

# A Case Study on “Economic status of Meetei-Pangal (women) in Manipur”

According to the history of Manipur, during the reign of King Khagemba in the year 1606 Muslims from Taraph Kingdom (North East of Bangladesh) numbering around 100 were allowed to settle in Manipur. However, knowing the courage, strength, sincerity, wisdom and industrious qualities of the community people Manipuri used to called them as PANGAL (Pang-gal which mean strength) and the rulers of that time allowed them to married Meetei-ladies and their descendent become Meetei-Pangal, who speaks Meeteilon as their mother tongue.

Since then, the number of Meetei-Pangal population has increased many a fold. According to report Manipur State Commission for MOBC, Manipur the total population of the community as of 2004 is 1, 79,590.

## **ECONOMIC STATUS OF MEETEI-PANGAL (Women):**

To study the economic status of the Meetei-Pangal, which is the second largest community in Manipur it is necessary to study the employment level, means to count the real bread earners.

The percentage share of Muslim workers to the state workers’ force is only 7.42% with a percentage of 43.62% and the number of workers to the total population of Meetei-Pangal is 36.75%. According to the Socio-Economic Survey of Meetei-Pangals-2004 (SESMP-2004) conducted by Directorate of Economics & Statistics and Directorate of MOBC Manipur, 71.71% of the total population of community is out of the labour force while as many as 90.12% of the female population are excluded from labour force.

Percentage of person employed in economic activities by sex and districts of Manipur- 2004

Districts	Male in %	Female in %	Person in %
Imphal East	87.41	12.59	100
Imp West	82.43	17.57	100
Bishnupur	83.2	16.98	100
Thoubal	85.9	14.91	100
CC Pur	76	24	100
Chandel	90	9.33	100
Manipur	85.46	14.54	100

Source: MOBC and DCS

From the above table, it’s clearly indicate that the percentage of Meetei-Pangal female workers is much lower from its counterparts. Moreover, almost half of female population of the community i.e 41.40% engaged in household activities followed by 35.31% of unpaid helpers in household enterprises. While, a meager percent of 6.39% of the total female population of the community are working as regular salaried/wage employed as against 21.65% of their male counterparts.

### Principal usual activities of Meitei-Pangal male-female distribution of persons in percentage

Status code	Sex	Imphal East	Imphal West	Bishnupur	Thoubal	CCpur	Chandel	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11	M	43.65	61.84	67.29	49.38	42.11	82.35	50.25
	F	40.41	24.86	40.91	46.85	-	85.71	41.40
	P	43.24	55.35	62.81	49.00	32.00	82.67	48.97
12	M	0.88	0.71	0.19	0.91	-	-	0.82
	F	0.77	1.66	0.91	7.92	50.00	-	4.49
	P	0.87	0.87	0.31	1.95	12.00	-	1.35
21	M	4.79	15.90	5.95	9.25	-	2.94	8.11
	F	31.71	56.91	52.73	28.83	33.33	14.29	35.31
	P	8.18	23.11	13.89	12.11	8.00	4.00	12.06
31	M	24.49	12.25	12.08	22.98	15.79	4.41	21.39
	F	10.74	2.21	-	3.72	-	-	5.25
	P	22.76	10.49	10.03	20.11	12.00	4.00	19.04
41	M	4.05	1.18	0.37	3.08	-	-	2.99
	F	2.81	-	-	4.68	-	-	3.05
	P	3.90	0.97	0.31	3.32	-	-	3.00
51	M	21.7-	7.65	13.75	13.38	36.84	10.30	15.73
	F	9.72	12.71	3.63	5.49	-	-	7.54
	P	20.19	8.54	12.04	12.21	28.00	9.33	14.54
61	M	0.37	0.35	0.37	0.28	-	-	0.32
	F	2.30	1.10	0.91	-	-	-	0.91
	P	0.61	0.49	0.46	0.24	-	-	0.41
62	M	0.07	0.12	-	0.17	5.26	-	0.13
	F	1.02	0.55	-	0.97	16.67	-	0.91
	P	0.19	0.19	-	0.29	8.00	-	0.24
71	M	-	-	-	0.14	-	-	0.07
	F	0.26	-	-	0.16	-	-	0.15
	P	0.03	-	-	0.14	-	-	0.08
72	M	-	-	-	0.43	-	-	0.19
	F	0.26	-	0.91	1.78	-	-	0.99
	P	0.03	-	0.15	0.63	-	-	0.31
<b>Total (11-72)</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>F</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
	<b>P</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Report on Socio-Economic Survey of Meitei Pangals (ESD and MOBC Govt. of Manipur)

Status code 1-working or being engaged in economic activities (employed), 11- working of household enterprises as an own account worker, 12-working of household enterprises as an employer, 21- working in household enterprises as an unpaid helper, 31- working as regular salaried/wage employee, 41- worked as casual wage labour in public works, 51- worked as casual wage labour in other types of works, 61- dint not work due to sickness through there was work in household enterprises, 62- Dint not work due to other reason through there was work in household enterprises, 71- Dint not work due to sickness through engaged/employed in regular salaried wage employment, 72- Dint not work due to other reasons through engaged/employed in regular salaried/wage employment

Besides, the fact that percentage of employed among the Meetei-Pangal is low (24.18%). Due to the lack of employment economic aspects of the community is also not so sound; the larger percentage of household fall within the low income range below Rs 2000 per month.

