamahi with Vishnu. This text has been dated to the 18th century.

Texts such as *Khagemba Langjei* and *Sanamahi Laihui* also deal with similar themes.

Texts of the nature of historical biography

Bijoy Panchali- The first part of this text is called *Garibniwaz Charit* and it was composed by Kirtichandra during King Chadrakirti's reign (1851-1886). The second part is entitled *Bhagyachandra Charit* and it was composed by Dina Gunendra in the early part of the 20th century. The first part deals with the career of King Garibaniwaj, particularly his military exploits and encounters with Burma, Cachar and Tripura. It also traces his genealogy from the line of Arjuna, the third Pandava, starting how the kingdom got its name, i.e., Manipur. The text also describes the topography of the valley of Manipur along with the temples and sacred sites located in and around the valley. It mentions the customs and lifestyle of the people and their religious beliefs. The second

part deals with some major events during King Bhagyachandra's reign such as the Burmese invasion, Bhagyachandra's stay in Cachar and then in Assam, the introduction of *Raas leela* and his pilgrimage to Navadwip. This text contains a number of myths and legends that provides an interesting insight to the process of Vaishnavisation of Manipur. The text was originally written in Bengali language. I have used the Manipuri translation by L.Mangi Singh and L.Mani Singh.

Chingthangkomba Maharaj Ganga Chatpa (King Chingthangkomba's journey to Ganga)- This text has been dated to the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The text describes the king's journey to the Ganges, his devotion to lord Krishna and his respect for the Brahmanas.

Shamu Phaba amsung Shri Govindaji Nirupan (capturing of the wild elephant and the installation of Shri Govindai's idol)- This text narrates how King Bhagyachandra proved the genuineness of his royal blood by capturing a wild elephant while he was in exile in Assam and how he was aided by lord Vishnu in this endeavour. It also narrates the events leading to the installation of the idol of lord Govindaji in his capital after regaining his throne from the Burmese. The text further describes how prince Gambhir Singh, the youngest son of Bhagyachandra, along with his two brothers, fought against the Burmese. The text is said to have been composed during King Gambhir Singh's reign (1825-1838).

Khahi Ngamba (conqueror of Khasis) - This text was written by Chingthangkomba Chaobaton under the supervision of Sri Ripujit, the royal minister, during the reign of King Chandrakirti. This text narrates how King Gambhir Singh, father of King Chandrakirti, led his army against the Khasis at the request of the British who were trying to construct a road from Sylhet to Guwahati through Shillong. The text also mentions the king's contribution to the development of Vaishnavism, not only in Manipur but also in Sylhet.

These sources provide us with valuable information on the history of Manipur. But one should be careful in using the information contained in these texts. Most of these texts were written under the royal supervision. Hence they are actually the royalty's view of the events. The primary concern of these texts was to glorify the king and justify his

actions. Myths and legends have been intertwined with history. Moreover, many of these texts were written long after the actual events. However, these are the only available texts that reveal the history of Manipur. The royal chronicle is particularly important because it provides us with dated accounts of the past. Texts like *Bijoy Panchali* have been discarded by some scholars because they contain mythical accounts. Yet, these myths themselves are often highly revealing. The epigraphic, numismatic and other archeological shed little light on my theme. Therefore, these have not been taken into account in this work.

Chapterisation

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first and the fifth are the introductory and the concluding chapter.

In the second chapter, the migration of the various Brahmana families into Manipur and the process of their integration into the Meitei society have been discussed. The discussion is based on the information contained in *Bamon Meihoubarol* (origin of Meitei Bamons), *Bamon Khunthoklon* (settlement of the Meitei Bamons) and *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur.

In the third chapter, the role of the Brahmanas in the Vaishnavisation of Manipur has been discussed. It includes a brief note on the traditional religion of Manipur. However, the emphasis is on the manner in which Vaishnavism was adopted as the state religion. The role of the Brahmanas in the royal court and the extent of their influence have been discussed in the light of the evidence contained in the royal chronicle and other literary sources, such as *Chingthangkhomba Maharaj Ganga Chatpa*, *Garibaniwaz Charit* and *Bhagyachandra Charit*. The chapter discusses the relationship of the Brahmanas with the local priests, the manner in which the Hindu myths were grafted on local Meitei legends, the process of identification of the Meitei pantheon with the Hindu gods and goddesses and the traditional festivals with the Hindu festivals as part of the process of Vaishnavisation. It also shows how the new religion was popularized with royal support.

The fourth chapter will look into the changes in the social structure of the Meiteis after the adoption of Vaishnavism and the role of the Brahmanas in regulating the socio-religious life of the people with the formation of a body of Brahmanas called Brahma Sabha and the codification of the rules of conducts for socio-religious observances.

CHAPTER:II

Migration and Settlement of the Brahmanas in Manipur

There has been a continuous process of human migration and settlement in Manipur that produced far reaching impact on the socio-religious life of the people. There have been migrations from the Eastern side of the state as well as from the Western side throughout its history. The people who migrated from the eastern side are called *Nongpok Haram* (Easterners) and those from the Western side are called *Nongchup Haram* (Westerners). The Easterners included the Shans, a combination of the Chinese and Burmese, while the Westerners included those people who came from the Indian side, primarily from Assam, Bengal and Tripura.¹ These people, in course of time, have adopted the culture and lifestyle of Manipur while introducing new cultures in the land, thereby creating a composite culture that we see today. Manipur can be called the melting pot of various cultures. One such group that played a major role in bringing about a profound change in the socio-religious life of the people was the Brahmanas.

In this chapter, the coming of the various Brahmana families in Manipur during different periods of time, their integration into the Meitei society and the probable reasons for their migration will be discussed, based on the information contained in *Bamon Meihoubarol* (Origin of Manipuri Brahmanas), *Bamon Khunthoklon* (Settlement of the Manipuri Brahmanas) and *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur.²

The coming of the Brahmanas in Manipur can be traced from the 15th century, as mentioned in the texts *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon*. Since then, there has been a gradual and continuous process of migration of the Brahmanas in Manipur.

However, some scholars suggest a much later date for the presence of the Brahmanas in Manipur. According to Yendrembam Munan, "These 'foreigners' (Meeramcha) and their descendents who came during and after King Kiyamba's reign were made Brahmanas

¹ M. Kirti Singh, *Religious development in Manipur in the 18th and 19th centuries*, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, 1980, p.18

² The Brahmanas are called *Bamons* in Manipur. The word is probably derived from the Assamese word '*Bamun*' for the Brahmanas.

only during King Pamheiba's (Garibaniwaj) reign(1709-1748) and there was no Brahmanas before his reign in Manipur".³

On the other hand, there are scholars who believe that Brahmanas were present in Manipur even before the 15th century. According to Gangmumei Kabui, there were Brahmanas even before Kiyamba's period, but they were completely absorbed in the local population. He says that those Brahmanas who arrived during King Kiyamba's period (1467-1508) are the ancestors of the later Manipuri Brahmanas and they were employed by the king to be the priests of the temples.⁴

Although evidence of such early dates for the arrival of the Brahmanas is lacking, one cannot completely rule out such possibilities. However, what is more important is not the mere presence of the Brahmanas but their recognition in society and the attempts made by various agencies to integrate and assimilate them into the society. This happened from Kiyamba's reign. Most of the scholars believe that the Brahmana migration to Manipur started from the 15th century. Both *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon* mention King Kiyamba's period as the earliest date for the arrival of the Brahmanas in Manipur. In *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur, Brahmana or *Bamon* is mentioned for the first time in 1516 during the reign of Lamkiyamba (1512-1523). It says, "One Bamon from Tekhao (Assam) arrived."⁵ Before King Garibaniwaj's period there are a few references to the movement of the Brahmanas and ascetics to and from Manipur in the royal chronicle. It is also mentioned that in 1707 the *Cheithaba* was Brahmana called Bamon Mani.⁶ *Cheithaba* system is a way of reckoning the year in which each year was named after an individual and he is referred to as *Cheithaba*.⁷ He has to bear all the misfortunes that would happen to the king and the state in that year and in return he would get tax free land and would be exempted from certain taxes. For a person to become a *Cheithaba*, his family must have been in Manipur for quite a long period of time. Hence, one cannot accept the view that there was no Brahmana in

³ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.1

⁴ Gangmumei Kabui, *History of Manipur*, vol.1, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991. pp.199-200.

⁵ L. Ibungohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Imphal, 2005. p.22.

⁶ Op cit. p. 70

⁷ Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpapa*, Routledge, London, 2005, pp.2-3

Manipur before King Garibaniwaj's period. Thus, it can be safely stated that they started coming to Manipur at least from the 15th century.

Let us now discuss the reference to the Brahmana families during the rule of different kings as mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon*.

King Kiyamba (1467-1508)

Bamon Meihoubarol mentions six Brahmana families that arrived in Manipur during this period while *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions 18 Brahmana families. The six families mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* are *Adhikarimayum*, *Kakchingtabam*, *Phurailatpam*, *Sijagurumayum* and *Takhenchangbam*.

Adhikarimayum- Adhikarimayum is derived from two words, *Adhikari* which is an administrative post and *mayum* which means family or lineage. The ancestor of this lineage who first settled in Manipur was Gangacharan Bannerji. He is said to have arrived from Kharadah in Bengal. His *gotra* was Bharadhwaja and his Vedic specialisation *Sama Veda*. He belonged to the *Gauda Brahmana* category and the sub-category mentioned is Varendra. His family god or *kula devta* is Shrigopalji. This family is said to have settled in the Brahmapur Bamon Leikai (locality)⁸ at the time of the composition of the text, i.e., in the 19th century. The reason for giving this surname is mentioned in the text as 'for being a judge'.⁹ *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that he married a *Haokei*¹⁰ girl called Tingbi.¹¹

It is unlikely that this family got their present surname during this period. No such post is mentioned before the 18th century. It is most likely that one of his descendents became an *Adhikari*, an official of the *Brahma Sabha*, a body of the Brahmanas that came into existence by the early 19th century, and later called the family Adhikarimayum. Thus, it can be said that they acquired the present surname only after the process of Hinduisation of the state had begun.

⁸ This area is located in the Imphal east district.

⁹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

¹⁰ *Hao* means hillmen or hill tribe in Manipuri and *keis* are originally slaves of the kings whose function was to provide and pound the rice of the king's household. They belong to the lower strata of the society. The text must be referring to a kei woman belonging to a hill tribe.

¹¹ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.2.

Kakchingtabam- Kackchingtabam is derived from two words, Kackching which is a place in Manipur and *taba mapham*, the place where one is found. The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Ghanaram Tantradhar. He is said to have come from Kulingram in present Bangladesh. He belonged to Bharadhwaja *gotra* and specialized in *Sama Veda*. He was a *Rahri Shreni* Brahmana. His family god was Rudradeva Thakur. Kakchingtabams are said to have settled in Brahmapur Bamon leikai when *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written. The text says that they were given this surname because they first settled in a place called Kakching when they arrived in Manipur.¹² *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that he married a Mayang Heikhong woman called Kumu.¹³

Leihaothabam- Leihaothabam means the place where *leihao* (Champaca flower) is planted. Names of two forefathers, Ganeshgiri and Damudar Mukherji, are given as the ancestors of this lineage. They are said to have come from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. The *gotra* of this family is mentioned as Bharadhwaja and they are said to have specialized in *Sama Veda*. They belonged to *Uttari Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family was settled in Yaiskul Chingakham Leikai in Imphal at the time of the composition of the text *Bamon Meihoubarol*. The text says that they were given the surname Leihaothbam since they had once offered *leihao* to the king.¹⁴ *Bamon khunthoklon* mentions that Ganeshgiri married a local woman called Toubul Chanu Haobi.¹⁵

Phurailatpam- The ancestor of this lineage is mentioned as Subhi Narrayan Chatterji from Nandagram, Uttar Pradesh. Their *gotra* was Kashyapa and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. Their family god or *kula devata* was Vishnu Thakur. They belonged to the *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family was settled at Uripok in Imphal when the text *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written. This text mentions that they were given this surname since they were friends of the Pong or Shan king. According to *Bamon Khunthoklon*, Subhi Narrayan married a Haokei woman called Thoinu.¹⁶

¹² *Bamon Meihoubarol*

¹³ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.2

¹⁴ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

¹⁵ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.3

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.1

Phurailatpam is derived from three words, *phura* which means a brick structure, *lai*, deity and *latpam*, the place where worship takes place. Shubhi Narayan is mentioned in legends as the first Brahmana who started Vishnu worship in Manipur.¹⁷ This has led some scholars to suggest that Vishnu worship started in Kiyamba's period after he received the emblem of Vishnu from the king of Pong (Shan) and that the present Vishnu temple at Lammangdong (present Bisnupur) in Manipur was built by him. However, it has been pointed out that there was no brick structure in Manipur before King Khagemba's reign.¹⁸ Hence, the idea that Vishnu worship started from King Kiyamba's period in a brick temple cannot be accepted. Also, this surname must have been assigned only after bricks came to be used in construction, i.e., after the 16th century.

Sijagurumayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Bhattapur Thakur from Gujarat. The family's *gotra* was Maudgalya and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. Their family god was Ram. They are said to have belonged to *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. They were settled in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai when *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written. The text mentions that they were given this surname for being the *guru* of Maharani Gomti.¹⁹ *Bamon Khunthoklon* says that he married a *kei* woman from Sekta called Maimubi.²⁰

Sijagurumayum is derived from three words. The term *shija* refers to the wife of a prince or the queen. *Guru* means a teacher and *mayum* means family or lineage in Manipuri. Thus, Sijagurumayum literally means family of the *guru* of *shija*. According to N. Ibochouba Singh, A. Chitreshwor Sharma and B. Kullachandra Sharma, Maharani Gomti was the queen of King Garibaniwaj and one of the descendents of Bhattapur Thakur must have been the *guru* of queen Gomti.²¹ Therefore, they must have got the surname much later in the 18th century. None of the texts mention the surname of this family prior to their getting the present one.

¹⁷ *Bijoy Panchali* vol. 2, p.20.

¹⁸ L. Kunjeshwori Devi, *Archeology of Manipur*, Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p.109

¹⁹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

²⁰ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.2

²¹ A. Chitreshwor Sharma, B. Kullachandra Sharma and N. Ibochouba Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongl Hourakpham* (Origin and Migration of Meitei Bamon), Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1995. p.267.

Takhengchangbam- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Hari Bidyalankar. He is said to have come from Takhel (Tripura is known to the Manipuri as Takhel in olden days). The family's *gotra* was Kaushika and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. This family worshipped Shri Madana Mohana. They are said to have belonged to *Dakhin Rahri Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family settled at Khwairamband in Imphal at time of the composition of *Bamon Meihoubarol*. It has been mentioned that they were given this surname because they were the first Brahmanas to have gone to Takhel or Tripura.²²

Takelchangbam is derived from the word Takhel(n), which means Tripura, and *changba*, to go or enter. It is possible that a descendent of this family must have gone to Tripura as a messenger. *Cheitharol Kumapaba* mentions some such incidents. For instance, it is mentioned that in the year 1705, two Brahmanas, who had gone to Tripura, came back to Manipur.²³ *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that Hari Bidyalankar married a Tangkham *kei* woman called Maimubi.²⁴

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These are the six families whose ancestors are said to have come to Manipur during King Kiyamba's period, as recorded in *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon*. However, *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that 12 Brahmanas came during this same period. They definitely were the first or the earliest batch of the Brahmanas that came to Manipur, got married to local women, settled there and were given local surnames later.

King Nongeenphaba (1523-1528)

Bamon Meihoubarol does not mention any migration of the Brahmanas during his reign, but *Bamon Khunthoklon* gives the names of two Brahmanas who came during this period.

Hidangmayum Kharungbam- The name of the Brahmana who was the ancestor of this lineage is not mentioned but he is said to have come from the northern side of Manipur

²² *Bamon Meihoubarol*

²³ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, 2005, p. 69.

²⁴ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.3



and married a girl from Khurkhul, a *loi*²⁵ inhabited area. Neither his place of origin nor other detail of the Brahmana is given.²⁶

Hidangmayum means family of hidang and hidang is an administrative post. Kharungbam is derived from the word kharung which means a large pot. *Bam* or *pam* or *pham* is added as suffix to a word to indicate the place related to the word. However, it is not clear why this particular surname was given.

Arambam- *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that one Ganaka (astrologer) called Maniram came to Manipur and he married a Haochongpan (settlers of hill are called *hao* in by the Meiteis) girl called Ngoubi.²⁷ His place of origin is not given. According to A. Chitreshwor Sharma, B. Kullachandra Sharma and N. Ibochouba Singh, Maniram's descendents merged with the Arambam family.²⁸ Arambams are not Brahmanas but are one of the *Nongchup Harams* or Westerners.

King Chalamba (1545-1562)

Bamon Khunthoklon mentions two Brahmanas who came during this period, while *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions only one.

Kanaujimayum- Both the texts mention this family. The name of the forefather of this family is Krishnacharan Tewari. His native place was Kanauj. His *gotra* was Bharadhwaja and he specialized in Sam Veda. He is said to have been a *Kanyakubja Brahmana of Uttari Shreni*. The family deity was Shalagrama Chakra. The family is said to have settled at Khurai in Imphal in the 19th century when the text *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written. The text mentions that their surname was Kanaujimayum as their place of origin was Kanauj.²⁹

Chandrashyam mayum- This surname is not mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol*. *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that Govindagiri was the forefather of this family and he is said to

²⁵ *Loi* means subdued or subjugated. It refers to the group of people who, having refused to integrate into the Meitei society under Ningthouja clan, were exiled and made to pay tributes to the king. In course of time, it became a form of punishment. They belong to the lower strata of the society.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

²⁸ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, p.84.

²⁹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

have married a local woman.³⁰ However no detail about the woman he married or his place of origin or *gotra* is given. Also, it cannot be determined why this surname was given to his family. Chandrashyam mayum means lineage of Chandrashyam. But it is not known whether Chandrashyam was a historical figure of this lineage or it represented something else.

King Mungyamba (1562-1597)

Both *Bamon Khunthoklon* and *Bamon Meihoubarol* mention only one migration during this period.

Loubuktongbam- Loubuktongbam is derived from the word loubuktongba which means to sit (*tongba*) in a paddy field (*loubuk*). The name of the ancestor of this family was Harihar Bhattacharya. He is said to have migrated from Shantipur, Gaudadesha (Bengal). The family's *gotra* was Shandilya and they specialised in *Sama Veda*. The family is said to have belonged to *Uttari Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. Their family god was Shesha Ananti. The family was settled in Yumnam Leikai in Imphal at the time of the composition of *Bamon Meihoubarol*. It has been said that they were given this surname because they first settled in a field, possibly a paddy field (*loubuk*), when they arrived in Manipur.³¹ This surname is mentioned in the royal chronicle. The chronicle says, "Bamon Loubuktongbam Gaovindamadhop was killed by his servant..."³²

King Khagemba (1597-1652)

Bamon Khunthoklon mentions 10 Brahmanas, while *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions eight who came and settled in Manipur during this period and became the ancestors of eight families.

³⁰ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.4

³¹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

³² Singh and Singh ed., *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.175

Aribam Bishnulatpam-The forefather of this family is mentioned as Kalinath Bannerji from Baranagar, Gaudadesha (Bengal) in the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, while the *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions him as one Manimath.³³ *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions his *gotra* as Vasishtha and he is said to have specialized in *Sama Veda*. The family belonged to *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. The family god was Vangshivadana. *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that they were given this surname because they worshipped Vishnu Thakur. It is possible that this family served a Vishnu temple and got the surname Aribam B(V)ishnulatpam which means where Vishnu is worshipped. This family was settled in Sagolband in Imphal when the text *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written.³⁴

Aribam Tampaklailatpam- Both *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon* mention the name of the ancestor of this lineage as Adinath Mukherji from Baranagar, Bengal. *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions his *gotra* as Vatsya and he specialized in *Sama Veda*. He is said to have belonged to *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. The family god was Vangshivadana. *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that they got this surname since they worshipped Vrindavanachandra. This family is said to have settled at Brahmapur Bamon Leikai (in Imphal) by the 19th century.³⁵ According to B. Kullachandra, Vrindavanachandra or Shrikrishna is also called *Tampak lai* (god of the valley).³⁶ Thus they obtained the surname Tampaklailatpam, which means where *Tampak lai* is worshipped. This surname has been mentioned in the royal chronicle which says that in the year 1784, Bamon Tampaklailatpam gave birth to a child with three heads.³⁷

Hidangmayum- Hidangmayum means family of hidang. The name of the ancestor is given as Benanath Mukherjee from Kharadah, Bengal. The family's *gotra* was Bharadhwaja and they specialized in *Sama Veda*. The family god was Shri Narayana. They are said to have belonged to *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. The reason for giving this surname was mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* as 'for being a *Hidang*'. This family is said to have settled at Khwairamband in Imphal at the time of the

³³ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.6

³⁴ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

³⁵ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

³⁶ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, p.173.

³⁷ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.142.

composition of this text³⁸. *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that he married a Kakching woman called Pinni.³⁹

According to B. Kullachandra, the *Hidang*⁴⁰ mentioned in the text possibly refers to the post called *Hidang* of *Shrigovindaji Loishang* (institute or organization of the Shrigovindaji) and it came into existence only from the 18th century.⁴¹ There are references to *Bamon Hidang* in *Cheitharol Kumpaba* in King Garibaniwaj's period and also later. Thus, one of the descendents of Adinath Mukherji must have occupied this post and hence obtained the surname.

Kongbalailatpam- Kongbalailatpam means the place where the *lai* or deity of Kongba (an area in Imphal) is worshipped. *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the forefather of this lineage as Nordhuram Mishra from Navadip, in Bengal. He is said to have married a Khetri Sanjimayum woman called Heri.⁴² *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that the family's *gotra* was Shandilya and their Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. Their family god is Shridhar Chakra Shalagram. They are said to have belonged to *Vaidika Shreni* of *Gauda Brahmana* category. *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that they were given this surname because they had settled along the Kongba river. This must have been their area of settlement when they arrived in Manipur, although they were said to have settled in Singjamei in Imphal in the 19th century.

Samulailatpam- The name of the forefather of this lineage is given as Shrinath Mukherji from Mukherjigaon, Gauradesh (Bengal). The family's *gotra* was Bharadhwaja and Vedic specialization *Sama Veda*. The family god was Shalagrama. They are said to have belonged to *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that this surname was given to them because they were the worshippers of Ganesha. *Bamon Khunthoklon* says that he married a girl from Yairipok (an area in

³⁸ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

³⁹ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.5.

