



ETHNIC IDENTITY OF MANIPURI COMMUNITY

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Abstracts

Manipuri Community has their Specific identity, the primitive tribes which played prominent part in the formation of Manipuri Society and State are Khuman, Luwang, Moirang, Meitei. In course of time all the tribes having different culture tradition, Religious belief, Merged, with the Meitei and formed a greater Meitei Community. Not only the seven Clans several other tribal groups also mingled with through the matrimonial relation since the immeasurable time. The general feature of the Meitei looks like Mongoloid but ethnologist have observed that Meitei have great diversity. They have their own language, Scripts, unique tradition, age old Culture, Social Systems, Costumes and independence Religious beliefs.

Key Words: Matrimonial, Ethnologist, prominent, Scripts.

INTRODUCTION

Manipur is one of the eight state of North East India. Manipur, a small State surrounded by ranges of hills, is one of the beauty spots on the earth and rightly called "the jewel of India". Her velvety green fields, transparent lakes, zigzag streams and branching climate induce a visitor to feel as if he is in Kashmir. Manipur lies on the eastern frontier of India. The Manipur of today is bounded on the North by a series of hills called Nagaland; on the North-east and south by Burma; on the South-West by Mizoram; on the West and North-West by the Present State of Assam. It may be mentioned that Cachar was not a part of Assam until its annexation by the British. The boundary of Manipur is partly the International boundary between India and Myanmar. The Manipur is today lies between 23°50'N latitude and 25°30'N latitude and 93°10'E and 94°30'E longitude (Jhalajit, 1999, P. 1). Manipur consists of a central valley called the Manipur Valley and ranges of Hills surrounding it on all sides. The hills cover about 7,850 square miles and the valley is about 750 square miles. The State is in-habited by Mongolian Origin from the Pre-historic Period. Major Population of the valley area is Manipuri Communities has its different stories about their origin from the ancient time. Though the history of Manipur has not been properly accounted for. The thousand Years of its Communities origin was in the State of in adequate treatment. The effort of the recent historian and the some work done by British author has attracted the attention of Indian Historians about

these Mongolian Originated far East Indian ethnic group. The attempts of the correction for the forgotten chapter of the History of Manipuri Community is not an impossible task. The scope of finding new facts and correction of errors, revision and new interpretation always remains. Varieties of the coins objects of unearthed stone image, excavations, copper plates gives the idea of the then Political conditions, religious beliefs, and different ancient Manuscripts and chronicles are the important Sources of In-formation for that Period will reveal the authentic history of Manipur and its People.

The tribes which played prominent part in the formation of Manipuri Society and State are Khumal, Luwang, Moirang and Meitei. The Meitei began to spread then influence over the rest of six clans. Moirang clans declined during rule of the Jai Singh. In course of times all this tribes having different culture, tradition, religious beliefs merged with the Meitei and formed a greater Meitei or Manipuri Community. Not only the seven clans several tribal groups also mingled with through the matrimonial relation as well as administrative reason since the immeorable time. Ancient records Chronicles and history of Clans of the origin Manipuri Society reveals its authentic report.

Objectives of the Study

- i) To study Ethnic study of indigenous Manipuri Community
- ii) This paper will attempt to analysed the traditions and Social Systems of the Manipuri Community

Manipuris Community and its Origin as Racial Group

The Meitei People are majority ethnic group of Manipur, a North Eastern State of India. Meitei is an endogamy or autonomy while Manipuri is an eponym. They primarily settle in the central plain region of Manipur. A Significant Population of the Meitei also are settled in Domestic neighbouring States such as Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura. They have also settled in Bangladesh and Myanmar. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meitei_people)

According to Dr. S.K. Chatterjee "The Meitheis or Manipuris are the most advanced section of the Kuki Chin People". They have their Kinsmen in Burma and appear to have settled in ancient time in Manipur and the Lushai Hill, as well as in the Chittagong Hill tracts. These Indo-Mongoloids are known to the Assamese as Chins; and Kuki-Chin has been adopted as a composite and inclusive name for them. The general feature of a Meitei looks like a Mongoloid but ethnologist have observed that Meitei have great diversity and among them are found traced back in Medieval age when Aryans Passing through to Penetrate Burma. T. C. Hodson is of opinion that the group name