## CASE STUDIES:

**Case 1 -----**Basijan Bibi (48) of Nongpok Sekmai a divorce and mother of 4 (four) children; Mangi (23-24), Ebecha (21), Bebe (18) and Tomba (10) who managed to feed them selling vegetable at Khwairamban Keithel.



Photo: Basijan

Basijan entered to wedlock at her tender age even before 18 with Fajaruman, who is suffering from an inborn heart related ailment and a person of “habitual idleness”. Since then she started her daily journey to market selling vegetables that grow at her own garden.

Her life took a serious twist when she tried to show so courage against her husband. Almost two decades ago, in protest against her husband’s attitude and habitual idleness

Basijan came back to her parental house. However, when she returned home after two months of no communication, Fajaruman married his second wife. Basijan then decided to divorce him and stayed along with her children in a separate house.

She told that like her husband Basijan’s eldest son Mangi have inherited some of trait of today’s youth, “no work but only to eat”. Currently, she is looking after her eldest son, daughter-in-law, grandson and her youngest son Tomba with her trifling earnings from selling vegetables at Khwairamban Keithel.

Basijan also informed that she managed to arrange the marriage of her two daughters Ebecha and Bebe without any help from her ex-husband.

In her 30-years of stint at Keithel in and around Imphal city she realized the value of education and the disparity of lifestyle between an illiterate and an educated-employed person. Therefore, with a “firm solemn promise” to make her youngest son, Tomba “a big officer” Basijan sends her son Tomba to a residential School in Khangabok (good English school as she said). She is sending Rs 2600/month and some extra money for his hostel, tuition, school fees and other personal expenses.

When asked how she managed all family expenses during bazaar and gari bandh, Basijan took a long breath and said, “Ebung-o chadaba-di yadabanina puba lang-ba touraga adum chai, ngamnaba hotnabada punsise ware.”

**Case 2 -----**Thambal (60), w/o (L)Agun Gadir of Porompat Khetri Leikai and a mother of 8 (eight) children, dry fish street hawker at the corridors and streets of markets in and around Imphal city. Her husband died 15 years ago.

Her first response to my reaction when she told me about the number of children “echa 8 ne, nupa mari nupi mari” was a broad smile.

Holding 2 plates of dry fishes and welcoming passerby to buy it and running hither and thither after city police chase her for causing inconvenience pedestrians on footpath, corridors, and streets is part of her daily business.

Since the last 30 years she is in the same business, and coming to market without missing a day except on Bandh and important festivals. However, she unable to manage to a plot in any of the Imphal Keithels.

“Chahi 30 dahi nongma kangdana koichen chellaga nga-yollaklibane adubu potpham di amata kanba ngamde, potpham leite chella chellaga yolli; Pangan sidi kharadi miraibi, einaga khangnaba leijadabaga.....”, Thambal told when inquired about her business.

Despite of Thambal’s topsy-turvy life she managed to arranged the marriage of her two daughters with her little earnings post her husband’s demise. Moreover, two of her sons are in Manipur police department as Village Development Force (VDF) personnel.

The reason why she is still working even at her advance age is only to make some money out of her business for her youngest daughter Arash’s dowry, who married last year.

“Mamang chahida luhongkhiba Echa nupi atombi Arash ki aunpot khara pige haiduna eise thabak suribane, masibu piba ngamlabadi ema hekta potharadone”, Thambal reasoned for her sufferings.



Photo: Thambal

## **CONCLUSION:**

Considering the above studies, it is clear that the cause of economic deprivation of the community is lack of education and employment of Meetei-Pangal.

It’s said that if a person is educated then he knows how to look after his family, economy, society and other things in life. In a broader sense, if the people of the community are staying away from the pool of knowledge, their socio-economic and political status in the society might be lagging behind from other communities. It may be noted that there is always a connection between the low economic and educational status of Pangals in Manipur.

According to the 2001 Census the literacy rate of the community is 58.6% which is comparatively less from the 70.5% literacy rate of Manipur. While, male and female Meetei- Pangal literacy is recorded as 75% and 41.6% respectively. Besides, only the 86.36% and 13.64% percentages of Manipuri Muslim boys and girls respectively are staying outside the state for education. It indicates

the cause of lower status of women in the Meetei- Pangal society. Social scientists have the opinion that religious dictum followed by the community women are unable to go at par with male in some aspects of life.

Because of the economic and educational backwardness of the community, their living condition is also receding from other communities. Except for cent percent own household occupancy the living condition is also comparatively low from other communities in Manipur. Only 6.2% of the total Meetei-Pangal households are staying in Pucca houses and only 9% of them are using tap water as the source of drinking as against 24.8% of Manipur. Only 6.6% of the household belonging to the community have only septic tank latrine.

So, if the women have to be at par with male in the society, education is needed so that they can think freely and positively, stand with their own feet independently and financially sound. As a whole, woman and man are like the two wheels of a bicycle, which have the same roles, functions and duties. So, none of them could stay away from their share of responsibilities, which are meant to perform to make the society a better and egalitarian one.

Sources-

Socio Economic Condition of Meetei Pangal in Manipur- 2004

Final report Manipur State Commission for MOBC

54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> rounds of NSS Survey reports

2001 census