



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Language

MANIPURI LANGUAGE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE MANIPURI COMMUNITY

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Dr. M. Ninghaiba Singha*

Lecturer, Patharkandi College of Education(B.Ed. College), Patharkandi, Karimganj, Assam. *Corresponding Author

Dr. M. Ningamba Singha

Assistant Professor, Department Of History, Patharkandi College, Patharkandi, Karimganj, Assam.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Language is a social phenomenon and it is used for communication, which is a social activity that requires the coordinating effort for the speaker and hearer. And it is true that the use of language always involves speaker's meaning and the hearer's understanding, further no discourse is free from social meaning, and the selection of social meaning appropriate to the context has a direct bearing to the communicative events and context or social situation. Therefore even the simplest type of speech act or communication should have a social situation in which time and place go together in a culturally accepted way.

The present Manipuri language is evolved out of the traditional Meitei language, the speech of the politically dominant group, legends, songs and manuscripts found in this language evidently proved a long and sustained existence of the language. Since, Manipuri language is an ingredient part of the Manipuri society and culture; and itself maintained the societal and cultural values of the Community. Thus in this paper we tries to focus on the social and cultural values of Manipuri language which seen in the Manipuri Community will be discussed.

The Manipuri Community:

A community is a social unit of any size that shares common values, or that is situated in a given geographical area). It is a group of people who are connected by durable relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties, and who usually define that relationship as important to their social identity and practice. The Manipuris call themselves by the name Meetei. Etymologically, the term had been derived from the words 'Mee' + 'Atei', 'Mee' means 'man' and 'Atei' means 'other'. The Manipuri community is a heterogeneous community consisting of the Meeteis 'with its seven exogamous clans i.e. Mangang (Ningthauja), Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Moirang, Khaba-nganba, and Sarang-Leishangthem', Manipuri Bramhins (Meetei Bramhon), Manipuri-Muslims (Meetei Pangals) and Lois (slaves or dependent group of Manipuris i.e. Manipuri SC) etc. The Meeteis have the elements-Mongoloids, Australoids, Austro-Asiatics, and stains of Caucasoids, of which the Mongoloid element is the predominating factor. Broadly speaking, the features of the Manipuris are Mongoloids. The Manipuri people belong to the *Kuki-Chin* group of the Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongolian race. But a good admixture of Aryans and other blood groups also took place in the mainstream of the Manipuri nation. Because of its special geographical location and as a result of several religious and political interactions, Manipur became the melting point of different ethnic groups and cultures.

Manipuri Language:

The Manipuri language/Meiteilon is evolved out of the traditional Meitei language, the speech of the politically dominant group, legends, songs and manuscripts found in this language evidently proved a long and sustained existence of the language. Manipuri language is a direct descendent of the accumulation of Kuki Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. Among the various Tibeto-Burman family of languages in India, Manipuri language is the only language with its own script – i.e. Meitei-Mayek, which has been existence from 1st century A.D onwards. The example is seen in the coins of *Wura Konthouba* (568-658A.D). The status of a language can be ascertained by its scripts. There is no denying fact that the Manipuris were conversant with the art of writing having their own scripts. Like other prominent language of India, Manipuri language has a scientific system of scripts. The use of the script was introduced in the state from early times and facts had also been exposed from the findings

of coins, stone and metal inscriptions along with the writings on hand made paper. In connection with Meitei Mayek, Dr M. Kriti (1980) writes-“ Meiteilon has been the state language of Manipur since 3rd century A.D., coins were struck, royal chronicles recorded, edicts and copper plates issued in this language.” (Devi Chanambam Sarajubala 2002:4). Ancient Meitei records were in Meitei-Mayek only. Manipuri Language is the lingua franca of the state. In Manipur, there are 29 different tribal ethnic groups recognized by the Government of Manipur. Since these tribal groups having their own language, they used Meiteilon as a lingua franca for the purpose of inter-tribal communication. So, most of the tribal people living in Manipur speak and understand Meiteilon. It appears that though Manipuri language was lingua franca of the different groups, each spoke a separate dialect, and as a result of the proximity with one another or of the subsequent amalgamation, many words from those dialects have been taken over and introduced into the main language. However, some of this rich heritage of Manipuri language was destroyed as a result of Hindunisation in 18th century; it has been influenced and enriched by Indo-Aryan languages of Sanskrit origin from 18th century onwards and by English language from 19th century respectively.

