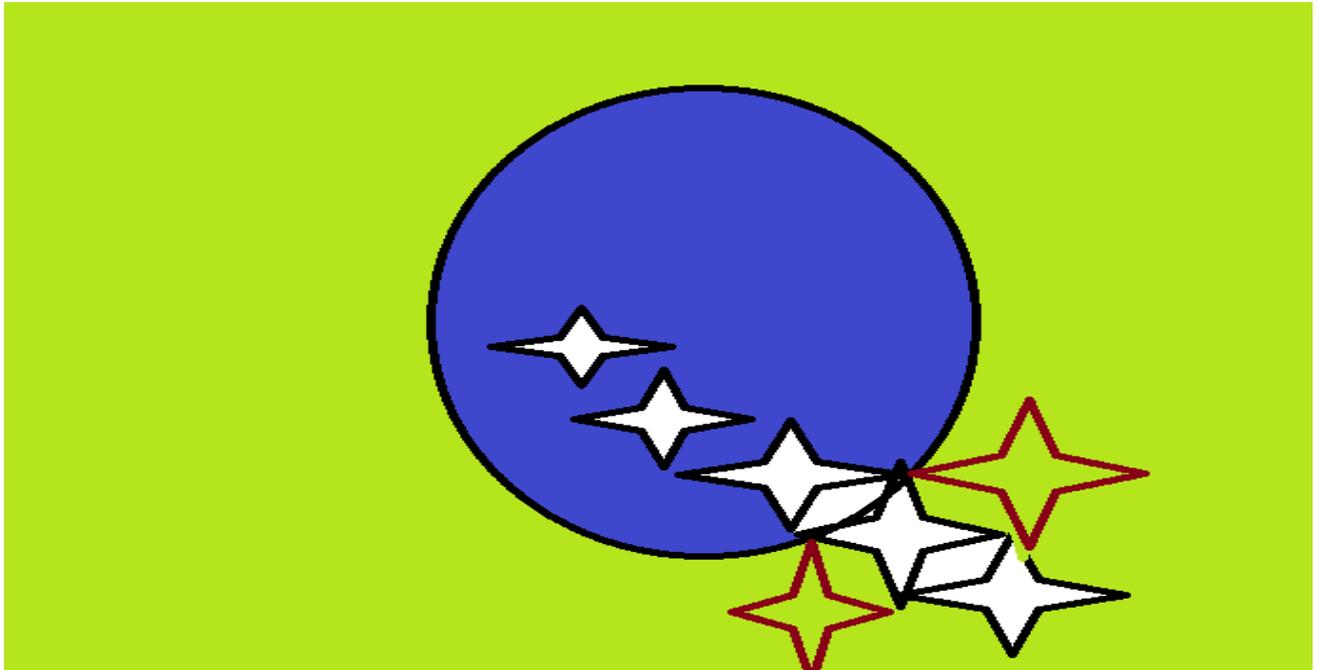




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Knowledge for the People



Work Participation and Empowerment of Women Weavers in Manipur

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Work Participation and Empowerment of Women Weavers in Manipur

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Introduction

North-East region of India has its natural beauty which is marred by poor development in many sectors. This is combined with extremely uncertain political scenario with insurgency playing an important role in all spheres of community life. It is undoubtedly the common people, the poor and the marginalized are the ones who suffer the most in this scenario. Even among these, women and children are affected the most. It appears that government of Manipur is more focused on tackling the problem of insurgent uprising than fighting social issues including the problems of women who are the backbone of the welfare of the family and the society.

It is normally assumed that women in North-East region of India are relatively more empowered as compared with their fellow women citizens in other regions of the nation. Leaving aside the existing matriarchal social structure in the state of Meghalaya where the women are expected to be the owners of the ancestral property, women in rest of the states in the region face discrimination based on gender similar to other patriarchal social structures. Manipur is a patriarchal social set up, and it directly or indirectly indicates that subordination of women does exist in Manipur too which is predominantly found in all the patriarchal societies. This paper examines the lives and livelihood of women weavers of Manipur who contribute substantially to the family income in order to understand the autonomy and control which they have as a result of work participation.