⁴⁰ *Hidang* is an administrative position next to Hanjaba. Hanjaba is a superintendent of a department in the administration.

⁴¹ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, p.301

⁴² *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.5

Imphal East).⁴³ This family is said to have settled in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in Imphal in the 19th century.⁴⁴

Samu means elephant, *lai* means god and *latpam* means place of worship. Thus, this family must have been worshippers of the elephant headed Ganesha.

Sanglakpam- The name of the ancestor of this lineage is mentioned as Jagannath Acharya from Kulingram, Bengal. The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. Their family god was Gopinatha. They are said to have belonged to *Uttari Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family settled at Kakwa in Imphal in the 19th century. They were given the surname 'for being a Sanglakpa in Shri Govindaji temple.'⁴⁵ *Sanglakpa* is the post of the keeper of the Shrigovindajee temple. Shri Govindajee's temple was built in King Bhagyachandra's period in the second half of the 18th century. Hence, the surname must have been given not earlier than the 18th century.

Sijagurumayum -*Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the name of the forefather of this lineage as Adinath Mukherji from Orrissa desha (Orissa). The family's *gotra* was Vatsya and the Vedic specialization *Sama Veda*. The family god was mentioned as Vangshivadana. They are said to have belonged to the *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. They were settled in Leinam khul area in Manipur by the 19th century. The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that the surname was given to them because 'they are the newly arrived ones.'⁴⁶ *Bamon Khunthoklon* does not refer to this surname under King Khagemba's reign.

However, this reason does not relate to the surname. According to B. Kullachandra, this family must have merged with the family of Sijagurumayum, whose forefather arrived during king Kiyamba's period. Thus, they justify the title 'the newly arrived ones.'⁴⁷ However it is not clear why they were merged in the surname, as the *gotras* do not match.

⁴³ Ibid., p.5

⁴⁴ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁴⁵ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁴⁶ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁴⁷ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, p.271

Thongratabam- The name of the ancestor of this lineage is Benninath (Panninath) Mukherji from Ghogholpara, Assam. The family's *gotra* was mentioned as Bharadhwaja and the Vedic specialisation *Sama Veda*. The family god was Shrinarayana. They are said to have belonged to the *Vaidika Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family was settled in Brahmapur Bamon leikai at the time of the composition of *Bamon Meihoubarol*. The reason for assigning this surname, as mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* is 'they first settled near the Singjamei bridge (*thong*)'.⁴⁸

Bamon Khunthlon mentions two more migrations in this period. One relates to the ancestor of the family of Vishnulatapam called Vrajananada from Calcutta, who married a girl called Hongbi from Charangpat in Imphal. The other is referred to as a brother of a *yogi* who came from Gauradesha (Bengal) and whose family was merged with Loubuktabam.⁴⁹ No other detail about these families has been mentioned.

King Paikhomba (1666-1697)

Both *Bamon Khunthoklon* and *Bamon Meihoubarol* mention the entry of six Brahmanas into Manipur during this period.

Bachaspatimayum- The name of the forefather of this lineage is given as Benarashi Mukund from Gujarat. The family's *gotra* was Kashyapa and their Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Bhuttabehari. They are said to have belonged to *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family was settled in Uripok in Imphal in the 19th century. According to *Bamon Meihoubarol*, the reason for assigning this surname to them is 'for holding the post of Vachaspati'.⁵⁰

Bachaspati is a position in Brahma Sabha, a body of the Brahmanas that came into existence in the 19th century. However, the date can go back to the 18th century during King Garibaniwaj's reign when *Bamon Loishang* or the organization of the Brahmanas

⁴⁸ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁴⁹ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.5

⁵⁰ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

came into being. Thus, one of the descendents of Benarashi Mukund must have occupied the post of Vachaspati and obtained the surname Bachaspatimayum.

Brahmacharimayum- Brahmacharimayum means lineage of Brahmachari. *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that the forefather of this family was Mishra Damudar from Prayag, Uttar Pradesh. However, *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that the name of the forefather was Prabhu Bishnuram, a Brahmachari. The family's *gotra* was Shandilya and the Vedic specialisation was *Sama Veda*. The family god is Balabhadra. They are said to have belonged to the Kanyakubja Brahmanas and their *shreni* was *Dakhin*. *Bamon Meihoubarol* the reason for assigning the surname was that the ancestor was a Brahmachari'. This family is said to have resided in Shripur in the 19th century.⁵¹

Gurumayum Angomlailatpam- Gurumayum means family of the guru and Angomlailatpam means the place where the deity (*lai*) of Angom⁵² was worshipped. The name of the ancestor of this family is mentioned as Motiram Dube from Nandagram, Brindavan, Uttar Pradesh The family *gotra* was Shandilya and Vedic specialization was *Sam Veda*. The family deity was Shri Vishnu Thakur. They are said to have belonged to *Uttari Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. The reason for assigning this surname as mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* is that the family had been the guru or religious perceptor of Angom and the priest of the Angom's temple. This family is said to have been residing in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in the 19th century.⁵³

Hangoibam- According to *Bamon Meihoubarol*, the name of their ancestor was Bichitrapuri Thakur from Mathura. His *gotra* was Kashyapa and Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was mentioned as Radha Madhava. This family is said to have belonged to the *Uttari Shreni* of the Mathura Brahmanas. They were settled in Wangkhei in Imphal when the *Bamon Meihoubarol* was written. The reason given for assigning the surname is that 'they arrived from Mathura'.⁵⁴ However, the reason given does not relate to the surname. *Hangoi* means frog and one cannot see the connection between the surname and the place of their origin.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Angom is one of the seven clans or *salais* of Manipur

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

According to *Bamon Khunthoklon*, the ancestor of this family came to Manipur during King Charairongba's reign (1697-1709). He is said to have married a *kei* woman called Khongonbi.⁵⁵ There is no indication in this text too as to why this surname was given to this family.

Heikakaksimayum- Jaikrishna Chakrabarti was the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Magadhgao. The *gotra* of this family was Bharadhwaja and the Vedic specialisation was *Sama Veda*. The family god is mentioned as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the Vaishnava preacher of Bengal. He is said to have belonged to *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. The reason given for the surname is that the family had first settled in Heikaksi village in Manipur.⁵⁶ By the 19th century, they were residing in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in Imphal. *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions that Jaikrishna Chakrabati married a local woman from Heishangkhong.⁵⁷

Shrimayum- Shri Ramdhar Chatterji from Gujarat is mentioned as the ancestor of this lineage. The family *gotra* was Kashyapa and specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. The family deity was Gopalji. They are said to have belonged to the *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. This family was settled in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai by the 19th century. The surname is said to have derived from the title Shri of the ancestor.⁵⁸

King Charairongba (1697-1709)

King Charairongba's reign was crucial for the spread Hinduism in Manipur. He was the first Hindu king of Manipur and was initiated in the new religion in 1707 A.D.⁵⁹ *Cheitharol Kumpaba* is replete with references to the building of temples of Kailika, Krishna etc., in his period. There are also references to Brahmanas and ascetics migrating

⁵⁵ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.7

⁵⁶ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁵⁷ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.6

⁵⁸ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁵⁹ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.68

to the state. For instance, it is mentioned that in 1704, 22 people led by one Gossai Muni arrived in Manipur.⁶⁰

However, the conversion to Hinduism was limited to the king and some members of the royal family only and the new religion had to be accepted and followed by the people in general. According to *Bamon Meihoubarol*, maximum number of Brahmanas came to Manipur during this period. The names of as many as 10 Brahmanas are recorded in the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, while the *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions the names of 13.

Choudhurimayum- Jagannath Choudhuri is mentioned as the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Shwetagangapuri in Orissa. The *gotra* of this family was Kashyapa and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Jatayu Pakhiraj. They belonged to, the *Uttari Shreni* of the *Utkala Brahmanas*. The family is said to have been residing in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in the 19th century. Their surname was derived from their title Choudhuri.⁶¹

Guruaribam- Guruaribam means old (*ariba*) lineage of the guru. The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Brindavan Sharma. He is said to have come from Orissadesha (Orissa). The *gotra* of this family was Kashyapa and they specialised in the *Sama Veda*. Their family god was Tulasi Chaura. They belonged to *Dakhin Rahri Shreni*. They are said to have given this surname for being the *guru* of King Charairongba.⁶² This family was residing in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in the Imphal East in the 19th century.

Guruaribam mayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Banamali Acharya. His is said to have come from Shvetganga Tulasighat in Orissa. The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and they specialized in *Yajur-Veda*. Their family god was Jagannath Thakura. They belonged to *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Vaidika Brahmanas*. The surname was given to the family for being the guru of king Charairongba.⁶³ However, even the surname Guruaribam mentioned earlier was given for the same reason. *Bamon*

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.68.

⁶¹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Ibid

Khunthoklon mentions that Banamali Acharya came with his wife.⁶⁴ This family is said to have been settling down in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai by the 19th century.

Hazarimayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was given as Bhagirath Thakur who came from Krishnanagar, Gaudadesha (Bengal). The *gotra* of the family was Shandilya and the Vedic specialization *Sama Veda*. Their family god was Narasingha. They are said to have belonged to the *Dakhin Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. They were given this surname 'for leading one thousand (*hazar*) people'.⁶⁵ This family was settled in Khwairamband in Imphal in the 19th century.

B.Kullachandra Sharma says that a post called *Hazari* (superintendent) of a *leikai* (locality) or a *pana* (administrative unit) came into being from King Garibaniwaj's period (1709-1747). One of the descendents of Bhagirath must have been in this post and hence got the surname Hazarimayum.⁶⁶

Laimayum⁶⁷ - Laimayum means god's lineage or family. Bamdev Pandit was the name of the ancestor of this family. He is said to have come from Kharddah in Bengal. The *gotra* of the family was Gautam and the Vedic specialization *Sama Veda*. Their family god was Bijay Govinda. They are said to have belonged to *Rahri Shreni*. *Bamon Meihoubarol* does not mention anything about the reasons for assigning this surname. This family was residing in Langthabal (in the outskirts of Imphal) at the time of the composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

Laimayum- The names of three Brahmanas are associated with this surname. They are Surath, Dashrath and Udhav. According to *Bamon Khunthoklon*, Surath and Dashrath became ganaka (astrologer) and Laimayums are the descendents of Udhav who married a Haochonpan girl called Ngoubi.⁶⁸ Their place of origin was Takhel (Tripura). The family *gotra* was Gautama and Vedic specialization *Sama Veda*. Their family god was Radha Madhava. They belonged to the *Gauda Dakhin Shreni*. This family was settled at

⁶⁴ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.8

⁶⁵ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁶⁶ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, pp.294-95

⁶⁷ There is a reference to the surname Laimayum in *Cheitharol Kumapaba* in the year 1782. Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumapaba*, p. 137.

⁶⁸ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.8

Thangmeiband Polem Leikai in Imphal at the time of the composition of the text. According to this text, they were given this surname because they performed the *puja*.

Laipubam- *Bamon Meihoubarol* does not mention the name of the ancestor of this lineage but says that he came from Baddha Kanchangarh in Takhel (Tripura). *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions two Brahmanas in connection with this surname, Nishiram and Bharataru. Bharataru is said to have married a Phayeng girl called Shitu and his family was absorbed in Laipubam. Nishiram is said to have come with an idol. He is said to have married a *Kei* girl called Maipakpi.⁶⁹

Bamon Meihoubarol mentions that the *gotra* of this family was Shandilya and their Vedic specialization was *Sam Veda*. Their family god was Jagannatha. They are said to have belonged to *Gauda Dakhin Shreni*. The family was residing in Brahmapur Bamon leikai when *Bamon Meihoubarol* was composed in the 19th century. They acquired this surname because they arrived with the idol of Jagannatha.⁷⁰ Laipubam is derived from the word *laipuba* which means one who carries the deity. Thus, they obtained the surname for coming with the idol of Jagannatha.

Leikhunchangbam- Jagannath Bhatt was the name of the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have arrived from Benurgao in Badarpur, Uttar Pradesh. The *gotra* of the family was Kaushika and the Vedic specialization *Yajur-Veda*. They are said to have settled at Khangabok in the Thoubal district of Manipur at the time of the composition of the text *Bamon Meihoubarol*.⁷¹ *Bamon Khunthoklon* does not mention this surname. Neither the name of the family god nor an explanation for the surname was provided. Leikhunchangbam is derived from the words *leikhun* which means a hole in the ground and *changba* means to go or enter. It might also mean hiding under the ground but nothing be said as to why this surname was assigned.

Manoharmayum- Manoharmayum means lineage of Manohar. The name of the ancestor of this family was Manohar Thakur. He is said to have come from Nadia in Bengal but

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.8

⁷⁰ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁷¹ Ibid.

was described as Kanyakubja Brahmana. He married a *Hao* girl called Maitekpi.⁷² The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Gopaldeva. The surname is said to have derived from the name of the ancestor. This family was residing at Khurai in Imphal when *Bamon Meihoubarol* was being written.

Mathurabasimayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage is not mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol*. He is said to have come from Mathura. The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and the Vedic specialization *Yajur-Veda*. Their family god is Radha Madhava. They belong to the *Uttari Shreni* of the *Gauda Brahmana* category. Their surname is said to have derived from the place of their origin. The family was located in Brahmapur Bamon leikai when the text *Bamon Meihoubarol* was being composed. *Bamon Khunthoklon* does not mention this family.

King Garibaniwaj (1709-1747)

It was in this period that the new religion, i.e. Vaishnavism, was declared the state religion and was imposed on the people of Manipur. There are many instances in the royal chronicle that suggest religious persecution by the king. There are also many references in the *Cheitharol Kumpaba* to the coming of the ascetics i.e., Brahmanas to Manipur. One interesting entry in *Cheitharol Kumpaba* is that in the year 1730, on the 3rd of Kalen (April/May), Thursday, five Brahmanas reached Manipur carrying cooked rice from Jagannatha.⁷³ *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the entry of five Brahmanas during this period who settled in Manipur and became the ancestors of 5 different families, while *Bamon Khunthoklon* mentions ten Brahamans who came during this period.

Aribam Sagollailatpam- Aadinath was the ancestor of this lineage is given as Aadinath. He is said to have come from Kanyakubja. The *gotra* of the family was Parashwar and the Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. The family god was Mahprabhu Gouranga. They belonged to the *Gauda Dakhin Shreni*. The reason for assigning the surname,

⁷² *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.8

⁷³ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.98

according to the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, was that they had newly arrived in Manipur. However, this does not explain the surname. *Sagol* means horse, *lai* means god and *latpam* means the place where it is worshipped. According to A. Chitreshwor Sharma, B. Kullachandra Sharma and N. Ibochouba Singh, Aadinath or one of his descendents must have worshipped Ashwa devata (god of horse) or Marjit, as he is known, and hence got the surname.⁷⁴

According to *Bamon Khunthoklon*, the ancestor of this family came during King Khagemba's period.⁷⁵ The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that the family was settled at Uripok at the time of the composition of the text.

Brahmacharimayum Anoubam- Paramananda Brahmachari is mentioned as the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Baranagar, Gouradesh (Bengal). The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and the Vedic specialization is *Sama Veda*. They belonged to *Gauda Dakhin Shreni*. The family god was Shri Shalagrama. According to the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, they were given this surname because they were the ones who had recently arrived in Manipur.⁷⁶ This family must have had merged with the family of Brahmacharimayum who had come during the reign of King Paikhomba (1666-1697). Thus their surname included the word *Anoubam* which is derived from the word *Anouba*, meaning new. This family is said to have been residing in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai at the time of the composition of the text *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

Gati (goti) mayum- According to *Bamon Khunthoklon*, the ancestor of this lineage was Sarangi who came from Nepal to Manipur during King Kiyamba's reign. He is said to have married a *Kei* woman called Maimubi.⁷⁷ However, the *Bamon Meihoubarol* states that he arrived in King Graibaniwaz's period. The name of the ancestor was Kaiba Thakur Tewari who came from Shantipur. The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Radha Krishna. The *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that Kaiba took *gati* or all possible means to take the King's daughter

⁷⁴ Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham* , p.193

⁷⁵ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.6

⁷⁶ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

⁷⁷ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.2

to the Ganges and hence was given the surname Gatimayum. This family is said to have resided in Khwiramband when the *Bamon Meihoubarol* was composed.

Hanjabam - Both the *Bamon Khunthoklon* and the *Bamon Meihoubarol* state that the name of the ancestor of this lineage was Sarbananda Bannerji and that he came from Kanyakubja. According to the *Bamon Khunthoklon*, he married a girl from Takhel (Tripura).⁷⁸ The *gotra* of the family was Bharadhwaja and the Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. The family god was Narasingha. They belonged to the *Gauda Uttari Shreni*. The *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that the surname was given to him for being a *Hanjaba*. *Hanjaba* means the head of a department in the royal administration. The *Hanjaba* mentioned here perhaps refers to Bamon Hanjaba, an official of Bamon Loishang or the institute of the Brahmanas, which is repeatedly referred to in the royal chronicle during King Garibaniwaj's period. This family is said to have been settled in Khwairamband at the time of composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

Hidangmayum- Debicharan Mukherji is mentioned as the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Sonarandi, Palashpara in Gouradesha. The *gotra* of the family was Kashyapa and the Vedic specialization *Yajur-Veda*. They belonged to *Gauda Dakhin Rahri Shreni*. The family god was Kurma Thakur. The family was settled in Uripok in Imphal in the 19th century. They were given this surname for occupying the post of Hidang.⁷⁹

King Gourashyam (1753-1759)

Only one Brahmana is said to have come and settled in Manipur during this period.

Gurumayum- Gurumayum means lineage of the *guru*. The name of the ancestor of this family was Neelambar Mishra Thakur. He is said to have come from Bargavari, Krishnanagar in Bengal. The *gotra* of the family was Shandilya and the Vedic specialization was *Sam Veda*. The family god is Shri Narayana Prabhuji. They belonged

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.9.

⁷⁹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

to *Gauda Dakhin Shreni*. It has been mentioned in the *Bamon Meihoubarol* that they were given this surname for being the *guru* of the king. The family was settled in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai at the time of composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*.⁸⁰

King Bhagyachandra (1763-1797)

His reign can be described as a period of religious consolidation. Both the religion, traditional and the newly introduced Vaishnavism existed side by side. King Bhagyachandra was a devoted Vaishnava and he dedicated his kingdom to lord Krishna. He had high regards for the Brahmanas. This can be attested from the fact that he gave up his throne as an act of atonement when a Brahmana was killed by one of his servants in 1761 A.D.⁸¹

The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the names and surnames five Brahmanas who came during this period.

Adhikarimayum Anoubam- Kriparam Bannerji was the name of the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Shantipur, Gouradesha. The *gotra* of the family was Shandilya and the Vedic specialization Sam Veda. The family god was Shrinarayana Thakur. They belonged to *Gauda Rahri Shreni*. This family was settled in Brahmapur Bamon Leikai in the 19th century. The *Bamon Meihoubarol* says that he was given this surname 'for being an Adhikari'.⁸² This family must have merged with the family of Adhikarimayum whose ancestors came during King Kiyamba's period. Hence, *anouba* meaning new is added to their surname. This surname is not mentioned in the *Bamon Khunthoklon*.

Brajabasimayum- The name of this lineage was ancestor Radhanath Brajabasi. He is said to have come from Braja Brindavan, Radhakund in Uttar Pradsesh. The *gotra* of the family was Bharadhwaja and the Vedic specialization was Sam Veda. The family god was Goplaji. They were *Uttari Shreni Braja Brahmanas*. According to the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, they were given this surname because they came from Braja Brindavan.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*. p. 123.

⁸² *Bamon Meihoubarol*

They were residing in Lalhambubg in Imphal at the time of the composition of this text.⁸³ This family is not mentioned in the *Bamon Khunthoklon*.

Dhyandasnayum- According to the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, Shrotari was the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Lahore. The *gotra* of the family was Kaushika and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Gopaladeva. They belonged to the *Gauda Uttari Shreni*. This family was settled at Pishum in Imphal at the time of the composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*. The reason given for assigning this surname is unclear. It says that they were the newly arrived ones,⁸⁴ which has nothing to do with *dhyan* or *dhyandas* in the surname. In the *Bamon Khunthoklon*, the place of his origin is mentioned as Takhel (Tripura). The *Bamon Khunthoklon* states that he arrived in Manipur during King Kiyamba's reign.⁸⁵

Laimayum Anoubam- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Radhanath Sanouriya or Brajabasi. He is said to have come from Shridham Brindavan. The *gotra* of this family was Bharadwaja and the Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. The family god was Gopalji. They were said to be Braj Brahmana of *Uttari Shreni*. They were given this surname because they came from Brindavan, place of lord Krishna. The term *lai* means god, *mayum* means home or family and *anouba* means new. Thus, they were the newly arrived ones from the place of god (Brindavan) and hence the surname Laimayum Anoubam was assigned to them. They are said to have been settled in Lalhambung in Imphal at the time of the composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*.⁸⁶

Warilibam- *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions that Jaduram Thakur was the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Beltola in Assam. The *gotra* of this family was Gautam and they specialized in *Sama Veda*. The family god was Narasingha. They are said to have belonged to Saraswat Brahmana of *Uttari Shreni*. According to the *Bamon Meihoubarol*, they were given this surname because they used to narrate stories. There is a tradition of *wari leeba* or narrating stories in Manipur, which are usually episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This is done by the Brahmanas on certain

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.3

⁸⁶ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

occasions. The family is said to have been residing in Khwairamband in Imphal at the time of the composition of the text.⁸⁷

King Gambhir Singh (1825-1836)

The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions four migrations and the *Bamon khunthoklon* mentions six migrations during this period.

Acharyamayum- Acharyamayum means family of Acharya. Lakhikanta Acharya was the ancestor of this lineage. He is said to have come from Dhaka, Bangladesh. The *gotra* of the family was Bharadhwaaja and the Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. The family worshipped Shri Madhusudhana. This surname was given to them since because they performed *puja* for the king. The family is said to have settled at Lalhambung in Imphal in the 19th century.⁸⁸

Anoubam- *Anouba* means new. Anoubam might mean newly arrived ones. Narayan Thakur was the name of the ancestor of this lineage as mentioned in the *Bamon Meihoubarol*. He is said to have come from Tripura. The *gotra* of this family was Kashyapa and their Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Shalagrama. They belonged to the *Gauda Uttari Shreni*. They are said to have settled at Thangmeiband in Imphal at the time of the composition of the *Bamon Meihoubarol*.⁸⁹ The text does not explain why the surname was given to them.

