

## Economic Contribution of the Muslims to Manipur

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Education in the wider and less definite sense implies the influence of the whole environment upon the individual. It is in fact a process of development, a process of modification and a process of change. The main objective of continuing education is to bring down the institutional barriers and provide knowledge and experience which is not only up to date but also broad minded and integrated to the socio-economic, cultural and other aspects of human well being. <sup>1</sup>

The Manipuri Muslims through education have contributed something in the socio-economic field as also to culture in Manipur without changing its basic nature. The Muslim accepted the already existing life pattern of the Manipuris and added to and enriched their culture without changing its content or impairing its structure. What they contributed formed a component part of the traditional whole and blended in to the indigenous traditions in such a manner as to be essentially harmonious fashion. Nevertheless, considering the history of the cultural activities of Muslims in general, it would seem that the Muslims who settled in Manipur brought with them some of the concurrent tradition of their co-religionists in other parts of the country and especially the areas from which they had migrated. Moreover, it was in recognition of their aptitude for and interest in specific types of professions that they were given the suitable names of Sageis (clans), a characteristic feature of the nomenclature of Meitei families on the basis of 'Loiyamba Sinyeri' a book which assigns Sageis to people on the basis of their profession. There are about fifty such Muslim clans in Manipur - an unique feature in Muslim life quite unknown to the Muslim world elsewhere. <sup>2</sup>

The use of Hookah and Pipe (kangchup) for smoking tobacco was one of the innovations in the cultural life of Manipur. Indigenous 'waktang' had however been in vogue. Sports and Games showed Muslims' participation as evident from the Mansam clan descendants of a wrestler designated by Maharaja Khagemba. The Muslims are also permitted to compete in the Lamchel (race).<sup>3</sup>

The Phundrei Sagei introduced an implement known as the lathe and were proficient in carpentry. This clan in collaboration with the Khuleibam clan, made an artistic palanquin fitted with seven lotus leaves made of ivory, richly decorated and inlaid with gold and silver - its two sides being covered with copper. This clan also possessed expertise in making the Hookah stem, the flag-tip

of the Pe (umbrella), stool-legs, Horai (dishes), book stands, basket legs, Charkhas etc, over which they exercised a monopoly. Kandam of Khuleibam clan manufactured a device (machine) for pressing sugarcane. <sup>4</sup>

The Maharaja of Manipur was very pleased with these works of exceptional crafts-manship and he allowed the Phundrei and the Khuleibam clans to marry and settle in the Manipur valley. <sup>5</sup> They worked together with the Dolaipaba Loisang, that is, the Department of palanquins. This Loishang was under state control.

Neoria Sheikh of the Phusam clan (potters) manufactured an exquisite pot called the 'Sanabul' through the wheeling technique and presented it to king Khagemba. <sup>6</sup> Mc Culloch had stated that pottery was one of the principal trades of the Muslims, and in fact, through this wheeling technique a new dimension was added to the craft of pottery making in Manipur. The Maibams were professional clan of physicians. Like modern doctors, they exercised the function of curing of various diseases. The Chesam clan is credited with introducing the art of manufacturing paper. The indigenous writing was in agar-bark. The art can be traced to China from where the Muslims of Samarqand learnt it in 751 A.D., Paper industries were set up at different cultural centres of the Muslim world such as Iraq, Bagdad, Egypt, Spain etc. <sup>7</sup> Janab Khan opines that Skeikh ChUNET alias Chunalia might have been the introducer of paper manufactured from bamboo in Manipur during the reign of Maharaja Khagemba.

The Manipuri Muslims introduced something new in the art of weaving through the introduction of the Pangal-Yong (100m), and invented new designs in weaving. <sup>8</sup> The Phisam (weavers) clan wove distinctive fabrics on the traditional loom viz., Delaiph, Kangthol Phitha etc., for the exclusive use of the Muslims. The introduction of Pangal yong indicates a fairly high level of competence in weaving art.

The Muslims were very proficient in horticulture and a garden called Ningthem Ingkhol at Khomidok Heinou Khongnemi was allotted to them for purposes of cultivation by Maharaja Khagemba. <sup>9</sup>

Here were grown a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and crops, as for example -sugarcane, flowers, coriander, opium, mustard seed, garlic, onion etc, and the produce of the first harvest was presented to the King. The Muslims introduced new fruits like mango in Manipur. Tobacco too was introduced by them in Manipur in 1609. <sup>10</sup>

And it soon became an important commercial crop and its use was not confined to the Muslims alone but the indigenous population of Manipur adopted it very soon and its use became widely prevalent both among men and women. R. K. Jhalajit says that "Smoking of Tobacco was introduced in 1610 and Tobacco was cultivated as a new luxury". <sup>11</sup>

In agriculture, the Muslims concentrated their attention on sowing paddy, the chief staple of Manipur according to the traditional system illustrated by the following incident graphically narrated in the Nongsamei Puya. When the Muslims scattered

the first seeds of paddy into the earth, the local cultivators becoming alarmed, informed the king and asked him to take action against the offenders. The Muslims were not familiar with this system since they were acquainted with the traditional mode of Pumphun (sowing paddy) and pamphel i.e., similar to Punghun.