Review of literature

It has been observed that a substantial number of women especially in developing countries are absorbed by the global production process resulting from the policy on trade

liberalization. The expansion of female employment has been predominantly concentrated within the ‘informal’ sector of economy. Debate on gender and its relation to employment has gained importance because of the increasing number of women becoming breadwinners along with their non-negotiable domestic roles (Afshar and Barrientos, 1999). This was the time when there was growing global economic inequality both among countries and also within countries (Afshar and Barrientos, *ibid*). The recognition of the value and characteristics of the informal sector appeared in the 1970s and 1980s and finally took the center stage in the 1990s. By then, the sector has been highlighted as an opportunity rather than a failure at the time of stagnating growth and rising unemployment (Afshar and Barrientos, *ibid*).

The emergence of the term informal sector was captured in a study conducted by Keith Hart (1971) in Ghana among the migrant population in search of job in urban settings. It was found that large sections of the population were engaged in self-employed activities as a means for their survival and livelihood for new entrants to the urban labour force who were unable to obtain employment in the formal sector (Mehta, 1995). Another reason for the involvement in self-employment by these laborers’ is their lack of skills and experience required for the jobs in the formal sector (Papola, 1994). The sector plays an important role especially in the developing world in particular with the increasing number of women in the labour force participation.

The informal sector of economy captures the large share of the global workforce which is outside the realm of full time, stable and protected employment. This is very significant while examining the changing trend of employment opportunities in the market. It is also an important sector particularly in developing countries and informal employment comprises 65 % in Asia. It was estimated in Asia that the organized sector grew at 2% per year through 1980s whereas the urban informal sector managed 4% growth and more, providing between 40 to 60% of

employment (ILO's 1992 World Labour Report, quoted in Jain, D., 2005:114). In all the developing countries, informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than formal employment and generally a larger source of employment for women than for men. There are 60% or more women workers in informal employment (outside agriculture) in the developing world (Chen et.al, 2006). Women were preferred as workers in many of the fast growing sectors of production and export. With respect to India, as mentioned in Samita Sen's work on 'gender and class', very little attention was given to the question of gender. Women who did work in industrial units were subsumed within the category of 'class'. To a large extent, women's productive role has been ignored for a long time. The fact is that women were a critical segment of the industrial labour force since the inception of the industrial development (Sen, S, 2004). An economic development of a country could be accelerated by enhancing or focusing on the status, position and living condition of women because women play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the country. The feminization of employment has been presented in two ways: number of women entering the workforce and secondly in terms of the quality of the employment, which is usually poorly paid, physically demanding, and dirty (Jain, D., 2005).

Feminization and the Process of Globalization and Liberalization

The trend of increasing number of female labour force in the market economy has led to new definitions and studies on feminization of labour as reflected in many academic as well as non-academic writings. It is observed that feminization of labour occurs at a time when paid work is becoming increasingly informal (Kabeer, 2008). Existing studies and literatures have revealed that with the restructuring of the market economy globally, particularly in Third World countries, the majority of the new workers are women. According to the ILO statistics, global employment almost doubled between 1965 and 1995. In this, the bulk of expansion was in the

developing countries and more than half of the new recruits were women (Hensman, 2004). However, the conditions of working for both men and women were far away from any labour standards. Most of these workers continue to work under such dreadful conditions only because this is the only way in which they and their families can survive. Therefore, it is the question of survival and livelihood of the workers.

Women's issues gained more importance in the nineties, with liberalization and privatization of the economy when the old concept of '*growth with social justice*' was replaced with the new concept of '*development with empowerment*' (Mohanty, 2001 cited in Naorem, 2007). Empowerment and inclusion are complementary terms. One act from below and another from above to provide the environment to enable individuals to build their capabilities. Sen (1990) throws light on the importance of discussing gender issues in developmental analysis by reminding that male and female have divergent predicaments. In order to avoid any misunderstanding in terms of both causation and consequences, gender should be taken into account as an important component in any social issue. Gender inequality persists very distinctly in our society whether developed or developing or less developed countries in different degrees. In the Indian context, the inequality between male and female reflects itself in adverse social indicators. Gender inequality and female deprivation have been characterized as India's most serious social failures as noted by Dreze and Sen (Dreze and Sen, 2002). Gender inequality predominantly exists in Manipur society which has negative implications for women's life.