Anoubam- The name of the ancestor of this lineage is not mentioned in any of the texts. He is said to have come from Brindavana. The *gotra* of this family was Kaushika and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. They belonged to the *Gauda Uttari Brahmana*. This family is said to have settled at Thangmeiband in Imphal in the 19th century when

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

the *Bamon Meihoubarol* was composed. This text says that since they came late, they were assigned the surname Anoubam.⁹⁰

Brajamayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Shri Brajudev. He is said to have come from Shantipur in West Bengal. The *gotra* of this family was Shandilya and their Vedic specialization was *Sama Veda*. They are described as Tewari Brahmanas. The family god was Gopaladeva. They were settled at Thangmeiband in Imphal in the 19th century. The surname is said to have been taken from the name of the ancestor.⁹¹

King Nara Singh (1844-1850)

The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the coming of two Brahmanas, while the *Bamon Khunthoklon* does not mention any migration during this period.

Gosaimayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Chandraswami Gosai. He is said to have come from Shantipur in West Bengal. The *gotra* of the family was Shandilya and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family god was Madana Gopala. They were *Gauda Rahri Brahmanas*. This family was settled at Wangkhei in Imphal. It has been mentioned that their surname was derived from the title Gosai.⁹² According to the *Bamon Khunthoklon* , the ancestor of this family came during King Chandrakirti's reign.⁹³

Kulinmayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Ramgopal Kulin. He is said to have come from Baranagar in Bengal. The *gotra* of the family was Shandilya and the Vedic specialisation was *Sama Veda*. Their family deity was Kali Thakurani. They were *Gauda Rahri Brahmanas*. They were settled at Kwairamband in Imphal. They acquired this surname because Ramgopal was a Kulina Brahmana.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ ibid

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ *Bamon Khunthoklon*, p.11

⁹⁴ *Bamon Meihoubarol*

King Chandrakirti (1850-1886)

Anoubam Adhikarimayum- Neither the name of the ancestor of this nor his place of origin has been mentioned. The family's *gotra* was Bharadhwaja and its Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. Anoubam Adhikarimayum means new Adhikarimayum. It has been said that since they came during the end of King Chandrakirti's reign, they were given this surname. They were settled at Elangbam Leikai in Imphal.⁹⁵

Radhakundabasimayum- The name of the ancestor of this lineage was Shyama Patouri. He is said to have come from Radhakund, Brindavan. The *gotra* of the family was Bharadhwaja and the Vedic specialization was *Yajur-Veda*. The family deity was Giriraj. It has been mentioned that they were given this surname because they came from Radhakund. They were settled at Uripok in Imphal.⁹⁶

Thus, the migration of the Brahmanas in Manipur was not on a large scale and it happened over a long period of time. The migration was slow and gradual but a continuous one. The movement was spread over four centuries and continued till the end of the 19th century.

All the Brahmanas that came and settled in Manipur were given Meitei surnames. The surnames were given according to the positions they held in the administration, or their place of origin, or the place where they first settled in Manipur, or from their original title, or the name of the ancestor, or the deity they worshipped. For example, the surname Kakchingtabam was given to a Brahmana family led by Parmananda Acharya from Shrihatta, Kulingram in Bengal, belonging to Bharadhwaja *gotra*, who came to the valley during King Kiyamba's reign (1469-1508A.D.). Since they first settled in a place called Kakching in the valley, they were assigned this surname. The surname Mathurabasimayum was given to a Brahmana family of Kashyapa *gotra* who arrived in the valley during king Charairongba's reign. Since they came from Mathura, they were given this surname. The surname Adhikarimayum was given to a Brahmana family led by Gangacharan Bannerji of Bharadhwaja *gotra*. They were given this surname because a member of his family or one of his descendents was a jury member in the royal court.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Two Brahmana families were given the surname of Hidangmayum. But they belonged to different *gotras*, they came from different areas and migrated to Manipur at different periods of time. Another instance of two Brahmana families having the same surnames is of Laimayum. Both the families belonged to the same *gotra*, had the same Vedic specialization and the same title Chatterji. However, they worshipped different family deities.

These Brahmanas migrated from different parts of the country, such as Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Gujarat and even Lahore. Most of them, however, came from Bengal. It has been said that locale is an important item in the identification and specification of a Brahmana and that a false statement regarding the land from where a Brahmana came was considered a crime.⁹⁷ However, it is unlikely that some of them who claimed to have come from places as far as Gujarat or Lahore had actually come to this remote and nearly inaccessible area with the intention of settling in Manipur. Probably, their ancestors came from their original place to Bengal, Assam and Tripura, and from there they must have entered Manipur.

For most of the Brahmana families, the place where they first settled in Manipur has not been mentioned. But considering those few whose initial place of settlement has been mentioned, such as Kakching, Yairipok and Kongba, it can be said that their settlement was scattered throughout the valley. But the places where these Brahmanas were settled in the 19th century have been mentioned and it shows that the Brahmanas were mostly confined to the Imphal area, although a few of the families were residing in other areas like Khangabok in the Thoubal district. In the Imphal area also, the locality where most of the Brahmanas were settled was the Brahmapur Bamon Leikai which lies in close proximity to the Shri Govindaji temple. The place was exclusively meant for the Brahmana families. The earliest reference to Bamon Leikai in the *Cheitahrol Kumpaba* occurs in 1732. It says that a fire that started from Sapam family reached Bamon Leikai and killed one Brahmana.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Chitrankha Gupta, *The Brahmanas of India*, Sundeep Prakashan, New Delhi, 1983, p.123.

⁹⁸ Singh and Singh ed. op.cit., p.91.

Gotras and *Pravaras* are important in the identification of a Brahmana even though they were given Meitei surnames. Sometimes it was their *gotra* that helped to differentiate between two Brahmana families with the same surname. The Brahmanas who migrated to Manipur are said to belong to one or the other of these nine *gotras*, Bharadhwaja, Shandilya, Kashyapa, Kaushika, Vatsya, Vasishtha, Parashara, Gautama and Maudgalya. Most of them were of *teen (3) pravara* and some of *pancha (5) pravara*. The Vedic specialization was also important. Most of these Brahmanas are said to have specialized in *Sama Veda* and some in *Yajur-Veda*. No Brahmana specialized in *Rig Veda* in Manipur.

Another area of identification of the Brahmanas was through the region of their origin. The Brahmanas who migrated to Manipur mostly belonged to the Gauda Brahmana category. Most of them are said to have belonged to Rahri, Varendra and Vaidika Brahmanas of Bengal. Next in importance were Kanyakuja Brahmanas, Mathura Brahmanas and Braj Brahmanas.

The *kula devata* or the family deities of these Brahmanas indicate that they were Vaishnavite Brahmanas. Thus, the form of Hinduism adopted in Manipur was Vaishnavism, more specifically the Gaudiya Vaishnavism of Bengal. The *Bamon Meihoubarol* mentions the Brahmana families who worshipped Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

Probable reasons for migration of the Brahmanas to Manipur

15th -16th centuries can be considered as an important period in the history of Manipur. King Kiyamba, who ruled Manipur from 1467 to 1508, was a great conqueror and expanded the kingdom upto the Kabaw valley in the West bank of the Chindwin river.⁹⁹ King Kiyamba is credited with the introduction of the *Cheithaba* system of reckoning time and he started the practice of keeping of the royal chronicle, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*. For the first time, we come across references to the invasion of the kingdom of Manipur

⁹⁹ . Kabui, *History of Manipur*, p.194.

by the *Mayangs* (Cacharis) in *Cheitharol Kumpaba* in the year 1504.¹⁰⁰ These *Mayangs*, after initial victory were said to have been defeated by the Meitei forces. Thus, there was an increasing contact with the neighbouring areas and the battles were not confined to just inter-tribal warfare within Manipur.

Scholars like Kunj Behari and B. Kullachandra Sharma have suggested that the Brahmanas came to Manipur in search of a recluse to escape the wrath of the Muslim rulers in mainland India.¹⁰¹ According to Gangmumei Kabui, Kiyamba's stable and powerful kingdom provided shelter to the immigrants, especially the Brahmanas, during the period of great Muslim expansion in India and this stability attracted people of the neighbouring countries.¹⁰²

Thus, the traditional explanation given for the migration of the Brahmanas to Manipur is that the Muslim rule in India during this period led to the movement of Brahmanas from these areas to places where they could profess their religion freely. However, it is known that this explanation generally does not hold true. Yet it can be said that the Muslim rule in these areas like Bengal must have led to the loss of royal patronage to the Brahmanas and some of them must have been on the move searching for places where they could receive royal patronage, such as in Assam and Tripura, and from there they must have entered Manipur.

By 15th -16th centuries, Manipur began to experience an increasing contact with the neighbouring areas like Cachar, Tripura and Assam. There are references in the royal chronicle to war and also matrimonial alliances with these kingdoms. For instance, there is a reference to Tekhaoleima (the queen of Tekhao or Assam) called Khongnambi in the year 1536 A.D. and it is stated that an elephant was given to Manipur as bride price.¹⁰³ Other than these, there are also references to trade with kingdoms of Cachar and Tripura.¹⁰⁴ These Brahmana immigrants must have served as a communicator between Manipur and these kingdoms. They might have been employed by the king as mediators

¹⁰⁰ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.21

¹⁰¹ Kunj Behari Singh, 'Manipur Vaishnavism: A sociological interpretation', *Sociological Bulletin*, vol.12, no.2, 1963, p.62 and Sharma, Sharma and Singh ed. *Meitei Bamongi Hourakpham*, p.41

¹⁰² Kabui, *History of Manipur*, p.199

¹⁰³ Singh and Singh ed. op cit. p.24.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.49,p.51.

which led to increase of their importance. There are many references to Brahmana mediators or messengers in the *Cheitharol Kumpaba* in the later period. For instance, it is stated that the two Brahmanas, Kamdev and Chadrashekhhar, who had gone to Tripura, arrived in the year 1705A.D.¹⁰⁵

Another factor that led to migration of the Brahmanas to a country where Brahmanic culture was not firmly entrenched was gifts of land to them by the king or sometimes by private individuals.¹⁰⁶ Thus, royal patronage was one of the common reasons for new Brahmanic settlements. However, there is no such evidence for the early Brahmana settlers of Manipur. In fact, they married local women who belonged to the lower strata of the society, such as *kei*, *loi* and *hao*. This indicates that these Brahmanas had come to Manipur looking for opportunities and did not receive any royal favour which started with the next set of Brahmanas that came to the state in the 18th and 19th centuries. By the 18th century, we come across many references in the royal chronicle to the *guru* of the king who accompanied him in all important events. During the reign of Garibaniwaj, an institute of Brahmanas called Bamon Loishang was set up that must have served their interests. From this, it evolved into a body called *Pancha Ratan* or the five jewels during the reign of king Bhagyachandra(1763-1798A.D.) consisting of five learned Brahmanas.¹⁰⁷ This was again enlarged to form a body of nine learned Brahmanas called *Nava Ratan* or the nine jewels during king Chourjit's reign (1803-1813A.D.) and *Cheitharol Kumpaba* mentions the inauguration of its building in 1804.¹⁰⁸ This body came to be known as Brahma Sabha in king Gambhir Singh's period (1825-1838A.D.). This clearly shows that patronage was extended to the Brahmanas by the Meitei kings.

Integration of the Brahmanas in the society

The Brahmanas who migrated and settled in Manipur were integrated into the Meitei society. One of the ways in which they were assimilated was through marriage with local women. Most of the Brahmanas who came to Manipur were not accompanied by their

¹⁰⁵ Singh and Singh ed., *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁶ Puspa Niyogi, *Brahmanic Settlements in different subdivisions of Ancient Bengal*, Indian Studies, Past and Present, Calcutta, 1967, p.4

¹⁰⁷ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.169. It was first mentioned in the year 1796.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.184

wives, as indicated by the text *Bamon Khunthoklon*. And they married local women, most of whom belonged to the lower strata of the society. A specific reference in the royal chronicle also indicates this.¹⁰⁹ However, by the 18th century, we find references in the royal chronicle to princesses who were given in marriage to the Brahmanas. A princess was given (probably in marriage) to the guru in of the king in 1730.¹¹⁰

Another way of integrating them in society was through assigning them Meitei surnames. However, the Brahmanas were not included in the *salai* system or the clan system into which the Meitei society was divided. There are seven exogamous clans or *salais*, which are Ningthouja, Angom, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Khaba- Nganba and Sarang-Leishangthem.

The immigrant Brahmanas adopted the language, culture and custom of the land. It is interesting to note that each of the Brahmana families was assigned a totem bird. The names of the birds were *bhingaraj pakhi*, *Khanjan pakhi*, *titil pakhi*, *shrotari pakhi*, *aamrachura pakhi*, *dambur pakhi*, *raj pakhi*, *binjuri pakhi*, *goshanik pakhi*, *karan pakhi* and *dipala pakhi*.¹¹¹ Thus, one can notice a degree of tribalisation of the Brahmanas.

In the Hindu society, the Brahmanas occupy the highest position. Manipur was Hinduised only in the 18th century. Before the 18th century, the Brahmanas did not enjoy any special position in the Meitei society. This is indicated by their marriage to the women belonging to lower strata. Also, they were not exempted from capital punishment. The royal chronicle mentions that in the year 1661, Bamon Thenkura and two other persons were executed for their crimes.¹¹² However, from the 18th century, they began to occupy an important position in society. For instance, King Garibaniwaj is said to have undergone atonement for the death of a Brahmana woman in course of a battle with the Awa (Burmese).¹¹³ This shows that the Brahmanas were began to be held in high respect.

¹⁰⁹ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p. 37. It has been mentioned that in the year 1628 A.D. a Yogi arrived in Manipur and he was given a Chakpa (loi) woman and was made to settle in Yairipok (a place in Manipur).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.99

¹¹¹ *Bamon Meihoubarol*.

¹¹² *Op.cit.*, p.45.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.102

Thus, the Brahmanas started coming to Manipur from different parts of northern India from the 15th century and it continued till the end of the 19th century. Unlike in other parts of India, their migration was not prompted by royal patronage. Initially, these Brahmanas did not occupy a special position in Meitei society. The situation changed from the 18th century. Vaishnavism was declared state religion of Manipur in the 18th century. This was definitely related to the coming and settling of the Brahmanas into this far flung area. Although not much of Hindu influence can be seen in Manipur before the 18th century, the three centuries from the 15th to the 18th can be called the gestation period or the formative period that led to the development of Vaishnavism in Manipur in the 18th century.

CHAPTER:III

Vaishnavisation of Manipur

With the beginning of the 18th century, the religious history of Manipur took a new turn. Vaishnavism was adopted as the state religion. During the three previous centuries, the land had witnessed the coming and settlement of the Brahmanas in it without any special favour shown to them. In these three centuries, they were assimilated into the Meitei society but they did not enjoy the status they had in other parts of India. However, from the 18th century, their importance began to grow. They started to receive royal patronage and their influence in the state could no longer be ignored. Hinduisation of Manipur has attracted scholarly attention and more work has been done on this subject than any other aspect of the history of Manipur. While the contribution of the Brahmanas has been recognized in bringing about this socio-cultural and religious change in Manipur, their role in this process requires further elucidation. In this chapter an attempt will be made to look into the role of the Brahmanas in the Vaishnavisation of Manipur.

The Pre-Vaishnavite Religion of the Meiteis

Before the adoption of Vaishnavism as the state religion in the 18th century, the Meiteis had their own religious beliefs and practices. This can be found in the various *puyas* (texts written in old Manipuri script which contain the myths and legends of the Meiteis) and other texts like the *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, the royal chronicle of Manipur. This can also be noticed from their present day religious observances which are quite different from the Vaishnavism of mainland India which they claim to profess. While one cannot accept the claim that Vedic religion was practiced in early Manipur, as has been argued by some scholars like Atombapu Sharma, the Meitei Religion cannot be described as crude animism. It has been pointed out that the Meiteis, before the advent of Vaishnavism, had developed a religious philosophy of their own.¹

¹ L.Bhagyachandra Singh, *A Critical Study of the Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis before the Advent of Vaishnavism in Manipur*, L. Jayantakumar Singh, Imphal, 1991, p. 58.

There are a number of deities or *lais* that the Meiteis worship. Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt has categorized these deities into three main groups: (1) *Umang Lai* or the sylvan deities, (2) ancestral deities and (3) household deities. According to her, *umang lais* or the sylvan deities encompass all the deities of the Meitei belief, although they constitute a category of their own. It has been pointed out that although the term *umang lai* literally means forest deities, they came to be used as a much more general term signifying any traditional deity from quite early times.² It consists of (i) ancestral deities like the clan or *yek* deities or the sub-clan or *sagei* deities of which the greatest example is the snake or dragon deity called Pakhangba of the Ningthouja clan, which occupies a very important place in the mythology of the Meiteis; (ii) deities associated with *yeks* or clans which are not necessarily regarded as their ancestors, such as Thangjing for the Moirang clan; (iii) tutelary deities which are the guardian deities connected with particular places or with specific directions such as Marjing of the north east direction, Koubru of the north west and Wangbaren of the south east; (iv) household deities such as Sanamahi, Leimaren and Phunga *lai*, which are worshipped inside the house. Apart from these, the Meiteis believe in the existence of a supreme deity who is considered to be above all deities and is addressed by different names like Tenbangba Mapu or Atiya Sidaba.

Sanamahi is the most important deity of the Meiteis and is worshipped in every household. The first mention of Sanamahi in the royal chronicle occurs in 1746C.E.³ Scholars like N.Khelchandra Singh, L.Bhagyachandra Singh and Saroj Nalini Parratt opine that Sanamahi was known by different names in the earlier periods and they identify *lai* Kasa, Laiwa Haipa (oracular deity) and Taipang Khaipa (ruler of the universe) as Sanamahi. These deities find mention in the chronicle from the 17th century onwards.

Apart from these, the Meiteis also worship a goddess called Panthoibi which was later identified with the goddess Durga after the Vaishnavisation of the state. There are

² Saroj Nalini Parratt, *The Religion of Manipur: Beliefs, Rituals and Historical Development*, Firma K.L.M., Calcutta, 1980, pp.110-111.

³ Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.162.

references in the royal chronicle of to the building of her shrines and casting of her images from the late 17th century, although it is quite possible that her worship had started earlier.

The most important of all the traditional rituals of the Meiteis is the *Lai Haraoba* or the pleasing of the gods. According to Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt and John Parratt, this ritual is basically an act of ancestor worship.⁴ There is no iconic representation of the deity in this festival and it reflects the cosmology of the Meitei beliefs. This festival welds together oral tradition, prayer, poetry and dance, which are a re-enactment of the cosmic dance of creation. The festival is meant to please the deities to ensure agricultural fertility and protection of the people. The ritual is conducted by the traditional priests and priestess of the Meitei's called the *maibas* and the *maibis*.

Arrival of Vaishnavism in Manipur

According to scholars like Gangmunei Kabui, M.Kirti Singh and Kunjbihari Singh, Vaishnavism took roots in Manipur in the 15th century. Their argument is based on the tradition that after the victorious expedition to Burma by the joint forces of Manipur led by King Kiyamba (1467-1508 C.E.) and the Shan or the Pong King Chaopha Khekhomba, the Kings exchanged gifts and among the gifts received by King Kiyamba was an emblem of Vishnu. It is believed that the worship of Vishnu started in Manipur from this time, although conversion to Hinduism had not yet begun. It has been said that the Brahmanas who had arrived in Manipur were traced and employed to look after the temple in which the emblem was kept.⁵

This is mentioned in the text *Bhagyachandra Charit*.⁶ However, *Bhagyachandra Charit* is a much later text, written in the 19th century, which tries to project a Hindu origin of

⁴ John Parratt and Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt, *The Pleasing of Gods: Meitei Lai Haraoba*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p.177.

⁵ Gangmumei Kabui, 'Socio Religious Movement', in Lal Dena ed. *History of Modern Manipur*, Orbit Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p.89

⁶ *Bijoy Panchali*, Vol.2, pp.8-11.

the Meiteis and contains a number of myths and legends that espouse Vaishnava ideals. Thus, the information contained in this text cannot be taken at face value. At the most, it can be said that the text was attempting to provide antiquity and legitimacy to the new religion, i.e. Vaishnavism.

The *Cheitharol Kumpaba* mentions this joint expedition to Burma, cordial relations between the two Kings and the exchange of gifts between each other.⁷ However, it does not mention anything about the Vishnu emblem or the construction of a temple for its worship. If that was the case, the royal chronicle would certainly have mentioned it. Moreover, there is hardly any evidence of Hindu influence in this text, apart from the references to the coming of some Brahmanas and a yogi, till come to the reign of King Chhairsongba (1697-1709 C.E.). There are frequent allusions in the royal chronicle to the *lais* or the traditional deities such as *lai Kasa*, *lai Wahaiba* or *laiyingthou Wahaipa*, *lai Puthiba*, *laiyingthou Taipang Khaipa*, *lai Nongshaba*, Marjing, Kouparen or Koubru and Panthoibi before the 18th century. Marjing and Koubru are hills in the valley, but they are worshipped as guardian deities and these hills are believed to be their abodes.

Also, there is evidence to suggest the prevalence of animal sacrifice. For instance, the royal chronicle says that in 1608 C.E., “(they) performed the appeasement rite to the sovereign god Marjing. They sacrificed wild boars, dogs, ducks, fowls, pigeons, and many other living creatures. They performed the appeasement rite to every watering place.”⁸ The chronicle mentions that this rite was performed after the death of the infant royal prince. Thus the appeasement rite was performed to prevent further sickness or death. There are references to other rites as well that were not in conformity with the Vaishnava mode of worship, such as ritual drinking of wine (*yu*) or consumption of meat.⁹

⁷ Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, pp.19-20

⁸ Ibid., p.72.

⁹ Ibid., p.60.

Thus, there is no clear evidence of any Hindu influence in Manipur before the reign of King Charairongba and hence it is hard to believe that Vaishnavism took its roots in the 15th century. However, it is known that some Brahmanas had entered and settled in Manipur in the 15th century. They are said to have married local women and gradually got assimilated into the Meitei society. It is hard to believe that these immigrants made no impact on the Meitei society or the King, more so because Brahmana migration to the state never ceased and, after about three hundred years of their presence in the state, the King adopted Vaishnavism as the state religion. Their influence must have been at work before the actual acceptance of Vaishnavism in Manipur. Contact with the neighbouring Hindu kingdoms like Assam and Tripura must also have helped in the process. Probably because of the lack of royal support, Brahmana influence could not spread before the 18th century.

