



## LALLUP: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

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**Abstract:** The present paper studies about the lallup system introduced in 1100 AD during the reign of Meidingu Loyumba who was the king of Manipur. It assess the possible background for the emergence of the lallup system. The main reason for the introduction is clearly mentioned. It also properly discusses features of this system. After a careful study of this system, a comprehensive study is made between lallup system and force labour and the differences of the two systems are also explained. It further puts the causes for the decline of lallup system in Manipur

**Keywords:** Lallup, Loyumba, Panna System, force labour, Manipur Levy, Major Maxwell.

### Introduction

Accurately, the aim of the study of lallup System was to indicate the possible development in the political and economical organizations of the Meitei Kingdom. According to T.C. Hudson 'Lallup' service was a military organization, but in times of piece it was made to play a part in the economics life of the Kingdom (Hodson, 1975, 59). The etymological origin of the word 'Lallup' refers to war organization. Hence, 'Lallup' denotes a war organization (Sonamani, 1988, 76).

In 1110 A.D. king Loyumba issued a royal edict called the 'Loyumba Silyen' in which he declared that the country was divided into six lups (divisions) (Sonamani, 1988, 76). They are Luplenlup, Thonchalup, Kongchalup, Lupkhubalup, Chingchalup and Khaijalup (Singh, 1967, 4-5). The basic characters of former administrative division i.e. introduced by Pnkhyanya 'Panna' and newly emerged 'Lup' (division) were almost similar. But the differences are only the increase of the number of administrative divisions, change of the name from panna (division) to lup (division) and definitely the development of administrative advance outlook. The evolution word lup (administrative division) during the reign of Loyumba was the immediate factor for the birth of the separate Lallup service Prof. G. Kabui states that the Panna System on which was based on the 'Lallup' service was introduced systematically by Loyumba (Kabui, 1988, 307-8). In Cheitharol Kumbaba, it is also recorded that Lallup service emerged during the reign of Loyumba. The basic aim of the introduction of it was to meet the necessary demands (i.e. labour and army) of the administration of the kingdom (Singh, 1967, 9). On the other hand, most part of the valley area was covered by forest. However, the increase of the population of the king would follow the clearance of the large forested areas, which led to expand the habitational areas. The development of the primitive agriculture during the reign of king Kangba brought a fundamental change of ownership of land that the cultivable lands belonged to the king (Singh 1982, 1-4).

For the prosperity of the country, the king became conscious for the economic development and at the same time, he highly aware of the security of his kingdom. The ultimate relation between the power and economy became a compulsory phenomenon of a society. Therefore, the king determined to capture the sources of wealth i.e. the control of agriculture area. The most important device of the economic development of the kingdom was to expand the reclamation of cultivable land. The entire developmental trend definitely required the large human labour. But the necessary labours were scarce since the population of the kingdom was small without using even a single coin, the king not only utilized the peoples energy for the economic development but also they were made voluntary security in order to protect property as well as life of the kingdom. Of course, a great dramatical change came to appear during the reign of Loyumba in various fields like socio political and economy. Thus king Loyumba, in order to strength his position and power and to bring a possible development of the kingdom, introduced 'Lallup' System.

### Whether the 'Lallup' is worth to name the forced labour or not?

The 'Lallup' service would be originated out of usual low public revenue of the kingdom and the natural shortage of its man – power particularly labour, who performs voluntary service of both political and economic fields. The 'Lallup' service was applied to every male between the age 17 (seventeen) and 60 (sixty) of the kingdom and they were obliged to perform public work only the ten days out of forty days. It is an institution sponsored by government for the welfare of kingdom (Brown, 1975, 83).

On the other hand, the forced labour may be revived out of king's desire and it is applied imprisoned and criminals, those capture in war and partly to labourers and artisans also. The forced labour is prescribed for a long or indefinite period as a method of description or discrimination on a highly selective basis (Somalia, 1980, 855).

### Did the people force to work under the lallup service?

The people were seemed to work forcibly in a lesser extend. The liability to Lallup commenced as soon as reached at the age of seventeen, when he also became entitled to cultivate one puri of land with the tax in kind exacted by the king. Under this system, peoples were required to appear ten days out of forty to the king's office and obliged to do proper work according to their grade to which they belonged. For example, some of the people used to work for the Raja's elephant, some for his ponics and even the Brahmins cooked for the Raja and their idol Govindaji (Mc Cullock, 1980, 12).

There was a large room of consideration and concession in favour of the people under the Lallup. The regulations prescribed definite age as well as fix working days. The Lallup service was applied to whole population of the kingdom. They are the Meiteis, the Brahmins, the Muslims, the Keis, the lois, the hill tribes etc. In the form of rotation, peoples of each lup performed the Lallup' service to their respective line.