Empowerment and Women's Earning

Kabeer acknowledges the multi-dimensional nature of gender inequalities. Among other things, one of the important aspects towards empowerment as it has been argued by Kabeer is the individual's inert sense of self which would then plausibly enhance the capability to exercise his

or her own choice (Kabeer, 2005). Empowerment could be viewed as the process of challenging the ideologies of discrimination and subordination, which justify the unequal distribution of power among individuals and groups in the society. According to Osmani (1998), women's subordinate position signifies a lack of empowerment. Women in general inherit inferior bargaining power which has an impact on the intra-household resource allocation like food, education, health care and so on. To empower means either to strengthen an individual's belief in self-efficacy or to weaken one's belief in personal powerlessness (Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

It is also important to note that women should be able to bring out their inert sense of self-acceptance and self-respect which extend, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals. This is nothing but power which is evolved from within. Women must be convinced of their innate right to equality, dignity, and justice (Sen, 2006). Considering earning as the direct account of contribution, it would be significant to discuss women's earning. Turning to women's earning, the notion of perceived contribution draws attention.

With this theoretical background, this study explores women's level of work participation in the weaving sector, their role in decision-making process of the family and examines whether their perceived contribution towards the survival and livelihood of the family is converted into power. As discussed by Sen (1990), there is a positive relationship between high perceived contribution and one's bargaining power over the conflicting interest among the members in the family. Recognition of women's contribution whether financial or non-financial (more importantly managing household work including bearing, rearing and looking after elderly people at home) is a significant step towards gender equality. Whether a woman has certain level of power within her family depends on the symbolic meaning and interpretations that are attached to her income by the woman and also by her family members. As discussed by Pyke, "A

woman married to a man who views her employment as a threat rather than as a gift for which he should reciprocate will derive less power from her employment. Similarly, an unemployed woman married to a man who values his wife's domestic work as a gift will derive more power from her role. Conversely, the extent to which a woman views her own paid and unpaid labor as a gift or burden will also affect her marital power" (cited in Kibria, Nazli, 1995:292).

The study by Maria Mies among the lacemakers of Narsapur in India found that women attached less value to their work even though their products are sold in the world market. Women could not get much benefit because they strongly feel that their work is supplementary to husband's work and lace making as a spare-time activity work for which they fail to bargain for fair wage (quoted in Sen, 1990:144). This led to self exploitation as housewives as well as workers. As revealed by a woman garment worker in Kabeer's study (2000:303), "I don't think women are respected for working at home. It is not possible to save from that kind of money". A similar view by another woman, "Women don't get status by working at home. Those who go out and work in offices earn respect from the community. What status can you expect from sitting at home and churning out linings?". This clearly shows that women themselves devalue their work and subscribe their income as supplementary earnings. Earning an income also depends on the environment where a woman works- outside or within the homestead. Thus, women's earning at home had limited impact on gender relationships within the family and to the broader community level.

As Donahoe says, one major problem with the labour force concept is that household or domestic work is not defined as economic activity because it is of use value rather than exchange value (Donahoe, 1999) which is normally described as non-productive in relation to the production process and market system. This indicates that the 'values' of women have been

ignored in the society and are marginalized even when they contribute economically. It is undeniable that income confers power and power relations are so complex at the familial level that men enjoy more than women out of the earnings in the same position (Viswanathan, 2001). Women cannot really convert resources into power mainly due to the social norms which force women to be dependent on men especially in the Indian context. Gender casts its shadow in every institution but the most complex is on the *family* as a social institution. According to Connell, “family is exactly like a scene of multi-layered relationships folded over each other like geological strata. In no other institutions are relationships so extended in time, so intensive in contact, so dense in their interweaving of economics, emotion, power and resistance” (Connell, 1987:30). In order to understand gender and the family, it is required to unpack the family. In the next step, one can examine the division of labour among the males and females and more importantly the recognition of the expected roles played by one particular sex by the other. It appears distinctly in almost all societies where “a woman’s place” has been defined, more so within the four walls of the home. As domestic work is equal to unpaid work and unrecognized, the issues concerning the women remain sidelined. The gender regime of a particular family represents a continuing synthesis of relations governed by the three structures – emotional relations, power and the division of labour (Connell, *ibid*). With this, we see that family represents both positive and negative aspect in human relationship. For instance, as Nussbaum points out that family means love in the positive sense whereas the unequal power relation between men and women in the negative sense, family means oppressive and abusive as women are socially and culturally molded to possess moral virtues such as willingness to sacrifice their own interests for the needs of others (Nussbaum, 2000). This would perpetuate gender discrimination and affect human capabilities in realizing one’s own self and their ability to