Saroj Nalini Parratt suggests some areas of possible Hindu influence on Manipur before the 18th century. First was in the position of the King. King Khagemba took the title *Lainingthou*, which means a god king.¹⁰ He was the first King of Manipur who adopted such a title. According to Parratt, this might have been due to the influence of the Hindu conception of divine kingship. The second relates to the method of disposal of the dead. She cites evidence from the royal chronicle which says that "In 1656, in the month of Kalen (April-May) Meiteileima Takhemi's father Hanjaba, the smith, died. In the month of Ingel (June-July), Mongjibam Pukhranba died. In the month of Langban (August-September) both were cremated."¹¹ However, it has been said that each clan had their own method of disposing the dead and some might have practiced cremation too. Moreover, it was during King Garibaniwaz's period that the practice was introduced.¹² Finally, according to Parratt, the allusions to sculptors from Kyang (in Myanmar) in the royal chronicle possibly suggest the beginning of cultic use of images.¹³ All these are, however, too speculative to allow us to arrive at any conclusion.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.69.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹² Ibid., p. 132.

¹³ Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, pp.129-132.

Adoption of Vaishnavism as the state religion

From the beginning of the 18th century, Vaishnavism began to spread in Manipur. Hinduism received royal patronage which helped the process. First, it was the King and some of his nobles who got converted into Vaishnavism. A few years later, it was proclaimed to be the state religion. It was a religion which was imposed on the people and it created a potential of conflict between the new and the traditional religions. But, by the end of the 18th century, a compromise between the two seems to have achieved and Vaishnavism reached the height of its popularity in the 19th century.

King Charairongba was the first Hindu king of Manipur and the chronicle gives the date of his initiation as 1704A.D. It states, “5 Wednesday, Ningthem Charairongba and all those who were to accept the name of Hindu *lai* fasted. Those who fasted with the king were made to accept the sacred thread on that day”¹⁴ The king is said to have ordered the making of a *Vishnu* image in the year 1707 AD.¹⁵

Thus, it is clear that Vaishnavism was adopted by King Charairongba along with some of his nobles. Although Vaishnavism had the royal support, the king never attempted to force the new religion on all the people of his kingdom. He did try to propagate it by constructing a number of temples of Hindu gods and goddesses like Vishnu and Kalika, but he did not neglect the worship of the traditional deities. Along with the construction of the idols and temples of the Hindu deities, he is said to have built a number of shrines for the traditional deities like Panthoibi and *lai* Wahaiba .¹⁶ Thus, there was no attempt to immediately replace the traditional religion with the new one.

The reign of King Garibaniwaj (1709-1748A.D.) is particularly important for the history of Vaishnavism in Manipur. It was during his reign that a full-fledged attempt to Vaishnavise Manipur was made. After eight years of his accession, he was initiated into

¹⁴ Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.113.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.116.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 108-118.

the new religion. He performed the ceremony of accepting the sacred thread thrice in his reign. The first one was in 1717. It is mentioned in the chronicle that in the month of Mera (September/ October), Ningthem (King) and some others accepted the Hindu religion from *guru* Gopal Das.¹⁷ Nothing else is mentioned in the chronicle about the *guru* except that he left the state in 1720.¹⁸

The second one was in 1729. The text runs: “Wednesday, full moon, the *guru* and the Ningthem(king) immersed themselves in the river at Lilong and on that day the *Mahapurusha* gave sacred thread (to the king).”¹⁹ The third one was in 1737. The text mentions that in the month of Hiyangei(October/ November), on full moon, Thursday, the Maharaja and 300 others took the sacred thread.²⁰ According to Parratt, the first instance possibly refers to the King’s initiation into the religion; the second to the *Upanayana* ceremony and the third to the renewal of the thread.²¹ But it is not clear why the adoption of the sacred thread was done after 11 years of his initiation into the new religion.

Towards the beginning of his reign, he constructed shrines of the traditional *lais*(deities). He also constructed a number of temples and idols of Hindu gods and goddess. A temple for Kalika was constructed in 1715 ²²and a temple for Krishna in 1722.²³ The royal chronicle mentions that in 1729, an idol of Hanuman was carved out of the stone which had been erected for the market place.²⁴ His period also saw the introduction of Jagannatha worship in Manipur. It is mentioned that in 1730, five new immigrant Brahmanas came with cooked rice which had been offered to the idol of lord

¹⁷ Ibid., p.124.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.127.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.136.

²⁰ Ibid., p.145.

²¹ Ibid., p.137.

²² Ibid., p.122.

²³ Ibid., p.129.

²⁴ Ibid., p.136.

Jagannatha.²⁵ Eventually worship of Jagannatha became an important part of Manipuri Vaishnavism.

Under his rule, Hinduism became firmly entrenched as the state religion and strong measures were taken against those who violated its codes. He started to aggressively propagate the new religion. Cow was declared a revered animal and beef eating was made a crime. The chronicle mentions instances of punishments for eating beef in 1722.²⁶ He also introduced the practice of cremation of the dead in 1724.²⁷ There was even an attempt at forcible conversion of the people by the state. This is evident in the statement in the royal chronicle: "In 1738 C.E., on the fifth of Inga (June/ July), Sunday, most of the people in the country were made to take the sacred thread."²⁸ It is mentioned that in the same year, genealogies of the seven *salais* (clan) were prepared. It is not mentioned from which original ancestor the genealogies are traced, but it is possible that it refers to the assigning of the seven *gotras* to the seven clans of the Meitei society, as mentioned in texts like *Sanamahi Laikan* (later part of 18th century) and *Garibaniwaz Charit* (late 18th century-19th century), due to the Vaishnava-Brahmanical influence on the state. In his pursuit of the propagation of the new religion, he even went to the extent of destroying the shrines and de recognizing the divinity of the traditional deities. The chronicle mentions no less than three instances of the destruction of the traditional deities during Garibniwaj's reign. The chronicle mentions that on the first of Langban (August/ September), 1723, Tuesday, it was declared that nine *Umang Lais* (sylvan deities) and two *Lamnaipis* (deities) were not to be regarded as *lais* (deities) anymore and all their shrines to be demolished.²⁹ The chronicle says that on 23rd of Ingel (June/July), 1726, Monday, the *lais* Laiyingthou, Panthoibi, Laiwa Haipa, two Lamnaipis, Soraren and Hoiton Poki were demolished.³⁰ It is mentioned that in 1732, Meitei *R(l)eima* (queen) had been destroyed. (In N.Khelchandra's translation, Meitei *lairiks*, meaning books, were

²⁵ Ibid., p.137.

²⁶ Ibid., p.129.

²⁷ Ibid., p.131.

²⁸ Ibid., p.147.

²⁹ Ibid., p.130.

³⁰ Ibid., p.133.

destroyed). Even Laiwa Haipa in the Monpahanba grove was either destroyed or made unclean.³¹

In 1723, he took the drastic step of transferring the responsibility of the traditional priests of attending the *lais* to the Brahmanas .The chronicle mentions that on the 15th of Hiyangei (September/ October), Friday, Brahmanas were made to attend Laiyingthou Nongsaba, Yimtheibi, Panthoibi and Taipang Khaiba and the Brahmanas were allowed to conduct the appeasement rites for these four *lais*.³² It was the duty of the traditional priests and priestess, the *maiba* and *maibi*, to conduct such rites. However, it seems despite these instructions, it did not become a common practice, since even now the traditional priests and priestesses attend the traditional deities and conduct worship. Nevertheless, it is a glaring instance of an attempt to Hinduise the traditional deities, which happened with some of them in the years to come.

No matter how suppressive his measures were, he did leave a decisive imprint on the religion and culture of Manipur. Except his immediate successor, Chit Sai, who tried to reverse his father's policy by imposing a fine on those who followed Vaishnavism, all the later rulers contributed significantly to the development of Vaishnavism in the state, while still retaining the traditional faith. Thus, Hodson observes, "To the royal will of Pamheiba (Garibaniwaj), the monarch in whose reign the fortunes of the state reached their zenith, Hinduism owes its present position as the official religion of the state."³³

A study of the religious development of Manipur cannot be complete without referring to the contributions of King Bhagyachandra (1763-1798C.E.). Despite the turbulence in the state created by the frequent Burmese invasions during his rule, he managed to bring about a significant change in the religious and cultural sphere. According to scholars like Saroj Nalini Parratt and L.Bhagyachandra Singh, his measures led to the consolidation of Hinduism in Manipur.³⁴ The Chaitanyite form of Vaishnavism struck roots during his time. According to Gangmumei Kabui, the height of Vaishnavite glory had been achieved

³¹ L. Ibungohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p. 93.

³² Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p. 130.

³³ T.C Hodson. *The Meitheis*, Low Price Publications New Delhi, 1999, p. 95.

³⁴ Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, p.161, Singh, L.Bhagyachandra, p. 151.

during the reign of Bhagyachandra who constructed the sacred image of Govindaji out of a tree from Kaina hill.³⁵

The chronicle records the installation (*nirupan*) of the idol of Shri Govinda in 1776 at Langthabal.³⁶ The text also mentions the installation of the image of Nitynanda Prabhu in 1794.³⁷ The chronicle refers to the listening of the *Bhagavata Purana* in 1783 on the occasion of the dedication of a pool in 1783.³⁸ He seems to have been a great devotee of Jagannatha. This is indicated by a statement in the chronicle that in 1777, in the month of Langban (August/ September) by the order of Jagannatha Prabhu, Maharaja and others went for begging for seven days.³⁹ The Brahmanas enjoyed great respect during his reign. He abdicated the throne in 1761 as an act of atonement when he learnt that one Brahmana woman was killed by one of his attendants or servants.⁴⁰

There are references to the singing of *kirtan* which became an effective tool for the propagation of Vaishnavism. The most significant contribution of Bhagyachandra was the introduction of *Ras Leela*. It is said to have been performed on the occasion of the *abhisheka* (consecration) of Shri Govinda in Canchipur.⁴¹ Texts like *Shamuphaba Amasung Shri Govindaji Nirupon* (capturing of the wild elephant and installation of Shri Govindaji's idol) and *Bhagyachandra Charit* say that he dedicated his kingdom to Shri Govinda and he ruled in his name. Apart from this, his devotion to Vaishnavism can be seen in his decision to set off for pilgrimage to places sacred to the Krishna cult towards the end of his reign in 1797 C.E.⁴² The whole journey of his pilgrimage is recorded in the text *Chingthangkhomba Maharaj Ganga Chatpa* (Maharaj Chingthangkhomba's journey to the Ganga).

³⁵ Kabui, 'Socio religious movement', in Lal Dena ed. *History of Modern Manipur*, Orbit Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p.90.

³⁶ Singh and Singh ed., *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, pp.129-30.

³⁷ Ibid., p.166.

³⁸ Ibid., p.180.

³⁹ Ibid., p.131.

⁴⁰ Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.172.

⁴¹ Singh and Singh ed., *Cheitharol Kumbaba*, p.133.

⁴² Ibid., p.172.

His devotion to Vaishnavism led to the development of many legends around him. *Bhagyachandra Charit* and *Shamu Phaba amasung Shri Govindaji Nirupon* tells the story of how King Bhagyachandra miraculously captured a wild elephant while he was in exile in the Assam with the blessings of Lord Vishnu who is said to have given him his vision.

His reign also witnessed the reconciliation of the Brahmanical and the traditional faiths. The traditional religion was given due respect and the traditional deities were worshipped along with the Hindu gods. Evidence points to a peaceful coexistence of the two faiths while attempts at slow Hinduisation of the traditional faith can also be observed. The royal chronicle mentions one incident that suggests this. It says that in 1783, on the 5th of Hiyangei (October/ November), Saturday, *lai* Govinda, Sanamahi and others, and all the *lais* of the land were made to bathe in the Lamlongei pond.⁴³

In the 19th century, Vaishnavism made further progress under great Kings like Gambhir Singh, Nara Singh and Chandrakirti Singh. Saroj Nalini Parrat calls this period a period of synthesis of the two religions. As M.Kirti Singh points out, syncretisation, which was inaugurated by the earlier Kings, reached its culmination in the reign of Chandrakirti.⁴⁴ This period saw the strengthening of Vaishnavism in Manipur and many Hindu festivals are said to have been introduced during this period, such as *Durga Puja*, *Ratha- Yatra* and *Jhulan*. At the same time, attempts were made to establish a close affinity between the two religions. The result was the development of a distinct form of Vaishnavism in Manipur which adopted aspects of Meitei culture and was modified by it.⁴⁵

The Brahmanas and the royal court

Vaishnavisation of Manipur in the 18th century cannot be studied without assessing the role of the Brahmanas and the extent of their influence in the royal court. As L.Bhagyachandra points out, conversion of the king to a new religion was possible only

⁴³ Ibid., p.140.

⁴⁴ M. Kirti Singh, *Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, 1980, p.174.

⁴⁵ Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, p.169.

because there had already been at least some influence of Vaishnavism in the court circle.⁴⁶ Although this influence was negligible before the 18th century, a body of evidence suggests that the influence of the Brahmanas began to increase in the court from the turn of the century. From the 18th century, there are frequent references in the royal chronicle to the entry of various categories of Brahmanas including monks, ascetics and astrologers. The chronicle indicates that they were well received by the King.

These Brahmanas started playing an important role in the political and administrative matters of the state. Their importance can be noticed in politics, especially in the foreign affairs of the state. There are many references in the royal chronicle to the Brahmanas who were sent to the neighbouring states like Assam, Cachar, Tripura and Burma as *laibars* or emissaries. For instance, the royal chronicle mentions that in the year 1717, Brahmana, the *Hanjaba* (an official post) and Ayangpa left for Langlong with a reply from the king to a message which was sent by *Tekhao* (Assam).⁴⁷

Another evidence of their role in foreign affairs of the state is the Anglo-Manipur treaty of 1763. This treaty was signed to procure British help against the Burmese invasions. Here too, the then King Bhagyachandra sent a Brahmana called Haridas Gossai to negotiate the terms of the treaty with the British. He signed the draft treaty on behalf of the king of Manipur and Henry Verslest, the chief of the Chittagong factory, signed it on behalf of the British in 1762.⁴⁸ This seems to have been due to the recognition of their diplomatic as well as their excellent communicative skill.

Other than these, the Brahmanas also played an important role in the military expeditions. They are said to have led many expeditions. For instance, it is stated that in 1728, the *guru* (a Brahmana), the king and some others attacked Maring Khunpi (a tribal village).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bhagyachandra Singh, *A critical study of the Pre-Vaishnavite Religion of the Meiteis*, p. 149.

⁴⁷ Paratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.125.

⁴⁸ .Ibid, p.173. Also Naorem Sanajaoba, ed. *Manipur Treaties and Documents*, Vol.1, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.12.

⁴⁹ .Paratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.135.

They also acted as counselors or advisors to the king. There are numerous references in the chronicle to the *guru* accompanying the king in his outings and other pursuits. Thus, their influence on the king and the court must have been great. They had started to introduce Brahmanical practices in the court, such as adoption of titles like *Maharaja*, *Maharani*, *Mantri*, *Senapati* and *Yuvraj*.⁵⁰ Other than this, their influence can be seen in the development of the concept of kingship itself. Garibaniwaj is said to have developed the concept of divine kingship. His title *Lai Maharaja* (god king) indicates this. This might also be a revival of king Khagemba's title of *Lainingthou* or god king.

The extent of their influence on the king and in court can be observed in the legends that developed around a Brahmana called Shantadas Gossain. He is believed to have been the driving force behind King Garibaniwaj's persecution of the traditional religion and aggressive propagation of Vaishnavism. His influence on the king is reflected in texts such as *Sanamahi Laikan*, *Khagemba Langje* and *Sanamahi Laihuiu* (18th-19th centuries). Legends claim that he was called by the traditional deity Sanamahi to spread Vishnu worship in Manipur.

The influence of the Brahmanas can also be seen in the field of astrology. The chronicle mentions the arrival of new *ganakas* (astrologers)⁵¹. Use of terms like *sankranti* (end of the month)⁵² started to be used from King Garibaniwaj's period in the royal chronicle. In Bhagyachandra's period a new almanac was introduced in 1760 by a Brahmana named Sidananda, Bhagabati Thakur and Kabo Khumbongmayumcha Muniram Singh. According to Saroj Nalini Parratt, this was based on Hindu astrology.⁵³

The status enjoyed by the Brahmanas and the respect shown to them can be ascertained from the performance of a '*praischit*' or expiatory rite for the killing of a Brahmana⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.137,163,150,151,170.

⁵¹ Paratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p. 120.

⁵² Ibid., p.144.

⁵³ Ibid., p.171.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.148.

Another instance is King Bhagyachandra's abdication of his throne in 1761, mentioned above.⁵⁵

The influence of the Brahmanas on the royal court must have existed even before the adoption of Vaishnavism by the king and the state, but it became more pronounced after royal patronage was extended to the new religion. Without such influence, it would be difficult to understand the sudden conversion of the king to an alien religion and its spread in the entire valley both in the religious and in social and cultural spheres.

The Brahmanas and the Traditional Priests

The increasing importance of the Brahmanas in the state must have been resented by the traditional priests (*maibas*) and scholars (*maichous*). As Manjushri Chaki Sircar points out that traditional religion in Manipur was organized under a complex of hierarchical institutions with different councils of learned scholars (*maichous*), office bearers, musicians, dancers and priests (*maibis*). Therefore, the process of Vaishnavism, though under royal patronage, had to contend with this extremely powerful force.⁵⁶

As mentioned above, the Brahmanas became important in matters religion, state, society and culture. There must have been clashes between them and the traditional elite. An incident is recorded in the royal chronicle that might indicate such a clash. It is mentioned that in 1712, the new *ganaka* (astrologer) Chandrashekhar was murdered by Haorongbam Maichou (A Meitei scholar) on his way to Takhel (Tripura).⁵⁷

Such conflicts can be seen in the legends that developed around the conflict between the *maibas* and the Brahmanas. One such tradition is around the figure of the Brahmana Shanta Das Gossain and Khongnagthaba, a traditional priest. Such clashes increased

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.172.

⁵⁶ Manjushri Chaki-Sircar, *Feminism in a traditional society: Women of the Manipur Valley*, Shakti Books, Ghaziabad, 1984, p.186.

⁵⁷ Paratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.120.

during King Garibaniwaz's period possibly because of his suppressive measures, such as destruction of the shrines of the traditional deities, burning of the *puyas*, attempt to hand over the worship of traditional deities to the Brahmanas and impose the new religion on the people.

However, by the second half of the 18th century, the contending groups seem to have reconciled with each other and both the religions began to exist side by side. It was a period of consolidation of both the religion and thus, the *maibas* and the Brahmanas accommodated each other, both performing their respective functions.

Incorporation of Hindu Myths and Legends within the Meitei Myths and Legends.

Vaishnavism was introduced in Manipur the 18th century and kings like Garibaniwaj had taken up strong measures to propagate the new religion. However, forcible conversion is often not successful and it needs certain strategies to make the people accept a new religion. One of the strategies was to create myths and legends linking the traditional faith with Vaishnavism.

One such myth related to the giving of a new name to the land. Manipur was called by various names before its Vaishnavisation. It was called Poirei Meitrabak or Kangleipak by the people of this land.⁵⁸ It was known by different names to its neighbours. It was called Kathe by the Burmese, Meklee by the Assamese, Moglie by the Cachari and Cassey by the Shans.⁵⁹ The Anglo-Manipur treaty of 1763 refers to the land as Mekhlee.⁶⁰

The Brahmanas named it Manipur and a myth was created linking it to the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. According to this myth, the valley of Manipur was flooded with water

⁵⁸ Wangkhemcha Chingtamlen, *A Short History of Kangleipak*, Part-I, The Wangkhembam Family, Imphal, 2005, pp.41-42.

⁵⁹ Ch.Manihar Singh, *A History of Manipuri Literature*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 2003, p.1.

⁶⁰ N. Sanajaoba, ed., *Manipur Treaties and Documents*, p.12

towards the end of the *satya yuga*. Lord Mahadeva was in search for a place for a divine dance with his consort and they found Manipur. But the valley was flooded and all they could see was the tip of the Nongmaiching hill (abode of the traditional deities Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi). Mahadeva stood on this hill and dug a hole with his *trishul*, a trident and drained the water. Thus, the valley came into existence and a dance was performed in which all the gods from the three regions of the universe participated. According to this story, the dance performed was the first *Lai Haraoba* (merrymaking of the gods). These gods offered many jewels to the land. Ananta took out his gem from his head and gave it to the land and the land was covered with jewels. Thus, it came to be known as Manipur, the land of the jewels.⁶¹

Gangmumei Kabui aptly points out that the adoption of the name Manipur for this ancient kingdom was the beginning of the process of Sanskritisation initiated by its conversion to Vaishnavism.⁶² According to *Sanamahi Laikan*, this name was given by Shanta Das during Garibaniwas' reign. In some of the coins issued by King Bhgyachandra, the legend 'Sriman Manipuresvara Sri Jaya Simha' is mentioned.⁶³ Thus, the name seems to have been given in the 18th century.

One of the principle ways of Hinduisation of Manipur was to provide a genealogy of the ruling kings tracing their lineage to a well known Kshatirya king or prince.⁶⁴ Genealogies claim to be records of succession in the past, although their preservation or even invention can derive from the social institutions of the present for which they provide legitimizing mechanisms.⁶⁵ One can observe such invention or creation of the genealogy of the kings in the case of Manipur too. The genealogy of the kings of Manipur has been traced to Arjuna, the Pandava prince of the *Mahabharata*, but they are said to have belonged to the solar lineage or the *Surya-vamsha* according to *Garibaniwaj*

⁶¹ Bijoy Panchali, Vol. 2, p.257.

⁶² Kabui, *History of Manipur*, p.256.

⁶³ L. Kunjeshwori Devi, *Archeology in Manipur*, Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 2007, p.46.

⁶⁴ M. N. Srinivas, *Cohesive Role of Sanskritisation and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1989, p.63.

⁶⁵ Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early India history*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p.709.

Charit. It states that Chitrabhanu was the king of Manipur when the Pandavas were in roaming in exile in the forest. He had a daughter called Chitrangada who married Arjuna, the third Pandava, when he came to Manipur for pilgrimage and bore a son called Babhrubahana who became the king of Manipur after Chitrabhanu. The text mentions how Arjuna dies at the hands of his son Babhrubahana and how Babhrubahana, at the behest of his mother, went to the underworld, got the necessary gem to revive Arjuna by defeating the snakes and brought back his father from death. The text says that the cave at Kangla ⁶⁶ is the path through which Babhrubahana went to the underworld.