Certainly, the following thirty days he was allowed to remain at home without bearing any burden of Lallup. If a man failed to appear to his Lallup, he was liable to forfeit one rupee and for this sum a substitute was hired. The following is vernacular statement ningthougi loi-sang-da (amasung office-da) numit tarani kaduna lallupki thabak tourage numit kunthrani mayumda leije. Lallup kadraduna mi aduna toklabadi lallup amada rupa loubha haonei, ashina mahut mi neeknei. It is compulsory to consider that in case of illness a substitute is accepted to provide. (Lallup Kagadaba lei-ba adubu Kaojei) Mi adugi karigumba thobak leiba amadi ana ayek leiramduna lallup karoidab leirabadi haijarabasung, mihut pirabasung, khundin numita karagadaba lallup chingba macha halna chingba kaduna khangnaba haonei Chinging-langpon thou ka habadi. In the months of Asin Bhadra, (or in Manipuri the months of Langpon and Mera) there was special duty to be done. Probably, the people get lot of opportunity as well as relaxation under this system. The absentee lallup could made a bargain for his substitute. The substituted person received the sum of four rupees. Connected with this is the Paimilang Panthou kai, which extended for three months and according to which the substitute received six rupees (Mayumda Kuädana tha ani loisangda amasung office-da) sarukhargi numit khuding thabak toujei, mi aduna, karo1 hairagana mi amada chingjin langpon haiba toge haiba, asimada rupa mari wasa sai Motomdi longpontha Meratha.) The last regulation mentioned is the Aka akum thingba. Under this case where the men of any area were found that the work imposed on them was beyond their capacity it was possible to call n men from the whole area till the work was finished. Lam amada thabak achaoba khun ama aniduna ngamdaba thabak thoklabadi lam adugi mi makhai lallup kaduna thabak loidriba makhai touge lallupti lam amaram-dagi mina (hun katli) Lei (Hodson, 1975, 62-63).

After completing nine days, on the same day all the lallup workers including "lallup Chingba bulled of Lallup) held a meeting known as khundin at the capital in order to consider next lallup Pali (term service). It is a liberal consideration that it discussed about the exemption of the lallup service from any lallup worker on the ground of the illness and it accepted the substitution of the lallup worker by giving money. The consideration covered of the punishment of any Lallup workers on an unreasonable grounds. Machahal took active part in the discussion of the Khundin (meeting). Lallup Chingba (manager) was quite active intermediary between the officers at the capital and the men in the village. The Lallup Chingba recorded the names of the persons who attend the lallup and those who did not attend, And he looked after the smooth, functioning of the lallup system (Sharma, 1960, 12).

It is further to mention that certain section of the people would be provided advantages of the Lallup System. The immediate family of the Peepa or head of the tribe is not imposed of heavy duty. Its post is Ningthou selba (personal attendants of the king). The family next in seniority has a heavy duty to work in Leikai. The third is the Lalmee and the fourth the Sangsaroi'. The lalloop of the second and fourth families worked generally in union. The heads of the Punnahs and a the officers required in connection with them and their immediate family had been exempted from the performance of any heavy duty (Mu Cullock, 1980, 11-12)."

The lallup' service was so arranged in favour of the interest of the people, R.Brown states that "in case of permanent illness or disability, a man under sixty may be excused from labour. But it is usual that to do that notice must be given and the authorities should satisfy of the true nature of the case. A payment of twelve anas exempted a man for forty days. There was no lallup for women (Brown, 1975, 83).

This lallup is often miscalled forced labour. It executed great public works for the benefit of the state. The system was a good one and when no carried to excess, pressed heavily on nobody. It exceptionally adopted to a poor state sparsely populated i.e. Manipur. In such a state under ordinary circumstances where the amount of revenue is small and the rate of wages often comparatively high, it is next to impossible to carry on many much needed public works by payments. On the other hand every man in India who lives by cultivation has much spare time on his hands and the lallup system very profitably utilizes this for the benefit of the community at large. Sir James Johnstone said that he never heard of it being complained of as a hardship (Johnstone, 1983, 114).

During the reign of king Garibaniwaz, the Lallup service was extended to the hill tribes but it was opposed by the tribes and they tried to avoid of such feudal service. However, in 1824 Manipur Levy was set up under the guidance of the Government of British India. The establishment of Manipur Levy started to give a death blow over the traditional Lallup system. The Levy replaced the Lallup system in the military aspects but the lallup remained its position in socio-economic aspects as it did formerly.

The establishment of Levy caused to made decline the importance of Lallup system in political mobilization of the kingdom. The Manipur Levy was substituted by a standing army in 1835. About 70 percent of the population of the kingdom were engaged to serve an important political purpose. Therefore, the creation of standing army brought a sharp declination the importance of the military functions of the Lallup service (Sonamani, 1988, 28). Even though, the traditional Lallup system continued till the lost of independence. Finally, in 1892 Lallup system was completely abolished by Major Maxwell (Dena, 1990, 75).

The establishment of Lallup system brought a great organised in the field of economic and political order. This system strengthened king's power over the subordinates. Probably, the constant warfare award the king to utilize the state organization like Lallup service solely for military purpose. The compulsory military service for every male section from 17 to 60 age group intensified the country's defensive as well as offensive positions.

To a great extent, lallup service rendered to the state, was utilized in different construction works and repairing of roads and bridges, religions works, hydromanerial and other welfare works. The water works provided a considerable extend of production forces of the rice cultivators. It is reliable to mention that the controlling of lallup service developed the prime relation between the ruling class and the means of production. The lallup labour even appropriated non-productive works. King Loyamba's ability to organize labour

without spending a single coin would help to strengthen the royal power. More cultivable areas were reclaimed since all the able-bodied male section were obliged to cultivate one pari of land. However, the introduction of lallup system would help to solve the problem of the scarcity of labour of the kingdom. With the institutionalization of lallup service during the reign of king Loyamba would be an important reason to set up a regular system that make an adequate supply of worker for public works. The distribution of occupation to different lineage in the village commodity production of artistic work is attributed to the tendency of the ruling class to exploit the artisan skills of the peasantry through the diversion of lallup service owed to the state for welfare works. Inasmuch such a systematic organization of peasant lallup labour contributed to the expansion of productive forces of peasant rice cultivators.

Lallup service was the backbone of the country's economic system. It brought to save huge amount of expenditure from expending and more reclamation of new cultivable land came to expand. Lt Compelled to increase the agricultural and handicrafts productions. Probably such system promoted prime relation between the king and the subjects. Thus, the Meitei kings at the expense of Lallup system could rule the country peacefully.

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