"Meithei has been derived from Mi-man and thei= separate. But Brain H. Hodgson in a foot-note to a contribution to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1853 expressed the view that "in the Moitay' of Manipur we Have the combined appellations of the siamese Tai and Kochin Chinese 'Moy' In other words, the Manipurian tribe, called Cossiahs by the Bengalis belongs to the Moi section of the great tribe called Tai by Themselves and Shanvel Syam by the Burmese the sectional name being also foreign and equivalent to the Native. But in view of great Shan influence over the culture and Politics of Manipur it is difficult especially on linguistic grounds, to group the Meiteis with the Tai races when the Structure and vocabulary of the Meitei Language alike agree with those of Tibeto-Barman

race" (Jyotirmoy, 1999. P. 4)

A small section of the Manipuris strongly believe that they are of western and Hindu descent. On linguistic and anthropometric grounds this idea is quite untenable. The modern Manipuri race is a composite one formed out of several tribes. The fertile valley of Manipur witnessed the invasions of different tribes from time immemorial. At different Periods the Nagas, the Kuki's, the Shans, the Chinese came and settled in this land and merged themselves into the Manipuri community. Some Aryan and Dravidian are also found in them.

The Royal chronicles "Cheitharol Kumbaba" and other chronicles of Manipur gives an account of the Royal family depicted stories totally based on Hindu fiction is not acceptable to Manipuri Society nowadays. Because its pre-historic name which were fictitious and Sanskritised spells or tried to obliterate ancient history till Pakhangba the first ruling king of Manipur. Tales are obviously influences of Hinduism and the appearance of Non Hindu names seems to mark the beginning of native legend. From the most credible traditions the valleys appears originally to have been occupied by the several indigenous tribes, principal of which were name Koomul, Looang, Moirang and Meithei all whom came from different directions (Hodson, 2010, P. 5). According to Pemberton Manipuris were the descendants from a Tartar colony from China, but the languages, spoken by this tribes are in their pristine state tradition, brings the Moirang Tribe from the South, the direction of Kookies, Koomul from the East, the direction of the Marrings and Meitei and Loowang from the North west direction of Koupooees. The language of Marring, Kookies, and Koupooees are all very similar and as the Koomul, etc., the offshoots of these tribes were, as before said, at different periods the dominant tribes in the valley, it might be expected that the present language of the people, united under the name of Meithei, would have a very apparent likeness to these languages, and such is the case. All these tribes have also traditions amongst themselves that the Maniporees are offshoots from them. These traditions then, and the composite nature of the language, appear to me to afford more reason for supposing the Maniporees to be descended from the surrounding hill tribes than from a Tartar Colony from China (Pemberton, 1835, P. 36). Manipuris relate amongst themselves that up to the recent Period they retained all the Customs of hill people of the Present day their superstition, has preserved relics are all close connection between them and neighbour Nagas. During the occasion of Phamban Kaba (coronation) or ascending the throne is performed in dress both by Raja and Rani old fashion of great house of residence of Meithei Chief though he does not reside now is made in the Naga Fashion.

The researchers of Linguistic Survey of India enable us to take a comprehensive view of the relationship of the Meithei language and Languages of the hill tribes both in the state and beyond it. According to Grierson Meithei are closely related with the Kuki-Chin language, Bodo, Naga, of the North Kachin to the East Burmese with the Bodo and Naga languages having specially in the North many relations with the Kachin dialects, which in their turn, form another chain between the Tibetan and Burmese. Generally Manipuris are belongs to Mongolian race. Dr. Brown says that, "Although the general facial characteristics of the Manipuris are of the Mongolian type, there is a great diversity of feature among them, some of them showing a regularity approaching the Aryan type (Hodson, 2010, P. 2). Because since the 12th A.D small groups Aryan were brought to Manipur by the then king of Manipur those who has professional experienced specifically in irons melting, salt raring, Brass and bell metal utensil, ornament making and other minor medicine exploitation from indigenous herbal plants. According to Salai Meihourol this was happened during the last nine hundred years. Some Aryans and proto Aryans settled here as war prisoners religious preacher, architect and businessman in the successive century. They came from