The text then tells how the kings of Manipur belong to the solar lineage or *Surya vamsha* instead of belonging to *Chandra vamsha* or lunar lineage to which the Pandavas belonged. It says that Babhrubhana and his queen Urmila had no son. One day, they went to take a holy dip in the river Vijaya (Imphal River) and prayed to the Sun god to give them a son. The Sun god granted their wish and gave them a son called Jabishtha, but in the form of an egg. The queen declined to accept it as her son and the Sun god gave the egg to Yamaraja who kept it with him till the end of the *Dwapur yuga*. When the *Kali yuga* began, the Sun god asked Lakshmi to descend on earth with the egg so that Jabishtha could become the king of Manipur. The egg was received by Pureiromba, who was born with the blessings of Lord Mahadeva. The egg hatched and Jabishtha came out along with five snakes called *Sarang-Leishangthem, Luwang, Moirang, Khuman* and *Khaba-Nganba*. From the naval of Jabishtha another snake came out and it was called Ningthouja. Pureiromba was given the name *Angom*. These snakes turned into men with the blessings of Lord Mahadeva and they became the seven *salais* or clans of Manipur. Jabishtha then became the king of Manipur with Lakshmi as his queen. It is mentioned that although Arjuna was their forefather, the kings of Manipur belong to the solar lineage as Jabishtha was born of the blessings of the sun. ⁶⁷

Jabishtha has been identified with Pakhangba of the Meitei belief in *Bhagyachandra Charit*. The term Jabishtha is derived from the word *juba* or *yuva* meaning youth and the

⁶⁶ . Kangla is the ancient capital of Manipur.

⁶⁷ *Bijoy Panchali* Vol.I, pp.10-13.

term Pakhangba is derived from the word *pakhang* also meaning youth.⁶⁸ Not merely a Brahmanical geneology, but all the earlier kings were given Sanskrit names. For instance, King Charairongba became Pitambara.⁶⁹ Thus, the lineage was given a divine origin and the kings were conferred names of Hindu gods. This was also a mechanism to provide legitimacy to the ruling dynasty and justify the imposition of Vaishnavism on the people.

Another interesting myth is related to the Vishnu emblem (*Shalachakra*) which King Kiyamba is believed to have received as a gift from the Pong or Shan King Khekhomba. The story is as follows. When Babhrubahana was the king, he requested Shri Govindaji to reside in Manipur. But Shri Govindaji gave this emblem to him to worship and told Babhrubahana that he would come to Manipur later. Since Babhrubahana did not have any offspring, there was no one to succeed him. After his reign came to an end, the neighboring Shan or Pong King ruled Manipur. After three generations, the then Shan King took the Vishnu *Shalachakra* from Manipur and kept it in Burma. However, the *Shalachakra* disappeared after sometime. Several years passed and, after the *Kali yuga* had begun, Lord Vishnu decided to go to Manipur. At that time, Kiyamba was the king of Manipur. The *Shalachakra* was found by a man when he was digging the earth and he gave it to the king of Manipur. The Shan King did not know anything about it. One day, he happens to scratch his body with the *Shalachakra* and became afflicted with leprosy. In his dream, Vishnu appeared and told him to give the *Shalachakra* to the king of Manipur to be worshipped by him. Thus, the Shan King gave it to Kiyamba, but Kiyamba forgot to ask how it was to be worshipped. However, he constructed a temple for it.

The king, after sometime, became seriously ill and no one could cure him. Then, he remembered that the Shan King had said while giving the *Shalachakra* to him that it grants all wishes provided it is worshipped. One noble man proclaimed that it was to be worshipped by a Brahmana. A search for a Brahmana began. But the Brahmanas, who had entered the state, were staying like refugees and, fearing that the King might punish

⁶⁸ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, p.262.

⁶⁹ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.1, p.14.

them, remained hidden. However, one day, a Brahmana called Shubhi Narayana⁷⁰ was caught while bathing in the river and thus the worship of Vishnu started in Manipur.⁷¹

It is evident that these myths were attempts to connect Hinduism with Manipur and to claim that Hinduism was just a revival of what already existed in its pristine past. The aggressive policy adopted by Garibaniwaj must have led to the unpopularity of the king. Thus, a legend was created to justify his actions. This story attempts to explain how Manipur became a Hindu state from Garibaniwaj's period.

This myth is mentioned in both the *Garibaniwaz Charit* and in the *Sanamahi Laikan* with minor differences. In *Garibaniwaj Charit*, it is said that people worshipped a god called Phanindra in Manipur before the arrival of Hinduism. He could be seen but could be heard. This Phanindra has been identified with Sanamahi in the later portion of this text. His attribute that he could be seen also indicates that the deity referred to here is Sanamahi which does not have an iconic representation.

According to the story, this deity went to Shrihatta and ordered a Brahmana called Shanta Das to go to Manipur. This Brahmana has been described as a great devotee of Shri Rama and has been compared to Hanuman in his devotion. He was said to be a *beiragi* (ascetic). The myth says that when this Brahmana ascetic refused to go to Manipur, his house was burnt down. After this he agreed to go and was given a warm welcome by Garibaniwaj, the then king of Manipur. The Brahmana, after enquiring about the religion practiced in this land, suggested that the king adopted a new and a better religion. The king, after consulting with his subjects, decided to adopt this new religion. They are said to have changed the way they wore the sacred thread or the *naguna*. The text emphasizes the importance of knowing the *Gaiyatri mantra*. The king is then said to have become a great devotee of Shri Rama.⁷²

⁷⁰ Shubhi Narayan is mentioned in *Bamon Meihoubarol* and *Bamon Khunthoklon* and he is said to have arrived during King Kiyamba's period.

⁷¹ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, pp.11-13.

⁷² *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.1, pp.16-18.

This story is also mentioned in the *Sanamahi Laikan*, but with a little difference. According to this text, King Garibaniwaj, under the influence of Shanta Das, totally neglected the worship of Sanamahi and even destroyed his metal image. Enraged, Sanamahi made his presence felt by creating panic among the people and one of the king's favourite queens and the royal prince fell ill in mysterious circumstances. The royal physician ascribed this to the offence done to Sanamahi and suggested ways to appease him. After initial compliance, the king refused to honor the god any further and started worshipping Rama once again. This incensed Sanamahi further. Not yet convinced, the king vowed to fast until the god's true identity was revealed and, on the third night, Sanamahi appeared before the king. It was then revealed to him that Sanamahi and Vishnu were same.⁷³

Both the myths narrate how Hinduism came to be accepted in Manipur. The first version suggests smooth conversion of the people without any conflict. However, in the second version, although a final compromise was achieved, the story points to initial clashes between the two faiths. The text also indicates the clash between the traditional priests and the Brahmanas. It mentions that a traditional priest called Moirang Lalhanba was against the king's decision to adopt the new faith and destroy the image of Sanamahi.⁷⁴ The destruction of the shrines of the traditional deities has been mentioned in the royal chronicle. This act of the king must have adversely affected his image so that it became necessary to justify the king's action. Thus, a myth was created to identify Sanamahi with Vishnu.

The figure of Shanta Das has been important in both these stories. His role in the Vaishnavisation of Manipur has been stressed by many scholars. According to Gangmumei Kabui, Shanta Das was a very intelligent Brahmana scholar who was bent on transforming the social and political system of the country.⁷⁵ Shanta Das has been described as the driving force behind the intensive and suppressive Vaishnavisation of the state. He is said to have influenced the king to destroy the shrines of the traditional deities

⁷³ *Sanamahi Laikan*, pp.70-71.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.70-71.

⁷⁵ Kabui, *History of Manipur*, p.256.

and many of the *puyas* (old texts dealing with traditional religion). He is said to have given Manipur its present name, assigned *gotras* to the seven clans of the Meitei society and, introduced many Hindu festivals. S.Nilabir Singh observes that Shanta Das had been instrumental in pushing through the measures that led to the syncretistic transformation of religion in Manipur.⁷⁶

The royal chronicle does not mention anything about this Brahmana during Garibaniwaj's period. During Bhagyachandra's period, there is a reference to him in the royal chronicle. It is mentioned that the pond which was dug during Garibaniwaj's period was dedicated by the king, the queen and Mahapurusha Shanta Das, and was named Padasagar.⁷⁷ There are references to the coming of many Brahmanas in the royal chronicle during Garibaniwaj's reign. It is possible that Shanta Das was one of them who gained the king's favour. He might have been the *guru* of the king of which there are a number of references in the royal chronicle. He is said to have accompanied the king in his official and pleasure trips.⁷⁸ Thus, he must have been quite influential that explains these myths.

The Brahmanas tried to reformulate the traditional myths by borrowing elements from the Hindu mythology. This can be seen in the creation myth of the Meiteis. Each of the deities who participated in the creation of the earth has been identified with a Hindu counterpart. In the Meitei mythology, Aatiya Guru Sidaba assigned the task of creating the earth to his sons Aseeba or Sanamahi and Konjin Tuthokpa or Pakhangba. The Meitei creation myth as mentioned in the *Bhagyachandra Charit*, is very similar to the Hindu myth of creation of the universe and the Vishnu's incarnations.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Sairam Nilabir, 'Sanskritisation Process of Manipur under king Garibaniwaz' in H. Dwijashkhar Sharma ed. *New insights into the Glorious Heritage of Manipur*, vol.2, Akanksha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2009, p. 248.

⁷⁷ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.131.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.134, 135,136,138,142,144.

⁷⁹ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, pp.240-245.

The creation myth of the Meities is as follows:-

The primal sound *hung* initiated the primal duty of creation and the primal elements. Atingkok (Formless Boundless Expans) and Amanba (Infinite Darkness), as eternal manifestations of *Tengbanba Mapu* (Supreme Father), served as the ultimate background of creation. Atingkok controlled and directed the entire course of creation. Atiya Sidaba and Ashiba were the main architects of creation, Konjin Tingthokpa disturbed the process of creation, and Nongthangleima, the goddess of light and thunder, was opposed to Konjin. Tengbanba Mapu called Atiya Sidaba from within Atingkok and asked Atingkok to take Atiya Sidaba down to create the universe. Amamba, who was with Atingkok took Atiya down and called forth Taopiloinai. Taopiloinai is the conglomeration of all elements floating in the vast infinite expanse and is considered to be the Supreme Mother. She appeared as the great imperishable black boulder, Nungmu Tumda Mangdaba. Atingkok sat on it and wedded Nungmu. Atiya was characterized by primal clouds and Taopiloina by air. Their union resulted in the manifestation of Ongthi. He was Ashiba.

Atingkok asked Atiya Sidaba to create the world. Atiya called forth Ashiba addressing him as A and Ashiba came forth as Infinite Water (*Ishing Tarang*). Konchin Tukhokpa was also called out, addressed as Ka, and he appeared as Fire. Atiya Sidaba went up to Atingkok to ask how the earth would be created. He bowed down to Atingkok and asked him to show his worth. Atingkok opened his mouth and showed the entire universe lying within him. The sun, the moon, the pole star and other stars, galaxies, fire, water, air and all others were shown to Atiya who was frightened by this vision. Atiya requested Atingkok to close his mouth. Atiya threw Himself within Atingkok's mouth and tried to drive out all beings by uttering the divine song *Ahei He Hoirou Hoirou Nakese*. Hearing this, Atingkok opened his mouth and all the elements, driven by Atiya came out, *Atingkok sang 'Ahei He Heiya Heiya Heiyanakese'*. This is a song to express happiness in coming out. All these songs are unintelligible. But they are still sung during the performance of the Lai Haraoba festival of the Meiteis.

Uttering the divine hymn *Ungset*, Ashiba spread his body. His belly became the heaven and his back the earth. His two eyes became the sun and the moon. His blood became water, his breath air, his bile fire and his hair became trees and plants.

In the beginning, the earth was under water. It was lifted by Ashiba by means of different species of animals like owl, Kopi (an insect), tortoise and fish, all of which are his own manifestations.

After the creation of the earth and heaven, Atiya Sidaba asked Ashiba to create human beings. Ashiba created the first human/ man Pongkhuon in the pattern of the image of Atiya Sidaba. But to breathe life into was a problem. Only when the five deities, Koubru, Apanba (Pakhnagba), Thangjing, Marjing and Wangbaren, entered into the body of Pongkhu with the Supreme Deity Lainingthou and seated themselves in their proper places within the body as souls did Pongkhu come alive. The five souls were named Tinon, Neno, Tatan, Piyam and Yapi. Thereafter, Pongnaoton was created in the pattern of the image of Atiya Sidaba by Ashiba. But, he too could not breathe. The deities Kari, Kara, Arangba, Okomglon and Nongtamba were placed by Atiya Sidaba within the body of Pongnaoton as the five souls and then he started breathing.⁸⁰

Another myth narrated the origin of the seven *salais* or clans into which the Meitei society was divided. According to this myth, the seven *salais* were derived from the body of Atiya Sidaba, the supreme deity. From his navel emerged the Nganba clan, from his tongue the Sarang Leishangthem clan, from his head the Luwang clan, from his hand the Khuman clan, from his white neck the Angom clan, from his eyes the Ningthouja clan and from his chest the Moirang clan.⁸¹ This is comparable to the story of origin of the four *varnas* mentioned in the *Rig Veda*.

An ateological myth connects Sanamahi with Pakhangba. In this story too, one can observe the influence of the Hindu myths on the Meitei traditions. The myth is about how Pakhangba, the younger son of Atiya sidaba, the supreme lord, gained the throne of his father by circumambulating the throne, while his elder brother Sanamahi went to

⁸⁰ Bhagyachandra Singh, *A critical Study of the Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis*, pp. 59-62.

⁸¹ *Bijoy Panchali*, Vol.2 p.253.

circumambulate the earth.⁸² This is similar to the well known Ganesha- Kartikey myth. The story adds that Atiya Sidaba gave Sanamahi the right to be the lord of the world and thus, the right to be worshipped in every household.⁸³

Identification of the Traditional Deities with Hindu Gods and Goddesses.

Vaishnavism has the potential to incorporate and amalgamate alien cults. Its doctrine of incarnations enables it to assimilate popular divinities within the Brahmanical mould.⁸⁴ Identification of local deities with the Hindu gods and goddesses is one of the principle ways of Hinduisation. This process can be seen right from the formative stages of Vaishnavism. The religion itself arose with the identification of popular divinities with the Brahmanical god Narrayana-Vishnu in an attempt to Brahmanise the popular cults.⁸⁵ The most important example of this is the cult of Krishna.

In Manipur too, one can notice such identifications with the local traditional deities. The most important deity of the Meiteis is Lord Sanamahi. As mentioned in the earlier section, Sanamahi has been identified with Vishnu.

Another deity of the Meitei Pantheon, identified with a Hindu god, is Pakhangba. *Paphal* or the coiled snake in various forms is the symbol of Pakhangba. His association with snakes has led to his identification with the snake lord Ananta.⁸⁶

Goddess Panthoibi has been identified with the Hindu goddess Durga. In Meitei mythology, Panthoibi is the consort of Nongpok Ningthou. There is a reference in the 19th century text *Shamu Phaba Amasung ShriGovindajee Nirupan* (capturing of the wild elephant and the installation of the idol of Shrigovindajee) to Panthoibi as Bhagavati

⁸² *Sanamahi Laikan*, p.13

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁸⁴ Suvira Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaishnavism*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1967, p.152.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.151.

⁸⁶ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, p.245.

Nongpok Panthoibi.⁸⁷ Another reference that confirms this identification can be found in *Garibaniwaj Charit*. While describing the topography of Manipur, it says, “On the east is the Nilakanthgiri mountain where Bhagavati Durga resides with Mahadev.”⁸⁸ This mountain has been identified as Nongmaiching hill which is believed to be the abode of the Nongpok Ningthou and his consort Panthoibi. Saroj Nalini Parratt opines that there is little similarity between the romantic legendary figure of Meitei mythology and the spouse of Shiva. She adds that the identification was necessary because she became one of the great goddesses in the Meitei pantheon, although the identification was made very late. There are many references to the building of shrines and temples in honour of this goddess in the royal chronicle from Charairongba’s period. However, as B.Kullachandra Sharma points out, the fierce aspect of Panthoibi can be seen in the text *Panthoibi Khongoon* (in the footsteps of Panthoibi) that can be compared to the fierce aspect of the Devi, prevalent in mainland India, represented by her forms as Camunda, Durga and Kali.⁸⁹ Such similarities must have helped in the eventual identification. The process seems to have started in the 19th century, as indicated by the dates of the texts. The deity is worshipped during the *Durga Puja* festival at present.

With the identification of Panthoibi as Durga, Nongpok Ningthou was identified with Lord Shiva. Nongmaiching hill has thus been mentioned as *Selloi Tandav Poireiching* in the *Bhagyachandra Charit*.⁹⁰ The festival *Baruni*, in which Lord Shiva is worshipped, is observed in Manipur. It is mentioned in the census report of 1961 that this festival was introduced by King Chandrakirti who also commissioned the construction of the shrine of Shiva on the Nongmaiching hill.⁹¹ The reference in the royal chronicle to the construction of the shrine of Mahadeva during his reign in 1844 possibly indicates this.⁹²

⁸⁷ *Shamu Phaba amasung Shri Govundajee Nirupan*, p.57.

⁸⁸ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol. 1, p.4.

⁸⁹ B.Kullachandra Sharma, ‘Similarities between Sanamahi and Vaishnavism’ in H. Dwijashankar ed. *New insights into the Glorious History of Manipur*, vol.2, p.445.

⁹⁰ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, p.257.

⁹¹ Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, p.182.

⁹² Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.267.

Another deity, identified with Durga, is the Hiyangthang Lairambi. It is mentioned in the *Garibaniwaj Charit* that at Hiyangthang (the place where Lairambi is worshipped) the lower part of the body of the goddess of Kamakhya had fallen.⁹³ There is a reference to the goddess as Hiyangthang Lairamma Kamakhya in the royal chronicle for the year 1843.⁹⁴ Another reference to this deity in the royal chronicle mentions that in 1855, a sacrifice was performed for Hiyangthang Lairambi with the milk of one hundred and eighty cows.⁹⁵ According to Saroj Nalini Parratt, to begin with, the traditional *lai* came to be identified with the Assamese Kamakhya and, by the time of King Chandrakirti's reign, with Durga.⁹⁶

Another deity that was identified with a Hindu god was Thongaren. In the mythology of the Meiteis, he was the god or king of the land of the dead. This god found his equivalent in the Hindu god of the dead Yama or Yamaraja, as mentioned in *Bhagyachandra Charit*.⁹⁷

As mentioned in the above section, Atiya Sidaba or Tengbangba Mapu the supreme deity of the Meities by whose wish the earth was created, came to be identified with Vishnu. Similarly, the Hindu concept of *panchabhuta* was identified with the Meitei belief in *thawi manga* or five souls of the human body. According to Meitei philosophy, as mentioned in the text *Leithak Leikharon* (a book on the creation of the earth), after the creation of the earth, Aseeba (Sanamahi) created the first man Ponkhu on the image of Atiya Sidaba, but he could not give life into it. Then, Atiya Sidaba put the five deities Koubru, Apanba, Thangjing, Marjing, and Wangbaren into the body that gave life to Ponkhu.⁹⁸ In *Bhagyachandra Charit*, these five deities mentioned are said to represent

⁹³ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol. 1, p.4.

⁹⁴ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.264.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.327.

⁹⁶ Parratt, *Religion of Manipur*, p.184.

⁹⁷ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, p.46; Bhagyachandra Singh, *A Critical Study of the Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis*, p.76.

⁹⁸ Bhagyachandra Singh, *op.cit.*, p.76.

earth, sky, fire, water and air respectively and they are claimed to be the same as the *Pancabhuta* of the Hindu concept.⁹⁹

Most of these identifications seem to have to been made in the 19th century. Srinivas remarks, "Identification not only enables wide cultural gulfs to be spanned, but also provides a means for the eventual transformation of the name and character of the deity and the mode of worship."¹⁰⁰ Thus, Panthoibi, Hiyangthang Lairembi and Nongpok Ningthou began to be worshipped in the Hindu mode of worship. However, one does not observe this in the case of Sanamahi, Pakhangba and some other deities. They continued to be worshipped by the traditional priests in the traditional way.

But Vaisnava influence in their worship is evident from certain customs such as making of bloodless offerings in place of animal sacrifices. A reference in the royal chronicle for the year 1870 indicates that the traditional custom of drinking wine was replaced by the drinking of *leiman* or flower water in front of *lai* Pakhangba.¹⁰¹

Identification of Meitei Traditional Festivals with Hindu Festivals.

Not only the deities but the traditional festivals were also identified with the Hindu festivals. The Meitei festivals were given a Hindu name or were modified to fit the form of a Hindu. The 19th century text *Sanamahi Laikan* provides a list of local festivals that were equated with the Hindu festivals.¹⁰²

The annual boat race festival, known as *Heikru Hitongba* and observed in the month of Hiyangei(October/November),was renamed *Jala yatra*.¹⁰³ The earliest reference to this

⁹⁹ *Bijoy Panchali*, vol.2, p.253.

¹⁰⁰ Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and other Essays*, p.61.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.388.

¹⁰² *Sanamahi Laikan*, pp.63-64.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.63.

festival appears in the royal chronicle for the year 1508,¹⁰⁴ although it is possibly observed from an earlier period. This festival was celebrated with a boat race, probably before a *lai* in the pre Hindu period in which the headman wore a garland of *heikru* (an edible berry) which could not be eaten until after the race. According to Saroj Nalini Parratt, the present form of the festival should be dated to the time of King Bhagyachandra (1763-1798), since it was he who built the image of Shri Govindaji in 1776 to whom the offerings were made. A reference in the royal chronicle of the year 1780 to Shri Govindaji that he was made to sit on a boat, indicates this.¹⁰⁵ At present, the race is conducted in front of the images of Shri Govinda and Rasheshwari. However, till the 18th century, the festival was known by the name of *Heikru Hitongba*.¹⁰⁶

According to *Sanamahi Laikan*, the festival of mass holy dip in the Lilong Sahoupat in the month of Wakching (January) known traditionally as *Ayang Yoiren Iruppa*, was renamed *snana*.¹⁰⁷ There is only one reference to this festival and thus its religious significance is obscure. But this dip in the Lilong is reminiscent of King Garibaniwaz's acceptance of the sacred thread from the *Mahapurusha* after they immersed themselves in the river at Lilong in the month of Wakching (December/January) in 1729. The month and the place of performance of the rituals are same, but nothing definite can be concluded from this.

A similar tradition of taking holy dip can be observed in the festival of *Chingoi Iruppa*. Chinkoi is a small rivulet that flows around the Nongmaiching hill, the abode of Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi. According to a legend, a holy dip in the Chinkoi rivulet was made a religious duty by King Naothingkhong, who is said to have ruled Manipur from 673-763. He and his men took bath in this rivulet out of repentance for the death of a *Selloi*¹⁰⁸ girl named Pittanga. She died in his palace out of shame because he

¹⁰⁴ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.21.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.134.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.173.