choose what they desire to. The constraints imposed on women on what they are free or not free to do may be closely related to “women’s own perceptions of legitimacy and appropriateness” (Sen, 1995:265).

Mazumdar highlights the extent of actual control enjoyed by women over their own lives and the extent to which they have access to decision-making processes and are effective in positions of power and authority (Mazumdar, 1978:17). One major contribution of feminist scholars has been to draw our attention to the importance of power followed by control that determines the subordinate position of women in society. In concrete terms, this notion of power or control manifests in the patriarchal ideology which exists in all societies (Nanda and Mangalagiri, 1985). The power to control women by men has become socially sanctioned and mediated through various social institutions. In a study conducted by Kibria (1995) among women garment workers in Bangladesh, it was found that the belief of men’s obligation to protect women socially and economically was strongly reflected among the respondents. In a rigid patriarchal family set up, it becomes difficult for a woman to exercise her rights over her income earned and her contributions including labour and money remain invisible. Patriarchal social set up is characterized by male dominance and female subordination. Women themselves might not see their own subordination as a problem because of the line of thought enforced by the process of gender socialization. As noted by Shrivastava (2001), the chief predicament of a woman lies in her very precarious condition of not being seen as a total human being. Women are too often treated as an instrument for others to meet their desires and needs rather than treating them as ends in their own right, persons with dignity that deserves respect from laws and institutions (Nussbaum, 2000).

Gender inequality and female deprivation can be characterized as the negative aspects in the process of women's empowerment. The study examines the complex relationship between women's work participation, empowerment and well-being. Like in any other patriarchal society, in Manipur too, the gender roles have been clearly defined despite their 'value added services' to the family income. However, women could not gain due recognition out of their economic contribution in their families which was clearly revealed in the study among the women involved in pottery work in Manipur though majority of them were the main income earners in their families (Naorem,2007). Given this background, this study advances a hypothesis that the invisibility that is observed regarding the household labour of women is also extended to the economic sectors where women work for their livelihood as the women have no control and autonomy with regard to the income earned by women and is also unrecognized.

Methodological Framework

Study Area: The study was undertaken in three districts of Manipur, India ie. Imphal East, Imphal West and Bishnupur based on the concentration level of weavers among the nine districts in the state, Manipur. All these three districts under the study are in the valley areas and majority of the population belong to the Meitei community. Nine villages were covered under these three districts depending on the concentration level of the women weavers. The three different organizations in production process were chosen based on women weavers' relationship with marketing of their finished products. They are as follows-

1. Category I - Household Level of Production (HLP)

Weavers involved in household level of production (HLP, hereafter) are hereby categorized as Category I (Cat I, hereafter) were selected by snow balling technique. In this category, women

weave in their own homes and also they have their own looms. The areas covered in this group are Kongba Ucheckkon, Wangkhei, Huiem (Bamon Kampu), Chanam Sandrok and Heigrujam.

2. Category II– Women Weavers under “NC”

The second Category (Cat II, hereafter) of weavers belong to a NGO based in Imphal West district of Manipur. The name of this organization is ‘*Women’s Worth Organization*¹’ (NC group, hereafter) based in Nagamapal, Imphal West in the heart of the main market ‘*Ima Keithel*’. A group of weavers in this organization from Moidangpok in Imphal West was selected for the study. The selection of the organization and its member weavers was purposive. There was a work shed built by the NGO, 12 weavers were working together. The products of the weavers under ‘NC’ in this village and to some extent from nearby village were brought together to the work shed then finally collected by the organization based in Imphal (‘NC’).