three side mainly from Cacher, Syhlet, Karbi Anglong, Kamrup upper Brahmaputra Valley. Simultaneously Mongolian race from the East and south east e.g. Pong, Khunjan, Shan, Barmar , etc., as prisoner, traveller, immigrant to Manipur and diluted particularly in two clans Moirang and Khuman clans of Manipuri (Erabot, 2015, P. 16). Therefore diversity of phyletic features, intrinsic behaviour appears still among this converted people of Manipuri. As a result some of the Manipuri girls good looking and fair but some are dark colour odd looking because of their inherited skin and appearance of fore father. Manipuris are decidedly a muscular race. Their hair cutting in peculiar according to their ages in the past from infancy to marriage period. The tradition of cutting style gradually changes particularly in childhood stage of the girl and boys but maintained the system of teenage is still alive.

There are different school of thoughts about the origin. It is needless to express that Manipuris are Mongolian in blood either it might be the composition of several tribes of the surroundings hills or they were migrated from north eastern front of the South Asian Country where they have similar feature, language, tradition with customs since the Pre-historic period they gradually steps towards south then to the West and settled down in fertile land of Manipur Valley. In the course of time with contemporary civilisation primarily Chinese and later the Aryans have touched the Vedic influences to the people of the valley during the 14th century. Belief of the home god or the ancestral belief mingled with seriously the Dragon or Pakhangba first king and it continue still today in every heart of the Manipuris. Of course ample example for attempt of Hinduisation enforce during the King Pamheiba but could not eliminate ancient belief now renovated with full strength. Manipuri had separate religion of their own. They worship many kinds of gods. Among them following four are very prominent viz..

- 1) Lamlai (God of Country side)
- 2) Umang Lai (of forest)
- 3) Imung Lai (The household deity).
- 4) An castor of each Tribe.

Besides them there are spirits of Mountain, passes, spirits of lakes, river, vampires. Other popular deities such as "Panthoibi" wife of "Khabasokchongba", the Devine of ancestor of 'Khaba tribe'. Worship of Sanamahi, Noongshaba, who is associated of with of stone deity of creations of rocks, Yumshalai, establisher of houses. The worship of seven clans compose of Meitei confederacy clearly consist in adoration and propitiation of the eponymous ancestors of the clan.

The name of the Tribal deities are found as Luangpokpa or ancestor of Luangs, such Khuman-pokpa for Khuman, Pakhangba for the Ningthouja and Angom Clans is the Nongpok Ningthou. Khamdingon for Khan Nganbas, Thangaren for Khuman, Nangningsing for Moirangs and Nungao Yumthaba for Chenglei clans. Worship of Panthoibi, Noongshaba, Sanamahi, and Limerel sidabi is common to all Manipuri society. Sarenchanba or sacrifices of animals were practice to the Solemn god of this clan. In the pre-historic period sacrifice of animal and human being was also recorded in some of the chronicles of this clans.

Pre-historic annals of the ethnic Manipuri had not been found but the uses of terms its languages prosthesis and ethos determine Meitei an Independent racial group when other small group was arrived from different direction merges with the indigenous peoples, places of the valleys Toponymy and eponym were assimilated the originality since pre-historic period. Belief and practice of Shamanism's ascertained the Meitei of Manipur belongs to Mongolian race because shamanism, one of the oldest system of foretelling is mainly known to the