Manipuri Language and its social-cultural values:

Manipuri language has a long literary tradition. Its literature can be traced back so far as the first century A.D. About one thousand ancient manuscripts consisting of varied subjects such as pure literature, historical accounts, theology etc. have so far been discovered (Sanajaoba, N, 1991:281). The classics of high literature books like '*Nummit Kappa*' (O. Bogeshore, 1977), '*Poireiton Khunthokpa*' (M. Chandra, 1979) described the ethical values like- truth, goodness, excellence, honesty and modesty, spiritual equality, egalitarianism (gender as well as social) etc. as prevalent in the Manipuri society.

The Manipuri faith has a strong association with religion, which is essentially an ethics. Manipuris advocated that the highest ethics is the religion of devotion to god. The Manipuris are perhaps the most God fearing people. The God in Meiteilon is understand by three terms: (1) *Chingu* 'the one who see the universe by his divine eyes', (2) *Khoyum* 'one whose abode is in the naval' and (3) *Lai* 'capable of his will in an ease'. In '*Langol*' (W.Yumjao, 1924) it has been said that *Korau nongja khudingbu tauja matik sintha laure* 'our actions

are recorded daily by Almighty for assessment' the very sentence exemplifies how the Manipuris visualize the God. Moreover, there are saying like *Laina yadaba* 'that is not accepted by the God', *Laina warakpa* 'to punish by the God', *Dharma leiba* 'religious; in the sense that one should never do wrongs or ills of others', etc which all reflects that the Manipuris pay a great reverence to the Almighty.

The Manipuris has a concept of *Lairamlen* 'Kingdom of God' and it is one of the guiding principles of the Manipuri concept of goodness, which is an essential value. The God according to the Manipuri concept is truth and is always good and unstained. The one who has achieved his goal through right means will win everywhere as is exemplified in the saying- *achumbana mai pak-i* 'truth always triumphs' *Lairamlenda yaibi thawaina hainam leinam oina tinba* 'to get mixed in the air of heaven by the soul' is also one concept of the Manipuris to let the people go in right and God path. In N. Khelchandra Singh's '*Chainarol*' (1968) portrays that the Manipuris are highly patriotic and courteous. In the book he writes, "if an unarmed man is challenged, he would fetch his arms and fix a day for bout." The stories of Paona Brajabasi, who died in Khongjom War (1891) as an example of recent sacrifices is worthy to be mentioned. M. Kriti Singh (1991) advocates that the Manipuri concept of '*Ahimsa*' is extend up to plants and tiny insects even. But killing of an aggressor for self-defiance is allowed. The Gaudiya Vaisnavism religion of 18th century cultivates the humility and modesty among the Manipuris. Being the persons *thaugallon* 'etiquette' in the King's court, courtesy and respect for persons of all status are precious like ornaments in personal and social relationship. Rude manners and harsh language are considered uncivilized by them. Manipuri concept of charity is based on sharing the possessions to the needy. The Manipuri saying *arei leita tathok tasin panminnaba* 'to share the belongings between rich and poor' *yenna yenna duna* 'to share the eatables', etc. can be mentioned.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion of the study, we came to know that Manipuri language is one of the most insistently an advanced Modern Indian literature and its socio-cultural values are highly remarkable. In the above discussion, we have seen that both ancient and modern literatures of Manipuri language which has flourished from the immemorial time has described about its relation with Manipuri society. All the socio-cultural events and facts narrated and described in the above literatures came to know that this language has a close relation with the Manipuri society and it always take part in the every affair of the people. This language is an ingredient part of the Manipuri society and culture; and itself maintained the societal and cultural values of the Community.

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