3. Category III - Women Weavers under Organization for Rural Improvement (ORI)

The selection of the organization was purposive and the list of the women weavers was collected. The organization is called ‘*Organization for Rural Improvement*’ (ORI group, hereafter) based in Nambol working under the principle of micro-credit finance. For the study, women weavers who were also taking loans from the organization and supporting their families were selected. The data from the field was collected by attending the weekly meetings held by the organization with

¹ The organization was established in 1st March 1983 and registered under the society registration act XXI of 1860 in the year 1984. The focus of the organization was on the income generation and social upliftment of the women and girls in the rural areas in Manipur. Several trades are under its coverage ranging from embroidery; cane, bamboo, kauna and allied crafts to handloom weaving. In the field of handloom weaving, training cum production centre was set up in Moidangpok in which a work shed was built by the organization.

the women workers in different villages. A similar trend to Cat I was found that weavers in this category too weave in their own homes and market their products through the middle women.

Methods of Data Collection

Considering the three categories involved in the study, for data collection, we used in-depth interviews, group discussions, narratives and some case studies as the main tools. Semi-structured interview guide was used during the interview as a suggestive reference which allowed the researchers considerable flexibility.

Findings

Women who are economically active (21-40 years) showed the highest number in the occupation of weaving among the Cat I women weavers. With age, there is less number of women in the occupation. When we look into their education, a large number of them could only attain till the secondary level of education which probably reflects the financial condition of these families. Majority of women respondents revealed that they joined the occupation out of economic compulsion to meet the basic needs of the family (78.2% which is 86 women out of 110). There is a close relationship between the available support system to the women weavers and the amount of income they could earn as for majority of them weaving is the main source of income and livelihood. Majority of the respondents learnt the art of weaving either from their mothers or sisters. None of them reported of gaining knowledge of weaving from any training program by the government.

Like in Cat I, quite similarly the largest proportion of women in this Cat II is economically active and also could only reach till secondary level of education. The socio-economic conditions of the weavers in this category are low and many of them are the main

income earners in their respective families. Due to the economic compulsion, these women are drawn into weaving at an early age and leaving their education to make their living and their livelihoods. We observed that in Cat II one woman had learnt the art of weaving from the handloom department in Imphal West district of Manipur. Except this case, we did not come across any other women who have learnt the art from a government set up.

It is very interesting to observe a slightly different picture as evident from the data of the women weavers in Cat III. The highest number of weavers is found among the age group of 41-50 along with women in their economically active stage. One of the reasons for this could be that a large number of women in this group are getting loans from the organization following the principle of micro-credit financing with an aim of empowering women through credit facility. They (elderly women) influence the young women in their own households to join their earning and seek credit facility in order to improve their income which they see as a positive way to improve their livelihoods. Even in this category, none reported of gaining any benefits from the government.

Commonalities and Differences across the Categories: Except a few numbers of weavers in the whole respondents included in the study, most weavers are managing their family maintenance through their earnings. The knowledge or skill of weaving was acquired commonly from the mothers or sisters in the family. The opportunity to upgrade their skills in weaving was minimal which shows the negligence of the state government responsibility towards their assigned duties especially designed for weavers in total. None of the respondents had the knowledge of any of the government schemes and also so far not availed any provisions. Above all, they did not even have weaver cards though some of them reported of being submitted their passport photographs along with Rs.40 to some of the unknown survey groups. Majority of the

respondents are secondary level of education which appeared and reported to be one major factor in not knowing whom to ask and where to query. Weaving is reported to be the main source of livelihood to majority of the respondents in the study. Their main concern in day to day life is to get two meals a day and families with other supplementary earning members would plan for small savings. Importance of education has been overshadowed by the need to meet the basic needs of the family. Concern to save some portion of their earnings for the marriage was expressed by the young single women respondents which led them to form and join marup (local saving system) of different kinds.