people of South-east and East Asian countries. These Shamanism have story belief since the Pre-historic period amongst the Shang dynasty of China (1558-1027) B.C and Zhou dynasty (1027-256) after then ancestral worship by the various clans began. In the early history of Japanese and Korean maintain there ancestral worship but it was heavily influence by deeply rooted Confusion tradition (Gunindro, 2006, P. 56). The deep rooted Practice of ancestral worship is indispensable social cult in every Manipuri Clans since the immemorial time reveals Manipuri clans are originated from the one of the clans who migrated towards south thousands years ago. Another religious practice is the Shamanism (Maibi Changba or Maibai Tongba). This Shamanism is the common religious practice of the Mongolian race which generally seen in Mongol, Tungus, Manchu, Turks. Among them Tungus are the worshiper of ancestral god and many other goddess is similar to the Manipuris of todays which called 'Emung Lai', domestic gods e.g Emoinu, Fungalairu, Leimarel Sedabi , etc. Worship of this god and goddess whether it may be 'Emung Lai' or 'Lam Lai' related with shamanism or Maibi Tongba or Laibou Taba is very essential in Manipuri clans. To become a Shaman is generally recognized early in the childhood as a likely candidate for such a Position. When a shaman is in a deep, ascetic, trance, he can indeed perform unusual acts that a person cannot Shaking of Tambourine, rattle or some other musical instrument which was endowed with mystical properties and was closely bound with the life of 'Shaman' (Gunindro, 2006, P. 58-59)

Among Most peoples Shaman had to belong to specific clans, the profession pass on from one generation to another is clearly mention in the 'Puyas' of many clans of Manipur. During the reign of the Ningthouja Dynasty the performance of Shamanism was done by the Khaba Clan's women who inherited generation to generation. But latter Shamanism was learned and performed by other clan also.

Manipuri Dress

Customs of Manipuri are still prevails the ancient traditional method. It is worth mentioning that some of the historian and British political agent stated in various books Manipuri dresses in herited from the neighbouring tribes. It is unbelievable so far because Meiteis are Mongolian races and they deserve their original traditional dresses in any function but style and artistic quality of weaving chanced in the reign of king Chalamba of Ningthouja clan. The modernisation continued with the arrival of Shan and Burmese immigrants. As soon as Hinduism enter the valley with conversion of religious faith, uses of male dresses slightly changes began and use in specific dhoti , etc., in religious purpose and social function in the last two century. Dresses of Manipuri are very simple. Unmarried and Young girls uses a kind of bodice so called Kha-onbi and Skirt called 'Phanek'. A totally Mongolian dress believed to be originated from the Pre-historic period which refers in every religious books of Manipuri society. Uses of the dress having the horizontal strives so called 'Maran naiba' is also generally use by the Koki-Chin group of Tripura, Mishing Tribes of upper Brahmaputra and Arunachal Pradesh, Kuki tribes of Manipur and Shan Tribes, Pong and Khunjan, tribes of northern Burma. The peculiarity of using the Manipuri girl's dress changed after marriage. Only the Phanek is uses lifting up to cover the chest and small Matek-phi tucked in the waist like belt as well as a head cover symbolizing the married women. The dress of Young and old male is very general. 'Khudhei' a dress uses by the male above the knee or up to knee. With the changes of time and influences of western immigration the length and breadth of 'Khudei' and their colour and artistic style changes for the social function but the quality remain as the Pre-historic period.

In the Ancient time some dresses of Manipuri society were use with the permission of the then Raja,