But a short while later, the same Muslims transplanted the young plants and since the Meiteis were unfamiliar with the method of transplantation, they assumed that the Muslim were trying to run away but in fact the local people arrested them and sent to Kongdong near Kabaw. The matter was resolved when the local people learnt that transplantation was a system of paddy cultivation and the Muslims were resettled in the plains of Manipur.<sup>12</sup> So, to the Muslims goes the credit of introducing the system of transplantation with regard to paddy, the chief staple in the diet of the people.

For the manufacture of war-materials and ammunition King Khagemba invited some Muslims, viz. Gora Sheikh and Ashiq Shah of the Aribam clan to assist in the manufacture of guns. Since they belonged to the first and oldest Muslim settlers in Manipur among the Muslims they were known as Aribam clan. The Aribams were among the brave Muslim soldiers in the royal army fighting against the mercenaries brought by Sanongba from Cachar and Sylhet. Gun making began during the reign of Khagemba.<sup>13</sup> According to the oral tradition of the Aribams, they were brought into Manipur by the Maharaja of Manipur for the manufacture of guns from Assam.

Through religion and commerce, the Manipuri Muslims maintained links with their co-religionists in provinces bordering Manipur during the reign of 'Gharib Niwaz' (kind to the poor) used by the Meitei King Pamheiba belonged originally to Persian vocabulary.<sup>14</sup> Many other words of the Manipuri language too are derive from Arabic or Persian as e.g., *ijjat* (prestige), *haq* (right), *hukm* (order), *kalm* (pen), *kamies* (shirt), *tarikh* (date), *patta*, *amin*, *qanungo*, *karkhana* etc. The Muslims of Manipur became almost indigenised retaining their bare identity.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Muslims there-by enriched and added to the vocabulary of the people of Manipur.

### Notes & References

1. *The Educational Review*, Vol. IXXXIV, No. 5, p. 90-91.
2. *Souvenir*, Golden Jubilee Celebration, Manipur Sahitya Parishad (1985), 23rd April to 1st May, pp. 40-42.
3. *Ibid*, pp. 42-43.
4. *Nongsamei Puya*, O. Bhogishwar & M. A. Janab Khan (ed), The Manipur Stationery and Printing Industries, Naga Mapal, (1973), p. 36.
5. *Ibid*; p. 34.
6. Riyazuddin Chaudhury, "Contribution of the Manipuri Muslims," (A paper read in the Seminar on Medieval History of Manipur, on 5th and 6th Nov., 1988, pp. 2-3.

7. M. A. Janab Khan, *The Manipuri Muslim*, Imphal, p. 19.
8. *Nongsamei Puya*, p. 45.
9. *Souvenir*; *op. cit.*, p. 44.
10. Quazi Hamid Ali. *The Manipuri Muslim, Fulertal*, 1979. p. 14.
11. *Nongsamei Puya*, pp. 48-52.
12. Riyazuddin Chaudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
13. J. Roy, *History of Manipur*, pp. 34-35.
14. *Souvenir*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48

The relations between the British and the Manipuri power centres are important aspects of British imperialism in India. The two World Wars of the present century brought an excellent opportunity for the rulers of the Indian states to demonstrate their loyalty and thereby establish their maximum contribution to the war efforts. In this paper an attempt is made to assess the socio-economic conditions and changes in Tripura State during the First World War period.

On the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, when the All India National Congress at Bombay (1914) resolved "to stand for the King as the ally of all nations and to support the King's Highness the British Emperor as the overlord of the Empire", the princely states were given a suitable recognition for their part in the war. A number of states were approached, and the following were the results of their response to the King's call:

No.	Name of the State	Amount of Contribution
1.	Chitral	100,000
2.	Swat	100,000
3.	Rawalpindi	100,000
4.	Islamabad	100,000
5.	North-West Frontier Province	100,000
6.	British India	100,000
7.	Y. M. C. A.	100,000
8.	British India	100,000
9.	British India	100,000
10.	British India	100,000
11.	British India	100,000
12.	British India	100,000
13.	British India	100,000
14.	British India	100,000
15.	British India	100,000
16.	British India	100,000
17.	British India	100,000
18.	British India	100,000
19.	British India	100,000
20.	British India	100,000