The qualitative aspects of the data from the field help to relate the art of weaving and its relationship with the women folks in the society. It was found that there was a strong cultural meaning attached to weaving in earlier generations (roughly two generations prior to the present generation involved in the study) which could also be due to then nature of production relations. The production relations here are limited to the relationship between the process of production and its relation with the changing market system within the state and also outside the state. Earlier, the production was mainly used for consumption purposes whereas at present the sector has become more commercialized and weaving has become a main source of livelihood to many families in the state along with consumption of the products. In brief, regarding the changing pattern of weaving from the past to present time, weaving means a means to meet the ends to majority of the families in this study. Some women of the study say *“to be financially independent is the most crucial step therefore we want our daughters to learn the art of weaving apart from the cultural meaning attached to weaving in Manipur. We will definitely teach them when they grow up.”* It is evident that the main reason for majority women to take up this occupation is due to financial problems.

Visibility of Earning and Women's Autonomy

Rationing the income earned: Almost all women in this study replied that their contribution is being recognized in their own families. Considering this fact, these women are helped by the male members neither in their production process nor in managing the large household activities. To quote, women in Cat I seek or get support exclusively from female members in their work both productive as well as household activities, except two women respondents who reported of being helped by their husbands (two women out of 110 women respondents in Cat I). Another point women brought out was that they could take part in the decision-making process in the family. Again, it was more of male-dominated decision-making process. None of the respondents excluding widows, women without parents reported of taking the main decision of the family. They never try to question on their right to make their own choice in life. The negative implications of this are manifested in the form of restriction towards women's freedom to move freely, early withdrawal from the school to support the family expenditure, low self-esteem to handle life situations, limitation in exploring different opportunities in life, ignoring ill health etc. However, all women respondents (Cat I, II & III) have mentioned that economic independence is the utmost step in a woman's life. It is understood that women knew the extreme form of exploitation of being completely dependent economically though they could not express or exercise their rights. In a way, they are conditioned to the subjugated status.

Perceived Contribution: An important area to be focused is on women's perceived contribution which could be an effective tool in bargaining or negotiating with other members in the household over their interest. Contributions are of two kinds-one of direct contribution which means income to sustain the family expenditure and another could be of non-economic contribution for example household activities including almost everything starting with domestic

chores to endless jobs. As mention, we can conclude by saying that women in this context of the study are involved in both kinds of contributions. In regard to this, a woman who makes others feel her value of contribution would definitely draw more power in the bargaining or negotiating process over the conflict situation in the decision-making process in the family as compared to the one who puts lesser value to her contribution.

Some women in Cat I reported that they were able to gain recognition of their contribution both monetary as well as the household duties of being a woman in our society. However, they could not completely overrule other male members in the family and also could not take part in the decision-making process of the family. Thus, we cannot consider such responses as positive in bridging the gender gap and unequal power relation within the family. From the women's responses (Cat II) in terms of their income contribution, it was observed that they could make others value their substantial input towards the welfare of the family. However, this really could not convert into power to bargain their perceived interest. It can be read and understood as lack of internalization of personal interest combined with the strong moral obligation and concern for family welfare which are a part of cultural value to maintain traditional inequalities in the society. Women in Cat III made a substantial contribution to the survival and livelihood of the family, majority of them could not bargain much over their interest and also the mainstay of the decision making laid with the men in the family. Some of them reported of domestic violence despite their contributions both productive and domestic chores perceived to be the women's duty in the society. They asserted that violence in their families decreased when their children grew up and stood in support of them against their husbands committing any form of violence.

Majority of them revealed that they worked and earned for their families not for themselves. The decision of the family was reported to be taken by male members in the family though they claimed to be a part of the process. However, the fact is that they were informed about the final decision by the males. To quote : *“A married woman in her 30 accepted the difference between a man and a woman in the society. According to her, a man should take the main responsibility of the family (male-breadwinner concept) and also he should be taking the main decision. This woman obviously put less value to her contribution who has been working 7 hours a day to earn Rs.3000 p/m and her husband is reported to be earning the same amount”*.