various articles of dress and ornament cannot be worn, and permission to wear any of these articles is much coveted. Persons of high rank are permitted to have carried before them a red swollen cloth; of a less rank, a green wooden cloth, and of a less still, a cloth of cotton manufacture. These they use as rugs to sit on, and it is only for such use they are prized; as articles of dress they may be used by any who can afford to buy them. The dress of the women is quite different from that worn by the women in the West. It consists of a striped cotton or silk cloth passed round the body under the armpits and over the breast, a jacket, and a sheet (Hodson, 2010, P. 13). Shoes are seldom worn. The 'kokyet' or puggaree are commonly use by the young and old Manipuri male and this 'Kokyet' varies in their colour according to their clan in the past. The dress of women when of good quality is picturesque and pleasing. The Phanek is made in cotton and silk, and the only patterns are stripes of various colours and widths running across the material, the ground work being of different colours. The commoner patterns are red with green stripes, green and black, blue with black and white stripes, yellow and brown, dark blue with green and white stripes, etc. At the top and bottom of the garments is a broad margin, on which geometrical figures or patterns of various kinds are sewn by hand with floss silk in various colours. Over the phanek is worn a white sheet. The following sumptuary laws are recognized, and were enforced among the Manipuris by their own officials: "The Kameng chatpa dhoti is a white silk dhoti with purple patterns of scrolls stamped on it by means of wooden blocks, which are said to have been introduced by the Chinese merchants who visited the state in the reign of Khagenba, circa A.D 1630, It may not be worn by person of inferior rank, but Rajkumar's may use at their pleasure, a privilege which is now extended to sons-in-law of the Raja'(Hodson, 2010, P. 15). Some of the dhoti phi-ge-napu dhoti, orange coloured, ju-gi Mairi dhoti, red silk colour, gulap-machu dhoti, rose coloured, were worn by the officials of the different branches on different occasion. Pagris or 'kokyet' with silk patterned ends may be worn by descendants and relatives of the Raja and by those upon whom it is conferred as a mark of favour or distinction. Pagris or 'Kokyet' with silk borders may not be worn in the presence of the Raja. Wrestlers and runners when performing in public wear a 'Kokyet' with a projecting front, to which the name lam khang poak is given. Dresses in religious and social function of Manipuris in somewhat different the shirt of the Male and Female are made of velvet with gold trimming about to inches deep on the sleeves which do not reach down to the elbow. A white cloth is wound tightly round the Waist from under the breasts just over the hips to give support.

The first change in the matter of dress occurred, according to the chronicles, in the reign of Chalumba, circa 1550, who is said to have 'introduced the system of wearing Duties and decent clothing, coats made of wax cloth were also introduced during his time.' It would be of extreme interest to know the precise nature of the presumably indecent clothing thus displaced. The luhup (lu= head- not a Meithei word - hup- chip, to cover) or head dress was first brought into use by Khagenba in about 1600, and the chronicles note that it is used by men of rank at the time of the festivals. Khagenba is also responsible for the adoption of the head gear known as Lamkhang Poak. He was a zealous reformer in the matter of dress, for he also caused the people to take to the turban or pagri. The first mention of the kameng chatpa dhoti, or royal dhoti, dates from the reign of Paikhomba, who ordered a man of the Potsangbom pandah to be beheaded for stealing one of these cloths, but its introduction is probably much earlier, as, according to tradition, it was first made in the country by Chinese, who are said to have visited Manipur in the reign of Khagenba (circa 1630 A.D), the inventor of a costume to which the name Ningkham furit was given for the use of royalty and the minister of state. The faichareng, a cap worn by ladies of

high rank, in first mentioned in the year 1746, when the Rani, the wife of the Raja Pamheiba or Garib New, wore it at a dancing party given by the Chothe Nagas in their village (Hodson, 2010, P. 17-18). Since that date changes of customs are not mentioned in the Royal chronicles but after the approach of Indian and European Civilisation has given rise to the fashion and design of wearing cast-off clothes from the westerns countries. But the ancient fashion for the women dress retained their popularity till today. But style and fashion for male dress totally changed accept social and religious custom remain as its.

Ornaments

In the past Manipuri uses very limited ornaments were use by the women because there was restriction in golden ornaments. Only ornaments which may be worn without restriction are earrings which may be worn by anyone, use of other ornaments either made of gold are permitted to the up-per classes only ornaments of other metal than gold may be worn freely. The earrings worn by the men and women are plain. Men don't were other ornaments but the necklaces worn by the women of the upper classes are of tasteful, simple filigree designs manufactured by native goldsmiths with pure gold among this necklace for example; i) kiyam Likphang ii) yantra Pareng iii) Tharoi Maning Pareng iv) Heikru Pareng v) Samdrembi Pareng vi) Nangoi Pareng vii) Liklu Pareng , etc.