¹⁰⁷ *Sanamahi Laikan*, pp.63-64.

¹⁰⁸ Sellois are hill tribes settling on the Nongmaiching hill.

refused to admit that he had once promised to marry her and instead regarded her like a mother figure. Since then, it has become a tradition to take a holy bath in the rivulet in the month of Lamta (February/March) to be free from the sins committed in this life.¹⁰⁹

This festival is said to have been transformed into the Hindu festival of *Baruni* in which lord Shiva is worshipped. King Chandrakirti is supposed to have introduced this festival.¹¹⁰ With the identification of Nongpok Ninthou and Panthoibi with Shiva and Durga, climbing of this hill after taking a dip in the rivulet has become a custom on the day of the *Baruni* festival.

Another festival, mentioned in *Sanamahi Laikan*, is *Waira Tenkap* (archery exhibition). This festival, traditionally held in the month of Phairen (January/February), was converted into an occasion for *Kirtana* of Lord Rama. Similarly, *Poirei Apakna*, held in the month of *Lamta* (February/March), was converted into *Loipam* festival;¹¹¹ the *Kongba Laithong Phatpa* (opening of the door of Kongba *lai*) held in Sajiphu (March/April) was changed into *Vishnu Sankranti*. The *Ahong Khongjing* festival held in the month of Ingen (June/July) was substituted by the Hindu *Dol Yatra* festival; *Tara Chanou Katpa*, held in the month of Mera (September/October), in which feasts are offered to one's ancestors, was changed into *Pitri log iratpa* (worship of *pitri log*); the worship of *Nungoibi* in the month of Mera (September/October) was substituted by *Dasnan Kwak Tanba* or the *Dussehra*; and the festival of tasting the newly harvested rice, known as *Chanou Huichintu* and held in the month of Langban (August/September), was replaced by *Govardhan Puja*.¹¹²

The relationship of the festival *Kwak Tanba* (scaring away of crows) with *Nungoibi* is not clear, but *Kwak Tanba* seems to have been an indigenous festival. Shakespear has mentioned a legend which was told to him by the two traditional scholars. The legend is

¹⁰⁹ Bhagyachandra, Singh, *A Critical Study of the Religious Philosophy of the Meiteis*, p.98

¹¹⁰ Kabui, 'Socio Religious Movement', p.93.

¹¹¹ *Sanamahi Laikan*, , pp.63-64.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp.63-64.

as follows. Pakhangba, the mythical ancestor of the Manipuri King, had a son called Khui, who rebelled against him and, for a time, was successful. But eventually Khui was slain by his father in a single combat in the palace and his head was cut off. Khui's spirit is said to have entered into a rare bird called Wakhembam. To celebrate his victory, Pakhangba instituted this festival on the anniversary of the fight. Those skilled in martial arts exhibited their skill before the king, and a Wakhembam was shot with arrows on this day. In 1726-27, Garibniwaz altered the festival to its present form. He ordained that crows, a common bird, should substitute Wakhembam. Since this change, the flight of birds began to be considered as prophetic. Garibniwaz is also said to have instituted a festival to celebrate the killing of Ravana. He also placed an image of Rama, near a large tank which he consecrated in the same year in which he revised the *Kwak Jatra*.¹¹³ Thus, it was made to appear as similar to the *Dussehra* festival.

Later during the reign of King Chandrakirti Singh, this festival was incorporated into the *Durga Puja* festival. It is mentioned in the royal chronicle that in 1851, on the 10th of Mera (October\ November), Friday, during the celebration of the festival *Kwak Tanba*(driving away of the crows), an idol of *lairemma* Durga was made and worshipped, which became a norm..¹¹⁴ Thus, the festival involving the annual worship of Durga also seems to have been introduced in the 19th century.

Apart from these, many new Hindu festivals were introduced. One of the most popular festivals in Manipur now is *Ratha Yatra* of Jagannatha. The reference to this deity appears in the royal chronicle in 1730 during the reign of Garibaniwaz. By the time of King Bhagyachandra's, worship of Jagannath must have been well established in Manipur. The king seems to have been such a great devotee of Jagannatha that he went for begging for seven days at the order of Lord Jagannatha in 1777.¹¹⁵

However, the festival of *Ratha Yatra* is said to have been introduced in Manipur by King Gambhir Singh (1825-1838). The text *Khahi Ngamba*(conqueror of the Khahis or Khasis)

¹¹³. Shakespear, J. 'A Manipuri Festival', *Folklore*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March, 1910, p.81.

¹¹⁴ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.310.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.43.

narrates an incident in connection with the introduction of *Ratha Yatra* in Manipur. King Gambhir Singh is said to have quelled a communal conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus in Sylhet. The story goes that once the Muslim festival *Muharram* and the Hindu festival *Ratha Yatra* fell on the same day. The British resident in Sylhet requested the Hindus to defer their celebration by a day. In the meantime, the Muslims are said to have assaulted the Hindus in order to stop them from observing their festival. Gambhir Singh dispersed the Muslims with the help of his troops and the celebration took place on the appointed day. He is said to have been hailed by the people of Sylhet as the protector of Hinduism.¹¹⁶ The royal chronicle mentions that this event took place in 1729.¹¹⁷

Gambhir Singh, after his return to Manipur, is said to have introduced the festival there. It is mentioned in the royal chronicle that in 1732, on the 20th of *Kalen* (April/ May), Sunday, a Panda Brahmana from Jagannatha Kshetra came to Manipur and started making the idol of Jagannatha. On the 1st of *Ingen*(June/July), Friday, the *jibanyas* ceremony of the idol is said to have been performed and on the next day the festival of *Ratha Yatra* was celebrated with a twelve wheeled *ratha* or chariot.¹¹⁸

The festival of *Jalakeli* is said to have been introduced by King Nara Singh. The royal chronicle mentions that in 1845, on 8th of *Kalen* (April/May), Friday, a pond was dug and the festival of *Jalakeli* was started in the manner in which Radha and Krishna are supposed to have celebrated this festival.¹¹⁹ Several other Vaishnavite festivals, such as *Jhulan*, *Yaoshang* (Manipuri name for Holi) and *Krishna-janma* or *Janmasthmami* were introduced during this period.

Propagation of Vaishnavism

The new religion required some mechanism through which it could reach out to the people and make them aware of its pantheons, tenets and rituals. In Manipur,

¹¹⁶ *Khahi Ngamba*, p.75-77.

¹¹⁷ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.235.

¹¹⁸ . *Ibid.*, p.241.

¹¹⁹ . *Ibid.*, p.271.

Vaishnavism became popular through royal support. Translation of the epics, *Puranas* and Vaishnava literature contributed to this process.

There was a significant development of literature during the 18th and the 19th centuries. As a result of Vaishnavisation of Manipur, the literature that developed during this period was also highly influenced by Vaishnavism. Ch. Manihar Singh has categorized the literature of this period into four groups: (1) the Hindu epics; (2) traditional Meitei faith; (3) historical biographies and (4) fiction.¹²⁰

Even in the literature dealing with traditional faith such as *Sanamahi Laikan* in which the traditional Sanamahi has been identified with Vishnu. Almost all the historical biographies, such as *Chingthangkhomba Maharaj Ganga Chatpa* (king Chingthangkhomba or Bhagyachandra's journey to the Ganges), *Owa ngamba* (conqueror of Owa or Burmese), *Khahi Ngamba* (conqueror of the Khasis), *Takhel Namba* (conqueror of Tripuris) and *Shamu Phaba Amasung Shri Govindaji Nirupan* (capturing of the wild elephant and the installation of the idol of Shri Govinda), contained Vaishnava elements by drawing parallels from the epics. For instance, *Gambhir Singh Nongaba* (Gambhir Singh's heavenward journey) states that after the death of King Gambhir Singh, young Chandrakirti was put on the throne because Nara Singh, the younger brother of Gambhir Singh, had declined to be the king. The writer compared this gesture with the incident in *Ramayana* in which Bharata refused to accept kingship and put Rama's sandals on the throne.¹²¹ Other literatures like *Sanamanik* and *Dhananjoy Laibu Ningba* (Dhananjoy, the devotee) exemplify Vaishnava themes of devotion.

All such literature, most importantly, the Hindu epics and the Puranas, must have helped in the dissemination of the Vaishnavism. These epics not only spread the tales of the Hindu gods and goddesses but also revealed fundamental beliefs of the Hindus. Sruti

¹²⁰ Ch. Manihar Singh, *A History of Manipuri Literature*, Sahitya Academy New Delhi, 2003, p.112.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.163.

Bandhopadyaya argues that this helped Hinduism to smoothly enter into an alien society and culture.¹²²

Public reading of these texts helped Vaishnavism in reaching out to the illiterate masses.¹²³ The royal chronicle records many instances of recital of the Bhagavata Purana. It must have started during the reign of King Bhagyachandra. It is mentioned in the royal chronicle that in 1793, on the 20th of Langban (August/September), Tuesday, Maharaja made all the nobles of the land to listen to the Bhagavata at Kangla.¹²⁴ Also, *Bhagavata saptahs*, in which the recital continues for seven days, are said to have been held from King Nara Singh's period. References to these performances can be found in the royal chronicle.¹²⁵ There is also a reference in the chronicle to a Mahabharata recital in 1869.¹²⁶ Such recitals have been the prerogative of the Brahmanas. Such sessions were organized on occasions of social gatherings and it must have been an effective tool of popularization of Vaishnavism.

There was also the tradition of *wari leeba* (narrating of stories) which must also have served instrument for the propagation of Vaishnavism. These sessions were organized by the wealthy families in which the narrator described incidence such as the vision of Sri Krishna in a dream of King Bhagyachandra, a dream vision of the Ras leela and the transformation of the traditional deities into Vaishnava gods and goddesses through divine intervention.¹²⁷

¹²² Sruti Bandhopadyaya, 'Dance: the tool of Sanskritisation Process in Manipur', paper presented in World Dance Alliance Global Summit on *Dance Dialogues: Conversations across cultures, artforms and practices*, Brisbane, Australia, 13 – 18 July 2008, p.4.

¹²³ S. N. Sharma, *The Neo Vaisnavite movement and the Sattra Institutions of Assam*, Guwahati University, Guwahati, 1966, p 22-24.

¹²⁴ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.162. First mention of the hearing of Bhagavata was in 1783. See p.140.

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp.268, 367, 380, 457, 463.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.379.

¹²⁷ Hodson, *The Meitheis*, p.117.

Another means of propagation was the performance of *Kirtana*. There are many references in the royal chronicle to the public singing of *Kiratnas*. Caitanya's *Sankirtana*, which was a simple mode of worship of Radha and Krishna through hymns of praise and enactment of scenes from the divine sport, was very effective in the propagation of the religion. This was particularly suitable in the case of Manipur because the pre-Vaishnavite religious life of the Meiteis was characterized by dance, drama and music in the celebration of such festival as *lai haraoba* or the pleasing of the gods.

Dance was one of the main instruments in planting Vaishnavism deep into the hearts of the Meitei people. This was started by King Bhagyachandra through the introduction of the *Ras Leela* in 1779. It is a dance drama that depicts the amorous play of Krishna with Radha and the other *gopis* of Vrindavana. There are several references in the royal chronicle to the performance of *Ras Leela*. The traditional dances, especially those which were performed during *lai haraoba*, were modified according to the needs of the Vaishnava sentiment. Thus, it was a combination of the traditional Meitei dance forms and Vaishnavite themes and, hence represents the synthesis of the two cultures.

Thus, Vaishnavism took roots in Manipur in the 18th century. Though there were Brahmanas in Manipur before the 18th century, their influence must have been very slight due to the absence of royal support. Yet, it must be admitted that those Brahmanas who had entered and settled in Manipur before the 18th century, helped in preparing the ground for the Vaishnavisation of the state. From the 18th century, the Brahmanas had started exerting their influence over the king, both in religious and secular matters. The new religion was initially adopted by the king and it was later declared the state religion. Vaishnavism was superimposed on the people. This was resisted especially by the traditional priests and scholars whose position the Brahmanas had begun to usurp through royal support. This is reflected in the literature of the period. The Brahmanas created myths and legends that connected the new religion with the traditional beliefs and practices. They gave a new name to the land and created a Kshatriya genealogy for the ruling family. They justified the king's adoption of the new religion and its imposition on the people through the myths and legends they fabricated. They identified traditional

deities and festivals with the Hindu ones and propagated that their worship was more effective in the Vaishnava way. Tools of propagation such as translation of the epics and the *Puranas* into vernacular, organizing public narration of them at social gatherings and also through dance, drama and music proved very effective. Alongside the new faith, people still followed the traditional one, both accommodating the other and absorbing elements from one another. Thus, Manipur evolved an indigenized form of Vaishnavism.

CHAPTER:IV

The Vaishnavised Meitei Society and the Brahmanas

Religion is an expression of a society's beliefs, customs, traditions and ideology. A change in the existing religion or adoption of a new religion often results in a corresponding change or modification of the society's assumptions, beliefs and traditions. With the adoption of Vaishnavism, significant changes occurred in Manipur society. This chapter will look into the changes in the social structure of the Meiteis after the adoption of Vaishnavism and the role of the Brahmanas in regulating the socio- religious life of the people with the formation of a body of Brahmanas called the Brahma Sabha and the codification of the rules of conducts for socio- religious observances through such texts as *Vyavastharanava*.

Social Structure.

The Meitei society was basically divided into seven *salais* or clans. The *salais* have been defined as large exogamous units, each tracing to a common, mythical ancestor, who is part of the Meitei pantheon¹. The seven *salais* are Ningthouja, Angom, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Khaba- Nganba and Sarang- Leishangthem. Each of them is divided into various *sageis* or sub-clans. According to another system of classification, the society was divided into four *panas* or units for administrative purposes. The people under the *panas* were assigned different grades according to their posts. The society in this system was more or less egalitarian.² According to Vijayalakshmi Brara, the hierarchy was based on the basis of royalty, the kingship principles and it was not rigid.³

¹ Vijayalakshmi Brara, *Politics, Society and Cosmology in the India's North East*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, p. 83.

² M. Kirti Singh, *Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, 1980, p.87

³ Brara, 'Religious movements and cultural synthesis of Manipur: An observation on Manipuri Hinduism'. This paper was presented at the National Seminar on 'Globalisation and the changing scenario of cultural interaction: Manipur experience' at Manipur University, 3rd-4th March, 2005, p.5.

Outside the *pana* system, the society included other categories like the *lois*, the *keis* and the hill tribes. The *lois* is believed to be autochthones of Manipur who were subjugated by the Meiteis and were made to pay tribute. The term *loi* has different connotations when used independently, as a suffix or a prefix, but all of them carry the meaning of being subdued, dependent, backward or lowly.⁴ For instance, *loi thaba* means sent to exile and *loi chanba* means conquer and subjugate. The *keis* were the slaves of the king whose function was to provide and pound rice for the king's household. These people were not considered to be at par with the Meiteis and occupied an inferior status in society. However, the concept of purity and pollution that developed later was unknown to the Meiteis.

With the adoption of Hinduism, the social structure underwent some changes. In Hinduism, the society is divided into four units arranged in a hierarchical order which is called the *varna* system. In this system, the highest position is occupied by the Brahmanas who are followed by the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Theoretically, one cannot change one's *varna* which is determined by birth. It is necessary to have a ritual status in Hinduism since it is according to one's location in the *varna* system that an individual performs the rites prescribed for him. Thus, the newly converted people had to be assigned a *varna*.

All the Meiteis, including the king were given the Kshatriya status. According to Vijalakshmi Brara, the reason for assigning a single caste to all Meiteis was that at the base of the *salai* structure was the rule of exogamy which implied equal status to all of them.⁵ There was no Vaishya and Shudra category in Manipur. Thus, in Manipur, the Hindu society was composed of two castes, the immigrant Brahmanas and the 'indigenous' Kshatriya Meiteis. It is interesting to note that the same Brahmanas who began to come to Manipur from the 15th century and did not enjoy a high status in society were now pushed up in the ladder to occupy the highest position in the social hierarchy. The position of the Brahmanas in society can be inferred from the fact that King

⁴ Brara, *Politics, Society and Cosmology*, p.115.

⁵ Brara, 'Religious movements and cultural synthesis in Manipur', p.5.

Garibaniwaj performed a purificatory rite for the killing of a Brahmana woman.⁶ Similarly, King Bhagyachandra abdicated the throne in 1761 because of the death of a Brahmana at the hands of one of his attendants.⁷

Although the Brahmanas were not exempted from the *lallup* system in which everyone in the kingdom was required to give free labour for 10 out of every 40 days to the king, the rules of punishment were relaxed for them. For instance, the royal chronicle mentions that in the year 1877, on the day of *Durga Puja*, 16th of October, a group of five youngsters Manoharmayum, one Adhikarimayum, (both are Brahmanas indicated by their surnames), one Laishram, one Surisam and another Laishram, while coming to see the festival misbehaved with five girls and all of them were caught and put in the sun for five consecutive days at different market places. But the two Brahmanas had to sit beneath the *sagai*, or the stage made for the purpose.⁸

The *lois* and the *keis*, who had an inferior social status earlier, were now declared outcastes. Similarly, the hill tribes and the Muslims came to be recognized as unclean by the Meiteis. The adoption of Vaishnavism had led to the introduction of concepts like purity and pollution in the land. Interaction with the polluted communities and dining with them became strictly prohibited. The royal chronicle mentions that in the year 1864 on the occasion of the *Jhulan* festival, a Muslim woman was found watching the celebration at the *mandapa* of Sri Govindaji's temple. Purificatory rites had to be performed at the *mandapa* and in the house of the Brahmana she had entered.⁹ Another indication of hill tribe being considered impure can be seen from an episode in the text *Bhagyachandra Charit*. It states that a hill woman was once found feeding a Meitei boy. Since this would lead to the loss of caste of the boy, she was caught by the king's men and was brought to the court for trial.¹⁰

⁶ Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.148

⁷ Ibid, p.172.

⁸ Ibungohal Singh and Khelchandra Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.445.

⁹ Ibid p.372

¹⁰ *Bijoy Panchali* vol.2, p. 182

Apart from the assigning *varna* status to individuals, the seven *salais* were assigned seven *gotras*. Ningthouja *salai* was given Shandilya, Angom was given Gautama, Luwang was given Kashyapa, Khuman was given Maudgalya, Moirang was given Aitreya-Angirasa, Khaba-Nganba was given Bharadhwaja and Sarang- Leishangthem was given Vasishtha.¹¹ This assignment must have been done since both *gotra* and *salai* are patrilineal exogamous clans. According to Thomas Trautman, the main function of the *gotra* as exemplified by the Dharmashastras, was regulation of marriage.¹² *Salais*, being patrilineal exogamous clans, also played a somewhat similar role in Meitei society. Hence, it was easy for the Brahmanas to assign *gotra* status to the *salais* and declared that marriage was to be conducted in the Hindu way.

According to Brahmanical law, it is forbidden to marry outside one's *varna* or caste. The *anuloma* form of marriage, in which the groom's caste is higher than that of the bride's, was tolerated, but with reservation. There developed parallel rules in Manipur regarding permissible degrees of intercaste marriage. The following are the rules which were enumerated by the Palace Pandit of Manipur in 1930.

- (i) In case a Brahmana man marries a Kshatriya woman, their offspring will be considered a Brahmana, but he will not be allowed to cook food for the king or men of high rank. However, he can become a *purohita*. If a Brahmana man marries a *loi* woman, his son will be considered a Brahmana only by name and he will not be recognized as a Brahmana in society and will not be allowed to perform any of the functions of a Brahmana.
- (ii) If a Meitei man marries a Brahmana woman, the Meitei will be banished as a *loi* to a village. Such cases are mentioned in the royal chronicle. All Brahmana women should be considered as mother by the Kshatriyas. Such a tradition must have developed in order to keep a check on the inter caste marriage.

¹¹ *Sanamahi Laikan*. p.59-60

¹² Thomas Trautman, *Dravidian Kinship*, Vistar Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.244

- (iii) If a Meitei man marries a *loi* woman, the man will be reduced to the status a *loi*. In case of a marriage between a *loi* man and a Meitei woman, the woman will become a *loi*. If a Meitei marries a Rajkumari, his social status will advance.¹³

Widow re-marriage is allowed, but the marriage ceremony is carried out without ostentation. Even divorcees were allowed to remarry. A man who married a widow or a divorcee, was not turned out of the society, but he lost his status. He could not become the *piba* or head of his *sagei* and could not represent his clan in socio-religious functions. They were not allowed to serve or touch the king and could not cook food for his locality or an institution. A Rajkumar who married a divorcee or a widow lost his right to inherit the throne.¹⁴

Thus, one can observe the transformation in the status of the Brahmanas. In the early period of their arrival in Manipur, they were made to marry a woman belonging to the *loi*, the *kei* or a hill tribe, but after the adoption of Vaishnavism, such matrimonial alliances became restricted. Even marriage with a Meitei was not approved. The royal chronicle mentions instances of banishment of Meitei men for having relations with Brahmana women. However, it should be noted that such restrictions did not begin immediately after the state's acceptance of Vaishnavism. The concepts of purity and impurity and restrictions on intercaste marriage must have started only after the religion was firmly established in Manipur and the Brahmanas acquired sufficient ritual authority to be able to popularize such ideas and impose such rules.

There are a few references in the royal chronicle to the practices of sati. The first reference to *sati* occurs in king Garibniwaz's period in 1735. It is mentioned that, "7th, Thursday, Bamon Narakhyan died along with his two wives." In the same year, "Wahengpam cha, the Nongthonba (an official) died. He died with his two wives."¹⁵ The first case is of a Brahmana, while the second is that of a Meitei. Another reference to this

¹³ John Parratt ed. *Notes on Manipuri Beliefs and Customs*, Manipur State Archives, 1998.p.88

¹⁴ Ibid.p.89.

¹⁵ Ibid.p.143.

practice occurs in 1737. It was mentioned that Thongai, the Keirungpa, who was in charge of the royal ladies, died with two of his wives.¹⁶ It seems to have been an unusual practice in Manipur and hence the chronicle found it necessary to mention a few stray incidents. However, even a few instances are suggestive, though the practice did not continue in Manipur and was not adopted by the people.

Rituals and observances

Rituals have been described as a patterned behaviour, consisting of prescribed actions, performed periodically and/ or repetitively, which is perhaps the most important constituent element of a religion and is located at the centre of any religious performance.¹⁷ The adoption of a new religion will therefore involve simultaneous adoption of the rituals of the new religion. In the case of Manipur, this can be seen in the modification to various rituals involved in the observances of the rites of passage, such as birth, marriage and death.