Income and women’s social status:- Income confers power in general understanding however it is contradictory when one talks about income earned by a woman engaged in an unorganized sector of the economy. Most women involved in the unorganized sector of economy in particular weaving attached less value to their income earned. This is mainly because their income earned could not make a great difference in their standard of living apart from meeting the basic needs of the family. According to them, *“we can’t really count on our income earned from this petty work. We just continue with the work because there is no other option available to us for our survival and livelihood. From our income, we can’t dream of big things in life. We just roll on life for the sake of living.”*

Involvement in decision-making process:- It is very important for us to examine women respondents’ role in the decision-making process of the family. In the Indian society, almost all women hardly make any voice in the main decision-making process except their role in managing the expenditures on food, their children’s small demands like buying toffees, clothes etc. Examining category wise, it was found that only four women in Cat I (four out of 110 women respondents) took the main decisions in their families. Women in Cat III had to bargain

with their male members for their interests despite their substantial contribution towards the family's income. The unequal power between men and women strongly persist in Meitei community and such a structure is reinforced in the socialization process which led to discrimination based on gender among the siblings in the family.

Gender Discrimination:-Considering the social structure prevailing in Manipur especially among the Meitei community with its strong patriarchy we felt it is relevant to examine the expected discrimination based on gender in the social context as well as within the household. The researcher made an attempt to capture the perceived discrimination among the respondents in the study. The responses showed that a strong sense of gender discrimination among the siblings was prevalent which was the contradictory view expressed by the women respondents. They did not agree that they were being discriminated. This indicates that women accept the 'legitimacy of the unequal order' (Sen 1990, cited by Kabear, 2000:28) and adapted to the system without any feeling of abnormality. It is significant to highlight the non-existence of women's right over the agricultural land; pulling young girls into the occupation by the mothers or elderly women in the family to support the family expenditure; non-support of the male members in the household work; a sense of less caring towards young girls as compared to the young boys in the family in terms of offering food, providing the best available choice, giving leisure time to boys and male members by letting them to do what they wish to and; finally most women had to work to support the family. All these manifestations are nothing but discrimination based on gender in a strong patriarchal set-up among the Meiteis.

Manipur appeared to be one of the states in eastern India with high level of women's empowerment in terms of women's freedom of movement, active participation in economic domain in the market, access to cash, participation in household decision-making etc. It is

possible that women in the state might be relatively free from strict social obligations that exist in other regions in the nation. However, women in the state do face different levels of ill effects of patriarchy. Agarwal's extensive work on land rights and its implication for women's bargaining power contribute immensely in understanding the complexity of unequal power relation between men and women in the society and also within the patriarchal family. She points out that without independent resources irrespective of the socio-economic condition of either parental or marital families, women can be economically vulnerable in case of marital breakdown or widowhood (Agarwal, 2008: 176).

It is evident in the study that majority of women weavers who weave in their own homestead do not get a centre-stage in the intra-household power dynamics. Eventually they do not take part in the main decision-making process in the family. They sacrifice their own wishes and desire either through the natural process of socialization or imposed to them by other members in the household. They generally are attuned to fulfill the welfare of the family by involving themselves in earning which is weaving in this context with minimal benefits in some cases especially among the single women and almost without any benefits among the married weavers. None of these women could freely move in the public place without prior permission from the male heads of the household especially from their husbands among the married women weavers despite being the main income earners in their own respective families.

Conclusions

Despite value added services to the family by the women weavers, the mainstay of the family still lies in the hands of the male members in the household except a few exceptional cases such as widows, destitute women, women with weak parents, women without parents etc.

The socio-cultural underpinnings play a major role in the lives of these women which act as constraint in achieving a level of empowerment. It simply indicates that the negative aspects of patriarchal ideology for instance gender discrimination, son preference, male dominance over women, unequal power relationship between men and women, restriction on women's movement so on and so forth within the family and also in the society do exist in Manipur.

The understanding of empowerment does not seem to be striking in the context of the study where women are denied their basic rights, for example the right to take their own decisions, land right, freedom of movement etc. Though the constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women in the society. The study shows that it might be very difficult for the women to bring any change in the existing social structure which is extremely rigid. Often, these women have not been benefited by their work participation and the income earned. Failing to get benefits from their income earned or control over their income has negative repercussions on the lives of the women. It is time to consider such an understanding in order to formulate a broader plan in which women workers have to be made inclusive partners in any labour welfare measures.

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