Weapons

The universal weapons use in all kinds of emergency and for every purpose whether in the fields, in war and arts of peaceful nature, is the dao or Thang. Iron is one of the rarest metal because of this rearness Manipur is always in shortage of iron made instruments and arms since the Pre-historic period. Manipur had acquainted with the western civilisation only in the 12th century and they accepted the specialisation of making tools which marks the progress of modern industry. The advent of horse added an arm to their military organisation which eventually became famous in the wars before arrival of British authority. The cavalry of Manipur or 'Sagol Lanmi' better known as the 'Cassy horse' is famous against the British and Burmese war. Their weapon was the 'Arambai' a kind of bumerang, the use of which was due no doubt to the fact that shock tactics couldn't be successfully carried out with such light cavalry in any country which they were called on to operate. Use of arrow, sword, spear, round shield and rectangular shield are commonly use. The Manipuri army's weapons like fire arms began to use in early sixteen century. They either bought or collected from Burmese merchant and soldier and later they could make fire arms locally. Tradition asserts that from Chinese merchants who visited the state during the reign of Khagemba, circa 1630, the Manipuris learnt the art of manufacturing gunpowder, an art which to this day is still practicalised by the kukis, who probably derive their acquaintance with it from the Manipuris. The chronicle State the Khagemba, in 1627 A.D, experimental to make big guns, and prepared one metal gun of big size. There is a curious weapon of the form and on the principle of the bow, which is used as a catapult. The pellets of harded clay travel with considerable force and with some accuracy.

Occupation

People of Manipur are mainly practice agriculture in every house women weaves and spine for cotton cloths for their family. There are goldsmiths whose are produces much that is of great beauty though simple.

Before the great devastation of the country by the Burmese, the land was in surplus in well prosperity. In a country in which family produces nearly all which it consumes, any advancement in the arts can scarcely be expected. But if without other impediments, improvement could take place it will be repressed under a government such as that of Manipur. Some little embroidery is practiced in the ancient time, their eating and drinking vessels, principally of bell metal are substantial, but in shape very little from those of the West. They have some dyes and have some taste in the arrangement of colours, but of drawing or painting they have no idea. The women hold a high and free position in Manipur, all the internal trade and exchange of the products of the country being managed by them. The women weave all the cloths and all girls whose position is at all respectable learn to dance, for in Manipur the dancing profession often a road to royal dignity and is not despised in anyway as is the case in India. Except this Manipuris are well experienced in cottage industry specially bamboo and wooden furniture. The artistic style of bamboo and cane production are adorable to the neighbouring state of Manipur. Performance of wood works and their decorative products are attractive. The most of the Manipuri able persons are related to the royal force of the king. At a period much earlier than that of the passage above quoted art and manufactures in Manipur seem to have been in a much more healthy state than in the later years of independence. The first blow to Manipur as a centre of artistic and industrial activity was dealt by the Burmese, whose repeated invasions of the country depopulated it, and who kept in captivity all or nearly all the famous silversmiths of Manipur. To the excellence of Manipuri art and manufacture, testimony is borne by several observers. In the treaty concluded in 1762 with governor Verist, mention is made of the following articles, products of the country: silk, iron, Kupass, dammer, wood oil, wax, elephant's teeth, agar, sandal wood, camphor, black thread, red ditto, blue ditto, white ditto, black cats, Meklee cloth, Meklee gold rupee.