Birth- Birth in the traditional Manipuri society involves a *maibi* who acts as a mid-wife. She invokes the six souls (The Meiteis believe that a human body has five souls and his shadow, which is the sixth one) to take up their place in the body of the child and then she cuts the umbilical cord. The placenta is put in an earthen pot and buried outside the house. On the morning of the sixth day, the ceremony of the *ipanthaba* is conducted by the *maibi* along with offerings of rice, vegetables and a fish.¹⁸ With the adoption of Vaisṇavism, *Shashthi Puja* came to be introduced which was conducted by a Brahmana. It is performed in the evening of the sixth day of the birth of the child.

Churakarana- The Manipuri Vaishnavas perform the ceremony of churakarana or tonsure. In this ceremony, both shaving of the head and piercing of the ears are done. The prescribed age for the ceremony is three years or five years for both the boys and the

¹⁶ Ibid.p.146.

¹⁷ Kunal Chakrabarti, 'Recent approaches to the history of religion in Ancient India' in Romila Thapar ed. *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1995.p.203.

¹⁸ Saroj Nalini Parratt, *The Religion of Manipur*, Firma KLM, Calcutta, 1980 pp.78-79. Also, in Brara, *Politics, cosmology and society*, pp.158-159.

girls. On this occasion, *sankirtanas* are performed which are followed by feasts.¹⁹ The practice of ear-piercing seems to be a very old one. There are many references in the royal chronicle to this ceremony being observed by the king and the members of the royal family. Tonsure, however, was a new custom.

Initiation rite or the upanayana ceremony- This was included among the lifecycle rituals of the Meiteis only after the adoption of Vaishnavism. In Manipur, this ceremony is conducted in two phases. The first is initiation into the religion called *Laiming louba* or taking the name of God and the second is the adoption of the sacred thread called *lugun(nagun) thangba*. This is applicable to both boys and girls but only the boys wear the sacred thread. For the Brahmana boys, the age of initiation is 9 while that of a Kshatriya it is 13-16. The sacred thread of a Brahmanas should have nine strands, while that of a Kshatriya six strands. In the initiation ceremony or *laiming louba*, the boy or the girl is invested with a *kanthi* or a garland of tulasi beads by the guru with the chanting of the name of Harinama. In Manipur, the king or a royal prince who is not a Brahmana, can also perform the ceremony of *laiming louba*.²⁰

Marriage- With the adoption of Vaishnavism, the rituals of marriage were Hinduised, although many traditional elements were still followed. The ceremony begins with *heishing kharai puba* in which fruits and other items are offered to the bride's family by the groom's family for the worship of the bride's family deity. The marriage is solemnized with Vedic incantations, exchange of garlands and circumambulation of the groom by the bride for seven times. However, in Manipur, instead of *yajna*, *sankirtana* is performed. It is forbidden to marry within the same *gotra* and the same *salai* marriage. With the coming of Hinduism, marriage between the *sapinda* or one's kindred upto four generations from both the parents' side has also been prohibited.

Death- Burial was general practice in disposing of the dead in traditional Meitei society, though some sections might have had followed the practice of cremating the dead. With

¹⁹ Kirti Singh, Religious developments, p.252.

²⁰ Kirti Singh, *Recent Researches in Oriental and Indological Studies*, Parimal Publications, Delhi, 1998, p.90.

the adoption of Vaishnavism, the practice of cremating the dead was introduced. The royal chronicle mentions the introduction of this practice in the 1724.²¹ The first reference to the performance of *shraddha* is in 1752 for King Garibniwaj. ²²*Asthi sanchaya* is observed on the sixth day of the death in which the bone or ashes of the deceased are collected to be immersed in the Ganga or some other sacred site. *Shradha* is performed on the 10th day of the death for the Brahmanas and on the 15th day for the Kshatriyas. The anniversary of death called *phiroy* is also observed. Both in *phiroy* and in *shraddha*, *sankirtana* is performed and *Bhagavata Purana* is recited.²³

All these rites are conducted by the Brahmanas. Apart from these ceremonies, they are also required in other religious ceremonies. Singing of *kirtana* and recital from the *Bhagavata Purana* are intrinsic to many religious ceremonies. Every locality or *lekai* started having a temple and a Brahmana family to serve the temple. Thus, they managed to penetrate deep into the life of the Meiteis.

Apart from these rituals, the Manipuri Hindus observe *vratas* or fastings of certain days of the lunar calendar, such as *ekadashi* and *pujima*. They celebrate many Vaishnava festivals such as the *Ratha Yatra*, *Durga Puja*, *Jhulan*, *Jalakeli*, *Yaoshang* or the Manipuri *Holi* and *Krishna Janma* or *Janmasthami*.

The Manipuri Vaishnavas also go on pilgrimage. Some of the most important places of pilgrimage of the Manipuri Vaishnavs are Navadwip, Brindavana, Puri and Dwaraka which are associated with Gaudiya Vaishnavism. There are many references in the chronicle to people setting out for pilgrimages. The first reference occurs in 1735 when it is mentioned that Bamon Kesok, Horinara and others went to take a holy dip in the Ganga. The first reference to a Meitei setting out for pilgrimage occurs in the chronicle in 1790, when one of the queens, Chaindri, went for pilgrimage. Kings, queens, members of the royal family and important officials, apart from the Brahmanas, are mentioned to have gone on pilgrimage in the chronicle.

²¹ Parratt, *Cheitharol Kumpapa*, p.132

²² Ibid, p. 168.

²³ Kirti Singh, *Religious Developments*, pp.267-70.

Brahma Sabha and the introduction of Smriti Laws in Manipur

A formal organization had become necessary to regulate the norms of socio-religious observances of the newly Vaishnavised society and also to resolve conflicts arising out of these. This must have led to the formation of Brahma Sabha, an apex body of the Brahmanas in Manipur. This was formed during king Gambhir Singh's reign (1825-1838). According to Dr. M.Kirti, this body consisted of the Brahmana specialists in the field of *nyaya*, jurisprudence, *gyotish* and theology.²⁴ The formation of this body can be traced to the setting up of an institute of the Brahmanas called the *Bamon Loishang*.

The state had several departments called *Loishangs* or Services for the smooth functioning of the administration. Each *Loishang* incorporated a number of posts. The functions of these posts have been delineated in a text called *Lioyumba Sinyen* (Loiyumba's distribution of duties). It was the king who establishes these *Loishangs*, and with time, their numbers increased. For instance, *Lairikyengba Loishang* (department of scribe) was added later. Lairkyenbam is the surname given to the family of the non-Brahmanas who migrated to Manipur from the 15th century and were employed by the king as scribes. Some *Loishangs* are of the nature of cultural and religious institutions like the *Maiba Loishang* (Institute of the *maibas* or the traditional priests) and *Pandit Loishang* (institute of *maichous* or scholars)²⁵.

With the increasing importance and the influence of the Brahmanas, it became necessary to set up a *Loishang* for them. The *Bamon Loishang* was set up during the period of King Garibaniwaj's.²⁶ Thus, we come across references in the royal chronicle to *bamon hanjaba* (an official under the *Bamon Loishang*) for the first time in 1716.²⁷

²⁴ Kirti Singh, *Recent researches*, p.87

²⁵ Khulem Chandrashekhar, 'Loiyamba Shinyen: The twelfth century Meitei Constitution' (Trans. Naorem Sanajaoba) in N. Sanajaoba ed. *Manipur Treaties and Documents (1110- 1971)*, vol.1, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1993, pp.3-11.

²⁶ . A. Chitreshwor Sharma, B. Kullachandra Sharma and N.Ibochouba ed. *Origin and Migration of the Manipuri Brahmins*, Chingtam Press, Imphal, 1995, p.4.

²⁷ Parrat, *Cheitharol Kumpapa*, p.123 and 125. for the year 1716,1717

It eventually evolved into a body called *Pancharatan* or the five jewels, consisting of five learned Brahmanas during the reign of king Bhagyachandra(1763-1798). It was first mentioned in the royal chronicle in the year 1796.²⁸ The names of the posts under this body were Vidyalankara, Vidyanidhi, Vidyasundara, Bachaspati and Vidyathakura.²⁹

This was again enlarged to form a body of nine learned Brahmanas called *Navaratan* or the nine jewels during King Chourjit's reign (1803-1813). To the existing five *ratnas*, four new *ratnas* called Vidyavargisha, Tarkalankara, Bamon Hanjaba and Bamon Hidang are added. However, the gurus of the king and queen were not included among them.³⁰ The *Cheitharol Kumpaba* mentions the inauguration of its building in 1804.³¹

This body came to be known as Brahma Sabha in king Gambhir Singh's period (1825-1838). The earliest reference to Brahma Sabha occurs in the *Cheitharol Kumpaba* in 1831. It is mentioned that "On the first of *Shajibu*(March/ April), Wednesday, Maharaj Chinglen Nongdren Khomba (Gambhir Singh), along with Yuvaraja, the Brahmana Sabha and all the other nobles of the land gathered and sat at Sri Govindaji's *mandapa* to listen to the reading of a text called *Laghu Jyotish Candrika* prepared by Sri Khumbong Debakishore, the *Panji Sanglakpa*."³²

The importance of this body in the court can be assessed from a reference in the royal chronicle to the creation of the post of *Vyavasthakari* in 1840 in the month of Wakching(December/ January). It says, "On the 17th, Sunday, on the occasion of appointing Sri Laipubam Thakur Hanjaba by the king as the *Vyavasthakari* in the court, where all the nine *ratans* and the ministers of the state were present, he a nine gun salute was presented."³³

²⁸ It was first mentioned in *Cheitharol Kumpaba* in the year 1796.see Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba* p.169

²⁹ Sharma,Sharma and Singh ed. op.cit.,p.6

³⁰Ibid., p.7

³¹ Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, p.184. King Chourjit must have adopted the idea of having nine jewels or *navaratnas* in the court as during the Gupta king, Chandragupta II Vikramaditya.

³² Singh and Singh ed. *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, Pp.238

³³ Ibid., pp.257

The Brahma Sabha consisted of many officials with the king as the head. All the proceedings were conducted in front of the king. He appointed the Brahmanas to the posts and his decision was final. Some of the important posts under Brahma Sabha are as follows:

- (1) *Vyavasthakari*- This was the most important position in the Brahma Sabha. The importance of this post even in the royal court can be inferred from the fact that the first appointee was welcomed with nine gun salute. He usually looked after the rites and rituals of Sri Govindaji and matters regarding purity and pollution. He performed the purificatory rites. He was required to be very knowledgeable, intelligent and the senior most of all the other members. He should also have belonged to a very high family.
- (2) *Acharyaguru*- He was the preceptor of the king and conferred on him the sacred thread.
- (3) *Rajapurohita*- As the name suggests, he performed all the rituals and ceremonies connected with the family of the ruling king.
- (4) *Tantradhara*- He performed the *yajna* in the Shri Govindaji's temple.
- (5) *Brahma*- He was the overseer during the performance of the *yajna*.
- (6) *Dhamandi guru*- He narrated the *nara pranalika* during the performance of a *sankirtana*.
- (7) *Vidyaratna*- This post was established during king Churachand's period. His duties were like those of a manager. He was responsible for the appointment of the *pujari* of Shri Govindaji.

(8) *Hanjaba*- He was the superintendent of the department and laid down the rules and regulations.

(9) *Hidang*- He was the assistant of the *Hanjaba*.³⁴

The importance of this body in matters concerning the socio-religious norms can be observed from the references in the *Cheitharol Kumpaba*. For instance, it is mentioned that in the year 1868, the conflict that divided the Brahmanas into two groups was resolved with the intervention of the Brahma Sabha and the reconciliation took place over a feast before Shri Govindaji.³⁵ Another interesting reference occurs in 1874 when the king, on the advice of the Brahma Sabha, announced to the assembly of the heads of all the seven *salais* or clans that the rules regarding marriage should be strictly followed so that the number of widowers did not increase further. It was announced that rules regarding forbidden marriages, such as within the same *gotra* and the same *salai* or between persons descending from same grandmother but of different grandfather must be observed without exception.³⁶ Another reference in the royal chronicle of the year 1874 relates to a dispute between the Brahmanas and the *ganakas* (astrologer).³⁷

The Brahma Sabha mostly consisted of senior Brahmanas, well-versed in scriptures, and other learned scholars who could contribute to the formulation and implementation of social norms. The high priests, *Acharya* and *Vyavasthakari*, were the authorities in religious matters and they were consulted in connections with the injunctions of the Shrutis and Smritis.

Successive attempts were made to introduce the Smriti rules in the everyday life of the Manipuris. This can be seen in the text *Vyavastharanaba*, written during king Chandrakirti's reign. This was an enlarged version of the text on jurisprudence called *Wayen Lairik*, which was written during king Bhagyachandra's reign. It was based on the

³⁴ Kirti Singh, 'Meitei Bamon amsung Brahma Sabhagi houraklon shamana neinaba' (A short note on the Meitei Bamon and the origin of Brahma Sabha), *Matamgi Khongthang*, vol.35,1981, pp.10-11.

³⁵ Singh and Singh, *Cheitharol Kumpaba*, pp.357 Nothing regarding the conflict is mentioned in the text.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.418.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.419.

Hindu Smritis and its prescribed codes regarding rituals relating to birth and death, pollution and purity, taboos, rules regarding marriage relations and divorce, celebration of the Hindu festivals, laws of inheritance and division among the *varnas*.

The text deals extensively with the auspicious and inauspicious days (*tithis*) in the lunar calendar. It states what kind of rituals and observances should be undertaken or avoided on certain days. For instance, it mentions that rites like *churakarana* and *upanyana* must not be observed during *malamasa*.³⁸ It says that in order to beget a good son, one should observe a *vrata* or fast on all the Krishna *ekadashis* or 11th of the dark fortnight. Those below eight years of age and those above 80 years of age should not observe the *ekadashi vrata*.³⁹ It mentions the auspicious days and times for taking a holy dip in the river Ganga. For instance, it says that if one takes a holy dip in the Ganga on *puṇnima* or full moon, he will be free from his sins.⁴⁰

The text discusses in detail the period of impurity caused by birth and death. It says that impurity by death is more than impurity by birth. Regarding death, the period of impurity to be observed by a Brahmana was 10 days, by a Kshatriya was 15 days, by a Vaishya was 20 days and by a Shudra was 30 days. The prescribed norms should be observed by the *sapindas*.⁴¹ The *Vyavastharanava* laid down the various categories of *sapindas* for men and women and the rites to be performed by them to get rid of death related impurities. For those who belonged to the same *gotra*, the impurity was removed by bath. The text prescribed that if the news of death of a family member staying abroad reached late, the period of impurity should be observed in accordance with the *varnas* status of the deceased from the day the news was heard. If the son of a person, who married a low caste woman, was staying with the father at the time of his death, the son should observe the period of impurity in accordance with his father's caste, but if he stayed separately

³⁸ *Vyavastharanava*, p.4

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.27

⁴¹ Trautman, *Dravidian Kingship*. p.248.

with his mother, he should observe the period of impurity in accordance with his mother's caste.⁴²

In case of the birth of a child, the period of impurity to be observed for the Brahmanas was 10 days, while for the Shudras it was 13 days. The text does not state the rules for the other two *varnas*.⁴³ Elaborate rules were prescribed for the birth of male and female child belonging to the different *varnas* and for various other kinds of birth related impurities.

Marriage within the same *gotra* or *svagotra* prohibited. Marriage with kins up to the fourth degree of the parental lineage was prohibited. This was a deviation from the Hindu law which generally prohibits marriage within seven degrees from the father's side and five degrees from the mother's side. Marriage with one's *guru*'s daughter was prohibited, but with the *guru*'s sister and granddaughter was allowed. If a Brahmana man married a Kshatriya woman, she was not allowed to cook food for and serve her husband's family.⁴⁴

Regarding the duties of each *varna*, the text mentions that it was the duty of the Brahmanas to keep a check on intervarna marriages unlike the other Hindu law texts, the Manipur code allowed the Brahmanas to take up trade as a profession but with certain restrictions on the items of trade. They were not allowed to trade in salt, soap, leather and cows. The Kshatriyas were also allowed to trade except in salt, leather and soap. It is mentioned that the Kshatriyas should not accept *dakshina* from a Brahmana family. In case he received a piece of cloth, he should offer it to the god.

Thus, an attempt to apply the Smriti laws in a modified form can be observed in this text. It draws heavily on the Dharamshastra texts but altered them to suit the local requirements. M. Kirti points out that the Manipur codes were derived from both the pan-

⁴² Op. cit. pp.55-56.

⁴³ Ibid., pp.58-60.

⁴⁴ Kirti Singh, *Matamgi Khongthang*, pp.7-8.

Indian brahmanical laws and the Smriti works of Bengal.⁴⁵ But the local practices often received precedence.

With increasing authority in their hand, the Brahmanas began to impose the rules of purity and pollution with greater severity. We have seen that the *loi* communities, the Muslims and the hill tribes were regarded as impure by the Meitei society, especially by the Brahmanas. Contact with them was prohibited and in case of an accidental contact, a purificatory rite had to be performed. Even the Meiteis from outside Manipur came to be looked down upon and they were not allowed to share the hookah with the local people. Dogs and pigs were regarded as unclean and people were not allowed to keep them within the premises of their house. Thus, N. Tombi Singh points out that while this body of the Brahmanas and the Smriti texts it produced contributed largely to the imposition of the Hindu beliefs and practices among the people of Manipur, they also led to the isolation of the Hindu society from the non-Hindu population living in the hill areas.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Kirti Singh, *Recent Resarches*, pp.88

⁴⁶ Tombi Singh. *Manipur and the Mainstream*, N.K.Singh,Imphal, 1975. pp.85.

CHAPTER:V

CONCLUSION

A process of cultural interaction began with the advent of the Brahmanas in Manipur. Vaishnavism was adopted as the state religion and the Brahmanas played a significant role in the Vaishnavisation of the people.

The migration of the Brahmanas started from the 15th century and continued till the end of the 19th century. The movement was slow but continuous. They migrated from different parts of the country, such as Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Gujarat and even Lahore. Most of them, however, came from Bengal.

All the Brahmanas that came and settled in Manipur were integrated with the Meitei society. They married local women and assumed Meitei surnames. To begin with, they were scattered throughout the valley. However, by the 18th -19th centuries, they were mostly confined to the Imphal area.

Unlike in other parts of India, their migration was not prompted by royal patronage. In fact, they married local women belonging to the lower strata of the society such as the *lois* and the *keis*. Also, they did not enjoy any special status in the Meitei society. The situation, however, began to change from the beginning of the 18th century.

The period from the 15th to the end of the 17th century can be described as the formative period in the development of Vaishnavism in Manipur. Although there is no clear evidence of Hindu influence on Meitei society before the 18th century, it is hard to believe that these Brahmanas did not create an impact on the society or the king. Their influence must have been at work before the formal acceptance of Vaishnavism in the 18th century.

The position of the Brahmanas began to improve from the 18th century with the adoption of Vaishnavism by the king. They received royal favours and began to exert their influence in matters of religion, culture and the state. Brahmanical practices were introduced in the royal court. A new almanac based on Hindu astrology was introduced in

1761. A particularly powerful Brahmana called Shanta Das Gossai acted as a catalyst in this process.

Vaishnavism was introduced in Manipur in the 18th century. Charairongba was the first Hindu king of Manipur and he built many temples of Hindu gods and goddesses. But he did not attempt to impose his personal faith on his subjects. However, his successor, King Garibaniwaz, adopted an aggressive policy. The references in the royal chronicle *Cheitharol Kumpaba* suggest that an attempt at forcible conversion of the people into Vaishnavism was made. He declared Vaishnavism as the state religion. He disregarded the traditional deities and destroyed their shrines. A glaring attempt at Hinduisation of the traditional deities was also made by transferring the right to conduct the rituals of their worship to the Brahmanas. Such attempts provoked reactions from the traditional scholars and priests, whose position was undermined by the Brahmanas. This is reflected in the literature of the period, such as *Sanamahi Laikan* and *Khagemba Langjei*.

During King Bhagyachandra's reign, a reconciliation of the two religions seems to have been achieved, while attempts to popularize Vaishnavism continued. This process went on till the end of the 19th century and kings Gambhir Singh, Nara Singh and Chandrakirti helped in strengthening the new religion in Manipur.

The process of Vishnavisation was carried out by the Brahmanas with the royal support. They gave the name Manipur to the state by linking it with the epic *Mahabharata*. They created a new genealogy of the royal family by tracing descent from Arjuna, the Pandava prince. Many myths were created that connected Hinduism with Manipur and it was claimed that Hinduism was merely a revival of what had already existed in the pristine past. They also tried to reformulate the traditional myths and retell it with elements borrowed from Hindu mythology. Even the origin myth of the seven *salais* or clans into which the Meitei society was divided was made to conform to the pattern of the origin of the four *varnas*, as mentioned in the *RigVeda*.

A policy of identifying the local deities with the Hindu gods and goddesses which has been described as one of the prime techniques of Sanskritisation, was carefully pursued. Thus, Sanamahi was identified with Vishnu, Hiyangthang Lairemma with Kamakhya

Devi, Panthoibi with Durga and Nongpok Ningthou with Mahadeva. Even the deities associated with creation myths were identified with their counterparts in the Hindu mythology.

Some of the traditional festivals were identified with the Hindu festivals. For instance, the festival called *Tara Chanou Katpa*, in which food was offered to the ancestors, was now called *Pitri Log Iratpa* (*iratpa* means worship). Several other new festivals, such as *Ratha Yatra*, *Jhulan*, *Jalakeli*, and *Durga Puja*, were introduced.

The Brahmanas, with the royal support, propagated Vaishnavism through translations of the Sanskrit epics, Puranas and other Vaishnava literature into Manipuri. Public narration of these texts was organized that helped in the dissemination of Vaishnava ideals among people. *Kirtana* also became an effective means of propagation. One major cultural achievement of the Vaishnavism of Manipur was the Ras Leela, a dance drama that depicts the divine play of Radha and Krishna with the *gopis* in Vrindavana. It became one of the major instruments of propagation of Vaishnavism.

At the level of the society, the Brahmanas introduced the *varna* system in Manipur. However, owing to the egalitarian nature of the society, only one *varna* could be effectively introduced. Thus, all the Meiteis were declared Kshatriyas. The seven *salais* were equated with seven *gotras*. The *lois*, the *keis*, the Muslims and the settlers of the surrounding hills were pushed outside the bounds of society and the hitherto unknown concepts like purity and pollution were introduced. These measures helped the Brahmanas maintain a stronghold on the people and remain at the top of the social hierarchy.