Pattern of Manipuri Houses

According to McCulloch says that the dwelling houses of the Munnipuriees are all of the same form, but those of the rich are larger and constructed of better materials than those of the poor, that is, the posts and beams of the former are of wood, whilst those of the latter are of bamboo. The walls of both are of reeds plastered with a mixture of earth and cow dung, and the roofs of all are thatched with grass. All the dwelling houses face to the eastward, in which direction they have a large open verandah. In this verandah the family sits during the day, and in it all the work of the household is carried on, except cooking, which is performed inside, in the South side of the verandah is the seat of honour. Here a mat or cloth is laid for the head of the family, upon which no one intrudes. Inside, the house is without partitions. The bed of the head of the family is placed in what is called the Lupleangka, close to the wall on the South side about the middle. It is usually screened by mats. The daughters usually sleep on the North side. There are no windows in the houses, the only light admitted being by two doors, one opening in to the open verandah, the other to the North, near the North-Western corner of the house. The fireplace is on the floor towards the North-west corner. There is no Chimney. The fuel used is generally dried reed jungle. This answers every purpose in the warm weather, but is a sorry substitute for wood in the colder months. Connected with the making of their house are many superstitious practices (McCulloch, 1859, P. 20-21).

The style of house was introduced by a mythical King named Khooi Ningonba, but in the reign of Khagemba changes were made.

Food habits of Manipuri Community

Rice is the staple food items of Manipuri society. The change in the diet of the Meitei section of the population which is due to the introduction of Hinduism at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The earlier reigns seem to have been one long feast with hecatombs of fat cattle and oceans of spirituous drinks, even culminating on more than one instance in fatalities due to an excessive appreciation of the good cheer. They then lived like the wild Nagas of the hills, each tribe regarding only its special taboos, and each individual abstaining only from the private taboos. But the official adoption of Hinduism not only removed the ban against milk but created many prohibitions to which the new converts eagerly submitted. Animal flesh is forbidden, and all spirituous liquor or intoxicants are accursed. Fish is eaten, and is a common article of diet (Hodson, 2010, P. 47)

Life in Manipur

The Manipuri society grew in and around villages. They are set down in fair and Square in the middle of the rice field tilled by the villagers. Every house stands in about an acre land. The Manipuris, lovers by nature of flowers and leaves, with which both men and women beautifully bedeck themselves. The homestead of these people frequently looked like a picture or a place of divine worship, so clean and so orderly was everything about it. Manipuris are the cleanest of the clean people of Hindustan.

Religious Rites and Festivals

The religious rites and festivals connected with Vaishnavism are performed by the Manipuris with due ceremonies. Among the festivals the most important is the Yousang. Other Hindu festivals such as Rath-Yatra, Janmastami, Durga Puja, Dewali etc. Lavish expenses are incurred in connection with Marriage ceremony and Sardha ceremony. Visits to the Places connected with Vaishnavism are also considered as meritorious acts. There are also some important traditional festivals of the old faith like Lai Harouba, Chirouba, Ningol Chakouba etc. which are observe along with other festival.

Conclusion

Manipuris, the predominant cultural and linguistic group of the state are the inhabitants of the Manipur Valley. They like to call themselves the Meiteis. The surplus wealth produced in the valley gave the Meiteis a great advantage over others. It became easy for its chief to establish and maintain his authority of the state as the sovereign over the chiefs of other clans and Tribes of the region. The material prosperity enjoyed by the people in the valley not only became their stay in political and military ventures but also sustained their rich and varied cultural pursuits. The advance method of military organisation and political system and administrative policy which could make themselves integrity among the clans could rule the state nearly two thousand years by a single dynasty which is rear in the world history. The Meiteis of Manipur belong basically the Indo- Mongoloid culture group. They might have come along the North-Eastern Gateways of India at list some centuries before Thousand B.C linguistically and racially they related to the people of China and Thailand as well as North Burma and Eastern Tibet. They speak dialects mainly of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. But they have retained their ancestral surname and a Manipuri name by the side of one on sanskritic origin. Customs of the same

are still prevalent among them. They are proud of their Non-sanskritic heritage, mother tongue and the script that has been virtually replaced by the Assamese-Bengali script. They have their own special food delicacies. Unlike their counterpart in the Gangetic Valley the Hindus of the Manipur Valley have no liking either for casteism or for seclusion of their women. Thus they are not uprooted from their ancient moorings.

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