Important changes were also made in the life cycle rituals. Ceremonies, such as the *upanayana* or initiation, were added, and the rituals pertaining to birth, marriage and death were Hinduised to a large extent.

The Brahma Sabha was formed as the apex body of the Brahmanas with the king as the head. They took charge of the socio religious matters of the state and laid down rules for all the social and religious observances. The rules were based on the Smriti laws, but were modified to suit the local customs and traditions. The introduction of the

Vaishnavism in Manipur did not lead to a total replacement of the traditional faith. Instead, a synthesis of the two religions occurred. Thus, the kind of Vaishnavism that developed in Manipur contains many elements of the traditional religion. Hence, a two way process of universalization and parochalization can be observed. It is best exemplified in the development of Ras Leela which is based on a Vaishnava theme but the dance forms are taken from the traditional *lai haraoba* festival.

Thus, the Brahmanas were instrumental in bringing about a religious transformation in Manipur. They made no significant impact on the local society before the 18th century due to the lack of the royal support. Yet, they prepared the ground for the development of Vaishnavism from the 18th century. Vaishnavism was introduced by the state and it was propagated under the banner of the state. Hence, it were the Brahmanas along with the ruling potentates who carried out the process of Vaishnavisation of Manipur.

MANIPUR

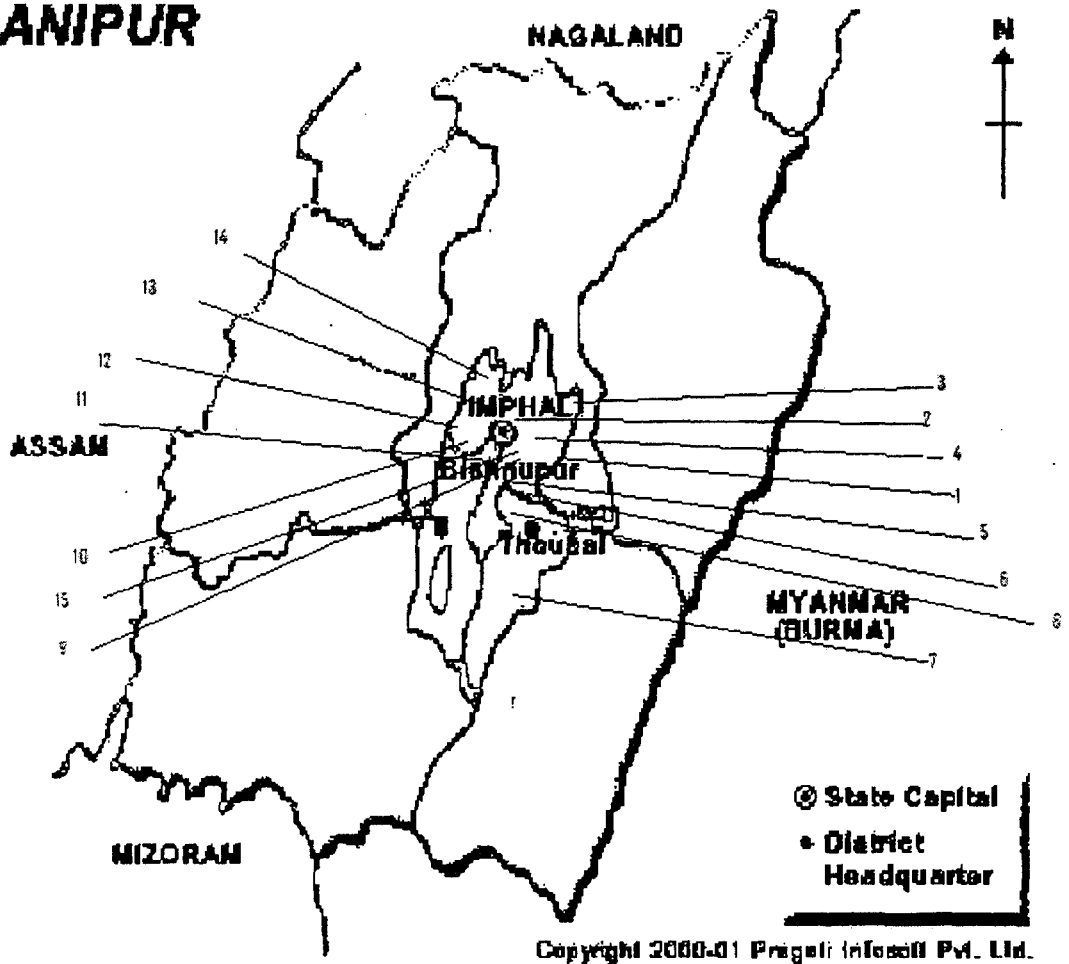


Fig. Settlement of the Brahmanas in Manipur in the 19th century.

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1. Brahmapur Bamon Leikai | 6. Kakwa | 11. Pishum |
| 2. Khwairamband | 7. Khangabok | 12. Uripok |
| 3. Khurai | 8. Langthabal | 13. Lalhambung |
| 4. Wangkhei | 9. Yumnam Leikai | 14. Thangmeiband |
| 5. Singjamei | 10. Sangolband | 15. Yaiskul |

APPENDIX: I

**List of the Brahmanas along with their details as mentioned in the
*Bamon Meihoubarol:***

King Kiyamba(1469-1508)

SL.NO.	1.	2.	3.
SURNAMES	ADHIKARIMAYUM	KAKCHINGTABAM	LEIHAOTHABAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR	SINGJAMEI	YAISKUL CHINGAKHAM LEIKAI
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	BHARADHWAJA	MARKANDA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN (3)	TEEN(3)	PAANCH (5)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA ANGIRAS	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	BHARADHWAJA BARASPATI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPATA	AURBACHARAN BHAGARAB JAMADAGANI
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN, BARENDRA	RAHRI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN	KHANJAN	GANDHARBA RAJ
TITLE OR UPADHI	BANNERJI	ACHARYA	MUKHERJI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	KHARDAH	SHRIHATTA, KULINGRAM	KANPUR
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	GANGACHARAN BANNERJI	PARMANANAD ACHARYA	GANESHGIRI, DAMUDOR MUKHERJI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI GOPALJI	SRI RUDRADEVA THAKUR	

SL.NO.	4.	5.	6.
SURNAMES	PHURAILATPAM	SIJAGURUMAYUM	TAKHENCHANGBAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	URIPOK	BRAMHAPUR	KHWAIRAMBAND
GOTRA	KASHYAPA	MAUDGALYA	KAUSHIKA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	PUROHIBARAM	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	DHANUR KARAN	MADHYANDI	HIRAN
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN (3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	KATYANI	GAUDILYA	KATYANI
RISHI	KASHYAPA BHARGAVA ANGIRAS	BHARADHWAJA	SHANDILYA ANGIRAS BARASPAT
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	VAIDIKA BRAHMANA	DAKHIN	DAKHIN
TOTEM BIRD	AMRACHURA	KHANJAN	TITIL
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	CHATTERJI	CHATTERJI	VIDYALANKAR
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	NANDAGRAM	GUJARAT DESHA	DHANURGAON
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	SUBHINARAYAN CHATTERJI	TATPUR THAKUR	HARI BIDYALANKAR
THEIR FAMILY GOD	VISHNU THAKUR	RAMA	SHRI MADANA MAOHANA

King Chalamba (1585-1562)

SL.NO.	7.
SURNAMES	KANAUJIMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	KHURAI
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	MADHYANDHIMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN (3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA
RISHI	SHANDILYA ASHITA DEBALA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	KANYAKUBJA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	TEWARI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	KANAUJ
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	KRISHNA CHARAN TEWARI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI SHALAGRAMA CHAKRA

King Mungyamba (1532-1597)

SL.NO.	8.
SURNAMES	LOUBUKTONGBAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	YUMNAM LEIKAI
GOTRA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN (3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA
RISHI	
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	BENDRI
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	BHATTACHARYA
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	SHANTIPUR, GAUDADESHA
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	HARIHAR BHATTACHARYA
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHESH ANANTA

King Khagemba (1597-1652)

SL.NO.	9.	10.	11.	12.
SURNAMES	ARIBAM BISHNULAILATPAM	ARIBAM TAMPAKLAILATPAM	HIDANGMAYUM	KONGBALAILATPAM OR KONGBRAILATPAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	SAGOLBAND	BRAMHAPUR	KHWAIRAMBAND	SINGJAMEI
GOTRA	VASHISHTHA	VATSYA	BHARADHWAJA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	PAANCH (5)	PAANCH(5)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAURIDHARA GADA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	AURABACHARAN JAMADAGANI	AURABACHARNA JAMDAGANI ALLUBAT	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT	SHANDILYA ASHITA DEBA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	VAIDIKA	VAIDIKA	VAIDIKA	VAIDIKA
TOTEM BIRD	BHINGRAJ	BHINGRAJ	DAMBUR	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	BANNERJI	CHATTERJI	MUKHERJI	MISHRA
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	BARANAGAR	BARANAGAR	KHARDAH	NAVADIP
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	KALINATH BANNERJI	AADINATH MUKHERJI	BENANATH MUKHERJI	NORADHURAM MISHRA
THEIR FAMILY GOD	VANGSHIVADANA	VANGSHIVADANA	SHRI NARAYAN	SHRIDHARACHAKRA SHALAGRAMA

SL.NO.	13.	14.	15.	16.
SURNAMES	SAMULAI LATPAM	SANGLAKPAM	SIJAGURUMAYUM	THONGKHATAPAM OR THONGRATABAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR	KAKWA	LEINAMKHUL	BRAHMAPUR
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	KASHYAPA	VATSYA	BHARADHWAJA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	MADHYADIN	DHANUR	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	KARAN	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	PAANCH(5)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT	KASHYAPA ABASHARNAY DHRUBA	AURBACHARAN BHARGABHA JAMDAGANI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN	UTTARI	VAIDIKA	VAIDIKA
TOTEM BIRD	BHINGRAJ	RAJ PAKHI	BHINGRAJ	DAMBUR PAKHI
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	MUKHERJI	ACHARYA	MUKHERJI	MUKHERJI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	MUKHERJI GAON	KULINGRAMA	BARANAGAR	KHARDAH
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	SHRINATH MUKHERJI	JAGANNATH ACHARYA	ADINATH MUKHERJI	BENINATH MUKHERJI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHALAGRAMA	GOPINATH	VANGSHIVADANA	SHRI NARAYAN

King Paikhomba (1666-1697)

SL.NO.	17.	18.	19.
SURNAMES	BACHASPATIMAYUM	BRAMHACHARIMAYUM	GURUMAYUM ANGOMLAILATPAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	URIPOK	SHRIPUR	BRAMHAPUR
GOTRA	KASHYAPA	SHANDILYA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	DHANUR KARAN	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA DEBALYA
RISHI	KASHYAPA ABASHARANAY DHRUBA	SHANDILYA ASHITA DEBALA VYAS	SHANDILYA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	KANYAKUBJA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN	DAKHIN	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	RAJ PAKHI	KHANJAN	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	TEWARI	MISHRA	DUBE
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	GUJARAT	PRAYAG	NANDAGRAM, BRINDAVAN
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	BENARASHI MUKUND	MISHRA DAMUDOR	MOTIRAM
THEIR FAMILY GOD	BHUTTABEHARI	BALLABHADRA PRABHU	SHRI VISHNU THAKUR

SL.NO.	20.	21.	22.
SURNAMES	HANGOIBAM	HEIKAKSIMAYUM	SHRI MAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	WANGKHEI	BRAHMAPUR	BRAHMAPUR
GOTRA	KASHYAPA	BHARADHWAJA	KASHYAPA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	GANDHARVA	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	KARAN	GAUTAMI	KARAN
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	DEBALA ASHITA VYAS	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT	KASHYAPA ABSARANAY DHRUBA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	MATHURA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI	DAKHIN	DAKHIN
TOTEM BIRD	BHINGRAJ	BHINGARAJ	BINJURI
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	CHAUBE	CHAKRABARTI	CHATTERJI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	MATHURA NANDAGAO	MAGADH GAO	GUJARAT
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	BICHITRAPURI THAKUR BISHNUPUR	JAIKRISHNA CHAKRABARTI	SHRI RAMDHAR CHATTERJI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	RADHA MADHOP	CAITANYA MAHAPRABHU	GOPALJI

King Charairongba (1697-1709)

SL.NO.	23.	24.	25.	26.
SURNAMES	CHOUDHURIMAYUM	GURU ARIBAM	GURU ARIBAM MAYUM	HAJARIMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR	BRAHMAPUR	BRAHMAPUR	KHWAIRAMBAND
GOTRA	KASHYAPA	KASHYAPA	KASHYAPA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	GANDHARVA	PUROHITABARAN	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	KARAN	PARASKAR	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	PAANCH(5)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	AURBACHARAN	KASHYAPA BHARGAVA DHRUBA RISHI	KASHAYAPA BHAGARVA DHRUBA	AKHAMMA SHARAN OUDANIKE VISHWAMITRA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	UTKALA BARHMANA	UTKALA BRAHMANA	VAIDIKA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI	DAKHIN RARI	DAKHIN	DAKHIN
TOTEM BIRD	RAJ PAKHI	BHRINGRAJ	BHRINGRAJ	BHINGARAJ
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	NETRADHARA	ACHARYA	CHATTERJI	BANNERJI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	UTKALA SHWET GANGA, ORRISSA	ORISSA	SHWETTA GANGA TULSI GHATTA, PURI, ORISSA	KRISHNANAGAR, SUNARASKI (BENGAL)
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	JATAYU PAKHIRAJ	BRINDAVAN SHARMA	BANAMALI ACHARYA	BHAGIRATH THAKUR
THEIR FAMILY GOD	JAGANNATH ACHAUDHURI	TULASI CHAURA	JAGANNATH A	NARASINGH

SL.NO.	27.	28.	29.
SURNAMES	LAIMAYUM	LAIMAYUM	LAIPUBAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	LANGTHABAN	THANGMEIBAND	BRAHMAPUR
GOTRA	GAUTAM	GAUTAM	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	
THEIR PRAVARA		TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	
RISHI	ANGIRAS BARASPAT	GAUTAM ANGIRAS BARASPAT	ASHIT DEBALA SHANDILYA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	RAHRI	DAKHIN	GAUDA DAKHIN
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN	KHANJAN	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	CHATTERJI	CHATTERJI	ROMAUDRI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	KHARDAH	TAKHEL (TRIPURA)	ORISSA
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	BAMDEV PANDIT	SURAT, DASHRATH AND UDHOP	
THEIR FAMILY GOD	VIJAY GOVINDA	RADHA MADHAVA	JAGANNATHA

SL.NO.	30.	31.	32.
SURNAMES	LEIKHUNCHANGBAM	MANOHARMAYUM	MATHURABASI MAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	KHANGABOK	KHURAI	BRAMHAPUR
GOTRA	KAUSHIK	KASHYAPA	KASHYAPA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	DHANUR	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	DHANUR HIRAN	KARAN	KARAN
THEIR PRAVARA	PAANCH(5)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	AURBACHARAN BHABAGABHA JAMADAGANI	KASHYAPA ABASARANAY DHRUBA	KASHYAPA ABASARANAY DHRUBA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	UTKALA BRAHMANA	KANYAKUBJA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN	DAKHIN	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	GAUSHANIK	KARAN	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	BHATT	CHATTERJI	CHAUBE
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	BENURGAO PADPUR	NADIYA, GAUDADESHA	MATHURA NAGAR
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	JAGANNATH BHATT	MANOHAR THAKUR	
THEIR FAMILY GOD		GOPLADEVA	RADHA MADHAVA

King Garibaniwaj (1709-1747)

SL.NO.	33.	34.	35.
SURNAMES	ARIBAM SAGOL LAILATPAM	BRAHMACHARIMAYUM ANOUBAM	GATIMAYUM OR GOTIMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	URIPOK	BRAHMAPUR	KHWAIRAMBAND
GOTRA	PARASHWAR	KASHYAPA	KASHYAPA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	PUROHITABARAN
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	PUROHITABARAN PARASKAR
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	PAANCH(5)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	SHAKTI PARASAR	AURAB JAMADAGNI RISHI	KASHYAPA ABASARANAY DHRUBA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	VAIDIKA
SHRENI	DAKHIN	DAKHIN	MADHYAM
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN	JANJARAJ	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	MUKHERJI	MUKHERJI	TEWARI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	KANYAKUBJA	RAMNAGAR, GAUDADESH	SHANTIPUR
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	AADINATH	PARMANAND BRAHMACHARI	KAIBA THAKUR TEWARI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	MAHAPRABHU (GAURANGA)	SHRISHALGRAM	RADHA KRISHNA

SL.NO.	36.	37.
SURNAMES	HANJABAM	HIDANGMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR	URIPOK
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	KASHYAPA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	KARAN
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GRIDHA
RISHI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT	GAUTAM VASHISHTHA ANGIRAS
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI	DAKHIN RAHRI
TOTEM BIRD	DIPALA	KURMMA
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	BANNERJI	MUKHERJI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	KANYAKUBJA	GAURADESHA

King Gaurashyam (1753-59,61-63)

SL.NO.	38.
SURNAMES	GURUMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR
GOTRA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA
RISHI	SHANDILYA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	MISHRA
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	BARGAVARI, KRISHNANAGAR, GAUDADESH
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	NELAMBAR MISHRA THAKUR
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI NARAYANA

King Bhagyachandra (1763-1797)

SL.NO.	39.	40.	41.
SURNAMES	ADHIKARIMAYUM ANOUBAM	BRAJABASIMAYUM	DHYANDAS-MAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	BRAHMAPUR	LALHAMBUNG	PISHUM
GOTRA	SHANDILYA	BHARADHWAJA	KAUSHIKA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI	DHANUR KARMA RAGINI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	ANGIRAS	GAUDILYA
RISHI	SHANDILYA ASHITA DEBALA	BHARADHWAJ ANGIRAS BARASPAT	DHURBA DEBALA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	BRAJ BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	RAHRI	UTTARI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN	TITIL	TITIL
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	BANNERJI	SANOURIYA	SHROTARI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	SHANTIPUR, GAUDA DESHA	BRAJA BRINDAVAN, RADHAKUND	LAHORE
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	KRIPARAM BANNERJI	RADHANATH BRAJABASI	HARIDEVA SHROTARI
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI NARAYANA	GOPALJI	GOPALDEVA

SL.NO.	42.	43.
SURNAMES	LAIMAYUM ANOUBAM	WARILIBAM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	LALLAMBUNG	KHWAIRAMBAND
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	GAUTAM
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	ANGIRAS	GAUDILYA
RISHI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BARASPAT	
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	BRAJ BRAHMANA	SARASWAT BRAHMANA
SHRENI	UTTARI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	TITIL	KHANJAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	SANOURIYA	ACHARYA
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	SHRIDHAM BRAJA BRINDAVAN	KHARDAH
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	RADHANATH SANOURIYA	JADURAM THAKUR
THEIR FAMILY GOD	GOPLAJI	NARASINGH

King Gambhir Singh (1825-1836)

SL.NO.	44.	45.	46.	47.
SURNAMES	ACHARYAMAYUM	ANOUBAM	ANOUBAM	BRAJAMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	LALLAMBUNG	THANGMEIBAND	THANGMEIBAND	THANGMEIBAND
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	KASHYAPA	KAUSHIK	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GAUTAMI	DHANUR	DHANUR	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	MADHYANDI	KARAN	MADHYANDI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	KATYANI	GAUDILYA	KATYANI	GAUDILYA
RISHI	BHARADHWAJA ANGIRAS BRAHASPAT	KASHYAPA ABSHARNAY DHRUBA DEBALA	KAUSHIK ATRIYA JAMADAGANI	SHANDILYA ASHIT DEBALA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	TEWARI BRAHMANA
SHRENI	DAKHIN	UTTARI	UTTARI	UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD	BHINGRAJ	SHROTARI	BHINGRAJ	SHROTARI
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	ACHARYA		BHATTACHARYA	TEWARI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	DHAKA	AGARTALA	NANDAGRAM, BRINDAVAN	SHANTIPUR
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	LAKHIKANTA ACHARYA	NARAYAN THAKUR		SHRI BRAJADEV
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI MADHUSUDAN	SHALAGRAMA		GOPALADEVA

King Nara Singh (1844-1850)

SL.NO.	48.	49.
SURNAMES	GOSAIMAYUM	KULINMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	WANGKHEI LEIKAI	KHWAIRAMBAND
GOTRA	SHANDILYA	SHANDILYA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	SAMA VEDA	SAMA VEDA
UPVEDA	GANDHARVA	GANDHARVA
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	GAUTAMI	GAUTAMI
THEIR PRAVARA	TEEN(3)	TEEN(3)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED	GAUDILYA	GAUDILYA
RISHI	GAUTAM ANGIRAS	SHANDILYA ASHITA DEBA
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA	GAUDA BRAHMANA
SHRENI	RAHRI	RAHRI
TOTEM BIRD	KHANJAN	BHINGARAJ
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM	GOSWAMI OR GOSATRI	TEWARI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED	SHANTIPUR	BARANAGAR, LOCHADAR DHATI
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR	CHANDRA GOSWAMI	RAMGOPAN(L) KULIN BRAHMANA
THEIR FAMILY GOD	SHRI MADANA GOPALA	KALI THAKURANI

King Chandrakirti (1850-1886)

SL.NO.	50.	51.
SURNAMES	ANOUBAM ADHIKARIMAYUM	RADHAKUNDA BASIMAYUM
PLACE OF SETTLEMENT WHEN THE TEXT WAS WRITTEN	YELLANGBAM LEIKAI	URIPOK
GOTRA	BHARADHWAJA	BHARADHWAJA
VEDA THEY WERE SPECIALISED IN	YAJUR VEDA	YAJUR VEDA
UPVEDA	DHANUR	DHANUR
BRANCH OF THE UP VEDA	KARAN	KARAN
THEIR PRAVARA		PAANCH(5)
THE SUTRA THEY FOLLOWED		GAUDILYA
RISHI		JAMADAGANI CHARAN BHARADHWAJA APALUBAT
CATEGORY OF BRAHMANA		VAIDIKA
SHRENI		UTTARI
TOTEM BIRD		KHAN JAN
TITLE OR UPADHI GIVEN TO THEM		PATOURI
PLACE FROM WHERE THEY MIGRATED		RADHAKUNDA, SHRI BRINDAVAN
NAME OF THE FOREFATHER WHO FIRST SETTLED IN MANIPUR		SHYAMA PATOURI
THEIR FAMILY GOD		GIRIRAJ

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